

Chapter 5

Proposal of the VDI “Technical Safety” Committee

The Scientific Advisory Council of the VDI felt called on by virtue of its interdisciplinary competence to launch and promote the process of safety awareness. In exercising this technical expertise the VDI “technical safety” Committee describes in the present publication the basic principles of a safety-methodological concept applicable across disciplines.

The presentation of this concept should demonstrate to a broader technical audience how technical safety is created, and what methodological approaches are required. The paths shown are realistic and, assuming consistent, ethically considered actions, feasible in practice for specialists working interdisciplinarily. A basis of trust between society and technology is important, and this can only be achieved in an open, honestly conducted dialogue between them. Observable technophobia on the part of a non-technical public must be reduced by explaining the risks involved in dealing with technical products and doing so in a manner understandable to the layperson. This, in turn, can only be successful when terminology and methods in the field of safety engineering are interdisciplinarily harmonized among the experts and can be presented on a sound basis. As with general engineering, safety engineering also needs both generalistic concepts for an interdisciplinary approach and systemic management procedures. Great efforts are still needed here in the fields of science and business.

The steps taken by the EU Council and EU Commission with the introduction of the New Approach and the Global Approach are certainly leading in the right direction. In industrial sectors in which EC verification of the products concerned is not followed by any system inspection conducted by a state agency; these steps do however have, as far as technical safety is concerned, clear weaknesses in certain sectors with their emphasis on the free movement of goods within the EU. The concepts in some cases thus remain a long way behind the effectiveness of the historical system which met demands and has now been relieved. These weaknesses, which at the time of introduction were already known to the experts dealing

with safety issues, are diverse, and improvements are currently being made by the European Commission. In addition to the product-related directives, the “Directive on General Product Safety” 2001/95/EG dated 03.12.2001 also applies, which requires all products being put on the market within the European Economic Area to be safe. How this is to be secured requires further regulation—however, not only in the field of safety legislation but also, above all, in the field of safety engineering.