CLGE's Strategy to Develop the Surveying Profession in Europe
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Abstract

Modern surveying business practice in Europe faces a number of challenges for the future. The intensive application of technology within surveying has automated many highly technical procedures. There is a trend towards liberalisation of national surveying markets resulting from the European Union's Internal Market rules and the formulation of a regulatory framework for an international market in business services at the GATS negotiations in Geneva. The marketing power of the Internet also applies added pressure on niche markets by providing alternate solutions for traditional surveying requirements. All of these challenges demand new skills of surveyors. CLGE have developed a two-pronged approach to face up to these challenges: enhancing surveying education, and developing professional practice.

Background

The Comité de Liaison des Géomètres Européens (CLGE) was established in 1972 by the 9 member countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) to consider the implementation of the Treaty of Rome in relation to the liberal profession of Surveyors / Géomètres in private practice. This focus changed in the early 1990s and CLGE now represents all surveyors in public employment and in private practice. Today, CLGE represents approximately 25,000 surveyors in the national surveying associations in 21 European countries and its annual budget is approximately 30,000 €.

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Figure 1 – Numbers of geodetic surveying professionals in each member country

National delegates to CLGE are nominated from a National Geodetic Surveying Professional Liaison Group (NGSPLG), which represents the majority of professionals who practice geodetic surveying in that country, and who are technically and professionally recognised in their country.

Only one membership per State is permitted and membership is restricted to the Continent of Europe. Principal members are accepted from EU member States, and have one vote each at General Assemblies. Other European countries not members of the European Union may become associate members. Associate members have the same privileges and obligations as principal members except that they do not have a vote at General Assemblies. Individuals, groups and European Institutions may become observers for a maximum of two years to assess the relevance of CLGE activity for their
needs and to facilitate an application procedure if necessary. Observers may attend General Assemblies and participate in the discussions, but they also do not have a vote.

An obvious trait of the surveying profession in Europe is its market diversity. The range of professional services provided by geodetic surveyors in some countries is quite different to the range of services supplied in others. Consequently the list of functions carried out by geodetic surveyors are those common to most countries: Land and Geodetic Surveying, Hydrography, Photogrammetry and remote sensing, Cadastral and Boundary Surveying, Land and Geographical Information Systems, Minerals and Mining Surveying, Engineering Surveying and Metrology and Cartography. Recently, there has been a move within CLGE to adopt the FIG definition of a surveyor (1991) to establish a vision for the surveying profession for the future.

CLGE holds two General Assemblies per year in spring and autumn comprising three half-day sessions normally on Friday & Saturday. A maximum of two delegates represents each country at General Assemblies, and the working language is English. The General Assembly decides policy and delegates the operation of CLGE to the Executive Board. The Executive Board comprising the President, Vice-President, Secretary General and the Treasurer are responsible for and control the day-to-day business of CLGE.

A Standing Committee meets four times a year and it acts as a discussion group to debate and develop proposals before they are recommended to the General Assembly. The Standing Committee currently includes members of the Executive Board, members from the different regions of Europe and the President of Géomètres Europas (GE).

The current objectives of CLGE are:

- To represent the interests of the geodetic surveying profession in Europe to the Institutions of the European Union by:
  - Active participation in the pertinent legislation processes at European level.
  - Co-operation with and assistance to the Commission in the recognition of qualifications for academic and professional purposes.
- Promoting the activities of geodetic surveying and aiding the development of the profession administratively and scientifically.
- Facilitating mutual recognition of qualifications.
- Stimulating and facilitating the normalisation of standards of academic and professional qualifications.
- The provision of assistance in dealing with national problems arising from different activities in various Member States.

CLGE maintains a network of alliances to fulfil its objectives. At national level CLGE communicates on a regular basis with the national professional associations disseminating information from the EU, and collecting national information for the different European reports being compiled. At European level CLGE has a very close relationship with Géomètres Europas (GE), an organisation for liberal professionals in private practice established in 1994 with membership in five countries: France, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark and Austria. CLGE is a member of CEPLIS, a pan European organisation for all the liberal professions, and also a member of the European Services Forum (ESF) established in 1999 to advise the European Commission for the period of the GATS negotiations in Geneva. CLGE also has a close informal relationship with FIG, which it hopes to cultivate further through joint collaboration on projects.

