

Ricky's Afterthought:

The uncertainty of Brexit

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The decision to leave the EU was a momentous one given that it was totally unexpected. Whether after the negotiations it will be a hard or a soft Brexit, it will have far reaching consequences for the UK and Europe alike.

A recent report compiled by the Royal Academy of Engineering in the UK, entitled, 'Engineering a future outside the EU', has consulted widely industrialists and academics and gives a summary of the main points that arise from the decision to leave the EU. Of course, article 50 has not been triggered as yet, expected to do so in March 2017, and it will take at least two years of close negotiations to leave the EU, nevertheless the uncertainty over what sort of relationship will exit post-2019 accentuates the fears of most engineers and scientists in the UK. The three main points raised in the report are: access to skilled workers and academics, access to markets and foreign investment, and compliance with and ability to influence European standards and legislations that affect engineering companies.

The UK government promised to switch funds to R&D to compensate for the fact that academics post-2019 will not be able to participate in EU funded projects. Incidentally, at present, 17% of the University of Cambridge's research income comes from the EU.

However, it begs the question whether UK based academics post-Brexit, even with funding, would be able to collaborate with their European colleagues so that established contacts and connections with complimentary expertise could still be maintained. Inability to recruit European workers will also have an adverse effect in large multidisciplinary projects. The restriction of movement of academics between Europe and the UK will have a detrimental effect in the long term and key areas of research and development will suffer. These concerns are relevant in particular to the members of AMPERE, and to their future collaborations with their European

colleagues on microwave heating projects. AMPERE members both in the UK and Europe are right to be gloomy about the prospect of future collaborative projects.

The report urges the UK government to try to establish close links with EU research programs and develop ways to encourage mobility and collaboration with industry and academia. What EU negotiators must realize is that the majority of academics and industrialists in the engineering sector in the UK voted to remain and it was only due to a large part of the population disaffected with the government, and what many commentators have coined the "have nots", that have swayed the vote towards Brexit.

However, how will the issue of Brexit affect AMPERE and its members? The uncertainty over what sort of relationship will exit post-2019 accentuates the fears of most engineers and scientists in the UK some of course being AMPERE members. At present there are collaborative projects on microwave or RF heating between centers in the UK and Europe, which are members of our association and whose primary funding emanates from the EU. I have no doubt that these projects will be allowed to complete their work. However, what about of new collaborative projects between AMPERE members in the UK and different countries of the EU, often being a tripartite initiative involving an industrial firm?

I must not give the impression that I am personally very gloomy about the outcome of the Brexit negotiations, but I do hope that negotiators from both the EU and the UK try and find mutually acceptable solutions to some seemingly intractable problems. If access to the single market is heavily restricted other markets will be found, however, what is required is to take a broader view of the consequences of a complete breakdown in the future relationship between the UK and Europe.

Regarding AMPERE, should the Brexit vote trigger a discussion for changing the name of AMPERE Europe to, for example, to AMPERE International Association? Well, from its inception, AMPERE has been a global association in that its members are not only EU based but as far afield as Japan, USA, and Australia, so Brexit should not be a catalyst for a change of name. This is an altogether separate issue which could be raised by Management Council at any future AMPERE general meeting. Whatever the outcome of the pending negotiations, AMPERE will survive post-Brexit even if other European countries in the future decide to take a similar view to that in the UK and withdraw.

Upcoming Events in 2017

Please see a detailed list of the upcoming 2017 events on Page 3, included in the President's letter.

AMPERE-Newsletter Call for Papers

AMPERE Newsletter welcomes submissions of articles, briefs and news on topics of interest for the RF-and-microwave heating community worldwide, including:

- Research briefs and discovery reports.
- Review articles on R&D trends and thematic issues.
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- Safety, RFI, and regulatory aspects.
- Technological and market forecasts.
- Comments, views, and visions.
- Interviews with leading innovators and experts.
- New projects, openings and hiring opportunities.
- Tutorials and technical notes.
- Social, cultural and historical aspects.
- Economical and practical considerations.
- Upcoming events, new books and papers.

AMPERE Newsletter is an ISSN registered periodical publication hence its articles are citable as references. However, the Newsletter's publication criteria may differ from that of common scientific Journals by its acceptance (and even encouragement) of news in more premature stages of on-going efforts.

We believe that this seemingly less-rigorous editorial approach is essential to accelerate the circulation of ideas, discoveries, and contemporary studies among the AMPERE community worldwide, and It may hopefully enrich our common knowledge hence exciting new ideas, findings and developments.

Please send your submission, or any question, comment or suggestion in this regard to the Editor (in the address below).

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