

TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

2014-2017 EFG STRATEGIC PLAN



EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF GEOLOGISTS



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BACKGROUND

At its November 2013 meeting in Brussels, the Council of the European Federation of Geologists (EFG) unanimously approved a Strategic Plan, together with a summary of the actions arising from it, for the period 2014-17.

This document details the agreed actions and their priority over the planning period. The guideline for the action plans was a matrix made in 2012, which included 17 priority actions. Those actions were subsequently grouped to seven thematic sets.

EFG'S MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

The EFG is a not-for-profit organisation whose purpose is to represent the professions of geology in Europe, especially to the European Union (EU) and its various bodies. EFG contributes to protection of the environment, public safety and responsible exploitation of natural resources by

- promoting excellence in the application of geoscience;
- supporting research and teaching that underpins it;
- raising public awareness of the importance of geoscience to society.

Public safety, sustainable development, responsible use of natural resources, wealth creation and effective prediction, prevention and mitigation of natural hazards are best served by educated and appropriately trained professional geologists working transparently with other professionals and communicating effectively with the public. To those ends, EFG encourages professional development by promoting training and Continuing Professional Development and offering validation (certification) through its internationally recognised title of European Geologist (EurGeol).

To fulfil its vision and values EFG considers five drivers, with the following aims:

- improving education and outreach in the field of geosciences;
- increasing professional mobility and recognition of qualifications;
- ensuring ethical professional practice;
- supporting its National membership Associations (NAs) in delivering its strategy.



I EFG Members

Overview

Increasing public awareness and obtaining political support for geological practice implies developing a close relationship with all the NAs, to maximise the synergy that could arise from events, either planned or not, or from natural or political sources with national or transnational impact. To build that relation it is critical to establish routine procedures to share information among EFG and its member bodies. A first step is to share information about Board activities. The dissemination of the outcome of the monthly Board meetings with EFG Council delegates has already been implemented and is a contribution to reinforce EFG's membership network in the hope that it will contribute to experience sharing among NAs, fostering a structured process of benchmarking best practices.

A second step is to work proactively with the European Commission General Directorates to increase EFG visibility and to obtain support for EFG's activities (this specific theme is set out under Strategic Action Plan II European Network). Success in that endeavour will strengthen the bond between the NAs and EFG, and enhance EFG's capability to attract new members. An expanded network is a characteristic that is highly valued by the European Commission. From that perspective, the process of increasing EFG advocacy capabilities is closely related with the process of increasing EFG's membership.

Objectives and drivers

1. Improving engagement of NAs in EFG activities makes a stronger Federation and mobilises time and talents beyond just the Board, Officials and permanent staff to deliver EFG's aims and programme;
2. Sharing of best practice and benchmarking among professional geologists in Europe, contributes to mobility, recognition by governments and European institutions of geologists and the work that they do, and provides opportunities for continuing professional development to individual geologists;
3. Retaining members protects EFG's core budget;
4. Recruiting additional members will either bring in more revenue allowing the annual budget to be met and with more contributions, fees can be reduced.

Outcomes

1. Developing a more cohesive Federation with shared objectives and a strong sense of mutual support;
2. Sharing the work involved in delivering the EFG strategic plan beyond just the Board, Officials and permanent staff – doing more by mobilising more resources from member associations;
3. Providing central services to member associations that lack resources to develop for themselves;
4. Facilitating mutual support between groups of member associations to pool resources or learn from each other.



II European Network

Overview

European Union policies reflect the political priorities of Member States. To influence EU policies EFG must actively position itself as the “voice of European geologists” and provide reliable information to EU policy makers on geoscientific issues and the way they relate to protection of the public, sustainable use of natural resources and environmental protection.

Whenever it has the knowledge and expertise to do so, EFG will actively seek out opportunities to participate in EU (policy) working groups and to cooperate with European institutions to achieve EFG’s aims, for example, by organising workshops and issuing public statements.

Objectives and drivers

1. Increasing the visibility of EFG among EU institutions and EFG’s capabilities to influence the EU in policy development regarding geosciences related issues;
2. Building and maintaining an updated database of contacts in European institutions;
3. Reinforcing EFG’s capability to act as facilitator to NAs.

