

PROCEEDINGS

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and LXVI ETRAN Conference,
Novi Pazar, Serbia, 6 - 9, June, 2022.

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и LXVI конференције ЕТРАН,
Нови Пазар 6 - 9. јуна 2022. године

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ЗБОРНИК РАДОВА/PROCEEDINGS

ИМПРЕСУМ/IMPRESUM

ACOUSTICS/АКУСТИКА - (AKI/AK)

1

AKI1.1	Recent Advances on Perforated Panels for Sound Absorption Applications <i>Jesus Carbajo, Nicholas Xuanlai Fang and Sang-Hoon Nam</i>	2
AKI1.2	Real-time Speaker Independent Recognition of Bimodal Produced Speech <i>Boris Malčić, Vlado Delić, Jovan Galić and Nebojša Babić</i>	6
AKI1.3	Feature Analysis for Industrial Product Sounds Using Discrete Meyer Wavelet <i>Đorđe Damnjanović, Dejan Ćirić and Dejan Vujičić</i>	12
AK1.1	Multidisciplinarnost u istraživanju slike i zvuka u sakralnom prostoru <i>Jelena Erdeljan and Ljubica Vinulović</i>	18
AK1.2	Auralizacija sakralnih prostora i likovni programi: nove perspektive i mogućnosti istraživanja <i>Vuk Dautović and Jakov Đorđević</i>	21
AK1.3	Istraživanje zvučnog ambijenta srpskih sakralnih prostora kao višemedijskog fenomena <i>Miomir Mijić, Miloš Bjelić, Dragana Šumarac Pavlović, Tatjana Miljković and Filip Pantelić</i>	25
AK1.4	O ulozi akustičkih rezonatora u prostoru hrama Svetog Save u Beogradu <i>Dragana Šumarac Pavlović, Miomir Mijić, Jelena Erdeljan and Tatjana Miljković</i>	31
AK2.1	Optimizacija prostorne rezolucije mikrofonskog niza za merenje saobraćajne buke <i>Miodrag Stanojević, Miloš Bjelić and Tatjana Miljković</i>	37
AK2.2	Komparativna analiza akustičkih signala motora sa unutrašnjim sagorevanjem mapiranih u slike bazirane na spektrogramu <i>Marko Milivojević, Emilija Kisić and Dejan Ćirić</i>	41
AK2.3	Koeficijent inharmoničnosti tonova harfe -Specifičnost i problemi automatske procene <i>Tatjana Miljkovic, Miloš Bjelić, Jelena Ćertić and Dragana Šumarac Pavlović</i>	46
AK2.4	Implementacija algoritama za kontrolu usmerenosti zvučničkog niza sa dva glavna loba na otvorenom hardveru <i>Tijana Đorđević, Stefan Ćimović and Miloš Bjelić</i>	52
AK2.5	Optimizacija pozicija zvučnika u zvučničkom nizu <i>Stefan Ćimović, Tijana Đorđević and Miloš Bjelić</i>	58
AK2.6	Realizacija sistema za aktivnu kontrolu buke u cevi na otvorenom hardveru <i>Marija Ratković, Nebojša Kolarić and Miloš Bjelić</i>	63

ANTENNAS AND PROPAGATION/АНТЕНЕ И ПРОСТИРАЊЕ - (API/AP)

69

API1.1	Application of Microwave Imaging for Brain Diagnostics <i>Marija Nikolic Stevanovic, Darko Ninkovic, Tushar Singh, Branislav Ninkovic, Miodrag Tasic and Branko Kolundzija</i>	70
API1.2	Current distribution in a hollow circular conductor influenced by a parallel filament <i>Dragan Filipović and Tatijana Dlabac</i>	75
API1.3	Jamming a Drone - EM Simulation of Simple EW and EW Countermeasures Scenarios <i>Tomislav Milosevic</i>	80
API1.4	Simulation Study of Voxel-Based Head Phantom for Medical Microwave Imaging <i>Mladjen Stevanetic, Branko Kolundzija, Tushar Singh and Marija Nikolic Stevanovic</i>	85
API1.5	Radome Shape Impact on Automotive Radar Sensor Operating at 79 GHz <i>Nebojsa Pupavac and Miodrag Tasic</i>	90
API1.6	Implementing Gradient Model for Surface Roughness in WIPL-D <i>Milan Radović, Aleksandar Golubović and Miloš Jovičić</i>	95
API1.7	The Ability to Minimize a New Type of Moderate-Bandwidth Microwave Filter <i>Dušan Nešić and Tomislav Milošević</i>	99
AP1.1	Uopštenje izraza za transfer funkcije između antena u problemima inverznog rasejanja <i>Anja Kovačević, Marija Nikolić Stevanović and Antonije Đorđević</i>	102

AUTOMATION/АУТОМАТИКА - (AUI/AU)

106

AUI1.1	The Improved GM PHD algorithm for Multi- Target Radar Tracking <i>Zvonko Radosavljevic, Dejan Ivkovic and Branko Kovacevic</i>	107
AUI1.2	Four-Stage Recursive Least Squares Algorithm for CARARMA Systems <i>Nasar Aldian Shashoa, Ahmed J Abougarair, Bduhakim Agll and Abdurrezag Elmezughi</i>	113
AUI1.3	Consensus on the Auxiliary Variables in Distributed Gradient-Based Temporal Difference Algorithms <i>Milos Stankovic, Marko Beko, Nemanja Ilic and Srdjan Stankovic</i>	118
AUI1.5	Arduino based online laboratory platform for digital control systems analysis and design <i>Vladimir Mitić, Vladimir Sibinović, Snežana Đorđević and Boban Veselić</i>	124
AUI2.1	Implementation of the New Curricula in Smart Products and Services Engineering <i>Marko Milojkovic, Dragan Antic, Sasa Nikolich and Nebojsa Jotovic</i>	129
AUI2.2	Denosing the open-loop step response using an encoder-decoder convolutional neural network <i>Natalija Đorđević, Nenad Džamić, Aleksa Stojić and Goran Kvaščev</i>	132

