



The apocalyptic date looms

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For the Mayan calendar the apocalyptic date is 21st December 2012. For people working in the construction sector, the date is 1st July 2013 - the date when the CPR will definitely replace the CPD.

Of course, if the Mayans were right the CPR is not exactly going to be anyone's highest priority but let's assume you are reading this in January 2013.

In official words, 1st July 2013 is the date of the entry into force of EU Regulation N° 305/2011 dated 9th March 2011 'CPR' (Construction Products Regulation), laying down harmonised conditions for the marketing of construction products and repealing Council Directive 89/106/EEC "CPD" (Construction Products Directive).

What is so worrying in the CPR? Once more, there is an attempt at harmonisation and unification of the European internal market, in a political context that is still not ready for that unification.

Since before the CPD existed, there were 25 years of internal discussions around the normative tables. Such discussions were made mainly to safeguard, as far as possible, national interests. Some Member States tried to close their internal market in the name of safety or of stricter national rules. Some Member States tried to implement the Directive at the latest possible time. Some Member States protested, some closed their ears and whistled. Member States will not easily give up their national approach and argue in the name of their citizens, their industries, their geographical position, their historical and technical background, etc: in so doing, damaging the European market - the SMEs much, much more than the multinationals.

see what will happen under the CPR.

At European and national level, the industry complains that the CPR cannot be properly applied because of a lack of related documentation and a lack of structure. It is a matter of fact that clarification on several points of the CPR is still needed as well as implementation papers still missing. But the principle of the CPR is clear: harmonisation. It is an extreme attempt to overpower states and create here and now a unique European internal market. It is the only way for Europe to survive, as an entire political entity.

To reach its goal, the CPR introduces a brand new tool for the industry and for final users: the DoP (Declaration of Performance).

What's a DoP?

The DoP is a document of technical data which must be available for all construction products placed on the market after 1st July 2013. If it works, the DoP can be a great step towards the unification of the internal market, and a great tool for SMEs. However, it needs to spread. It must become a habit, a reflex. As a driver's license for drivers, the leaflet for medicinal products, online check in for flights: a document that, if you do not have it, you stop and rummage the pockets until it comes out.

What is a DoP for?

It is a document necessary in order to put the final user in a position to evaluate the European products on the basis of their performances.

A DoP will be drawn on the basis of the same format, the same all over Europe, no matter if a product is covered by a European Assessment Document, or by an EN standard, or if the standard is more or less complicated. The message for the national market surveillance is clear: DoPs that do not contain all necessary information for the final user must be considered against the CPR.

The DoP will be the handbook for CE marking and its precondition. No DoP, no CE marking. And talking about CE marking in the CPR, reminds somehow of the First Commandment: 'Thou shalt not have any marks before me'.

The DoP can also be creative: it is based on a generic format unique for all (see Annex III of the CPR), but each DoP is tailored for each product. The construction industry is doing its proper written homework. Thousands of DoP have appeared on websites, and discussions are on. The DoP can be one or more pages, depending on the amount of technical content (given in Paragraph 9 of the DoP) and the languages in which it is written (each Member State may authorise one or more languages in which the DoP can circulate inside its country).

"The principle of the CPR is clear: harmonisation."

On the other side, the European Commission doesn't seem to have either enough political power to force Member States, or enough people to ensure the correct application of its Regulations. For years the European Commission has, for example, warned Member States over further attempts to protect their national markets by adding further national burdens in name of concepts like "utilisation", "placing of the market", "installation", but these attempts continued under the CPD. Let's





Obviously the European industry is unanimous in wanting the DoP to be downloadable from the manufacturer's website, and not necessarily accompany the product in print ("How can we provide a DoP on paper complete with all the technical data in all languages required by the Member States where the product is placed in the market, in a format readable on a construction site? Many of our products are small and there is no room... we certainly cannot do as for the chocolate eggs!"). But CPR is not clear on this point. Despite 1st July looming and every company supposed to be ready with its DoP system already up and running, the debate has not yet been completed; the Member States are still not unanimous; nor has the Commission expressed itself clearly.

And you... have you already tried to draw up a DoP in advance or ask the producers? If you're a manufacturer, you should draw up your DoPs now. Considering the shipments of products from the Far East, for example, in January you may already be at the limit to set up and run the Company DoP system by July. If you are a final user, surf the Internet to see who has already done something.

I happened to create, without knowing it, a DoP for my personal use.

Two weeks ago I renovated the bathroom in my house. To solve a particular technical problem, I searched the internet and found a product from a small Portuguese company, which would solve the situation very well. Buying it was not a problem: I got it in three days time. But the challenge was to convince the Italian technicians to accept it. We know that in the world of construction only the multinationals are able to impose their

'foreigners' products; for the other ones every mason is linked to the products of his country.

So I took from the website the technical information about the performance of the product I got, and about other competing products, and I transcribed them in tables of the same format, so that they were comparable. In practice, I created a DoP in Italian and gave it to the technicians. There were performances, the reference standard, the CE mark. What else was needed? The comparison was simple, in my case, even overwhelming. What better chance for European SMEs? No need for expensive seminars to promote the products raising awareness among designers (which SME can pay the cost?), or a collection of quality marks, or certification of the new invention (which SME can pay for them?). The product is now successfully installed, and I am quite sure that this is not the last time the technicians will use it: now they are aware of its existence.

In the last 60 years we have been trying in every way to unify Europe: the Euro currency, the Erasmus program for student exchanges between the various European universities, the Marie-Curie scholarships for researchers, fundings from the Seventh Framework Programme - only to find, with a big surprise, the unplanned disruptive effect of the Internet, social networks, the low costs. What unites us more? The Latin text about the indivisibility of Europe - the 'Hymn to Joy' by Ludwig van Beethoven, Official Hymn of the European Union - or the crude trumpet preceding the announcement "Welcome, you have arrived on yet another on-time flight"?

So, get ready for 1st July and try to believe in the DoP effect.



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