



Annual Report 2023

Member Associations:

Austria, Belgium, BIGGA, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Rep. of Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland.

Affiliate Member Associations:

South Africa, GCSAA

Patrons:

Aquatrols, Bayer, Barenbrug, Campey Turf Care, CapillaryFlow, Clubcar, Culterra, Dennis-Sisis, DLF, EIGCA, EGCOA, ETL, Foley United, Frank Newberry, Goldcrop Ltd, Grundfos, GTC, Harradine Golf, Hunter, Husqvarna, Infinicut, John Deere, John Moore, Kristianstad's Golf Club, Le Golf National, Macro Organics, Rain Bird, Ransomes-Jacobsen, STMC, Sustane, Symbio, Syngenta, Toro, Turfcare, Verschoor, Vellsam

Introduction

2023 was a year that saw FEGGA start to return to a more normal environment in terms of the running of the Federation. There were still limitations on everything that the board wanted to achieve during the year, but it was overall a successful year in delivering good services, supporting educational programmes, and representing the European greenkeeping profession at the highest level.

In focusing on the year ahead the Board reacted in making the following key decisions:

- A budget was produced to provide flexibility of projects being run or not and ensuring a safe passage through 2023 could happen.
- The Executive Officer hours remained at 20 hrs average per week. Although this has maintained a financial sustainable platform, it does create challenges in achieving all the essential needs of managing the Federation.
- The board took time to discuss succession planning following the retirement of Dean and Linda Cleaver.

Overview:

During 2023 FEGGA worked in the following key areas.

- Organised and ran a successful FEGGA Conference.
- FEGGA Scholarship programme in Partnership with Kristianstad's Golf Club:
- The 6-month programme took on 6 scholars concluding in October 2023. Many of our Patron Members along with other Industry Partner Experts, delivered quality Education. The programme also provided further work experiences at the Evian Masters and the 2023 Ryder Cup.
- The FEGGA Scholarship Programme for 2024 was open for applicants towards the end of 2023. You will all have received the latest brochure and thank you to the many associations for sharing with your own membership and through your social media platforms. We have already reached our limit of 8 persons for the 2024 programme starting in April.
- FEGGA launched a new website.
- FEGGA were able to Provide five placements for Greenkeepers to work at the Ryder Cup venue of Marco Simone for a period of 6 months leading up to and during the 2023 Ryder Cup.
- Provided support services to all our Member Associations and Patron Members.
- Produced regular Updates for our Members and Patrons.
- Produced four quarterly electronic newsletters through 2023.
- Produced articles for publication by Member Associations in their own magazines which have helped greenkeeper members learn more of FEGGA work in their own languages.
- We continued to represent the Greenkeeper profession regarding the Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the sustainable use of plant protection production.

FEGGA Conference:

FEGGA held their annual conference in Portugal on the 22nd and 23rd of February 2023. Due to popular demand the participants once again converged at the Hotel Quinta da Marinha Resort in beautiful Cascais just outside of Lisbon.

A strong group of delegates from FEGGA's 21 membership Countries of European greenkeeper associations came together with Patrons and industry partners to hear, share, and talk about some of the toughest challenges the European Golf Industry faces: post pandemic labour shortages and the proposed EU regulation on the use of pesticides.



The first morning kicked off with the now familiar speed dating networking session where greenkeeper association delegates and patrons networked in small sessions over a 2-hour session. This was a great way for everyone to get to know each other and mutually share information and general thoughts about industry trends and challenges.

It was now time to head down to Cascais Marina for lunch, and why travel by bus, when it can be done by bicycles, yes, all 70 delegates taking a fun bicycle ride around the neighborhood and coastline before lunch at a local seafood restaurant by the Cascais harbour. Although cycling is not an everyday means of transport for most of the participants everyone remained safe and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.



