

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT PHILIPPE BISCH AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Dear delegates, dear friends

It has been four years already since I organised the XIth ECEE in Paris, and my time as president is drawing to an end.

I would first like to thank our British colleagues and particularly Dr May and Dr Merriman for the organisation of the XIIth ECEE. Great efforts have gone in to the organisation of this conference, and I have no doubts that it shall meet with all due success. I hope that the attendance shall be to their satisfaction and we shall have a report on the organisation later on.

I would also like to thank the Executive Committee whose members have taken great pains in the functioning and the improvement of our association. Most of them became extremely involved in the association and there has been a good attendance to our meetings. A very special thank you to our general secretary, who, despite the two terrible earthquakes that struck his country and mobilised much of his time, never spared his efforts.

During this period, I was personally, as many other members of our national associations, involved in the work of conversion of the Eurocode 8 into a European norm. Major progress has been made during the last period for enhancing the norm; they have taken into account recent theoretical research and experimental results obtained in Europe and elsewhere. Eurocode 8 is a very important issue and finally it shall be a good tool for aseismic construction in Europe and elsewhere. Its future evolution shall require further research and involvement of European researchers and engineers. Although our association is not directly involved in this development, it is so closely linked with our aims that we have to continue to devote on an individual basis, our time and best efforts for the development and the improvement of the code.

During this period, we, I mean the executive committee, have tried to take significant steps to prepare the future of our association.

But first a word concerning our traditional activities:

We had only one association who volunteered to organise a regional seminar and this very limited number is somewhat disappointing. When I consider the success of the regional seminar which was organised in Sion by our Swiss colleagues, the fact that it was dedicated to a very up-to-date subject, the assessment of existing buildings, and the high interest it presented for the young researchers and engineers who attended it, I am sure that such

seminars are one of the main tasks that our association should take care of. I ask the next executive committee and the new president to give particular attention to this task and hope that they shall be more successful in having the opportunity of organising a greater number of seminars, as it is the best way to fulfil one of the aims of our association, which is the education of young people and the spreading of knowledge.

As concerns the functioning of our task and working groups, some progress has been made. It was decided at the first EC that the TG or WG would take advantage of regional seminars or specific conferences related to their subject for the organising of their group meetings, and this was accomplished on a few occasions. It is most probably one way of improving the proper working of these groups, and could therefore be generalised in the future. However, we do fear that lack of sufficient financing can only render their functioning very difficult. Our general secretary shall give a report on the state of their work and we shall discuss later on the development of the activity of the groups.

Let me now come to the main subjects of concern that we encountered during this period.

The first one was the technical journal. The previous situation was not satisfactory, as we had little control over the EAEE journal. Atilla has devoted a lot of time trying to improve the situation, notably in trying to persuade the previous editor to involve the association more deeply. A fair agreement was proposed to the editor in that respect, which failed through the evident lack of enthusiasm on his part to desire a more tightly knit collaboration. After that, Atilla followed up other leads and I have no doubts that the solution he has reached shall prove an excellent basis for a high quality bulletin for our association in the future. Although he received support from the executive committee in this process, I think we can fairly say that it is more his "baby" and I shall let Atilla give you all the details on the new agreement.

In the past, the working of our association has not been without difficulty, due to the scarcity of money to finance our activities, mainly the working groups and task groups. In the mean time, there has been a lot of developments in the political and economical issues since the creation of our European association. Its manner of functioning was elaborated at a time when the environment was quite different. Over the last decade, many changes have taken place, as can be seen for instance in eastern Europe. The European community has also made great progress and we had to stick with this reality. The European Community can be a source of financing if we have interesting projects in common to propose and this can be a basis for the future functioning of our working groups.

The improvements that could be imagined for the functioning of our association can only come about with the volunteer work of the participants in our executive committee and with the working and task groups. It is therefore

essential that the rules for the designation of the members of our committee be improved in order to give better thought to their motivation.

We chose to totally renew our statutes and way of functioning. We also took into account our history and the existing activities of our national associations members which may contribute more to the development of their common association. The executive committee dedicated its time during this period on these subjects ; an important task which has been fulfilled. New statutes were proposed to the members for voting at the beginning of May this year and were adopted prior to this conference.

Now, you know the main points in the modifications of the statutes:

- The opening of the membership to collective members and individual members. These new categories of members shall be represented at the general assembly. This modification is too recent to having such members registered at the present GA, equally their representatives, but I hope their numbers shall be important in the future and trust that they shall be well represented at the next GA. However, this said and done, the national associations shall nevertheless remain the kernel of the European association and they shall keep the majority of votes at the general assembly. This opening is extremely important to us, for it is a way of giving more direct involvement to those people who may decide to volunteer for the handling of different tasks.
- From now, there shall be a membership fee. Indeed it is impossible to develop activities without sources of financing (either from the members or from external sources). Money is necessary for a more established association's life. As a consequence, a position of treasurer has been created and the treasurer shall be elected among the new executive committee members. One of his duties shall be to seek external support, particularly to enhance the functioning of the working groups.
- Thirdly, the election of the executive committee. Its members shall be volunteers and I hope there shall be sufficient motivation among our delegates or the persons they will nominate to participate in the Executive Committee, to propose and handle projects for the development of the Association. The new president, the first vice-president and the general secretary shall be elected by the present general assembly. The secretary and the treasurer shall be elected by the new executive committee among its members. One of our main task today is to proceed in this new type of election within our association, but we have to consider that a similar procedure is already used by many other associations. This new way of designation is more democratic and I trust this shall be a good tool for the good development of our association, as motivation is an absolute necessity in volunteer work.

I trust that these major changes shall be a booster for the life of our European association which is now in the hands of all its members, whatever their origin: associations, organisations or individuals, and, as I am leaving the

position of president, I wish a pleasant and successful future to our association, to the new officers who shall be elected this week, to the new executive committee and to the members of the association.

As a consequence of these changes, the present GA shall later have to decide on the fees that are to be paid by all categories of members. At this stage, although the process has to be initiated, I think the sum asked has to remain reasonable. In the future, members shall decide whether they want to develop the European association or not. With the new statutes, although they shall now have the means, it also requires their determination.

I thank you very much for your attention and wish you a very good continuation for your stay in London and for the conference.