

Kosa tries to tackle industry issue

Next issue

In our May issue, **Special Report** looks at the issues agents need to consider regarding the best possible placement, while **Market Report** finds out about business trends in Italy last year. **Direction** looks at regional or special interest educator groupings and their services for agents and **Feedback** finds out what students studying in Spain think about their study abroad experience. **City Focus** visits Munich while **Destination** reports on Australia's appeal.

Earlier this year, the Korea Overseas Study Association (Kosa) issued many language schools with an ultimatum. Kosa President, Yong-Nae Kim, wrote to a number of language schools around the world saying that they must write back and agree not to work with agencies using unacceptable tactics, or face being listed on a "blacklist" of schools that Kosa members would not work with.

The association's efforts were aimed at stopping a process it referred to as "price dumping", whereby some agents discount tuition prices for students by taking a share of the commission they receive from a school and passing it on to students.

Another problem that Kosa is concerned about is student poaching, when some in-country agents persuade students beginning their course to get a refund and then re-book at the same language school,

leaving the original agent used out of pocket.

Kim wrote, "Some agencies, both at home and abroad, have recruited students in an unacceptable manner by discounting tuitions and offering excessive premiums. Thereupon, we witness that conscientious agencies... are suffering."

Since the time that schools initially received this letter, there has been dialogue between key national schools' associations and the Korean association, and all parties are attempting to resolve the problem in a reasonable way. Notably, the threat of schools being blacklisted has been averted, recounted Kelly Franklin, President of the American Association of Intensive English Programs (AAIEP) in the USA.

"We explained [to Kim] and he accepted our explanation that it's very difficult for schools to control what agents do with their

commission fees once we have paid them," said Franklin. "Of course, I think most of our members would agree, in principle at least, with the contention that [price dumping] is unfair. Yet if we are unable to control the practice in any way, we can't really be blamed or blacklisted if it occurs."

Other school associations, the Association of Recognised English Language Services (Arels), the Canada Language Council and English Australia (EA), are also liaising with Kosa to try and discuss the problems highlighted and explore what strategies are possible to improve the situation. The Federation of Education and Language Consultant Associations (Felca) is also involved.

Sue Blundell at EA commented, "EA appreciated that there are serious issues that Kosa is trying to deal with, but had concerns regarding the way they chose to address the problem." □

Industry issues - agents speak out

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Q Do you book flight tickets for your clients? Please explain why or why not, and if you do offer this service, what sorts of problems do you encounter?



"Yes, we do book tickets and yes, there are sometimes complications involved such as sending a ticket via a courier service and the ticket never arrives, or does so after the departure date! There have been situations when it has been impossible to get flights for the day the client has requested, and there can be an unrealistic expectation on the clients' behalf about the cost of the tickets. Also, for certain destinations, the tickets at a reasonable tariff [price] are always booked. However, we always manage one way or another to satisfy clients' demands. [Clients] expect to have the complete package, which includes flight. Even though they may end up purchasing their own flight, they expect us to know about the best routes and the various prices."
Annette Duerdoth, InterstudioViaggi, Italy



"I don't usually arrange flights although I can tell students who to go to. But in the case of [chaperoned] group tours, then yes, I make the flight bookings because I need to know that all of the students will be on the same flight. I reserve a number of seats with the airline and then confirm nearer the time. If I do not have enough, it can be a problem. Last year, I gave back 10 seats to the airline and then some more students started to book! So my sister travelled in the end as a second chaperone [with a second group]. I get special deals from the airline and I can pass on the benefits to the parents and students."
Adriana Cantu, Cursos de Idiomas en el Exterior, Argentina



"I work alone in my company and I mainly deal with professional people, in quite small numbers. Most

of these people come from the government and multinational groups of companies and they book through contracted travel agencies.

[However], I give advice as I often know which flights are most suitable for people. People don't always consider the time for the transport between the airport and the school and they are usually not aware of the lowest fares and the conditions. I have found several times that travel agencies book, or intend to book, expensive regular flights without informing my students about low priced tickets."

Berth Olofsson, Language Partner, Sweden



"We are not operating as a travel agency besides being an educational consultancy organisation. We have a travel agency that we work with, which provides special discounts for our students/trainees who are

travelling abroad. The agency is required to provide the shortest and cheapest fares possible."

Burcin Turkkan Kale, USEH-International Training & Education Services, Turkey



"I book flights if the student requires, and we deliver the ticket with all the other programme information, so it is easier for the student. It is always better for us too, as we make sure we advise the school of the flight details, so at the same time we are making sure the school or the host family know when the student is arriving. We use a travel agency that appears in all our information. [We find that] when students have made a choice of a country of destination [for their study trip], the route [availability] is not important."
Belen Moro, Lengua y Cultura Inglesa, Spain

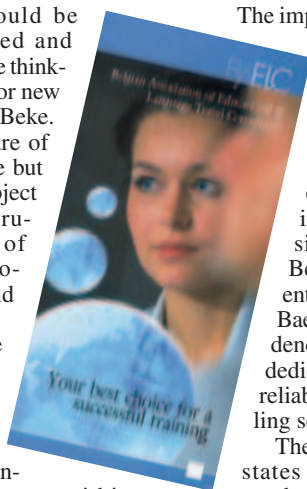
Official launch of Belgian agent association

AFTER many months of negotiations, the Belgian Association of Educational & Language Travel Consultants (Baelc) has been established, with three founding agency members dedicated to furthering their vision of quality counselling to study abroad clients. At the time of going to press, Baelc was expecting to be officially inaugurated by the Belgian government in April this year.

