

# MEI~Relsa meets agents in Moscow

## Next issue

In our May issue, **Special Report** examines the evolution of the global language school business and **Direction** looks at how work experience placement agencies can help agents. **Feedback** finds out what students studying in Spain think about their study abroad experience and **Agency Survey** canvasses agencies in Mexico. **City Focus** visits Perth in Australia and **Destination** reports from England's Midlands and North. **Status** provides data from Canada.

Nineteen language schools from Ireland recently travelled to Russia to meet 56 Russian agents as part of an in-country workshop in Moscow organised by MEI~Relsa, in collaboration with the Irish Embassy in Moscow, Tourism Ireland and Enterprise Ireland.

According to Gill Nother at MEI~Relsa, the trip was a success, with Ireland's reputation 'as a country excelling in educational standards preceding us'. She added, 'Agents are always impressed by the involvement of the Irish Department of Education in regulating the English language school sector.'

As well as providing an opportunity to meet Irish schools face-to-face, the workshop allowed agents to learn more about visa issues, as a representative from the Embassy held a seminar and Q&A session. A representative from Tourism Ireland also



PHOTOGRAPH: MEI~RELSA

Swan Training Institute talks shop with Russian agents

gave seminars about touristic highlights of the country.

Nina Koltashova, from ITEC agency in Russia, said, '[Having] the visa office [representative] was essential - this enabled us to clarify many questions concerning visa application procedures.' She added, 'Our agency considers Ireland as one of the best educational destinations for Rus-

sians. It attracts students because of the price-quality [ratio].'

Tatyana Khromchenko, from Takt & Partners, added, 'The event was excellently organised. All the school representatives from Ireland were so friendly and the reception at the Irish Embassy was great!' Another in-country workshop in France is planned by MEI~Relsa later this year. □

## Industry issues - agents speak out

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**Q** What is your opinion/experience regarding the issue of direct (Internet) bookings and appropriate agency commission?



'This is a very difficult issue. I think it all comes down to the role and responsibilities of the parties involved. Internet bookings are a totally different ball game to ordinary school-agent agreements. The programme supplier (school) uses the Internet to provide their product information directly to the consumer. Why does the supplier want agent involvement in this situation? And why does the consumer want agent involvement? All schools and agents need to think about this carefully. An agent's role is different from one country to another, so each case needs to be carefully determined. Once schools and agents determine their responsibilities, then it is just a matter of website and system revision to accommodate all parties in the distribution system.'

**Yuki Yamashita, Global School**

**Information Network, Inc. (GSI), Japan**

'I have not made any headway with the issue of direct booking and appropriate agency commission. Actually, I feel very affected by direct bookings made through the Internet, because as an agency, we give students brochures and spend time giving them information and it can happen that the student goes and books directly with the school. It is very difficult to prove to the school that we have counselled the student first and most of the time we lose the commission. I am working with some schools that respect our agreement and when they receive a direct inquiry, they send it to us to follow up in order to continue the progress through us.'

**Cecilia Ayala de Ferreyra, FA Intercambios Estudiantiles, Colombia**

'Unlike other types of business, this one involves qualified and educated people seeking a higher education or better qualifications to prepare themselves for the job market. This means agency staff holding a certain educational level to be able to deal with all the issues that might arise and satisfactorily counsel clients. To discipline the market of the education industry, I would suggest that partners have links on their websites to agents' sites, and whenever a candidate requires information, he or she could be advised to contact the one or more agents in their area. There are usually institutions that do not accept direct bookings and, in my opinion, these are the ones we should be loyal to.'

**Maria Aparecida de Castro Barbo, High Connections Intercambio, Brazil**



## New website for Ialca

THE Italian agency association, Ialca, has launched its first website in order to promote the association among the Italian public and explain the benefits of using Ialca members.

As well as links to the 12 Ialca members' sites, students can find a guide on how to select a good language course abroad and also view the code of practice that Ialca members are committed to. Ialca President, Paolo Barilari, added, 'In the future, some tests for the most popular languages will be added to the website.'

Ialca members adopted a new code of practice this year, which explains the standard of professional service agreed upon. This incorporates honesty when advising clients and a high standard of professional knowledge and client care before, during and after a language course abroad.

Barilari explained that other plans for the Ialca website, www.ialca.it, include links to the Felca website and reports from Felca and Ialca meetings. □

## Agent complains about Arels fam trip

SPANISH agent, Francisco Fuentes, Director of United Languages in Madrid, Spain, writes of his experience last August on an Arels fam trip to Bournemouth.

'I am writing because I think [readers] should know something about the Arels Bournemouth fam trip that I attended. I reserved a place well in advance, at the cost of UK£130 (US\$210). Only the week before the workshop, I received an email from the school organising the trip confirming the hotel and our accommodation in twin rooms. They wrote that there was a possibility of getting a single room for an extra UK£30 (US\$49) per night. I immediately emailed Arels to complain about this and to say that an agent assumes he/she will be placed in a single room, unless travelling

with a colleague. I got no reply at all. I also emailed the school to say I wanted a single room.

