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Host family crisis in Malta

SINCE the issue of taxing host families was raised by the Maltese government last year (see *Language Travel Magazine*, August 2005, page 7), family accommodation for students in Malta has been a difficult issue for some schools. New rules requiring host families to pay VAT on host family income has resulted in fewer households being willing to host students. Some schools have been forced to house students in hotels this summer – with complaints from other residents ensuing – or turn down bookings.

The Shadow Minister for Tourism, Evarist Bartolo, accused the government of mishandling the issue in a letter to the *Times of Malta* – families were informed of the new tax rules at the start of the summer season instead of during winter. By mid-June, the number of families registered with the Malta Tourism Authority as host families had dropped from 2,013 in 2005 to just 876.

John Dimech, President of Maltese language school association, Feltom, acknowledged that the new guidelines about the taxation plan – which is considered fair, he reports, by the General Retailers Trade Union (GRTU) – were badly timed. “Despite our strong recommendations last year, Minister Tonio Fenech’s letter has been badly timed, right at the start of the peak season and this caused a lot of unnecessary alarm,” he said.

The problem seems to be the fact that taxation of host families has not previously been required and also that the new guidelines insist that social security contributions are paid from 2006 onwards if income exceeds ML3,100 (US\$9,145). “In reality, families can have the [host family] licence in the husband’s name and avoid



Host families like this one are in short supply this year

paying contributions if he works already,” said Dimech. “The examples in Fenech’s letter do not suggest this alternative and... we did not have much time to inform families accordingly.”

Host families are now entitled to earn ML1,000 (US\$2,950) before paying tax on 35 per cent of the rest of their income earned from students. The other 65 per cent of income is considered as expenses incurred for hosting the students.

At Educational English Culture in Kappara, Renato Valente told a local newspaper that agents were diverting business to the UK, where accommodation provision was more stable. His

institution had spent ML2,000 (US\$5,900) on advertising for host families, he said. “The net result was that we attracted seven to ten host families, but we have lost 100 registered host families who have worked for our organisation for the past decade.”

Another school source based in Sliema told *Language Travel Magazine*, “This year, it has been very, very difficult to find host families and we don’t want to turn students away. So far we have managed to find a place for everyone, but it just causes more stress in an already stressful period of the year.”

There is anger in the industry that the government seems to be thwarting what is one of the most buoyant tourism sectors. Dimech said there was enough hotel capacity to accommodate students because the mainstream tourism sector is performing less well. The problem “could rock the sector,” he said, “[which] grew by 10 per cent in 2005.” He added that schools had been burdened with the extra fiscal responsibilities relating to VAT payments of families. ●

OISE buys two Hawthorn schools

LANGUAGE school chain, OISE, has further expanded its reach by buying two schools previously owned by the Hawthorn brand, which operates out of the University of Melbourne in Australia.

Hawthorn Edinburgh and Hawthorn Vancouver will both be returned to their former school names, Edinburgh School of English and the Canada Language Centre. The University of Melbourne sold the schools as part of a restructure and new strategic vision, “Growing Esteem”, said Allan Tait, Vice Principal at the university. The remaining Hawthorn English Language Centres will continue to operate as normal in Melbourne, Singapore and Muscat.

Till Gins, Managing Director of OISE, explained that he “could see the commonality in these two schools” and explained, “I knew Edinburgh School of English very well and I knew it was a very good school. Canada Language Centre was one of the oldest and first schools in Canada and very well established.”

Following this purchase, Gins hinted that further expansion in Canada is the next step in the OISE game plan, which sees the

OISE Group buying up well established older schools that need investment to ensure they can remain competitive.

