

# Relevant achievements on the activities of *fib* WP 2.4.1 for Modelling of Fibre Reinforced Concrete Structures

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## Abstract

The *fib* WP 2.4.1 is a technical committee of the *fib* organization (<https://www.fib-international.org/commissions/com2-analysis-design.html>) dedicated to the development of methodologies for the design of fibre reinforced concrete (FRC) structures using computer programs based, mainly, on the finite element method (FEM). For taking advantage of the fibre reinforcement, these computer programs should simulate the relevant fibre resisting mechanisms, mainly the ones that increase the post-cracking tensile capacity of cement-based materials. Several challenges are, however, faced for assuring reliable simulations, namely: 1) the knowledge of the stress-crack opening simulating correctly the post-cracking tensile behaviour of the FRC of the structure to be designed; 2) modelling the contribution of fibre reinforcement in structures failing in shear, punching or torsion; 3) level of accuracy of these models on performing the serviceability and ultimate limit state design verifications; 4) guarantee results independent of the refinement of the finite element mesh; 5) design format (characteristic, average or design values for the material properties). To contribute for a proper handling of some of these challenges, the *fib* WP 2.4.1 has been coordinating a series of blind simulation competitions, whose relevant objectives and results are described in this paper. The vision on the use of this information for deriving information useful in the design of FRC structures is also provided.

**Keywords:** Fibre reinforced concrete; finite element method; nonlinear finite element analysis; Blind simulation competition.

## 1- INTRODUCTION

Research and real applications have shown the potential of the addition of discontinuous (short) fibres to cement based materials on the significant improvement of the behaviour of concrete structures at serviceability and ultimate limit state conditions (SLS and ULS, respectively) [1, 2]. The structures

made by fibre reinforced concrete (FRC) and including conventional reinforcements will be herein referred by the acronymic R/FRC structures. Regarding SLS, it should be highlighted the smaller concrete crack width and stress level in conventional reinforcements and the higher stiffness of FRC structures during their elasto-cracked stage [1, 3-8]. For ULS, it should be indicated the higher load carrying capacity, more ductile failure modes and larger energy absorption and dissipation capacity and structural integrity under loading conditions representative of extreme events [1, 9-22]. The fibre reinforcement also provides significant enhancements in the durability [22-30] and life cycle of concrete structures [31-34]. The main applications of FRC are still concentrated in flooring, tunnelling and in some pre-fabrication [1, 35-43], being too scarce in the development of innovative structural systems where the benefits of the fibre reinforcement mechanisms have recognized potential for obtaining technical and economic advantages regarding conventional systems.

The fibres, when crossed by cracks, develop reinforcement mechanisms through to their pull-out resistance, whose effectiveness depends on their material and geometric properties, on the mechanical properties of the surrounding cement paste, and on the fibre distribution and orientation in the element. These last ones are dependent on the technology of FRC application, its rheological properties and geometry of the element to produce [44].

Due to these complex phenomena, modelling the fibre reinforcement benefits should be based in computational models that simulate the behaviour of FRC from the fresh up to its hardened stages [45-54]. Commercial software based on the finite element method (FEM) have been used for the simulation of the material nonlinear behaviour of FRC structures, as the contribution of fibre reinforcement is, mainly, activated after the fibres have been crossed by cracks. Smearred and discrete crack approaches (SCM, DCM), strong embedded discontinuity methods (ESD), and elasto-plastic-damage models are the most current models in these software [45-54]. However, the applicability of these approaches has been assessed by simulating experimental tests with elements, in general, of small scale, where the values of their model's parameters are adjusted for the aimed predicting level, constituting, therefore, an inverse technique of very small utility for structural design practice. The major part of these models considers the contribution of fibre reinforcement mechanisms through a cohesive traction-separation law obtained from semi-empirical recommendations, or from experimental results, directly or from inverse analysis [55]. However, there is still considerable uncertainty regarding the most adequate methodology to derive the model's parameters values for predicting accurately the behaviour of a given structure. An inadequate assessment of these values provides results without any representativeness of the real behaviour of the structure. Furthermore, available information in this respect shows that the  $\sigma$ -w relationships derived from IA provides unsafe predictions [56].

The relative reduced use of computational tools for exploring the advantages of FRC on the development of competitive and sustainable R/FRC solutions are due to the following main reasons: 1) lack of preparation on the use of the available models; 2) lack of understanding of the impact of the relevant parameters of the models on the prediction of the behaviour of a R/FRC structure; 3) difficulties on transforming experimental results obtained in recommended quality control tests in reliable data for the constitutive models.

The *fib* WP 2.4.1 - Modelling of Fibre Reinforced Concrete Structures was established with the main aim of developing guidelines on the use of FEM-based software for the design of R/FRC structures. The execution of blind simulation competitions (BSC) is part of this strategy, by obtaining information about the reliability of constitutive models available in commercial and in-house software, as well as their proper use, in the analysis and design of R/FRC structures.

This work describes the BSC already carried out, and discuss other activities planned to be executed with the obtained information for assessing the influence of the relevant model parameters towards a more comprehensive use of them under the framework of reliable and safe design methodologies.

## **2- BLIND SIMULATION COMPETITIONS**

### **2.1 - Introduction**

Under the framework of the *fib* WP 2.4.1, the BSC have the following main objectives: 1) obtain reliable experimental data for the assessment of the potentialities and debilities of FEM-based constitutive models on the analysis and design of FRC structures; 2) by considering this data, perform parametric studies and sensitivity analysis for assessing the influence of the models parameters on their predictive performance; 3) collect this experimental data in a Web-based information platform (WeBIP) for the use of Machine Learning (ML) algorithms to provide the most appropriate values for the most used classes of FEM-based models on the design of FRC structures.

The type of structures for the BSC was selected considering the already recognized level of fibre reinforcement efficiency, namely: 1<sup>st</sup> BSC – fibre reinforcement for the total replacement of steel stirrups in beams failing in shear [1, 2, 35, 57-66]; 2<sup>nd</sup> BSC – fibre reinforcement for partial replacement of conventional flexural reinforcement in slabs supported on piles or columns [1, 2]; 3<sup>rd</sup> BSC – fibre reinforcement for the total replacement of conventional transverse reinforcement in RC slabs failing in punching [67-70]. The last BSC, to be executed in 2024, will be dedicated to exploring the use of high-performance fibre reinforced concrete (HPFRC) and hybrid reinforcement (fibre reinforced polymers, FRP, and steel bars) applied with or without a certain prestress level for the development of elements of thin wall tubular cross section. By disposing this hybrid reinforcement

properly, it is aimed to eliminate all transverse reinforcement for the shear and torsional effects, since they are those most susceptible to corrosion, which allow to significantly decrease the wall thickness of this type of elements, resulting lightweight elements.

For the appraisal of the predictive performance of existing FEM-based constitutive models, an intensive structural monitoring system is used, like Digital Image Correlation (DIC) for assessing crack width, crack spacing and strain field, electric strain gauges for measuring the strains in critical regions, mainly on conventional reinforcements, and displacements transducers for registering the deformation of the structure.

## 2.2 - 1<sup>st</sup> BSC: steel-fibre reinforced concrete beams failing in shear

Figure Figure 1 shows a sketch of the geometry of the specimen, support and loading conditions.

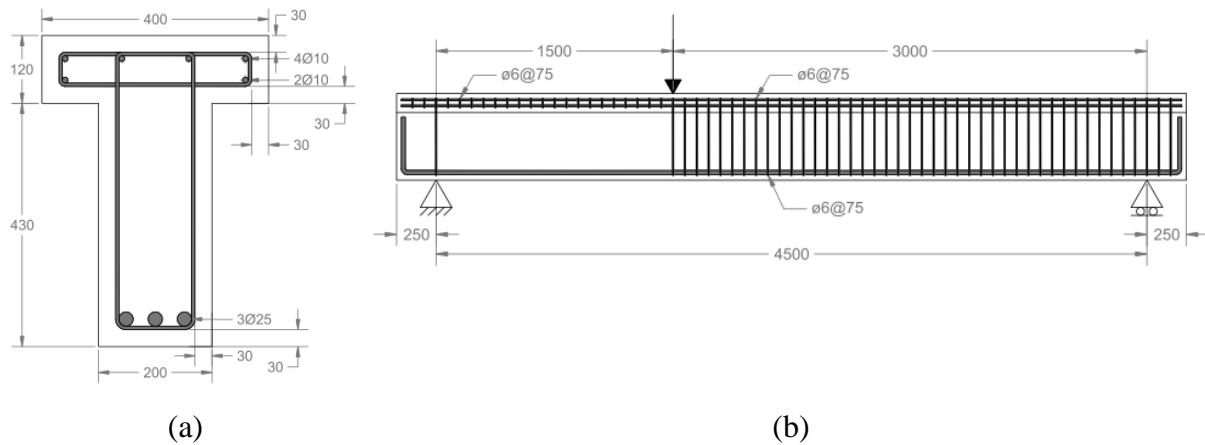


Figure 1 - Geometry of the beam: (a) cross-section, and (b) longitudinal view (dimensions in mm).

