

AEHT - Newsletter

Dear AEHT Members,

The AEHT Presidium has just returned from a ten-day fact-finding mission to Colombia as guests of the SENA (Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje – National Training Service), Colombia's largest public training organisation, responsible to the Colombian Ministry for Social Protection; the SENA provides each year free initial training for more than 400.000 persons, and gives continuing education to more than three and a half million workers.



Sébastien Longhurst,
our host, interpreter
and guide throughout
our stay



Part of the delegation at the Hotel de la Opera

The SENA was founded in 1957 by workers' organisations, company directors and the catholic church, with the support of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as part of Colombia's industrialisation effort; it quickly became a key factor in economic and social development throughout the country. The SENA currently has 115 training centres distributed across all 33 departments of Colombia. The training infrastructures set up by the SENA, the training programmes it has put in place and continually adapted to keep pace with the industry's needs for qualifications, and the information it has made available – all of this is aimed at improving the country's productivity and competitiveness. The SENA's official slogan says it all about its mission: 'Conocimiento y competitividad para todos los Colombianos' (Knowledge and competitiveness for all Colombians).



Mobile Classroom

SENA mobile training kitchen at the
Finca El Espejo

The SENA plays a highly important social and economic role, aiming as it does to provide every Colombian, including the most impoverished, with a training programme that is free of charge (financed through professional taxes and payroll taxes) and that covers all practical areas, resulting in 98% of trainees going on to paid employment (thanks especially to the SENA's public employment service). This policy has paid dividends by helping to reduce petty crime in deprived areas of large cities and by minimising the influence of guerrillas in regions where they operate; with the return of foreign investment, the country's socioeconomic development has quickened its pace, through an impressive increase in the competitiveness of industry and a concomitant improvement in the standard of living.

The SENA also plays a crucial role in developing an entrepreneurial culture and in starting up companies and creating jobs in Colombia. The 'entrepreneurial fund' (Fondo Emprender) for example gives financial support to students who want to set up their own businesses. The 'Opportunity Bank' offers micro-credit for this purpose, even to the least well-off. 'Company incubators', not-for-profit organisations linked to the SENA, aim to speed up the creation of new, innovative companies by offering them a consultancy service and targeted technical assistance. In order to encourage the exchange of knowledge between entrepreneurs and students wishing to set up IT companies, the SENA is currently supporting the creation of technology parks. Since 2003 the SENA has provided online training programmes in a large number of fields, while also making computers available to students in its own training centres, in computer rooms provided by local authorities and in community e-centres created by the Compartel programme which is, once again, financed by the SENA. Research and development facilities are made available to companies. The SENA also provides technical assistance and a consultancy service to entrepreneurs.

Through improved training for staff working in the restaurant, hotel and tourism sectors, the SENA has certainly contributed to an improvement in the performance of the tourism industry, thus strengthening the country's economy and protecting it from a form of globalisation that is too much influenced by multinationals, as well as

shielding it from foreign interference. By becoming a highly desirable tourist destination, Colombia will achieve stability not only in its internal security, but also in its economic development.



Mona Lisa in the
Botero Museum



Police Academy (feminine version)

The SENA is eager to establish new partnerships with European hotel and tourism schools with a view to improving its training programmes, modernising its facilities and organising teacher and student exchanges with Europe. The SENA would like to find schools willing to receive Colombian students in the third week of November 2008 for a week's placement. If you are interested in this scheme, please contact Sébastien Longhurst (SENA International Relations Group, slonghurst@sena.edu.co). The SENA would also like to have the AEHT's comments on its gastronomy portal which aims, among other things, to revive Colombia's rich gastronomic traditions by creating a record of the numerous local recipes which until now have always been handed down orally.

At this point the reader may well wonder what is the point of the AEHT being involved in a fact-finding mission in Colombia.