CLGE has published the following reports, which are available on our Website at http://www.clge.net.
Challenges for the Future

Professional practice in surveying faces a number of challenges for the future. Firstly, the intensive application of technology within surveying practice during the last few decades has automated many highly technical procedures. Some surveyors are of the opinion that surveying firms can now employ unskilled personnel to push buttons and produce datasets according to set procedures. I am of the opinion that the opposite is required. New skills are required to exploit new data sources and make use of new methods; not only in an efficient manner, but also to ensure that the consequences of particular choices or actions are fully appreciated. "We should not just thrust the black box, we should know what it is doing". The nature of our surveying business is changing and new opportunities are developing, such as in geographic information management, but other professionals are competing with us for these new opportunities. Surveyors have to prove their merit to maintain their foothold in these emerging areas, and they will need new skills to assist them. Many new projects are designed and managed by multi-disciplinary teams of professionals for which surveyors need equality of qualifications and management skills to allow them to participate effectively as equals. The way forward is upskilling, rather than ‘dumbing down’ the surveyors of the future.

Secondly, the surveying profession in Europe has predominantly operated in niche markets, which were either local or national in character, mainly due to the licensing of surveyors by State authorities, the economic significance of distance to market, and issues of language. This insular operation of the surveying market has resulted in a wide diversity in the range and types of services offered by surveyors, and has seen the development of a number of separate traditions in different areas in Europe. Surveying professionals in some countries provide services, which are supplied by other professionals in neighbouring countries. The status quo within these niche markets is under threat from European Union action of promoting an internal market within the Member States and removing barriers for cross-frontier trade and liberalising services previously regulated. Freedom of service is one of the pillars of the EU’s internal market policy, which commits to eliminate obstacles within the European Internal Market and to encourage open competition within the four modes of service across frontiers. These four modes are: Cross border supply, Consumption abroad, Commercial presence abroad, and Delivery of service by natural person's abroad. Surveyors need to modify their traditional concepts of ‘who are the competitors in the local market’ if they are to maintain their market share. They need to begin to think laterally and view adjacent niche markets as opportunities. There were many valid arguments why certain surveying functions were reserved to regulated professions before the internal market. Consumer Protection is central to these arguments to ensure clients receive best solutions and best professional advice and that quality of service is guaranteed. These arguments need to be re-examined in the light of liberalisation and restated to persuade politicians of the necessity of regulating specific functions, rather than specific professions.

Thirdly, the marketing power of the internet for selling surveying services is also putting pressure on these niche markets by supplying alternate solutions for traditional surveying requirements. Surveyors
in these local markets will have to re-examine their pricing models for the surveying services they provide to ensure they are giving value for money. They will also have to convince clients of the benefits of a quality service; ‘all bells and whistles’ compared to a service that concentrates on the core requirements and does not provide an after sales service. Clients will continue to search for local solutions to minimise their costs, because professionals commonly pass on travelling charges to the project site, but not if the overall costs are more expensive locally. Niche markets close to national frontiers will be the first to come under pressure and bi-lateral agreements between national professional associations not to encroach on each other’s territory may be illegal under internal market rules.

Finally, globalisation through the application of common standards is opening new markets previously inaccessible to non-national surveying businesses. International markets at regional level in Europe and at global level have been rapidly developing during the last two decades, and many central and eastern European countries have also been progressively implementing market economies during the last decade. Regulations for the international markets in services are currently being negotiated in the GATS negotiations at the WTO in Geneva. The perceived effect of these negotiations is the opening of international markets outside Europe at the cost of increased liberalisation of national markets within the EU, whereas in truth GATS is laying the regulatory framework for conducting international business in services. These new international markets offer surveyors new opportunities, but providing distant surveying services demands new skills of surveyors, such as language skills, knowledge of the laws and regulations in the destination country and the use of more complex costing models. This again suggests that surveyors need to enhance their professional competence to take advantage of these opportunities.

All of these challenges explain aspects of the rapidly changing commercial environment for surveyors in Europe. The only constant in this environment is Change. Surveyors should not view these challenges from an aspect of fear for the future, but should view them as opportunities for the profession to exploit. Lack of knowledge leads to fear. We need to provide a forum in Europe to debate these issues to provide us with in-depth information about these challenges and develop the knowledge of how to deal with them.

