

On the Beginnings of the European Conferences on Non-destructive Testing

Hermann-Josef Kopineck, Dortmund *

Introduction

It was twenty-five years ago that the first European Conference for Non-destructive Testing - ECNDT - was held.

How it all came about: Inspired by an invitation to the Pan-Pacific Conference 1976, organised by the Pacific rim nations, I suggested to introduce an adequate conference also in Europe.

The DGZfP Board colleagues, Eberhard Mundry and Helmut Schaper agreed, and we decided on the dates of 24 to 26 April 1978. The annual meeting of the DGZfP was connected with the international conference, in order to secure many papers and participants from the Federal Republic of Germany.

The choice of venues was Mainz because of the good accessibility and also because the Mainz Rheingold-Halle (Picture 1) offered a generous congress centre with a pertaining hotel.

After the DGZfP Council had also agreed, the proposal was put to the World Conference for Non-destructive Testing (WCNDT) in Cannes and the International Committee for Non-destructive Testing (ICNDT), and it was accepted thanks to the support of the many European ICNDT members. It was agreed that the European conferences would always be held between the world conferences, being staged every four years. This rule applies to this very day.

1st ECNDT in Mainz 1978

Following the return from Cannes, we informed the presidents of the European NDT societies and asked them and their members for participation. Subsequently, we received many registrations for papers, of which most were accepted.

This great response was probably also due to the fact that German, English and French simultaneous interpreting could be offered also for the parallel sessions, thanks to the financial support both of the German Federal Ministry for Research and Technology (BMFT) as well as the European Commission.



Picture 3: Handing over the "Certificate of Distinction" to Dr Otto Vaupel. F.l.t.r.: Otto Vaupel, Herman-Josef Kopineck and D. Fifer

* Prof Hermann-Josef Kopineck was DGZfP Chairman from 1974 to 1983

Einladung/Programm		Mainz in Numbers	
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Zerstörungsfreie Prüfung e.V.		Participating societies/countries	27
Vortragstagung und Ausstellung Zerstörungsfreie Materialprüfung		Conference participants	982
Conference and Exhibition on Non-Destructive Testing		Exhibition visitors only	334
Conference et Exposition sur les Essais Non-destructifs		Participants in the ladies programme	120
ZFP NDT END		Total number of people	1,436
Mainz 1978 24., 25. und 26. April Rheingoldhalle		Exhibitors	42
Invitation/Programme		from abroad	12
		Number of countries involved	9
		Papers	92
		from abroad	33

Picture 2: 1st ECNDT 1978

It said in the preface of the programme, "the conference may serve as a beginning for further European NDT activities."



Picture 1: The Rheingold-Halle in Mainz

The accompanying exhibition of testing equipment also met with great interest. Picture 2 shows a summary of the paper and participant numbers. The German research Minister, Volker Hauff, had taken over the patronage of the conference.

Otto Vaupel (FRG) and George Homez (Belgium) were awarded a "Certificate of Distinction" by the ICNDT, at the proposal of Rudi Schumacher and myself (we were the two acting German ICNDT members), to honour their services in the organisation of the 1st NDT World Conference in Brussels in 1955. As neither could take part in the World Conference in Melbourne in 1979, they were awarded the certificates in Mainz.

On behalf of the ICNDT, D. Fifer, deputy of the Australian NDT President, delivered a moving speech and handed over the certificates to the two gentlemen, who had contributed greatly to global NDT understanding (Picture 3).

In parallel to the conference sessions, there was a comprehensive ladies and fringe programme, for instance, an outing to the old part of town and to the Gutenberg Museum.

Furthermore, there was a trip to the Eifel region, north of Mainz, with a visit to the Centre of Semi-precious Stone Production of Idar-Oberstein.

The Government of the Federal State of Rhineland Palatinate had extended an invitation for an evening reception, which was popular especially with the foreign guests.

