

Exchanging electrical application experience

The European conference on electrical application experience in the chemical industry

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Current tendencies

The ever faster advances in international integration of industries and companies creates the need for exchanging knowledge. The number of industry-related international conferences has thus increased dramatically in recent years. Nationally, the exchange of experience on the subject of 'electrical applications in the chemical industry' in Germany can look back on a tradition of decades. Important examples are the 'Process Control Engineering Interest Group for the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Industries' (NAMUR), 'The Federation of Industrial Energy and Power Producers' (VIK) and the VDI/VDE Society for Measurement and Automation Technology' (GMA). In

addition, the infrastructure offers technical people academic and manufacturer seminars, plus – in the explosion protection sector – the BAM/PTB colloquium, as options for the exchange of experience and further education.

Starting from the national infrastructure, the intention now is – in view of the increasingly harmonized standards and regulations covering specifically electrical, electronic and communication equipment and related engineering – to establish an European forum. This forum will be primarily for technical people working in electrical and instrumentation technology. The concept of a 'European Conference for Electrical and Instrumentation Application Experience in the Petroleum and Chem-

ical Industry' can also take account of the weak points of the present German infrastructure and so bring about an improvement in the current situation.

Similar conferences

The USA has, for many decades, had the PCIC-Conference of the Petroleum and Chemistry Industry Committee (PCIC) of the Industrial Applications Society (IAS) in the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).

The IEEE – as mirror organisation to the VDE in Germany – is recording a steady growth of members internationally and strives for strategic partnerships in many countries. Close cooperation with PCIC North America without

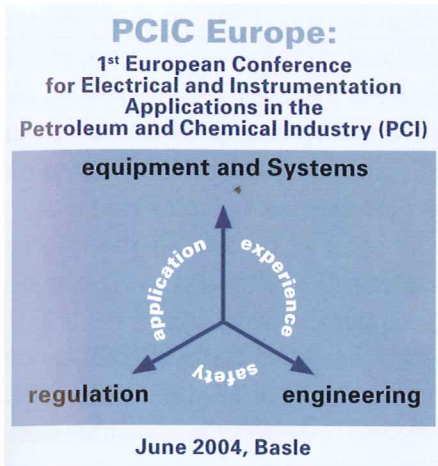


Figure 2: PCIC Europe: conference announcement

engaging in formal membership of the IEEE appears sensible, since international developments call for strategic partnerships and the knowledge acquired there for building an IEEE-independent 'PCIC Europe' is very helpful.

The Concept

Currently there are a large number of events in Germany enabling technical experts to exchange experience on a variety of different subjects. The combination of as many topics as possible in one conference should lead to an increase in effectiveness. This will also increase the motivation of decision-makers in the chemical industry⁷ to send the technical people employed in their own company to an event that is practice-based. During the two-to three-day conference, both technical problems and solutions will be presented, as well as topics relating to law and standardization. The increasing merging process in the industry, with simultaneously increasing cost pressures in system engineering and on installation and maintenance expenditure, also lead to the desire for an extensive exchange of experience. The chemical plant operators already work in part to engineering and maintenance standards that are applicable worldwide, with the aim of having the widest possible standardization. The current stage of conference planning indicates that the arrangement of topics will essentially follow that of the NAMUR structure:

- Planning and erection
- Systems for process control technology
- Process measurement technology
- Energy technology
- Safety technology
- Maintenance.

Additionally, the following topics should be offered:

- EU directives
- National regulations
- Standards and standardization.

The aim of the conference should be to gather application experience on 'Products, Equipment and Systems', 'Engineering and Operation of a Plant' and 'Standards and Regulations'. Thus it can be expected that, over time, the conference will develop into an important point of reference for technical experts from operators, manufacturers, standards committees and governmental institutions. The foundation for this is the creation of a 'PCIC Europe' which is taking over responsibility for content and implementation. To this end, representatives from the German institutions NAMUR, GMA, ZVEI and DKE and the Basel Chemical Industry (BCI) have already met. The immediate object is to set up – via the respective European organizations (EUREL, ORGALIME, EU Commission, CENELEC, ExNB Group etc.) – a committee of leading European representatives as 'PCIC Europe'.

Running the conference

A timeframe has already been fixed for preparations relating to the first conference in June 2004 in Basel (Switzerland), as follows:

- March 2002 – first home page
- October 2002 – appointment of preparation group and personnel as PCIC Europe
- March 2003 – call for papers
- September 2003 – fixing of programme
- October 2003 – dispatch of programme, acceptance of bookings.

Current planning assumes that a group of technical experts will be nominated for each topic to review and assess the conference papers received. 'PCIC Europe' will decide on the final programme.

The conference should take place at two-year intervals in locations where the chemical industry has a strong presence. Organizational preparation and the financial risk will be taken over by the GMA, who already have the relevant experience. The conference is not commercial – no sales presentations may be given as conference papers. The papers must be of general interest and present a significant advance in solving the everyday problems of technical people. Manufacturers can set up hospitality suites in the conference centre – following the American model – in order to pursue their business interests. There is of course a social supporting programme for the evenings and during the day for accompanying participants. The conference papers will be distributed in printed version and on CD-ROM.

Developing the idea of the PCIC further

There is a great need worldwide for similar events that must each be linked with markets and local institutions and associations. The idea of the PCIC, and the conferences arranged by them, can concentrate the interest of technical people in the chemical industry and establish a forum for further development of electrical and instrumentation technology. By including the interests of the IEEE-PCIC and other already existing international links to technical people, there is a realistic chance of establishing other PCICs with the aim of forming a global network of technical people able to exchange information and support.