



# Inaugural FIG young surveyors conference

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**M**ANY of my fellow students at the University of East London (UEL), and many surveyors who are at the teething stages of their careers may not have heard of, or know much about the Fédération Internationale des Géomètres, FIG. Hopefully, reading this will change that. I want the help raise the awareness of the works and the benefits of what FIG and FIG Young Surveyors Network (FIG YSN) has already opened up to me.

I first heard of FIG Young Surveyors Network from a past UEL student, Alex Maddison. Alex Maddison, UK Representative FIG YSN, enthused me with his stories and experiences of what he had gained attending the FIG Working Week in Marrakech 2011. FIG YSN, for those who are not aware and to quote Alex, aims to facilitate networking, represent young surveyors' interest, improve awareness and encourage involvement. The FIG YSN is chaired by Australian, Kate Fairlie and these aims were very much at the forefront of the young surveyors conference.

## Conference

Over 120 young surveyors from 40 different countries, were passionate enough to gather together in Rome to make the inaugural FIG young surveyors conference a success. FIG denotes a young surveyor as someone who is either younger than 35, or someone who has graduated from a bachelor or masters degree within the last 10 years. This means there are surveyors at different levels of expertise and from of a huge range of specialisms making up the FIG YSN.

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The conference was spread over two days, with a mixture of talks, debates and presentations. Many focused on the theme of the conference 'knowing to create the future' on how young surveyors can influence the future of the survey industry. A strong issue that cropped up time and time again was that there are simply not enough surveyors. This is due to a combination of reasons including a lack of knowledge of the profession within the general public; especially in schools which leads to low numbers of students studying the subject. Also, more



*Gathering of over 120 young surveyors.*

young surveyors to take a more pro-active role within their community to help address this issue, locally, nationally and internationally.

## Commissions

FIG's technical work is comprised of ten commissions. Each commission is led by the chair person who has been elected at the general assembly at the FIG congress for a four-year term. Work plans of the commissions are approved by the

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general assembly during the congress. A choice of attending one of four different workshops was on offer:

- 1.1 Young surveying professional (commission 1, 2 & YSN)
- 1.2 GIS and land management (commission 3 & 7)
- 1.3 Surveying and measurement (commission 4, 5 & 6)
- 1.4 Real estate and property (commission 8, 9 & 10)

Naturally I was drawn to 1.3 due to the nature of my degree. Every presentation was as professional and informative as the last. All completely inspiring; my mind running with ideas. Many of the presentations were on topics related to modules studied in BSc(Hons) surveying and mapping sciences course, so it was brilliant to see the theory I have been working and learning with being put into practice on such a variety of projects and sites. Hearing from other young surveyors with such enthusiasm and expertise has been a great motivator for me.

## Inspiration

On the first coffee break I met a group of guys outside, three of them all sporting a dark navy polo with a 'Meet Het' badge. As the only ones to have come in a 'uniform' rather than formal wear I was instantly curious as to what 'Meet Het' meant and what they were promoting. As it transpired, these three young surveyors, Jonas Van Hooreweghe, Bram Van Landeghe and Jans Van Desselgher have all become



FIG foundation grant receivers.

time after graduation – and as partners they have developed Meet Het (translated 'Measure It').

They were amazing to talk to, completely inspiring, passionate about what they do and how they became a success. Only a couple of years older than myself, I felt like a whole new door has appeared and opened wide. I had never thought about starting my own company before and had a stereotypical view of company owners – usually in their elder years with lots of money to invest. But these guys changed that. Each had their own confidence and drive to start a company and to have the entrepreneurship mind to collaborate with each other. This enables each of them to specialise in their interest fields but not lose business by passing on work to each other through Meet Het. With the right mentality and idea for success even young surveyors can be their own bosses.

### The future

As a student with a low budget and having to fit it into the term time schedule it is difficult to attend international networking events like this. However, I would absolutely recommend others to take some time into planning and organising such trip to share and develop incredible knowledge and experiences – along with furthering your horizons.

I need to give my thanks to the University of East London Going Global Bursary who helped sponsor me, also to Costain, who awarded me a student sponsorship – of which much has been used to allow me to be able attend such an event. Also thanks to all the sponsors and supporters of FIG young surveyors conference, FIG council, members and commission chairs and last but not most importantly FIG Young Surveyors Network committee, Kate Fairlie, Eva-Maria Unger, Alex Maddison and all fellow young surveyor participants.

As the first, of hopefully many more, FIG young surveyors conference it addressed the current challenges of the surveying industry worldwide with regard to surveying as a profession and what us, as young surveyors, could do to help promote this essential vocational subject field.

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