Finally, the participants and their ladies were invited to the Electoral Palace for a festive evening. This evening was crowned by the 'Ladies Address' delivered by Prof Paul De Meester, who praised the charming ladies in an impressive manner, starting in German, then changing to French or English and off and on with a Flemish bon mot from his hometown of Leuven.

It has to be added, for the sake of completeness, that Mainz 1978 was not the first European meeting of NDT experts, as the Gevaert company had decided to conduct an

international symposium for industrial radiography in Mortsel, sparked by the 1st World Conference in Brussels in 1955. This first event was followed by further such meetings. The sixth and last took place in 1974. George Homez chaired these symposia as their President, in which experts from Western Europe and the United States participated.

Gaevert ended their string of meetings as these subjects were then to be taken over within the framework of the European conferences.

2nd ECNDT in Vienna 1981

Already in Mainz, the Austrian NDT working group, belonging to the "Eisenhütte Österreich" association, had extended the invitation for the 2nd ECNDT to be held in Vienna from 14 to 16 September 1981. The Conference Chairman, Eckehard Kariner, Vice President, Alfred Silber, and many members of their staff organised this conference, which was held at the splendid venue of the Vienna Hofburg Palace, under the patronage of the Federal President of the Republic of Austria.

The general subject of the conference was 'New developments and special procedures of NDT, physical, technological and economic limits'. Papers had been registered by 200 experts, of which 150 were accepted. Again, the organisers had been able to provide simultaneous translation in German, English and French for all papers in two parallel sessions. At the invitation of E. Krainer, I delivered greetings as President of the 1st ECNDT. Some figures in Picture 4 show the great response the Vienna conference met with.

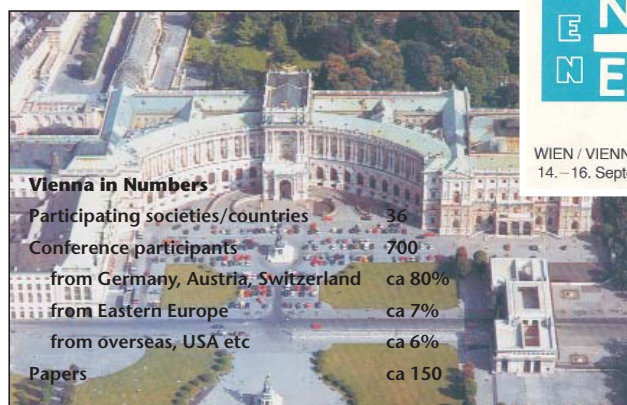
All papers suited the subject of the conference well. For instance, there were many reports on the classic NDT methods, supplemented by gamma and neutron radiography, noise emission and radiographic stress measurements,

thermography and photo-acoustic analysis. The subject of training NDT personnel was also highlighted in some of the papers.

Every one of the three conference days started with a keynote lecture, for which European experts had been invited, for instance, Messrs Dubresin from Paris, Mundy from Berlin as well as Birkbeck, Farley and Wise from the UK.

The fringe and ladies programme again took an important place also in the hospitable city of Vienna. It is worth mentioning the welcome cocktails at the Vienna Hofburg and the new wine sampling evening in the well-known Vienna suburb of Grinzing.

The announcement of a 3rd European



Picture 4: 2nd ECNDT in Vienna 1981

NDT conference in Florence from 15 to 18 October 1984 by the President of the Italian NDT society (AIPnD), G. Nardoni, was received with great applause.

3rd ECNDT in Florence 1984

The opening session took place at the Palazzo dei Congressi. The AIPnD President, Giuseppe Nardoni, often greeted as 'Caro Amigo Seppi' by friendly colleagues, put in the main work for this conference together with his staff, especially Prof Tonolini. He welcomed the many participants and guests, and above all the guests of honour.

