

Press Release

Vienna, 11 October 2018

Smart Cities – Smart Materials – Smart Youngsters

Thirty young bright minds from across Europe debated the role of Science and Sustainability in Smart Cities at the European Finals of the Youth Debating Competition in Vienna

Today, the 2018 European Youth Debating Competition (EYDC), an educational initiative organised by the European Petrochemical Association (EPCA) and PlasticsEurope culminated with the European Finals, gathering 30 youngsters aged between 16 – even 15 - and 19 years old from 9 National Finals from across Europe. They all debated in the framework of the overarching theme **“Living, learning, working and moving in Smart Cities of the future: with or without plastics and petrochemicals?”** During the three days, the 30 national finalists had a unique opportunity to learn, exchange views on the role of Science and Smart Cities of the future and meet industry leaders from the petrochemical and plastics industry, as well as reputable speakers from the civil society and academia during the 52nd Annual Meeting in Vienna.

Ten winners were selected on their ability to express themselves, the consistency of their speech, their ability to convince the jury and to interact with other debaters. During the closing ceremony, the top five winners were personally congratulated by Professor Steven Chu, U.S. Secretary of Energy (2009 – 2013), Nobel Prize-Winning Physicist and Professor at Stanford University, who was the honorary speaker at the closing ceremony of the 52nd EPCA Annual Meeting, together with Marc Schuller, EPCA President and Executive Vice President of Arkema France and Karl-H. Foerster, Executive Director of PlasticsEurope. The top five winners are: first prize winner - Matsuko Sano from France, second prize winner - Huda Daghem from the United Kingdom, third prize winner - Giulia Dargenio from Italy, fourth prize winner - Leon Zrnić from Croatia and fifth prize winner - Jiawei Zhang from France. The other five winners were awarded by Caroline Ciuciu, EPCA CEO and Karl-H. Foerster, Executive Director of PlasticsEurope.

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 organising a series of debating competitions for youngsters in Europe. The EYDC has been taking place since April and concluded with the European Finals on Monday, 8 October afternoon in Vienna. More than 450 students have participated in nine National Finals in: Belgium (for a joint “Benelux” Finals), Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK.



In his welcome address during EU Finals of the EYDC 2018, Mark Schuller, EPCA President and Executive Vice President of Arkema France stated that “People underestimate how refreshing it is to listen to young people. The EYDC is a great platform for them to express their ideas and connect with industry leaders. I am fully convinced that these youngsters are already shaping the world of today and will continue to do so tomorrow.”

In his closing remarks to the young debaters, Karl-H. Foerster, Executive Director of PlasticsEurope, mentioned: “I was very impressed with their reasoning skills and ability to construct their arguments. More than half of the selected participants are girls and we welcome their participation in the EYDC and their interest in science. These students are the future of our society and role models for their peers.”

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), to empower students with soft skills and to encourage them to further discover and exchange on the contribution of petrochemicals and plastics towards the low-carbon economy, 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) - hosted in nine EU countries and targeting young students aged 16 to 19.

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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.