Although good data exists in European golf on players participation coupled with the economic impact, little is known about the labour force and the impact golf has on the environment. FEGGA's Chairman Joel Nunes of Portugal presented together with Professor Joaquim Contreiras of the University of Algarve on their result from a greenkeeper survey made in Portugal during 2022. Portugal is experiencing serious issues with labor shortages and one very clear conclusion was that the base salary for greenkeeper assistants was so low, that it simply didn't made golf an attractive job. I think this is certainly not a just a trend I Portugal, but many Countries can draw comparisons. What is evident though that the data makes it much more real and much easier to communicate the message with real facts.

Following a day packed with networking and some really major challenges facing our industry, it was now time for the FEGGA members to come together for their AGM. With this, FEGGA were delighted to welcome three new Board Members, these being; Yavor Atanasov (Bulgaria), Haukur Jonsson (Iceland), Duncan Bruce (Norway).

An early 8:30 start was made on the second day with the Education session led by Koert Donkers. Kelli Jerome was really helpful getting the schedule back on track. Kelli of GEO he presented on Europe's BMP's. Her worries on the amount of attendees was unfounded, because at 8:30 the conference room was packed and ready to learn all about the GEO developments and how they promote and make visual Best Management Practices all around Europe.

Aquatrols "Fairway Foundation" presented a great insight into the opportunities that are available through this global initiative, followed by Rhett Evans of the GCSAA followed who provided an update of how the now global thank a Greenkeeper" day went in 2022 and how we will continue to improve it for the 2023 campaign.

Bianca Mignon Pronk and Pepe Jimeno Fernandez was next introduced to host their presentation on their FEGGA Scholarship adventures and projects at Kristianstad Golf course in Sweden. In their introduction the session leader reminded everybody how special he thought it was that FEGGA has been supporting students from all over Europe for over 20 more years now. He himself was a FEGGA student at the Ryder cup 2001 at the Belfry already for Bevan Tattersall. Bevan is now again inviting students over to his golf course in Sweden. They gave an excellent presentation on their projects showed how much they learned over at Kristianstad and how they had grown as a person during this scholarship. A scholarship that resulted for Bianca a new job at Kristianstad. Pepe who showed us a really impressive CO2 meter programme which had developed during his scholarship is now working as a Head groundman at Malaga CF.

Maria Viking, Mathia Damberg & Par Forsman (Husqvarna AB) Presented about their latest developments on Robotics. Their presentation: Robotics and how they can enhance the future of Golf Course Management. Underlining that the world of golf is changing Erwan Lecocq Course Manager at Winston Golf Club, Germany presented in a very interesting and jaw dropping presentation on how he works with 40+ robots at his golf course Winston Golf. His presentation was called Robotics How they have benefitted my Golf Course Management Programme. After the break Martin Nilsson introduced Lara Arias. Lara is the Golf Course Superintendent and Agronomist at Marco Simone Golf course in Italy. In here presentation called The Development of Marco Simone into a Ryder Cup venue. She took us through all the challenges they are facing in creating a top facility which can hold the Ryder Cup. Every single part of the golf facility gets renewed and improved to host the biggest golf team event in the world even the roads leading up to the golf course got widened for all the spectators, trucks, media etc.

The final session of this year's conference dealt with a very serious to how the industry is run now namely the proposed EU regulation on a ban of the use of pesticides in 2024. Multiple speakers addressed this issue which first came to the attention of the whole industry last summer. Niels Dokkuma, normally with the Dutch Golf Federation, but now working for the European Golf Association on this case, Simon Elsworth from Syngenta, Rhett Evans from the GCSAA, Bárbara Oliveira from the Portuguese environmental Agency, Eugenio Rezola and Frank Schäfer representing the Spanish and German Greenkeepers Association respectively all gave their insights on how they perceive the regulation will affect the golf industry and what reasonable outcome could come out of the negotiations with the EU. The proposed ban of pesticides or something pretty close doesn't make the FEGGA mantra less relevant: More and better coordinated turfgrass research, better education of greenkeepers, proper data collection and better communication to golfers.