AUI2.3	Single Screw Extruder Temperature Control Using PLC and HMI in Cable Production Process <i>Igor Kocić, Saša Nikolić, Aleksandra Milovanović, Darko Mitić, Petar Đekić and Nikola Danković</i>	137
AU1.1	Upravljanje nivoom vode i pumpama upotrebom SMS poruka <i>Igor Kocić and Zoran Jovanović</i>	143
AU1.2	Application of Subtractive Clustering in Data Processing <i>Boris Barišić, Aleksandra Krstić, Sanja Vujnović and Željko Đurović</i>	148
BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING/БИОМЕДИЦИНСКА ТЕХНИКА - (BTI/БТ)		153
BTI1.1	AGILIS: Restoring Functional Grasping in Individuals with Tetraplegia using Epineural Electrodes <i>Christine Azevedo, Charles Fattal, Lucie William, Lucas Fonseca, Arthur Haiarrassary, David Andreu, Antoine Geffrier, Jacques Teissier and David Guiraud</i>	154
BTI1.2	A Device for Monitoring Physiological Parameters and Electrotactile Stimulation <i>Bojan Jorgovanović, Matija Štrbac, Miloš Kostić, Vojin Ilić and Nikola Jorgovanović</i>	156
BTI1.3	Deep Neural Network Approach for Artifact Detection in Raw ECG <i>Tanja Boljanić, Jovana Malešević and Goran Kvaščev</i>	160
BTI1.4	Inhibition Potency of Terpyridine Metal Complexes toward Penicillin-Binding Protein 1A <i>Svetlana Jeremić, Enisa Selimović, Milan Dekić and Tanja Soldatović</i>	164
BTI1.5	GT Analyzer - A Basic Tool for Handwriting Movement Data <i>Vladimir Džepina, Nikola Ivančević, Vera Miler-Jerković, Blažo Nikolić, Dejan Stevanović, Jasna Jančić and Milica Janković</i>	168
BTI1.6	Morphological parameters assessment with a depth camera based measurement system <i>Olivera Tomašević, Luka Mejić, Darko Stanišić and Nikolina Maravić</i>	173
POWER ENGINEERING/ЕЛЕКТРОЕНЕРГЕТИКА - (EEI/ЕЕ)		178
EEI1.1	Overview of measuring methods and equipment for calibration of instrument transformers <i>Dragana Naumovic-Vukovic</i>	179
EEI1.2	Effects of cryptocurrency mining rig operation on power quality in LV distribution network <i>Vladimir Katic, Zoltan Corba and Aleksandar Stanisavljevic</i>	188
EEI1.3	Prediction of voltage dips characteristics in IEEE 13-bus test grid using harmonic footprint <i>Aleksandar Stanisavljević and Vladimir Katic</i>	194
EEI1.4	Optimal Power Dispatch in Distribution Networks with PV Generation and Battery Storage <i>Jordan Radosavljević, Miloš Milovanović, Nebojša Arsić, Andrijana Jovanović, Bojan Perović and Jovan Vukašinović</i>	199
EEI1.5	Modeling of High-Voltage Induction Machines with Fallen-out Magnetic Slot Wedges <i>Milica Banović, Kristina Vujkov, Mladen Terzić and Dejan Jerkan</i>	205
EEI1.6	Time-domain simulation of electric circuit with nonlinear hysteretic inductor <i>Srđan Divac and Branko Koprivica</i>	211
EEI1.7	A Comparative Analysis of Three-Phase Phase-Locked Loops for Grid-Connected Systems <i>Filip Bakić, Lazar Stojanović, Katarina Obradović and Emilija Lukić</i>	217
EEI2.1	Parameter estimation of induction motors using Wild Horse Optimizer <i>Jovan Vukašinović, Miloš Milovanović, Nebojša Arsić, Jordan Radosavljević, Saša Štatkić, Bojan Perović and Andrijana Jovanović</i>	222
EEI2.2	Damper Winding Inductances Calculation by Winding Function Approach <i>Aldin Kajević and Gojko Joksimović</i>	228
EE1.1	Inteligentni DTC algoritam sa automatskom reorganizacijom u zavisnosti od intenziteta ripla momenta <i>Marko Posuћ</i>	234
EE1.2	Primjena električnih vozila za smanjenje deficita snage u sistemu <i>Uroš Ognjenović, Saša Mujović and Lazar Šćekić</i>	240
EE1.3	Realizacija laboratorijskog sistema za bežični prenos energije <i>Dejan Janjić, Alenka Milovanović and Branko Koprivica</i>	246
EE1.4	Pravci istraživanja u elektroenergetici kroz tematsku orijentaciju radova sa skupova CIRED Srbija i ETRAN/IcETAN <i>Zoran Simendić and Vladimir Katic</i>	251
ELECTRIC CIRCUITS AND SYSTEMS AND SIGNAL PROCESSING/ЕЛЕКТРИЧНА КОЛА, ЕЛЕКТРИЧНИ СИСТЕМИ И ОБРАДА СИГНАЛА - (EKI/ЕК)		257
EKI1.1	A method for laser rangefinder reticle position calibration in a multi-sensor imaging system <i>Saša Vujić, Miloš Radisavljević, Dragana Perić and Branko Livada</i>	258
EKI1.2	Linear regression in RR-RT domain for cardiac cycle evaluation <i>Milan Milivojević, Ana Gavrovska and Dragi Dujković</i>	264
EKI1.3	Application of Bayes and knn classifiers in tumor detection from brain MRI images <i>Marta Mirkov and Ana Gavrovska</i>	268
EKI1.4	From puppet-master creation to false detection <i>Ana Pantelić and Ana Gavrovska</i>	273
EK1.1	Kvarcni kristalni filter frekvencije 35.4 MHz zasnovan na trećem overtonu <i>Dragi Dujkovic, Ana Gavrovska, Lenkica Grubišić, Snežana Dedić-Nešić, Irini Reljin and Ivan Popovic</i>	278
EK1.2	Primena vremensko-frekvencijskih metoda kod analize spektra u kognitivnom radiju <i>Nenad Stojanovic, Milenko Andrić, Dimitrije Bujaković, Boban Bondzulich and Vladimir Ristić</i>	283
ELECTRONICS/ЕЛЕКТРОНИКА - (ELI/ЕЛ)		289