The composition of the steel fibre reinforced concrete (SFRC) corresponds to a concrete C50/60 XD3 (P) CL 0.20  $D_{max}$  12.5 S5, with a type cement CEM II/A-L 42.5R of fast hardening of 58.8 and 67.1 MPa at seven and 28 days, respectively. Hooked end steel fibres of 33 mm length, 0.55 mm diameter and tensile strength higher than 1100 MPa were used. At 14 days, this SFRC has presented an average compressive strength in 4 standard cylinders of 64.2 MPa [1.5 MPa] (NP EN 12390-3:2011 [71]), a modulus of elasticity of 32.9 GPa [0.4 GPa] (NP EN 12390-13:2014 [72]). By performing three-point bending tests (3PNBBT) in 6 notched SFRC beams according to the *fib* Model Code 2010 [73], it was obtained an average value for the residual flexural strength parameter at crack mouth opening displacement, CMOD, of 0.5 and 2.5 mm of, respectively,  $f_{R,1m} = 4.79$  MPa [0.70 MPa] and  $f_{R,3m} = 3.16$  MPa [0.52 MPa]. The values into [] are the standard deviation. The load versus CMOD curves are displayed in Figure 2.

The yield stress and tensile strength of the steel bars [74] of 6, 10 and 25 mm diameter adopted for the stirrups (6 mm) and longitudinal reinforcements (10 mm in the top and 25 mm in the bottom)

were 527 MPa [11 MPa] and 700 MPa [16 MPa] (6 mm) 538 MPa [7 MPa] and 696 MPa [6 MPa] (10 mm) and 557 MPa [2 MPa] and 678 MPa [1 MPa] (25 mm).

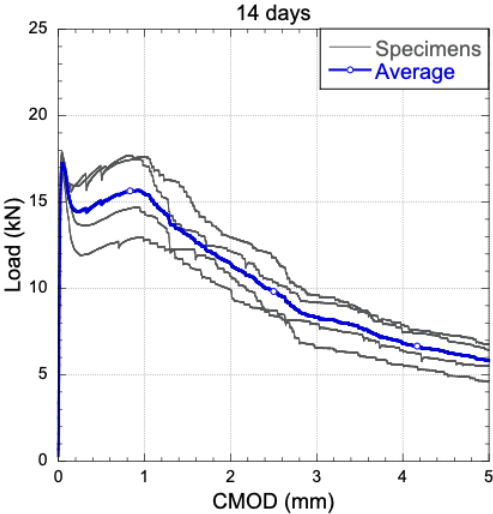


Figure 2 - Load versus crack mouth opening displacement (CMOD) relationships in the three-point notched beam-bending tests executed at 14 days.

Two twin beams were subjected to eccentric loading under displacement control of  $50\mu\text{m/s}$  at the loaded section, until failure. Deflection (displacement of the cross-section at which the load is applied), load and concrete strain at the level of the longitudinal reinforcement in the loaded section were measured during the tests (Figure

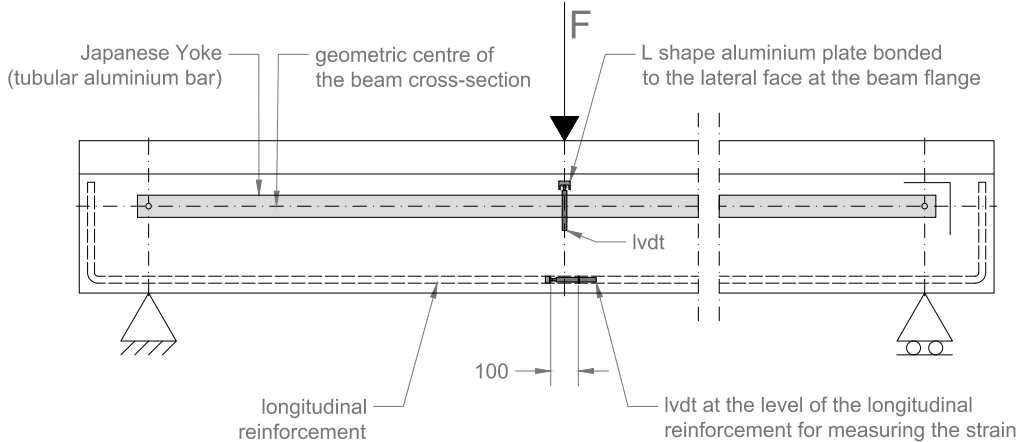


Figure ). The strain was determined by dividing the displacement recorded in the displacement transducer (LVDT) by its stroke (100 mm).

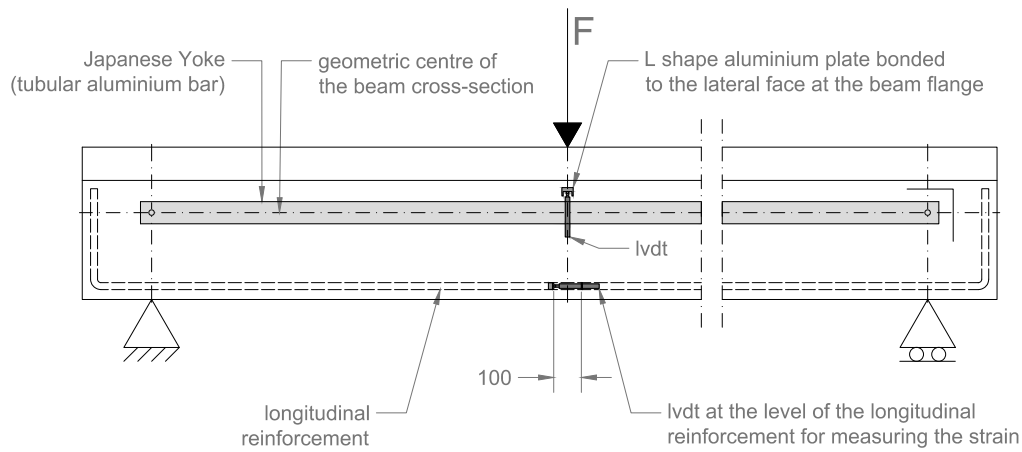


Figure 3 – Schematic representation of the monitoring system to register the beam’s deflection in the loaded section and the concrete strain at the level of the bottom longitudinal reinforcement. (dimensions in mm).

Figure 4 displays the experimental results. Unfortunately, the record of the strain of the first beam was lost. Figure 5 represents the crack pattern at failure of both tested beams, which shows that each beam failed in shear.

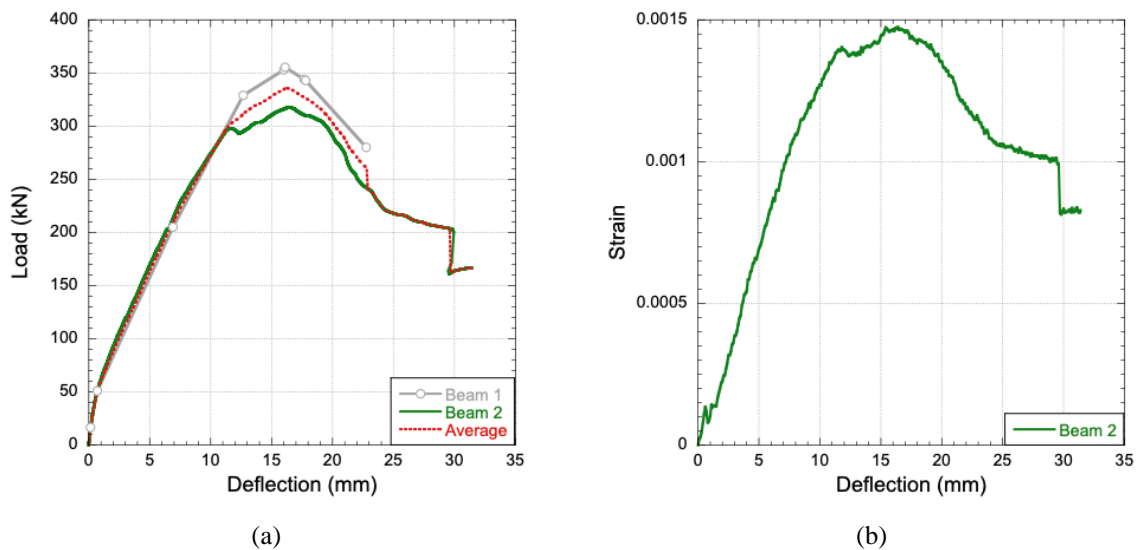
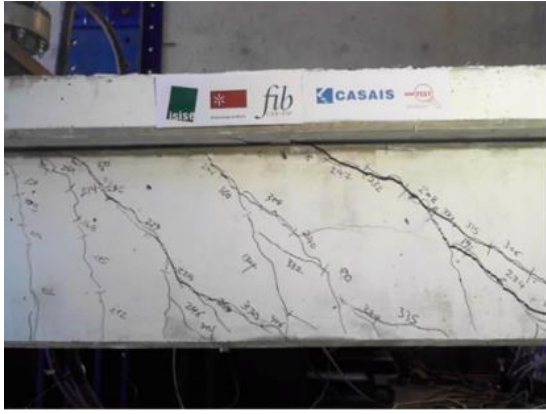
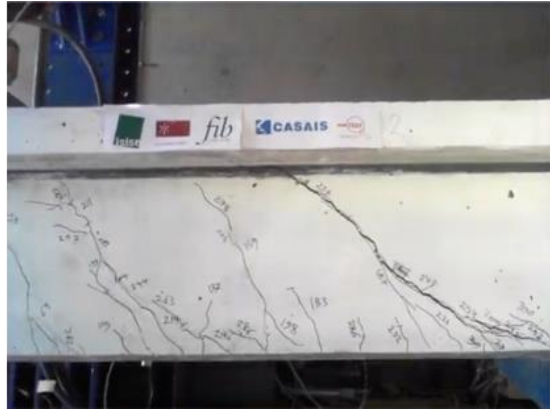


Figure 4 - Experimental results in terms of deflection at the beam’s loaded section versus: (a) load; (b) and concrete strain at the level of the longitudinal reinforcement.



(a)

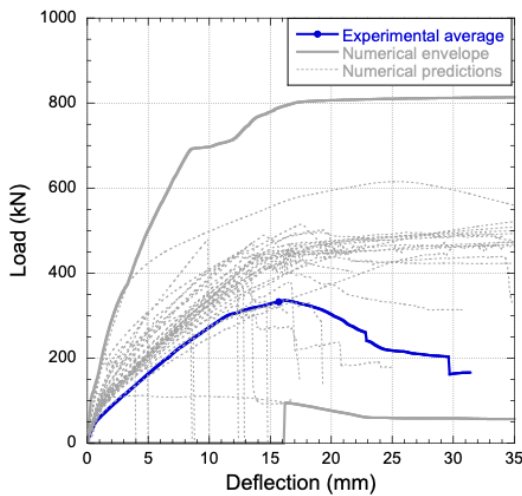


(b)

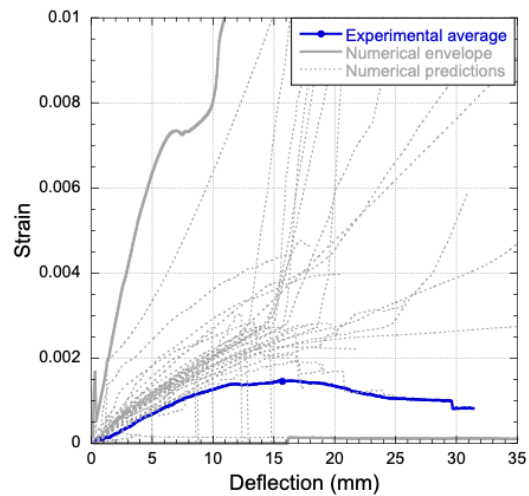
Figure 5 - Crack pattern at failure in the short shear span region of beam: (a) 1; and (b) 2

Five different classes of models were used by the participants, namely: Smearred Crack Models (SCM), 46%; Discrete Crack Models (DCM), 8%; Concrete Damage Plasticity (CDP), 30%; Lattice Discrete Particle Models (LDPM), 5%; Others, 11%.

Figure 6 shows the experimental average, the individual numerical predictions, and their envelope for the load versus deflection and strain versus deflection up to the deflection corresponding to the end of the experiments.



(a)



(b)

Figure 6 - Experimental results, numerical envelope, and numerical predictions of all participants in terms of: (a) load versus deflection, and (b) strain versus deflection.

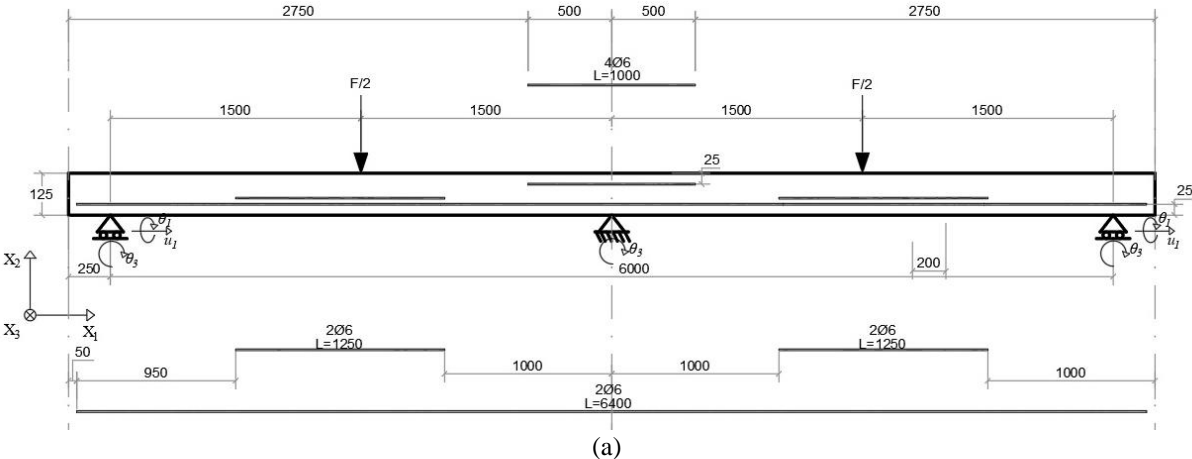
Although the two first ranked participant teams have used SCM, the dispersion on the predictions with this class of models was very high. The predictive performance of the proposals where commercial software was used was better and with smaller dispersion than in the proposals where in-house software was utilized. Despite the provided experimental data for the definition of the relevant

models' parameters, inaccuracies on the load capacity, deflection and strain at peak load have attained 40%, 113% and 600%, respectively. Furthermore, inadequate failure modes have been estimated, and simulations with the same commercial software have provided very different results. A more detailed analysis of the results can be found elsewhere [75].

**2.3 – 2<sup>nd</sup> BSC: continuous shallow R/SFRC beams failing in bending**

The main objective of this BSC is to simulate the behaviour of a region in the alignment of columns/piles of an R/SFRC slab. In this application, the conventional flexural reinforcement ratio is relatively small, therefore flexure is, in general, the governing failure mode. In slabs supported on piles of industrial buildings where forklifts can elevate objects relatively high for their stockage, an incorrect evaluation of the deflection at SLS conditions can lead to accidents during those operations. Crack width must also be estimated with sufficient precision to avoid durability concerns and to mobilize efficiently the aggregate interlock resisting mechanism to assure the intended shear and punching capacities provided exclusively by the FRC. Therefore, in this 2<sup>nd</sup> BSC, special focus was given on the predictions of data concerning SLS verifications.

Figure 7 shows a sketch of the geometry of the specimen, including the details of the support and loading conditions. The specimen consists of a continuous shallow beam of two equal spans and same rectangular cross-section, reinforced with longitudinal bars at the bottom and top over the central support (the latter limited to the hogging region). In the region of the highest positive bending moment (sagging region), a higher percentage of reinforcement is provided in each span.





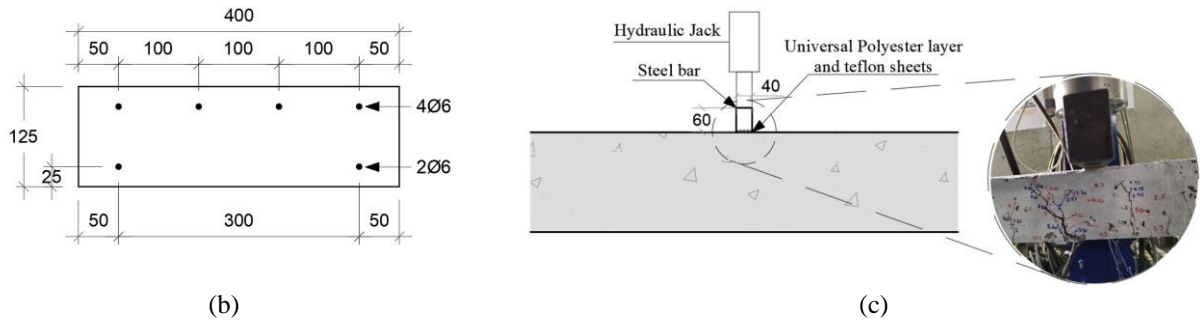


Figure 7 - Geometry of the specimen: (a) longitudinal view; (b) cross-section in the hogging region; and (c) detail of the loading conditions (dimensions in mm).

