



LUC MAENE - DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL FERTILIZER ASSOCIATION

ARE YOU COMMITTED TO LIFELONG LEARNING?

TEXT LUC MAENE, DIRECTOR GENERAL INTERNATIONAL FERTILIZER ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT, ESAE

REGULAR READERS OF THE ESAE SECTION OF HEADQUARTERS MAGAZINE KNOW THAT I AM A PASSIONATE ADVOCATE FOR THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT. ALTHOUGH THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF FORMALISED LIFELONG LEARNING VARIES FROM CULTURE TO CULTURE, THERE IS A GROWING RECOGNITION THAT IN A WORLD THAT IS INCREASINGLY GLOBALISED AND THAT IS EVOLVING AT AN ACCELERATING PACE, TOP PROFESSIONALS IN ANY FIELD MUST MAKE AN EFFORT TO KEEP THEIR SKILLS SHARP AND UP-TO-DATE.

Certification elevates professional standards, enhances individual performance and designates association executives of high calibre. Furthermore, because of the need to renew certification, it also demonstrates a healthy commitment to continuous learning.

In many cases, certification begins with an assessment of a candidate's professional readiness. How many years has the individual worked as an association executive, and what is his or her educational background? Many certification programmes also include an implied or explicit commitment to a code of ethics. The American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), which has a 47-year-old certification programme, requires candidates to sign an attestation to uphold ASAE's Standards of Conduct.

Certification is not a permanent status. In order to renew their certification after three years, association executives are often required to accumulate a certain number of credits in

continuing education and professional development.

As well as testing practical experience, certification for association managers needs to test knowledge and understanding of the relevant regulations that associations confront frequently. This aspect of certification is challenging in a multinational context, but it is not insurmountable.

ESAE is investigating ways to strengthen its certification programme. We are looking to build on the track record of ESAE's ECAM qualifications while also tapping the experience of a variety of existing certification programmes in our profession - notably those offered to association managers in Australia, Canada, France and the USA.

These models offer key insights to develop a broad programme that is flexible enough to meet the needs of association executives throughout Europe.

Successful qualification programmes do not just measure accomplishment. They also stress lifelong learning as the basis for qualifications that educate and enlighten - something we are keen to emphasise as we continue to build ESAE's certification programme.

I believe that if we want to be a credible profession, we need certification in order to demonstrate the qualifications that make a good association executive. We also need to embrace the imperative to stay current with latest developments affecting our profession. To meet all of these goals, it is important to have good understanding of the future beneficiaries of the programme: association managers from throughout Europe. That is why I feel it is important for ESAE to reach beyond its existing membership so that the new ECAM will be relevant to a wide range of association executives. If you would like to get involved, we would welcome your input, even if you are not currently a member of ESAE.

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