



Continuous Training – the French Experience

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1. General context

While it was still conceivable in the 1950s that a professional would, after the completion of its initial training, enrich himself, this situation is over now. The fast and growing evolution of technologies, the accumulation of laws and regulations, the constant enlargement of areas of activities, the multiplication of exchanges entail that the initial formation, however complete it may be, and experience cannot anymore be regarded as a safeguard for the professional to ensure to his clients and relationships a guarantee of competence.

As a matter of fact, a new notion emerged in the second half of the 20s century, namely the notion of continuous training.

2. Concrete application to the profession

As regards the profession of surveyors, this obligation emerged very early.

3. OGE's role in continuous training

■ Main provisions

The law establishing the French national association of surveyors dating back to May 6th, 1946, its consecutive decrees of application, as well as the internal rules precise the role of training.

- Article 17 of the law foresees that the French surveyors' Council "is watching over discipline and professional improving"
- Article 47 of the decree dating back to May, 31st 1996 reads that "the land surveyor shall maintain and improve its professional knowledge".
- OGE's role is to check the competence of its members

The checking of this competence is not only ensured during the registration to the association, but it is also regularly carried out during the professional life of OGE's members.

The application of the rules enacted by OGE is made at the Regional Councils' level and can be twofold :

- Periodical checking of offices – the most common way
- When clients complain or express their doubts about certain practices of a given surveyor to a Regional Council – another option.

Certain specific activities such as technical diagnostics to detect the presence of lead or asbestos in buildings, real estate management are subject to preliminary specific trainings under the control of Regional Councils.

4. The institution of mandatory continuous training

The adoption of a directive in 1999 by the French surveyors' Council rendered continuous training mandatory.

This first directive laid down a minimum of 40 hours of training per year. Those 40 hours were considered on a basis of a three year period. Every 3 years, every surveyor had to prove that he had undergone 120 hours of training.

OGE's training commission is in charge of putting on line the different existing trainings.

Regional Councils must enforce disciplinary measures in case of default which can rank from a simple warning to a ban to practice the profession in case of a serious default.

However, every sanction regarding a breach of the obligation of continuous training is subject to an appeal before the French surveyors' Council, like any other disciplinary sanction imposed by Regional Councils.

This obligation of continuous training was even more amplified by the French surveyors' Council last year.

Since January 1st, 2009, the minimum level of training consists of 5 days of direct training plus 3 days of indirect training (participation to Congresses, redaction of articles for professional

reviews...). Last but not least, the breakdown of days is made every year.

The Council indeed recognized that it was extremely difficult to ensure a checking on a 3-year period time. The checking will, from this year on, be made every year. Surveyors will have to send, before the 1st of March, a declaration of the trainings they have attended plus a justification for all of them to their Regional Council.

The trainings can either be trainings organized by the OGE or by departmental or regional professional instances, or complementary university trainings, or specializations in a given area. But in any case all the trainings must be in relation to the activities of surveyors or to the improvement in the management of offices.

Trainings can also lead to OGE's or any other instance's certifications (e.g. OGE's certification for the technical diagnosis of buildings, certification of the Town Planning Qualification Public Office).

In order to offer available trainings, a special national Commission was created with a view to:

- Suggesting themes and speakers
- Evaluating the suggested trainings
- Putting on OGE's website the different existing trainings while specifying the dates, locations, speakers, content, and the validation by OGE
- As regards the trainings organized by OGE, the content of the training and the skills of the trainer are systematically evaluated by the participants; the evaluations are then sent to the training commission which will analyze them.

Certain trainings dealing with fundamental areas have even been rendered compulsory:

- continuous training on land delimitation in 2002
- continuous training on insurances and risks in 2005
- training on numerical land registry in 2006
- training on the new town planning rules in 2007
- a training on land techniques in the framework of the delegation of public services of surveyors is under preparation.

5. Summer universities of surveyors

5.1 Basic principle

In order to mobilize surveyors on continuous training, the executive board of the council established for the first time in 2005 a new concept deriving from the notaries' experience.

The idea is to organize periodically, in one place, during a few days, half a day or full day trainings on different subjects. Here are the main advantages of this concept:

- It's better to undergo a training while being away from the office
- Spending many days in one place is good in terms of sharing of experiences with other colleagues
- It's an opportunity for the Council to communicate about the difficulties of the profession, the actions to be taken, etc
- The costs are less important
- Friendly atmosphere
- Good way to unite the profession and reinforce the «esprit de corps» of the profession
- The control of attendance record is easier

Summer universities are organized every two years (odd years) so as not to conflict with OGE's congresses that take place during even years. They last for 3 days in one of the 3 schools leading to the profession of surveyor.

The evaluation of trainings is based on the following criteria:

1. content of the programme
2. balance between the programme and professional practice
3. quality of the trainers
4. interactivity
5. distribution of time between the different subjects
6. quality of teaching aids.

We attach much importance to the diversity of subjects (legal, technical, management of offices).

Trainers can be surveyors themselves, academics, or professionals (notaries, lawyers...). Trainings are open to surveyors, managerial staff, surveying trainees, foreign surveyors coming from French-speaking countries, but also to the teaching staff of surveying technical schools.

5.2 Return of experience – perspectives for 2009

Summer universities were a great success last year and gathered more than 400 participants during 3 days. According to the statistics, 96% of the participants declared that they will come back the year after. The global budget for the last 2007

summer universities amounted to 400 000 euros. At the end of the day, the balance sheet was positive. For 2009, let me briefly give you a selection of different subjects that will be covered:

- The reform of our urban planning code
- The financing of public equipments
- The right of way : how to avoid conflicts?
- Real estate taxation
- Land delimitation
- The management of meetings
- Ethics and deontology
- GPS for “dummies”.

5.3 The future of universities – the development of the concept

The success of the 2005 and 2007 summer universities cannot but lead us to perpetuate and improve this event. While at the beginning we planned to organize such meetings only every two years, the constant increase of mandatory days of training may, one of these days, lead us to launch annual summer universities. Similarly the length of these meetings could grow from 3 days to 4 or 5 days (as it is already the case for the notaries) Workshops will have to be divided in two level groups: “beginners” and “confirmed”.

Summer universities cannot as such cover the number of mandatory hours of continuous training but they could, at least, cover half of the needs on fundamental subjects. The second half could be covered at the regional level with smaller groups of participants and more specific topics. Besides,

a degree of flexibility is of course required should a new law or new provisions trigger a need for a specific training.

6. Conclusion

In the framework of a more and more globalisation and a growing complexity of our professional practices, our professions can only perpetuate if their members are highly competent. This competence necessarily stem from a high level of initial training but also a top-level continuous training. The duty of professional organisations in this area is:

- To render continuous training mandatory
- To evaluate and offer top-level trainings
- To control the participation of surveyors
- To impose sanctions in case of default.

Last but not least, one cannot but be delighted at the European recall of this legal and technical obligation of continuous training in the recommendations of the Strasbourg declaration which was signed in September 2008 by the two European associations of surveyors, namely the Comité de Liaison des Géomètres Européens (CLGE) and Geometer Europas (GE).

Contact

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