Qualification and certification of NDT personnel in the Czech Republic
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Abstract
APC - Association for Personnel Certification as the national certification body shall ensure the qualification and certification of NDT methods in three levels. APC was founded in 1995 and has historically followed the national certification system in the former Czechoslovakia, which was established in 1966. APC is accredited by a national accreditation body (CIA) by the standard EN ISO / IEC 17024. Within APC system are included the training and test centers, where operates a highly qualified staff that provide a high level of qualification. In the Czech Republic there are currently on the market in this field for several certification bodies. APC has a sophisticated system based on their own know-how, modern means of communication and database management of certified people. APC also cooperates with German certification body SECTOR Cert and last but not least, with ČNDT. APC has all the prerequisites for maintaining and further developing the qualification and certification of NDT personnel in the Czech Republic.

Keywords: NDT-wide, personnel training and certification, Qualification, personnel certification, accreditation, NDT methods, cooperation, implementation of NDT qualifying standards

The Association for Personnel Certification (APC) was founded in 1995 as an association of legal entities with an aim to provide its members with personnel certification especially in the field of NDT. APC thus follows the tradition of the nationwide Crack Detection System of the Czech Republic (the CDS), which was established based on the requirements of the Government in 1966. Later, APC expanded the personnel certification activities by including branches related to NDT, especially the engineering and electro-technical industry (such as corrosion and corrosion protection or heat treatment of metals, etc.)

At present, APC brings together more than 40 members from major industrial companies. APC is accredited by the Czech Accreditation Institute (CAI) according to the standard EN ISO/IEC 17024. The scope of the accreditation can be found on the association's website www.apccz.cz. APC is also a recognized institution for granting permissions according to EU Directive No. 97/23/EC. Non-destructive tests of permanent joints in pressure equipment and assemblies must be carried out by appropriately qualified personnel. The approval of NDT personnel is governed by the provisions of Government Decree no. 26/2003 Coll., as amended by Government Regulation no. 621/2004 Coll. For pressure equipment of categories III and IV, the NDT personnel must be approved by a "Recognized Third Party organization" (RTPO) recognized in accordance with §6c of the Government Regulation by the Member State and in accordance with Art. 3.1 of Annex 1 of Directive 97/23/EC. APC is authorized by the Office for Standards, Metrology and Testing (ÚNMZ) and simultaneously notified by the European Commission Directorate-General for Enterprise.

In the area of personnel education and obtaining the necessary qualifications, there are basically three main directions in the Czech Republic: (a) the National System of Qualifications and Occupations, (b) a system of independent education and training providers and (c) personnel certification. Personnel certification differs from the previous two basic educational systems especially by being able to demonstrate the practical competence of personnel in the areas for which they hold valid certification. The National System of Qualifications and Occupations is being newly built with regard to the developing needs of various industries and currently also builds upon the requirements of the standards for personnel certification.

The general trend of the EU and the Czech Republic is to consolidate the qualification requirements in various professions, which vary not only between countries but also within countries. The people and entities engaged in crack detection in the Czech Republic tried to
go in a similar direction by adopting the functional models of economically advanced countries in the field of NDT. The strategic aim was to bring together the two main leaders in the field of NDT, associating the business and academic community: ČNDT (Czech Society for Non-Destructive Testing) and APC (Association for Personnel Certification). The merger of these two main representatives of NDT in the Czech Republic – ČNDT, which organizes a successful annual conference on NDT, and APC, which is the national representative for the qualifications and certification of NDT personnel in the country, would give rise to a single authority that would protect and promote the common interests of the Czech Republic in this area.

APC pursued the merger for two years. The strategy of merging the two partners was introduced at the Congress of ČNDT in 2012. At this Congress, the stakeholders appointed the Presidium of the ČNDT with the task to implements this project. However, individual interests of some profitable companies within the competitive struggle had a significant impact on the suspension of the project on the part of ČNDT. Thus, APC and ČNDT will continue to be independent associations. ČNDT is currently at a crossroads of strategic decisions that will affect the future development of NDT in the country.

