Many would say that one’s 50s is hardly the prime of life, but those who have passed the half-century mark would hardly agree. AIIC started to celebrate its birthday a bit early – it won’t officially turn fifty until November – with the recent assembly in Porto. And except for a few squeaky joints, showed that maturity has its advantages.

Communicate! readers will know that we rarely dedicate much reporting to AIIC meetings, but the assembly only comes around once every three years so this issue will be an exception.

The week in Porto was actually much more than the assembly itself. The pre-assembly weekend saw a greater number of events and meeting than ever before. More than forty members and non-members took part in the Training of Trainers workshop (broken into two sessions to meet demand), while many others took advantage to attend the two Portuguese refresher courses in Braga.

An intersectoral meeting brought together interpreters working for all the various international organisations with which AIIC has collective bargaining agreements to discuss matters of common interest. The Vega network had its first full meeting with members present from a host of countries from five continents. The Private Market Sector got one of the larger rooms for its discussions and, as usual, they needed it.

There was an afternoon session on follow-up to the Workload Study. And a workshop for regional webmasters helped introduce them to the possibilities of AIIC’s information management system, which hopefully will result in a number of new regional websites going online through the AIIC server. Amidst such a proliferation of activities, the only complaints I heard were about the necessity of having to pick and choose among them.

The opening session of the assembly itself was distinguished by
Greetings from the President of the Portuguese Republic, Dr. Jorge Sampaio, who reminded us of the importance of cultural diversity and the contribution interpreters make to human communication. We thank him for his kind words and his permission to reproduce his speech here along with translations of it into French and English.

The assembly also had the task of deciding which of two excellent candidates would be AIIC’s next president. Jennifer Mackintosh, a freelance interpreter with broad experience in both teaching and research, was elected. In this issue she offers her vision of the next three years and summarizes the major decisions taken in Porto.

Those of us who attended the assembly will not soon forget the marvelous reception we received from our Portuguese colleagues, who organised the week perfectly, the port wine and vinho verde receptions, the conversations over the free espresso coffee – or the chilling temperature of the Alfandega, the lovely but cavernous old customs house converted into a conference center. Anecdotes abound and fortunately Phil Smith was keeping an assembly diary.

Our assembly coverage stops here – for this issue. In April, once we have the text prepared and translated, we will publish the speech on professional secrecy presented by Judge José Narciso da Cunha Rodrigues of the European Court of Justice.

This first issue of 2003, however, doesn’t start and stop with the assembly. The AIIC Staff Interpreters Committee has again sent us its annual overview of international organisations. Anyone interested in the possibilities of working for one of them, or who simply likes to keep up on what staff interpreters do and face, should definitely click on it.

We receive far too few reviews of dictionaries, but this month we got lucky. The multifaceted Phil Smith has sent in a few words on the Ernst’s Dictionary of Engineering and Technology and tells us why it is an important tome to keep at hand.

And last but not least, we announce a birth. A new interpretation and translation journal came on the scene with the New Year, and Hyang-Ok Lim tells us what FORUM has in store.

Good reading to all and come back often - announcements of courses, conferences and employment opportunities are posted as they come in and not just with each issue of Communicate!. And soon you will find a re-designed site at this same URL.

Recommended citation format: