

the Voice of efca



European Federation of Engineering Consultancy Associations



Panos Panagopoulos

Panos Panagopoulos takes the reins as the new EFCA President in May 2008.

Best value for public money: public procurement in focus

Panos Panagopoulos, CEO of ECOS Consulting S.A. based in Greece, will represent the interests of European engineering consultancies as EFCA President from 2008 to 2011. A Ph.D. in civil engineering by training, he puts forward a convincing roadmap to communicate the important role of the engineering consulting service sector in a dynamic and growing Europe. Mr Panagopoulos explains EFCA's goals and positions on the key topic of public procurement.

Why is EFCA so active in the debate on public procurement legislation?

EU public procurement legislation affects the whole scope of engineering work: from procurement rules, technical standards, and control mechanisms, to national liability and insurance frameworks. The 2004 Public Procurement Directive is, in principle, a powerful instrument to ensure transparent and well-founded procedures in national procurement rules. EFCA underscored the significance of consulting engineers for the success of the project during the development of the Directive. We are now focusing on the interpretation and implementation of the Directive in Member States and developing concepts and proposals for the ways it can evolve.

What is EFCA's experience from the implementation of the Directive so far?

We see a strong need for guidance and information, especially in our sector. EFCA has developed and is developing concrete tools and recommendations (e.g. national transposition guidance, guidance on the competitive dialogue) to help national governments, especially for the new procurement instruments and more complex project forms. Our policy papers on award procedures for Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and Institutional PPPs voice and reflect the experience across Europe.

What is the most important lesson learnt so far?

We still observe that the legal framework for contracts and the complex procedures involved often limit the capacity of consultants to provide innovative solutions. We need greater flexibility in the engagement of consulting engineers in order to realise their full potential for adding value to the projects delivered.

The new procurement rules that strive to provide some flexibility — such as “Competitive Dialogue” — need to provide room for innovative and sustainable solutions without harming transparency and non-discrimination principles.

What is the concrete added value of Consulting Engineers?

The traditional scope of work of consulting engineers has changed tremendously. We are now handling large and integrated projects with new financing needs. Our added value lies in conceiving the appropriate solutions for each project in terms of operational effectiveness, safety, sustainable development, investment and operational cost, and in providing services for the project management and supervision of construction — a challenging range from concept to construction, maintenance and operations.

In addition, we are undertaking more responsibility for our actions (perhaps, in some cases, to an excessive degree); thus risk coverage and a balanced risk allocation are becoming more and more crucial.

A final question: What is your personal key performance indicator for your presidency?

Consulting engineers influence Europe's growth and through public investments its most tangible form. This gives EFCA the mandate to work not only for its members but for European society in general — and especially for the next generation. I therefore view the number of decision-makers who have understood the impact of our industry as the most important key performance indicator for my work as EFCA President.

Did you know...

- That EFCA is preparing a state-of-the-art report on liability and insurance markets in the EU? It will give guidance on national legal frameworks, insurance requirements and insurance availability. The report can be used to support national reform actions and will feed into recommendations for future EU legislation in order to gain a better understanding of the insurance market.
- That EFCA has compiled a guide on Award Procedures for PPPs for project delivery as well as a policy paper on institutionalised public private partnerships (IPPPs)? This comes in the light of new procurement procedures and ongoing national developments in Member States on public private partnerships (PPPs). In addition to this, a complementary document, a guidance paper on the Competitive Dialogue, has been prepared.

COMING SOON: EFCA Conference 2008

Knowledge management and innovation are the topics for discussion and networking at this year's EFCA Conference, to be held in Prague on 30 May 2008.

Tackling today's and tomorrow's major challenges requires both creative new thinking and effective systems for harnessing the knowledge that already exists. Experts from the engineering consultancy industry and its clients will discuss their experience of these issues when addressing future challenges such as climate change, the place of innovation in public procurement, and the links between our industry and scientific research.

More information: www.efcaconference2008.cz.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Commission invites EFCA as expert in Health and Safety Committee

EFCA and the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE), representing the European design community, are collaborating with the European Commission to draw up a non-binding guide to good practice for improving health and safety on construction sites. EFCA had raised serious concerns about the implementation of Directive 92/57, which places responsibilities on various partners involved in the construction process. The interpretative guidance document will assist Member States in developing national policies for the protection of the health and safety of workers. The Guide is expected to be available in 2009.

EFCA continues its work for young engineering professionals in Europe

Following the success of the first event in 2007, EFCA will be hosting a second two-day visit to Brussels for young engineering professionals on the 8 & 9 October 2008. During these two days they will get a chance to learn about the European institutions, the way they work, and the impact that "Europe" has on their daily work. They will also learn about EFCA's role in representing the interests of engineering consultants to the EU. The idea behind the event is to build and promote a stronger network of young engineers through exchange of working experiences and awareness of mobility opportunities.

European standards for engineering consultancy?

While engineering consultancy in different Member States has a great deal in common, there are nevertheless substantial differences in practice and regulation from country to country. EFCA, in conjunction with the French standardisation organisation AFNOR, has just completed a feasibility study to develop common definitions of the scope of engineering consultancy activities and key terminology. This can improve cross-border cooperation, reduce misunderstandings on the content of services provided, and ultimately bring down the cost. The study may form the basis for European standards for the industry's activities.

Making Europe's business-to-business services more competitive is a key aim of EC policy. While the Services Directive is to be implemented by the end of 2009, the EC is also looking at the role standards can play in ensuring free competition across Europe by providers, improving quality, and boosting innovation.

CEN, the European Committee for Standardisation, has identified a number of sectors which might wish to consider developing standards. EFCA is carrying out a feasibility study as part of a project managed by AFNOR, the French standardisation organisation. The study will determine whether common European standards could – or should – be drawn up for the engineering consultancy sector.



There is a clear interest for everyone in ensuring that all stakeholders understand exactly what is involved in the provision of engineering consultancy services in different countries. This can encourage greater cross-border activities. Moreover, common understanding will also be crucial for the contracting agencies drawing up project specifications, and for insurers, at a time when insurance and liability are key aspects of project planning and operation.

The study is also taking place as the industry is undergoing key changes: many clients increasingly expect companies to provide more multi-disciplinary services, and companies themselves are providing new types and packages of services such as health & safety co-ordination, and energy contracting. All the more need for clear definitions.

EFCA members and national standardisation bodies, together representing 20 countries, were consulted during the project. The feasibility study decided to break down the consultancy process into five functional stages: initiative; design; execution; operation; dismantling. Agreement on these stages and what they involved would make it easier for companies and clients to understand how the entire process is managed, and where the different contractual or regulatory milestones are placed along the way in any particular country.

This approach has been widely welcomed by the companies and associations involved so far. The results of the feasibility study are to be presented to a wider range of stakeholders, representing both the industry and its clients, at a CEN workshop on 22 April.

CONTACT

EFCA secretariat,
Avenue des Arts, 3/4/5, B - 1210 Brussels
Phone: + 32 2 209 07 70 | Fax: +32 2 209 07 71
email: efca@efca.be | <http://www.efcanet.org>

EFCA has member associations in 28 countries, and is the sole European federation lobbying on behalf of engineering consultancy and related services, a sector that employs around one million staff in Europe. EFCA contributes with a strong and cohesive input to legislative actions of its national associations on issues affecting market conditions. Furthermore the organisation works as a Europe-wide platform for national associations and their member firms to gather relevant facts and discuss business issues with their counterparts.