Robert C. Baldwin, CMRP, Editor How good is maintenance in Europe? That question was on my mind in June when I traveled to Helsinki to attend Euromaintenance 2002, the biennial conference sponsored by the European Federation of National Maintenance Societies
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The plenary session on the second day looked promising because it included a paper on "Nordic Benchmarking Analysis and EFNMS Key Figures" by Tom Svantesson, leader of the EFNMS working group on benchmarking.

Svantesson pointed out that "today's management often has a limited knowledge of maintenance. On top of that their available time to focus on maintenance is limited." (Sound familiar?) This, he says, "forces the maintenance manager to address his management in business terms and not as preferred in engineering or maintenance terms."

He went on to suggest that benchmarking and performance indicators can help create needed understanding.

The EFNMS has adopted a list of 13 indicators as fundamental maintenance performance measures. According to Svantesson, indicator selection was relatively easy; defining the terms was a bit harder.

The maintenance societies of Denmark, Finland, and Sweden have conducted a number of benchmarking analyses using the EFNMS indicators.

Their numbers are good. For example, maintenance cost as a percent of plant replacement value averaged 3 percent, "world class" according to some of the studies we hear about.

More important is the fact that the numbers are public knowledge and they are based on a standard approach developed by a recognized authority: the EFNMS. In that regard, Europe is ahead of North America. Yes, benchmarking methods and numbers are available here, but they tend to be closely held.

We need a public standard for benchmarking the performance of equipment maintenance and reliability organizations. I would look first to the Society for Maintenance & Reliability Professionals for leadership--a committee report perhaps--in defining these performance indicators.

I know SMRP members who believe the society should provide standard definitions of key performance indicators and perhaps even provide performance guidelines leading to certification. We would like to offer them our encouragement and support.

We believe it is in the best interest of the profession to have a common set of standard indicators and numbers that practitioners can use to explain maintenance performance to the rest of their company. **MT**