

Anex holds visa session

Next issue

In our May issue, **Special Report** examines the rise of language plus work experience courses, while **Market Report** finds out about market trends in Ireland last year. **Direction** looks at the demand from students around the world for Russian language courses in Russia and **Feedback** finds out what students studying in New Zealand think about their study abroad experience. **City Focus** visits San Francisco while **Destination** reports from the islands of Malta.

At its annual general meeting last year, Colombian agency association, Anex, organised a meeting on visa issuance that was attended by 54 agents. Detailed presentations about visa issuing procedures were given by representatives from five different embassies.

"[Members] were very happy about the opportunity to improve their visa policy knowledge," related Claudia Rozo, Anex Secretary. "They felt it was the perfect opportunity to solve a lot of their questions relating to this very important issue."

Attending the event were representatives from the German, Canadian, US, French and British embassies. "The main concern from the embassies in general was that they feel a lot of Colombian students are trying to use the student visa to remain illegally [overseas] or to extend their studies for years and years, only to



Delegates learnt that fake I-20 forms for US study are a problem

remain in a country," said Rozo. "[Representatives] talked about the [use of] false documents and referred to a new Colombian law that punishes with jail the use of [fake] documents for visa purposes." Rozo added that the representatives urged agents to explain to students the risks and consequences of breaking the immigration law.

Joyce, from the US Embassy, gave an "excellent explanation",

according to Rozo, of the quality of students the embassy likes to receive, and showed examples of fake I-20 forms, which are becoming a big problem in Bogotá. Two delegates from the British Embassy also spoke frankly about immigration procedures, and surprised participants, said Rozo, by informing them that a visa extension made by a student while in Britain can imply that inaccurate information about study plans

Agent questionnaire



Name of agent: Kevin Hickey
 Position: Director
 Name of company: EIL Intercultural Learning
 Location: Cork, Ireland
 Other branches: sister offices in 25 other countries
 No. of full-time staff: seven
 Average no. of students per year: 1,950 total - 250 on language programmes

Would you like to participate in our Agent questionnaire? If so, please send us your responses to these questions, accompanied by your photograph. Please contact us if you have any further questions.

1. When and how did you become a language travel agent?

EIL (Experiment in International Living) was founded in the USA in 1932 and has been involved in language travel programmes since the 1950s. The organisation was introduced to Ireland in 1960 and has hosted incoming English language participants since the 1970s. Over the past 10 years, we have concentrated on outgoing language travel programmes and have seen a steady increase in the numbers each year. I have been Director of EIL since 1989.

2. Please tell us about your client profile.

Seventy-five per cent of our participants are high school students who wish to travel to France, Germany, Spain or Italy. More and more, they look for programmes that combine language learning with sporting or other activities. Increasingly, people are also asking for residential rather than host family-based programmes. We are also finding more older adults or professionals who wish to travel beyond Europe to destinations such

as Ecuador, Mexico, Russia and Japan. We are hoping to start sending [clients] to China soon.

3. Do you deal with both inbound and outbound clients?

Yes, we have inbound and outbound programmes. Most of our inbound clients take part in academic high school or college programmes. We have participants from Germany, USA, Mexico, Italy, Spain, Latvia, Argentina and Ecuador attending high school in Ireland. We have a very small incoming English language programme.

4. Are there many outbound agencies in Ireland, and is the concept of language travel relatively new in the country?

The concept of language travel is still new in Ireland and there are two other agents who send participants to European destinations. However, as far as I am aware, we are the only organisation that provides a range of options to so many different countries and to so many different types of schools in Europe and beyond.

5. How do you promote your services to potential clients?

Advertising in newspapers, mailings to every language teacher in the country, school visits and placing brochures in youth information centres across the country. We also organise a very exciting scholarship programme in association with the Irish Times newspaper each year. This year, we will send young Irish people on fully-funded scholarships to Mexico, Japan, Ecuador, Chile, India, China and the USA. These scholarships make us very well known.

6. What do you believe will be the future growth areas across your product range?

I believe there will be significant growth in the teenage market, especially in programmes that combine classes with sports activities. The demand for good quality residential facilities rather than host families will also continue to grow - even if most people will still opt for host families. I also believe the interest in Spanish will start to catch up with French and German.

was initially supplied to the visa officer, which can affect future visa applications by the student.

Rozo explained that visa-issuing procedures were becoming more difficult for many Anex members because a lot of Colombian people were trying to leave the country for good, due to the political situation in the country. Therefore, there were more visa requests overall and "[this] forces the embassies to be more selective and very strict about the real intentions of the traveller".