ELI1.1	A Gigabit Ethernet Media Access Controller for TCP/UDP Radar Data Streaming and Visualization <i>Vukan Damnjanović and Vladimir Milovanović</i>	290
ELI1.2	ANN model for one day ahead Covid-19 prediction <i>Jelena Milojković, Miljana Milić and Vančo Litovski</i>	296
ELI1.3	Equivalent Electromechanical Model of a Composite Ultrasonic Transducer <i>Igor Jovanović and Dragan Mančić</i>	300
ELI1.4	Hardware Realization of Nearest Neighbour Search Algorithm over an In-Memory Pre-Stored k-d Tree <i>Aleksandar Kondić and Vladimir Milovanović</i>	304
METROLOGY/МЕТРОЛОГИЈА - (MLI/МЛ)		310
MLI1.1	An Intercomparison of the Broadband Electrical Field Meter NARDA NBM 550 <i>Nenad Munić, Aleksandar Kovacević, Nenko Brkljač and Ljubiša Tomić</i>	311
MLI1.2	LiDAR measurements in Maritime transport safety and navigation of the deep seafloor <i>Dijana Džever and Marjan Urekar</i>	316
ML1.2	Dvokoračna segmentna linearizacija kao deo mernog lanca termopara <i>Dragan Živanović, Milan Simić, Milica Stojanović and Dragan Denić</i>	322
ML1.3	Poređenje merenja brzine vetra anemometrom sa lopaticama i ultrasoničnim anemometrom na vetroturbini <i>Robert Fajhner and Marjan Urekar</i>	328
ML1.4	Primena linearnog niza fotodetektora kod optičkih pseudoslučajnih pozicionih enkodera <i>Ivana Ranđelović, Dragan Denić, Goran Miljković and Aleksandar Jocić</i>	333
ML2.1	Ponovljivost rezultata merenja nivoa električnog polja EM smetnji <i>Aleksandar Kovačević and Nenad Munić</i>	337
ML2.2	Pregled elektrogastrografske metode <i>Jelena Đorđević Kozarov, Platon Sovilj, Marjan Urekar, Milan Šaš and Miroljub Pešić</i>	340
ML2.3	Sistem za merenje pritiska u konceptu Internet of Things <i>Tomislav Pap and Marjan Urekar</i>	344
ML2.4	Merno informacioni sistem za automatsko hranjenje kućnih ljubimaca <i>Maja Perić and Marjan Urekar</i>	347
ML2.5	Uređaj za pravilno sedenje baziran na merno-informacionim modulima <i>Jovana Jović and Marjan Urekar</i>	352
ML2.6	Merno-akvizicioni sistem za pravilno sedenje <i>Mario Volaš, Dragan Pejić and Marjan Urekar</i>	358
ML2.7	Razvoj softvera za merenje vremena reakcije na vizuelne i zvučne stimuluse <i>Milica Djordjevic, Djordje Novakovic and Marjan Urekar</i>	364
ML3.1	Projektovanje univerzalne razvojne ploče za merenje i regulaciju <i>Ninoslav Srdić, Marjan Urekar, Dragan Pejić and Platon Sovilj</i>	368
ML3.2	Merni sistem za detekciju padova zasnovan na akcelerometru, žiroskopu i GPS modulu <i>Sanja Mandić and Đorđe Novaković</i>	373
ML3.3	Merenje karakteristika i modelovanje Hamonovih etalon otpornika u naizmeničnom režimu <i>Stefan Mirkovic, Dragan Pejic and Aleksandar Dimitrijevic</i>	378
ML3.4	Merni sistem za određivanje modula i faznog stava impedanse baziran na virtuelnoj instrumentaciji <i>Milan Šaš, Dragan Pejić, Nemanja Gazivoda, Đorđe Novaković and Bojan Vujičić</i>	382
ML3.5	Simulaciona analiza metode pogodna za metrološku karakterizaciju impedanse na niskim frekvencijama <i>Milan Šaš, Dragan Pejić, Nemanja Gazivoda, Đorđe Novaković and Bojan Vujičić</i>	386
MICROELECTRONICS AND OPTOELECTRONICS, NANOSCIENCES AND NANOTECHNOLOGIES/МИКРОЕЛЕКТРОНИКА И ОПТОЕЛЕКТРОНИКА - (MOI/МО)		390
MOI1.1	Two Color Photodiodes Mounted on the Micromachined Carrier <i>Žarko Lazić, Milče Smiljanić, Dušan Nešić and Ljubiša Zeković</i>	391
MOI1.2	Optimization of electrodeposition parameters to improve composite hardness of nickel coatings on brass substrate for varying film thicknesses and applied indentation loads <i>Ivana Mladenović, Jelena Lamovec, Marko Obradov, Milena Rašljić Rafajilović, Vesna Radojević, Dana Vasiljević Radović and Nebojša Nikolić</i>	395
MOI1.3	Electrically Programmable Analog Device As An Ultraviolet Light Sensor <i>Stefan Ilić, Milija Sarajlić, Dana Vasiljević-Radović, Marko Andjelković, Alberto J. Palma, Russell Duane and Goran Ristić</i>	401
MOI1.4	Origin of the Open Circuit Voltage and Important Processes that Affect its Value in Organic Solar Cells <i>Teodora Pavličević, Jovana Gojanović, Nataša Ćirović and Sandra Živanović</i>	405
MOI1.5	Design Consideration for Low-Power Step-Up Converter <i>Jana Vračar, Milan Stojanović, Zoran Prijjić, Aneta Prijjić and Ljubomir Vračar</i>	411
MO1.1	Osnovi teorije diferencnih jednačina sa primenom na analizu svojstava nanostrukture <i>Jovan Šetrajčić, Vjekoslav Sajfert and Siniša Vučenović</i>	415
MO1.2	Difuzija optičkih pobuđenja u tankim molekulskim filmovima <i>Jovan Šetrajčić and Siniša Vučenović</i>	427
MO1.3	Indukovanje stanja sličnih topološkim kod dvoslojnih fosforenskih traka primenom normalnog električnog polja <i>Vladimir Arsoski and Milan Tadić</i>	433
MO1.4	Elektronska svojstva grafenskih nanotraka sa periodičnim defektima <i>Jovana Vlahović, Vladimir Arsoski, Milan Tadić and Milorad Milošević</i>	437