“I’m actually very proud of having these two schools and taking them further, continuing the work of the original owners [Martin and Margot Huggins in Edinburgh and Al Stusiak in Vancouver],” said Gins. “I also feel it consolidates our position as the group that owns and runs the collection of the best long-standing schools in the EFL world. That’s what we do well because we enjoy doing it.” ●

Calendar	SEPTEMBER	M T W T F S S
	OCTOBER	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
	NOVEMBER	8 9 10 11 12 13 14
	DECEMBER	15 16 17 18 19 20 21
	JANUARY	22 23 24 25 26 27 28
	29 30 31	

Annual Conference of the EAIE

Date: September 13-16
Venue: Basel, Switzerland
Email: eaie@eaie.nl
Web: www.eaie.nl

Fedele Annual Meeting

Date: September 28 - Oct 1
Venue: Granada, Spain
Email: info@fedeleSpain.com
Web: www.fedeleSpain.com

International Education Fairs of Turkey

Date: October 8-15
Venue: Ankara, Izmir, Bursa, Istanbul - Turkey
Email: info@ieft.net
Web: www.ieft.net

WYSTC 2006

Date: October 9-14
Venue: Melbourne, Australia
Email: ks@wystc.org
Web: www.wystc.org

Scope on the Globe

Date: October 11-14
Venue: Utrecht, Netherlands
Email: s.vdaakster@aromedia.nl
Web: www.scopeontheglobe.com

The Icef Asia Workshop

Date: October 14-16
Venue: Shanghai, China
Email: info@icef.com
Web: www.icef.com

Higher Education Exchange and Agent Workshop

Date: October 16-18
Venue: Istanbul, Turkey
Email: info@ieft.net
Web: www.ieft.net

The Alphe Russia Workshop

Date: October 27-29
Venue: St Petersburg, Russia
Email: jane@hothousemedia.com
Web: www.hothousemedia.com

Ireland and Japan sign working holiday deal

GREATER working opportunities in Ireland will soon be on the cards for Japanese students, thanks to the signing of a Working Holiday visa agreement between the two countries. Taking effect from 1 January 2007, the new agreement will mean Japanese and Irish young people can work in each other's countries for up to 12 months.

Irish Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Michael Martin, said the new programme would "provide young people in Ireland and Japan with a chance to travel, to learn more about each others' countries and to build international friendships".

At English language schools' association, MEI~Relsa, Director, Brian Burns commented, "Compared with other larger English speaking countries, Ireland is still relatively unknown in Japan. The new working holiday programme will be promoted throughout Japan and should help place Ireland on the map amongst agents and potential students."

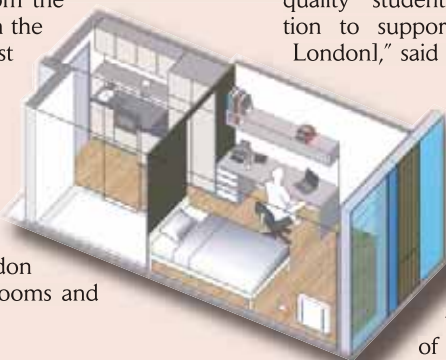
He said that he expected English language schools in the country to develop working holiday programmes that would incorporate an induction course, English language training programme and then paid work placement.

In other news in Ireland, membership of MEI~Relsa has increased since new categories of membership for summer schools have been introduced. Current membership now stands at 62 schools, and further members are expected to join in the future. ●

New trendy living concept for London

STUDENTS in London, UK, can choose from an entirely new style of accommodation from September next year. As well as host family or residential dormitory-style accommodation, Nido Student Living will be offering studio-style living within a building housing 846 rooms on 16 floors. The option to share with a friend – using a communal kitchen – is also offered from the latest student accommodation provider on the scene, providing what it terms the "newest way of living student life" in the King's Cross area of London.

All students will have access to a resident student services manager and facilities that include separate study rooms, a gym and fitness centre. Services such as room (cube) cleaning and laundry pick-up will also be offered as extras. Nido London also has space that can be used as classrooms and faculty offices.



An artist's impression of the Nido Cube, offering complete studio living

Nido Student Living is aimed at all types of students, from short-term study abroad students to postgraduates. "There is a staggering lack of quality student accommodation to support [students in London]," said Nido London's spokesperson, Maureen McDermott, who claimed, "British universities provide accommodation for less than a quarter of potential student demand." ●

China promotes Mandarin study

CHINA has launched a website that offers free Mandarin lessons and study materials, www.linese.com. It is hoped that the site, which is only available in English and Chinese at present, will encourage interest in Mandarin language learning overseas. Versions of the website in Japanese and Korean are also being developed.