After the trip from Brighton to Bournemouth, when we were packed on the minibus, we arrived at the hotel and the organiser asked who was going to be sharing with who. We were all so tired after a two-day workshop and two-and-a-half hours on the minibus, and we were asked to share with someone from another country we do not know at all.

Only myself and a Japanese agent got a single room. The rest were put in twins; they even split a couple from the same agency (mother and son) because there was an uneven number of men and women. Obviously, no one was happy with this. The organiser said she emailed everyone - yes, but only the week before.

I was not charged the single room supplement in the end, but only after intervention from the school when I checked out. I think not only the school organising the fam trip, but also Arels has a responsibility for this, and they should ensure all fam trips meet some standards. I really felt we were not treated professionally in respect of accommodation and I would not recommend the trip. However, I should mention that all school representatives were very attentive and made an effort to make us enjoy ourselves.'

*The organiser and Arels respond:* 'Naturally, we are sorry that Mr Fuentes was less than satisfied with some aspects of the fam trip, but we find it a little strange that he did not say anything at the time of the fam trip, that he should wait several months before saying anything, and that he has chosen not to contact us or the school direct.

Mr Fuentes booked a single room and this was reserved for him. The journey to Bournemouth from Brighton was by 25-seater coach. There were 18 passengers so the coach was hardly 'packed'. None of the agents on the fam trip expressed dissatisfaction either verbally or in feedback to Arels, and generally feedback indicates that agents find the fam trips a useful part of the Fair package and, at UK£130 (US\$210) for transport, accommodation for two nights and meals, good value. We will however keep these comments in mind.' □

### German Agency Survey

In our German agency survey in the February issue (see February 2003, pages 12-13), the number of agents who recognised the Arels marque was confused with the agents who recognised the Baselt name. In actual fact, 83 per cent of agents recognised the Arels name and 33 per cent of agents recognised the Baselt name.

### Smith English School

Smith English School in Edmonton, Canada was referred to as Smith School of English in our Destination feature in the February issue (pages 38-40). We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

## On the move



Study Group has appointed Jakob Ernberg (top) as Regional Sales Director, Rest of Asia. Based in Singapore, Mr Ernberg has extensive experience of international student recruitment in the region. Within the company, Erin McAndrew



(centre), who has worked with Study Group since 1999, has been appointed Regional Manager for Western Europe, with direct responsibility for marketing efforts in France, Italy and Spain. Lucy Greaves joins the European, Middle East and Africa department as Sales Development Manager. She will be creating and implementing new initiatives to support agents.



John Lin, of Welcome Tours in Taiwan, has been appointed the new President of Taiwanese agency associations, Tosa and Ieca (Taipei-based). He replaces



Albert Lee in his position, and Mr Lee (below) is taking on the roles of International Relations Officer at the associations. 'I will be more than happy to work closely with our colleagues from all over the world to service our students and members,' said Mr Lee.



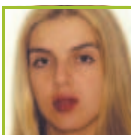
Michael Aulbach is the new Director of Did Deutsch-Institut in Munich, Germany. Dr

Aulbach has many years of experience teaching German as a foreign language and has worked for the German Academic Exchange Service (Daad) as a university lecturer in Senegal, promoting Germany as a study destination with the local Embassy at the same time. At Did, his aim is to maintain the high quality of German tuition at his school and promote Munich as an ideal place to learn German in Germany.



Gary Neale has returned to Aspect ILA as Regional Sales Manager for Western Europe,

having worked for the last two years as Sales and Marketing Manager for the LAL group of schools. He is looking forward to continuing the development of Aspect's strong commitment to agent sales.



## 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?

Pamela Caicedo, Marketing Manager.

### Where do you work?

Málaga ¡Sí! Spanish School, Málaga, Spain.

### Why and how did you start in the industry?

During my travels abroad while I was a student, I realised that I wanted to work offering other people the same experience. I completed my postgraduate education in Spain and two years ago, I joined Málaga ¡Sí!.

### Why should agents choose to represent your school?

We offer reliability, personal and friendly attention and a full range of courses and activities. Málaga ¡Sí! is one of the few organisations that is managed by young people. We also have the professional background of International Meetings (IM), the Swedish agency that owns the school.

### How does your school promote itself to agents?

With only three years in the market, we already have agents in Germany, England, Belgium, Norway, China and Sweden. To attract other agents we use web marketing, advertising, direct marketing, trade journals and visits to our personal contacts.

### What percentage of your annual student intake comes through agents?

Fifty-four per cent.

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

We want to remain as a high quality teaching and service-oriented institution. And we will keep working on our product development.