Outcomes

1. Reinforcing EFG’s role in the development of EU policies that relate to the geosciences;
2. Building awareness of EFG among European Commission officials;
3. Reinforcing EFG’s collaboration with kindred European associations;
4. Reinforcing communication between EFG, the NAs and relevant national organisations such as Geological Surveys or industry associations;
5. Reinforcing EFG’s role to set standards for geologist’s professional practice under European guidelines.



III Global Network

Overview

In the light of the increasing pace of business globalisation and rapid changes to both the regional economic balance and in Europe’s role, EFG must seek alliances with geoscientific organisations outside Europe to promote adoption internationally of criteria and standards relating to the professional practice of geoscience. EFG is committed to setting standards in geosciences, covering the professional exercise, ethics, reporting and training. Mutual recognition of professional qualifications is critical to extend the opportunities for EFG’s members working overseas and to benchmark existing European standards and the achievements in skills enhancement.

Through its broad base of NAs, EFG has a network of contacts with countries (and regions) with different languages and cultures, including America, Africa, Oceania and parts of Asia. It can also rely on the support of the European Commission with its interest in setting international standards.

Objectives and drivers

1. Share and benchmark best practice among geoscience organisations (professional, technical, scientific, etc.);
2. Seek opportunities to develop international standards based on the concept of Qualified Person or Competent Person, to ensure delivery of high levels of professional competence (see also the Strategic Action Plan VII EurGeol Competent Person);
3. Develop a common and reciprocal process for the mutual recognition of professional qualifications among kindred professional geological bodies;
4. Develop a common code of ethics for all professional geologists;
5. Attract NAs from outside Europe to join EFG, initially as Observer Members.

Outcomes

1. Widen recognition and acceptance of standards based on individual professional competence;
2. Ensure the recognition of the EurGeol title and the mobility of Eurogeologists in Canada, USA, South America, Asia and Africa;
3. Reinforce the EFG network with scientific and professional geoscientific organisations;



IV EurGeol Competent Person

Overview

One of the major problems the European and global minerals industry faces is public acceptance. The public has low confidence in the industry and proposals for establishment of mines at all scales are characterised by conflict.

Against this background, Europe could lead in setting and promoting a certification tool, based on existing and EU implemented standards and on personal warrants given by Competent Persons to assure the public (as consumers or end-users) that the products they are buying or using were made from raw materials exploited within responsible and sustainable mining practices. This certification scheme must: 1) include interoperability guidelines with other standards and; 2) be simple and based on personal warrants given by a EurGeol.

Such a scheme will favour European mines and quarries because the standards already in use in Europe require responsible mining. In this way, by certifying that a company follows principles and criteria already under the scope of existing EU regulations and standards (like ISO9001, ISO14001, OHSAS18001 or PERC), a certification process could be introduced quickly at minimum cost to industry and widespread benefit. Informal feedback from EU officers suggests that the EU will support a certification scheme that promotes sustainability and best practices and at the same time benefits (and protects) the EU industry without raising trade barriers. To achieve this aim it is critical to attract the engagement and support of the minerals industry associations and leading companies.

Objectives and drivers:

1. Promote the EurGeol title and the advantages of the Competent Person framework, to ensure delivery of high levels of professional competence based on individual responsibility;
2. Actively seek opportunities to develop global standards promoting responsible and sustainable exploitation of geological resources, based on simple and personal warrants given by a Competent Person (EurGeol in Europe).

Outcomes:

1. Increase the status of the EurGeol title;
2. Increase recognition of the EurGeol title at the National, European, and International levels;
3. Increase the number of EurGeol applications and the revenues from EurGeol fees;
4. Develop and implement new EU standards (or reinforcing existing ones) or certification schemes based on warrants given by EurGeols.



V EurGeol Services

Overview

Two converging trends support the need to reinforce the use of web-based tools to improve the dialogue between EFG and its stakeholders:

1. lack of time and search for convenience;
2. increased availability of internet access and its widespread use.

Given these trends, it is logical to make greater use of the internet to provide information about the title and to develop web pages dedicated to EurGeols with details of job opportunities and training relating to professional development, including an e-learning platform with scope for fee income.