After that the two presidents of the preceding conferences, Mr Krainer and myself were asked to deliver a welcoming address. Paul Höller also granted the request of a short address and talked of the research and development in NDT and the focus of his institute in Saarbrücken. Then there was Mr Klyuev from Moscow who spoke about special activities and problems of NDT in the Soviet Union. Some figures of the conference have been put together on Picture 5.

Most papers once more concerned the classic NDT methods, including such with an emphasis on special applications, for instance, the steel industry, transport technology, aeronautics, welding technology, safety problems and economic issues, material properties, off-shore technology and also the subjects of training and qualification of NDT personnel.

Apart from the normal conference sessions, there were many special meetings, for instance, that of the presidents of the European NDT societies. At one of these meetings, the presidents constituted themselves as the 'European Council for NDT', abbreviated ECNDT, at the suggestion of G. Nardoni. Furthermore, efforts aimed at the harmonisation of training of NDT personnel could be agreed there.

The European-wide importance of the conference also becomes clear when one takes a look at the split of the speakers: there were roughly the same number from Italy and the Federal Republic of Germany, some 21%, from France ca 12%, from the UK ca 8%, and approx. 7% from the Soviet Union.

There were 58 companies that presented their devices at a large exhibition. 500 people came in addition, only to visit this exhibition, which bears testimony to its great significance for Italian industry.

Apart from experts from the European societies, there were visitors and speakers from the USA, Japan, Canada and Taiwan. Florence offered many opportunities for the extensive ladies and fringe programme. For instance, the city hosted a reception at the Old Town Hall, the Palazzo Vecchi. The prize awarding ceremony took place at the Church of Santa Croce (Picture 6) accompanied by a musical pro-



Picture 5: 3rd ECNDT in Florence 1984



Picture 6: The Church of Santa Croce

gramme, for instance, the organ-trumpet concert of Camille Saint Saëns, which contains the well-known musical accompaniment to the Eurovision transmissions on TV, which once more underlined the European nature of the conference.

President Nardoni announced in his address that F. Tonolini would receive the Maximilian Kolbe Prize (international journalism prize) for his contribution in designing the Italian NDT journal 'Il Giornale delle Prove non Distruttive'. Finally, an old Tuscan Medici villa had been chosen for a ceremonious banquet.

The trips in the evening hours to the many rustic restaurants offered a good opportunity of deepening personal acquaintances and friendships.

The DGZfP had organised a group trip for the German participants, in which many members participated.

4th ECNDT in London 1987

The 4th European NDT conference was held in London from 13 to 17 September 1987. It was staged under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh at the new Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre (Picture 7). The participants were welcomed both by the President of the BINDT, G. Oates, as well as by the Lord Mayor.

As a sign of his office, G. Oates, as the new ECNDT President, received a silver medal designed by Giuseppe Nardoni, into which were engraved the silhouettes of the three Graces from the painting 'Prima Vera' by Botticelli and the name of the Presidents of the previous European NDT conferences. Oates promised to pass on the medal after the conference in London.

According to the list of participants, some 700 NDT experts from 36 countries, from more or less all European NDT societies, had registered. Furthermore, 115 people participated only in the ladies and fringe programme.

Special overview papers, which were particularly well frequented, focused on selected topics. For instance, Viktor Haul spoke about 'Methods for determining internal stress, state-of-the-art and development trends', and Rudolf Trumpfheller spoke on the 'Application of NDT for reliability tests of pressure parts in nuclear power plants', and Paul Höller addressed the participants on the topic of 'Research and development work at the Fraunhofer Institute for NDT'. Furthermore, members of the company British Gas spoke about their impressive underwater inspections of pipelines and construction elements, just as Mike Farley, Babcock Energy Ltd., who addressed the participants on his ultrasound inspections of reactor pressure vessels during their production. Paul de Meester from Leuven, Belgium, described the development of NDT technology of composite materials as new materials to be used in aircraft construction. Picture 8 shows a few numbers from London.

The conference papers were delivered in several parallel sessions with translation into the languages German and French, as well as into Italian and Spanish, in part.



