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FEGGA’s first conference

tongues”! Delegates departed a little wiser and enthused at the prospect of European co-operation in the future and the strength which the profession will gain from speaking with a common voice and in significant numbers.

Many papers were presented and there was much talk during the weekend. Some conference snapshots may be of interest to readers whilst individual papers can be made available on application to the FEGGA Office at P O Box 42, S-139 21 Värmö, Sweden, Tel. 46 8 570 196 10, Fax. 46 8 570 198 10.

In Spain, 20 years ago there were 25 golf courses - mainly country clubs. Today there are over 250 golf courses. Spanish greenkeepers suffer from a lack of information and difficulties in translation. The last Association conference attracted 120 members. Support from golf clubs in Spain is vital to assist greenkeepers with their education while there is a need for technical programmes focussed on turf grass management.

In France, golf courses with more than 10 employees are required to devote 1.5% of their wage bill each year to training. Wouldn’t that be wonderful in the United Kingdom?

In Switzerland, the position is complicated by language! 64% are German speaking, 19% French speaking, 8% Italian speaking, while 1% are Romansh speaking and 8% speak other languages. In 1980 Switzerland had 29 courses, today there are 59 with 30 new projects in the pipeline. The SGA has 159 members, 64 being French speaking and 95 German speaking. The SGA works closely with the GTC and the Training Manual has been translated into French and German enabling members to pursue training where desired through the framework of the GTC.

In Norway, the Association was formed 10 years ago with eight members. There are now 150 members and 60 golf courses with a projection of 150 courses within the next 10 years. An educational plan is lacking but a week’s seminar is held every year in the second week of January. For 1998 this will be held in Spain and has attracted 80 members (there must be a moral here!). Additionally one day seminars are organised as well as meetings on golf courses.

In Belgium, there are 61 golf courses with Dutch, French and German being the main languages. It is interesting that 14 Head Greenkeepers from the USA are employed in Belgium. Greenkeeper training is very much in embryo form with one day training courses for Head Greenkeepers arranged during the winter. However, a one year course for greenkeepers was introduced in September 1997 and a similar course for Head Greenkeepers will be introduced in September 1998. The Association in Belgium is for Head Greenkeepers only.

In Finland, golf courses are a relatively new industry with the main boom occurring in the 1980s. From less than 20 courses in 1989 there are now more than 90. The FGA with 250 members has an average of three members on each course. Generally courses are frozen every winter, opening in March with the main season from May to October.

In Iceland, there are 30 members of the Association and no educational programmes. The Association was founded in 1994. Some 50 greenkeepers have been educated through a close association with Elmwood College. Occasional seminars are held and at present there are 50 golf courses in Iceland.

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