The days of using automation to maximize profit and reduce the number of staff are definitely over, stated Dr. Norbert Kuschnerus, President of the Board of Management of NAMUR (international user association of automation technology in process industries). Dr. Kuschnerus introduced the topic of Asset Management at their General Meeting, which was held at the end of 2006. The enhanced value of automation will be reached mainly by ensuring availability and minimizing maintenance costs. But to put this into practice, today’s operating staff needs additional “eyes and ears”.

“You cannot improve what you cannot see”, stated John Berra, President of Emerson Process Management, in his contribution. In the first workshop of the afternoon, Michael Pelz, chairman of the Working Group 2.6, Fieldbus spoke on behalf of the deceased Sven Seintsch regarding the results of the tests about “Diagnosis and Debugging of the Physical Layer of Fieldbus Systems” conducted by the Rheinhold & Mahla Test Laboratory. The bus stood up brilliantly to the tests in the lab and was very stable against the simulation of “primary faults” such as EMC inference or installation errors, which may include missing fieldbus terminators. Also, there were no effects on performance during long-term operational tests.

The recent trend toward Physical Layer Diagnostics of fieldbus systems received a great deal of interest and positive feedback at the NAMUR General Meeting.

“The physical layer is the telephone cable through which the data flow. And if this cable is not performing to standards, your communication network will not function correctly”, stated a leading expert of the measurement and control technology. He also stated that, “Conventional analyses with current and voltage measurements will not lead to suitable results.” Reducing commissioning times and permanent monitoring during operation are key functions to any fieldbus network. With Plant Asset Management, the key factor in enhancing the value of production plants is a higher availability.”