	MICROWAVE TECHNIQUE, TECHNOLOGIES AND SYSTEMS/МИКРОТАЛАСНА ТЕХНИКА, ТЕХНОЛОГИЈЕ И СИСТЕМИ - (MTI/MT)	441
MTI1.1	On Some Differences Between Wave Digital Models of Directional Couplers <i>Biljana Stošić, Nebojša Dončov and Marin Nedelchev</i>	442
MTI1.2	Doherty PA Linearization by Injection of the 2nd order Digitally Processed Signals for 5G FBMC modulation <i>Aleksandar Atanasković, Nataša Maleš-Ilić, Biljana Stošić and Djurdje Budimir</i>	448
MTI1.3	Planar Archimedean Spiral Antenna Resonant Frequency and Bandwidth Estimation using MLP Neural Network <i>Zoran Stanković, Maja Sarevska, Nebojsa Doncov and Ksenija Pesic</i>	452
MTI1.4	Analysis of Feeding Methods for High-Gain Crossed Slot Antenna Arrays <i>Marija Milijic and Branka Jokanovic</i>	457
MTI1.5	Cost-Effective Standing Wave Ratio Meter <i>Ana Ćupurdija and Slobodan Savić</i>	463
MT1.1	Automatizacija određivanja nivoa EM polja radio-difuznih predajnika na osnovu ITU-R P.1546 metode za visine h1 manje od 10 m <i>Miloš Radojković and Zlatica Marinković</i>	469
MT1.2	TLM modelovanje deformacija savijanja antene u biomedicinskim aplikacijama <i>Jugoslav Jokovic, Tijana Dimitrijević, Aleksandar Atanaskovic and Nebojsa Doncov</i>	473
	NEW MATERIALS IN ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONIC ENGINEERING/НОВИ МАТЕРИЈАЛИ - (NMI/HM)	478
NMI1.1	Sintering and Phase transition of the ZnTiO ₃ nano powder dilatometric data deconvolution <i>Nebojša Labus, Milena Rosić, Smilja Marković, Maria-Vesna Nikolić and Srđan Matijašević</i>	479
NMI1.2	Study of the effect of microstructure and magnetic texture on major loop phenomenology using OOMMF <i>Mehrija Hasicic, Aphrodite Ktena and Jasna Hivziefendic</i>	487
NM1.1	Primeri primene fraktalne analize na karakterizaciju novih materijala <i>Sanja Aleksić, Branislav Ranđelović, Aleksandar Pantić, Neda Stanojević and Dušan Milošević</i>	492
NM1.2	Mikrostrukturna i dielektrična karakterizacija PLZT keramike <i>Vesna Paunović, Miloš Marjanović and Zoran Prijić</i>	498
NM1.3	Električne karakteristike BaTiO ₃ keramike dopirane antimonom <i>Aleksandra Stojković, Miloš Marjanović, Vesna Paunović, Aneta Prijić and Zoran Prijić</i>	503
NM1.4	Осетљивост магнетоимпедансног елемента CoFeSiB аморфне жице <i>Jelena Orelj and Nebojsa Mitrovic</i>	507
	NUCLEAR ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY/НУКЛЕАРНА ТЕХНИКА - (NTI/HT)	512
NTI1.1	The stability and Quality Control of Instruments for Measurement of Ambient Dose Equivalent Rate <i>Jelena Krneta Nikolic, Marija Janković, Milica Rajacic, Ivana Vukanac, Dragana Todorovic and Natasa Sarap</i>	513
NTI1.2	Measurement using liquid scintillation spectrometer-quality control <i>Marija Janković, Nataša Sarap, Jelena Krneta Nikolić, Milica Rajačić, Dragana Todorović and Ivana Vukanac</i>	516
NTI1.3	E-Waste Glass in Radionuclide Immobilization <i>Tatjana Miljojcic, Ivana Jelic, Marija Sljivic Ivanovic and Slavko Dimovic</i>	519
NT1.1	UTICAJ FUZIONIH GENERATORA NA EFIKASNOST GASNOG ODVODNIKA PRENAPONA <i>Nemanja Aranđelović, Dušan P. Nikezić, Uzahir Ramadani, Ivan Lazović, Nikola Mirkov and Predrag V. Osmokrović</i>	524
NT1.2	Sektorski pristup u analizi bezbednosnih rizika upravljanja nuklearnim otpadom <i>Slavko Dimović, Milica Ćurčić and Nikola Zdolšek</i>	530
NT1.3	UTICAJ JONIZUJUĆEG ZRAČENJA NA KARAKTERISTIKE GASNIH ODVODNIKA PRENAPONA <i>Uzahir Ramadani, Dušan P Nikezić, Alija Jusić, Ivan Lazović and Nikola Mirkov</i>	537
	COMPUTING AND INFORMATION ENGINEERING/РАЧУНАРСКА ТЕХНИКА И ИНФОРМАТИКА - (RTI/PT)	543
RTI1.1	One Solution For Multimedia Subscription Using Blockchain <i>Igor Srdić and Djordje Glisic</i>	544
RTI1.2	Model-Driven Approach to Blockchain-Enabled MLOps <i>Nenad Petrović</i>	548
RTI1.3	Controllability of the multi-agent system modeled by the chain graphs with repeated degree <i>Milica Anđelić, Edin Dolićanin and Zoran Stanić</i>	554
RTI1.4	Distillation of Secret Keys using Speech Signals and Discussion through a Public Channel <i>Jelica Radomirović, Milan Milosavljević and Aleksandra Krstić</i>	558
RTI2.1	One solution for voice commands on Android based STB <i>Jovana Simić, Djordje Glisic and Uros Jokic</i>	562
RTI2.2	One solution for simulating conditional access in DTV Software on PC platform <i>Milan Petrović, Djordje Glisic and Uroš Jokić</i>	566
RTI2.3	One solution for testing embedded DTV software on the PC platform <i>Branka Ševa, Djordje Glisic and Uroš Jokić</i>	570
RTI2.4	Comparison of type-2 hypervisor performance on the example of VirtualBox, VMware Workstation player and MS Hyper-V	574

