

The need to enthuse youngsters about surveying



The youngsters of today are the geospatial professionals of tomorrow, writes Wim van Wegen, which is why the industry urgently needs to increase its focus on the next generation.

It was only after several years of working in the geospatial industry that I became adept at explaining – briefly and insightfully – to people at networking events, parties or even in my local pub

precisely what the sector does. Clearly, we still have our work cut out to put our profession on the map. Even though geospatial data and geospatial technologies have become pervasive and indispensable in today's highly developed society, we still struggle to make others adequately aware of this. Worryingly, the number of school-leavers choosing to study geomatics study is lagging behind, despite the desperate need for new survey and mapping professionals in the years ahead.

I'm not the first person to make this observation, and it's not the first time I've raised this issue either. But in view of the challenges our planet is facing – such as the energy transition, for example – and the opportunities presented by digitalization, we urgently need to increase our focus on the next generation. Afterall, the youngsters of today are the geospatial professionals of tomorrow.

It is encouraging to see a number of recent initiatives that are raising children's awareness of how cool surveying can be. One such initiative is '[Get Kids into Survey](#)', whose mission is 'Engaging, educating and empowering future surveyors to take on the challenges of the tomorrow, bettering the geospatial industry for all'. Elaine Ball and her team are contributing to a geospatial-aware generation, including by developing online resources, school events, career days and engaging learning materials, as well as a series of amazing posters.

Meanwhile, in Germany, a children's book has been published called *Ich hab eine Freundin, die ist Geodätin*. It tells the story of Jule who wants to be a geodesist when she grows up. When her family are preparing to move into a new house, the geodesist teaches Jule how a building is staked out and later measured, how heights are levelled and how a map is created. [The book](#) – which I picked up from one of the countless booths at a previous edition of Intergeo – succeeds in showing the versatility of surveying and geodesy. Talking of Intergeo, that is exactly the kind of event that school pupils should visit because I'm sure they would be fascinated and inspired – not only by the survey technology and solutions, but also by the innovative applications presented on video screens or even in virtual reality.

Here in the home country of *GIM International*, the Netherlands, we have [GeoFort](#): an educational geo-experience centre where children can learn about geospatial techniques in a fun, hands-on way. Additionally, Dutch company Geomaat recently organized guest lessons for older primary school pupils to give them a taste of the surveying profession. The pupils even got the chance to use a total station. According to [Geomaat](#), it is important that we tell children about technology and the role of surveying at an early age, and I couldn't agree more. As an industry, we should all make a serious effort to enthuse the new generation about the amazing world of geomatics. Will we ever succeed in turning surveyor or geospatial professional into a dream job for children, along with firefighter, jet fighter pilot, pop star or professional football player? It's got to be worth a try!



Dutch company Geomaat recently organized guest lessons for older primary school pupils to give them a taste of the surveying profession. (Courtesy: Geomaat)