Interactive exercises, resources for teachers and audiovisual presentations of famous landmarks and cultural icons are included on the website. The Chinese Ministry of Education has also revealed that it plans to set up more Confucius Institutes around the world to promote Chinese culture. There is currently a Confucius Institute in South Korea, Sweden and Germany. ●

DMGT to sell Study Group

The Daily Mail and General Trust (DMGT), owners of Study Group, are looking to sell their shares in the company and an announcement was imminent at the time of going to press.

Nick Tellwright, Group Marketing Director at Study Group, explained that the company has definite growth plans following a good year last year and a very successful 2006. "We believe, and DMGT shares this view, that the time is right [to attract new investment]," he said. "Our growth plans focus on expanding our university partnerships [see page 49], developing our programme range, opening new centres and extending our marketing reach."

The company was valued at UK£80 million (US\$148 million) in a *Sunday Times* report. ●

Currency

1xUS\$ =currency*

Argentinean	Pesos	3.078
Australian	Dollar	1.330
Brazilian	Real	2.187
British	Pound	0.540
Bulgarian	Leva	1.550
Canadian	Dollar	1.134
Chilean	Pesos	539.15
Chinese (PR)	Yuan RMB	7.990
Czech	Koruny	22.41
Danish	Kroner	5.898
Egyptian	Pound	5.740
EU	Euro	0.790
Hong Kong	Dollar	7.775
Hungarian	Forint	216.89
Icelandic	Kronur	73.320
Indonesian	Rupiah	9,151.0
Israeli	New Shekels	4.431
Japanese	Yen	116.76
Maltese	Lira	0.339
Mexican	Peso	10.879
New Zealand	Dollar	1.606
Norwegian	Kroner	6.278
Polish	Zloty	3.111
Russian	Rubles	26.924
Singaporean	Dollar	1.584
Slovakian	Koruny	30.185
South African	Rand	6.958
South Korean	Won	949.46
Swedish	Kronor	7.300
Swiss	Franc	1.243
Taiwanese	NT Dollar	32.761
Thai	Baht	38.053
Turkish	New Lira	1.552
Venezuelan	Bolivar	2,147.3

*Rates are subject to change and should be used as indications only. 20/07/06.

The Language Show

Date: November 3-5
Venue: London, UK
Email: jrs@thelanguageshow.co.uk
Web: www.thelanguageshow.co.uk

The Icef Berlin Workshop

Date: November 5-7
Venue: Berlin, Germany
Email: info@icef.com
Web: www.icef.com

CIEE Annual Conference

Date: November 8-11

Venue: Seville, Spain
Email: conference@ciee.org
Web: www.ciee.org

Expolingua Praha

Date: November 10-11
Venue: Prague, Czech Republic
Email: prague@expolingua.com
Web: www.expolingua.cz

"Education and Career XXI"

Date: November 16-18
Venue: Moscow, Russia
Date: November 21

Venue: Nizhny Novgorod, Russia
Date: November 19-21
Venue: St Petersburg, Russia
Email: rtv@znanie.info
Web: www.znanie.info

Expolingua Berlin

Date: November 17-19
Venue: Berlin, Germany
Email: info@expolingua.com
Web: www.icwe.net
www.expolingua.com

The Alphe Asia Workshop

Date: November 19-21
Venue: Bangkok, Thailand
Email: jane@hothousemedia.com
Web: www.hothousemedia.com

Oriente European Ed. & Employment Fair

Date: November 24-26
Venue: Brussels, Belgium
E: oriente.international@cpexpo.com
Web: www.cpexpo.com

The Icef Americas Workshop

Date: December 03-05
Venue: Miami, USA
Email: info@icef.com
Web: www.icef.com

Le Salon des Formations Internationales

Date: January 13-14 2007
Venue: Paris, France
E: camille.rabehanta@ltdudiant.fr
Web: www.ltdudiant.fr