

150 Years of TÜV Rheinland: From DÜV to TÜV

Technology is meant to benefit people, not harm them – this has been the core principle of technical monitoring ever since TÜV Rheinland was founded. On October 31, 1872, textile manufacturers joined forces to form the “Verein zur Überwachung der Dampfkessel” (Steam Boiler Monitoring Association) in the districts of Elberfeld and Barmen, one of the most heavily industrialized regions of Germany at the time, which we now know as Wuppertal. Their aim was to reduce the number of accidents involving steam boilers by having the boilers checked independently and professionally by engineers working for the association. As the decades progressed, this first steam boiler monitoring association (DÜV) in the Rhineland region gave rise to the global testing company TÜV Rheinland, which celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2022.

The steam boiler monitoring association in Elberfeld and Barmen was not the first of its kind in the German Empire of the time. Boiler owners in Mannheim in the Grand Duchy of Baden had joined together to form a monitoring association six years previously. With the privately organized inspection of steam boilers by independent associations – instead of state inspections – German entrepreneurs created a principle that really caught on. Why? Because it worked: It resulted in fewer and fewer accidents, despite the sharp rise in the number of technical installations. For instance, in 1879, there were 60,000 steam boilers in Germany and 18 explosions; 20 years later, there were just 14 explosions, even though the number of steam boilers had more than doubled to 140,000. Ultimately, the monitoring associations were about regaining control of the “unleashing” of fossil energy sources that had shaped industrial development in the 19th century – they drove technical advances and increased the economic benefits of technological innovations.

Interaction between people and technology

Along with checking of steam boilers and related materials, training of specialist personnel soon became a key activity, as “human error” was one of the most common causes of accidents in factories. This gave rise to the first “stoker schools” – a forerunner of the training courses provided by the TÜV Rheinland Academy today. The guiding principle behind this is that safety is achieved when people and technology interact properly.

Expansion of test activities

Over the decades, the test activity of the monitoring associations quickly gained even more momentum, as advancing industrialization and inventiveness in business and science led to rapid technical progress in the 19th and 20th centuries. The range of

equipment, products and technical devices expanded considerably as a result, all of which had to be tested independently according to the assessment and view of governmental authorities.

In addition to the inspection of steam boilers, the inspection bodies therefore also took on activities to a varying degree, such as technical inspections of elevators, pressure vessels, power plants, tank equipment, machinery, and — since the beginning of the 20th century — of course, motor vehicles. These inspections are a key part of TÜV Rheinland's activities to this day. The company regularly performs technical safety inspections on just under ten million vehicles alone.

Organizational change over the decades

Changes also occurred at organizational level at the DÜV, which started out as a purely regional body. In 1877, 80 steam boiler operators merged to create the “Rheinischer Dampfkessel-Überwachungsverein” (Cologne-Düsseldorf Rhineland Steam Boiler Monitoring Association, DÜV)”. In 1936, the steam boiler monitoring associations were renamed as “Technische Überwachungsvereine” (Technical Monitoring Associations, TÜV) for short, when put under centralized state control by the Nazi regime. “Rheinischer DÜV” became TÜV Köln. After the Second World War, the TÜV organizations resumed the tradition of autonomy. Finally, TÜV Rheinland e.V. was formed in 1962. At the time, it employed 600 people at six locations.

Another important step in the association's development was the expansion of its network throughout Germany. Further milestones were the merger in 1997 of TÜV Berlin-Brandenburg and TÜV Rheinland and the 2003 merger of TÜV Pfalz into TÜV Rheinland. Another large step toward the consolidation of the testing market in Germany followed in 2005 with the purchase of Bavaria-based Landesgewerbeanstalt (LGA), which reached its provisional endpoint in 2013 through the integration of the FSP Group that was involved in vehicle testing.

