

FIG Information Policy Concept

A. INTRODUCTION

For the information policy concept it is necessary to have a look at the different groups existing inside and outside the FIG. So when discussing the information policy it is necessary to identify the group in question in order to goal-direct the policy. Especially in those cases where the information policy has a strong marketing aspect it has to be discussed who is the “target” of the information policy. The last question is closely related to the question what we can offer to clients outside of FIG i.e. what it is worth advertising.

Because FIG is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation, the main focus of our information policy is to get FIG known as the leading organisation within the surveyors' world all around the world. People should consider the FIG as a competent source of information, which they can use to solve their daily problems. So FIG has to be presented as a modern organisation, also oriented towards new technologies. At the same time, as mentioned in the work plan, FIG as a worldwide actor has to take more and more responsibility in international affairs. FIG can be an attractive organisation to the developed countries as the competent provider of information in a broader sense.

B. GROUPS / OBJECTIVE GROUPS

In general there are three different objective groups in the FIG information policy:

- the FIG members themselves (member associations, affiliates, academic members, corporate members, correspondents and individuals in the member organisations),
- potential new members and
- the public in general.

These main objectives are discussed below in more detail.

B.1 Information policy for FIG members

The objective for the first group in general will be

- to inform FIG members about all activities, discussions and intentions within the FIG and
- to make the members and individuals in those organisations more active.

Up to now one could have the impression that there is a little "gap" between the FIG Council and the member organisations which ends up in the demand for more information, often stated during the working weeks and conferences. Thus new means have to be developed to bridge the gap!

When looking for new means it also has to be considered if the FIG member organisations can be considered as one objective group, so that they are all reached, or if there are differences, which have to be taken into consideration. The different groups considered here are:

- a) First of all there are the developed countries that can be divided into those that are already very active within the FIG and those that are more or less “silent members”. Even these last organisations normally have very experienced individual members who can bring their knowledge into the FIG. Therefore it is worth building up a special information policy concept with a marketing aspect. It seems to be not that difficult to convince those members that it is worth to take part (a) in working weeks, regional conferences and other events or (b) even in the work of technical commissions and working groups.

Those newly active members can help the FIG to put our intentions into action (“*shaping the change*”), and the result can be even more positive by the multiplier effect. So, finally, this group is really worth being considered as one of the main objective groups of our information policy.

- b) Secondly there are the developing countries. It is very attractive to the member associations and their members to be related to the FIG since they can take profit from the experiences of other member countries. It is, however, very often impossible for those members to take part in meetings, congresses or working weeks, mostly because of the costs or because it is impossible for them to travel (or even to leave the country). In addition, for some of them it is very difficult or even impossible to get FIG information regularly since they do not have a constant access to the Internet. This is important when thinking about which communication means to use.

If the means of information policy are focussing more on only one of these two target groups, it is mentioned in the following list of means.

B.2 Information Policy for potential new members

For the second group, the objective is to increase the number of members of the FIG so the information policy has a strong marketing aspect.

We already know most of the professional organisations that are potential FIG members, so it is worth considering if it is worthwhile to develop an information policy for this group. If so, the main idea would be to show to potential (new) members how FIG is working and the actual on-going discussions. So the focal point and the objective are a little bit different to existing FIG members, but the advantages and disadvantages are mostly the same.

B.3 Information policy for the public

For the third group, the objective is just to tell the public that FIG exists and what are the main tasks and ideas. Thinking of the public, the “rest of the world”, the information policy focuses mostly on informing them of the existence of surveyors and the profession and its activities, the FIG, justification of FIG work and about the main and basic ideas. A minor aspect is getting them familiar with the FIG publications. So the information policy has a marketing aspect, and these public relation and advertising means have a lot in common with commercial ones.

It is important that FIG member associations and in particular corporate and academic members are active in distributing the information about surveyors to promote the profession to the next generation, economic leaders and political decision-makers.

NGOs in general are of great importance for modern society since ideas and innovations can be brought up, and this should also be the main task of the information policy for the public: to promote our own ideas. “Do well and talk about it” is necessary since “they don’t know what we are doing”. FIG is a federation of a very specific group, the surveyors, and in addition as an NGO only has a limited sphere of activities, so the information policy should consist of specific actions related to a certain event or a very specific aim that FIG wants to reach. Mail campaigns to “anybody” are not only time and money consuming, they are useless.

So the following ideas to public relations and advertising do not claim to be a sophisticated model but are more or less pragmatic ideas or examples how to get the FIG more known in the public.

C. INFORMATION POLICY MEANS

The different means of information policy are listed here. For each means it is discussed in detail if it can be used for at least one of the mentioned target groups and if it is the correct one.