The three founding members are Nensi de Heer of Cosmolingua, Maurice Beke of ELS and Pascal Carré of Languages & Travel – IDP Education Australia. More agencies in Belgium will be invited to join Baelc in the future, and in the meantime, the association itself has joined the global Federation of Education and Language Consultant Associations (Felca).

“Baelc should be well established and structured before thinking of looking for new members,” said Beke. “Applications are of course welcome but they will be subject to thorough scrutiny in terms of experience, professionalism and quality.”

One of the key aims of Baelc is to regulate the profession of education and language travel agents within Belgium, with the aim of improving quality assurance. Beke hopes to see “swindlers eliminated from this serious business”.



The importance of using professional advisers will also be stressed to consumers in Belgium, as will “international communication as an essential part of one’s individual and professional development”. Beke said he hoped clients would recognise the Baelc quality label as evidence of legal businesses dedicated to accurate and reliable education counselling services to students.

The new Baelc brochure states that all association members are also able to deal with a range of requests within the realm of education travel, from accommodation and transport to visa advice. □

On the move



Vince Cooper has joined British Study Centres as Principal of its new London school, which

opened in February this year. Formerly Vice-Principal of Stanton School of English, Mr Cooper is looking forward to the challenge. “It’s a really exciting project, a brand new school in the centre of London,” he said.



Elena Bliman has been appointed as an International Department Manager in

Educacentre Russian language school in St Petersburg. She will be responsible for Russian studies, visa support and accommodation for foreign students. Since 1999, Ms Bliman has been a part of an experimental educational programme, combining Russian and US styles of education.



Jill Sieff has resumed her role as Principal of Hampstead School of English in London, UK. A

founding partner and Principal since 1977, Ms Sieff has spent the last two years developing and implementing a tailor-made computer system for the school. “I am delighted to be able to devote more time to the school’s day-to-day operations and personally welcome our visiting agents,” she said.



David Rowson (top) has been appointed UK Director of Embassy CES, the English



Language Training division of Study Group. Formerly Principal of Embassy CES in

Cambridge, UK, Mr Rowson brings a wealth of practical experience to his new role. He comments, “I am looking forward to building on the success of Embassy CES in the UK by developing still further our levels of teaching excellence.”

Geoff White (below) has been appointed as Queensland Area Sales Manager for Embassy CES/Martin College in Brisbane, Australia. Mr White started working for Study Group in 1992 first as a teacher at Martin College and then in the international marketing department. He said, “My new job involves looking after education agents with offices in Australia, plus many overseas students studying at Embassy CES [who] want to apply to Martin College.”

Chilean and Argentinean agents visit NZ

EDUCATION New Zealand decided to focus on two countries that supply moderate numbers of students into the country for its first fam trip of the year. Two agents from Chile and two from Argentina toured the country in February, visiting 15 institutions and getting to see some of the highlights of New Zealand.

Stuart Boag at Education New Zealand explained that it is hoped that commercial relations between these countries and New Zealand will improve as a result of the fam trip. “Both agents and institutions are far better informed as a result of this visit as to the opportunities that students can find in the country,” he said.

Boag added that a delegation of education officials from Chile visited New Zealand last year, and commercial interest in New Zealand is growing in both countries. The 10-day visit “sparked a lot of interest in New Zealand, as student numbers from both of these countries are currently quite modest”, he said. □

Agency of the month



Neodream Overseas Education

In a new series to appear in *Language Travel Magazine*, we will be asking a different language teaching institution each month to nominate one of their preferred agencies or agent partners, and to explain why this person/company is worthy of their nomination.

This month, Worldwide School of English in New Zealand nominates Neodream Overseas Education in Korea.



Cleve Brown, Director of the school, explains why:

“I have a lot of great agents in many different countries and who to choose is difficult. Probably in a country that not many people will choose first up, so it is Korea.

A company called Neodream in Chonbuk Province, run by Mr Harrison Jang. He is loyal, consistent and dedicated, especially to New Zealand, which is his favourite country. He offers excellent pre-departure service and also does a lot of follow up with the students on their return. He doesn’t just forget about them.

Every time I visit he arranges for me to meet parents of current students so they can see the owner of the school that their children are studying at and receive reports about them. All his students are very well counselled and prepared for their study and life in New Zealand. Whenever we have a problem with one of his students, which is very rare, he is very willing and able to help. He never shies away from offering constructive advice nor seeking it from me. In all, a great agent and indeed a good friend.”