Regarding the mix composition of the 2<sup>nd</sup> BSC, it was the same adopted in the 1<sup>st</sup> BSC, apart the type of cement, which was now a CEM I 52.5R of fast hardening of 30 and 52.5 MPa at 2 and 28 days, respectively, and the hooked end steel fibres that had a length of 60 mm, a diameter of 0.9 mm and tensile strength higher than 1900 MPa. At 19 days, this SFRC presented an average compressive strength in 4 standard cylinders of 57.8 MPa [1.0 MPa] (NP EN 12390-3:2011 [71]), a modulus of elasticity of 31.9 GPa [0.4 GPa] (NP EN 12390-13:2014 [72]). By executing 6 3PNBBT [73] at 19 days, it was obtained  $f_{R,1m}=6.2$  MPa [1.5 MPa] and  $f_{R,3m}=7.6$  MPa [1.4 MPa]. The load versus crack mouth opening displacement (F-CMOD) curves are displayed in Figure 8.

The modulus of elasticity, yield stress and tensile strength of the steel bars of 6 mm diameter and ribbed surface used for the flexural reinforcement, determined experimentally [74], was, respectively, 222199 MPa, 627.25 MPa and 769.57 MPa with a STD of 14970 MPa, 15.41 MPa and 13.27 MPa, respectively.

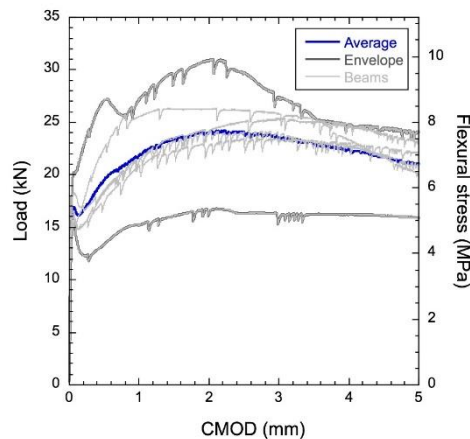


Figure 8 - CMOD versus load and flexural stress in the three-point notched beam-bending tests at 19 days of the SFRC adopted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> BSC (all tests, envelope, and average curve).

Figures 9 and 10 show the monitoring system for measuring the deflection (by LVDT), the applied load (load cells), strains in SFRC and steel bars (electric strain gauges), and average crack width in the hogging and sagging regions (Digital Image Correlation, DIC).

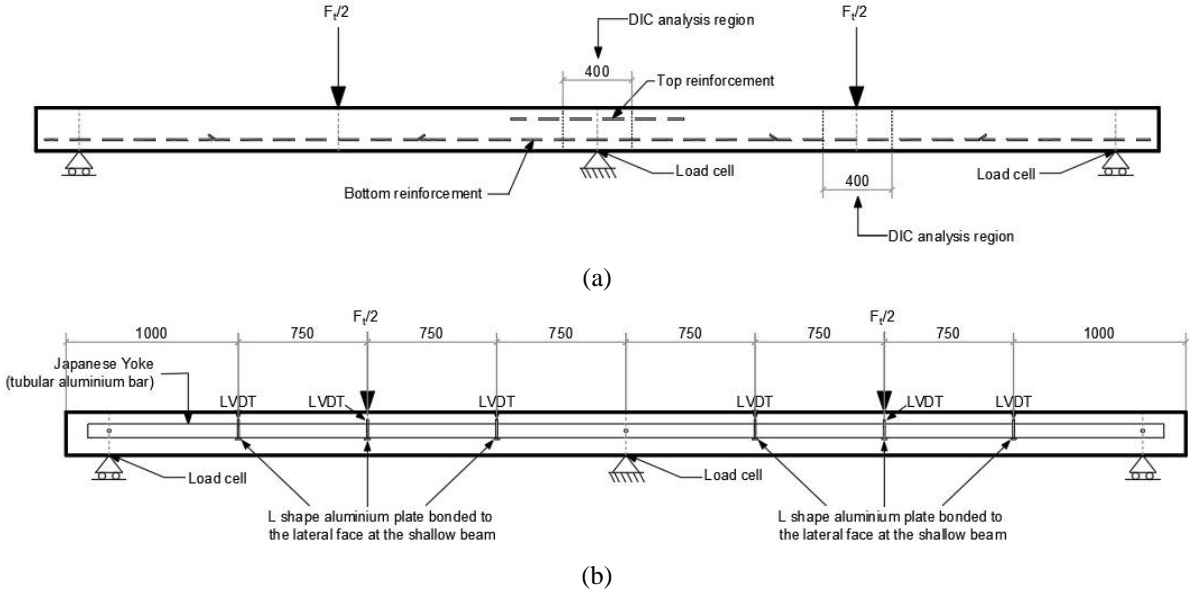
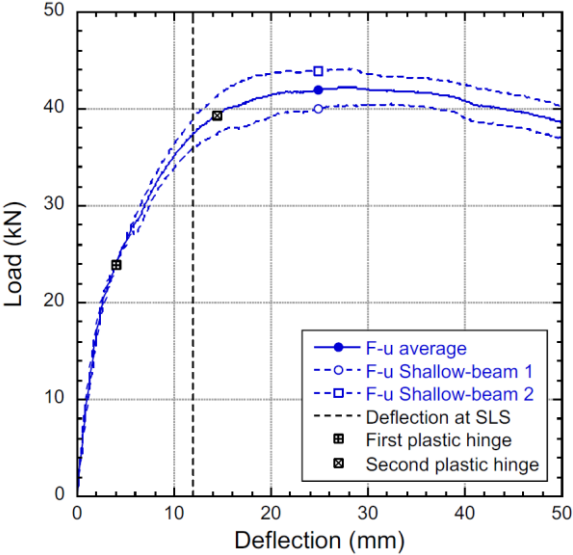
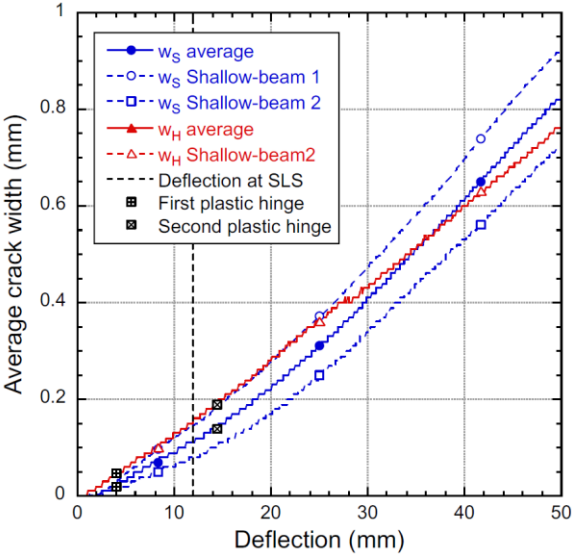


Figure 9 - Monitoring systems for measuring the deflection, reaction forces and average crack width in the sagging and hogging regions of the shallow beam: (a) Front view; (b) Rear view; and (c) Photo of the front and rear view of the prototype in the test setup (dimensions in mm).

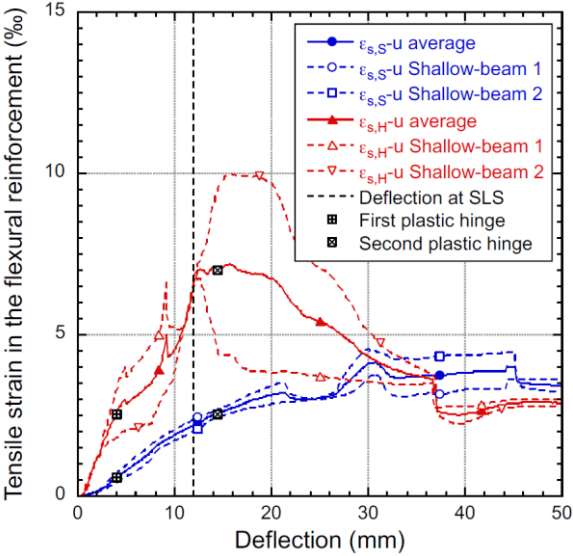
Figure 11a presents the deflection versus total load ( $\bar{u} - F_t$ ) obtained experimentally in each shallow R/SFRC beam, as well as this average relationship. Figure 11b shows the relationship between the deflection and the average crack width in the sagging and hogging regions at the level of the tensile reinforcement ( $\bar{u} - \bar{w}_s / \bar{w}_H$ ) of the second shallow beam (the one of the first beam was lost). Figure 11c presents the relationship between the deflection and the strain in the longitudinal tensile reinforcement in the sagging and hogging regions ( $\bar{u} - \epsilon_{s,s} / \epsilon_{s,H}$ ). Figure 11d shows the relationship between the deflection and the compressive strain in the SFRC at the loaded section and over the intermediate support,  $\bar{u} - \epsilon_{c,s} / \epsilon_{c,H}$ . As expected, both tested shallow beams failed in bending. A critical analysis of these results can be found elsewhere [76].



