

How to Get More Students Involved in FIG

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ABSTRACT

Last year, at the Working Week in Paris, we joined a session about underrepresented groups in FIG. We discussed the problem that there are few female surveyors, few students and few surveyors from distant countries who are participating in these global meetings. We talked a lot about the lack of the representatives of the surveyors of the next generation. It was during this discussion, since we are students, the thought came into our minds; more students should participate during these conferences!

A way for students to be a part of FIG is to get the Universities interested. The Universities could arrange suitable contests to find interested students, and sponsor their participation at the Working Week. This was how we got the chance to participate in Paris. The Educational Board for the Survey Education in Lund, Sweden, encouraged the students to write a paper about the education in Sweden and then the Board chose the most adequate paper and sponsored the journey.

To get the Universities interested in this idea there has to be a well organized co-operation between the specific University and a contact connected to FIG. Those contacts will participate during the Working Week to make the students feel welcome. A way to involve local students is to have them working as functionary people.

At the Working Week there can be a meeting where the students have an opportunity to talk about their experiences, differences between their educations and the possibilities with exchange studies. Another way for the students to get to know each other is to arrange a happening one evening, where the students can get together more casual.

A student organization will be the beginning of a social network with personal contacts and a chance to meet new friends who will be future fellow workers. To let survey-students join the Working Week is a stimulant to FIG and brings important rejuvenation to the organization.

SAMMANFATTNING

Förra året deltog vi på "FIG Working Week" i Paris. Där deltog vi i ett mindre möte som handlade om underrepresenterade grupper inom FIG. Vi diskuterade problemen att det finns för få kvinnliga lantmätare, för få studenter och för få lantmätare från avlägsna länder som deltar i FIGs konferenser. Vi pratade mycket om avsaknaden av nästa generations lantmätare. Det var under det här mötet som tanken slog oss; fler studenter borde delta i FIGs konferenser!

Ett sätt att möjliggöra studentengagemang är att få universiteten intresserade. Universiteten skulle kunna arrangera passande tävlingar för att finna intresserade studenter och därefter sponsra studenternas deltagande i FIGs konferenser. Det var på det här sättet som vi fick chansen att vara med i Paris. Utbildningsnämnden för Lantmäteriprogrammet i Lund uppmuntrade studenterna att skriva en uppsats om utbildningen i Sverige. Nämnden valde sedan ut den mest lämpliga uppsatsen och sponsrade resan.

För att väcka universiteternas intresse bör ett välorganiserat samarbete mellan de specifika universiteten och en kontaktperson inom FIG etableras. Kontaktpersonen skulle kunna delta under konferensen för att få studenterna att känna sig välkomna. Ett sätt att engagera lokala studenter är att erbjuda dem att arbeta som funktionärer på konferensen.

Under konferensen skulle FIG kunna arrangera ett möte där studenterna har möjlighet att utbyta erfarenheter och knyta internationella kontakter. Sådana kontakter kan senare leda till exempelvis möjligheter till utbytesstudier. Ett annat sätt att få studenterna att lära känna varandra är att arrangera en studentafton där studenterna får träffas under mer avslappnade former.

En studentorganisation skulle vara början till ett socialt kontaktnät och en möjlighet att träffa nya vänner och framtida arbetskamrater. Att låta lantmäteristudenter delta i FIGs konferenser innebär en stimulering för organisationen och bidrar till en viktig och nödvändig förnyring.

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1. INTRODUCTION

We are two young women at the moment studying a Master of Science in Land Surveying and Management, at the University of Lund in Sweden. We are at our third year and during the education we have realised how important it is with international co-operation between surveyors all over the world. An international co-operation gives a chance to exchange knowledge and help each other cross the borders.

The purpose with this article is to challenge FIG to work harder with the question how to involve more students in the organization. We will handle the topic in this article from a student perspective; what could be done and how should the proposal be implemented?

