Applying model checking to critical PLC applications: An ITER case study

THPHA161

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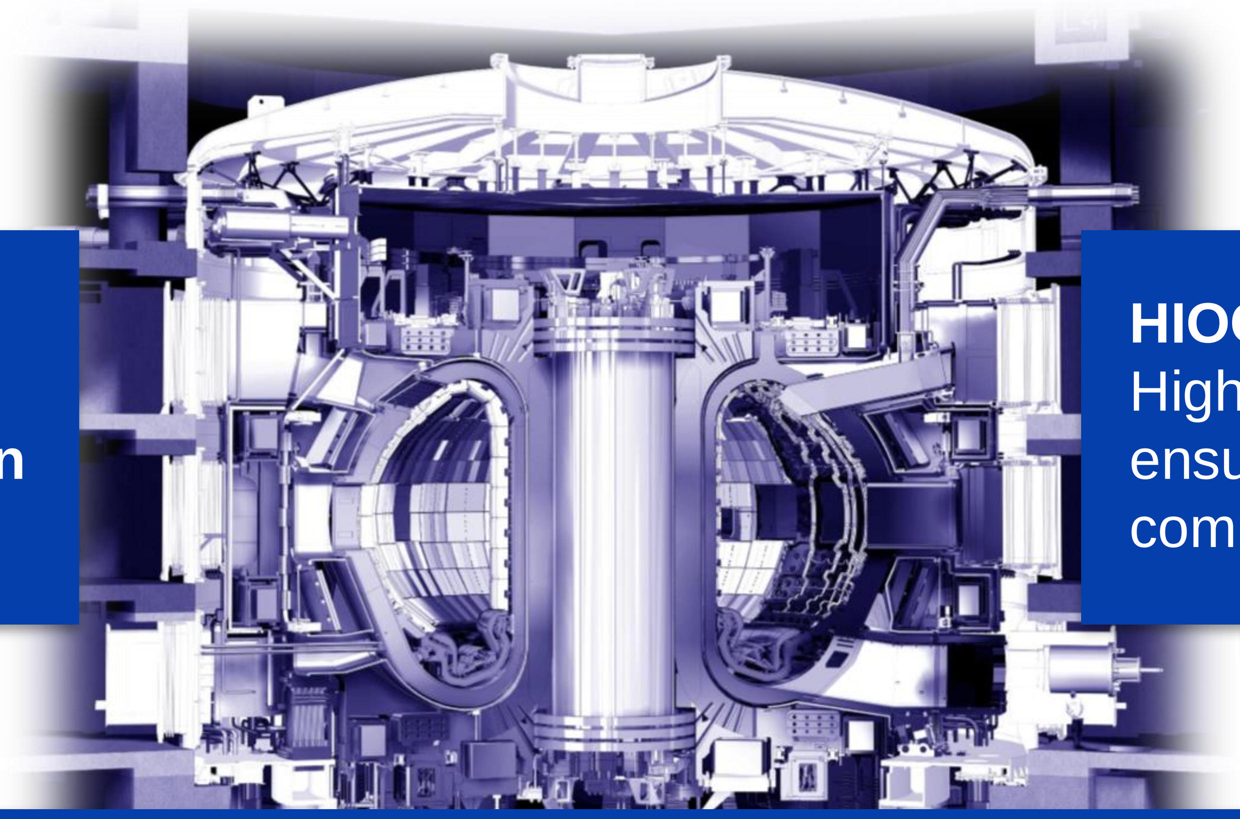
ITER
World collaboration to build the first **fusion device** producing **net energy** and to **maintain fusion for long periods** of time.



HIOC
High-integrity communication protocol to ensure safe masking of interlocks for commissioning and maintenance.

