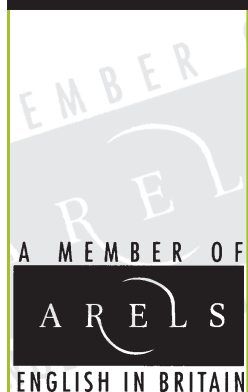


# Arels' bold plans

TONY MILLNS, Chief Executive of the Association of Recognised English Language Services (Arels), answers our questions about the association's achievements and its exciting plans for the future.

## Fact box



**Full name:** Association of Recognised English Language Services

**Year established:** 1960

**Number of members:** 212

**Type of members:** English language course providers

**Agent workshops/fam trips:** yes

**Organisation's main role:** To promote, represent and support members

**Association complaints procedure:** Yes, via the association, then to an independent ombudsman

**Code of practice:** yes

**Membership criteria:** English in Britain Accreditation

### Association contact details:

Arels, 56 Buckingham Gate, London, SW1E 6AG, UK. Tel: +44 207 8029200; Fax: +44 207 8029201  
Email: [enquiries@arels.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@arels.org.uk)  
Website: [www.arels.org.uk](http://www.arels.org.uk)

**Q** One of the key achievements of Arels in the last year has been pushing forward discussion about the formation of English UK - a new joint association for members of Arels and Baselt. Please tell us about progress to date.

**A** Following extensive consultation with members of Arels and Baselt in 12 regional meetings this year, the working party has recommended to the Arels General Council and the Baselt Executive Committee that the necessary constitutional resolutions should be put to general meetings of members in the autumn to wind up Arels and Baselt and establish English UK on a date to be agreed, probably around April 2004. The Arels General Council has agreed to this (with none opposed), and the Baselt Executive Committee will be making a decision shortly. The new association will be open to all English in Britain accredited schools, colleges and universities.

**Q** Why do you believe English UK to be a good idea for the UK English language teaching industry?

**A** English UK has a number of advantages. First, it has a clear, simple, comprehensive name. Second, it will reduce the confusion over the roles of Arels and Baselt and the duplication between them. Third, it will have at least 330 members and thus greatly increased representational power to the UK and foreign governments and other agencies. Fourth, it will make better use of resources in providing services for members. In short, we mean to establish it as the world's leading association for language teaching.

**Q** How will English UK benefit agents?

**A** It will simplify their lives, for a start: one organisation to contact and one body of members. But we plan to offer services for agents in due course, in collaboration with agent associations, in order to increase the overall professionalism of the language travel business worldwide.

**Q** Please tell us about the all-party parliamentary group that Arels convenes and the benefits that this brings for Arels member schools.

**A** The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Teaching English to international students was set up in May 2001 to raise awareness in Westminster of the issues affecting the English language teaching industry. The group is chaired by David Lepper, MP for Brighton Pavilion, and meets about three times a year. Meetings to date have focused on the problems students face applying for a visa to study English, the importance of the ELT industry to inbound tourism, the need for government registration of English language schools and professional development within the industry. The group and Arels also host an annual reception for ELT leaders and parliamentarians.

**Q** Is Arels working on any other strategies designed to boost student numbers for its member schools?

**A** Yes, there are many initiatives which space precludes us from covering fully. One example: we were instrumental in ensuring that the recent agreement between the UK and Chinese governments on certification to do

business in China covers accredited English language schools only.

**Q** Does Arels work with relevant government departments and the British Council to enhance member services?

**A** Yes, we work with a wide range of government departments and agencies, from DTI/Trade Partners UK, through to UK visas, and also with the British Council and VisitBritain, to support members in their business. We are also represented on the top-level Tourism Alliance Executive Group, chaired by Digby Jones, Director-General of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), and through Mr Jones we have a line in to Downing Street [central government].

**Q** What are the key challenges facing UK language schools at present?

**A** Recovery in the aftermath of SARS is probably uppermost in people's minds. There are many issues to do with regulation and costs, from Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks to employer liability insurance, some of which are generic business issues that we lobby about through our CBI membership.

**Q** What do you foresee 2004 bringing for Arels members?

**A** If we have a more stable global scene, combined with a lower exchange rate for the pound, the prospects are good - a sign of this is that at the time of writing, the delegates attending Arels' International Languages & Education UK Fair were five per cent up (both providers and agents) on this time last year.