EFG is in a privileged position to manage training courses: EFG can accurately evaluate the existing professional geologists training needs; and it can combine the existing resources from NAs and training organisations to set a training offer capable of matching the identified needs. To take this opportunity, EFG must develop an e-learning platform and make agreements with NAs and training organisations to ensure the delivery of training courses with added value to professional geologists.

Objectives and drivers

1. Enhance the dialog between EFG and its stakeholders;
2. Enhance the value for mobility of geologists both within and outside Europe;
3. Establish web services relating to the EurGeol title, allowing the holders to upload personal data and to download information regarding job offers and training opportunities, and the general public to run queries (searching for EurGeols);
4. Establish an e-learning platform and develop training courses.

Outcomes:

1. Increase the status of the EurGeol title;
2. Increase the number of EurGeol applications and the revenues from EurGeol fees;
3. Increase the income from training courses and reinforce relations with NAs willing to cooperate in professional training (for example, in developing courses, teaching, promoting, publicizing).



VI Projects

Overview

Many EU organisations recognise EFG as having experience in participating in large EU collaborative projects with expertise in disseminating information and in contributing a professional geoscience perspective. The Federation is increasingly being invited to participate as a partner in project proposals.

The H2020 framework programme places emphasis on the supply of critical raw materials for European industry and mineral resources will have a prominent role. Although resources are currently the main focus of prospective projects, opportunities relating to education and groundwater topics are also being identified.

Objectives and drivers

1. Ensure funding of EFG's current activity through participation in dissemination tasks (or management/co-ordination tasks) of EU funded projects where there is a geoscience element;
2. Strengthen the bond between the EFG, the NAs and national entities (countries and organisations in Europe and elsewhere) related to innovation and R&D;
3. Enhance the prestige and credibility of the EFG within the EU institutions, businesses and institutions of R&D;
4. Involve as (staff and individual members with appropriate expertise) for their financial benefit.

Outcomes

1. Build on the existing accumulated project surplus funds to allow funding of all EFG non-core (investment) activities;
2. Make at least a 40% contribution to core funding before 2017 allowing reduction of NA fee budget;
3. Enhance the competences of EFG in communicating to the public, the community of geoscientists and decision makers;
4. Enhance the competences of EFG in the preparation of applications for EU funded projects and in delivering excellence as a project partner or co-ordinator;
5. Strengthen EFG relationships with NAs, Laboratories and Universities of the countries (European or not) involved in the applications/projects;
6. Establish EFG and its member NAs as 'first choice' partners for pan European dissemination of geoscience topics and leading to a 'pipeline' of unsolicited invitations to participate.



VII Communication

Overview

Geological information is required to inform decisions about use of 'the ground' or, for example, to assess the consequences and risks associated with a particular geohazard. Users need information to make decisions that could, for example, influence engineering design, determine the location of structures, roads and utilities, to locate mineral resources or to help save lives.

Communication of geological matters can be critical as the results, advice and recommendations arising from geological investigations are used by various groups, including clients, policy makers, the lay public, media and other audiences. Frequently, the users of geoscientific information are non-technical and the failure to communicate the message effectively and accurately to those recipients may reduce the usefulness of the information.

EFG can improve public awareness of the importance of geosciences to the safety, economic well-being and health of individuals. To achieve that, EFG must be capable of issuing public statements related with "hot" subjects (because they are controversial or just because they are on the news headlines), with a simple and clear language, based on solid scientific understanding. EFG must align the statements provided within its communication policy, aiming the recognition of the importance of geoscientific information in public policies.

Objectives and drivers

1. Improve the use of geoscientific information on decision-making in public policies;
2. Raise public awareness of the importance of geosciences;
3. Improve elementary knowledge of the public on geology and geological processes.

Outcomes

1. Reinforce the use of the EFG communication tools: EGM, GeoNews and webpage;
2. Reinforce the dissemination capacity between EFG Members NA;
3. Raise awareness of EFG, among the public and policy makers, as a trustworthy source for geoscientific information;
4. Reinforce EFG capabilities to contribute to the development of EU policies relating to the geosciences;
5. Strengthen the bonds between EFG, NAs and mineral industry associations;
6. Co-organise the EU Geology Day.



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