The mission had several objectives:

- Opening up opportunities for the AEHT in Latin America, a continent with promising development prospects;
- Arranging access to the SENA's 115 training centres and to the network of companies (hotel and tourism businesses) which operate in partnership with the SENA;
- Exchanging knowledge and skills between AEHT member schools and the SENA's training centres;
- Establishing contacts with potential new professional members;
- Organising placements for students and teachers in hotel businesses;
- Cooperating in tourism-related fields in Colombia and in the SENA's drive to strengthen the hotel and tourism sectors;

- Discovering a new culinary culture using raw materials and ingredients which are relatively unknown in Europe;
- Assessing the country's potential as a tourist destination offering gastronomic restaurants;
- Acquiring more objective knowledge about the situation in Colombia.

Please visit our website for a more detailed account of our visit. Below you will find a brief description in words and pictures of the highlights of our trip, which began on Saturday February 16th with a guided tour of La Candelaria, Bogotá's historic district. We were quite enchanted by this capital city of seven million inhabitants who seem never to sleep, with its architectural and cultural wonders and its rich gastronomy. Our guided tour included: the presidential palace which is located within the Casa de Nariño; the first observatory to be built on Latin American soil; the Santa Clara church, now also a museum, the only historic building to have withstood the earthquakes which frequently afflict this region; the Plaza de Bolívar with its city hall, the house of representatives, the senate, the law courts and Bogotá cathedral. Inside the cathedral is the tomb of Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, who founded the city of Bogotá in 1538.



Observatory



Presidential Palace

On Sunday February 17th Michel Gaillot suggested we visit the Paloquemao market, a real Ali Baba's cave with a thousand tastes and colours.



The flower market and the fruit and vegetable market of
Paloquemao

The following day our delegation received a warm welcome at the Bogotá hotel and catering training centre, which boasts its own training hotel.

First came a formal presentation of the SENA by Sébastien Longhurst, with contributions from Julia Gutiérrez de Piñeres, Director of the International Relations Department and from Judith Castañeda, Deputy Director of the National Training Centre for the Hotel, Tourism and Catering Industry. Then each member of our delegation had the opportunity to give a short presentation of the education system in his or her country, and to give a brief description of his or her school and its distinctive features.



L. Robert, J. Gutiérrez de Piñeres
M. Gaillot, and B. Pienkowska



Trout with broad beans,
Richi potatoes and yucca
root cassava

Dario Montoya, the SENA's Director General, joined us for a delicious lunch, after which there was a signing ceremony to mark the moment when the SENA officially joined the AEHT as an observer member.



L. Robert and Dario
Montoya, SENA Director
General



The signing of the agreement between
the AEHT and the SENA

Next we visited the Crowne Plaza Tequendama hotel, which belongs to the pension fund of the Colombian armed forces and is therefore managed by a General, Orlando Salazar Gil. During our short meeting with the General, he said that he was prepared to offer placements in his hotel to teachers from AEHT member schools, as part of a future programme of collaboration.

Very early on Tuesday February 19th we set off for Armenia, Colombia's coffee paradise. Once we had settled into the Finca El Espejo and eaten a copious paesa breakfast, we were whisked away in

a fleet of 4x4s led by Carmenza Quintero, Director of the Armenia hotel school, to the El Agrado Coffee Analysis and Tasting Centre, run by the Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia.



Breathtaking view over the
Coffee Park

Finca El Espejo

It was an amazing experience to discover the process of coffee production, from the planting of the seedlings of the coffee bushes to the roasting of the beans, guided by the centre's director Jaime Duque Londoño; Jaime took us to tables in a bamboo grove to enjoy an excellent Quindío coffee, then taught us how to taste coffee just like the professionals. We hope we can persuade the Coffee Growers Federation to join our association and to present their coffees to us at our next annual conference in Kuressaare.