Picture 7: Elisabeth II Conference Centre in London

4th European Conference on Non-Destructive Testing	
PATRON: HRH Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh KG KT	
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre London 13-18 September 1987	
London in numbers	
Participating societies/countries	36
Conference participants	700
Industrial exhibition (exhibitors)	75
Number of papers	150

Picture 8: ECNDT 1987 in London

The ladies and fringe programme was very well organised. In the church of St. Martin in the Fields (Picture 9), there was an outstanding concert, for which unfortunately only 150 tickets were available. On the last evening, there was a grand banquet held at the Guildhall, chaired by President Oates. His official welcome was followed by responses of the guests, for instance, by the DGZfP Chairman Klaus Engelkraut and G. Nardoni from Italy.



Picture 9: Saint Martin in the Fields

The traditional London rain had been cancelled for the days of the conference, so that the umbrellas brought along were rendered unnecessary.

At a meeting of the ECNDT, a first draft of statutes and articles was submitted, on which a vote was only to be taken later.

The Yugoslav NDT President, Kovacevic, finally extended the invitation for the 5th European conference to be staged in Sarajevo in 1991.

5th to 8th ECNDT 1991 - 2002

The 5th conference had to be cancelled due to the outbreak of war in the former Yugoslavia.

The resulting gap in European cooperation was bridged by some extraordinary meetings of the European Council. So it was fortunate that the French colleagues of Cofrend took the initiative under the leadership of their President, Roger Roche, and extended the invitation for the 6th ECNDT to be held in Nice from 24 to 28 October 1994 (Picture 10).

Following the return from the World Conference in Sao Paolo in 1992, I was unfortunately hit by a severe sickness. Thus, I was neither able to travel to Nice nor to the subsequent conferences in Copenhagen and Barcelona.

That is the reason why I have to base my remarks on these conferences on written and oral reports. Nice was, above all, the song of praise for the French skill to stage important ceremonies so ex-



Picture 10: Acropolis conference hotel in Nice



Picture 11: Historical Town Hall Copenhagen

cellently that they are turned into a resounding success, eg the opening event or the gala dinner. The meetings of the European Council for NDT were also held, at which

joint activities were decided, for instance, a basic agreement on the mutual recognition of the certification systems of all European NDT societies.

Bjarne Larsen, President of the Danish NDT society, extended the invitation, at the end of the conference, for the 7th ECNDT to be held in Copenhagen, with the witty remark that he could not promise that it would turn out better than in Nice but in any case, it would be more 'Danish'!

The 7th ECNDT was held in Copenhagen from 26 to 29 November 1998, at the Radisson SAS Falconer Center. This conference, too, was well frequented with more than 1,000 participants.

President Larsen and an official representative of the Danish Office for the Environment and Energy welcomed the participants at the opening ceremony. Subsequently, Mr Dijkstren from the Dutch RTD presented a paper on the situation of NDT in industry as a necessary instrument for production quality.

Vladimir Husarek from Paris had taken over the task of handing over honorary prizes to deserving European NDT experts on behalf of the Organising Committee. The prizes went to Prof Ermikov from Russia for his echo amplitude calculations in various reflectors, to Peter Krebs, Chairman by Seniority of the Swiss NDT society, for his work in personnel certification and to M. Lund, from Denmark, for his development work on automatic testing systems.

The topic of 'Qualification and certification of NDT personnel' was at the centre of the conference in Copenhagen. 12 papers were dedicated to this issue alone.

The international harmonisation of testing personnel training - even though the ICNDT decided on a worldwide accepted agreement at the WCNDT in Las Vegas - is still an open problem that should now be resolved once and for all.

The previous European Council for NDT (ECNDT), set up the new organisation of the European Federation for NDT (EFNDT).

The ladies and fringe programme comprised, for instance, a reception at the historical Town Hall of Copenhagen (Picture 11) and a gala evening at the conference centre. There were also several company



Picture 12: Palais de Congressos di Barcelona

receptions, for instance, by AGFA at the Tivoli and by KO-DAK at the Old Bourse.