	<i>Borislav Đorđević, Iva Jovičić, Nenad Kraljević and Valentina Timčenko</i>	
RTI2.5	Comparison of file system performance in full virtualization with MS Hyper-V and KVM hypervisors	580
	<i>Borislav Đorđević, Miloš Piljić, Nenad Kraljević and Valentina Timčenko</i>	
RTI2.6	A Review of Wazuh Tool Capabilities for Detecting Attacks Based on Log Analysis	585
	<i>Stefan Stanković, Slavko Gajin and Ranko Petrović</i>	
RTI3.1	Infrastructure for Simulating n-Dimensional Simplicial Complexes	590
	<i>Dušan Cvijetić, Nenad Korolija and Marko Vojinović</i>	
RTI3.2	Possibilities for Parallelizing Simplicial Complexes Simulation	595
	<i>Dušan Cvijetić, Nenad Korolija and Marko Vojinović</i>	
RTI3.3	The Evolution of Big Data Analytics Solutions in the Cloud	600
	<i>Danko Miladinović, Jovan Popović and Nenad Korolija</i>	
RTI3.4	Hybrid Manycore Dataflow Processor	606
	<i>Danko Miladinović, Miroslav Bojović, Vladislav Jelisavčić and Nenad Korolija</i>	
RTI3.5	Service-Oriented Communication Between ADAS and IVI Domains in Automotive Solutions	611
	<i>Dušan Kenjić, Marija Antić and Dušan Živkov</i>	
RT1.1	Утврђивање сличности софтверског кода	617
	<i>Zaharije Radivojević and Miloš Cvetanović</i>	
RT1.2	Softversko rešenje za akviziciju i vizuelizaciju moždanih talasa	626
	<i>Ivan Tot, Boriša Jovanović, Dušan Bogičević, Tamara Gajić and Jordan Atanasijević</i>	
RT2.1	Platforma za praćenje kvaliteta vazduha u gradu Čačak	630
	<i>Nikola Kukric, Bozidar Popovic, Slobodan Lubura and Zorana Mandić</i>	
	ROBOTICS AND FLEXIBLE AUTOMATION/РОБОТИКА И ФЛЕКСИБИЛНА АУТОМАТИЗАЦИЈА - (ROI/PO)	634
ROI1.1	Mobile robot decision-making system based on deep machine learning	635
	<i>Aleksandar Jokić, Milica Petrović and Zoran Miljković</i>	
ROI1.2	Method for Configuring Virtual Robot as an Integral Part of the Control System	639
	<i>Nikola Slavković, Saša Živanović, Zoran Dimić and Nikola Vorkapić</i>	
ROI1.3	Low-cost real-time human motion capturing system	645
	<i>Milutin Nikolic, Lazar Milić, Milutin Studen and Mirko Raković</i>	
ROI1.4	GAN-based Data Augmentation in the Design of Cyber-attack Detection Methods	651
	<i>Dušan Nedeljković and Živana Jakovljević</i>	
ROI1.5	Comparison of SLAM algorithms on omnidirectional four wheel mobile robot	657
	<i>Slaven Petković, Lazar Milić, Milutin Nikolić, Mirko Raković and Dragiša Mišković</i>	
ROI2.1	Natural Non-Invasive Human-Machine Interface Based on Hand Gesture Recognition	663
	<i>Jelena Rodić, Darko Golubović, Nikola Knežević and Kosta Jovanović</i>	
ROI1.1	Pozicioniranje Hvataljke ABB Kolaborativnom Robota Pomoću Kamere	668
	<i>Vojislav Vujičić and Ivan Milićević</i>	
ROI1.2	Upravljanje pasivnom krutošću završnog uređaja robota oblikovanjem elipsoida krutosti	672
	<i>Branko Lukić, Nikola Knežević and Kosta Jovanović</i>	
ROI1.3	Hijerarhijsko distribuirano upravljanje kolaborativnim industrijskim humanoidnim robotom podržano oblak-arhitekturom	678
	<i>Jovan Šumarac, Aleksandar Rodić and Ilija Stevanović</i>	
	TELECOMMUNICATIONS/ТЕЛЕКОМУНИКАЦИЈЕ - (TEI/TE)	683
TEI1.1	On Pulse Shaping for Generalized Faster than Nyquist Signaling with and without Equalization	684
	<i>Jovan Milojkovic, Srđan Brkić and Jelena Čertić</i>	
TEI1.2	Performance simulation for LCR of MIMO Multi-branch SC Diversity System in α - μ fading and α - μ interference channel	688
	<i>Dejan Milic, Suad Suljović, Dejan Rančić, Nenad Petrović and Nenad Milošević</i>	
TEI1.3	Location Privacy Improvements in Telecommunication Data Management Systems	693
	<i>Milan Simaković, Zoran Čiča and Dejan Drajić</i>	
TEI1.4	Introducing IoT to Big Data Platform for Network Performance Monitoring	698
	<i>Milan Simaković, Zoran Čiča and Dejan Drajić</i>	
TEI1.5	Reliability of Earth-Space Links under Deep Fades with Interleaved Reed-Solomon Codes	702
	<i>Srđan Brkić, Zoran Čiča, Andreja Radošević, Đorđe Sarač and Predrag Ivaniš</i>	
TEI1.6	Effect of Phase Noise on Error Probability of MPSK Receiver over TWDP Channel - Simulation Study	707
	<i>Goran Djordjevic, Jarosław Makal, Bane Vasic and Bata Vasic</i>	
TEI2.1	Initial Development of a Program for Drone Micro-Doppler Signature Modelling	711
	<i>Jovan Radivojević, Predrag Petrović, Aleksandar Lebl and Mladen Mileusnić</i>	
TEI2.2	Execution Time Improvement using CPU Parallelization and Non-Uniform High-Resolution Range-Doppler Map Estimation in HFSWR	717
	<i>Dragan Golubović, Nenad Vukmirović, Zoran Lončarević, Marko Marković and Miljko Erić</i>	
TEI2.3	Layer 2 Forwarding Using T4P4S: P4 Language and Data Plane Development Kit	723
	<i>Dimitrije Jovanović and Aleksandra Smiljanić</i>	
TE1.1	Mogućnost primene beacon tehnologije za razvoj Covid-19 sistema za praćenje kontakta u visokoškolskim institucijama	729
	<i>Ivana Stefanović, Milutin Nešić and Marko Milivojčević</i>	