2. OUR EXPERIENCE AT THE WORKING WEEK IN PARIS

Last year we attended the FIG Working Week in Paris, where we presented a poster about the gender perspective at the education in Lund. We got the opportunity to participate at the Working Week thanks to the Educational Board of the Survey Education in Lund, Sweden. The Board encouraged the students to write a paper about the education in Sweden and then they chose the most adequate paper and sponsored the journey. This competition was not a one-off event. This way of engaging students in Lund is continuously and this year two other students are participating at the Working Week in Athens.

In Paris we had a great time. We met a lot of interesting people who really inspired and encouraged us. We listened to several remarkable presentations of papers and learned a lot about the situation in other countries. However, we noticed that there was a lack of students and younger surveyors at the conference. This was not what we had expected as we thought that student sponsoring from Universities was a common phenomenon. Our experience had been even more valuable if we had got the chance to meet foreign students in our situation.

During the conference we joined a session about underrepresented groups in FIG, held by Gabriele Dasse. Gabriele Dasse is the chair-woman of Working Group 1.5 in Commission 1, Network of Under-represented Groups, which FIG established some years ago. During the session we discussed the problem that there are few female surveyors, few students and few surveyors from distant countries who are participating in these global meetings.

We talked a lot about the lack of representatives of the surveyors of the next generation; more students should participate during these conferences. This is a topic that has been discussed in FIG for several years, but no solution is yet to come. Without active participation of the next generation there is no future for any profession connected to the organization. It was during the discussion with Gabriele Dasse, since we are students, the question came into our minds; how can we get more students involved in FIG?

Besides the discussion with Gabriele Dasse we also got inspired listening to several of the participants. Among others, a young female Surveyor from Fiji who developed the land use system in her home country and a young man from Korea who had done his PhD in Stockholm, Sweden. We also met Surveyors from Canada, Ireland and South Africa who all taught us the importance about international co-operation.

3. INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

It is important not to be narrow-minded when it comes to the development of an education. There are great chances to find inspiration from Universities in other countries if you are open-minded. For example, the Educational Board of the Survey Education in Lund has been inspired by the Survey program in Aalborg, Denmark. In Aalborg the terms are based on projects instead of separate courses and now this way of working has been applied to the Swedish Survey education.

Our grade was the first grade in Sweden trying the “Aalborg-system” and of course there were some adjustment problems in the beginning with this new way of education. However, all kind of changes have some teething troubles and during the years we have realised that this system has only led to improvements.

Another example of international co-operation in Sweden is the state-owned company Swedesurvey. They are internationally recognised for their innovative approach to land management and use of geospatial data. Swedesurvey have full access to all the resources of the National Land Survey of Sweden, Lantmäteriet, and Swedesurvey provide clients all over the world with solutions.

Sweden has a well functional system for detailed information concerning land use, and there is no reason not to share a winning concept with other countries. We believe that one of the most important tasks for an international-thinking Surveyor is to help under-developed countries with their land registers and make them work with satisfaction. FIG is a great forum to meet Surveyors from other countries and get information about their land use systems, this international perspective is important for a Surveyor as well as for a student.

4. WHY STUDENTS ARE IMPORTANT IN FIG

FIG represents an important international perspective of the Survey profession. It is important for students to get a connection to the organization and this international point of view in an early stage of the studies. A connection to FIG brings a possibility for the student to get an international commitment, a chance to meet people of the same age in the same situation and a chance to meet experienced colleagues. A gathering of students connected to FIG would be the beginning for the next generation of Surveyors to get a social network with personal contacts. It will also bring a chance to meet new friends and future fellow workers.

Another aspect of the meetings between students from different countries is the possibility with exchange studies. It is easier to establish a contact with a University abroad if you

already have a personal contact there. The experience of exchange studies brings personal development and understanding for different cultures, which are important in the forthcoming work as a surveyor. Therefore, FIG should work to promote international co-operation also for the students.

Moreover, to let survey-students join the working week is a stimulant to FIG and brings important rejuvenation to the organization. Active participation of the next generation in FIG is very important for the future for all professions connected to the organization. Students involved in FIG do not meet all the needs of today, but they will meet and develop the challenges of tomorrow.

5. HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSAL

Students seldom have the possibility to finance the participation in the Working Weeks. Some kind of sponsoring is necessary for the students to be able to join the gatherings. One way to make this happen is if FIG supplies students with scholarships. However, FIG already has student discounts on the membership fee and scholarships for surveyors from distant countries. A more reasonable possibility is if member-organisations of FIG, such as SLF (the Swedish Survey organisation) or the organizations concerned, like Lantmäteriet, could sponsor students from the specific country. It is in their interest that a Surveyor of the future has a width in her approach to the forthcoming profession.

Another way for students to take part in FIG is to get the Universities interested. The Universities could arrange suitable contests to find interested students, and sponsor their participation at the working week. To sponsor a student is a great chance for both the University and for the specific student. The student becomes an ambassador for the University, which leads to great advertisement. The specific Survey Program will probably be an eminent and well-known education in an international perspective. The University also has the chance to establish international contacts, which can be valuable in many ways.

To get the attention from the Universities, a well organized co-operation between the specific University and a contact connected to FIG has to be established. The responsibility for the co-operation should be in the hands of FIG and our proposal is to create a sub-group. This sub-group could be a part of commission 2 - Professional Education. It is important with a well organized forum to maintain the regularity in the work with establishing students in FIG since you are student in a limited time. The sub-group could be the link between FIG and the worldwide students.

Another way of helping students to be part of FIG is if experienced members stand by students and become some kind of mentor. This mentorship would lead to pleasure for both the mentor and the student since they both can inspire each other. The student will come with new ideas from an educational perspective while the Surveyor inspires the student with knowledge and experience. The mentor and the student could have their contact during the year via e-mail for example and then meet at the Working Week.

6. HOW TO INVOLVE THE STUDENTS DURING THE WORKING WEEK

To make the students feel welcome to the conferences, representatives from FIG should participate during the working week and help the students with the general questions they might have. The representatives will be there to organize the gathering between the students from different countries and be a support to the individuals. It can be a bit tough for a young student to present his thoughts among the experienced members of FIG for the first time. To present a paper for an audience in a foreign language is not what a student is used to do.

A way to make the student feel more secure, and the meeting less formal, is if the representatives from FIG are young and therefore more understanding and interested in the students. This is a great way to involve local students. It is a possibility for all local Survey students when a Working Week takes place in their home country. Many more students have the chance to participate as it does not demand as much funds to get to the conference when it is nearby. FIG could help those students with the experience and pleasure that rely in the task of welcoming foreign students.

At the Working Week there can be a smaller session where the students have the opportunity to talk about their experiences, differences between their educations and the possibilities to exchange studies. These discussions may serve as the basis of a further discussion in the home country of the student. Moreover, to get the foreign and the local students to get to know each other in a more casual way a Student Eve could be arranged. This get-together could be something simple like a night-out at the local pub. The main thing is to get the students to feel akin with each other.

A suggestion that makes it easier for the students, and the veterans, to find each other is if the students wear coloured badges. The representatives from FIG could also help with the arrangements of lodging, such as a room in the local school for example.

In Athens there will be an informal evening meeting for students and young surveyors together with the Greek surveying students. This is a great beginning for a student network and an involvement for students in FIG. We can only hope that there are others, who like us, feel the importance of an international co-operation between the surveyors of today and the next generation.

7. CONCLUSION

In our future profession as surveyors it is important to have international contacts as the countries of the world works differently. There is much knowledge in different areas that can be shared if international contacts are established on an educational level. Today there is a lack of students involved in FIG, which prevents new ideas from young people.

A sub-group for students in FIG and a co-operation between FIG and Survey Programs all over the world would give many young people the great experience that participation at a Working Week gives. A student organization could be the beginning of a social network with

personal contacts and a chance to meet new friends and colleagues from all over the world for both students and veterans.

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