



## STANDARDS, WHAT STANDARDS?

David Golding, GTC's Education Director, discusses the lack of greenkeeper training systems.

Following the circulation of a Greenkeeping questionnaire to all European Golf Associations by the R&A in 2004, it was clear through the analysis that many countries have no greenkeeper education and training systems in place.

Obviously, countries where the game is very much in its infancy, employers rely on importing qualified staff to manage the course and often local labour is used to maintain the course.

One clear message came out through the replies and that was, that many countries were seeking assistance to develop their own system for educating and training greenkeepers.

The R&A, as members of the GTC, asked for a response from the Board as to how assistance could be given to these countries based on the years of experience the GTC has in greenkeeper education.

The Board allocated some time for me to develop a response and this has involved joint meetings with representatives of both BIGGA and FEGGA.

It was clear from the outset that all representatives saw an opportunity to not only assist golf developing countries but also to consider recommending to the R&A that this support could be better delivered through agreeing a set of standards for greenkeeping.

A pan-European advisory group has been established and its recommendations will be circulated to all appropriate golfing organisations very shortly.

On a personal note I have to say this advisory group has been united in the will to be part of an initiative that will benefit the game as a whole and there has been no "personal or political" gain throughout any of the discussions.

There is still work to do on the proposal and when the standards are agreed, it will be for each country to deliver programmes of education and training to meet the pan-European standards in a manner to suit the country.

The group recommended three levels for the occupational standards:

1. Golf Course Greenkeeper.
2. Golf Course Supervisor.
3. Golf Course Manager.

A list of skills with the related knowledge will now be developed for each level and the group will circulate these as a minimum standard for consultation. It is also suggested that a Certificate be issued when a student has met the European standards through their country's



system of qualifications. A rigorous quality assurance system would be established to maintain and monitor the Certification Scheme.

The advisory group suggests there are many benefits for the greenkeeping sector to have pan-European standard's not least that employers throughout Europe would know exactly what skills and knowledge any applicant for employment would have, when presenting a certificate achieved through the system. The benefits to greenkeepers would include the opportunity to move within the European greenkeeping community with certificate(s), which are respected and understood by employers.

It is hoped that all the Golf Unions and Federations, will support this initiative and with the Greenkeeping Associations, BIGGA and FEGGA already fully supporting the advisory group's work, there is a great opportunity through education and training to unite even closer the greenkeeping profession.

The R&A, the European Golf Association and the PGA European Tour are being kept fully informed of the advisory groups work as their support and endorsement for this initiative will be vital to its implementation.

Updates on this project will be posted on the GTC, BIGGA and FEGGA websites as work progresses.

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