

## Press Release

Brussels, 06 July 2018

**44 students from Belgium and The Netherlands debate on the role of sciences and sustainability**

### **Winners selected at Dutch and Belgian National Final of 2018 European Youth Debating Competition heading to European Final in Vienna**

At the Dutch and Belgian National Final of the 2018 European Youth Debating Competition, an initiative organised by the European Petrochemical Association (EPCA) and PlasticsEurope, 44 youngsters from eight schools and universities in Belgium and The Netherlands debated on the overarching theme **“Living, learning, working and moving in Smart Cities of the future: with or without plastics and petrochemicals?”**.

After successful editions of the European Youth Debating Competition (EYDC, [www.eydc.eu](http://www.eydc.eu)) in 2016 and 2017, EPCA and PlasticsEurope once again partnered up to organise a series of debating competitions for youngsters in Europe, held between April and October 2018. This year, for the first time, the three Benelux countries competed amongst each other during a debate held in Brussels on 25 June 2018.

Ultimately, three young debaters won and were selected to represent the Benelux at the European Finals to be held in Vienna from 7-10 October, during the 52<sup>th</sup> EPCA Annual Meeting, the largest gathering of the global Petrochemical Business Community in Europe. They are Jason Yeager (18 years) from the International School of Brussels; Ian Osole (16 years) and Harriet Agyiri (19 years), both from De Nieuwe Internationale School Esprit in Amsterdam.

Caroline Ciuciu, CEO of EPCA, expressed her delight about the quality of the debaters during the Benelux finals and said that “this competition is a unique opportunity for students to express themselves in a convincing way and for our industries to connect with the new generation, listen and learn about how they see the future.” She continued, “today, the young debaters demonstrated their ability to debate. Beyond promoting STEM Education, our aim is to empower them with soft skills that will help them to interact in a fast changing world.”

Leonor Garcia, Public Affairs Director of PlasticsEurope added to this: “With the challenges the world is facing today, it is important that we are all aware of the large sustainability potential of plastics and chemistry. Today, we learnt what the younger generations have to say. They expressed this well, demonstrating an insightful understanding of the synergy and collective responsibility between industry, consumers and the society at large – this profoundly impressed me.”

## **Background**

The main objectives of the European Youth Debating Competition and its organisers from the petrochemical and plastics industry are to promote STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) as well as to inform about sustainability and resource efficiency, all of them being key ingredients for the future of both industry sectors and the overall competitiveness of the European Union. To reach this, EPCA and PlasticsEurope have launched this new series of the European Youth Debating Competition ([www.eydc.eu](http://www.eydc.eu)) targeting young students aged 16 to 19 hosted in nine EU countries.

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### ***The European Petrochemical Association (EPCA)***

*Based in Brussels, EPCA is the **primary European Business Network** for the global petrochemical business community consisting of chemical producers, their suppliers, customers and service providers. It operates for and through more than 700-member companies from 54 different countries. EPCA **hosts** events in Europe offering members all over the world the opportunity to meet industry leaders and selected external stakeholders and stay abreast of international market developments as well as technological and societal trends. EPCA also **assists** members on **specific topics** that underpin the sustainable development of the global petrochemical industry. EPCA promotes STEM education, with a clear focus on gender and diversity inclusion. EPCA also highlight the multidisciplinary approach and the variety of challenging career paths that the petrochemical industry offers.*

**PlasticsEurope** is one of the leading European trade associations with centres in Brussels, Frankfurt, London, Madrid, Milan and Paris. The association is networking with European and national plastics associations and has more than 100-member companies, producing over 90% of all polymers across the EU28 member states plus Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.