



FEGGA Conference 18.02-20.02.2020 Galway, Irland

Adrian Schwarz

This years FEGGA Conference was held in Galway, Ireland. The SGA was one of 17 associations who was able to represent their Greenkeepers at this international summit. There was a total of 18 different speakers who talked about Themes such as „Women Greenkeepers in Golf“, „Environment and Sustainability“ and „Research Results and future Goals of FEGGA“.



At the Gala-Dinner, the 80 participants all involved in the golf industry, were warmly welcomed by the Chairman of the Golfing Union of Ireland, Iggy O Muircheartaigh. When talking to other members of greenkeepers associations, it showed that climate change is a very important topic, not just in Switzerland. Prior to the conference the FEGGA sent out a survey which showed that all the European associations are struggling with pesticide bans, watershortages and extreme weather conditions. Most of the participants were also agreeing that there has to be a reassessment of course quality. Overall it was great to see how many associations are focusing on sustainable greenkeeping.

Koert Donkers from the Netherlands Golf Federation and also a boardmember of the FEGGA, opened the three-day conference as a speaker. It was very impressive to see how the Dutch are pioneers in research for sustainability and alternatives for pesticide use. With launching a voluntary „Green Deal“ with the Dutch government, they've agreed to avoid the usage of pesticides and are now getting the support from the government for Turf research. The goal of this Green Deal was to be proactive and not to wait until the restrictions are being set from the governments.

In one of the next speeches, Una Fitzpatrick (Biodiversity Data Center of Ireland) talked about the biodiversity in Ireland. It was shocking to hear that with 31500 species and 117 habitats, only 9% are doing okay. She presented a bunch of action plans which were established with

assistance of the Irish Greenkeepers Association and local governments. Some of the lectures are meant for golfers, some for kids and students and some are meant for the wide range of public. In one lecture, people can learn about how to seed flower fields which are a very important source of nutrition for bees. Una Fitzpatrick also says, that with the help of GEO-On-Course and the golf courses which have been certified, there is a great opportunity to build new habitats. You can find more information here: <https://pollinators.ie>



GEO OnCourse and R&A Golf course 2030

In the last 12 months there have been more and more golf courses who have been certified by GEO. Johnathan Smith from GEO says it has been great to see how well some associations are working and being given the opportunity for their golf courses to get certified. The main focus at the moment for Jonathan Smith and his GEO-Team, is to work out the stories, data and benchmarks so that it will be easier to present it to the public or members of a golf club. Erich Steiner will talk more about the topics of GEO on our Headgreenkeeper Seminar at the end of march.

R&A Golfcourse 2030

Golfcourse 2030 was presented for the first time at the last years FEGGA in Rome. Golfcourse 2030 is part of the United Nations Charta on worldwide sustainable development. GEO On-Course is a very important part to reach the goals of the R&A.

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

Steve Isaac (Director of Sustainability R&A) says that there could be three possible scenarios that the golf industry has to prepare for. In the first scenario, the golf industry won't have to worry about anything because there will be no regulations in pesticides and raw material will be available without shortage. In the second scenario there will be pesticide bans, watershortage /restrictions and no more raw material. The golf industry is not prepared because there are no alternatives to handle all of this. In the third scenario all the prior said problems will occur but the golf industry will be ready to deal with these issues because the industry prepared for it. This is why the R&A is putting a lot of money into research such as ***Course Conditions and***

Playability, Resources and Management, Irrigation and Watermanagement. The R&A also wants to support ***Turf Research in Europe.***

Dreaming of European Turf Research Foundation

The cooperation between the Scandinavian countries in lawn research was presented at last year's FEGGA Conference (STERF). At the general meeting, FEGGA was commissioned to develop a concept for European turf research. Using STERF as a model, research results would be available to all European countries, golf associations and greenkeepers. The aim is to divide research into European zones and to equip it with at least one active research institute. Using the divisions, north zone (Scandinavian countries), central zone (Holland, Germany, France, Switzerland, Austria etc.) and south zone (Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece etc.), research could be carried out specifically on the climatic conditions of the different countries. Of course, an intensive exchange with the other research institutes would also be planned. Any funding options for this project have already been discussed and FEGGA will meet this year in a meeting with the relevant associations on this topic. It would be desirable if Switzerland could participate in this project in the future. Should this project happen, we would have a huge network of information which would be indispensable for us.

Women in Greenkeeping

Another topic for which FEGGA is very committed is the role of women in greenkeeping. In order to further promote the status of female greenkeepers and also to ensure an international exchange, FEGGA is planning a greenkeepers seminar for women who work as greenkeepers or headgreenkeepers. The Finnish Greenkeeper Association was mentioned as a role model, in which over half of all greenkeepers are female!

Fazit

FEGGA 2020 in Galway was, like the one in Rome last year, a very exciting conference. The topics on which lectures relate affect all greenkeeper associations equally. The mutual exchange and the network are of great importance. Such networks are indispensable, especially for small associations like Switzerland. Special thanks go to the FEGGA board for their work, and to the Irish Greenkeeper Association (GCSAI) led by Damain McLaverty for the hospitality this year.

The PowerPoint presentations of this year's FEGGA are posted on the homepage. Adrian Schwarz will be happy to answer any questions you may have on the individual topics.