

Fedele's philosophy

Spain's national group of regional schools' associations, Fedele, is now three years old. FRANCISCO PÉREZ NAVARRO, President of Fedele, answers our questions about the evolution of the association and describes its efforts to put the Spanish language teaching industry on the map.

Fact box



Full name: *Federación Española de Asociaciones de Escuelas de Español para Extranjeros*

Year established: 1999

Number of members: 39

Type of members: *private schools specialising in teaching Spanish for foreigners*

Association's main role: *promoting Spanish in Spain*

Membership criteria: *membership of a local association and accreditation from Ceele or Centro Acreditado Instituto Cervantes*

Government recognition: *Fedele has an agreement with Turespaña (Spanish Tourism Board) and is permanently in contact with the Cervantes Institute, the Ministries of Education and Culture and the Institute for Foreign Trade*

Code of practice: *no*

Complaints procedure: *in progress*

Agent workshops/fam trips: *annual workshop*

Contact details: *C.N 340, Km 189,6 - 29600 Marbella, (Málaga), Spain
Tel: +34 952 834 782 Fax: +34 952 920 215
Email: info@fedeleSpain.com*

Q How is Fedele growing as a school association?

A The Spanish Federation of Associations of Spanish Schools for Foreigners (Fedele) was founded on the initiative of the regional school associations of Andalusia, Castile & León and Madrid. The Basque association was incorporated afterwards. Spanish language schools in other regions, such as Catalonia, Valencia, Murcia, the Balearic Islands and the Canary Islands, are working on setting up similar [regional] associations, which, once consolidated, can also become full members of Fedele. During the coming year at least two other associations [are due to] become members of Fedele.

Q What was Fedele's most important achievement last year?

A Last year, Fedele set up agreements with Turespaña – the Spanish tourism body – concerning joint participation in promotional activities, such as attendance at professional industry fairs. We had negotiations with the Cervantes Institute concerning issues such as quality standards inspections and refresher courses for Spanish language teachers, and made progress in the area of promotion. We had our third Fedele annual meeting in Madrid and exhibited at a stand at Salon de l'Étudiant in Paris last November.

Q Did members suffer any downturn in business because of the effects of September 11?

A Very little. Across the Fedele member-

ship, overall, a decrease of between eight and 10 per cent was noted among member schools.

Q What are the main goals of Fedele for the future?

A Among the main objectives of Fedele are plans to represent the Spanish as a second language teaching sector in [collaboration] with the Spanish government, as well as to defend the commercial and professional interests of our member schools.

Q How does Fedele work with education consultants and agents?

A As part of an agreement signed with Turespaña, the first Fedele annual meeting was held in October 1999 in Estepona, in Málaga, with the participation of 80 agents and 48 schools. The second meeting was held in October 2000 with 100 agents and 60 schools, and last year's meeting, held in October 2001 in Madrid with 120 agents and 60 schools, followed this. These annual meetings, which have grown in size each year, give agents the opportunity to meet Fedele members face-to-face and discuss business opportunities. This year, the next annual meeting will be held in September in Vitoria, in the Basque Country. Each year, Fedele decides which agents will be invited to our workshop based on the interests of its members.

Q What accreditation certificates are schools expected to have in order to join Fedele?

A All Fedele schools have either Ceele

accreditation [operated by the Universidad de Alcalá de Henares] or Centro Acreditado del Instituto Cervantes recognition. Ceele was established in 1999 as an accreditation scheme and is now widely recognised inside Spain and starting to be recognised in countries outside Spain. The other accreditation scheme is managed by the Cervantes Institute, which began its first inspections last year. The schemes differ, but both have standards that schools must adhere to relating to aspects such as teaching quality, academic activity, classroom equipment, administrative organisation and a school's publicity procedures.

Q What are Fedele's plans for the coming year?

A We are working towards the creation of a Spanish national standard regulating the academic activity of centres teaching Spanish as a foreign language. This is one of the most urgent and necessary goals to be attained [in our industry]. We are also working on a common promotional plan together with Turespaña, which will involve brochures, a publicity campaign in the press, participation in professional fairs and workshops, fam trips for agents and journalists and a Fedele webpage. Through these activities, we hope to raise the profile of Fedele as a national body representing reputable Spanish language providers. Of course, we continue to look forward to the Fedele annual meeting each year, as an opportunity for the federation to come together and also to meet with education consultants and agents from around the world.