

**Report to the 29<sup>th</sup> General Assembly  
FIG Congress in Munich, October 2006**

**ACCO Report**

**Report of Activities 2002-2006**

**1. General**

The commissions are “the heart and spirit of FIG” as a technical/scientific organisation. Besides the individual goals of the commissions for the working period 2002-2006 Council and ACCO chairs have had common general objectives around how to further improve commission activities as a part of the overall Council work plan. This report, drawn by Dr. Andreas Drees, Chair of ACCO and FIG Vice President, and the ACCO representatives in the Council Gerhard Muggenhuber (2003-2004) and Matt Higgins (2005-2006), is prepared to show, what has been achieved, but also to indicate what still needs to be done (lessons learned and recommendations for the future). It is part of the outcome of the ACCO workshop in Copenhagen in May 2006 and a summary of comments given by the 10 commissions in addition to their detailed commission reports. The Munich Congress is the appropriate occasion for this report although the final printed version, including all statistics from Munich as well, will be delivered later.

The main goal of all activities in the working period 2002-2006 was to strengthen the commissions in their professional and scientific work by giving them as much support as possible. Therefore not only the ACCO representatives in the Council but all Vice Presidents were made responsible for the co-ordination between commissions and Council. The FIG office has been re-organised and strengthened by additional staff to be a strong basis for all our activities. The General Assembly was involved, too, by open discussions between ACCO representatives and member associations. Another target was to give commission work more visibility. The main result in this area was the installation of the **Surveyors Reference Library**. Many discussions within ACCO finally led to the now operable database of all presentations and publications of FIG on the web ([www.fig.net/srl](http://www.fig.net/srl)). E-newsletters, commissions CD's and improved websites have also been developed as useful tools for informing the individual members of FIG.

The purpose behind introducing regional conferences was an important new initiative to continue to bring FIG closer to its members. Joint events by several commissions and/or with other organisations, particularly UN agencies, should not only bring the community of surveyors closer together but it should also strengthen our networking with related professions.

## 2. Lessons Learned

The following outlines a summary of lessons learned by the Commission Chairs for 2003 to 2006 regarding the operation of the commissions, ACCO content and Work Plans. The lessons learned have been categorised into three categories; Content, Delivery and Logistics.

### 2.1 Content

- It is important for the incoming Chair to have a vision for the Commission and where it should be in four years time;
- In developing that vision, it is important to look at the current global situation in the areas of interest for the Commission. That should take into account the overall direction of the Profession and Industry;
- Commission Work Plans should be developed in the overall context of the FIG Council Work Plan. That helps to ensure that the work of an individual Commission benefits from and contributes to the overarching policies and activities of the broader FIG;
- Development of Work Plans should also consider links to Task Forces and other whole-of FIG bodies such as the Standards Network;
- In developing Work Plans, Commissions should also consider issues important to organisations with which FIG has Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), including United Nations bodies and Sister Associations;
- Cooperation with other Commissions on broad topics across FIG is vital and “big picture” issues important to United Nations organisations and to Sister Associations can give a useful focus to that cooperation;
- It is vitally important for the development of Work Plans to also consider the needs of practicing surveyors who are the “grass root” members of FIG;
- It is also important to have at least one Work Plan activity that is obviously at the core of the domain of the Commission;
- In taking account of all of the issues above, it is also important to remember to set a Work Plan that is achievable and realistic given the limited human and financial resources available and inside the 4 year term;
- The success of the Commission work is based on persons who have a vision, idea, interest and commitment. Thus the Commission chairs have to look proactively for such persons – especially within the younger generation, PhD students included.

### 2.2 Delivery

- In delivering the Work Plan, an extremely important factor is the team of Vice Chairs leading each of the Working Groups. The Vice Chairs and other key people in Working Groups form the critical mass that makes the Commission viable. Therefore, it is important to consider the professional and personal motivations of the Commission team and to ensure they are personally interested in the outcomes they are asked to deliver;
- Whatever amount of time that can be spent developing the Work Plan is always worthwhile. It is also important for Commission Officers to regularly review the plan throughout their term of office to check progress and to ensure it is still relevant;
- Any planned activities always needs clear definition of the deliverable, such as a targeted event, technical session or workshop or a specific publication;

- For delivering outcomes from external liaison with United Nations organisations and Sister Associations, our MoUs with those organisations typically outline areas of common interest. It is best to choose one or two key areas and concentrate on those;
- Practical experience has shown that Inter-Commission Working Groups can have problems delivering outcomes. Therefore, any such activities need to be managed well. It is important to ensure that responsibilities are assigned and clearly understood early. It is best for one Commission to take leadership and ensure that the outcomes, milestones and a deadline are clearly defined and that progress is regularly reviewed;
- If particular ACCO members have good contacts in a particular region of the globe, they should be given a role representing that region on behalf of all of FIG. That can raise the profile of FIG generally but also the profile of their Commission and can be a “win-win” situation;
- It can be difficult for an organisation like FIG to compete with technical innovation, which is sometimes best done by other bodies. It should be remembered that FIG is about value added results that come from networking, communications and personal interactions;
- A lot of the work of a Commission centres on FIG Events (Working Weeks and Regional Conferences and Commission specific events). Experience has shown that it is very useful to have Technical Sessions and Workshops centred on the topics of Commission Working Groups. This allows the state of the art to be presented to FIG members but it also helps to stimulate, clarify and focus Working Group activities;
- It is important that the papers, presentations and results of conferences and seminars are delivered to the Commission delegates and FIG’s broader audience. This can be achieved through commission information networks and by ensuring that all proceedings are included in the Surveyors Reference Library and that the library continues to develop.
- There is need to develop a marketing plan for the Surveyors Reference Library so that it is well publicised among surveyors and to FIG’s broader audience.
- Disseminating outstanding papers to the FIG network through the article of the month is also a very useful mechanism.
- It is important for Commission officers to recognise that time is in short supply and that the FIG community is a volunteer workforce. FIG work needs to be balanced against personal and family issues and the demands of one’s “day job”;
- There is a strong camaraderie among members of ACCO (past and present) and that network can and should be used for support, advice and for sharing experiences;

