

Argentina's industry suffers

Next issue

In our April issue, **Special Report** examines the latest worldwide developments in accreditation standards for language courses, while **Market Report** finds out how German language schools fared last year. **Direction** assesses the advantages of using agents based in the destination country to book a language course. **Feedback** finds out what students studying in South Africa think of their experience and **Agency Survey** assesses the Brazilian market in 2001.

Since December last year, when the IMF froze US\$1.3 billion in aid to Argentina because its government could not rein in budget over-spending, things have looked gloomy for many industries in the country, not least language travel agents. According to many, business has all but dried up, while students still able to afford to learn a language abroad do so for long-term study and/or work overseas. Speaking of the effects of the current situation on the country's language travel industry, Marcella Serra, of Passport agency in Argentina, said, "The impact is tremendous. It will be very difficult for people to have [enough] dollars to pay for their courses [overseas] since salaries are in pesos, which have been devalued by 40 per cent so far." The value of the peso has crumbled and the Argentinean government – which saw five



PHOTOGRAPH: ASSOCIATED PRESS

Widespread protests hit Argentina as the economy collapsed

presidents in just a few weeks – has limited cash withdrawals to US\$250 per week per person and converted some accounts into fixed-term deposits, meaning that savers cannot access their money for at least a year. Serra acknowledged that more people are thinking about

leaving Argentina and trying to find another country where they can work, but finances will mean that "only rich families will have the money to send their children abroad", she said. For those Argentinean students who had already booked language programmes last year, there were also

Agent questionnaire



Name of Agent: Brian Boubek
 Position: President & CEO
 Name of Company: Cultural Experiences Abroad (CEA)
 Location: Tempe, AZ, USA
 Other branches: Argentina, Spain, Australia, Costa Rica, England, France, Ireland, Italy and Mexico
 No. of staff: 67
 Average no. of students per year: 1,000

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. How many institutions do you represent and in how many countries?

CEA works with 19 institutions in nine countries: Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, England, France, Ireland, Italy, Mexico and Spain.

2. Please tell us about your client profile.

Most of our students are currently studying in US and Canadian universities. We do allow seniors in high school to apply for our programmes as well. Our students range in age from 18 to 26 year old. Paris, London, Madrid, Seville and Florence are our most popular destinations and the autumn is our most popular term. Most of our students study language, art, history and culture. However, many of our programmes offer courses in other areas.

3. What do you expect 2002 to bring in terms of the level and nature of student bookings, in comparison with last year?

For 2002, we anticipate further growth in the numbers of students

wishing to study abroad with CEA. After the attacks in the USA on September 11, we anticipated a slight drop-off. However, our numbers continue to be on track and showed similar growth in late 2001 to the previous year. Our students seem more resolved than ever to go forward with their plans.

4. How do your clients form an opinion about which country they want to study in?

Most of our students come to us with an idea of where they want to study. Once they contact CEA, our programme advisers – all of whom have studied abroad – help them decide which destination, programme and term best fits their needs if they are at all unsure about where or when they wish to study. Our programme advisers continue to work with our students, from applicant to alumni, to ensure student satisfaction.

5. What role does the Internet play in your business?

Although we have collateral materials, including a comprehensive 200-plus page catalogue describing our programmes, we use our website to market our programmes and promote study abroad, and to keep our students, faculty, families and staff updated about international events, health and safety abroad, travel opportunities, financial aid and various scholarship opportunities.

6. Can you give us an example of a successful product that you represent, which is popular with your clients?

All of our programmes have been wildly successful with our students. Our unique approach allows us to fit our programmes to each individual student by giving them numerous options, from factors such as term of study to housing preference. Included in the price of our courses are airport pick-up, orientations, excursions, transcripts and supportive on-site staff. Overall, the exceptional quality and reasonable prices of our programmes has led to CEA's success.

problems. "Paying for the existing booked courses has been an ordeal, because we cannot transfer money abroad," related Serra.

Veronica Cartagenova, of agency Northampton Education Consultants, estimated that her agency had experienced a 20 per cent drop in business since December 5. "We cannot buy foreign currency and we cannot transfer money abroad," she explained. "For those clients interested in travelling to Australia, for example, we are only working with those schools that accept credit card payments."

Agent Valentina Gentili, of Amadeo Gentili Turismo, said that her agency was receiving no clients at all. "We don't think that the situation will improve for at least six months," she told *Language Travel Magazine* in January. And Francisco Guinzau, of Tradfax Cultural Brasileira, was equally bleak in his outlook. "The only purpose of students going abroad is just to learn and stay there," he said.

