



EPE '99 in Lausanne is over now. According to the answers of the evaluations forms, it was considered as a success. Indeed, the organisation staff enjoyed preparing and participating to this event. They expressed only one regret : it was finished too quickly and they think that with all the preparatory work made and the acquired experience, only one conference is frustrating. So they would be ready to start a new one !

As it was the case for EPE Lausanne, there always is a technical university backing up the EPE's organising committee. Our first preoccupation remains education of engineers. In this field, clouds appear in the power electronics domain and in a more general way, in electrotechnics. The number of students have dramatically reduced these last 6 years. They still are many students and future engineers in electric techniques, but increasingly centered on communication systems, computer science, microcontrollers or, in a word, on information.

Power systems are considered as traditional or worse, as out-of-date. But a technical system must evolve or then will disappear. This is what happened to steam engines, replaced by diesel or electrical locomotives. Power electronics, electric drives, electrical energy systems evolve and require research, development and innovation. Even if this is often under the pressure created by the developments in the other technologies such as microprocessors, communication systems, materials, the components of electrotechnics - mainly power and industrial electronics, electric drives - will become sooner or later the weakest point of the systems and thus must necessarily evolve in parallel with any new other technology.

The recent storm which occurred in Western Europe (mainly in France, Switzerland and Germany) showed the importance of the electrical energy in the everyday life. Without it, the most significant functions such as light, heating, transport, food conditioning and even cow milking cease ! Our electrical energy network, including production, distribution and utilisation must still be improved by using new technologies. An open electricity market is useless if the distribution network is weak. The priority thus should remain in the field of the infrastructure and reliability.

Currently, companies in the field of electrotechnics, including all the aspects from industrial electronics to motors, encounter more and more difficulties to hire young engineers. Per one engineer trained at EPFL in this field, we receive at least five offers for a job. Since a decade, due to certain fashion effects, trained engineers in our domains are under the limit level.

One of the goals of an association such as EPE is also to inform its members of the situation and, with them, to transmit this message to the students at the age of choosing their engineering specialisation.

Because power electronics and electrotechnics on the whole have still a bright future.

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