### **2.3 Logistics**

- There is a need to ensure that the timing of election processes allow a Council Work Plan to be drafted by the incoming Council in the year before taking office. This is necessary to give guidance to the incoming Commission Chairs when developing their Work Plans;
- The fact that FIG Officers are distributed globally means that regular communication is vital. That includes communications inside the Commission, across ACCO and with FIG Council and the FIG Office;
- Achieving strong involvement in Commission work by National Delegates is an ongoing problem and the communication media outlined below should be used to good effect;
- One approach to Working Group membership that has helped achieve more involvement from National Delegates has been to offer two levels of participation:

- The first level of participation was as a “core member” of a Working Group contributing directly to discussions, publications etc;
- The second level of participation was as part of a “reference group” to review publications, provide feedback on issues etc.
- Regular external communication about the ongoing work of the Commission is also very important. Mechanisms used successfully in the past include,
  - Newsletters;
  - Compiling and distributing CDs of Commission papers and documents;
  - Ensuring the Commission’s Web pages are up to date;
  - Contribution to whole-of-FIG publications such as the Annual Review, the FIG eNewsletter and the Article of the Month;
  - Effective use and ongoing development of the Surveyors Reference Library;
- It is also important to ensure that Technical Sessions at FIG Events include content that is directly relevant to the region where the event is being held. Asking the Local Organising Committee to appoint a local contact for each Commission can assist in ensuring that local content;
- In cases where a particular Commission is not well represented in the local Member Association, it is important for the Local Organising Committee to make links to allied professional organisations in the country and/or region to ensure topics relevant to all of the FIG Commissions are covered during the FIG event;
- Initiatives to encourage direct interaction between Commissions and the General Assembly at recent Working Weeks have been useful for ensuring that Member Associations have more input to and take more ownership of the work of the Commissions. Commission involvement through panel discussions or break-out sessions should be continued at future General Assemblies;
- ACCO typically only meets face-to-face one or two times in a year. Therefore, preparation for meetings is vital. It is important to read agendas, minutes and background documents and know what can be dealt with easily versus those issues requiring face-to-face discussion;
- Similarly, Commission officers typically only meet face-to-face at FIG Events (Working Weeks, Regional Conferences and perhaps some Commission specific events). Therefore, it is important to be well organised at those events to maximise the chance to progress the work of the Commission;
- A good Vice Chair for Administration is very important. It is good for that person to take some of the administrative load but it is useful if that person can also think strategically and can assist the Chair in setting strategic direction;
- The recent approach of appointing a specific Vice President to take responsibility for each Commission has been useful for improving liaison with Council and should be continued;
- Similarly, the appointment of a Commission Chair as an observer member representing ACCO on FIG Council (for a two year term) has also been very useful and should be continued;
- Regarding resources, as well as the standard Commission grants, FIG does have money for special projects where a good business case can be made;
- However, there will never be enough FIG funding for everything that all the Commissions might want to achieve. Therefore, it is important for Commission Officers develop multi-agency funding sources, eg from their member association and their employer;
- Ensuring support from national and international partners also facilitates the successful delivery of activities, events, publications and other outcomes;

- It is important to remember that the staff of the FIG Office are very experienced and can be used to assist with many of these logistical and other tasks.

### **3. Recommendations**

In line with Lessons Learned it is Recommended:

- That the above lessons learned regarding Content, Delivery and Logistics be taken into account by Chairs Elect when planning the future work of the Commissions;
- That the above lessons learned be taken into account in the functioning and work of ACCO;
- That the above lessons learned also be used as a guide when reviewing the progress and operations of the Commissions and of ACCO;
- That FIG Council notes the above lessons learned and ensures they are addressed in future Council Work Plans and in interactions with the General Assembly, with individual Member Associations, with Local Organising Committees and with National Delegates;
- That the above lessons learned also be reviewed by the FIG Director and by the FIG Office staff and any necessary changes to operating procedures be proposed to Council for implementation;
- That a similar process of reviewing, amending and adding to these lessons learned be undertaken by ACCO at the end of the term of all Commission Chairs and be included in future reports by ACCO.

### **4. Acknowledgements and Outlook**

It is always the ambitious individual that stands behind the work in an association like FIG. We were lucky to have many remarkable individuals for the period 2002-2006. Thanks belong to all of them for the efforts they made, especially considering that most of the work is on a voluntary basis! Commission chairs and vice chairs, secretaries and delegates have contributed their knowledge and experience from all over the world. They have discussed and argued, read and written. The Council “navigated” and the office “rowed” hard. We have all been hosted, organisationally and personally, for working weeks, regional conferences and meetings. In co-operation with sister organisations, people met people.

Besides our progress from 2002 to 2006, to reach future goals we continue to need people who care, who share and who dare. For that we need member associations that are aware.

Turning from review to outlook, it is clear from the efforts of the new chairs in preparing their work plans for 2007-2010 that FIG is in good hands! It is hoped that these lessons learned and the recommendations from our common ACCO period 2002 – 2006 will give useful guidance to the future work of FIG.

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