GOAL: Verification and better understanding of the **PLC program** implementing the **HIOC protocol**

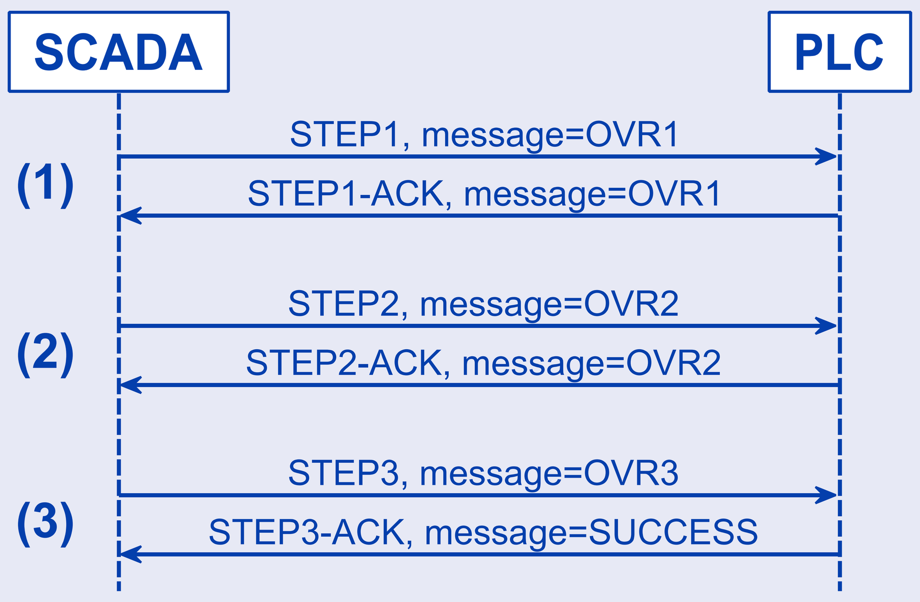
Protocol

Black channel approach

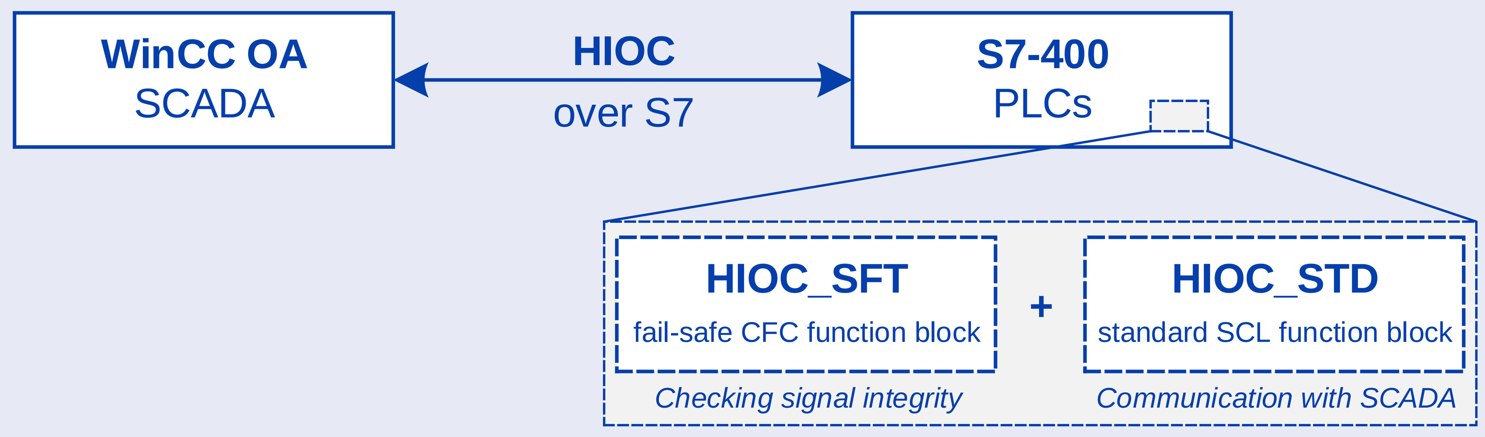
- As defined in IEC 61508
- No guarantees expected from the underlying communication protocols

