

## Dear Community of Civil Engineers, Dear Colleagues,

Civil engineering belongs to the oldest domains of human activity – its history is as long as the history of civilization. The social role of civil engineering in the development of mankind has always been of fundamental importance because the standard of human life has been so highly dependent on its progress. This can be observed from the beginning of human history up to the present day. Civil engineering deals with all aspects of the built environment (either physical or natural) and can be dated to the first time someone placed a roof over his or her head or laid a tree trunk across a river to make it easier to get across. And we can be confident that the role of civil engineering will continue to grow into the future.

Civil engineering as a domain of technological activity is a key element of the national and international economy. Economic progress is impossible without adequately developed social and physical infrastructure, including, for example, buildings, water distribution networks, and service and transport infrastructure networks.

Contemporary achievements of civil engineering, thanks to the progress of building knowledge and science, are spectacular. This is exemplified by numerous tall buildings, dams, large bridge structures, water infrastructure, motorways, sport stadiums and halls, theater houses, etc., constructed in the last decades and strongly influencing urban and extra-urban areas and landscapes. On the other hand, we should also note less spectacular but equally important achievements for social and economic reasons, such as residential buildings, smaller bridges, roads, industrial buildings, etc. The first field can be considered as extraordinary examples of civil engineering, illustrating its especially high level of achievement, while the second one can be considered as 'the work of the day' of civil engineers. Both of them are equally important.

The social, economic and cultural progress of every country is impossible without the contribution of civil engineers, based on their education, professional knowledge and experience. The impacts of their activity can be evidently observed in the form of buildings and structures of various types. Civil engineers are in general socially accepted or in many cases admired. In spite of its dynamic development and its very considerable modern achievements, civil engineering is commonly treated as a rather traditional domain of technology. This situation can be observed in many countries world-wide including in Europe.

However, the reality is that the role of civil engineers in advancing social, economic and cultural progress is especially high. Moreover, civil engineering is a profession that enjoys the highest level of public confidence. Civil engineers are ultimately responsible for the safe utilization of buildings and structures. This is an especially important and often forgotten aspect of the social role of civil engineers. Apart from their technological activities, civil engineers also increasingly consider the social effects of engineering decisions. To meet this condition, civil engineers continue to widen their knowledge of the economic and social sciences.

Ultimately, civil engineering is a very exciting profession. At the end of the day civil engineers can see the results of their work, whether this is a completed bridge, a port, a high-rise building, a subway station, a tunnel, a highway, a hydroelectric dam or even a small house.

Looking to the future, the civil engineering profession will play a fundamental role in dealing with many of the challenges that society will face. The world is becoming increasingly and relentlessly urbanized and this is bringing with it unprecedented social, economic and environmental stresses. Added to this will be the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. While all aspects of civil engineering will be put to the test, there will be a particular focus on the areas of transportation, energy and water. Civil engineers will be tasked with providing infrastructure which is both sustainable and resilient to address these challenges.

The profession will also be challenged to proactively address the opportunities and efficiencies which will be brought about by the digital revolution, also known as the fourth industrial revolution. Digital technology will drive increasing automation in our industry and there will be opportunities to use the rapidly expanding ocean of data to better design, construct, operate and maintain physical infrastructure.

Taking into account the situation briefly presented above, the European Council of Civil Engineers (ECCE) has decided to proclaim year 2018 as the European Year of Civil Engineers (2018 EYCE). The main goals of this proclamation have been to reinforce the fundamental role of civil engineers in society in improving the standard of human life, to make the case for the prestige of the civil engineering profession in the social community of European countries and to stress the pivotal role that civil engineers will play in addressing the challenges that will face society in the future.

Acting President of ECCE



Włodzimierz Szymczak