

**EXPOLINGUA PRAHA 2008****18TH INTERNATIONAL FAIR FOR LANGUAGES EDUCATION AND CULTURE**

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In recent years, a growing number of Czech secondary school and university students have been participating in study-abroad programmes and foreign language courses. Interest in studying at university has greatly increased and cannot be satisfied by domestic institutions, which can only meet around 50% of the demand for places. Furthermore, as the Czech language is scarcely spoken outside the country, knowledge of foreign languages is highly regarded and viewed as a key to enhancing educational and career opportunities. These factors, combined with the rapid growth of the Czech economy (at a rate higher than the EU average), have motivated many young Czechs to seek opportunities abroad. Expolingua Praha represents the practical answer to such needs.

The event has been an ideal platform in the Czech Republic to present a diverse range of products, programmes and services focusing on language learning and teaching, intercultural exchange and educational opportunities around the globe.

According to Expolingua Praha final report, the event attracted 5.893 visitors, mainly school and university students; being this the highest number of visitors in the history of the event.

With 5.893 visitors, 102 exhibitors and 21 countries represented, the event was bigger and more diverse than ever before. There was also an increase in exhibitors and countries represented: 102 exhibitors from 21 countries presented their products and services at Expolingua Praha 2008, with institutions from China, Italy and Romania participating for the first time.

For a university, internationalisation means the awareness and operation of interactions within and between cultures through its teaching, research and service functions, with the ultimate aim of achieving mutual understanding across cultural borders. For a national higher education system, internationalisation refers to dialogue with those in other countries<sup>1</sup>.

It is strongly advisable then that an International perspective is necessary when dealing with local development. Expolingua Praha has been the ideal occasion for all participating universities to introduce themselves to the foreign market and to get a more

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<http://www.education.monash.edu.au/centres/mcrie/docs/recentjournalarticles/internationalisation.pdf>

thorough knowledge and understanding of its dynamics. Università Telematica “Guglielmo Marconi” has been one of the expositors with the aim of fostering the study of the Italian language and culture through the new digital technologies. The University offer has been strongly appreciated both by young students and adults during the two-day event; in particular the innovation and the flexibility of UTGM teaching and learning methodology as an immediate and usable opportunity of opening up to other countries.

The success of the fair can be seen as a real chance for the Czech Republic to open up to the outer world. In this framework UTGM can represent an optimum choice to respond to the need of a growing market as the Czech market.

Expolingua Praha was opened ceremonially by the Ambassador of Switzerland, H.E. Jean-François Kammer and the Cultural Attaché of the French Embassy in Prague, Jean-Marc Berthon. EXPOLINGUA Praha 2008 took place under the patronage of Ján Figel, Member of the European Commission responsible for Education, Training, Culture and Youth and was supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in the Czech Republic.

The extensive seminar programme, which runs parallel to the exhibition, was very well received. Seventy-one presentations and seminars informed visitors about the latest developments in language learning and teaching. A variety of mini language courses in Spanish, French, Arabic, Chinese, Portuguese, Italian and Romanian provided an opportunity for visitors to test their language learning skills and a hip hop workshop offered them a chance to unwind body and mind.