C.1 Annual Review

The Annual Review is an overview of major activities and achievements of FIG and the main medium for external communication. This will be continued, not only as one of the classical means within FIG to send comprehensive information about FIG activities to its members in analogue form.

The review is sent in the printed format only to FIG member associations, but those often use them to distribute them not only to their own members, but also to others that are interested in the technical, organisational and research work that is going on. In addition, the review can be downloaded from the FIG Homepage, even as PDF-file, so it can be used by everybody. Concluding, the Annual Review can be seen as a mean especially to the first target group of the information policy, but can be also used as a marketing means to possible new members.

C.2 Proceedings and Minutes

The proceedings and minutes of the Working Weeks as other information of the official FIG meetings are put on the web very soon after the events. E.g. during the discussions at the regional conference in Marrakech most of the representatives of the developing countries said that they have access to the Internet, but at a very slow speed. The idea came up to send on a CD-ROM to all member organisations: the main FIG web pages, proceedings from the working weeks and regional conferences, articles of the month (see below) etc. This can be done without major additional costs if it is send together with the written reports and minutes, and it can be assured that all member organisations are really getting at least the most important results of the FIG work.

The minutes are of course sent only to FIG members, but the proceedings of congresses, working weeks and regional conferences are of interest to more people, not only surveyors! So for them the articles can be very interesting, whether they are interested in FIG or not. For the target groups of our information policy, after first contacts and for those already having an idea the proceedings can also be used as a market means.

C.3 Letters

C.3.1 Newsletters

The quarterly FIG Bulletin has been replaced by a monthly e-Newsletter, which has been well received, being actual and bringing information more frequently. There have also been requests for printed material or journals. The e-Newsletter is an appropriate way to inform the Presidents, member organisations and national delegates about the activities of the Federation. It also gives links to the latest news on the FIG home page, which can be used in national newsletters. The circulation of the e-Newsletter is larger than what is possible with a printed bulletin. Further in general there is not a lot of work for the FIG Office to produce the e-Newsletter frequently.

Since the e-Newsletter contains the headlines of the latest news and gives links to the FIG home page, it is not too long, only one to two pages in printed format, which can be considered suitable. The member organisations have the possibility of choosing the facts, which are most important for their organisation and members. When looking at the home page, they will probably find other things worth drawing members' attention to. Long newsletters with six or more pages will not really reach the member organisations since they are too long and therefore will not be read. In addition most of the member organisations have their own newspaper / newsletter into which they are encouraged to extract news from the FIG web site.

The e-Newsletter reaches the developing countries (better than ordinary mail) as well as the industrial countries and the active members as well as the more or less "silent members". There is no difference between the members that need to be taken into consideration besides the fact that in developing countries not all (individual) members have access to the Internet, and we should avoid the "digital divide". At least the member organisations have got the latest news from the FIG. It is the responsibility of the member organisations to find a way to distribute it further.

For possible new members, which already have a certain idea about the FIG, the e-Newsletter gives some more details about the ongoing work in FIG and is perhaps the last straw to get a new FIG member, but it cannot be used as the only means for this target group.

For the public in general the e-Newsletter is a possibility to look for what is just going on in FIG, but it will be difficult to get an overview of the main ideas. So for this objective group the e-Newsletter can only be a means used in addition to other ones.

C.3.2 President's letter

The presidents of the member organisation normally get in direct contact with the FIG President only once a year, which is at the Presidents' meeting during the Working Weeks. The results are fixed in the minutes sent out shortly after the meeting. Since the interval is relatively long, the President started mailing so-called President's letters to the presidents of the member organisations. These are sent quarterly and their content is more or less the same as in the e-Newsletters. Since the presidents are contacted personally, this information channel better matches their needs and e.g. policy issues of their special interest can be raised in advance. These letters have been well received and are the first step to bridge the mentioned gap.

C.4 Mailing forum / discussion group

The FIG has established two discussion groups on the home page – one for all members and one for academic members – but these have not been very successful because there has not (yet) been the critical mass, which is needed for active discussion.

There are also mail distribution lists for the Council and Commission officers (ACCO) and under preparation for Commissions. The Commission model was introduced recently, and at the moment we do not know how successful it will become. This depends directly on the activities and initiatives of the members in the distribution lists and how to avoid “junk-type” messages. The fear is that it will once again be driven by those who are already very active in FIG (the "spokespersons") while the others will remain more or less silent listeners".

