

# World of workshops

The workshop arena presents many choices for agents, who expect good business opportunities and networking potential from an event. *Language Travel Magazine* talks to agents about the various events they attend and provides a guide to some of the key workshops of the year.

**W**orkshops are a hotbed of industry exchange, potential partnerships and, of course, news and opinion from others in the business. Many agents feel that it is essential to attend at least one or two workshops in the year and they are considered by many to be an essential forum in which to meet institutions and fellow professionals.

Alfredo Spinola of Brazilian agency, Wind Internacional, says that he attends workshops because of "the search for new products, the opportunity to renew long-term [relationships] and to get hot news about the market". Alexandra Galindo at Global Connection in Colombia agrees with these central points. "In most cases, we make very good contacts for our industry," he says.

Agents decide which events to attend based on a number of factors. Chiefly, the location of the workshop and the range of institutions attending are crucial determinants. "[I decide] based on the cost-benefit ratio," says Spinola. "I try to select those [events that



The format of the Alphe workshops has been commended by agents

PHOTOGRAPH: HOTOHOUSE MEDIA LTD.

ALL PRICES QUOTED ARE INCLUSIVE OF TAX AND MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. ATTENDANCE FIGURES ARE BY COMPANY NOT DELEGATE

## The Arels International Language Fair

### Price for agents

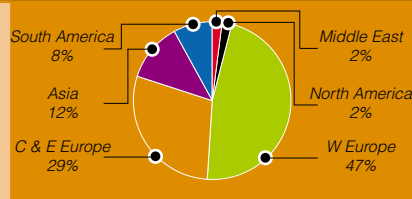
The agents' "early bird" discounted rate was UK£110 (US\$162), which includes two nights accommodation in a Hilton hotel and lunch on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, as well as attendance at the drinks reception and gala dinner on the Tuesday evening. The "early bird" booking deadline was 24 May 2002

### Cheapest price available for schools

The educators' discounted rate was

UK£1,550 (US\$2,276), which includes lunch on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, and the drinks reception and gala dinner on Tuesday. The cheapest rate with accommodation (two nights B&B) and lunches/gala dinner is UK£1,720 (US\$2,526). Arels members are entitled to a further discount. Educators' "early bird" booking deadline was Friday 12 April 2002

### Agents by world region of origin 2001



### No. of agents and schools at last workshop

Agencies 251  
Educators 205

### Other activities organised

Ten different fam trips; international conference; newcomers' welcome; reception; gala dinner

### Details of next event

August 27-29 2002  
Hilton Brighton Metropole Hotel, Brighton, UK

Organised by Arels

## Study English in Australia (SEA)

### Price for agents

Agents received free registration and participation at the SEA workshop in 2002, including three nights accommodation, meals for the duration of the workshop and transfer from Brisbane Airport to the Brisbane Sheraton Hotel

### Cheapest price available for schools

The cheapest price available for schools in 2002 was AUS\$2,860 (US\$1,625) including tax

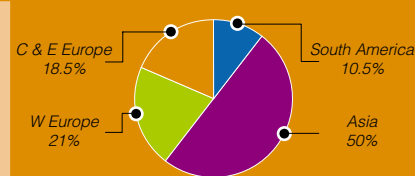
### No. of agents and schools at last workshop

Agencies 40  
Educators 49

### Other activities organised

Information seminars with speakers Alyson Moore from English Australia; Rebecca Cross from Australian Education International; Glenys Merrifield from the National ELT

### Agents by world region of origin 2002



Accreditation Scheme; the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs; the Australian Tourist Commission.

River cruise dinner; additional dinner at a choice of venue; Aussie barbecue. Add-on tours arranged by state and territory branches after the workshop

### Details of next event

To be advised. Most likely to be held during 2004

Organised by English Australia

are] not expensive and which may really have new potential providers. It is not worth meeting only the schools we already know and deal with." In Taiwan, Albert Lee, of International Education Foundation, points out that the dates of workshops can also be a decisive factor. Aside from the quality and range of schools attending an event, Lee says he likes to attend a number of events in one trip if possible. "Alphe in London, Arels in Brighton and MEI in Ireland are a classic example," he says, pointing to the three autumnal workshops that take place in the UK and Ireland during late August and early September.

Workshop dates and locations vary widely, with events now taking place in Asia, North America, Europe and Australasia, although there are currently not many events in South America. Galindo in Colombia attended Icef's Miami workshop this year and also plans to attend the Alphe workshop in London. Typically, agents travel far afield for events they consider worthwhile.