In concluding FEGGA would like to thank its Key Main sponsors John Deere, Husqvarna and Toro for their loyal Support, along with all its Member Associations, Patrons and Partners. Some 48 organisations were represented at the Conference, which really enabled complete discussions and debates from every aspect of the Turf industry.

Next FEGGA conference is scheduled for March 2024 in Madrid, Spain.

Board meetings:

During 2023 the board met on a regular basis, holding online meetings at least on a monthly basis. The board held two physical meetings, one during the FEGGA Conference in Portugal and the main meeting taking place in Copenhagen during the month of September.

The board also held meetings to discuss succession planning following the retirement of Dean and Linda Cleaver. These were a mix of meetings with and without Dean in attendance.

Succession planning following Dean and Lindas retirement at the end of March 2024

The board led by Our Chairman Joel Nunes have been working with succession planning following the retirement of Dean and Linda. As you are all aware, after more than 20 years of dedicated service, Dean Cleaver is retiring. We want to express our deep gratitude for Dean's unwavering commitment, passion, and expertise, which have played a pivotal role in shaping the success and growth of FEGGA. Dean has been instrumental in making FEGGA the reality it is today.

The board acknowledges Dean's decision to retire and respects his choice to embark on a well-deserved new chapter. In light of this transition, we want to assure you that the current board is actively engaged in facilitating a seamless and internal handover. Our collective commitment to upholding FEGGA's mission remains steadfast, and we are dedicated to continuing the excellent work that Dean has led over the years.

Dean's ongoing support and understanding during this period of change are crucial, and we appreciate his collaboration as we navigate this transition together. The board is committed more than ever to the exciting times ahead."

New FEGGA Website

FEGGA were finally able to finalise and launch its new website. The site has been a great edition, offering a new look, with some nice new features that provide more opportunities to showcase the work of FEGGA, its Member Associations and Patron Members. The site has had a trouble-free launch and has received many compliments on its look and new functions.

REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the sustainable use of plant protection production

From the beginning, FEGGA has been firmly committed to the European golf advocacy campaign towards the EU regarding the proposed regulation on the use of Plant Protection Products on golf courses.

In March, right after our annual conference, FEGGA joined “the Collaborative Platform” consisting of EGA (chair), R&A and European Tour Group. The EGA is the European golf business key representative organization to the EU. FEGGA have participated in all meetings and discussions in this forum.

After joining the collaborative platform, the FEGGA board very quickly decided to contribute to the financing of two EGA proposed phases for dealing with the EU regulation:

Phase 1 was for the industry to submit an Impact Assessment Report and a Roadmap. The impact Assessment Report describes how the industry see the adverse effects from the legislation on the industry if implemented as proposed. The STRI and Chemservice was appointed the job to write this report. It is quite a substantial work conducted within a very short time frame and the FEGGA board would like to commend the two companies for their work and in particular Christian Spring, the lead contributor from the STRI. The GEO Foundation was commissioned the job to create a roadmap. The outcome is a strong and comprehensive European Golf - Turfgrass Sustainability Road Map that describes what golf already has achieved in sustainability and what opportunities there still exist and how to achieve them.

Phase 2 is concerned with engaging a public affair agency to consult and advise the collaborative platform and to represent the European Golf business in Brussels when the EGA is not available. After a brief tender process, BCW was appointed the job. This phase will end when the final version of the legislation has been decided in Brussels.

From the onset FEGGA has taken a position against a full ban of the use of pesticides on golf courses. This industry is not ready for a step like this in the foreseeable future. However, this FEGGA board doesn't believe that the result from the negotiations with the EU will be that the use of pesticides on golf courses will remain as it is today. A dramatic reduction is a realistic outcome.

A dramatic reduction would mean that the final EU pesticide regulation will be so radical that many traditional practices and behaviors will be left behind and new must be tried, adapted, and invented. This fact will for many years mean that it is unrealistic to think that golf courses will look and perform the way they did before the legislation. To make the situation even more complex, you can add the fight for water, the fight for land, biodiversity crisis and climate change.