Three-phase protocol

- Ensures the integrity of the transmitted message

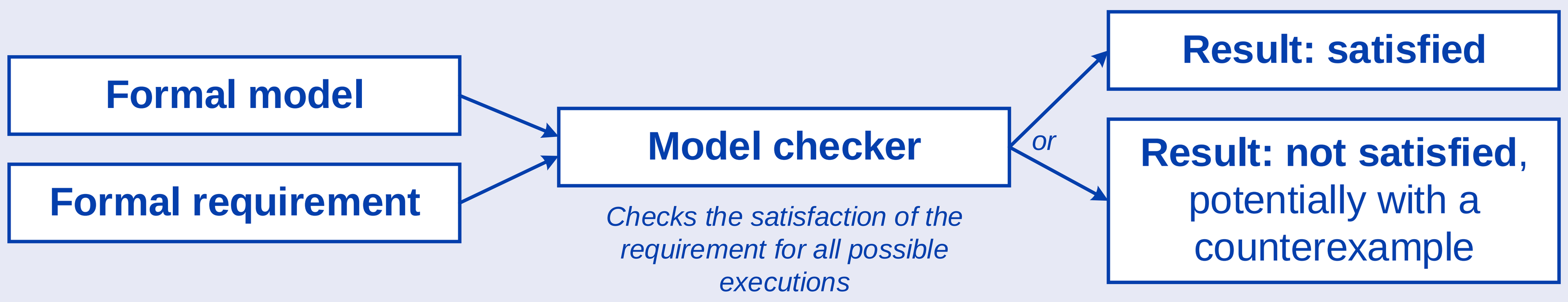


Implementation



Model checking

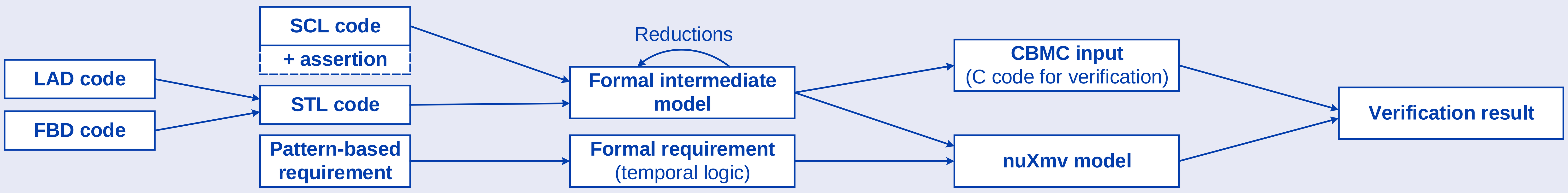
Model checking is a formal verification method that checks the satisfaction of a formal requirement on a formal model with mathematical precision for all possible executions.
In case a violation of a requirement is found, often a counterexample can be provided that shows a trace leading to the violation.



PLCverif

- **Model checking solution** for PLC programs
- **Hides the formal details** from the users
- Integrates **multiple** model checking **engines**
- Developed at **CERN**

PLCverif's verification workflow



Pattern-based verification

- **Pattern-based requirement**: Fixed English sentence with place-holders to be filled by the verifier
- **nuXmv**: State-of-the-art symbolic model checker tool

\+ **Can check rich, complex requirements**
– **Performance can be a bottleneck**

Assertion-based verification

- **Verification assertion**: Logic expression in the code that must always be satisfied
- **CBMC**: Bounded model checker to check assertion violations in C code

\+ **Fast verification**
– **Assertions can only represent simple requirements**
– Bounded model checking ensures correctness only for certain length

Outcome

Formal proof of correctness

- Ongoing work
- Formalising and checking all important requirements is an ongoing work
- Difficult to ensure completely: All tools in the toolchain must be verified

Improved understanding

Via counterexamples

- A counterexample can show a **witness of an incorrect behaviour**
- Similarly, counterexamples can be used to provide examples (traces) of any behaviour
- Such trace may reveal **peculiar, unexpected functionality**

Via requirement formalisation

- Model checking requires formal requirements
- **Removing all ambiguity** from informal specifications is difficult and often reveals **interesting corner cases**
- Needs collaboration of specifiers, developers and verifiers

You can find the paper and more information at
http://cern.ch/plcverif
http://iter.org

Photo of the TOKAMAK: © ITER Organization, http://www.iter.org/, included for informational use.
We thank the ITER interlock team for their support of this work.