

EPE/PEMC: steps for a future in Power Electronics in Europe

Starting early in the sixties, Power Electronics gained rapidly an enormous importance in industry for electrical energy applications due to the development of the power semiconductors and mainly of the diodes and the thyristors. Main fields were the controlled rectifiers for the steel industry and the choppers for railway traction, i.e. respectively the fields of natural commutation and forced commutation.

As a consequence, numerous conferences were organised. For this reason, the feeling grew around the necessity of a concentration of efforts and a reduction of the number of small international conferences in view to reduce the waste of time connected to the repetitions of the same messages.

A group of experts in the field met several times early in the eighties (in Toulouse on the occasion of the second CONUMEL conference, in Darmstadt and Lausanne on the occasion of IFAC-conferences) and finally the first EPE conference was created in september 1985 in Brussels. The correctness of the views was confirmed by the presence of 650 attendees. EPE events that followed are well-known with Grenoble in 1987, Aachen in 1989, Florence in 1991, Brighton in 1993 and Sevilla in 1995. The next EPE conference is now launched and will take place in Trondheim (Norway) in September 1997.

Three years after the first EPE conference, an EPE Association was created to strengthen the link between the conference attendees and as a first attempt towards the creation of a European Power Electronics Society. To support this construction it was decided in Florence to publish a quarterly EPE Journal which quality is nowadays everywhere recognised.

The EPE Association is the owner and is running the EPE conference through an agreement with the local organiser.

An important creation of the EPE conference has been the introduction of extended poster sessions, the oral sessions being more and more devoted to papers with major industrial or theoretical contents read by authors with recognised lecturing qualities. High quality tutorials on various topics belong also to the regular activities.

The structure of the EPE Association is quite simple. A general assembly of coopted members is the owner of the power. It delegates its duties to an Executive Council composed of maximum fifteen members, 50% of them belonging necessarily to the industry. The President, the Vice-Presidents and the officers (Secretary and Treasurer) are running the daily tasks with the help of the secretariat hosted by the Belgian Royal Society of Electrical Engineers (SRBE - KBVE) in Brussels.

The EPE conference has a general character and is covering practically all the fields of Power Electronics and Applications.

More specialised activities are developed by specialised groups, built inside the Association. These groups are called Chapters and those working presently are respectively specialised in Components, Electrical Machines and Drives, Control and Electric and Hybrid vehicles.

Contacts and contracts are developed with the Commission of the European Union. An example of this is the action in the framework of the Human Capital Mobility and Training and Mobility of Researchers Programmes.

The EPE conference and association is not a closed club. The acting forces are regularly renewed and the balance between industry and university is a permanent objective.

As an open forum, EPE is looking for the broadest European audience and is discussing links with EUREL, the European Association of National Electrical Engineering Societies to aim to create a transnational Society of Power Electronics and Drives with strong links with the National Societies as this is a characteristic of Europe.

Looking to the Central and Eastern European Countries, EPE has offered a joint venture on the occasion of the venue of PEMC in Warsaw in 1994. This offer is clearly stated in the form of an effective merge creating in this way an opportunity for a biennial event in the Central and Eastern European countries alternating with the regular EPE-event in the frame of the European Union. Later evolutions will still be possible and are welcome.

A main concern in this respect could be the multiplication of small conferences everywhere and more particularly in Central and Eastern European Countries. This is naturally counterproductive and the proposed merge should lead to a more efficient and well-organised exchange of information.

EPE declares itself fully ready to support actions in the stated direction, but is clearly not willing to support any small event which clearly goes upstream the necessity of concentration of efforts in well-structured activities.

Our support to the PEMC organisation is the testimony of our offer. We wish PEMC all the best in the future and formulate once more the proposal of a merge of efforts inside Europe and of the creation in the form of a learned society, of the necessary link between all European countries.

Prof. P. Ferraris
President of EPE Association

G. Maggetto
Editor in Chief

*Speech of Prof. G. Maggetto at
the PEMC opening session*

