

# društvene vijesti

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## The criterion was excellence

intervju časopisu *Nachrichten aus der Chemie* povodom održavanja  
3<sup>rd</sup> EuCheMS Chemistry Congress 2010 Chemistry – the Creative Force  
29. 8. – 2. 9. 2010., Nuremberg, Germany

*The 3rd EuCheMS Conference is an ideal platform for spotlighting chemistry as the key source of sustainable solutions to the mega-topics and challenges facing all of us today: energy, food supplies, and resources in a healthy environment. Nachrichten aus der Chemie talked with Francois Diederich and Andreas Hirsch, co-chairs of the Scientific Committee.*

**Nachrichten aus der Chemie:** All good things come in threes. From August 29 to September 2, 2010 the 3<sup>rd</sup> EuCheMS conference will take place in Nuremberg. What differences can we expect from the conferences in Budapest and Turin?

**Francois Diederich:** First, both those two meetings were highly successful scientifically. So we have kept some of the structures that were working so well in Budapest in Turin Budapest and Turin as our “trademark”, as it were – just as the ACS meetings do. They keep the same format for years. The positive resonance of Budapest 2006 and Turin 2008 certainly made recruiting top conveners and guest lecturers easier this time around. We have also preserved the vertical thematic structuring that made the two previous meetings so successful.

**Nachrichten:** What does this “vertical structuring” look like?

**Andreas Hirsch:** Seven main topics lend a basic structure to the event. They are each introduced by eminent plenary speakers. But at the Nuremberg congress, the panel of plenary speakers is different from that of Turin: though thoroughly international, Europe is the showcase of the plenary lecturers here.

**Nachrichten:** What were the criteria for choosing these seven main themes?

**Hirsch:** The main themes were selected for their significance in terms of future impact. Chemistry generates much of its progress and achievements for a sustainable society within these seven areas. The plenary lecturers are leaders in each of these fields, as are the conveners, whose reputations have attracted a group of outstanding guest speakers. These persons amount to a virtual “who’s who” of names outstanding in Europe and globally.

**Nachrichten:** We understand that each main topic will then be discussed in various sub-symposia.

**Diederich:** That’s right. Each of the seven main themes will be discussed at three or four symposia, each featuring some six guest speakers from Europe and elsewhere, plus shorter talks and poster presentations. The symposia are organised by leading conveners who have attracted high-level guest speakers from all over Europe. The only criterion for the selection of lecturers was excellence.

The symposia are an ideal format for presenting and debating the basic scientific developments needed to cope with the mega-themes of the future.

**Hirsch:** In addition to the core programme, a number of special symposia will be organised by EuCheMS divisions on Life Sciences, Inorganic Chemistry, Chemical Education at Work, Organic Chemistry, Party on Physical Chemistry, and two satellite meetings at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg.

**Nachrichten:** So this is what makes up the conference’s vertical structure.

**Diederich:** Yes – 132 hours of lectures and more than 1000 posters. Then, in addition to this vertical structure, the conference’s horizontal structure is sure to appeal to specialists from industry and academia.

**Nachrichten:** Horizontal structure?

**Diederich:** Yes. Each field – organic, inorganic, analytical and physical chemistry, as well as chemical biology and materials sciences – will also be presented and debated over the entire four days. So each specialist will find something in their specific field during the entire conference. Thus the meeting will provide perspectives that are readily translatable to the general public – how essential chemistry is to energy research, food supplies, environmental sustainability, etc. – as well as a high-level specialist programme in the various sub-disciplines within each field. Specialists and experts will be looking for high-quality proceedings in their discipline throughout the conference period. This is what I mean by the horizontal structure.

**Nachrichten:** Are there any scientific lacunas in the programme? Intentional ones, even?

**Hirsch:** No single congress can cover everything. We have tried to allow for the fact that conferences today actively compete with one another. The conveners – all members of the Scientific Committee – report exceptionally positive response to their invitations to guest speakers.

**Diederich:** So we now have reason to expect that this excellent programme frame will be attracting many more scientists – from industry, academia, and government agencies – and that they will give poster presentations and discuss their work in person in oral contributions. These talks, which are selected from the participants’ abstracts, should offer a unique platform, especially for younger scientists, for reporting on findings and the challenges encountered in research, both in academia and industry. After all, it is today’s young people who will be facing tomorrow’s challenges.

**Nachrichten:** What benefits does the EuCheMS conference offer young scientists?

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**Diederich:** They obtain a broader view of the main focuses for chemistry in the future and what tools and methods are being developed to reach which key objectives. They can meet leading European and international scientists in lectures and in person and make contacts for scientific exchange and postdoctoral opportunities. They can also meet industrial scientists and learn about the opportunities their companies have to offer. They can also see at first hand how prosperous chemistry is in Europe, and that belonging to this creative scientific force is very much worthwhile. Career days and a job fair will be organized for young chemists looking for jobs in industry by the GDCh and the European Young Chemists Network. In the past, such events have made ACS meetings much more attractive: we hope they will be a highlight of this congress series as well.

**Nachrichten:** Will travel grants be available for young scientists?

**Hirsch:** The Karl Ziegler Foundation offers stipends for German participants to the amount of EUR 400. In an effort to strengthen and advance the European Young Chemist Network (EYCN) and attract talented young Eastern European chemists to Nuremberg, the Forum of Young Chemists in Germany (JCF) will also award travel grants to scientists from Eastern Europe: 10 grants worth EUR 250 each. The French and British Chemical societies have also announced stipend programmes.

