

Icef Online deemed a success

Over 750 agents and schools have applied to join Icef Online in the nine months since its launch in November last year. Markus Badde, Chief Executive Officer of Icef, said, "We've been fortunate to receive strong support from the industry, as you can see from our membership numbers. Quite a few agency associations have encouraged their members to join. We are pleased with the progress to date."

Icef Online is a web-based platform for agents and schools to do business with each other and was officially launched during the annual Icef workshop in Berlin last year (see *Language Travel Magazine*, March 2007). The system currently has 400 agents registered from 72 countries, as well as 364 schools from 39 countries.

Since its inception, the system has introduced new features such as enhanced search and navigation capabilities and the ability



to email more than one person at the same time. Badde said that more developments were in the pipeline. "Further developments planned for the coming months include a booking engine that will allow agents to easily book and manage student enrolments with provider members and an online multiple currency payment gateway that will make it easier and cheaper for agents and providers to transfer and track student fees and commission payments."

Arlene Spencer from Fulton Montgomery Community College State University of New York in Johnstown, NY, USA, said that she found Icef Online to be an easy way to make agent contacts. "I have tracked at least five enrolments through this service in a short amount of time and that has proven to be very successful for the little amount of time and effort I took to set up my profile and send out letters to prospective agents." ●

EC acquires first US language school

LANGUAGE school chain, EC, which has English language schools in Malta, the UK and South Africa, has recently branched into the USA with its acquisition of the Olin Center in Boston, MA.

The school will now be known as EC Boston and offers a range of English courses including academic preparation, business and junior programmes, including a new multi-destination programme involving EC schools in their other destinations of London, Cambridge, Brighton, Cape Town and Malta.

Chief Executive Officer of EC, Andrew Mangion, said, "I am thrilled with the addition of our latest centre. The acquisition of the Olin Center adds a new and exciting dimension to our company."

Fredric Gonzalez, former General Manager at EC Cambridge, will become General Manager at EC Boston. ●

Korea develops English test

THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT has announced plans to spend 21.5 billion won (US\$22.9 million) over the next four years to develop a test of English language proficiency. The new government-administered test will be introduced in 2009 in a bid to decrease Korean students' dependency on foreign English proficiency tests such as Toefl, Toeic and Ielts.

Over 2.6 million Koreans took an English proficiency test in 2006, 76 per cent of which took a foreign-administered exam such as Toefl or Toeic. In contrast, just 183,000 adults took the domestically developed English test, TEPS, which is administered by Seoul National University.

The new test will be developed with 10 levels of ability, with level one aimed at primary school children and levels eight to 10 for adults. The test will examine students in speaking, listening, writing and reading modules, which will be conducted through the Internet. A new government body, called the Korea English Proficiency Evaluation Foundation, is due to be set up by the end of the year to develop and oversee the new test.

Sungjoo Cho from UhaKfocus in Korea explained that Toeic and Toefl tests were popular with many Korean students because most

overseas universities, as well as many of the larger companies in Korea, required Toeic or Toefl scores from their applicants. However, he added, "I think the envisioned government-administered English test will gain more popularity in the future because the supply for the Toefl test in Korea does not meet the excessive demand, and applying for Toefl is getting harder and is more expensive than the local test. However, in order for our Korean government to succeed in the project, I think the local test will need international recognition for foreign universities to recognise the test results like Toefl." ●



a2 Kazakhstan Fair
Date: November 2-3
Venue: Almaty, Kazakhstan
Email: info@aafair.com
Web: www.aafair.com

Icef Work & Travel Forum
Date: November 2-3
Venue: Berlin, Germany
Email: wtforum@icf.com
Web: www.icf.com

The Language Show
Date: November 2-4 2007
Venue: London, UK
Email: info@thelanguageshow.co.uk
Web: www.thelanguageshow.co.uk

Icef Berlin Workshop
Date: November 4-6
Venue: Berlin, Germany
Email: info@icf.com
Web: www.icf.com

Expolingua Praha
Date: November 9-10
Venue: Prague, Czech Republic
Email: prague@expolingua.com
Web: www.expolingua.cz

Vieca International Education Fair
Date: November 9-11
Venue: Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Email: vieca@hn.vnn.vn

CIEE Annual Conference
Date: November 14-17
Venue: Toronto, Canada
Email: conference@ciee.org
Web: www.ciee.org

Fairs "Education and Career XXI"
Date: November 15-24
Venue: Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, St Petersburg, Russia
Email: rtv@znanie.info
Web: www.znanie.info

Eaquals admits first Russian school

LIDEN AND DENZ language school in St Petersburg, Russia, has become the first language school in the country to be accepted to join the European Association for Quality Language Services (Eaquals).

The school, which is already a member of the International Association of Language Centres (Ialc), plans to get its Moscow-based school inspected by Eaquals next year. Walter Denz at the school said that international inspection schemes such as Ialc and Eaquals are particularly important for schools in Russia. "In Russia we don't have a national inspection scheme like, for instance, the British Council for the UK. It adds credibility to our quality claims and we need to convince

agents that they can trust us. Any serious inspection has always a consultancy element in it. It is a very good idea that will help us to improve our services further." ●



Outside the Liden and Denz language school in St Petersburg

New student visitor visa in the UK

SHORT-TERM STUDENTS going to the UK for less than six months will no longer be able to study full-time on a visitor visa after a new student visitor visa category was introduced in September. Students applying for the new visa will also have to show that they have been accepted on to a course of study at an organisation that is listed on the Register of Education and Training Providers, held by the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills.