At the end of the conference, Emilio Romero extended the invitation for the next European NDT conference to be held in Barcelona, following a respective EFNDT decision.

The 8th ECNDT was opened by the President of the Spanish NDT society, in the presence of the Lord Mayor of the city, at the Palais de Congressos di Barcelona (Picture 12) on 18 June 2002. Following the speech delivered by E. Romero, ICNDT President Nardoni also welcomed the participants.

ECNDT President Roger Roche was able to hand over the EFNDT Award 2002, posthumously to the late former DGZfP Chairman Dierk Schnitger, who had died unfortunately in 1999, for his untiring work for international cooperation and the association of European NDT societies in the EFNDT. President Jaroslav Obarz from the Czech Republic was honoured with the Award for his continuous work for NDT in Europe. On 19 June, a gala dinner was held at the Old Palais with typical Spanish dishes and exclusive wines.

Altogether 1,300 participants were registered in Barcelona, including 400 exhibitors. At the end, Douglas Marshall of the Canadian NDT society extended the invitation for the 16th World Conference for NDT, to be staged in Montreal in 2004. Subsequently, Dr Link was able to extend his invitation on behalf of the DGZfP for the 9th European conference to be held in Berlin in 2006.

Thus, the end of this report is reached, in which the author was able to chart the development (Picture 13) from the beginning of European cooperation with the

1st ECNDT in Mainz, 1978, right up to the coming 9th ECNDT in Berlin, in 2006 (Picture 14).

It remains to be wished that after Berlin 2006, there will be a further development of the European NDT conferences, which might find another climax in the year 2028 (maybe in Mainz? once more) with the 50-year golden anniversary.

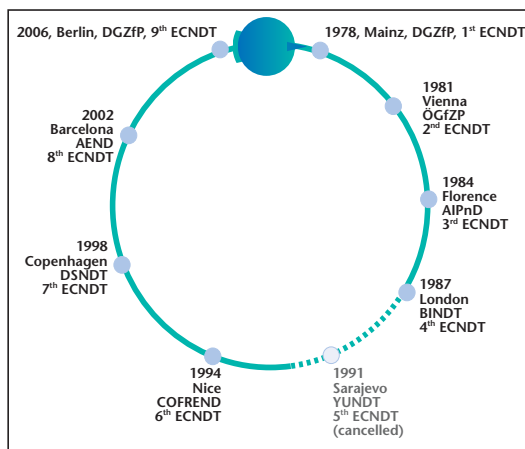
Thanks

I was able to avail of a lot of help in compiling the documents, for instance, my own historical records as well as the archives at the DGZfP offices, well maintained by Wolfgang Bock. He was able to help me with many documents such as pictures, reports and numbers. After he left, Ute Salac thankfully took over this supporting job.

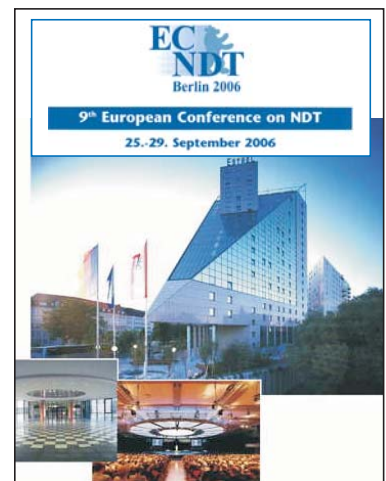
Gerhard Krüger informed me about the Gevaert seminars and Ing. G. Aufricht sent me pictures from Vienna.

The slides were prepared by the staff at the DGZfP offices.

Just as in the past Board years, I was able to feel like in one big family.



Picture 13: 'Time Cycle' of the European NDT conferences



Picture 14: The DGZfP will stage the 9th ECNDT in Berlin, in 2006