**Nachrichten:** Will EuCheMS 3 attract chemists from industry, too?

**Hirsch:** Undoubtedly! The mega-topics and mega-trends in industry and academia are actually the same: energy, food supply, resources and environment, new analytical methods and tools, new functional materials, new synthetic methods, catalysis, etc...

**Diederich:** Industrial and academic research laboratories will need to pull together in future to cope with these challenges. The congress offers a platform for industrial chemists to broaden their scientific knowledge and get to know the academic scientists pursuing original work that can help a company meet its objectives. They can get in touch with numerous young scientists, doctoral and postdoctoral, on the career days and at the job fair – and also in more informal settings within or around the meeting. Industrial chemists will get a broader perspective on what is going on and what is available all over Europe – not just in the country where they live and work. The fact that all scientific proceedings are held under one roof in the excellent conference centre ensures many opportunities for contact. The exhibition is expected to be very attractive. A long list of companies and vendors, in addition to scientific publishers, have already announced their participation.

**Nachrichten:** Is conference attendance expensive?

**Diederich:** The registration fees could fortunately be kept to the level of previous conferences, with EUR 400 for the 150,000 members of the 50 member societies from 34 countries within EuCheMS, and EUR 200 for students below the age of 35.

**Nachrichten:** Why was Nuremberg chosen as the site of the third EuCheMS conference?

**Hirsch:** Nuremberg has an excellent modern congress centre and a fine infrastructure – all at a reasonable prices. There are the many cultural offerings, too. Medieval Nuremberg with the Kaiser's Castle is very attractive, very interesting, and historically significant.

**Nachrichten:** The 4th EuCheMS conference will be in Prague, only 250 km away from Nuremberg: is Eastern Europe a favoured focus?

**Hirsch:** Nuremberg's position at the interface between the early EU countries and the new Eastern European EU countries is important. Chemists from Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary can easily come by car, which is convenient and economical. We hope for a large participation from Eastern Europe and have tailored parts of the programme specifically for this audience. I am certain that there is much untapped chemical talent in the Eastern European countries. We hope many Eastern Europeans will attend and show us in their presentations what they have done and can do. As an example, organic chemists in Eastern

European countries focus in their research on heterocyclic chemistry, which is essential for drug development. Theoretical chemistry is prominently represented, too. So these topics are highlighted in the programme. We hope to make a smooth transition to Prague 2012.

**Nachrichten:** If I'm counting correctly, more awards will be presented here than ever before. Is that right?

**Diederich:** That's right. To name some, there is the August-Wilhelm von Hoffmann-Denkünze of the GDCh, the European Young Chemist Award from EuCheMS, the Heinrich Emanuel Merck award for Analytical Sciences, the Reaxys PhD Prize, the Young Chemist Award and, for the first time, the First European Sustainable Chemistry Award, sponsored by SusChem, the European Environment Agency, and Cefic.

**Nachrichten:** What is the impact of EuCheMS compared with other international conferences?

**Diederich:** The format of the EuCheMS conferences resembles that of the ACS meetings in many respects, with division symposia organised by eminent conveners, an exhibition, career days and awards sessions. European Chemistry needs a regularly scheduled European Meeting. It is just like sports. It is nice to have national conventions but the really exciting events involve all of Europe and higher levels of competition – just like in the Football Champions League. The higher quality of European chemistry journals demonstrates the benefits of changing from national-only to European.

**Nachrichten:** So you hope that the EuCheMS Conferences will also play this role?

**Diederich:** Absolutely. As we move from national to more competitive, higher-level European meetings, the visibility and impact of European chemical sciences will grow far beyond Europe. Such meetings will ultimately attract eminent scientists from the other major players in chemistry such as the USA, Japan, India, and China. Particularly strong attendance by industrial and young scientists, besides being fertile ground for scientific discussion, is one of the impact factors that mark a conference's quality and success. We certainly expect to have a high impact. The Asian scientific communities realize this, too, and they are putting a lot of work and resources into holding Asian congresses.

**Nachrichten:** What is specifically "European" about EuCheMS conferences?

**Hirsch:** A top-level scientific event in a historical medieval setting is possible only in Europe. Both speakers and audiences reflect not only the great diversity among scientific communities but also the cultures of the various European countries. Different countries have different strengths in chemistry, too. Assembling them all in a single showcase allows an outstanding overview of European science. This kind of up-to-date picture of the European research landscape gives a big boost to the creation of a European research sphere. For example, supramolecular chemistry is one highlight and a strength of European research, so this theme is expected to have particular weight in the conference programme.

**Nachrichten:** Do you think the individual European societies are properly aware of EuCheMS as their own conference? Do they do enough to promote it?

**Hirsch:** There's a worthwhile video on the conference home page showing strong support for the conference from all over Europe. Acceptance by the 50 EuCheMS member societies to attend the conference is already a substantial plus. The large advertisement by the Italian Chemical Society is particularly worth noting.

**Nachrichten:** What do you personally expect from EuCheMS Nuremberg?

**Diederich:** We are very excited about both the setting of the congress and its scientific programme. It promises to be a most rewarding and enriching few days and to make a unique contribution to establishing the EuCheMS Congress as the leading bi-annual event of European chemistry. See you in Nuremberg!