Next year, the International Association of Language Centres (Ialc) Agents' Workshop is taking place in Mexico, giving agents in the region the opportunity to attend an event closer to home. Each year, a different member of Ialc hosts the annual workshop, which is only open to Ialc member schools.

As the market matures and higher education and secondary-level institutions become more acquainted with international marketing and the workshop circuit, it is likely that workshops will grow in size and new events will emerge. Some agents say this is not a bad thing, as long as, in the words of Galindo, "they are professional and they select carefully

## Information overload

Karel Klusak, writing on the *sucsess.com* website, calls for the standardisation of information about courses and products for agents attending workshops. He points out that with many events to attend, the sea of information that agents end up with is overwhelming. "At the end of August, many [agents] flock to London for Alphe, then go to Arels in Brighton and those with more time on their hands will fly to Dublin afterwards for MEI~Relsa," he says. "Then you have Alphe Asia, Fedele

[in Spain], the Berlin Workshop, there is a Canadian workshop as well and an Icef event in the USA."

With so much information to keep up-to-date with from existing and potential new partners that agents meet at these events, clarity of information is important in a school's brochure. Agents need a clear pricing structure and don't want to be forced to ask extra questions, such as, "does the host family provide towels?, will the host mother do the student's laundry?," says Klusak. Queries should all be answered in the brochure.

"Secondary schools are a good example [of institutions not providing enough information]," says Klusak. "Not too many of them provide exact information on mid-term holidays, actual number of lessons, subjects etc. It is obvious that their brochures are made for a domestic audience. Universities are not much better."

While Klusak argues that this necessary information should be sent to an agent prior to a workshop, "so that [they] then would have time to concentrate on business instead of gathering information

which is not included in brochures", there is another plan afoot that could aid agents in their information analysis. The Federation of Education and Language Consultants Associations (Felca) discussed an idea with global educator group, Gaela, at its AGM last year of a standard format questionnaire that agents could send to schools each year. If the idea were developed, schools and agencies would be able to save time by always dealing with exactly the same information.

## The Icef Berlin workshop

### Price for agents

Free participation for agents with three nights accommodation

### Cheapest price available for schools

€3,944 (US\$3,596) for one person, inclusive of 16 per cent tax, if booked prior to February 1 2002

### No. of agents and schools at last workshop:

Agencies 378  
Educators 217

### Other activities organised

Buffet reception; market intelligence seminars. Tours to Potsdam and Berlin at extra cost

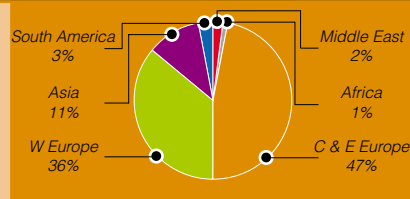
### Details of next event

November 11-12, 2002  
Hotel Inter-Continental, Berlin, Germany

### Other workshops in other locations

In 2002: California Workshop, Los

### Agents by world region of origin 2001



Angeles, USA (September 13-14); Tokyo Workshop, Tokyo, Japan (October 21-22); Americas Workshop, Miami, USA (December 14-15). In

UK (May 9-10); Moscow Workshop, Moscow, Russia (March 30-31)

**Organised by** Icef

2003: Asia Workshop, Singapore (February 25-26); China Workshop, Beijing, China (March 15-16); Istanbul Education Exchange, Istanbul, Turkey (April 14-15); London Education Exchange, London,

## The Alphe UK workshop

### Price for agents

There is no charge for agents to attend the Alphe workshops. All agent participants receive three free nights accommodation in the Victoria Park Plaza Hotel

### Cheapest price available for schools

UK£2,042.50 (US\$2,999) for a shared table booked by first "early bird" booking deadline. Association members receive a further discount. Accommodation costs start at

UK£70 (US\$103) per night at Thistle Victoria Hotel

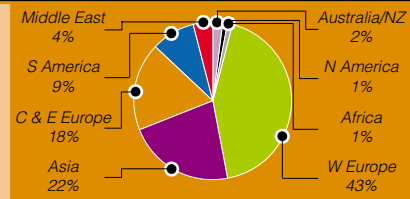
### No. of agents and schools at last workshop

Agencies 137  
Educators 95

### Other activities organised

Welcome reception on the Friday evening; Saturday evening event at Lombard's restaurant in London; free

### Agents by world region of origin 2001



coach transfer to the Arels International Language Fair in Brighton. Gaela and Felca meetings precede the workshop

Alphe USA workshop in Las Vegas, USA (May 22-24 2003)

**Organised by** Hothouse Media

**Details of next event**  
August 23-25 2002  
Victoria Park Plaza Hotel, London, UK

### Other workshops in other locations

Alphe Asia workshop in Phuket, Thailand (October 29-31 2002);



PHOTOGRAPH: MEI~RELSA

MEI~Relsa's venue for this year's workshop

the institutions and the kinds of agents that they are going to invite". However, Lee believes that, while competition is healthy, "Ultimately, Darwin's law will prevail and only the most competitive events will survive."

