

European NANDTB Meeting

A member of the Australian Aerospace NDT Board attended the European NANDTBs meeting in Berlin on 29th September, along with about 30 others including a representative from the European Aviation Safety Authority. The meeting was called to discuss and decide on the formation of a forum for the European aerospace NDT boards. The Australian representative attended to monitor the discussions and consider how it may be guided when seeking mutual recognition. Mutual recognition with other Boards or Regulators is part of the Charter and a requirement of CASA.

The meeting agreed by a clear majority that a forum for the European NANDTBs be created. The forum is not itself a NANDTB but a vehicle for discussion among the various Boards formed under EASA requirements, because at present there is no existing information channel across this group. It is intended to be effective in lobbying the regulators, EASA and FAA in particular. It will engage Part 21 (design standards) as well as Part 145 (maintenance) organisations.

French. France has had a NANDTB for the past 28 years. Its French acronym is COSAC. Being well established, the French Board is refined and suited to a wide national aerospace manufacturing and a lesser aircraft maintenance sector. Under French chairmanship the Forum may be influenced to adopt or accept only those NANDTB systems which are similar. This will not suit smaller nations, and not suit Australia. Additionally, with the European Federation for NDT providing secretariat support, the resulting organisation may require some operational funding. Considering that most NANDTBs are operated on a voluntary basis, as is the Australian Board, it will be interesting to observe how this aspect may affect the Forum's membership.

EASA appears satisfied to let the various jurisdictions' Regulators set the standard for their respective NANDTBs. Despite a single document for qualification and approval of NDT staff (EN 4179), each Regulator is free to interpret the standard as it suits their circumstances. Juan Anton from EASA emphasised that the available Acceptable Means of Compliance (AMC) documents are designed to permit the flexibility needed across various local conditions. Demonstration of adherence to an AMC would ensure compliance to the Regulation. It is possible however that positions taken by the NANDTB Forum could be interpreted as de facto EASA endorsed, because EASA is present at these meetings. EASA will need to be aware and involved in any Forum activity involving regulatory matters and interpretation.

There were many similarities in the composition and functioning of NANDTBs represented at this meeting. Most were generally small which reflected the extent of their domestic aerospace sector. It would be expected that these NANDTBs have similar views on mutual recognition and other matters to the Australian Board. The inclusion of non-European Boards is also not yet decided. Having said that however, it should be noted that the European nature of this group is not bounded by membership of the European Union. Some who attended were outside this entity. At this time the Australian NANDTB is included in correspondence from the secretariat and can monitor the development of this Forum and participate when appropriate.

It plans to have its first formal meeting under its appointed Chairman in early December.



The meeting being opened by Mike Farley, the current president of the European Federation of NDT

Some of the early objectives are to formulate a mutual recognition policy for NANDTBs, harmonise qualification training and examinations, including new technologies, and promote a common format for 'written practice' documents. It was suggested that if EASA and FAA are working from the same NDT document (EN 4179 and NAS 410), and they are, it may be reasonable to have audits and assessments which were conducted by one, accepted by the other. There may be limited opportunity for savings here because NDT is usually only a small part of a larger site audit, and for reductions in multiple audits, common standards across the many audit elements would be needed, and not just NDT.

The Charter documents presented were accepted without much discussion and comments on their content are to be sent to the secretariat and be collated for discussion at the first meeting in December. It is interesting but not surprising that the first Forum Chairman will be

Changes at CASA

Albert Fleming has moved to the position of Field Aviation Safety Adviser, one of only six such positions and no longer is the contact in CASA for NDT (and welding) matters. He is replaced by Keith Johnston. Keith is an Airworthiness Inspector in the Maintenance Personnel Standards section. He is located in the Canberra office and his telephone contact is 61 2 6217 1658. Keith has had an extensive career in both the commercial and administrative environments of the aerospace industry and is looking forward to introducing himself to the NANDTB at its next meeting. Albert has distinguished himself by providing some excellent guidance and support to the industry. The Board welcomes Keith and wishes Albert every success in his new role.