Enjoying a cup of coffee in
the middle of a bamboo
grove



Coffee tasting in the
El Agrado laboratory

In the afternoon we took part in a three-hour round-table discussion at the Armenia hotel school, on the subject of 'strategies for the development of 'alternative' (ecological, green community) tourism'; in the audience were the school's students and a dozen local hoteliers eager to develop new activities.

On Wednesday we reluctantly left our idyllic finca and set off to Medellín, to visit the SENA's facilities and training restaurant belonging to their training centre on the Plaza Mayor. Our visit continued far into the afternoon at the Pedregal Training Centre, an avant-garde institution which has benefited from the changes brought about by the director of the 'Advanced Manufacture and Design Department', Álvaro Ospina. Under his

guidance the Pedregal centre has successfully been transformed from a teacher-centred institution to a system encouraging autonomous and student-centred learning under the guidance of a tutor.



Kitchen in the Plaza Mayor Conference Centre

Pedregal Training Centre

On Thursday February 21st several members of our delegation took part in a round-table discussion on the theme of 'Towards a modernisation of Colombian gastronomy – fusion of the traditional with the contemporary'. The event was arranged by the hotel school and took place at the SENA's headquarters for the Antioquia department. We were honoured by the presence of Julian Estrada, a renowned researcher in Colombian culinary arts, whose field work is about to be published under the title 'Colombia Sal y Dulce'. The discussion was very lively, reflecting Colombians' eagerness to safeguard their traditional culinary heritage.



Round Table Discussion in Medellín

Our next destination was the Caribbean coast and the Sucre department, where we headed for Santiago de Tolú, a haven of peace, carefully guarded because of the oil-fields located in the Golfo de Morrosquillo. Tolú is a modest tourist destination, though very picturesque and a great favourite of the inhabitants of Medellín.

After a brief twilight dip in the sea, we were the guests at a banquet given by the mayor of Santiago de Tolú at the local Gastronomy and Tourism school.

At a touching ceremony we were declared citizens of honour by a decree issued by the municipality of Santiago de Tolú. A group of beautifully attired little girls presented us with the traditional broad-brimmed hat and the keys to the town.



Culinary Arts Courses for Presentation of the Keys to the Town to Budding Chefs

The following morning we were treated to a guided tour and presentation of the Tolú school, followed by a demonstration of the SENA's Colombian Gastronomy Portal which is currently under development; the AEHT will shortly be asked to give its opinion on the portal.



the SENA's Colombian Gastronomy Portal We were met everywhere by the local press

On our return from a boat-trip and oyster-tasting in the mangrove swamps of the Ciénaga la Caimanera (Crocodile Creek) we shared our traditional suckling pig and rice (cooked in a clay oven which had previously been heated with a wood fire) with a crowd of journalists, who clamoured for interviews after the meal. We should mention that we were accompanied by journalists throughout our journey, and a report on our mission will be appearing in the next number of 'Catering', a specialist magazine.



In the Ciénaga la Caimanera in excellent company



In the Ciénaga la Caimanera in excellent company

Our next destination was the breathtaking colonial city of Cartagena de Indias, fortified by the Conquistadors to fend off the constant attacks by pirates seeking to relieve the city of the treasures which had been amassed there while awaiting shipment to the Spanish crown. The city has been used as the location for many films, such as 'The mission (1985)', and 'Love in Time of Cholera' (2007)' based on the novel by Gabriel García Marques, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982 and who is fortunate enough to own a villa in Cartagena.



Casa del Marqués de Premio Real on the Plaza de la Aduana, occupied by the Caribbean Gastronomy School



El Coro (the choir) Bar in the Sofitel Santa Clara Hotel, a former convent dating from 1621 and a charity hospital



Saturday began with a visit of the host school's premises, followed by a series of presentations:

- Nora Luz Salazar, SENA Regional Director, gave a welcome address and a presentation of SENA's main policy directions in the region;
- Luis Guillermo Martínez, Director of the Cartagena Tourism Corporation, gave a presentation on the tourism sector & related activities;
- Rafael Martínez, Director of the Caribbean Gastronomy School, gave a presentation of the school's training activities;
- Francisco Cervantes, Director of the Business and Services Centre for the Bolívar department, gave an account of the SENA's training activities in the tourism, gastronomy and hotel sectors;