The range of participants is likely to expand, however, as workshop organisers realise that agents and consultants want to extend their product range through workshops, reflecting the demands of their clientele. At Study English in Australia (SEA), organised in April this year in Australia, an additional workshop, Study in Australia, was also organised to give agents an opportunity to meet higher education providers. The Alphe workshops embrace all education sectors. Jane Gilham, an organiser of the three events, stresses that the Alphe workshops were conceived at the outset to enable agents to meet language providers and higher education providers, hence the acronym, Alphe (Agents, Language Providers and Higher Education). The marketing of workshops on the Internet also assures a greater mix of participants, as institutions unfamiliar with

the international education arena learn of new opportunities for promotion.

Regardless of location or content, workshops generally follow the same format, with agents booking 20- or 30-minute appointments with schools that they are interested in meeting. Antonio Valadas of Multiway in Portugal says he would welcome a change in format in the future. He says he would like to see, as an alternative to the one-to-one meetings, "schools, or even agents, running a full-hour session where anyone interested could come and find out more about what interests them". Gavin Dowling, Director of Living Spanish in the UK, adds that he would also like to see "less restriction on the time spent with schools". A more flexible approach seems to be welcomed by agents around the world. Anne Wittig at NRCSA in the USA comments, "The format of Alphe is one of my favourites – allowing agents to sign up for their own appointments and not trying to arrange them ahead of time which is time consuming for everyone."

## The Ialc Agents' Workshop

### Price for agents

The Ialc workshop charges agents €106 (US\$100) to attend, which includes two nights hotel accommodation, usually in the same venue as the event, and meals and entertainment during the entire workshop period

### Cheapest price available for schools

Ialc members only can attend the annual agent's workshop and the price of attendance is included

within Ialc's membership subscription fee

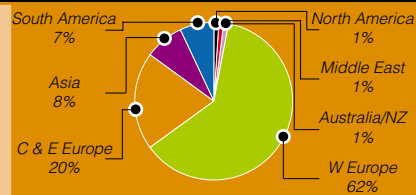
### No. of agents and schools at last workshop

Agencies 78  
Educators 45

### Other activities organised

In Malaga this year: party at hosting schools Malaca Instituto and La Brisa; tour of city; gala dinner with flamenco

### Agents by world region of origin 2001



performance; talk on environment by the agency Studiosus; fam trips to Madrid, Nerja, Salamanca and Alicante. Each year, there is a

welcome reception; a gala dinner with a cultural theme; tour of the city and hosting school. Fam trips are sometimes available

### Details of next event

May 2-4 2003  
Cuernavaca, Mexico  
to be hosted by Centro Bilingue/Universidad Internacional

**Organised by** Ialc

## The MEI~Relsa Agent Workshop

### Price for agents

There is no charge to attend the workshop. The workshop and fam trips are fully hosted by MEI~Relsa. There is only a small fee for second representatives. Agents are offered two nights free accommodation in Fitzpatrick's Hotel in Bunnratty Village. For those agents who attend the fam trips, accommodation is also provided during these trips.

### Cheapest price available for schools

Approx €1,000 (US\$944), depending on the number of participating schools.

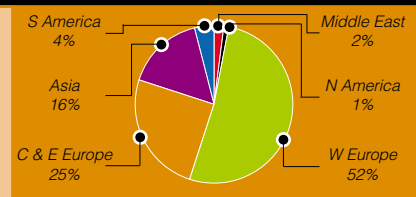
### No. of agents and schools at last workshop:

Agencies 51  
Educators 35

### Other activities organised

Pre-workshop fam trip of some Dublin schools; post-workshop fam trips with

### Agents by world region of origin 2001



options of Cork and Limerick or Galway and Clare, as well as other Dublin schools. Tour of Shannon area and a medieval banquet in the

evening. Banquet at Dromoland Castle with Riverdance-style performance.

