EUROPEAN STANDARDS - A BACKGROUND TO THE FUTURE

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Summary

At the last conference held in Delph, a paper was presented giving details of the various test regimes for different countries producing concrete block paving.

With the recent directive from the E.E.C. about restrictive practices or Barriers to Trade, concrete block paving, along with other concrete construction products, are required to have a CEN standard by the early 1990's.

The purpose of this paper will be to highlight the test regime which will give an indication to the quality of the concrete and hopefully bring together industry and researchers alike to produce a unified code.

Background

"The creation of a simple market in Europe is an objective which goes back to the establishment of the Community some 30 years ago. We have made progress - tariff and quota restrictions are a thing of the past - but the free movement of goods is still impeded by technical barriers to trade and the growth of a free and competitive market for services is blocked by a range of national restrictions." - As quoted by Lord Young - November 1987. (I)

International Standardisation

There are two international standardisation bodies, ISO which covers the whole world and CEN which only covers Western Europe, and its membership includes members of the Common Market and E.F.T.A.

There is a big move in Europe, promoted by the Common Market, to produce a European Standards to promote international trade. The moves within the common market have been prompted by the Construction Product Directive which will enforce free movement of goods which comply with certain essential requirements. In order that this can be effective, the commission has asked CEN to produce the necessary product standards. It is unwise to think that these standards will be limited to the attributes covered by the essential requirements, they are most likely to be full standards for the products.

CEN

This organisation is the major element in the development of an internationally agreed standard and it is very important we understand the workings and procedures of this body if we are to agree upon a European Standard for our product.

The method of working by CEN is first a proposal for a standard to be produced, and must indicate the scope and give justification of the need for a European Standard. This proposal is then approved by the CEN Technical Board who will appoint a country, usually the one making the proposal, to act as Secretariat to the Technical Committee set up to deal with it. It has been suggested that France will become the Secretariat.

Membership is open to all CEN countries and "observer status" can be granted to European Trade Associations.

The actual work of producing a standard is done either by the Technical Committee as a whole or by working groups set up by the Technical Committee.

There are specific rules for working groups, namely a small number of experts work together to produce a draft, but the current recommendation is that they are open to a representative from each country. After the draft is produced, this is submitted for national comments. In the UK, this would be done by the British Standards Institution in the same way as for national codes, likewise in other member states their "standards" procedures will be followed.

Editorial groups are established to consider all Member "States" comments, and will seek to ensure that the final draft contains no sticking points which could delay acceptance by number of States.

The final draft will be voted on and if it gets a sufficiently large weighted majority in favour, its adoption becomes mandatory on all CEN members and they will be required to withdraw any conflicting National Standards.

Within CEN there is recognition for a common test method, the need of which is obvious, for example, it would be impossible to measure the strength of a concrete paving block using different packing materials or, indeed, a dif ferent method as is used currently by the different countries.

Product performance requirements are another method of producing standards, but this is more difficult to achieve because of the complica tion of performance level, for example, the Saline Freeze Thaw requirements of the coastal regions of Spain or Greece will be different from those required by England or Germany.

Requirements bv the various countries (II)

TABLE 1.

Country	Dimension	Strength		Dura bil- ity
		Compression	Flexural	
Austria	Specified		Splitting	Yes
Belgium	Specified	Cube or Cylinder		
Denmark	Recommended	Full Block		
Finland	Recommended		Full Block	Yes
France	Specified		Splitting	
Germany	Specified	Full Block		Yes
Italy	Specified	Full Block		
Holland	Recommended		Full Block	
Norway	Specified	Full Block		Yes
U.K.	Specified	Full Block		Yes

More up-to-date details are being presented to the conference, but when you consider Table 1. and look at the relative country standards, there are more aspects to consider under test methods which will have to be taken into account when the CEN standards are written. It is no use, we all take a view point that "ours is best", we need to ask ourselves a lot of questions. The most important question is, whether we crush, bend or split our blocks, and what are we testing for? Is it a measure of abrasion resistance, freeze thaw resistance, concrete strength, or are we complying with someone’s whim or guesswork?

As part of our investigation into a European Standard, we in the United Kingdom are obtain ing all the national standards of Europe and compiling a complete dosier on all the aspects of the individual standards to check the commonality and contentious areas, so we are in a strong position to check out to see whether our product will meet the requirements of the possible final European Standards. Even now, International co-operation is taking place in research projects and the B.R.I.T.E. application for laboratory test "Durability" (i.e. freeze thaw saline) is due to start soon

Mr. G.A. Griffiths in his paper at the confer ence will explain how we developed the British Standard BS 6717 (III) which took us nearly ten years.

Conclusions

Whatever the answer, we will have a European Standard for concrete block paving by 1991. So let us all work forward to this aim, not forgetting the purpose, and that is, "to promote trade by unlocking the market means more competition and more competition means better, cheaper and more efficient service to a much wider range of people". In the Common Market we now have a potential domestic market of some 320 million people, very nearly as many as the United States and Japan combined.

REFERENCES

I Lord Young

II 2nd International Block Conference, Delph

III BS 6717 - Concrete Block Paving