



## **Nick Byrne celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Viadrina Language Centre**

Having worked as a language centre director for over 25 years, first at the University of Arts London, and then at the London School of Economics and Political Science, I have built up an excellent database of those language centres which I have used as benchmarks.

The language centre at Viadrina is one of those centres of excellence which inspire, inform and initiate new ideas.

How do I know and measure this? I use six simple but key criteria:

- The need for a range of language courses which are part of and contribute to the university's undergraduate and postgraduate degree offer
- The need for a range of vocational language courses which facilitate employability and internationalisation
- The need for language and inter-cultural support programmes to help international students
- The need to develop income generating programmes which support the university
- The need to maximise the relevance of applied research to increase professionalism
- The need to run a range of outreach programs to involve all members of the community in the city itself

All of these needs are met by the Sprachenzentrum at the Viadrina. Furthermore they are met with enthusiasm and dedication.

However a successful language centre is more than just the act of teaching - although this is of course at its core. It has to provide a physical home for its students and staff. Again this sense of providing a home, a sense of identity is apparent in both the physical space and technology on offer.

To sum up, the success of any language centre depends on its administrative team, its teachers and its director. The university is lucky in having a dedicated team which has been so successful in delivering a range of quality courses. It is also lucky in having a director, Dr Thomas Vogel, who has built up a range of international contacts, and who is recognised as an innovative decision maker in the world of language provision in higher education. The Wulkow group - soon to celebrate its own 10th anniversary - is a potent symbol of this.

Finally, Thomas mentioned the hive mentality and close thinking and working of his team. Well, if the language centre is a beehive, then at the centre is a queen bee - and one with a big personality, a lot of energy and a real sense of vision.

Happy 25th Birthday!

Nick Byrne  
Former Director LSE Language Centre