Editorial

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This year *fib* entered its second decade. This is a unique opportunity to reflect on its past, including its parent organisations, the *Fédération Internationale de la Précontrainte* (International Federation for Prestressing—FIP) and the *Comité Européen du Béton* (European Committee for Concrete—CEB), to assess its present situation and to try to project it into the future.

FIP and CEB were founded in 1952 and 1953, mainly as Franco-German organisations with strong participation from Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy. They soon grew to encompass practically all of Europe, east and west, but with western Europe at the centre. Their names reflect the early dominance of the French language, a tradition respected through the title *fib* (*fédération internationale du béton*) when both organisations merged in 1998. Long before this merger, though, English was exclusively used in the technical discussions and publications. By that time the geographic scope of FIP and CEB was truly global and has become more so in the days of *fib*: *fib* has national member groups (NMGs) from 39 countries spanning the globe from the Americas through Europe and Asia to Japan, Australia and New Zealand. This evolution looks like a forerunner of the international economic and political developments of the second half of the 20th century: the establishment of the six-country-strong European Carbon and Steel Community in 1952 and its development in 1957 into the European Economic Community (EEC); the gradual enlargement of the EEC and its evolution into the European Union; the end of the Cold War and the reunification of Europe; globalisation and the emergence of new economic powers in the world. The parallel is not a coincidence: artificial barriers are first penetrated by ideas and then by technical and economic cooperation, to be institutionally abolished in the end. So, if you see in the future *fib* retreating into

Europe, watch for globalisation going into reverse and the world stepping towards financial nationalism and protectionism.

A unique feature of *fib* as an international scientific and technical organisation is its institutional core of 'statutory members', NMGs representing the relevant members or member organisations in a country. NMGs are formed by an existing national association or by the cooperation of several ones, or are created specifically to bring together all bodies interested in *fib*'s work. *fib*'s general assembly, comprising all delegates of the NMGs, debates and approves, among other things, *fib*'s most important technical product: its Model Codes. The heads of the NMG delegations, together with the chairmen of *fib*'s commissions and so on, debate and approve in the technical council other important documents, such as *fib*'s recommendations or guides to good practice. Besides this, they launch and guide the technical work in *fib*'s commissions, special activity groups and task groups. Through their active role in these two bodies countries help shape the future of structural concrete in the world.

Each country has a single delegate and vote at the technical council, but has one to four delegates and votes at the general assembly. Every two years it can nominate as many young engineers as its votes for the PhD award and the engineering practice award. It may also nominate one or more of its recent concrete projects for the award for outstanding structures, given every four years at an *fib* congress. NMGs often host short courses given by *fib* experts on advanced topics or topics of special local interest. They are expected to do so more in future. They may also be given the opportunity to diffuse nationally in electronic form knowledge synthesised by *fib*. NMGs may propose names of experts for *fib*'s commissions, special activity groups and task groups, where the real technical work is carried out on a voluntary basis. Membership in those working bodies is not limited to nationals of member countries: everybody is welcome on the basis of merit, expertise and motivation. However, the members and – especially – the leaders of these

working bodies happen to come mostly from member countries and are, of course, individual members of *fib*.

Although the institutional core of *fib* is its group of 'statutory members', its real core is the large and global 'club' of volunteers working in its commissions, special activity groups and task groups. These volunteers are brought together by their shared dedication to the advancement of knowledge about concrete construction. They are largely driven by this dedication, as well as by tradition and 'peer pressure'.

Tradition is a very important factor, notwithstanding *fib*'s short history and variable geography. Deep-rooted in active members of *fib* is the conviction that working for it is a great honour and a pleasant duty, a conviction inspired by legendary figures and role models of the past whose shoes we may never be able to fill. It is thanks to those men that *fib* is nowadays appreciated not only for its technical quality but also for its 'ethos', notably for its uncompromising independence of any commercial or national interests and the devotion and loyalty of its voluntary workers.

In the large international 'club' of *fib*, 'peer pressure' is felt quite differently than within the walls of our everyday workplace, the confines of our country or the narrow scope of our trade. We have the opportunity to present our ideas to a group of friends in this 'club', who are eager to help improve them with their own comments. An open, relaxed and friendly technical discussion can convince the group to incorporate our ideas in the synthesis of knowledge that normally comes out of the group's work, or even in recommendations, guides for good practice, and so on, that represent *fib*'s position. Through such discussions and exchanges we can also get the earliest possible exposure to fresh ideas and information from others, to build upon and cross-fertilise with ours. Far away from any poisonous internal competition and rivalries of our everyday workplace or home country, we can build in these groups long-term friendships and complementary partnerships or

networks across national boundaries or between academia and industry. The mid- to long-term professional benefits from such networking and the advancement of individual careers through the involvement in *fib* fully warrant the investment of our time and personal effort. If that were not the case, *fib* would not have survived and flourished in this era where everything – even academic research – is done on contract under very high pressures of time and budget. Young ones should also keep in mind that, despite the importance of tradition, *fib* is a very dynamic organisation, welcoming competent, energetic and motivated people and promoting them throughout its scope of activities. The older generation is eager to make room for those

who will carry on the *fib* tradition to the benefit of structural concrete.

New members will join *fib* at a very good point in its history. Thanks to Joost Walraven's work and leadership, the list of *fib*'s technical publications, all highly regarded for their technical excellence and impartiality, will soon be crowned with the *fib* Model Code 2010 (see the interview on page 45). Its acclaimed predecessors, the CEB/FIP Model Codes 1978 and 1990, shaped standardisation of concrete design in Europe, through the European Pre-standard (ENV) and European Standard (EN) versions of Eurocode 2, and had strong influence on other parts of the world as well. Twenty years after the CEB/FIP Model Code 1990, the new *fib* Model Code aspires to

become the bellwether of the new generation of structural concrete codes. It covers not only (performance-based) design for serviceability and structural safety (including design for robustness, fatigue, impact and explosions, earthquake, fire and cryogenic conditions), but design for service life, durability and sustainability as well. It also addresses conservation, dismantlement and recycle/reuse. Materials covered include ultra-high or low-strength concrete, concrete with lightweight or recycled aggregates, fibre-reinforced concrete and non-metallic reinforcement. Thanks to the new Model Code, *fib* members, current ones or new, will be part of the opening into a fascinating new world of knowledge in structural concrete.