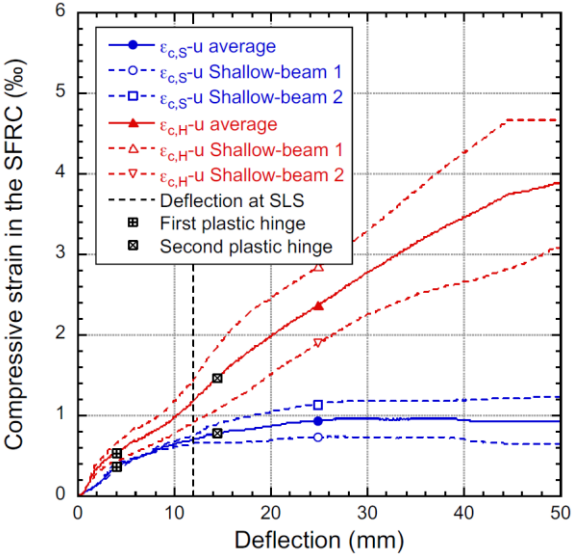
(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

Figure 11 - Experimental results and average curves of: (a) average deflection versus total load ( $\bar{u} - F_t$ ), (b) average deflection versus average crack width in the sagging region ( $\bar{u} - \bar{w}_s$ ) and in the hogging region ( $\bar{u} - \bar{w}_H$ ), at the level of the corresponding tensile reinforcement, (c) average deflection versus tensile strain in the flexural reinforcement at the loaded section ( $\bar{u} - \epsilon_{s,s}$ ) and over the intermediate support ( $\bar{u} - \epsilon_{s,H}$ ), and (d) average deflection versus compressive strain in the SFRC at the loaded section ( $\bar{u} - \epsilon_{c,s}$ ) and over the intermediate support ( $\bar{u} - \epsilon_{c,H}$ ).

Figure 12 includes the curves of load versus deflection, and the average crack width in the hogging and sagging regions versus deflection. Figure 13 presents the curves of tensile strain in the flexural reinforcement at the loaded section and over the intermediate support versus deflection, and compressive strain in the SFRC at the loaded section and over the intermediate support versus deflection. The results are displayed up to the deflection corresponding to the end of the experiments.

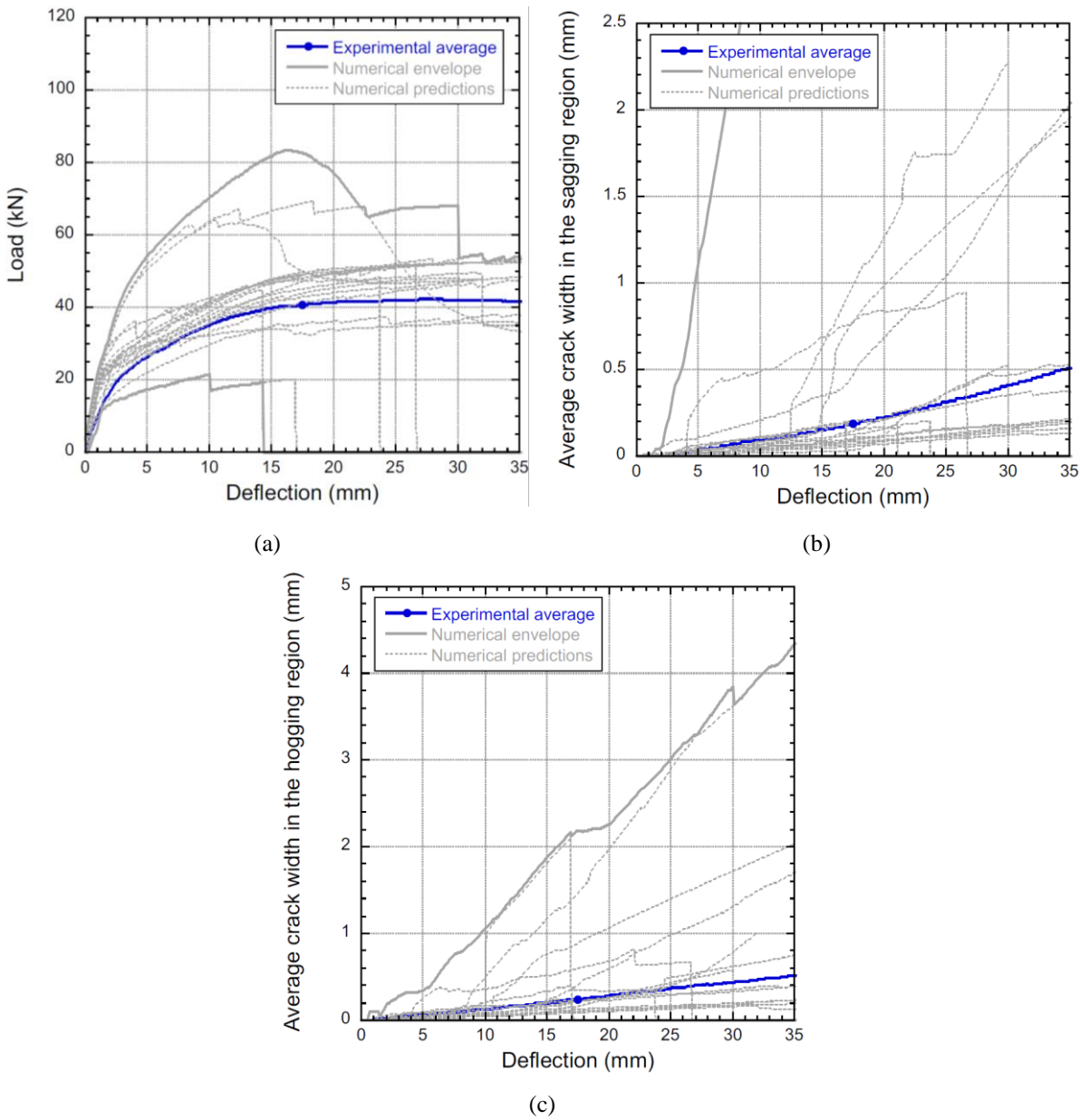


Figure 12 - Experimental results, numerical envelope and numerical predictions of all participants regarding the: (a) load versus deflection ( $\bar{u} - F_t$ ), (b) average crack width in the sagging region versus deflection ( $\bar{u} - \bar{w}_s$ ), and (c) average crack width in the hogging region versus deflection ( $\bar{u} - \bar{w}_H$ ).