APC has been, just like ČNDT, exposed to competitive pressure from among its own members, because the NDT market has been saturated since approx. 2003. At present, the companies are engaged in fighting over the existing clients. However, the overall situation in the Czech Republic is negatively affected by the political environment and the supervisory government organizations in the Czech Republic, including the interests of lobbying companies that are closely intertwined with the supervisory governmental authorities. Subsequently, this negative influence has direct impact on the different levels of qualifications and certifications in NDT in the country.

The members of the association made it clear at the XX. General Meeting (AGM) of APC that they refuse the negative attitudes of other members directed against APC (which ČNDT is also a member of) and want to continue as an independent association in the field of NDT personnel certification and related areas. From this perspective, this General Meeting of APC was groundbreaking compared to the events of the last few years. APC members remain important providers of NDT in the Czech Republic. A total of 16 designated representatives from among major companies and academic sector stood for election as members of the APC Board of Directors. The elected members of the APC Board of Directors are Ing. Martin Hampejs, Ing. Jana Veselá, Ph.D., Ing. Vladislava Sekerášová, Josef Holec, Ing. Jan Vít, Ph.D., Doc. Ing. Pavel Mazal, CSc. and Ing. Miloslav Procházka.

APC is fully aware that the competence of certified persons, and in particular inspection and NDT personnel, lies in their responsibility for quality control, safety and serviceability of products, production equipment and facilities. It is not possible within the competitive struggle to reduce the level of qualifications at the expense of inspection activities, especially in relation to the regulated sphere, where the safety of the inspected manufacturing facilities and units implemented into operation must be fully guaranteed.

Noteworthy historical milestones:

- 1966 –Government Resolution issued by Directive No. CDS 1/1966 (the so-called National Crack Detection System) dated 1.2.1966 "Improving the skills of workers in NDT departments in factories" and the introduction of a three-step qualification system for NDT personnel; the amendment of this Directive was implemented by issuing the Directive No. 2/1973 and No. 3/1981 - SVÚM (National Laboratory of the Czech Republic)
• 1991– the establishment of an independent department for qualification and certification of NDT personnel within SVÚM - CSNZ (NDT Certification Centre); Directive No. 1992 amended in 1993

• 1995 – establishment of the "Association for the Certification of NDT personnel" as an association of legal entities

• 1996 – name changed to the "Association for Personnel Certification" (APC) focused on the certification of technical personnel

• 1998 – First accreditation by the CAI Institute – the KCS 201 APC qualification and certification system (workers engaged in specific NDT activities and related disciplines) and KCS 301 APC (NDT workers, the national APC system developed from the CDS system)

• 1998 – accreditation of the KCS 101 APC - EN 473 qualification and certification system by DAR – TGA

• 1999 – accreditation of the KCS 101 – EN 473 qualification and certification system by CAI.

• 2001 – accreditation of the KCS 501 APC qualification and certification system (workers in metrology) by CAI, as the first system outside the NDT

• 2002 – EF NDT Multilateral Recognition Agreement (MRA)


• 2002 – accreditation of KCS 401 APC (workers in the field of corrosion and corrosion protection), KCS 402 APC (workers in the field of heat treatment of metals) a KCS 602 APC (workers in the field of audit activities) by CAI.

• 2003 – notification of APC in Brussels under the Directive No. 97/23/EC (PED)

• 2011 – introduction of new NDT methods (AT and FT) and accreditation by CAI.

• 2012 – replacement of EN 473 with standard No. EN ISO 9712

As the national representative for the qualification and certification of NDT personnel in the Czech Republic, APC together with its key partners and representatives of technical expertise, such as Dekra CZ a.s., Škoda JS a.s., ZVVZ MACHINERY a.s., ČEZ a.s., ČD a.s. or Sector Cert GmbH and others (www.apccz.cz), wants to maintain a strong partnership in this area, whose main mission is the uniformity and high level of technical education.