In Northampton's case, payment procedures to Canada and the USA were unaffected because the company held accounts in each country. Cartagenova added, "Canada [is] the number-one destination since it has lower tuition rates and no traces of terrorism." Serra pointed to Australia as being popular with her clients last year, but she warned that the new visa regulations (see *Language Travel Magazine*, September 2001, pages 6-7), which require three months of bank statements testifying to financial solvency and capability, mean future enrolments are in doubt.

Cartagenova added that courses requested by clients were typically year-long programmes, such as diploma or Master's. □

Clarification

In the January 2002 issue of *Language Travel Magazine*, in our City Focus article, Graham Simpson of Oxford English Centre was wrongly credited as being from UTS Oxford English Centre. We would like to apologise for any inconvenience caused.

FDSV on quality drive

GERMAN agency association, FDSV, is emphasising its quality commitments to the industry with a new membership drive.

Joachim Pitsch, International Spokesperson for the association, told *Language Travel Magazine*, "FDSV is actively looking for new members as we want to incorporate as many serious and experienced study tour operators as possible. [We aim] to mediate the importance of our code of conduct to both the customer and the entire industry."

Pitsch said that another revised aim of the association was to persuade more Germans to study abroad. A Hamburg-based research institute, Opaschowsky, had, he said, conducted a survey which showed that while 14 million Germans think about learning a language every year, only up to

150,000 actually embark on a study abroad experience.

Combating the existence of illegal or unprofessional agencies is a further aim for this year, as well as continuing involvement with the European standardisation project (see *Language Travel Magazine*, October 2001, page 12). "We want companies or individually-trading persons... to obey ethical rules and withdraw from unfair competition," said Pitsch.

He claimed that one motivation for FDSV's plans has been the results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa), by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Pisa compared "knowledge and skills for life" across 32 countries for the 2000 survey, and Germans at primary level did not fare well. □



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?

Alexander Soukharev, Director.

Where do you work?

In the Faculty of Philology, Centre for International Education, at St Petersburg State University in Russia.

Why and how did you start in the industry?

The centre was opened in 1993 to send Russian students abroad for language courses first. Since 1996, the centre has also worked as a marketing department for the Faculty of Philology. We market the Russian language courses and BA, MA and PhD courses in language and literature.

Why should agents choose to represent your school?

We [are] one of the top qualified universities, the oldest in Russia.

What do you believe are the challenges facing your school in the future?

We are still recovering from the 1998 economic crisis and how successful we will be depends on the next two to three years.

How does your school promote itself to agents?

I prefer to call them partners. Agents generally sell the product and this is too simple. We try to build more complex relations with our partners. They find us through the website, brochures, fairs, international conferences or alumni.

What percentage of your annual student intake comes through agents?

60 to 70 per cent.

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

We are planning several new classes, including video classes.

On the move



Clare McKinley, Marketing Coordinator at Oxford Brookes University, has become the new

Chairperson of Baselt in the UK. Ms McKinley hopes that Baselt will move into a position of pre-eminence in student recruitment. "Baselt will become the partner of choice for facilitating student recruitment, training and services, quality control and consultancy within the state educational sector," she said.



Peter Kruyt will assume the position of Director General of Fiyto on a full-time basis this

year, taking over from Peter de Jong. Mr Kruyt is a 41-year-old Dutchman, married with three children, based in Gouda, the Netherlands. He was previously Head of Corporate Marketing at Goudse Insurance Company, and he has attended several Fiyto conferences and WYSTC trade fairs.



Tim Newton has taken up the position of Principal at Aspect Sydney in Australia and is involved in

setting up this new school with the International School of Business and Technology, which will incorporate English language with management and IT. Mr Newton has extensive experience in running English language schools and has done so in Moscow and Mexico City. His valuable knowledge will help establish a stronger presence for Aspect in Australia.



MEI-Relsa has appointed Gillian Nother as its new Manager. In her previous role as Education and

Training Officer at MEI-Relsa, Ms Nother produced a framework for teacher development under the Irish government grant-aided "Skillnets" initiative. She sees her new position as an opportunity to further develop benefits for membership and to continue to promote Ireland as the quality location for learning English.



Jenny Hannan has taken up the position of General Manager at Insearch, UTS, in

Sydney, Australia, leaving Billy Blue School. "Billy Blue Schools taught me about organisational change management, quality and accountability, and enabled me to move to a wider work platform," said Ms Hannan.