Towards a harmonisation of conference interpreter training in Europe?

More about the European Masters In Conference Interpreting.

Eva BONNARD-SJÖGREN.
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- Development of a curriculum that will serve as a model for all European institutions offering courses for conference interpreters
- European Masters Diploma/Certificate
- Exchange of students and teachers between partner institutions
- Seminar dedicated to preparing speeches to be used for interpreter training
- Workshop on video-teaching

Who initiated these activities?

These activities were initiated by the Consortium for the Implementation of the European Masters in Conference Interpreting (EMCI) course. After 4 years' of preparatory work, the 15 European universities offering courses for conference interpreters that currently form the consortium, signed an agreement of cooperation in Brussels last May 30th.

What is this agreement?

First, the participating universities undertake to train conference interpreters in accordance with the core curriculum that was developed by the consortium, a full-time, one year post-graduate university course that is in close agreement with the principles recommended by the aiic Training Committee. The participating institutions will apply uniform criteria for selecting and examining the students and do their utmost to ensure high standards of training by regularly reviewing changing needs and new developments and permanently updating the programme.

On successful completion of the programme at any of the partner institutions, students will receive the degree awarded by their school accompanied by a European Masters certificate. The certificate ("quality seal") will list the participating institutions and the European organisations which support the programme and include the following statement: "... in compliance with the requirements of the programme adopted by the EMCI partnership in collaboration with the Joint Interpreting Services
Background

The main motivation for the initiative was the shortage of highly qualified conference interpreters and the realisation that neither JICS nor the university level institutions in the Member States had the potential to meet existing and future demand, particularly for language combinations which include less widely used and less-taught languages.

The European Masters in Conference Interpreting is a Master's-type university programme which was launched as a pilot project by the European Commission's Joint Interpreting and Conference Service (JICS), DGXXII and the European Parliament in 1997. At the invitation of these organisations, and in consultation with them, a working group comprising eight university level institutions drew up a core curriculum for interpreter training at post-graduate level, which is being offered across the participating institutions. The selection was made on the basis of such principles as geographical spread and pooling of expertise.

Today, the Masters Group consists of the following 15 universities:

- Karl Franzens-Universität GRAZ
- Hoger Instituut voor Vertalers en Tolken Hogeschool ANTWERP
- ETI GENEVA
- Univerzita Karlova PRAGUE
- Johannes Gutenberg-Universität MAINZ
- Handelshøjskolen i København COPENHAGEN
- Universidad de la Laguna LA LAGUNA
- Turun Yliopisto TURKU
- ESIT PARIS
- ELTE BUDAPEST
- SSMLIT TRIESTE
- Université de Varsovie WARSAW
- Universidade do Minho BRAGA
- TÖI - Stockholms Universitet STOCKHOLM
- University of Westminster LONDON

Almost every one of the above schools has already offered Masters courses in conference interpreting. Other universities and schools may join the group on the condition that they comply with all the stipulations of the curriculum and that they offer the course every three years.

The group is headed by a Council of Representatives (one representative from each member institution). A coordinating institution is elected every 3 years. The present coordinating institution is the University of Westminster. Although aiic, as an organisation, is not represented on the Council, it is nevertheless present in the person of several aiic colleagues who are members of the faculty at the member institutions.

Activities

In addition to developing a training program based on the fundamental principle of a curriculum whereby 75% of the teaching is given in the form of practical interpreting exercises, the Masters Group is engaged in several other activities, namely:

- Visits and exchange of students and teaching staff, for periods of time to be agreed to, between partner institutions. This is particularly important for those schools that are short on mother tongues for the practical exercises. Participating institutions will also exchange examiners for the aptitude tests and the examining boards.
Teacher training workshops.
Research in subjects of interest to academia and to the profession.
Study visits to European institutions.
Exchange of teaching materials (video cassettes, speeches, talks, etc.).

The next event to be organised by the group is a workshop on video-education scheduled for 22 September at the ETI in Geneva. This workshop shall address the application of the possibilities offered by modern technology to the training of conference interpreters. Among other subjects, participants will look at how they can be applied to perfecting language skills, joint seminars for practical exercises, shared courses in parliamentary procedure, conference terminology, and the theory of interpreting.

The main activity of the consortium will be to continue to spread best practice in the training of conference interpreters.

Further Information

For further information on the programme and the participating institutions, as well as on dates and available language combinations, we invite you to visit the European Masters in Conference Interpreting website.

Recommended citation format: