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Construction in Europe: still a way to go

Francesco Bassi, general manager of Soilmec France, answers *GDI's* questions on the current state of the European construction market

The Soilmec SM-5 microdrilling rig recently won the British Drilling Association's technical innovation award

Q Has the European construction market bottomed out yet?

The situation of the European market, at least the continental one, is still stagnant and no positive signs can be seen for the year 2015; however, we have started to organise and prepare ourselves for the best in view of 2016, when major infrastructure works are planned in the UK, Switzerland and France.

Q Which Soilmec products are currently in demand?

Our continuous flight auger (CFA) rigs are doing well in the UK. Overall, contractors are currently looking for hydromill rigs, large CFA rigs and piling rigs, medium-sized piling rigs and small CFA rigs.

Soilmec's SR-75 and SR-90 rigs in action at Chelsea Barracks, London, UK



Q The French, Italian and Spanish construction sectors are still struggling to recover. Why have conditions not improved?

These markets are suffering from lack of cash and lack of policy decisions on infrastructure projects to be carried out in those countries.

In order to restart these markets, we need clearer ideas, economic stability and true cohesion between countries to better organise all European connections.

Q Have you witnessed any trends in the European construction industry?

At the moment, I do not see any significant trends; if we consider the future ahead, the

most 'promising' demand comes from the willingness to develop and widen tunnels in the main European metropolitan areas.

Q What is your forecast for demand for near future? Will any large projects improve demand in Europe?

Globally speaking, the demand for the year 2015 is decreasing, compared with 2014, while a slight recovery is expected for 2016.

The most relevant projects in Europe that will start in 2016 are the Thames Tideway Tunnel in London, the 'Grand Paris' in Paris, the CEVA in Geneva, and various tunnels in Austria and Switzerland.

Q In addition to sluggish growth following the recession, are there any other challenges the market is facing?

The main challenge the European market is facing is to avoid the parochialism among the big construction companies; instead, said companies ought to be invited to show greater mutual collaboration in order to unite and therefore be more successful in going beyond the borders of Europe.▼



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