

# Baselt opens arms to agents

## Next issue

In our November issue, **Special Report** finds out how agency associations around the world have been addressing the needs of their membership, while **Market Report** provides an update about market trends in Canada. **City Focus** visits Cambridge in the UK and **Destination** reports on the experience awaiting language travel students in France. **Status** provides another global comparison of market statistics and **Agency Survey** reports on business in Korea in 2001.

The British Association of State English Language Teaching (Baselt) is stepping up its efforts to introduce agents around the world to its members' services by updating its brand image and organising further inbound agency trips, following the success of its inaugural inbound fam trip for Turkish agents earlier this year (see *Language Travel Magazine*, May 2002, pages 8-9).

With a new logo and brand identity now unveiled, the association has planned a series of inbound visits for agents from different countries to meet its members. 'Baselt has now confirmed bookings with agents from Brazil, Japan, Taiwan, Mexico and has developed a two-year rolling programme of inward visits,' explained Julie Hutchinson, Marketing and Communications Manager at the association. 'This method of marketing Baselt mem-

bers is proving so very popular [that] we are now planning well into 2004.'

The new logo and identity for Baselt was unveiled earlier this year at the Alphe workshop in London and the Arels International Language Fair in Brighton in the UK. Hutchinson said that it was hoped that the new strong image would encourage the international education industry to see 'Baselt as a vibrant, exciting and forward thinking association, offering a 'world of possibilities' through English and educational study for students around the world'.

Email newsletters have been sent out to many agents to inform them of the new look for the UK's state-sector association, while the new logo and brochure has also been distributed to British Council offices worldwide.

'Feedback from members [about the new Baselt branding] has been very positive,' said Hutchinson, 'with remarks [received] such as 'Baselt has come of age'.'

The decision to update the associa-



tion's materials and image was taken when it was identified, through research activities with members, agents and students, that the old identity was considered old-fashioned and lacking in consistency.

However, Hutchinson pointed out, 'Feedback did indicate that Baselt [was considered by focus groups] to represent a trustworthy and reliable association'.

## Agent questionnaire



Name of Agent: Giedrus Mazurka  
 Position: Director  
 Age: 33  
 Name of Company: East West Consulting  
 Location: Vilnius, Lithuania  
 Other branches: London, UK  
 No. of full-time staff: 15  
 Average no. of students per year: 500

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. What is the hottest destination of the moment for your clients?

The USA, the UK and Ireland are popular destinations. This is because the native language in these countries is English. Our applicants realise that without knowing this particular language it is more difficult to get a job, make new personal and business contacts and establish a better future for themselves.

### 2. How do students decide which country they would like to study in?

Most students are looking for studies connected with work-related programmes such as internships or practical training programmes. Actually this segment nowadays seems even more important as students think that they will learn the language anyway in a foreign language speaking environment.

### 3. Please tell us about your client profile.

Most of them are students aged from 18 to 28 years old. Some of them are professionals or people aged from 23 to 50 years old. Ability to speak a foreign language gives

them better possibilities in the job market in Lithuania and abroad. This is the main motivation. Some of them just want to change their lifestyle and get valuable life experience.

### 4. What are the most popular programmes and why?

Work and travel programmes, internships and practical training and au-pair programmes in the USA as well as general English language courses in London. These programmes are popular because students can learn or improve their foreign language, while at the same time they can legally work and earn money for their studies.

### 5. How do most Lithuanians studying abroad fund their trip?

They usually have their own money or take loans or borrow from relatives, friends or parents.

### 6. Do you experience problems getting visas for your students in any countries?

Yes, sometimes for the USA, UK and Ireland. [Problems] are very complicated to explain as usually

embassies do not tend to explain why visas are denied. In my opinion, there are usually some difficulties in proving the financial abilities of the student or his/her commitment to come back to Lithuania. There could be some other issues, but it varies on an individual basis.

### 7. Do you work directly with schools in any way to promote the concept of study abroad?

Yes, we do work directly with schools. Sometimes they visit us in Lithuania. Actually it does not involve a lot of organisation from our side as usually schools are meeting only agents, but not clients. So far we have had guests from Harrow House, the Swiss Hotel and Management School and Aspect ILA. Also some other schools have visited Vilnius during an IALC mini-workshop.

### 8. How do schools believe the market for study abroad will develop in Lithuania in the future?

I think they believe it will [grow] as we are receiving more and more guests and even some small workshops have been held [here].

## Thais soak up NZ atmosphere

EDUCATION New Zealand is another organisation capitalising on inbound fam trips as a way of introducing New Zealand and its education institutions to agents. A series of visits for agents has been organised this year, following on from the successful fam trips organised last year (see *Language Travel Magazine*, September 2001, pages 12-13).

