



REPORT

Workshop “Students Where Are You?”

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1. Introduction

This workshop focused on the factors that make (or could make) the surveying profession attractive to young people. Globally the attractiveness of the profession seems to vary. Some surveying courses are closing whilst others report a good demand for places from high quality students.

Participants were randomly selected to be in one of four groups who were invited to discuss five key questions and report back on their findings. These four groups were led by:

- Tamas Jancso, *Hungary*,
- Carmen Grecea, *Romania*,
- Henny Mills, *United Kingdom*, and
- Gerhard Navratil, *Austria*.

The five questions addressed by each group were:

1. Is the surveying profession itself too unattractive for today's young people?
2. Is the low number of surveying students the result of insufficient and inadequate education?
3. Is the low number of surveying students just the result of a lack of active marketing of surveying education and/or the surveying profession?
4. How to enhance the technical and academic interest in surveying education? Should technical education and training to start at kindergarten/ elementary school?
5. How to encourage life long learning, project management and quality management?

Globally the surveying profession is changing and this impacts the perception of the profession within society generally, and in particular among those who may be considering it as a career. This change is epitomised by FIG President Prof Stig Enemark who speaks of the movement from measurement to management, and of surveyors as professional facilitators; essentially 'The Land Professionals'.

2. Workshop Results

The feedback from the four groups provided a diverse range of views, reflecting the twenty countries attending the workshop. It reflected the extent to which surveying is seen by some as a state regulated profession and by others as a more diverse profession operating within the context of a wider market economy.

To provide a flavour of the discussion key points are outlined that encapsulate the general feedback on each question.

Question 1: Is the surveying profession itself too unattractive for today's young people?

- There does seem to be a negative image about the surveying profession – sometimes it is seen as an outdoor activity with low salary, though for others working indoor on GIS is seen as positive (*Remark: Contrary views are generally found in former transition countries where the profession is well respected with good salaries*)
- Surveying is not as attractive to high flying students as medicine or law though there are global variations
- Generally its not clear what studying surveying involves and this may put some students off
- Some find the interdisciplinary nature of the profession attractive, together with the scientific aspects of the work

There is a need for clear promotional material that is suitable for 'blogs' and social networking sites that are frequently used by young people. FIG Young Surveyors were particularly supportive of this approach.

Question 2: Is the low number of surveying students the result of insufficient and inadequate education?

- In general this was not seen as a problem
- Where this was an issue the subjects of mathematics and physics together with field work was seen as an inhibitor
- The poor or indifferent image of the profession means that students are unclear about the type of work they would be involved in once they were qualified

- One point that was frequently mentioned was the need to make the teaching of mathematics and physics more exciting at secondary level
- There needs to be improved linkages to schools to ensure that teachers are aware of the opportunities through a career in surveying

A comment made in one discussion group summarized the answer to this question "Our public profile is poor: surveyors are people standing on the highway looking through strange instruments. This image needs to change"

Question 3: Is the low number of surveying students just the result of a lack of active marketing of surveying education and/or the surveying profession?

- Again there were wide variations in response to this question which appeared to be linked to the perception of surveying
- In some areas course funding is tied directly to student number and this creates the need for aggressive marketing
- Direct marketing was generally seen as the most successful approach to attract new students
- One example that was reported as being very successful was in France where *Ordre Géomètre-Expert* have one dedicated communication person visiting schools, and have produced a 'comic/cartoon' video to promote the profession
- There was considerable variation in views over the need for a 3 or 5 year degree programmes. Some felt that the 3 year programme simply resulted in a technical qualification

There was agreement that the name of a degree programme was important: it is the first contact with many students and needs to be attractive. The need to promote what being a surveyor actually involves was seen as critically important. There was a widely held view that FIG should take a lead role to develop templates to explain the profession and surveying activities for schools that could be adapted locally.

Question 4: How to enhance the technical and academic interest in surveying education? Should technical education and training to start at kindergarten/ elementary school?

- In many counties primary education embraces surveying as a topic: in some explicitly, in others not so explicitly
- Kindergarten was seen as too early to start promoting the profession
- Engagement with teachers was seen as essential, as are visits to schools to explain

what surveying involves including for example; GPS, spatial modelling, satellite imagery

- The material *The Life Accelerator?* used to promote the US Navy was given as a good example of how to engage with young people

There was general agreement of the need to promote diversity and active involvement in global problems by those in the surveying profession.

Question 5: How to encourage life long learning, project management and quality management?

- In some countries there is mandatory Continuous Professional Development (CPD) where either a chamber of engineers or a professional body is involved
- In some countries compulsory Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) requires skills to be up to date or the insurance would be invalidated
- Chambers or professional bodies should monitor CPD / Life Long Learning (LLL) records and regulations should enable members to be expunged if they fail to comply with mandatory CDP or LLL requirements
- Making mandatory competence in Project Management and Quality Management should ensure that these skills are acquired

3. Conclusions

It would be unfair draw a single set of conclusions from this workshop. However, it is clear that those considering entering the surveying profession will have a realistic expectation. The use of social networks and other electronic communication channels have to explain what the profession does.

In addition younger members of the profession also expect the use of electronic communication including pod casts and webinars to be the norm. What else would they expect?

As a profession there is a requirement for a coherent marketing and communications strategy in place to propagate the attractiveness of the profession and to ensure that members have access to all available resources to keep their skills and knowledge up to date.

Contact

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