Minutes of the EEPG Marketing Network meeting in Athens, 19-20 May 2005

Participants:

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Wednesday 18 May: Welcome dinner hosted by Patakis Publishers

Thursday 19 May:

10.00-13.00:

The morning session was an open meeting, attended by teachers, authors and representatives of the Greek Ministry of Education.
After the welcome speech by Stefanos Patakis there was a presentation by Staffan Selander, president of IARTEM (International Association for Research on Textbooks and Educational Media). Textbooks and the design and structure of textbooks were presented from different perspectives (historical, pedagogical, social etc.) which lead to an overview of the aspects to take into account when evaluating textbooks (click here to see the presentation).
Secondly, Preben Spåth, EEPG, presented the textbook approval systems in selected countries of Europe, partly based on the findings of the Austrian Ministry of Education, partly on the internal survey within the EEPG (carried out in 2004). Using the debate on state approval or not as a starting point he presented the quality system behind the Principles of Quality defined by the so called Quality Team who also take part in the evaluation of the annual contributions to the EEPG Best Schoolbooks Awards (click here to see the presentation).
After these presentations there was an in depth discussion of the numerous aspects of textbook evaluation in the different countries represented at the meeting.

15.00–17.00:

Topic: How we are organised and how we work together; who is playing which role; in which phases are the books evaluated and by whom?

The first performance was made by Manfred Meraner, who started with Veritas Publisher’s vision – their wish is to be number one in the schoolbook market and to get a better position in the other markets. Veritas interview their staff once a year to discover how satisfied they are with their job and with the situation in publishing house. Free courses are possible for them who need it or want to enhance their qualification. At the moment there is a goal to raise their market share in schoolbook market to 20%. Very important and determinative issues in strategy planning are also communication, money and technology. There is no
possibility to be in the market if you don’t have at least 20% of new products. Before starting to work with a
new product they call together a small group of teachers to discuss about their new idea. If the idea is good
they start to work with it in spite of very viable competitor(s). 90% of products start from the publishing house
and only 10% of ideas come from teachers (authors). After approval a new idea – there is made a decision
that the publishing house starts to work with this product - there is usually a new product’s workgroup
meeting. That means that editors, designers, production, and marketing talk about very important things:
1) Why should one teacher want this schoolbook?
2) What are the elements of this material – teacher’s book, workbook, CD, another supplementary
materials?
3) The first ideas for marketing?
4) Timetable?

In Austria – and also in Germany – they use teachers’ home addresses while sending advertising materials,
invitations or another information necessary for teachers. They have discovered that sending information via
school secretary is not effective – it has happened (and obviously quite often) that secretary simply forgets or
for some reasons doesn’t want to forward the information.
In Veritas they have a database where everyone can see everything about production, selling, about income
and expenses. This database is really very open for everyone so there are very few secrets in Veritas!!!
Marketing usually makes a very deep “homework” – good discussions and plans before the product is ready.
But if some or one part of set is not ready in time they stop a campaign and just leave it for this year because
all the materials have to be ready – it’s important for teachers to see and feel the new book before she
makes a decision.
The communication between editors and marketing is usually good but sometimes it happens that changes
in the plan don’t reach to everyone (click here to see the presentation).
Jukka Vahtola, Otava Publishing Company, told that the situation is quite same in Finland as it is in Austria.
Tomas Mikalonis from Alma Littera (Lithuania) and Dace Rudzite from Zvaigzne (Latvia) both agreed that the
marketing situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia is not the same as in West Europe. In all these countries
the competition is very hard but the methods for winning a new clients are not the same. Publishing houses
do not spend so much money for marketing, for example even marketing departments are very small. In all
three countries much more resources are used to make different courses and to give teachers some extra
knowledge for free.
Marusa Kmet from Rokus Publishing House (Slovenia) mentioned almost the same – they also arrange lots
of courses. This year they figured that you get much more interest if you find an attractive name for the
course.
Elena Pataki from Patakis Publishers (Greece) gave us a very interesting information about situation in
Greece. Authorities arrange a competition if there is a need for new textbook. If a publishing house is lucky
and wins this competition they get a fee from state (very safe!) but after that they don’t have any right to
publish this book. The do lot of supplementary materials which are for this market totally free. They also
arrange numerous events and seminars but – as in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia – they also don’t dine and
wine teachers as they do in wealthy countries.
Lena Gennerud from Bokförlaget Natur och Kultur (Sweden) was not very happy about co-operation
between marketing and editors. Marketing has to force the other colleagues to listen what they have to say
about new products. Sometimes it happens that marketing does make a very good campaign but it doesn’t
work because connection with editors has not been sufficient. In Bokförlaget Natur och Kultur they have
different marketing people for primary school and secondary school and their sales representatives are
usually former teachers.
Frank Thalhofer from Cornelsen Verlag (Germany) said that their system is quite similar to Austria. They
have 16 information centres for collecting and summarising information about the market. In their publishing
house meetings form a natural part of their work and sometimes there seems to be even too many meetings.
Right after getting a new idea editors try to frame the product. After that the marketing department has to
make their calculations and give editors their opinion within 45 days.
In the evening all participants were invited by Patakis Publishers to attend an excellent concert in the Athens Concert Hall with the Guiseppe Verdi Orchestra of Milan.

Friday 20 May:

In the morning the participants had the opportunity to attend a guided tour on the famous Acropolis.

