

Dean Cleaver, the Chairman of FEGGA, gives an overview into the aims of the Federation...

EuroUNITED

It does not seem two years ago since many of us gathered in Amsterdam and made that unique decision to form the Federation of European Golf Greenkeepers Association (FEGGA).

For many years we had discussed whether there was a need to form an umbrella Association to represent National Associations on a European level. Many discussions and decisions were being made with no greenkeeping input. For this to continue we felt would be damaging to the industry and indeed the game of golf.

For some time, some of the National Associations had applied for a place on the EGA's Ecology Management Committee. With the formation of FEGGA a place was granted for one person to represent all Associations. We were obviously delighted with this decision and felt this would only benefit the progress of the Ecology Management Committee.

Education is something all Associations have been working very hard on for many years, and in most cases with much success. There was a definite need for all Associations to get together and learn from each other's education, and then to aim for a minimum level within Europe.

There are many other aspects that affect our business in maintaining golf courses in Europe. It must be good to pool our resources, so we may learn from each other and benefit from each other's experiences and resources.

This was the main basis for forming FEGGA in the short term; in the long term there are many more ambitions to fulfill.

At this point I must stress that FEGGA has no wish to interfere with the running of National Associations, supporting their individual activities and representing them at European level.

Following the initial meeting in Amsterdam an interim Board of five members was elected with their main job to prepare a Constitution ready



FEGGA has a policy of holding meetings around Europe and this picture shows the Board on a recent visit to Estonia and the country's only golf club - the Estonian Golf Club. L-R: Board Members, Roland Favrat, of Spain; Per-Olof Ljung, of Sweden; Claus-Detlef Ratjen, of Germany; Dean Cleaver, of the UK, and Elise Jarvenen of Finland. Also in the picture are the Federation's two administrators, Neil Thomas and Tommy Lindelof, as well as, on the extreme right, Rein Paalberg, the Course Manager of the Estonian Golf Club.

for the first AGM in January 1997 held in Harrogate, England. This was approved along with the election of the interim Board.

During last year (1997) FEGGA started to establish quite well and was beginning to be recognised for the work it was doing, and the role it was beginning to play.

We now have 16 Member Associations, representing some 10,500 greenkeeping members.

The Board meetings we held served two purposes, one to obviously carry out Association business, and secondly to take FEGGA to National Association events. We feel that it is very important to support these events and so build up a closer relationship. During 1997, we visited Germany, Switzerland, Sweden and Spain, all very worthwhile visits.

We started 1997 by taking our place on the Ecology Management Committee. Like any new committee member, there has to be a settling in period, but now three meetings later feel that we are making a good contribution. "Committed to Green" is something the Ecology committee has been working toward for some time, and is something we are keen to support and be part of. It is so

important that greenkeepers are involved in decision making, as without their support, success will be limited. It is also vital that Federations encourage golf clubs to be part of "Committed to Green", to show that Golf and Ecology can go together.

FEGGA's main activity for 1997 was to be our first conference, and this was held in Spain during November. The theme for the conference was 'Education and Ecology' followed by time for open discussion. The papers were presented by each Association, with two delegates representing each National Association. All the papers presented were excellent and indeed we learned so much from each other. As I mentioned earlier, one of our aims from the beginning was to have a minimum level of education, something that despite what education was being used could be used as a benchmark.

This indeed was achieved at the conference with everyone agreeing to set their minimum level of education on the equivalent of NVQ Level 2. It is fair to say there are Associations that have surpassed this level already. This minimum level will be reviewed as time goes on.

The papers on Ecology proved to be

most enlightening. We all have different rules and regulations that we have to work to. It did prove how little we know about each other's environmental affairs. FEGGA will help in this matter, as will our involvement in the Ecology Committee. Good communication is vital.

The conclusion of the conference was that there was a great need for FEGGA and we had all witnessed FEGGA working during the conference. We would now hope that the conference will be an annual event picking out different themes each year.

Looking ahead we would like to recruit more members, and help some of the countries that as yet do not have an Association, therefore we plan to visit some of these countries this year. It's also important that we consolidate on what we have achieved already and not try to do everything at once.

I would like to thank the European Golf Association for their support of FEGGA, and I hope I have given you all a brief insight into the role of FEGGA, and its ambitions for the future. I certainly hope we can continue to work closely together in the future.