According to Rozo, the level of visa denials is currently highest at the US Embassy, which receives many applications for student visas from people who do not intend to study in the USA. She explained this was because it is no easier to apply for a tourist visa, which can take up to two years to obtain and for which there are greater restrictions on length of stay. □

Forgery scandal in China

IN A FRESH charge of corruption to be levelled at study abroad agencies in China, a Japanese newspaper has revealed allegations of document forgery and illegal entry of Chinese students into Japanese language learning institutions. This time, it is licensed agencies that are accused of malpractice.

The *Daily Yomiuri* revealed it had obtained a fake diploma in science, said to be issued by the Chinese Education Ministry. "The certificate, forged by a document forgery organisation in China, was purchased by a major international student agency in Beijing," reported the paper.

It explained that for potential language students to gain a certificate of status, which is needed for residence approval from Japan's Immigration Bureau, students

must submit documents showing the highest level of academic background; proof of Japanese language level; a guarantor's bank balance certificate; and a guarantor's employment certificate.

Quoting senior officials at study abroad agencies, it was claimed that some regional banks in China "are willing to issue a false deposit verification in exchange for a commission of about 7,000 yuan (US\$840)". Some agencies were said to provide bogus academic documents for a fee of 8,000 yuan (US\$967) or more, although the newspaper reported that the documents could also be purchased for as little as 500 yuan (US\$60), or 1,000 yuan (US\$121) for documents from more prestigious institutions.

There are at least 200 agencies in China that have been licensed by the Ministry of Education, in an effort to stamp out illegal operators that were accused of over-charging for services that they could not provide and using illegal business practices (see *Language Travel Magazine*, April 2001, page 14).

However, it is a moot point in China as to whether the distinction of having a licence or not offers any guarantee to students or language schools overseas about the quality of the services on offer (see *Language Travel Magazine*, July 2001, page 12). According to the *Daily Yomiuri*, "among [the] 46 agencies in Beijing, where they are under relatively strict supervision by the authorities, several agencies are handling fake documents".

The newspaper estimated that many Chinese students had already entered Japan using false documents and many of them were believed to be working there. The Japanese Embassy in Beijing confirmed that some Chinese agencies were involved in the forgery of documents. "We confirm the validity of the documents by interviewing visa applicants if they are suspicious," said a spokesperson. □

On the move



Valerie Richmond, Director of the Aspect International Language Academies

Vancouver school in Canada, is the latest President of English language teaching association, Capls. "We are working to ensure that the experience students have [in Canada] is educationally rewarding and enjoyable," she said.



Brian Brownlee has acquired the Anglo European School of English in Bournemouth, UK. Mr Brownlee

has a long track record in the language travel industry, having previously worked in senior management positions for a number of large organisations, including ELS Language Centers, Eurocentres and Aspect. He plans to maintain the small school atmosphere and approach at the Anglo European School in Bournemouth.



Julie Hutchinson has joined the Baselt Secretariat in the UK as Marketing and Communications

Manager, following many years working in education and business. "English language teaching is facing a very exciting and challenging time, and this newly created post indicates how rapidly Baselt is growing," said Ms Hutchinson.



English Australia has appointed Sue Blundell to the position of Executive Director and

Company Secretary. Ms Blundell has over 20 years of experience in the English language and education industry, a considerable number of which have been in senior management positions. Her most recent position was General Manager, International Programs at ACL in Sydney.



Tomoko Effie Ando has joined Poly Languages Institute, Los Angeles, USA, as the International

Recruitment Coordinator, a new position through which Poly maintains strong relationships with overseas agencies and students. With her background in international relations and skills in five languages, Ms Ando leads a multilingual team of agency liaisons. Poly is expanding its overseas recruitment programme with a personalised service for agencies and students.



Face to face

Each month, we profile the people from language schools who deal directly with agents, in order to give you the chance to get to know some of the people you work with.

Who are you?

Marie-Laure Lions-Olivieri, Director

Where do you work?

Campus International, Toulon, France

Why should agents choose to represent your school?

Our school is located in the heart of Provence; the "Var" is the sunniest *departement* (region) of France. Our school, brand-new and designed in a typical Provençal style, is located in the most attractive area of Toulon, facing the beaches and the watersports centres.

How does your school promote itself to agents?

We participate at the workshops "Maison de la France" and the Arels fair in Brighton, UK.

What percentage of your annual student intake comes through agents?

Only 25 per cent.

How has your school developed over the years?

We have a lot of very faithful partners who send us students on a regular basis and [students also come to us] via word-of-mouth recommendation.

What do you enjoy most about working in the language travel industry?

Every day it is wonderful to meet so many different nationalities and ways of thinking. I do not feel French very much, but international.

How do you believe your institution will develop in the future?

In 2001, 91.72 per cent of our students left Campus International very satisfied with their stay... I think it is a good sign for the future!