Brazilian, Korean, Vietnamese, German and Thai agents have all visited the country so far this year, while Taiwanese and Indonesian agents are scheduled to be visiting later this month. 'Familiarisation visits provide agents with the opportunity to learn about New Zealand's culture and education environment,' explained Chrissie Wolfensohn, Project Administrator at Education New Zealand. 'They provide

an opportunity for agents to meet with [local] education providers and see for themselves the quality and resources available to international students.'

Wolfensohn said that general feedback from participating institutions indicated that the fam trips were successful in generating new business for those schools that have hosted visiting agents. Tanatsorn Woraphant was one of the participants on the most recent Thai agent fam trip, held in July. While solely promoting New Zealand as a study destination to her clients, Woraphant said the trip did help her to improve her knowledge about institutions.

'Each of the institutions we visited was well prepared, well organised and professional,' she said. 'Each of them had their own interesting marketing point. [Such



Thai agents get a taste of NZ

a] good background [of information for agents] leads to a good understanding [of the schools].'

Kristy Jaroenwisana of Perfect Link in Thailand also attended the fam trip for Thai agents. 'I was glad to attend the trip,' she said. 'I was impressed by the facilities of the schools and their staff were super.' Jaroenwisana added that she thought the trip could only have been improved by more sightseeing, 'to get a better picture [of New Zealand]'. □

## On the move



Mella Beaumont is the new National Director of Studies at Embassy CES Australia and

New Zealand, a division of Study Group Australia. Ms Beaumont has been with Embassy CES for three years and was previously Director of Studies at the Brisbane campus. In her new role, she is responsible for the management of all Embassy CES centres in Australia and Study Group's new Embassy CES campus in Auckland, which opened in April 2002.



Peter Clarke has joined Torquay International School (TIS) in the UK as a Director and Co-

owner with Judith Hands after 19 years in Plymouth working at the Suzanne Sparrow Plymouth Language School, where he was Marketing Director. Mr Clarke is looking forward to a new and exciting challenge with TIS in Torquay. As well as being involved full-time with the school, Mr Clarke is also a member of the Institute of Linguists and registered by the Home Office and Public Service as an interpreter and translator.



Paul Weeks took over as the Agency Coordinator at the Avalon School of English

in London, UK, at the beginning of July. With over 10 years' experience at Avalon, having set up the company in 1992, Mr Weeks plans to keep all agencies fully informed of new courses, timetables and special packages with a regular monthly email newsletter. He says, 'I want to develop long-term working relationships with agencies of all sizes, catering for all types of students. It will be my responsibility to ensure that all our agents are 'aware' of Avalon, its unique teaching system, and the high quality services that we offer.'



The American Language and Culture Institute (ALCI) at California State University, Chico,

in the USA, has recently appointed Amber Strickland as Interim Director. As an Instructor and Academic Coordinator at ALCI over the past six years, Ms Strickland is prepared to meet the demands of a fully accommodating intensive English programme. She is looking forward to working with agents and students the world over and hopes to welcome many to Chico soon.



## 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?

Gary Duff, Programme Coordinator, International Professional Development.

### Where do you work?

I work at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in the USA.

### Why and how did you start in the industry?

After studying cross-cultural communications in graduate school, I lived and worked in Japan and then began managing this programme in 1992.

### Why should agents choose to represent your programme?

Our intensive language programme has been effective for over 25 years, we have one of the few professional training programmes of its kind in the USA for internationals. The cost of tuition and living is very low here, and there are no large blocks of students from one country.

### How does your school promote itself to agents?

Through magazines like *Language Travel Magazine*, web links, or through personal relationships developed over the years.

### What percentage of your annual student intake comes through agents?

Fifteen per cent.

### Please give an example of a student success story at your school.

A woman from Japan studied in our programme several years ago. She came to improve her chances of getting a job and being hired by an international company. When she returned to Japan, she was asked by several international companies [at interviews] to give a presentation in English. She had prepared a report and a Powerpoint presentation as part of her training with us, and after she presented this, three companies offered her a job!

## UK matches US and Australia in visa price rise

THE UK has followed in the footsteps of the USA and Australia by raising visa prices, although the fee involved is marginal. UKvisas, the new name for the visa controlling authority run by the Home Office and the Foreign Office, announced that most increases, which came into effect in July, were between eight and 10 per cent higher.

Standard visitor visas and student visas now cost UK£36 (US\$56) up from UK£33 (US\$51). The price applies to all student visas, regardless of the length of stay. Six-month multiple-entry visitor visas also cost UK£36 (US\$56), down from UK£45 (US\$70) while five-year multiple-entry visas are up 10 per cent from UK£80 (US\$125) to UK£88 (US\$138).

'The revenue generated by the increases will help UKvisas deliver the additional staff and equipment needed to meet the increasing worldwide demand for our visa services,' said a spokesperson at the authority. □