Globalization brings far-reaching changes for testing business

1970 saw the establishment of the first subsidiary outside Germany, which marked the beginning of gradual internationalization. This was driven by German companies expanding their business to new markets, and by global economic integration, which increasingly relied on worldwide value chains. In 1993, TÜV Rheinland realized about 12 percent of total revenue with approximately 700 employees outside Germany. Almost 60 percent of TÜV Rheinland's employees now work outside of Germany. They generate around 47 percent of total revenue. International activity is mainly centered in Asia, and product testing in particular.

TÜV Rheinland introduced a new corporate structure in 1993: TÜV Rheinland e.V., as it was called then, continued to perform tasks on behalf of the state such as inspection of cars and other motor vehicles, as well as steam boilers and elevators. Other business – including outside Germany – has since been managed by the newly established stock corporation, all of whose shares continue to be held by the association.

Deregulation of the testing market

The testing business changed further in these years, including in Germany. Along with the described consolidation of the testing associations, a gradual political deregulation of the testing market occurred. This initially affected the regular technical inspection (general inspection) of motor vehicles. Another major step was the promulgation of the German Ordinance on Industrial Safety and Health in 2002, which included “plant and machinery requiring inspection.” Since then, steam boiler plants or pressure vessels, gas stations or elevator systems, for example, have been inspected by authorized inspection bodies, rather than just by TÜV, in a market that has been deregulated for all of Germany. TÜV Rheinland also performs these activities throughout Germany these days.

Digitalization influences investment activity

Digitalization has been having a growing influence on TÜV Rheinland’s test activity since the start of the new millennium. Around the world, the company’s international specialists help to improve the protection of network and information systems, and to protect increasingly networked vehicles, industrial plants and consumer products against cyber attacks. In addition, TÜV Rheinland is constantly stepping up the use of digital solutions in its own inspections.

With the rise in digitalization, TÜV Rheinland has invested heavily in its own IT infrastructure since 2010 in order to provide its customers with contemporary solutions combined with maximum IT security. Investment has also been channeled into the construction and expansion of testing laboratories worldwide as well as extensive measures for improved environmental protection and sustainability, including through energy-efficient renovation of buildings. In total, TÜV Rheinland invested over EUR 400 million in growth and its own future viability from 2016 to 2020 alone.

As a result, the company believes that it is well equipped for a future in which demand for safety and quality remains high worldwide. For instance, the importance of independent tests to ensure that reliable face masks reach the market has been apparent in the coronavirus pandemic since the start of 2020.

History of TÜV Rheinland

1872	Founded as the “Verein zur Überwachung der Dampfkessel” (Steam Boiler Monitoring Association) in the Districts of Elberfeld and Barmen
1877	Merger to create the “Rheinischer Dampfkesselüberwachungsverein” (Rhineland Steam Boiler Monitoring Association, DÜV)
1904	Inspection of vehicles
1936	Renamed as “Technischer Überwachungsverein Köln” (Cologne Technical Monitoring Association, TÜV)
1962	Renamed as TÜV Rheinland e.V.; six locations in the Rhineland area with 600 employees
1970	First subsidiary founded outside Germany
1993	TÜV Rheinland AG founded
1997	TÜV Berlin-Brandenburg and TÜV Rheinland merged to create TÜV Rheinland Berlin-Brandenburg e.V.
2003	Merger with TÜV Pfalz to form TÜV Rheinland Berlin Brandenburg Pfalz e.V.
2005	Integration of LGA as well as two large Hungarian test institutes
2006	Admission to the UN Global Compact, integration of two leading Brazilian test service providers
2007	Foundation of the company in Australia, represented on all continents
2010	With the acquisition of Geris, TÜV Rheinland becomes the largest technical test service provider in Brazil
2012	60 percent of the employees of TÜV Rheinland work outside Germany
2014	By means of corporate acquisitions in the IT security sector, TÜV Rheinland is becoming one of the world’s largest independent testing service providers for information security
2017	Completion of the expansion and energy-efficient renovations at the site of the Group headquarters in Cologne with investment of almost EUR 70 million
2019	Acquisition of the Spanish company Certio, strengthening of the network of test centers for vehicle inspections in Spain
2021	Major investment in China for a new office and laboratory location in Taicang
2022	TÜV Rheinland is 150 years old

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