### Details of next event

September 2 2002  
Dromoland Castle, County Clare, Ireland.  
(Fam trips

commencing 31 August, continuing after workshop to 5 September)

**Organised by** MEI~Relsa

Aside from designated appointments, some workshops also offer agents add-on tours or fam trips, to enable them to get to know schools and regions in the country. While agents do not cite these events as central to

their decision-making process, they are often a useful and cost-effective way for them to visit schools in the country where they are staying. As Wittig points out, “[At NRCSA] we require on-site evaluations of every school we work

with, so just contact at a workshop doesn’t fulfil all our requirements to work with a new school.” As such, fam trips can be a good introduction to potential business partners. At CEC Network, Cailey Crawford, Director of Events, says that such tours are sometimes organised by schools for agents outside of fair hours, although visits are not directly organised by CEC Network.

All workshops also have social events, which are usually included in the workshop package for schools and agents. These occasions can be crucial networking opportunities for agencies and schools outside of the appointment schedule, and most workshop participants attend these events.

Anna Mical and Małgorzata Skrzypowska, of Profile agency in Poland, report that they

## The CEC Network Agent Fair

### Price for agents

There is no fee for agents to attend the CEC Network Agent Fair. Three nights accommodation at the Westin Hotel in Ottawa is included in the workshop package, as are all meals during the fair.

### Cheapest price available for schools

Open only to CEC Network members, schools pay CAN\$3,423 (US\$2,227) including tax for the first participant, and CAN\$1,658

(US\$1,078) including tax for a second participant

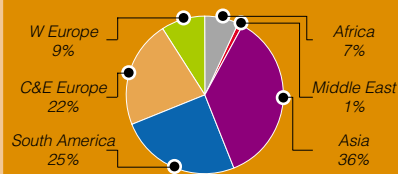
### No. of agents and schools at last workshop:

Agencies 117  
Educators 100

### Other activities organised

Networking lunches; welcome reception; gala dinner on second night. Schools will also be using an

### Agents by world region of origin 2001



innovative online appointment scheduler and each school interested in meeting an agency will send the company an email with a link to their

private interactive online scheduler. Agents are required to have a minimum of 15 appointments made with schools before arriving in Canada

### Details of next event

December 4-5 2002,  
Ottawa Congress Centre, Ottawa, Canada

**Organised by** CEC Network

like the idea of attending a workshop in a different place each year, so that they can get to know a new region or country. They also point out that meeting school representatives allows them to “assess their competences”. They con-

tinue, “Sometimes we can also imagine how these schools [operate] – if they are professional, or have a good atmosphere.”

Because Profile is a relatively new agency, in its third year of business, Mical says that

they establish a lot of new partnerships at each workshop. “About 25 to 40, depending on the size of a workshop,” she says. Françoise Salavert, of Univia Plus agency in France, is more typical when she estimates that three or four new partnerships result from each event she attends. For established agencies, this can represent an overhaul of an agency’s product range at each workshop. Valadas in Portugal says, “[I make] somewhere between two and five [new partnerships]. I make many contacts that I am not interested in following through.”

The workshop, then, is just the beginning of a business relationship. But this is evidence that each event presents many opportunities for both agencies and schools as they seek to forge relationships that will let them to stay competitive and in tune with market demand. □

## The Fedele Annual Meeting

### Price for agents

Agents are invited to the Fedele Workshop free of charge, as part of Fedele’s agreement with Turespaña

### Cheapest price available for schools

The cheapest price for state-run institutions is €600 (US\$566) for the first participant and €500 (US\$472) for the next participant. Privately-run institutions pay €1,000 (US\$944) for the first participant and €900 (US\$850) for the second participant

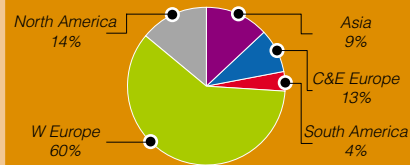
### No. of agents and schools at last workshop:

Agencies 120  
Educators 55

### Other activities organised

Post-workshop fam trips are arranged for agents to allow them to visit schools in different regions of Spain. For the 2002 Fedele Workshop this September, each region is offering its own tour and

### Agents expected, by world region of origin, 2002



agents have to decide which tour they would like to attend. A cocktail reception is also organised for all participants on the first evening

### Details of next event

September 7-8 2002  
Vitoria, Spain  
Agents have already been selected and invited for this year’s annual meeting. Agencies are chosen based upon consultation with all members of Fedele and with the final advice of Fedele’s secretariat

**Organised by** Fedele