The FEGGA board doesn't see any indicators of that golfers are about to change the way they perceive how a golf course should look like or should perform. If golfers don't like what they are paying for they will either leave the sport or complain so much that it will seriously affect the working conditions for all club staff, especially the greenkeepers.

This interim phase will be very hurtful to the golf sector. At some stage in the future, the business will find some kind of new balance, realistically with lower participation and lower total turnover. If the industry doesn't seriously address this interim phase, it can become permanent. But it is this FEGGA board belief, that with the right initiatives and the right commitment the golf sector can avoid being stuck in such a depressed situation permanently, but instead move into a new situation where the golf sector regains the participation and its economic strength, but at the same time be much more on par with all the critically issues we face.

Both within the collaborative platform as well as outside this group, FEGGA is heralding the following initiatives to be crucial for the golf sector:

1. Data collection. The EGA must demand from all its members that golf facilities gather exact data on the use of pesticides and the data is submitted on an annual basis to relevant authorities. The submitted data must be legally binding for greenkeeper as well as for the golf facilities owner or chairman of the board of directors.
2. Knowledge. The golf business needs to step up and invest in well-coordinated, well-funded and sustained turfgrass research. The role model is the Scandinavian Turfgrass Research Foundation. Successful for over 15 years, funded by the respective federations members and with co-funding from industry partners and public sources. FEGGA has earlier proposed the foundation of similar institutions for central Europe and South Europe.
3. Education. Greenkeeper education across Europe is generally underfunded, not updated and lacks ambition. Turfgrass research is moving forward with the times, but there exists a knowledge gap and the greenkeepers are lacking behind in technology adaptation.
4. Communications. The interim phase will need very good and strong communications to golfers of what to expect and how things will be in the future. The communications purpose is two-fold: firstly, to keep golfers playing golf, but secondly, to avoid professional greenkeepers leaving the industry due to worsened working conditions and lack of recognition.

Many of you will be aware that the proposal submitted to the EU Parliament on the 22nd November was rejected by a majority of MEPs. For the moment, this means that everything remains the same.

The EU will now reflect on this decision over the next 6 months and will then make a new decision as to what their next steps will be. It's very important that golf now uses this time to continue its progressive work in Responsible Golf Course Management, and FEGGA is really pushing for this mindset with its role within the European Golf Associations Management group.

Patron Membership:

Our Patron Membership again held very strong during 2023, and through this partnership were able to use their support and expertise in delivering the range of services that year on year we commit to. This year we welcomed Vellsam and Infinicut. We look forward to working with them both.

FEGGA Greenkeeper Scholarship programme:

Congratulations to our six FEGGA scholarship students who recently graduated following their six months at the host venue of Kristianstads Golfklubb & Destination. Luis Miguel Bustamante (Spain), Drazen Surbek (Croatia), Gillies Parmentier (Belgium), Kristian Kouhia (Finland), Rocio Alvear (Spain), Nils Nilsson (Sweden) were all model students, embracing every element of the programme and concluded their final days with all of them delivering final presentations on the conclusions of their projects and what they learned from the whole process.



Many of our Patron Members along with other Industry Partner Experts, delivered quality Education and this year mostly were through onsite delivery. In total we delivered close to 35 seminars, these ranging from one-hour sessions, through to two-day Workshops.

The programme will now move into its fifth year, and without the support of Bevan Tattersall and his team at Kristianstad's, Alan Lindsay of STMC this would not be possible. This is a programme that is fully embraced by our Patron Members, and we thank all of them that participated in delivering education throughout the six month programme.

Greenkeeper Ryder Cup Experience

FEGGA provided another career developing experience at Marco Simone – Home to the 2023 Ryder Cup. One important aspect of FEGGA's work is helping aspiring greenkeepers in their career development through education and experience. Through this commitment we were able to provide valuable support to five greenkeepers through a 6-month Greenkeeper Experience Programme at Marco Simone golf course, host venue to the upcoming Ryder Cup to be played for the first time in Italy.

