

Eurocodes: clearing up the misunderstandings

Results of an international survey by SCIA Group International

Herk-de-Stad, 2nd May 2007 – SCIA Group International today published the results of its international Eurocodes survey. The aim of this survey was to find out how much the European construction professionals currently know about the Eurocodes. The results of this survey bring to light some important misunderstandings and incorrect market perceptions across 26 countries. They also prove that the Eurocodes definitely offer improvement perspectives and have a great life ahead of them.

Myths

Over 60% of European engineers believe that national building codes will remain in place after 2010. More than half of the respondents believe that the introduction of the Eurocodes will lead to a rise in the prices of building structures. Nearly one in ten engineers believe that Eurocodes may only be used in the EU Member States. And only one out of seven engineer believes the Eurocodes will be introduced after 2010. These are only a few of the results that have come out of an online survey carried out by leading European structural engineering software developer SCIA Group International.

"Eurocodes will be the design codes of the future for the whole of Europe," explains ir. Benoît Parmentier, Deputy Head of Division Geotechnics & Structures at the BBRI (Belgian Building Research Institute). He adds "According to this very interesting survey undertaken by SCIA, it is nevertheless impressive that still more than 60% of European engineers believe that other codes will remain applicable after 2010 which is actually the ultimate date of withdrawal of the national conflicting codes!"

Pan-European perceptions

88% of the respondents feel that the implementation of Eurocodes will affect the public sector as much as the private sector. This feeling seems to exist amongst both Eastern and Western European construction specialists.

"It is quite remarkable to see that Western European respondents are inclined to think that the Eurocodes will only really impact Continental Western Europe, whereas East European respondents believe the Eurocodes will have a strong impact for the entire European Union" declares Jean-Pierre Rammant, CEO of SCIA Group International nv. He adds "Another noticeable difference between Western and Eastern European perception concerns the implementation deadline: the Western European engineers think the deadline is as early as this year whereas the Eastern Europeans are right on track with the deadline of 2010".

National codes vs. Eurocodes

Over 50% of the survey respondents believe the National Codes will not disappear at all. And almost 60% don't believe the Eurocodes will be accepted on a worldwide basis in the coming five years.

When it comes to more international competition, it is quite remarkable to note that almost half of the respondents don't consider the Eurocodes to lead to more cross-border competition.

Training

Almost half of the responding organizations expect to have to retrain between two and five engineers. One out of four companies believe they will manage by training only one engineer. In terms of the investments, only half the companies believe they should carry the full training costs linked to the introduction of the Eurocodes.

Implementation

Clearly the correct information about Eurocodes does not seem to have reached European construction professionals in the same way. Although 32% of respondents work in companies that operate outside Europe, two thirds of them are currently taking steps to implement the Eurocodes in design work. This proves that this lack of knowledge does not prevent professionals from taking the impending Eurocodes seriously.

Benoît Parmentier adds: "Despite different initiatives taken by some countries, this survey highlights the lack of information throughout Europe". He concludes: "This means there is a really important need and urgent work to do to draw the attention of design engineers for switching over to the Eurocodes as soon as possible and benefit from a complete set of robust design standards."

Challenges of the Eurocodes in a global market

The Eurocodes are an assembly of 58 consistent norms, completed with national addenda. Each country is responsible for those annexes, which must ensure the safety (national responsibility). The annexes may vary from country to country, which leads to dedicated localized versions. The European Commission and the CEN (the European standardization institute) are pursuing efforts to minimize the local annexes.

There is a growing cooperation between the worldwide normalization institute ISO and the European CEN on the issues of the Eurocodes. More and more countries outside Europe have shown major interest in the Eurocodes, and have even already accepted them in cases such as Vietnam and Singapore. Eurocodes dedicated seminars and classes are being held in Mediterranean countries in Africa, in China and in India. The consistency and tuning between the Eurocodes offers a major advantage compared to current codes in the USA, where a multitude of norms of different institutes co-exist (e.g. AISC, AISI, ACI, UBC, IRC, ASTM, AWS, WFCM, NDS...), in most cases not available in S.I. units.

Of even greater importance are the publications, help desks, online versions, learning material, free distribution (e.g. Leonardo da Vinci project), all coming up at a rapid rate. For more details, please refer to specific websites such as <http://eurocodes.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>, www.eurocode-online.de, www.eurocodes.co.uk and <http://www.normes.be/eurocodes>.

Methodology

SCIA conducted this online survey between December 2006 and February 2007. The survey questionnaire was published on SCIA's website and was available in several European languages. The survey was publicized through SCIA's monthly e-newsletter that goes out to 11.000 registered readers. The results of the survey refer to replies from 456 engineers accessing the website during the above-mentioned timeframe from within 26 countries.

An interpretation of these results is compiled in a White Paper by SCIA Group CEO Jean-Pierre Rammant, entitled "*Resolving the nonsense and the misunderstanding on the Eurocodes!*" This document is available upon request by e-mail (j.reekmans@scia.be)

SCIA Group

SCIA, founded in 1974, develops, markets and supports software products for structural engineering in the construction market. SCIA's software is typically used to design buildings, bridges, and other complex engineering structures, and focuses on the middle to top end of the market. SCIA is the market leader in Europe. It has an international network of branches and distribution partners in 16 countries. Its products have been translated in 10 different languages and have sold in excess of 8000 licenses to more than 5000 clients in over 50 countries.

For more information, please surf to www.scia-online.com

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