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Engineers call for quality control

ETEK CONCERNED OVER CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS

By **Paul Malaos**

celebrating 20 years of operation this week the Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber (ETEK) vowed to continue striving for the best results in engineering and technology on the island, but also voiced concern over the quality of construction of public buildings.

Founded in 1991 the chamber is the technical consultant to the state and the corporate body of all qualified engineers in Cyprus.

Speaking during a press conference ETEK president Christos Efthyvoulou said the chamber was troubled that there is still no legal framework in Cyprus to determine the minimum level of preplanning and study a contractor puts in before beginning construction on a building.

"We believe that this is seriously hindering the quality of construction works on the island and will result in buildings that do not meet expectations and are considerably lower value than budgeted."

The chamber's objective is to promote expertise in the various sectors related to the fields of specialisation of its members and in general to develop them with a view to the self-sufficient economic, social and cultural devel-

opment of the Republic.

Efthyvoulou said ETEK submitted a suggestion report to the Ministry of Communications in 2003 with guidelines on a construction quality control protocol and measures which has still not been implemented.

"Unfortunately some state services continue to ignore the chamber's suggestions and seek the services of often unqualified construction consultants believing that this will save them money.

This begs questions over the quality and safety of the structures," he said.

Another gripe ETEK has with the government is that foreign engineers are often hired over local workers because they are cheaper.

"We are also concerned that the government often secures construction contracts for half the price of its budgetary provisions thinking that the quality of the work will be on the same level."

He mentioned as an example buildings belonging to the Technical Services of the Education Ministry and specifically the Limassol Technical School.

"ETEK considers that money saved during the construction

process may lead to unnecessarily high expenses in the near future if the quality of work is inferior."

One of ETEK's main objectives is to prepare and implement legislation which ensures construction quality control.

"Our biggest preoccupation is to make sure that public buildings are properly constructed and safe while efficient and functional," said Efthyvoulou.

He cited the introduction of the Cyprus Concrete and Seismic codes as examples of quality control and public safety measures.

Introduced in 1993 the seismic code oversees the construction of seismic resistant structures and the anti-seismic shielding of existing structures.

It also established the necessary infrastructure for the immediate and effective reaction following an earthquake.

In addition, ETEK is also pushing for a change in the way tenders are launched to ensure fair competition and a quality end product.

Efthyvoulou said the chamber's view is that tenders for public buildings should be launched in the form of architectural competitions open to

high numbers of bidders.

"This would ensure creative competitiveness between the bidders and would generate interest among new young architects in Cyprus."

He added that one of ETEK's other most significant achievements was building strong working relations with Turkish Cypriot engineers.

"We have the good fortune of having a community of Turkish Cypriot engineers in the north who firmly believe in the reunification of the island."

Vice president of ETEK Constantinos Constanti agreed that the government needed to look past cheap solutions and understand the importance and long term cost of construction of public buildings.

"We appeal to the state to not approach this matter as if it were purchasing cucumbers or tomatoes from the local market when it is dealing with professionals working on very important and permanent projects.

The services purchased are specific to the needs of the project and the quality will determine the final product which is the building. Quality never comes cheaply," he concluded.



PENDING: *ETEK president Christos Efthymoulou (second from left) said a suggestion report submitted by the chamber in 2003 with guidelines on a construction quality control protocol and measures has still not been implemented*

SUGGESTED: *ETEK is calling for legal framework to determine the minimum level of preplanning and study a contractor puts in before beginning construction on a building (Photo by Stefanos Kouratzis)*