Our attending Greenkeeper Students, came from Italy, Finland, France, Rep of Ireland, and Sweden.



In working with Lara Arias, Superintendent & Agronomist and Alejandro Reyes, Director of Agronomy we were able to provide this wonderful opportunity, coupled with a supporting education programme during their time at Marco Simone.

Through this programme we have been able to deliver education on; Fertilization – how to prepare an annual fertility plan, management of Poa and bent grasses on greens. Irrigation management, Machine Management and bunker design and maintenance, all being delivered by experienced specialists working within our industry. They will finish this part of their experience during the Ryder Cup week, with a seminar delivered by Thomas Nikolai on all aspects of rolling greens.

This programme was made possible through the sponsorship of the Toro Company and CapillaryFlow and FEGGA thanks them for their commitment in helping support this unique opportunity.

Thank a Greenkeeper/Superintendent Day – 14th September 2023



The day was a great success, with many Associations and partner organisations getting involved and supporting the meaning behind the purpose of the day.

Across both hashtags (#ThankASuper and #ThankAGreenkeeper), more than 4,500 posts were made, an increase of nearly 30% over 2022. Those posts resulted in 14.7 million impressions globally, which is a 41.5% increase over last year.

We also reached additional audiences over broadcast media. In the UK 7 million impressions were made via the BBC and 11.2 million impressions were made in the U.S. through Golf Channel. You can watch the commercials and Golf Channel interview [here](#).

Combined, the social and broadcast efforts totaled nearly 30 million impressions around the world and on a smaller scale, we heard countless stories of how facilities and golfers took the time to personally thank and celebrate their team, which is what the day is all about.

Meetings have already taken place regarding 2024, and more information will be presented at the FEGGA Conference in Madrid.

FEGGA Association Support:

FEGGA were very committed to continuing our support of its Association Members. During 2023 we were able to attend events and support associations through FEGGA presentations and in attending European industry meetings.

In particular we were represented at BTME and GIS, along with representing all associations on the newly formed EGA Golf Collaborative platform for dealing with the EU Pesticide regulation.

The Portuguese Greenkeepers Association again gave special packages for all FEGGA Member Associations and Patrons to attend their Conference. It was great to see many organisations making the most of this opportunity.

Financial Update:

2023 saw FEGGA return to many of its normal activities, resulting in increased revenue streams, allowing us to commit to more support initiatives. There were still some initiatives that we were not able to make happen as per our planned budget, but the board are confident that we can continue to build on these during 2024.

Please see the attached verified Trading Profit and loss account for 2023, along with a proposed budget for 2024.

On a positive note:

- All our Memberships stayed strong during the whole year of 2023.
- Our two main sponsors stayed committed to supporting us with the Conference for 2023 and we were pleased that Husqvarna joined both John Deere and Toro in becoming main sponsors for our 2023 FEGGA Conference.
- Finalised and launched a new FEGGA website.
- We maintained a good level of services to our members.
- Were able to continue to run our Greenkeeper Scholarship Programme with sufficient funding.
- We were able to support 5 greenkeepers on the Greenkeeping 2023 Ryder Cup Experience.
- Commit funds to the EGA Collaborative platform, resulting in the financing of two EGA proposed phases for dealing with the EU regulation.

I would say that we are pleased in how we have come through the year, being able to provide a wide-ranging level of support to Greenkeeper Associations and their greenkeeper members. This coupled with the continued support of our Members, Patrons and Sponsors enabled us to end on a positive note and feel very confident for 2024.

Finally, the Board would like to acknowledge the support of all Associations, Patron Members and Industry Partners during the last year and look forward to working with them during the next twelve months.

Dean Cleaver

Executive Officer - On behalf of the FEGGA Board