After lunch the meeting continued as planned:

**Topic: Marketing issues in general, including:**

a) market segments and their relationship to contents, media etc.
b) organising the communication process with the customers
c) "best practice" in our company (example of a successful marketing campaign)
d) "worst practice" in our company (example of a less successful marketing campaign)
e) summarising of what we have learned and outlook into the future

Minna Nymark, Otava Publishing Company, presented the structure and idea behind a campaign for the primary school project OTSO ('Little bear'). She mentioned the benefits for members of the OTSO club, the special events, the customer magazine and the Otso road show visiting one school per day for 4 weeks. More than 20% of all primary school teachers in Finland have joined the Otso club by now. Minna Nymark was proud to state that Otava has no examples of bad campaigns – so far! (Click here to see the presentation).

Dace Rudzik, Zvaigzne ABC Publishers, gave a detailed presentation of the publishing house and its organisation. Special attention was given to the co-operation between Zvaigzne and the teachers (monthly seminars, further education courses are organised by the publishing house and are compulsory for the teachers). The role of the book bus was also mentioned along with the 14 book shops nation-wide. Zvaigzne has a market share of more 50% in Latvia (click here to see the presentation).

Tomas Mikalonis, Alma Littera/Šviesa, described the tight co-operation within the Alma Littera group in Lithuania. Together the group now covers more than 70% of the educational market. More details can be found in the presentation (click here to see the presentation).

Maire Tänna, Koolibri Publishers, presented the ABITS campaign; a brand new ABC book with especially well suited illustrations for kids. The book has been tested in 4 classes this year and the outcomes of this trial have had impact on the final product. Accompanying the schoolbook is an extraordinary promotion video with sample animations and sounds describing the world of the main characters, but also a short genuine opera based on the narrative of the schoolbook.

Lennart Persson, Bokförlaget Natur och Kultur, described the many different types of activities organised and carried out by the marketing department, including among other things advertising, PR activities, seminars and workshops (for teachers who have bought books of the company), direct marketing (free copies of all new books to relevant teachers), digital newsletter, book fairs, school visits (by sales reps), telemarketing and numerous information meetings.

Lena Gellerud, Bokförlaget Natur och Kultur, had decided to concentrate on a 'bad' campaign for a textbook with big letters, based on the reading methods from New Zealand. Two competing publishers had already entered this market – and Natur och Kultur thought they could enter the market, too. The packages consisted of the big letter book itself plus a poster with nice graphics, books with picture stories (without any text at all). In addition the method was described in detail to the teachers, but in the end almost no books were sold despite discount, free seminars etc. Maybe the lesson learnt is that you should be careful entering a market if you are not sure about the size of that market and if competitors are already active to some degree?

Maruša Kmet, Rokus Publishing House, gave a presentation of the organisation and the structure of the publishing house including the roles of the editorial and marketing departments. Special attention was paid to the many different types of web sites that are located in Rokus. Not only catalogues are presented on-line, but also events of relevance to teachers and/or students, free work sheets for teachers to download, special sections for authors working for Rokus etc. (click here to see the presentation).
Frank Thalhofer, Cornelsen Verlag, presented both a successful campaign and an example of 'worst' practice. The successful campaign was a book package for French beginners (called 'A plus 1'). Klett Verlag had had 95% of this market for years, and Cornelsen wanted to challenge this. Lots of direct mailing activities to the French teachers was one aspect, another aspect was competition (prizes included bottles of French wine). All activities are mentioned in the presentation (see below). As an example of 'worst' practice a web portal for teachers, parents and pupils was described. The main problem was probably how to make such a portal known to the target group, thinking of the thousands of web portals and web sites already on the Internet (click here to see the presentation).

Barbara Strobl, Veritas Verlag, presented two campaigns, one not so successful about the German language coursebook series "Kek", and another more successful campaign about the Latin course package "Medias in res". The materials were clearly presented and described in the presentation, including considerations as to why the first campaign did not succeed (too complicated, too many authors are among the possible reasons) (click here to see the presentation).

Daniel Zderic, Profil International, first gave a short presentation of the structure and organisation of the publishing company (click here to see the presentation). Next he gave a detailed presentation of samples of successful campaigns, including considerations about what makes a textbook good (click here to see the presentation).

Elena Patakis and Vagelis Baklavas, Patakis Publishers, first gave an introduction to the special features of the schoolbook market in Greece. The brand name is very important for educational publishers. The publishers have to give serious thoughts to teacher’s guides, descriptions of teaching methods etc., since exclusively the Ministry of Education decides the schoolbooks themselves. This year new types of seminars for teachers have been introduced where teachers pay to get further training, organised by Patakis publishers.

Next Elena Patakis presented a series of first readers, 3 books of increasing levels. All schools received one of the three books as a free sample plus a leaflet describing the pedagogical methodology behind the series. Among the interesting and innovative marketing materials were stickers for cars (looking like a traffic sign triangle with the text 'Attention, child reads'), big posters for the whole series, newsletter to all teachers, radio spots advertising for the books, and movie clips shown in ordinary cinemas. The campaign has been expensive, of course, but also very successful.

As the last issue of this network meeting we discussed possible items for the coming meeting of the marketing network. Among these items were:
- experience with producing two parallel series of books for the same subject, i.e. a company competing with itself to gain more market share
- using the internet as a marketing tool
- a semiotic analysis of the marketing slogans used by members of the EEPG

Finally it was suggested as a general reminder for all network meetings that presentations of the member publishing houses and presentations of the national school systems should be sent beforehand to Preben Späth who would then put these presentations on the EEPG web site. This would leave more time for discussing the relevant and more network specific issues.

On behalf of the participants I would like to thank our Greek hosts for helping to organise this network meeting and to make it a clear success.

14 June 2005
Preben Späth