It should be discussed if another discussion group should be introduced for the presidents of member associations. In this case, the presidents can be considered as one homogeneous group. If they are interested in more information, they could use this forum even for questions ("what is on with ..."). This could be useful since it is not always up to the Council or the office to answer! However, there are some concerns that not everywhere in the world people are used to e-mailing as an easy and also non-formal way of communication. There is certainly a contradiction to the serious working of the presidents; they will perhaps prefer to wait for the e-Newsletter and only use this as their source of information.

C.5 Forum during meetings

Even the best e-Newsletter or mailing forum cannot substitute personal contacts! People are waiting for them. This was very obvious during the Presidents' meeting e.g. in Paris. It should be discussed if those meetings could take place more often, e.g. also during regional conferences. They could be organized in the same manner as the Presidents' meeting during the working weeks or as the round tables during the regional conferences (Nairobi and Marrakech) to avoid too big forums and to allow profound discussions. Presidents (or at regional level from that particular region) who are not able to attend should appoint a personal deputy. The presidents must be aware that they are not excluded if they don't participate, but they should be afraid that they are missing something!

A new interesting even funny title could attract people. And if the meeting is an official topic on the agenda, it will perhaps be easier for people to get the permission to travel.

Not only the regional conferences, but also other conferences and meetings should be used to organise these kinds of presidents' or delegates meetings, especially those that are sponsored by the FIG.

The minutes and, as recommended, the resolutions have to be distributed. This should be done in the same way as it is done with the minutes of the Presidents' meeting. If there are questions, especially from those who are not able to participate, answers have to be published. Perhaps they can even be a good opportunity to enforce the Presidents' mail forum (see above).

Regarding the objective groups at the regional conferences, there is no difference to the official meetings (the presidents in general). The only restriction is that these meetings do have a regional focus concerning the attending presidents (or delegates); perhaps even more representatives from the developing countries are able to take part when the regional

conference takes place on "their" continent. But no difference will be considered between industrial and developing countries. It is important that also the Vice Presidents attend these meetings, chaired by the FIG President.

C.6 Article of the month

The *article of the month* is a possibility for all members, but especially for those from developing countries to be more active (since they are often not able to travel) and to present themselves. Thus here the special objective group should be the developing countries. But their articles will be of more significance if the opportunity for the article of the month is offered to all members, without considering which type of country they are coming from.

The article of the month is proposed to be selected by the commission chairs and confirmed by the Council. The concept of the "article of the month" has to be sold to the FIG members. This must be done especially to avoid expectations that each time the article includes the latest developments in modern technology. Instead everybody has the possibility of reading from time to time something about the (daily or actual) problems in developing countries.

The first article of the month was put on the web in June 2003, and up to now the comments received are very positive, and we should continue bringing these. Perhaps they should be considered more as a means for members from the developing countries; this is up to the commissions to consider.

Regarding the target groups two and three, the articles of the month can be of the same use as the proceedings (see above).

C.7 Mailing campaigns

Direct mail campaigns are not appropriate means for the public in general: it is a big group to be reached (positive!), but there cannot be any positive result for the FIG. Mailing campaigns are only worth using if there is a really big (anonymous) target group, and this group does not exist. People that are interested in the FIG and have been in contact with the office once are better reached by the e-Newsletter.

For the FIG members and the "members behind the members", mailing campaigns are already used! This is the case with every mail sent around looking for participants and speakers of congresses, working weeks and regional conferences. But this is a very specific type of mailing campaign and has only a very little aspect of information policy.

Mailing campaigns can be thought of as an appropriate means of possible new corporate members. But the list of companies that can be contacted during such a campaign must be well chosen, and the letter should be phrased as a very personal one. The campaign should be related to a certain event or even better focus on a certain objective that needs a specific support. In any case also for this target group-mailing campaigns should only rarely be used!

C.8 Presentations of FIG work

Even though it is not commonly thought of, every presentation of the FIG and its work is a kind of information policy, but even more a marketing activity. So every opportunity should be used to talk about FIG. If it concerns really interesting facts it should furthermore be a

means of getting sleeping members moving. In addition, since people can contact the speaker after the presentation, it is possible to continue with personal contacts, an even more promising but of course limited way. So we should use every opportunity.

In general presentations can possibly activate all kind of individuals, coming from the industrial states or the developing countries. So it will depend on the content, which kind of objective group will be reached. The way of marketing also depends on delegates' interests. Finally, with the presentation of things going on in FIG of course the FIG members can be reached, and thus even for them it is a means of information policy; but, hopefully, a minor one since they should know what is going on!