TE1.2	Istraživanje različitih algoritama dubokog učenja za detekciju i klasifikaciju dronova <i>Mohammed Mokhtari, Jovan Bajčetić, Boban Sazdić-Jotić and Boban Pavlović</i>	734
TE1.3	LDPC dekoderi sa reinicijalizacijama koji objedinjuju tvrde odluke i razmenu mekih poruka <i>Predrag Ivaniš, Srđan Brkić and Bane Vasić</i>	740
TE1.4	Analiza performansi kooperativnog diverziti sistema u kompozitnom fedingu modelovanom odnosom α - μ i gama raspodela <i>Edis Mekić, Irfan Fetahović and Edin Dolićanin</i>	746
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE/ВЕШТАЧКА ИНТЕЛИГЕНЦИЈА - (VII/ВИ)		750
VII1.1	Code Comment Classification Taxonomies <i>Marija Kostić, Aleksa Sribljanović, Vuk Batanović and Boško Nikolić</i>	751
VI1.2	Primena ConvLSTM modela za predikciju optičke debljine aerosola <i>Uzahir Ramadani, Dusan Nikezić, Dušan Radivojević, Nikola Mirkov and Ivan Lazović</i>	757
VI1.3	Primena veštačke inteligencije na terminal za daljinsko upravljanje stanice za punjenje električnih vozila koja se napaja iz obnovljivih izvora električne energije <i>Jovan Vujasinovic and Goran Savić</i>	763
VI1.4	Prepoznavanje imena na slikama lekarskih izveštaja na srpskom jeziku u cilju zaštite ličnih podataka <i>Aldina Avdić and Ulfeta Marovac</i>	768
VI1.5	Sistem za automatizaciju testova za proveru znanja baziran na transformaciji predikatskih iskaza <i>Ulfeta Marovac and Aldina Avdić</i>	772
SPECIAL THEMATIC SESSION CONTEMPORARY TECHNOLOGIES AND EDUCATION/СПЕЦИЈАЛНА ТЕМАТСКА СЕСИЈА САВРЕМЕНЕ ТЕХНОЛОГИЈЕ И ЕДУКАЦИЈА (SS-EDUI/СС-ЕДУ/)		777
SS-EDUUvodni rad	Konferencije ETRAN/IcETLAN kroz statistiku <i>Vladimir Katić, Marko Jarnević, Dragomir Nikolić and Mirjana Jovanić</i>	778
SS-EDUI1.1	A Comparison of Selected Systems For Learning About SQLi Vulnerability Suitable for Academic Uses <i>Djordje Madic, Danko Miladinovic and Zarko Stanislavjevic</i>	784
SS-EDUI1.2	Automated grading system for picoComputer assembly codes integrated within E-Learning platform <i>Jovan Đukić, Vladimir Jocić, Marko Mišić and Milo Tomašević</i>	789
SS-EDUI1.3	Pandemic Support System Modelling and Implementation as Integral Part of Computer Science Courses <i>Nenad Petrović</i>	794
SS-EDUI1.4	An overview of software code review tools and the possibility of their application in teaching at the School of Electrical Engineering in Belgrade <i>Milos Obradovic, Marija Kostic, Balsa Knezevic and Drazen Draskovic</i>	799
SS-EDUI1.1	Automatsko snimanje amplitudno-frekventnih karakteristika primenom Arduino okruženja <i>Goran Dikić and Slobodan Drašković</i>	805
SS-EDUI1.2	Zaštita prenosa paketskog telefonskog saobraćaja upotrebom tehnologije virtuelnih privatnih mreža <i>Miće Živanović, Jovan Bajčetić and Ivan Tot</i>	809
SPECIAL THEMATIC SESSION – DIGITALISATION IN SCIENCE/СПЕЦИЈАЛНА ТЕМАТСКА СЕСИЈА – ДИГИТАЛИЗАЦИЈА У НАУЦИ (SS-DI/СС-ДИ)		815
SS-DI1.1	Digitalizacija naučne građe - metode i rešenja <i>Zoran Zdravković</i>	816
SS-DI1.2	Jedinica za snimanje podataka u ispitivanju vanrednih železničkih događaja <i>Sanja Jevtić, Marija Vukšić Popović, Nada Ratković Kovačević and Sonja Ketin</i>	822
SS-DI1.3	Merenje digitalizacije i IKT sektora – parametri i metode kvantifikacije razvoja društva <i>Zoran Zdravković</i>	826
SS-DI1.4	Neki savremeni aspekti upotrebe luminiscentnih efekata <i>Milanka Pećanac and Bećko Kaslića</i>	830
SS-DI1.5	Изазови у настави на рачунарима током пандемије Covid 19 на предмету Нацртна геометрија са рачунарским цртањем <i>Magdalena Dragović, Aleksandar Čučaković, Svetlana Čičević, Aleksandar Trifunović and Anastazija Martinenko</i>	834
SS-DI1.6	Aktuelni problemi digitalizacije u državnoj administraciji <i>Nikola Popović and Julijana Mirčevski</i>	840
SS-DI1.7	On the Potential of SMS Text Messaging in mHealth <i>Danica Mamula Tartalja, Gordana Jelic and Enis Osmani</i>	844
SPECIAL THEMATIC SESSION - FORENSICS/ СПЕЦИЈАЛНА ТЕМАТСКА СЕСИЈА – ФОРЕНЗИКА (SS-FO/СС-ФО)		848
SS-FO1.1	Forenzičke metode za identifikaciju lica: juče, danas, sutra <i>Snezana Stojicic, Nataša Petrović, Radovan Radovanović and Mileša Srećković</i>	849
SS-FO1.2	Sigurnosni uređaji za proveru oružja u funkciji forenzičko-balističkih ispitivanja <i>Kristijan Đujić, Radovan Radovanović, Saša Milić, Martin Matijašević and Aleksandar Ivković</i>	854
SS-FO1.3	Primena forenzičkih alata u klasifikaciji incidenata i nesreća u komercijalnom vazдушном саобраћају по EASA методологији <i>Aleksandar Ivković, Radovan Radovanović, Sаша Милић, Душан Ивковић and Кристијан Ђујић</i>	858
SS-FO1.4	Нуклеарна форензика – методе за откривање процеса производње, прометовања и кријумчарења недозвољених физионих материјала <i>Срећко Илић, Радован Радовановић, Саша Милић, Александар Алексић and Александар Ивковић</i>	863