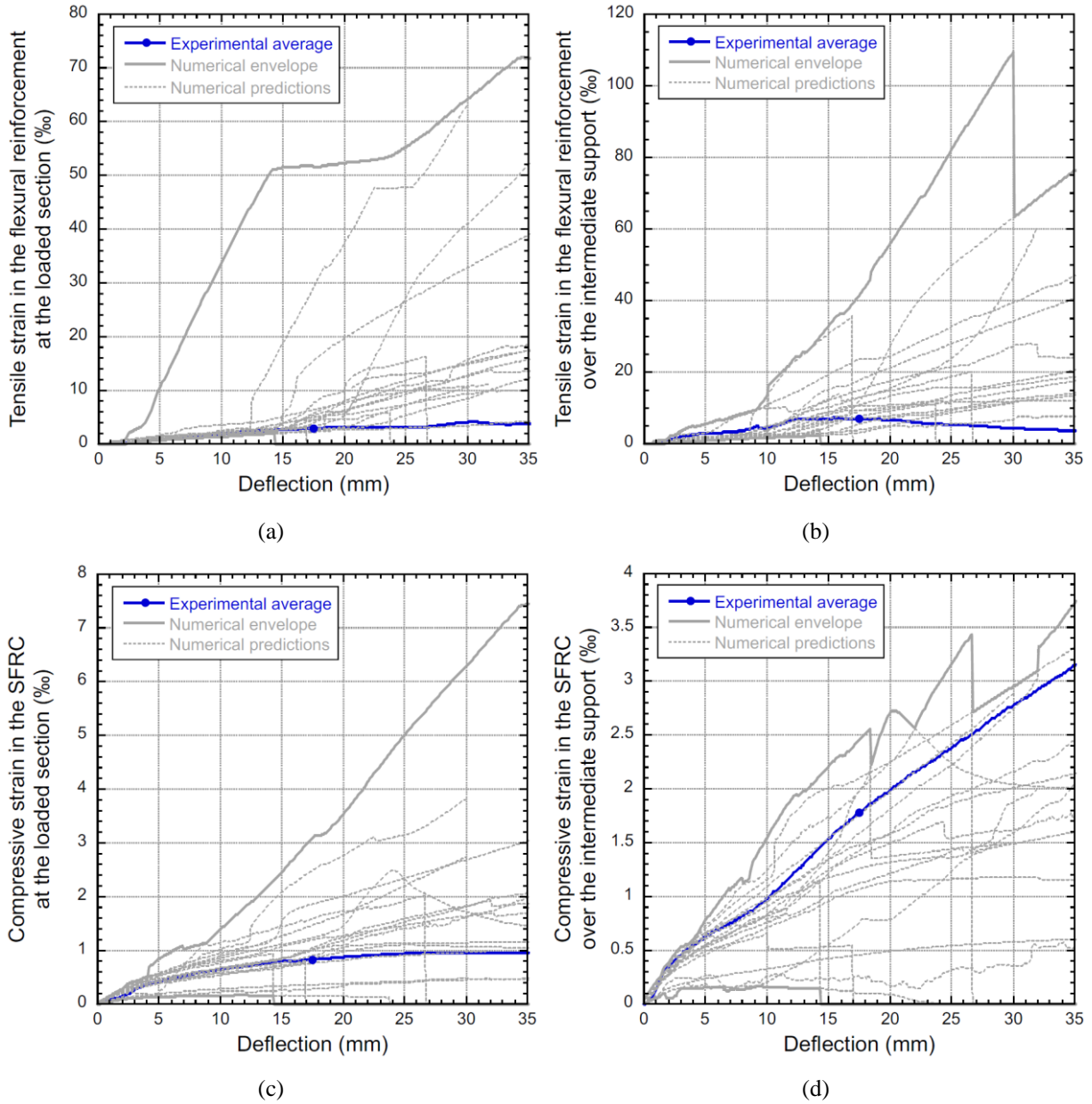


Figure 13 - Experimental results, numerical envelope and numerical predictions of all participants regarding the: a) tensile strain in the flexural reinforcement at the loaded section versus deflection ( $\bar{u} - \epsilon_{s,s}$ ), b) tensile strain in the flexural reinforcement over the intermediate support versus deflection ( $\bar{u} - \epsilon_{s,H}$ ), c) compressive strain in the SFRC at the loaded section versus deflection ( $\bar{u} - \epsilon_{c,s}$ ), and d) compressive strain in the SFRC over the intermediate support versus deflection ( $\bar{u} - \epsilon_{c,H}$ ).



The normalised mean square root,  $NRMS_F$ , of the numerical prediction of the load was calculated as:

$$NRMS_F = \frac{1}{F_{\text{exp}}^{\text{max}}} \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{k=1}^n (F_{\text{exp}}^k - F_{\text{num}}^k)^2}{n}} \quad (1)$$

where  $k$  corresponds to the records,  $F_{\text{exp}}^k$  and  $F_{\text{num}}^k$  are the experimental and numerical load values of record  $k$ , respectively,  $n$  is the number of scan readings, and  $F_{\text{exp}}^{\text{max}}$  is the maximum of the experimental load. Equivalent equations are used to compute the  $NRMS$  of the tensile strain in the flexural reinforcement at the loaded section,  $NRMS_{\varepsilon_{s,S}}$ , compressive strain in the SFRC at the loaded section,  $NRMS_{\varepsilon_{c,S}}$ , tensile strain in the flexural reinforcement over the intermediate support,  $NRMS_{\varepsilon_{s,H}}$ , compressive strain in the SFRC over the intermediate support,  $NRMS_{\varepsilon_{c,H}}$ , average crack width in the sagging region,  $NRMS_{\bar{w}_S}$ , and average crack width in the hogging region,  $NRMS_{\bar{w}_H}$ . The score of each participant was calculated according to the following expression:

$$\text{Score} = 0.2NRMS_F + 0.1NRMS_{\varepsilon_{s,S}} + 0.1NRMS_{\varepsilon_{c,S}} + 0.1NRMS_{\varepsilon_{s,H}} + 0.1NRMS_{\varepsilon_{c,H}} + 0.2NRMS_{\bar{w}_S} + 0.2NRMS_{\bar{w}_H} \quad (2)$$

From the obtained results it can be pointed out the main following observations:

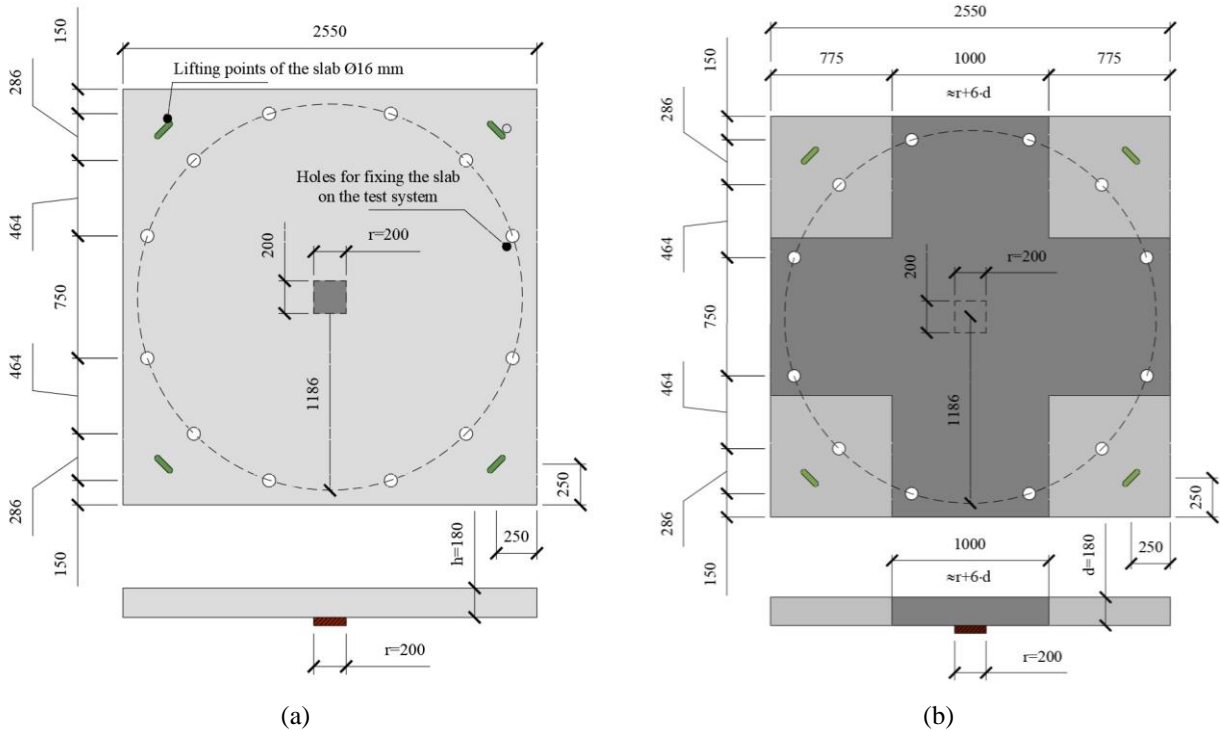
- 1) The average error (normalised mean square root,  $NRMS$ ) on the numerical predictions in terms of the load, tensile strain in the flexural reinforcement at the loaded section, compressive strain in the SFRC at the loaded section, tensile strain in the flexural reinforcement over the intermediate support, compressive strain in the SFRC over the intermediate support, average crack width in the sagging region, and average crack width in the hogging region was, respectively, 0.29, 2.04, 0.63, 1.96, 0.27, 1.24 and 0.91 (a perfect simulation would correspond to  $NRMS = 0$ );
- 2) The DCM and the CDP provided the best and worst predictive performances, respectively;
- 3) In-house software has assured best predictive performance than commercial software;
- 4) The LDPM and DCM have best predicted almost all the variables of the competition than the SCM and CDP;
- 5) The larger difference in terms of predictive performance of the LDPM and DCM versus SCM and CDP was mainly on the strains in the steel reinforcements and average crack width.

**2.4 – Other planned blind simulation competitions**

**2.4.1 – 3<sup>rd</sup> BSC: slabs reinforced with conventional flexural reinforcement and steel fibres, subjected to punching loading configuration**

The main objective of this BSC, whose structural tests are planned to be executed in July 2023, is to assess the performance of FEM-based models for predicting the behaviour of flat slabs under punching loading conditions, where fibres are used as a punching/shear reinforcement. This assessment will be, mainly, in terms of force-deflection, deflection profile, and strain levels in conventional flexural reinforcement and in concrete of critical regions of R/SFRC slab. The predictive capacity in terms of crack pattern and failure mode will be also an objective.

