

Press Release

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88 students from across France debated on the role of science and sustainability in Smart Cities

Winners from the French Finals of 2018 European Youth Debating Competition are heading to European Finals in Vienna

At the French edition of the 2018 European Youth Debating Competition (EYDC), an educational initiative organised by the European Petrochemical Association (EPCA) and PlasticsEurope, 88 youngsters from 12 schools and universities across France 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) in 2016 and 2017, EPCA and PlasticsEurope once again partnered up to promote education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) by organizing a series of debating competitions for youngsters in Europe. The EYDC has been taking place since April and will conclude with the European Finals on Monday 8th October afternoon in Vienna. So far more than 400 students aged 16 to 19 years old have participated in eight National Finals in: Belgium (for a joint “Benelux” Finals), Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK. The French National Finals in Paris was the last national debate of a series of nine National Finals.

Ultimately, three young debaters won the French debate, which took place at the International School of Paris on 21st September 2018. They were selected to represent France at the European Finals to be held in Vienna from 7th – 10th October, during the 52nd EPCA Annual Meeting, the largest gathering of the global Petrochemical Business Community in Europe.

They are Aleksander Kondak (16 years), from the Lycée International des Pontonniers in Strasbourg; Jiawei Zhang (17 years), from CNED / Cours Singulier in Ivry sur Seine and Adam Roden (16 years) from Saint-Denis International School in Loches.

Marc Schuller, President of EPCA and Executive Vice President of Arkema France was impressed by the outcome of the competition, stating: “Today, the young debaters demonstrated their ability to express themselves in a convincing way and interact with other participants. Beyond promoting STEM Education, we seek to empower them with soft skills that will help them in their future careers, irrespective of their role or paths.” Mr Schuller, continued, “this competition is a unique opportunity for students to directly enter into debate with industry and in turn for us to connect with the new generation, to listen and learn about their views and how they see the future. I look forward to seeing the level of debate at the European Finals in October, where young finalists from 9 National Finals will compete.”

Eric Quenet, West Region Director at PlasticsEurope, was greatly encouraged by the young debaters, stating that “I’m absolutely delighted that the petrochemical and plastics industries continue to support the EYDC project. Once more we find ourselves in front of a young, energetic and diverse group of students ready to step in and solve the world’s most critical issues. All jury members enjoyed this experience and were impressed by the level of maturity and enthusiasm of the young debaters.”

Caroline Ciuciu, CEO of EPCA joined Mr Quenet in his praise by commenting: "The level of debate in Paris was outstanding. I was impressed by the students' ability to articulate their views on how they see Smart Cities of the future and the contribution of petrochemicals and plastics to solve challenges of rapid urbanisation, mobility and quality of life." She continued, stating that "These young people are our future, and as such, it is more important than ever to facilitate dialogue and listen to each other's perspective and continue supporting and nurturing STEM education, which in turn will ensure the future sustainability of our industry."

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) 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 **organises conferences and 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 **supports** 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.*