C.9 Information booth at conferences and congresses

To be present at conferences and congresses and to give information about FIG's work on a special booth has a strong advertising aspect. Since it is very time consuming, it is rarely done. During the INTERGEOs in Germany, the FIG has a common booth with the German Federation of Surveyors (DVW), but normally nobody from FIG is present.

What can be done at the booth is more or less only to distribute the existing information sheets, the flyers and so on. The people that can be reached are the surveyors (during the INTERGEO and other congresses of the surveyors), and normally the result is not that promising. Regarding the cost-benefit-analysis, this does not seem to be a good means of information policy.

C.10 Personal contacts

This is the most time consuming means! But it is also very efficient, and for some special aims it is worth spending the time. This is the case for example to convince some specialist to be active within FIG or to get FIG more known in new regions (like e.g. in Latin America). In new regions the time is worth to spend since the contact persons will have a multiplier role. So this means is useful for the target groups two and three, often in combination with other means, and every opportunity should be used by every FIG member.

The universities, already FIG members or not, should be considered as a special subgroup. They are in general interested in very specific spheres. Which university is active in which specific research field is mostly known by the working groups. So it will be most promising to contact them directly by the related working group of the concerned commission.

It is important to personalize FIG and the persons working for the Federation. This is why FIG is encouraging to publish the profiles of the President, Council members and Commission officers on the website and newsletters.

C.11 Newspaper, Radio, Television

Related to a certain event, contacts to the media are of course of advantage for the FIG. Even if there are certain differences between the types of the mentioned media and even more between their importance and target groups they reach, FIG should use every opportunity arising to talk about its work, ideas and aims. In any case, the release (statement) will be only of regional importance, since it will be nearly impossible to reach the "whole world". But in any case, focussing on the international character of FIG and on the projects set up together

with the UN, the role of FIG can be clearly explained. The example of Marrakech clearly shows that FIG work can be interesting to the public, even for a one-hour television programme.

To get the best benefit of the FIG events it is strongly recommended to prepare a plan for media relations and to have, at least, a media conference at each meeting.

To get in contact with the journalists will be one of the main tasks of the Council and the Director, and it will possibly be working only by personal contacts. Without any relation to a certain event, it will be difficult for FIG to attract attention to its work and to have a press release or even an interview on television; even if there is an interesting story to talk about. Again, the collaboration with UN organisations could be a good example to show up the main idea of FIG's work and its importance.

C.12 Specialist magazines

In general, articles describing FIG work in special surveyor's magazines do have an aspect of information policy, but normally members and members of the member organisations should know what is going on. Even though this is another opportunity to talk about FIG's work it should be used as often as possible. The FIG Council has started a close co-operation with the publishers of surveying journals that are corporate members of FIG.

Looking at the third target group, the public in general, they will probably not read these specialist magazines; they will be better reached by newspapers.

C.13 Presentations

In general, presentations of the FIG, its basic ideas and how it is working is the best means to reach the public, and at the same time the best marketing that we can have, so we should use every opportunity (see above). The presentations at national or regional events are very good examples! As the personal contacts, presentations are time consuming, but there are obviously more people that can be reached. To help the members of FIG promoting the federation some PowerPoint presentations about FIG and its activities have been prepared and these are available on the FIG home page.

There are only some minor differences regarding the three target groups, and they depend on the opportunity: during a surveyor's congress or conference, the groups one and two are reached. To reach the public in general will only be possible during events with different topics; during the presentations the importance of FIG's work has to be put in another context, but it will not be too difficult to point them out.

C.14 Flyers

In addition to the mentioned means, others exist as for example the flyers, which will reach possible new members, i.e. when distributed during a congress. But in general the flyers are directed towards target groups two and three.

Appendix to the FIG Information Policy Concept

Short and Long Term Action List

Level: May 2004

The discussions during the Working Week in Athens have shown that FIG members are satisfied with the (new) information policy concept of the Council. But there are still some means that are not used up to now or that have to be refined.

Already used are:

- The Annual Review,
- Proceedings and Minutes,
- Letters (Newsletters, President's letter), and
- The Article of the month.

Within the next months, the focus should be on:

- Setting up rules for the organizers of FIG events how newspaper, radio and television can be used as public relationship means,
- Activating the mailing fora and discussion groups (or to give them up!),
- Adding a chapter to the information policy paper related to strict marketing,
- Adding another chapter to the information policy paper related to relationship to other NGO,
- Setting up an detailed strategy for fora during meetings
- Continuity within the Council's publications in surveying journals,
- And finally new versions of the FIG flyers that have been revised anyhow with regard to the vice presidents elect and the commission chairs elect.

On the long term action list, there are remaining decisions about:

- Mailing campaigns and
- The use of information booth at conferences and congresses.