

# **W055 - Building Economics and W065 - Organisation and Management of Construction**



A Joint Project on  
International Construction Labour  
Productivity Benchmarking

by Professors H. Randolph Thomas and Ivica Zavrski

Previous efforts to compare construction labour markets across international boundaries have been based on economic indices and cost comparisons. Little work has been done on comparing the actual labour performance of individual projects. Two Working Commissions, W055 - Building Economics and W065 - Organisation and Management of Construction, are initiating a joint project to develop reliable databases that can be used to benchmark international labour productivity. The project will be jointly led by Professor H. Randolph Thomas, Penn State University (USA) and Professor Ivica Zavrski, University of Zagreb (Croatia).

For this project, researchers in various countries will be organised to assemble the necessary databases to compare the labour performance of one country to that of another. The scope of this project is international, and researchers throughout the world are invited to participate. Researchers in developing and third world countries are especially welcome. Professors Thomas and Zavrski plan to conduct an organisational meeting for the research effort at the Joint Triennial Symposium of W055 and W065 in Cape Town, South Africa in September, 1999. A workshop of all participants is planned in early 2000. Thereafter, participants will be ready for the data collection phase. It is expected that this project will last five to six years.

The conceptual benchmarking model has been developed by researchers at Penn State and the University of Zagreb. A report is available that describes the model and illustrates the benchmarking theory and procedures. The model was developed using five databases consisting of 83 construction projects from the United States, Croatia, and the UK. A second report is in preparation that details how productivity data are to be collected. This procedures manual will be available in the spring of 1999.

Participating researchers in each country will select projects and construction activities, collect data, and

organise databases detailing the construction labour performance in their country. Each participating researcher will be provided with a copy of all databases developed as part of this research for his/her use. Periodic results will be presented at annual meetings and tri-annual symposia of the two Commissions. Follow up workshops may also be held.

Upon successful completion of this research, one will be able to assess the overall performance of a particular project activity and attribute various aspects of performance to design or management. Project indices are calculated for each project indicating the level of management attained on that project. If the management is deficient, the reasons will be evident. Also, contractors working in international markets will be able to determine the relative difference between countries in labour performance of particular activities and overall project performance. Persons interested in participating in this project should contact Professor Thomas (e-mail [hrt1@psu.edu](mailto:hrt1@psu.edu)) or Professor Zavrski (e-mail [zavrski@master.grad.hr](mailto:zavrski@master.grad.hr)).