The twin prototypes to be tested, whose details are shown in Figure 14, represent a region over a column of an elevated slab or over a pile of a slab supported on piles made by SFRC and including conventional flexural reinforcement in the alignment of columns/piles.



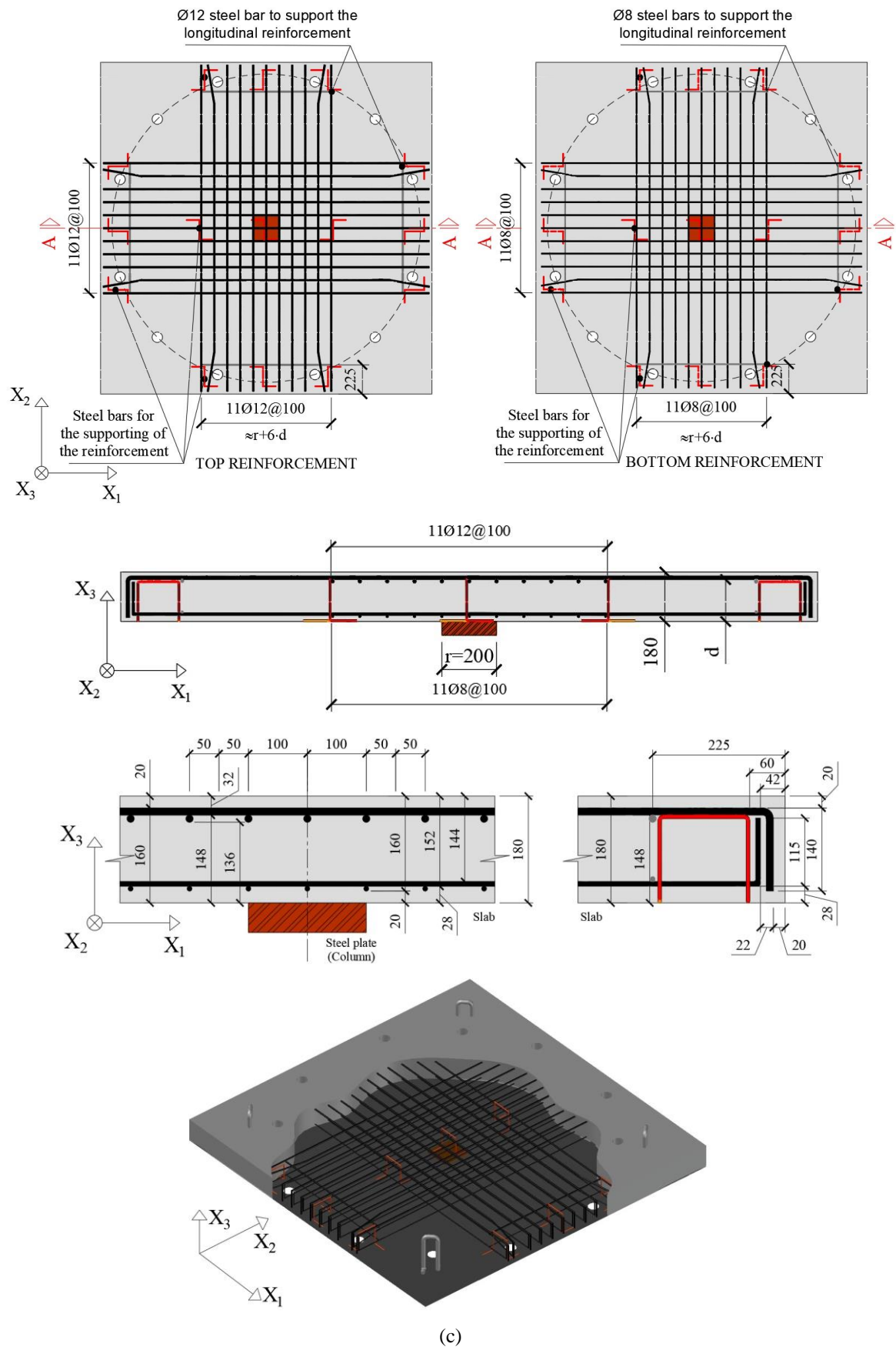


Figure 14 - (a) Geometry of the R/SFRC slab: cross-section (b) localization of the conventional reinforcement (c) details of the conventional reinforcement (dimensions in mm).



The test setup is shown in Figure 15, while the monitoring system is represented in Figure 16. During the tests, deflection will be measured in the points indicated in Figure 16a, and strains in the flexural reinforcements and in the SFRC will be recorded in electric strain gauges disposed as shown in Figure 16b and 16c, respectively. To monitor the applied load, a load cell will be installed in the extremity of the piston of the actuator. The maximum crack width will be determined through DIC technique in the region represented in Figure 16a. The results to be provided are the average of the two experimental tests.

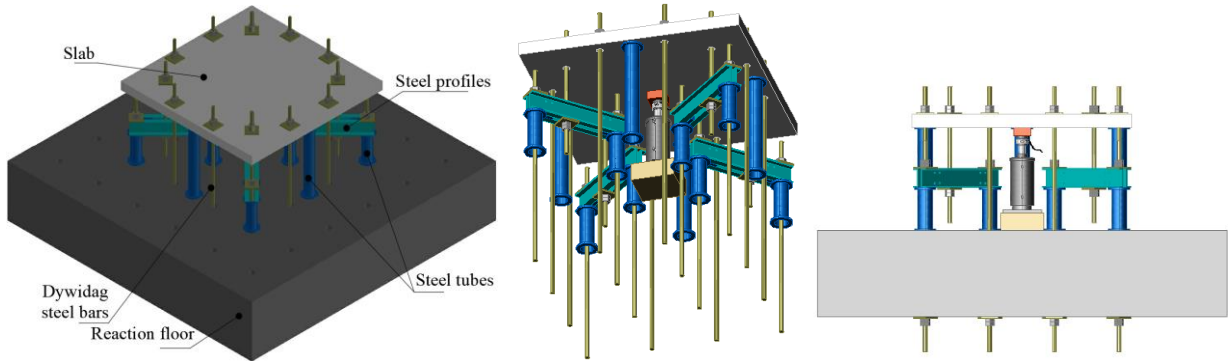


Figure 15 - Test setup of the R/SFRC slab prototypes.

