EAQUALS Annual Conference

European Centre for Modern Languages

Graz, Austria

The European Association for Quality Language Services (EAQUALS) held its annual conference late last November at the premises of the European Centre for Modern Languages, at the beautiful town of Graz, Austria. The Conference invited members of EAQUALS (Examination Bodies and Language Schools) across Europe with a strong commitment to quality to gather together, discuss current issues concerning membership, marketing strategy, recent developments and prospects undertaken by EAQUALS. The aim was to build up and strengthen relationships, exchange opinions, concerns and expertise as well as socialise in a most friendly atmosphere.

Thirty-two full members, fourteen associate members, and thirteen guest speakers from countries such as the UK, Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Poland, Iceland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Switzerland, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece represented FL Schools such as the British Council, Goethe Institute, Bell Schools, International House, and other schools of schools well-known in their respective countries.

Henry Ricketts (Lord Byron School, Thessaloniki) and Panayiota Kanellopoulou (Silo Kanellopoulou School, Kalamata) were the only EAQUALS full members from our country and were warmly received by their colleagues as the first ever Greek members, which met EAQUALS standards.

All these people had the chance to attend informative talks, academic and practical, as well as hear what other EAQUALS members had achieved.

David Vane, Principal, Richard Language College, UK, explained how the school had applied the Common European Framework of Languages to course design and delivery, and how, after extensive consultation and trialling, they designed and implemented the 'student linguistic profile', which gives more information on the students' achievements and competences than the traditional school report with pass/fail grades.

Zoltan Rozgenyi, Executive Director, International House, Budapest, guided audiences through the Euro/PLF exams they have developed in Hungary, which test general English, and are useful for students who want to enter or graduate from universities or who require a validation of their everyday English skills. The exams are recognised by the Hungarian state and are promoted in neighbouring countries.

Cherry Gough, gives participants useful information on the various tasks and activities of the British Council, which operates internationally promoting the English language and culture. She particularly focused on China, a giant-size Asian country, with the tremendous resources and potential.

Gabi Bauer, Goethe Institute, Munich, demonstrated Profiplus Deutsch, a new reference manual and CD-ROM, useful for curriculum developers, heads of institutions, textbook authors, examinations specialists, teachers and pupils. The package comprises learning objectives, 'can do' definitions and communication aids for proficiency levels A1, A2, and B.

Ludita Kotzarska, EAQUALS Chair Inspections, continued on page 16.
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The convention closed with Professor Brown, Chair of EAQUALS, who asked and got the members' approval for a charter for e-learning, which EAQUALS will develop exclusively for its members.

All in all it was a most informative convention, excellently organized, smoothly run, which covered a lot of important issues. The next convention is going to be held in the historic and picturesque town of Prague, in April.

About EAQUALS

EAQUALS is a Pan-European association, which, for the benefit of students, clients and staff, aims to promote and safeguard quality in institutions teaching foreign languages in Europe. It was formally established in Trieste, Italy, in December 1991. The group of founder members represented language schools in Italy, Spain, Berlin, Ireland, France, Germany, Switzerland and with interests in Hungary and the Czech Republic.

EAQUALS is an open association: any school or institution which is providing language training services may apply for full membership, whether it is in the private or public sector, and whatever languages are being taught. The only requirements are that the institution can prove that it meets the criteria contained in the EAQUALS Code of Practice in full repose, and that it pays membership and inspection fees as stipulated (contact person: freyworth@eaquals.org)

About Graz

Graz, the capital of the Styrian region, was founded 900 years ago and nestled at the base of glory in the fertile and romantic Habsburgian times, when it was the seat of the Habsburg monarchs. The Old Town, one of the best-preserved city centres in central Europe, has been inscribed on the UNESCO list of world cultural heritage sites.

Graz is also an educational centre with a university, which dates back to 1563, and a student population of 40,000.

[ELT NEWS would like to express its warmest thanks to EAQUALS, Boyd and specifically to Mr. Secretary, Mr. Frank Heyworth, for organizing its chief editor, Tasoulis Sympanoulis, thus enabling her to attend a most successful conference.]