The Henri Methorst award

In 2001, the members of the Congrestolken Cooperative and the AIIC Region of the Netherlands, upon the suggestion of then AIIC Council member Javier Ferreira, instituted an award for good causes named after the founder of Congrestolken Henri Methorst.

The idea was to do something for others less privileged than ourselves by making a sum of money available to a worthy recipient, at least in years when our not for profit cooperative of interpreters had an end of year surplus. The Dutch Region of AIIC very generously chipped in with a substantial amount of their available funds.

Thus every two years this monetary award goes to an institution, organisation or individual that has shown stalwart dedication to a multilingual or multicultural cause. The region contributes a maximum of 500 euro per year and Congrestolken puts in up to 3000 euro. The eligibility criteria stipulate that the project must serve to break down language and cultural barriers and have a sound administrative and reporting structure. The members themselves make nominations and then vote for a project of their choice.

The first award was presented to the Dutch Association of Sign Language Interpreters at their European Conference in September 2001. The Association used the award to organise a seminar and workshop about sign language interpreting between Dutch and a minority language, which turned out to be a resounding success.

Moreover, several Congrestolken members volunteered to interpret at the Conference of the European Federation for Sign Language Interpreters, with one of our equipment providers helping with the booths. The benefit of interpretation was that more participants were able to attend and follow the proceedings. We really had the feeling we were accomplishing the motto of the conference: "Raising the profession".

Our members interpreted between five languages and the output was then used to interpret into five sign languages. It was great to see sign language interpreters at work. Without any show of nerves, but with the use of their whole body and fantastic facial expression, they did their work standing up in front of a huge audience. Compared to that, our working conditions are pure luxury!

The European and the Dutch organisations for Sign Language Interpreters showed their appreciation at receiving the first Henri-Methorst-Award and for our volunteer work by publishing articles on their websites and in some Dutch dailies.

The second Henri Methorst Award went to a children's home in Soweto to help provide the children with English conversation and writing classes. We take great satisfaction that the project has been able to continue, and is now supervised by one of our members, Astrid van der Putten, who is
originally from South Africa herself.

The working group on the Henri-Methorst-Award is now examining possible candidates for the third award. We recognise the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility and AIIC members in the Netherlands have rallied to a good cause. Our efforts have brought us into contact with persons and groups that we would not have met in the normal course of our work. As we extend our network, we take satisfaction in the fruits that one small seed can bring to many. Following the example of Henri Methorst, we hope to recognise and contribute to many more worthy groups in the future.

**Recommended citation format:**