- A presentation of the project involving cooperation between the Nice hotel school in France and the SENA aimed at modernising the SENA's tourism training programme, and at setting up a new system of accreditation. The contributors were Jacques Bessou (an international expert in computer-based vocational training), Wolfgang Latorre (coordinator for teaching methodology at the Bogotá training centre) and Nancy Cabrera (a renowned chef and gastronomy consultant to the SENA's Director General).



Rafael Martínez, Director of the Caribbean Gastronomy School Luis Guillermo Martínez, Director of the Cartagena Tourism Corporation
Francisco Cervantes, Director of the Business and Services Centre
El Marqués Boutique Hotel (Nancy Cabrera & Jacques Bessou Seated left)

The 'cazuela de mariscos' (shellfish casserole) served for lunch at the DianaMar restaurant and the best in Cartagena according to our hosts, was a unique culinary experience. For our farewell dinner on the terrace of the Casa del Marqués, the students from the Cartagena school really pulled out all the stops: not only were we served a delicious dinner, we also danced the night away to cumbia, salsa and merengue music provided by the 'gaita' band made up of SENA students. Our group finished the evening to the sound of salsa in the 'La Quemada' bar, initially a film set bar constructed in 1969 for the film 'Queimada' ('Burn') with Marlon Brando and Evaristo Marquez; it was subsequently turned into a real bar by some members of the film crew.



Amazing cazuela de mariscos served at DianaMar

Typical narrow street in enchanting Cartagena

Next day it was time to take leave of Cartagena; some of us were flying back to Europe, others were headed for a final debriefing meeting at the SENA headquarters in Bogotá. For all of us, this journey to Colombia was a deeply satisfying experience, both professionally and personally. Plans for cooperation are already on the stocks.

Several seminars and competitions are scheduled to take place in the next few months:

For its 4th competition for Hotel Reception Employees and its 2nd 'Tourism in Town' competition, both to take place from May 8th-11th this year, the I.P.S.S.A.C.T. "L. DI POPPA" in Giulianova (I) has already accepted applications from 27 Italian schools and 14 foreign schools, including four from Croatia, one from Latvia, one from the Netherlands, two from Finland, one from Palma de Mallorca, one from Malta, one from Poland, two from Russia and one from Denmark. The organisers would be very glad to receive applications from other member countries such as France, Germany, etc. Roll up! If you would like to apply to take part, please contact Anna Di Febo without delay (ipssact.giuldiifebo@libero.it).



Emblems and founder of the City of Giulianova

There is also the 2nd International Thrace Cup organised from April 9th-13th by the Anatolian Hotel and Tourism School in Tekirdag, Turkey; please note that the programme and all the documents for the bar and culinary arts competitions as well as the application forms are now available on our website www.aehi.eu. Please note that the deadline for receiving applications is March 31st 2008.

From April 22nd - 25th the Gothenburg school (Sweden) invites you to take part in its seminar entitled '**From the Sea to the Plate: a course on sustainable methods of harvesting and preparing fish and shellfish**'. Since our Internet service provider carried out some system changes in February, we are currently experiencing some problems managing our website. We therefore prefer to remind you via this newsletter of the organiser's banking details:

Account name: Ester Mosessons Culinary School ;

Bank name: Nordea, Göteborg (S)

IBAN account number:

SE55 9500 0099 6034 0920 2441.

We look forward to seeing you all again in Kuressaare.

With best wishes,

Nadine SCHINTGEN
AEHT General Secretary

Texte : N. Schintgen, J. Rees Smith
Photos : N. Schintgen, J. Rees Smith, P. Troquenet
Traduction anglaise : J. Rees Smith

Nos partenaires professionnels :

