

MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

– Developing a Concept Tailored for the Surveying Profession

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to develop a general understanding of the nature of Mutual Recognition, the challenges we are facing, and the benefits for the world wide surveying community by adopting a FIG policy in this area. The FIG Task Force on Mutual Recognition should be seen as a respond to the globalisation of surveying services, and to the pressures being generated by the WTO agenda which provides a framework for free trade in professional services.

Mutual recognition is a device which allows a qualified surveyor who seeks to work in other country to acquire the same title as that held by surveyors who have qualified in that country, without having to re-qualify. Mutual recognition is, therefore, a process which allows the qualifications gained in one country (the home country) to be recognises in another country (the host country).

The paper presents a methodology for assessment of professional competence tailored for the surveying profession. The principles and responsibilities are identified and the role of the national surveying organisations is highlighted as the key driver in the process. The final report of Task Force on Mutual Recognition of Professional Competence will be presented for adoption at the FIG Congress in Washington 2002. This paper presents the key issues to form the FIG approach in this area.

Mutual recognition is perceived by the European Commission as a device for securing the free movement of professionals within the single market place of the EU. For the WTO, the aim is the global marketplace for services, using the process of mutual recognition of qualifications.

The paper will present the approach taken by the Task Force to develop a FIG concept on Mutual Recognition tailored for the surveying profession. The approach is in line with the pressures generated by the WTO, which provides a general framework for free trade in professional services.

The suggested approach is, however, pragmatic by nature. It draws from the common professional identity of the surveying community. Also, it allows each country to retain its own kind of professional education and training because it is based not on the process of achieving professional qualifications but on the nature and quality of the outcome of that process.

The Task Force recommends that the Bureau at its meeting in Seoul 2001 adopt a policy statement on Mutual Recognition to be included in the final report. A draft for the contents of the final report is presented in the full paper. The final report will be presented for adoption at the FIG Congress in Washington 2002. The draft for a FIG Policy Statement on Mutual recognition reads as follows:

“The International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) recognises the importance of free movement of surveyors in a global marketplace. The mutual recognition of professional qualifications provides a means whereby professional qualifications held by individual surveyors can be recognised by individual professional organisations as comparable to those acquired by their own national surveyors.

FIG will promote the principle of mutual recognition of professional qualifications by:

- Encouraging communication between professional organisations to ensure a better understanding of how surveyors acquire their professional qualifications in different countries;
- Developing with professional organisations a methodology for implementing mutual recognition for surveyors;
- Supporting professional organisations where difficulties are identified in achieving mutual recognition, and encouraging debate at national government level in order to remove such difficulties;
- Working with external organisations (such as the WTO) in order to achieve mutual recognition in both principle and practice of professional qualifications for surveyors world-wide.”

There are a number of barriers, which hinder mutual recognition at a worldwide scale. Language, national customs and cultures are, however, not true barriers to mutual recognition. Ignorance and fear are the main barriers and yet with improved communication and understanding, these should disappear.

Surveyors have professional skills, which are vital for the success of the global marketplace. We need to communicate effectively in order to develop an understanding of the processes and benefits on which mutual recognition can be based. The work of the Task Force has contributed to and furthered the debate.

The principle of mutual recognition has been established and we have the chance to adopt a framework that suits the surveying profession. We should take it.

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