SS-FO1.5	Stabilnost frekvencije kvarcnih oscilatora <i>Miodrag Malović, Ljiljana Brajović and Tomislav Šekara</i>	869
SS-FO1.6	Natural Polymers As Nanocapsule Carriers <i>Danijela Rajić, Srđan Vuković and Svetlana Pelemiš</i>	875
SS-FO2.1	Kvantne generativne suparničke mreže za generisanje naučnih rezultata <i>Vladimir Arsoski</i>	879
SS-FO2.2	Forenzički aspekt prostorne i vremenske komponente <i>Snezana Stojičić, Radovan Radovanović, Mileša Srečković and Nikola Radovanović</i>	886
SS-FO2.3	Različiti režimi rada kvantnih generatora kao instrument za modifikacije u stomatologiji <i>Aleksandar Bugarinović, Željka Tomić, Sanja Jevtić, Aleksander Kovačević, Svetlana Pelemiš, Zoran Nedić and Dragan Družijanić</i>	890
SS-FO2.4	Оптичка влакна у периметарским системима техничке заштите <i>Slađana Pantelić and Branka Radojčić</i>	894
SS-FO2.5	FIZIČKA I NEDESTRUKTIVNA ISPITIVANJA KERAMIČKIH MATERIJALA ZA OBLAGANJE SA ASPEKTA TRAJNOSTI <i>Zoran Stević, Aleksandar Savić, Milica Vlahović, Sanja Martinović and Tatjana Volkov Husović</i>	898
SS-FO2.6	Суб-микрометарске паралелне површинске структуре индуковане фемтосекундним ласерским снопом у форензици <i>Aleksander Kovačević, Suzana Petrović, Marina Lekić, Borislav Vasić, Branislav Salatić and Jelena Potočnik</i>	901
SPECIAL THEMATIC SESSION - HERITOLGY/СПЕЦИЈАЛНА ТЕМАТСКА СЕСИЈА - ХЕРИТОЛОГИЈА (SS-HE/CC-XE)		905
SS-HE1.1	Sinhronizacija mernih podataka u bežičnim senzorskim mrežama <i>Miodrag Malović</i>	906
SS-HE1.2	Primer kombinovanja raspodela atmosferskih aerosola po veličinama dobijenih metodom merenja električne pokretljivosti i optičkom metodom <i>Miloš Davidović, Milena Davidovic, Sonja Dmitrašinović, Mileša Srečković and Milena Jovašević–stojanović</i>	913
SS-HE1.3	INTEGRACIJE NAUČNIH ZNANJA U PRIMENI VEŠTAČKE INTELIGENCIJE U HERITOLOŠKIM PROBLEMIMA <i>Suzana Polić, Mileša Srečković, Zoran Stević, Slobodan Bojanić and Željka Tomić</i>	918
SS-HE1.4	Problem heritološke abdukcije u vezi sa instrumentalnim analizama materijala kulturne baštine <i>Suzana Polić, Mileša Srečković, Zoran Stević, Miodrag Malović and Miloš Đurić</i>	922
SS-HE1.5	Deskripcija, heritologija i metrologija boje <i>Mileša Srečković, Veljko Zarubica, Aleksander Kovačević, Zoran Fidanovski, Suzana Polić and Milena Davidović</i>	928
SS-HE1.6	PROTO-KONCEPTUALNA REŠENJA U PRIMENI LASERA U HERITOLOGIJU <i>Mileša Srečković, Suzana Polić, Zoran Stević, Veljko Zarubica and Stanko Ostojić</i>	933
SS-HE1.7	COMPARISON OF 3D PRINTING AND GALVANIC COATING OF GOLD IN PRINTING CIRCUIT BOARD PRODUCTION <i>Zoran Karastojković, Radiša Perić, Aleksandar Bugarinović, Milan Miladinov and Višeslava Rajković</i>	937
SSICETRAN-KALCEA		940
SS-ICETRAN-KALCEA	Platform for Rapid Prototyping of Maximum Power Point Tracking Algorithms in Photovoltaic Systems <i>Srđan Lale, Ognjen Petrić, Slobodan Lubura and Marko Ikić</i>	941
Indeks autora/Author index		

Measurement Using Liquid Scintillation Spectrometer-Quality Control

Marija Janković, Nataša Sarap, Jelena Krneta Nikolić, Milica Rajačić, Dragana Todorović, Ivana Vukanac

Abstract—Liquid scintillation spectrometers (LSC) are used for radionuclide activity concentration measurements. This paper presents quality control measurements for Quantulus 1220 LSC, which is used for tritium activity determination. The quality control is verified on a monthly basis with two tritium standards. Based on these measurements two different efficiencies were calculated. Paper also presents the results obtained for tritium activity concentration in water sample within intercomparison, which are performed in Radiation and Environmental Protection Department, Vinča Institute of Nuclear Sciences. Intercomparison was organized by International Atomic Energy Agency in 2021.

Index Terms—liquid scintillation spectrometer, quality control, tritium.

I. INTRODUCTION

Liquid scintillation spectrometer is widely used for determination of low radioactivity. It can be used for detection alpha and beta radiation, Cerenkov radiation, X-rays, Auger electrons, luminescence and gamma radiation. The main advantages of using liquid scintillation spectrometer are rapidity, sensitivity, low detection limits in measurement of low energy beta emitters, such as tritium. Radioactive isotope of hydrogen, tritium ^3H , has low beta energy with maximum of 18 keV. Whether of natural or anthropogenic, this radionuclide is mobile in the environment, especially in water, and in biological systems. Tritium exists in three chemical

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forms: tritiated water (HTO), gaseous tritium (HT) an organically bound tritium (OBT). Naturally occurred tritium, produced in the upper atmosphere is oxidized to tritiated water [1,2]. Anthropogenic source of tritium are nuclear tests (between 1945. and 1963.) and nuclear facilities.

In order to determine the activity concentrations of radionuclides, optimization of detector measurement conditions should be performed. One of the basic parameters is determining efficiency. In the case of internal quality control, a periodic check of the characteristics of the detector is carried out according to the quality control plan. External quality control enables participation in intercomparisons, participation in PT schemes.

This paper presents the evaluation of the efficiency of liquid scintillation spectrometer for tritium measurement and analysis of control charts. Radiation and Environmental Protection Department, Vinča Institute of Nuclear Sciences participated in intercomparison for tritium measurement in water sample and this paper also presents the obtained results.

II. THE METHOD

Measurement for the purpose of tritium activity determination in water samples are performed on liquid scintillation spectrometer Quantulus 1220. Methods for tritium determination, ASTM D 4107-08 standard method [3] and validated method [4], are accredited with the Accreditation Body of Republic of Serbia according to standard 17025.

Because of low energy of tritium, samples must be distilled to prevent the detection of other beta emitters with higher energy that could mask the tritium spectrum. One of the advantages of LSC technique is 4π geometry (Figure 1.).

