

ICMS looks to apply common language for global built environment

The International Construction Measurement Standards (ICMS) aims to provide greater global consistency in classifying, defining, measuring, analysing and presenting construction costs. The Association of South African Quantity Surveyors (ASAQS) is working with a growing group of professional and not-for-profit organisations from around the world to develop and implement these standards for benchmarking, measuring and reporting construction project costs.



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ASAQS EduTech director Karl Trusler is representing the ASAQS in the ICMS coalition. He says that a global standard in cost reporting will benefit South African quantity surveyors, developers, and other professionals in the built environment in a number of ways.

Levelling the playing field for built environment professionals

“When there is global consistency in how the construction costs of a project are represented, investors and clients are able to compare apples with apples,” explains Trusler. “Through the introduction of a standardised cost reporting template, the ICMS is succeeding in creating a common language for the global built environment.”

“Regardless of where they are based, clients can use the ICMS as a guideline to determine where in the world they should develop their projects to achieve the best returns thanks to the consistency and benchmarking it provides. It has the potential to level the playing field globally,” says Trusler.

The way that construction project cost reporting has been presented to clients, developers and investors in the past can vary from country to country and even within countries. Adoption of the ICMS means that construction costs will be presented in the same way whether at a project, regional, state, national or international level.

“The stand-out benefit is that real comparisons of construction projects can be made, and these comparisons will guide more informed decision making. An increasing number of local quantity surveyors are becoming involved in projects across our borders into the rest of Africa and beyond. To become and remain globally relevant, they should seek to do their reporting in an internationally standardised way. The ICMS speaks to this need,” says Trusler.

Encouraging widespread adoption of a globally consistent standard

As the ASAQS representative to the coalition, Trusler is tasked with staying informed and connected on global developments related to the ICMS and providing feedback and suggestions from members to the coalition. When asked how widely the ICMS has been adopted in South Africa, Trusler explains that it is still very new and has not yet become the status quo.

“Like any initiative in the built environment, there are early adopters, but the majority of South African professionals in the built environment are waiting to see what the uptake will be. While the larger multidisciplinary practices may adopt the ICMS quicker, the majority of smaller practices in South Africa would be more cautious. Basically, all practices make use of some form of a cost reporting system so to become ICMS compliant, they would need to align their reports to the ICMS cost reporting template.”

The ASAQS plans to encourage the adoption of the ICMS through education.

“When people are informed and grasp the value of a concept, they become motivated, and before long, through their own initiatives, the concept gains momentum. Across the globe, the ICMS is beginning to gain momentum through the efforts of local organisations. Lobbying at government level is a priority because government adoption will go a long way towards cementing the ICMS as the national standard within countries,” concludes Trusler.

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