Under terms of the new visa, students will not be able to work in the UK and will not be able to extend their stay in the country to go on to further education. Students wishing to work part-time or undertake a work placement as part of their short-term study programme will have to apply for a student visa.

Jackie Furneaux from Live Language School in Glasgow said that the new visa might help to open up student markets for which it has been difficult to obtain visa entry to the UK. "If [students] are not going to work at all and can prove that they can support themselves throughout financially, [the new visa] might be a bonus to us because the government then might be more relaxed in letting students study here," she added.

In another change to the visa regulations in the UK, all students entering the country to undertake a course of study for over six months, or undertake part-time work while studying for less than six months, will have to apply for entry clearance on their arrival. Students who have not finalised their study plans will be able to seek entry clearance as a prospective student and switch to a student visa at a later date. ●

Currency

1xUS\$ =currency*

Argentinean	Pesos	3.161
Australian	Dollar	1.209
Brazilian	Real	1.924
British	Pound	0.492
Bulgarian	Leva	1.415
Canadian	Dollar	1.046
Chilean	Pesos	517.40
Chinese (PR)	Yuan RMB	7.523
Czech	Koruny	19.99
Danish	Kroner	5.391
Egyptian	Pound	5.659
EU	Euro	0.723
Hong Kong	Dollar	7.784
Hungarian	Forint	184.73
Icelandic	Kronur	65.183
Indonesian	Rupiah	9,404.57
Israeli	New Shekels	4.102
Japanese	Yen	113.93
Malaysian	Ringgit	3.514
Maltese	Lira	0.311
Mexican	Peso	11.100
New Zealand	Dollar	1.432
Norwegian	Kroner	5.683
Polish	Zloty	2.744
Russian	Rubles	25.506
Singaporean	Dollar	1.522
Slovakian	Koruny	24.353
South African	Rand	7.197
South Korean	Won	936.67
Swedish	Kroner	6.753
Swiss	Franc	1.186
Taiwanese	NT Dollar	33.166
Thai	Baht	32.350
Turkish	New Lira	1.287
Venezuelan	Bolivar	2,147.1

*Rates are subject to change and should be used as indications only. 11/09/07.

German agency launches new registration scheme for schools

A NEW SYSTEM has been launched by an agency in Germany to help language schools with applications for approval of their language courses for *Bildungsurlaub*, the German "education vacation".

Due to burgeoning interest in the *Bildungsurlaub* programme – the result of a 1976 federal government agreement that gives German employees the right to further education, consequently allowing them five days extra holiday in one year for such purposes as enrolling on a language course

– German language travel tour operator Easy Sprachreisen's service has been created to help schools worldwide with the application process, as well as provide training and help in official communications. Individual applications under the *Bildungsurlaub* scheme have to be made to each of the self-sustaining federal departments in Germany, resulting in a lot of tedious paper work.

Ten schools have signed up to the service after the August launch. The Centre of English Studies in Wimbledon and Worthing in the UK have had certain courses approved by some local governments in Germany but Justin Quinn from the school highlighted the obstacles they faced. "Some local governments just approve a particular course and some only approve state organisations," he said. Quinn also said complex language on the forms requires schools to enlist a specialist.

Nina Cremer from Easy Sprachreisen said, "Schools that decide to take part will be displayed on www.bildungsurlaub-service.de where Germans can search directly for schools." ●

Expolingua Berlin

Date: November 16-18
Venue: Berlin, Germany
Email: info@expolingua.com
Web: www.expolingua.com

The Alpha Japan Workshop

Date: November 28-30
Venue: Tokyo, Japan
Email: jane@hothousemedia.com
Web: www.hothousemedia.com

The Alpha Korea Workshop

Date: December 3-5
Venue: Seoul, Korea
Email: jane@hothousemedia.com
Web: www.hothousemedia.com

The Icef Americas Workshop

Date: December 9-11
Venue: Miami, USA
Email: info@icef.com
Web: www.icef.com

Fitur 2008

Date: January 30 - Feb 3, 2008
Venue: Madrid, Spain
Email: lfitur@ifema.es
Web: www.fitur.ifema.es

The Icef Middle East Workshop

Date: February 3-5, 2008
Venue: Dubai
Email: info@icef.com
Web: www.icef.com

Expolangues

Date: February 6-9, 2008
Venue: Paris, France
Email: expolangues@letudiant.fr
Web: www.expolangues.fr

The Alpha Asia Workshop

Date: March 17-19, 2008
Venue: Bangkok, Thailand
Email: jane@hothousemedia.com
Web: www.hothousemedia.com

The Alpha Latin America Workshop

Date: March 26-28, 2008
Venue: Sao Paulo, Brazil
Email: jane@hothousemedia.com
Web: www.hothousemedia.com

Work Experience Travel Market

Date: March 26-28, 2008
Venue: The Hague, Netherlands
Email: mailbox@wetm-iac.org
Web: www.wetm-iac.org