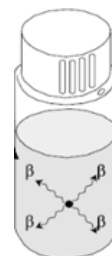


Fig. 1. 4π counting geometry [5]

Spectrometer before any measurement must be calibrated according to the calibration plan. According to the quality control plan, the efficiency check of the detector is done on a monthly basis. The value of the detector efficiency is included in the calculation for determining the activity of tritium.

Monthly counting efficiency is determined according to method ASTM D 4107-08 Standard Test Method for Tritium in Drinking Water. Quality control is carried out with reference standard tritium solution ³H 9031-OL-548/13 Czech Metrology Institute Type: ER X with activity 5.060 MBq on day 1.10.2013. and PerkinElmer Unquenched Toluene Standard 6008500 with activity 4890 Bq on day 18.11.2015. which have traceability to the BIPM.

Counting efficiency of the spectrometer, ε , is calculated using the following equation:

$$\varepsilon = \frac{R_{ST} - R_b}{A_{ST}} \quad (1)$$

where R_{ST} is standard count rate (cps), R_b is background count rate (cps) and A_{ST} is standard activity (Bq).

Measurement uncertainty for efficiency is presented through the following equation:

$$u(\varepsilon) = \sqrt{\frac{R_{ST} + R_b}{A_{ST}^2} + \varepsilon^2 \left(\frac{u(A_{ST})}{A_{ST}} \right)^2} \quad (2)$$

where t_{ST} is standard measuring time (s), t_b is background measuring time (s).

III. MAIN RESULTS

As already mentioned, according to the quality control plan, the efficiency check of the detector is done on a monthly basis, before measurement of samples.

For efficiency determination two standards are used. In addition to the standard, the background is also measured. Beside the standard from Czech Metrology Institute, for background, dead water (*DW* - tritium free water) from Miami is used, and beside the standard from PerkinElmer Background PerkinElmer is used. The first standard and *DW* are mix with 12 ml scintillation cocktail ULTIMA GOLD LLT in relation 8:12 in 20 ml polyethylene vial. Measurement time for the first standard is 300 s, and for the *DW* is 18000 s, for the second standard and for the background from PerkinElmer measurement time is 1200 s.

Figures 2. and 3. are present control chart for the efficiencies using two different standards. As a reference value, the internal calibration value is taken. Upper and lower control limits are $\pm 3 \sigma$.

Since the LSC Quantulus 1220 has one detector and 60 positions for measurements, changing the position for the standard and for the background does not change the count rate of standard and background used in efficiency determining.

For the tritium spectrum, standard and background count rates were evaluated between channels 1 and 250 for the first standard, and for the second standard and background count rates were evaluated between channels 1 and 350.

Based on the calculated counting efficiency, the sensitivity of the instrument, *figure of merit* (*FOM*) can be calculated via following equation:

$$FOM = \frac{\varepsilon^2}{R_b} \quad (3)$$

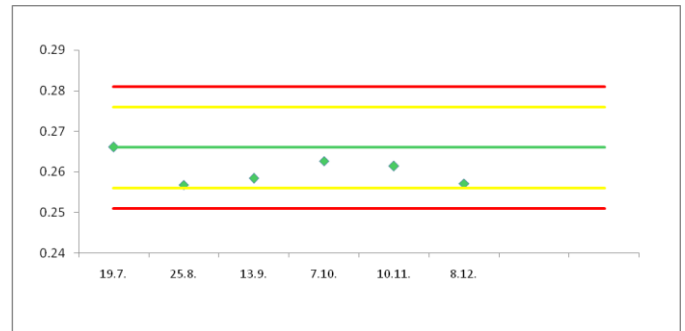


Fig. 2. Control chart for the efficiency for the standard from Czech Metrology Institute for the second half of 2021.

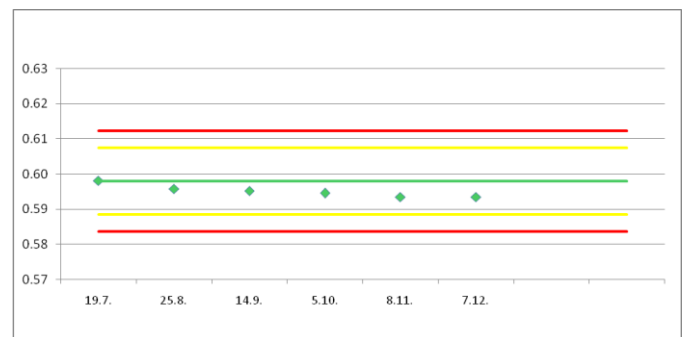


Fig. 3. Control chart for the efficiency for the standard from PerkinElmer for the second half of 2021.

Based on the results obtained for the efficiency check on monthly basis, the limits of acceptance, which is set on $\pm 2 \sigma$, were not exceeded, observing control charts for both standards.

Using the determining efficiencies, *FOM* can be calculated based on the equation (3). For calculated efficiency for the first standard (26,6 %) and for determined background count rate (2,1 cpm), *FOM* is 337. For the second standard, for calculated efficiency for the first standard (59,8 %) and for determined background count rate (9,66 cpm), *FOM* is 370.

Radiation and Environmental Protection Department, Vinča Institute of Nuclear Sciences, National Institute of the Republic of Serbia, University of Belgrade, participated in intercomparison ALMERA Proficiency test IAEA-TEL-2021-04. One of the required analyzes was tritium determination in water sample. For sample preparation, ASTM D 4107-08 standard method was used. The method involves preliminary distillation. An aliquot of 8 ml distilled sample is mix with 12 ml scintillation cocktail ULTIMA GOLD LLT in polyethylene vial (volume of vial is 20 ml).

Table I. presents intercomparison results. The final score is A (accepted).

TABLE I
INTERCOMPARISON EVALUATION PT IAEA-TEL-2021-03

Sample	Reference value	Reported value	Z-score evaluation
Water	1653.6 ± 98.2	1641 ± 32	A

IV. CONCLUSION

In order to use a Liquid scintillation spectrometer to measure tritium, an analysis of control charts was performed using two tritium standards. Counting efficiencies were calculated and these values were taken as a baseline value. Monthly determination of efficiency, in accordance with the quality control plan, shows stability of the instrument. Results of intercomparison for tritium measurement in water sample show excellent values, using LSC Quantulus 1220 and accredited method.

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