Welcome address of S. Lechner, European Commission, JRC* to the participants of the Workshop “Eurocodes: Background and Applications” 18-20 February 2008, Brussels

Dear Mr. Chairman,
Dear representatives of the Member States,
Dear members of CEN/TC250,
Dear colleagues from the European Commission,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you in this major Eurocodes event on the name of the Director General of the Joint Research Centre, Mr. Roland Schenkel, and from my own name.

Statement
The publication of the Eurocodes in May 2007 marks a major milestone in the European standardisation for construction. For the first time mechanical resistance and stability of constructions and construction products will be calculated using common technical rules across the Europe. The forthcoming application of Eurocodes in the Member States in 2010 will enhance the competitiveness of the European construction industry by removing obstacles arising from different national practices.

The accomplishment of the Eurocodes is a big success since it provides Pan-European framework for a successful market uptake of high quality products and services and innovation. There are no doubts that this new standardization environment will strengthen the world-wide competitive advantage of the European construction industry.

The Eurocodes can be considered as unique world-wide success story in the construction sector and I would like to congratulate DG Enterprise and Industry and the members of Technical Committee 250 “Structural Eurocodes” of CEN for this key achievement.

What/Who has contributed
For the European Union, the overriding policy objective linked to the Eurocodes is the creation of an Internal Market with the free circulation of products and services while guaranteeing an appropriate level of safety in construction works. The European Commission has supported, from the very beginning in 1975, the elaboration of the Eurocodes, and contributed to the funding of their drafting.

* The delivered speech might have been slightly different in wording.
The creation of the Eurocodes has been widely supported by the European scientific and technical communities. The extensive interaction between CEN/TC250 and the national and international scientific and technical institutions and organizations gave opportunity to build Eurocodes on best European practice, expertise and research achievements.

The Joint Research Centre is proud of the scientific contribution given to the Eurocodes since 1992. The first Eurocode designed building was constructed and tested at the ELSA laboratory of the Institute of Protection and Security of Citizen in Italy, in 1994, and from then on many other reference tests were carried out aiming at calibration and further development of the Eurocodes.

At the end of 2004, the Joint Research Centre has signed a three-year Administrative Arrangement with DG Enterprise and Industry by which it commits itself to provide Scientific and Technical support to the Eurocodes process. The mission devoted to the Joint Research Centre includes: support to the national implementation and harmonization of the Eurocodes, strategies and support to training and international promotion, the coordination of the scientific and technical work for increased protection against earthquake and fire and to foster innovation.

How should we proceed?

Now the Eurocodes are in the key stage of adoption by Member States for use under their regulations. To achieve maximum benefit from the opportunities provided by the Eurocodes, the National Authorities, National Standardisation Bodies, Technical and Scientific Organisations and the Construction Industry must be ready to use them.

The European Commission encourages technical training, continuing professional development and university courses on the Eurocodes and the today’s Workshop “Eurocodes: Background and Applications” is a part of these efforts. In the same time, the training of staff is the responsibility of Industry in cooperation with National Authorities and National Standardisation Bodies and they should accomplish this task.

Why research and innovation

The only way for Europe and European Industry to build sustainable leadership is to fully exploit the knowledge triangle: the creation, transmission and use of knowledge, through an appropriate interaction between research, education and training and innovation. Research with regard to Eurocodes is essential to preserve their statutes of the most up-to-date and comprehensive International Codes of Practice.

The European Commission in its Recommendation on the implementation and use of the Eurocodes, 2003/887/EC encourages the Member States and the Industry to finance and develop research in support of the Eurocodes in order to incorporate innovation in the codes, develop standards for new construction materials and ultimately uphold the Eurocodes as the most advanced codes for design of buildings and civil engineering constructions.
New challenges

The next goal of the European Union is to make the European standards for construction all-inclusive tool by extending their scope to sustainability aspects such as protection of environment, resources, energy saving, health protection and security. In the same time the feasibility of a future expansion (new codes, new parts and/or amendments) of the Eurocodes and associated EN standards for methods and products to all six Essential Requirements of the Construction Products Directive (CD 89/106/EEC) should be considered.

In the context of the “Lead market” vision, such expansion of the scope of the Eurocodes and of the related technical specifications would reinforce the position of the European construction industry on the global market by providing a new and wider family of standards in a field where no competitor exists so far.

I have just signed a Memorandum of Understanding between DG Enterprise and Industry and the Joint Research Centre. The mission delegated to the Joint Research Centre includes further support to the implementation, harmonisation and expansion of the scope of the Eurocodes.

To build and strengthen sustainable leadership of the European construction sector we have to fully exploit the knowledge triangle. The Joint Research Centre will give its contribution to decrease the gap between research and standardization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Joint Research Centre and DG Enterprise and Industry have organized this Workshop with the support of CEN. Its Technical Committee 250 and particularly its Chairman, Professor Calgaro, have kindly accepted to make the Workshop benefit from their expertise of Eurocodes writers and have organised all technical sessions.

I would like to congratulate the organisers and contributors to this Workshop with the excellent work and I hope that you in your work back home will significantly benefit from the Workshop. Thank you very much.