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Improving Power Quality to save Europe billions of euro

The European Copper Institute has been invited by the European Commission to conduct its new education programme on Power Quality. This 3 million euro project, funded over three years by the LEONARDO programme, will develop and implement a range of training programmes, aimed at reducing Power Quality (PQ) problems.

ECI and its 11 partners will develop practical solutions to PQ problems, that currently cost European business over 10 billion euro per year. In a study conducted by ECI in 2000, 50% of buildings in Germany were found to suffer from data loss in IT equipment, network congestion, computer lockups, etc. In a worst case scenario, these shortcomings can lead directly to breaks in the chain of production and loss of revenue.

These problems are relatively new. 'Power quality analysis, diagnosis and solutions have been included in the electrical engineering curriculum since the mid 90's', says Prof. Ronnie Belmans, Head of the Electrical Engineering Department at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. 'As a result, many generations of engineers have not been trained for these topics, while being confronted with them on a daily basis', continues Belmans.

That's why this project will provide continuing education as a main solution. It started with a kick-off meeting in Brussels on April 9th and 10th with the participation of prominent engineers from 4 academic and polytechnic institutes and specialists from the Copper Development Associations of Benelux, Germany, Italy, Poland and UK.

The major objective of this two-day meeting was to develop a methodology aimed at training the main actors in the building and construction sector to provide better Power Quality installations. As a result, special attention will be given to building designers, whose actions will increase electrical reliability, improve the quality of the working environment and save billions of euro. The programme will include a particularly ambitious plan of Internet e-learning and a wide-ranging communication & dissemination campaign.

'European standards lag in modern installation practice in the United States and UK', according to Prof Markiewicz of Technical University Wroclaw. 'PQ-standards do exist, but in many countries they are not obligatory or they are interpreted differently by energy users and suppliers. Urgent action is needed, which we will now be able to start.'

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