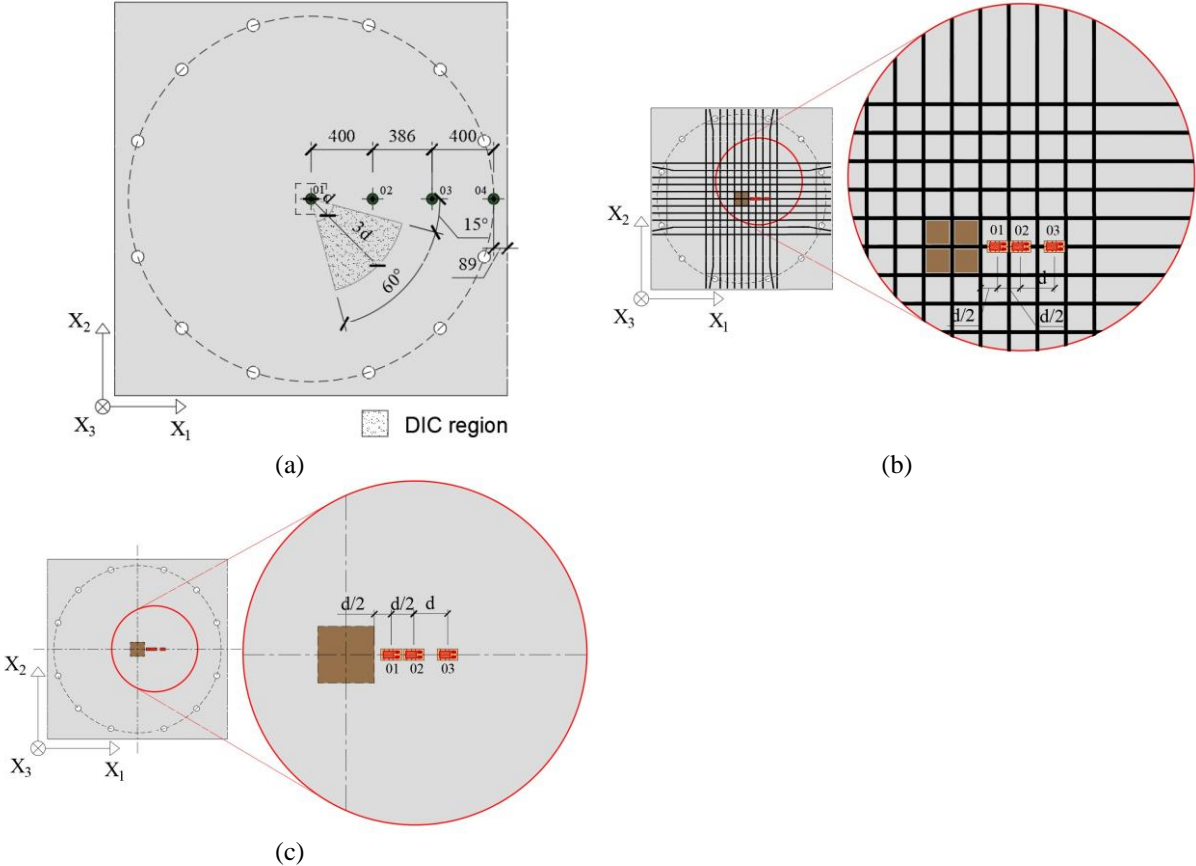


Figure 16 - Monitoring system: (a) points for measuring the deflections and zone for registering the average crack width; locations for measuring the strains in the (b) conventional reinforcements (top layer), and (c) in the R/SFRC slab's bottom surface (dimensions in mm).

The evaluation process will be like the one adopted in the previous BSC.

#### ***2.4.2 – 4<sup>th</sup> BSC: fibres for the transverse reinforcement of thin-walled tubular cross section elements subjected to torsion***

In recent years, some developments on increasing the mechanical and durability properties of FRC have been done, with the purpose of using these composites in structural applications with the elimination of conventional steel reinforcements, mainly those more susceptible to corrosion, such is the case of steel stirrups, and, consequently, have lighter constructions systems [77]. To prevent corrosion, the use of fibre reinforcement polymer (FRP) reinforcements has been explored, in general in the form of GFRP bars [78, 79]. However, the smaller modulus of elasticity and bond conditions of these reinforcements erase some concerns on their use due to the extra difficulties they pose in terms of the verifications of the design prescriptions for SLS conditions, mainly deformability and crack opening [78-81]. The concern in terms of concrete crack opening is not related to the corrosion of the FRP reinforcements, but mainly on assuring the aggregate interlock resisting mechanism of concrete for the loadings of transverse nature, like shear, punching and torsion [82]. Due to the non-isotropic nature of the FRP, their dowel resisting mechanism when crossed by shear cracks is also smaller than the one guaranteed by steel reinforcements. Limiting the concrete crack width is also relevant, not only due to aesthetical concerns, but also the potential corrosion of steel fibres close to the surface of the elements, mainly above a certain crack width limit [83].

The application of FRP with a certain level of prestress can overcome part of the abovementioned concerns, by increasing the load at crack initiation, the stiffness of the elasto-cracked phase of the member, and its load carrying capacity at SLS conditions [78]. However, the tensile brittle nature of FRP and the susceptibility of their mechanical properties to high temperatures recommend the use of hybrid reinforcement, e.g., FRP plus steel, both applied with a certain level of prestress [78, 84, 85]. The steel reinforcement is disposed in the element with a cover thickness sufficient to minimize, as much as possible, its susceptibility to corrosion effects. Figure 17a shows a potential application of this material concept for thin-walled tubular cross section elements. This type of elements can be applied in the development of innovative constructions systems with technical and economic benefits, where their void part can be efficiently used for the installation of cables and/or pipes for functional requirements of the constructions that include these elements. These voids can also be reservoirs of rainwater to be used in case of a fire, by using proper sensors for triggering an effective irrigation system.

The 4<sup>th</sup> BSC will be dedicated to exploring, not only the structural performance of this material/structural concept, but also the performance of FEM-based models for predicting the

behaviour at SLS and ULS conditions of an element that can be representative of this concept, when subject to a loading configuration that induces torsional effects, such is the one shown in Figure 17b (constant torsion and bending moment in the test zone).

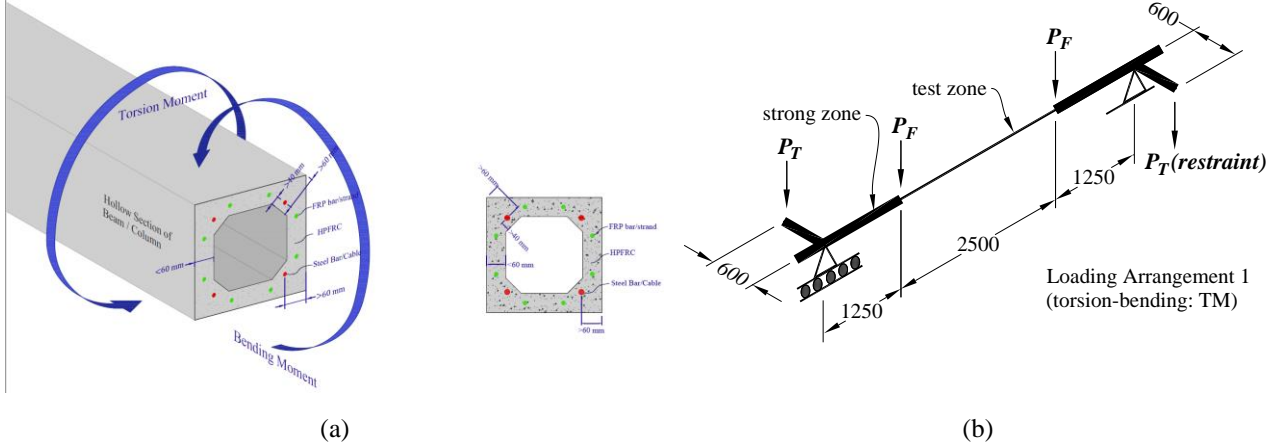


Figure 17 – a) Thin-walled cross section tubular structural element in HPFRC with longitudinal hybrid reinforcement (FRP+steel); b) test setup for inducing a constant torsional and bending moment in the test region.

### 3 – FUTURE INITIATIVES OF THE *fib* WP 2.4.1

Each BSC is leading to a publication in an international journal for describing the relevant results and, based on the scores adopted to evaluate the predictive performance of the type of models adopted by the participants, important information has been extracted. However, the *fib* WP 2.4.1 has much larger ambition with the BSC activities. In fact, based on the scores in a BSC, the participations with the best scores per class of model (the representativeness is in proportion to the percentage of each class of model adopted in the competition) are invited to execute parametric studies with their models to evaluate the impact of the most relevant parameters of the models on the performance of the predictions. A report is prepared by each one of these selected teams of participants, according to proposed recommendations, and a final document resuming this sensitivity analysis is published. The *fib* WP2.4.1 believes that this exercise, extended to all BSC, will produce information of high value for the design practice of FRC structures with the types of FEM-based models used in the BSC.

Another activity *fib* WP2.4.1 is initiating in 2023 is related to the global resistance methods (GRM) for the design of FRC structures, whose application was recently explored to FRC structures [86]. Several GRM have been proposed for the design of RC structures with FEM-based models [87-91], namely: Partial Safety Factor (PSF), Global Resistance Factor (GRF), Method of estimating the coefficient of variation of the structural resistance (ECOV), and the Global Safety format (GSF). For this purpose, an elevate SFRC slab, experimentally tested and with suitable characterization of the

SFRC properties for design purpose, was already selected [92]. The members of the *fib* WP2.4.1, using different types of FEM-based models, will apply the GRM for the design of FRC structures to derive important conclusions about their potential. GRM will be also applied on the design of the structures tested in the BSC, as well as to R/FRC structures of large scale and of high potential use of FRC.

Another important objective of the *fib* WP2.4.1 is the formation of a COST initiative that helps to bring more members for the activities of this group, in order to help the development of a web-based application including a database with comprehensive, complete and reliable experimental tests of FRC structures, numerical simulations with FEM-based models and analysis of their predictive performance. The final aim is to have a web tool that can be used with machine learning (ML) algorithms for assisting in the determination of the most suited values of the FEM-based models on a reliable, safe, and economic design practice for taking advantage of fibre reinforcement for more sustainable built environment.

#### **4 – CONCLUSIONS**

The present paper describes the past, ongoing, and planned future initiatives of the *fib* WP 2.4.1 technical committee, which is dedicated to the design methodologies of fibre reinforced concrete (FRC) structures using software based on the finite element method. Focus was done on the blind simulation competitions (BSC) already executed, ongoing and planned for close future, and on the objectives behind these BSC. The final purpose of *fib* WP 2.4.1 is to derive knowledge for the development of innovative construction system by using FEM-based software that explores the potentialities of fibre reinforcement towards a more sustainable built environment.

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