**CLGE Strategy for the future**

CLGE conducted a comprehensive debate on its strategy for the future during the last three years. If the surveying profession is going to flourish in this new economic environment in Europe then we must compete successfully against services offered by other professionals in our local market or services offered by our colleagues from outside our local market. CLGE recommends that surveyors should focus on ‘quality of service’ and has recently proposed a two-pronged approach as a way forward: Developing surveying education, and Developing professional practice.

**Developing Surveying Education**

Enhancing the professional competence of surveyors is a means of providing the skills necessary to exploit opportunities in the new commercial environment in Europe. CLGE recommends the adoption of a high standard for academic courses, and a five-year MSc. qualification is recommended as the most appropriate. Curricula for academic courses for surveyors should be broad based to produce highly qualified generalists as a consumer protection measure to ensure surveyors have the competence to supply best solutions for the benefit of clients and society. Curricula should have a course philosophy of learning to learn and problem solving to ensure surveyors have the ability to adapt to rapid changes in commercial environments both nationally and internationally during their careers. These curricula should comprise the areas of Measurement Science and Land Administration supported by a strong paradigm of Geographic Information Management as indicated in figure 2.
CLGE encourages a close liaison between academia and professional practice and an understanding of the diversity of the surveying profession in Europe, which should be used as the basis for revising and enhancing academic programmes for surveyors within European countries. There is also an essential need of continuing professional development (CPD) to maintain skill levels within the profession and to have the competence to adopt new technologies to provide best solutions for the benefit of society.

**Developing Professional Practice**
As well as enhancing our education there is a need to focus on the professional practice of surveying and develop our business in parallel with enhancing our education so that surveying professionals attain direct and concrete benefits from their enhanced competence.

Firstly, we need to assist the development of a vibrant and visible surveying economy in Europe for the benefit of consumers. It is true that the profession will benefit from a more vibrant surveying economy, but the primary driving force should be better service to clients, rather than better business for surveyors. This vibrant surveying economy should be provided jointly by both private and public sectors in a best balance to primarily benefit the client. We do not presume to suggest that a system dominated by either the private or the public sector is best; that is a political question, but we do think that both elements have an important role to play in each system. This best balance should be in accordance with the judicial and cultural set-up in each country. Both elements should participate in the surveying market in a spirit of partnership and co-operation. We need to focus on current public-private relationships to eliminate areas of friction such as competing in specific markets in order to engender a spirit of co-operation. Traditional ideas and modes of supplying services for clients need to be jointly re-examined to find new best solutions for the benefit of the client.

Secondly, CLGE promotes co-operation between surveying firms, both nationally and internationally, to improve professional experience across borders as another method of increasing the vibrancy of the surveying market. National co-operation normally takes the form of joint tendering for large projects, which would not be possible for any individual firm. International co-operation could be for an European Union funded project requiring international co-operation, or could take the form of striking a relationship with a surveying firm in the area of a project by subcontracting an element of the project to minimise friction and develop contacts for the future. CLGE also promotes the mobility of professionals between countries using the EU concept of mutual recognition of professional qualifications, which increases our knowledge of each other’s systems by experience. This co-operation facilitates sharing knowledge and experiences on how to structure projects, the development of best practice procedures, both technically and administratively, and the development of robust costing models.

Thirdly, we encourage the broadening of fields of professional practice across the spectrum of measurement science, land administration management, and geographic information management to allow surveyors exploit new opportunities. We suggest that it is not good business practice to ‘put all your eggs in one basket’ and specialise in one narrow area. The surveying business environment is changing so rapidly that certain specialisations will become redundant in the future, so we promote...
the idea of highly qualified generalists and the consolidation of disciplines of professional practice to provide surveyors the ability to adapt their service offerings during their careers.

Finally, we promote the regulation of cadastral surveying functions by national laws in each country in the interests of consumer protection. The profession needs to persuade politicians at local, national and European levels of the need for a property security system throughout Europe. CLGE will provide a forum to investigate and debate the different models of licensing procedures being currently used in Europe in order to document the policies, procedures and necessity for regulating certain cadastral surveying functions within a modern society.

CLGE intends to implement this strategy to develop the surveying profession in Europe by hosting a range of discussion papers, workshops, seminars, and research grants to supply the information necessary to give us the knowledge to make good policy decisions and to take charge of our own destinies.

REFERENCES:


Stannard, J., (1996), *The Establishment of the Profile and Definition of the Geodetic Surveying Profession to meet the requirements of the general public and the Commission of the European Union (commonly referred to as the Profile Report)*, CLGE, UK, pp 1 - 51.