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**Global FM International Workshop at Th!nk FM, Nottingham 5th April 2011**

BRUSSELS, Belgium — (18 April 2011) Should corporate culture trump local culture? Does facilities management in different countries conform to national stereotypes? Do we need international standards to drive its development? Is there an accepted international definition of FM? Are facilities skills portable across borders? These and other questions were tackled at the 11<sup>th</sup> Global FM International Workshop held alongside the Th!nk FM conference earlier this month in Nottingham, UK. Th!nk FM was organised by the British Institute of Facilities Management (BIFM).

The Workshop was chaired by David Millar of international construction services firm Hochtief, chair of BIFM's International Special Interest Group. Over 30 participants were welcomed by Global FM chair Teena Shouse and the chair of BIFM, Ian Broadbent.

Steve Jones of Qube Global Software, headline sponsor of this year's International Workshops, set the scene with a short presentation. Qube Global Software has customers in over 50 countries so is accustomed to working across borders and cultures. Challenges include different languages, currencies and legislation as well as providing support across time zones.

Real estate investment and development company Redevco, a Qube client, is based in the Netherlands, with a retail portfolio comprising 800 properties across 21 countries in Europe and Asia. Control is centralised in Amsterdam and English is the business language but the company follows local customs where necessary.

This pragmatic approach reflected the views of the group and those members of the online FM community that responded to the workshop brief. As former Global FM chair Stan Mitchell inquired: "*A marriage of the two is surely the right approach?*"

Mark Andrews and Mark Walton from Faceo set out what they see as key trends for multi-country FM contracts and took the group through a case-study of Faceo's relationship with international chemical company BASF. They argued that companies are thinking about and moving toward international FM to reduce costs through economies of scale; to rationalise the number of service providers; and to ensure consistency of best practices and services through service level agreements (SLAs). Additionally, the economic downturn is stimulating both the development of new outsourcing models and new solutions from vendors. Pre-2000 it was almost exclusively US-based IT companies that signed cross-border FM contracts. Since the turn of the century there has been a slow widening of the market to include industrial and non-US companies. This trend accelerated from around 2005, although it still accounts for a small percentage of FM delivery.

Andrews and Walton explained how BASF structures FM services and the goal of the project – to provide and align professional facilities management services across all sites. They discussed how BASF's process-driven approach, which typifies the core business, was instrumental in the successful implementation. The lessons learned included the importance of communication,

getting transparency and trust, and defining rules for implementation on a corporate level without forgetting local touches at site level.

Following the presentation from Faceo, newly-appointed BIFM board member Ashley Rogers of international surveyors Eddisons, facilitated the discussion. On culture the group emphasised the importance of setting corporate standards whilst acknowledging diversity, which exists not just between companies and countries but within them. A balanced approach is needed.

Participants were divided on the need for or feasibility of international standards. One delegate expressed the concern that to achieve consensus these could be diluted to become almost meaningless.

The view that facilities management conforms to national stereotypes may derive from a time when FM was seen as essentially a “blue collar” activity – it has moved beyond that now. Most agreed that FM delivery is essentially local but through ICT it can be managed globally. The group was unanimous that FM skills are portable across borders.

The next International Workshop will be in Vienna, Austria, on 22 May alongside the EFMC. For more details, please check Global FM website at:  
<http://www.globalfm.org/GlobalFMWorkshops2011.asp>.

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*NOTE TO EDITORS:*

**About Global FM**

Global FM is an international not-for-profit organization based in Brussels, Belgium. It represents a worldwide community of organizations that provide leadership in facilities management. Global FM's vision is to achieve Global recognition of facilities management profession and its mission is to promote the strategic value and progress of facilities management. For more information, visit [www.globalfm.org](http://www.globalfm.org).

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