

EuChemS congratulates FACS on its 40th Anniversary

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THE EUROPEAN CHEMICAL Society (EuChemS) offers its heartiest congratulations to the Federation of Asian Chemical Societies on the 40th Anniversary of its foundation. We also congratulate FACS on the introduction of this new magazine, AsiaChem, which promises to be a fascinating addition to general chemistry magazines.

EuChemS has been through a number of metamorphoses since its foundation as the Federation of European Chemical Societies (FECS) in 1970, its translation to the European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences (EuChemS) in 1995 to its current European Chemical Society (EuChemS) in 2018. However, throughout that time, we have sought to promote chemistry in Europe and coordinate the work of the national chemical societies in geographical Europe, just as FACS has done for Asia. Because of their particular geography, three countries, Israel, the Russian Federation and Turkey are represented in both EuChemS and FACS so it is a pleasure that they can act as bridges between our organisations. Indeed, Professor Ehud Keinan, President of the Israeli Chemical Society, has been an Executive Board member of both organisations and when the 5th European Chemistry Congress was held in Istanbul, it was a delight to hold a joint meeting between the Executive Boards of the two organisations in order to identify areas of common purpose. We would be very enthusiastic about building upon these initial discussions.

The main difference between our two organisations is that the European Parliament, of which there is no equivalent in Asia, has representation from about ¼ of our members. This means that we provide advice to the Parliament, organise Parliamentary Workshops, respond to consultations and position papers and try to make sure that chemistry is considered whenever new legislation is being planned or implemented. Areas where we have been prominent in recent years have included ensuring that the European Commission has appropriate structures for scientific advice, supporting the European Agenda on Climate change, especially with respect to the Paris agreement, raising awareness concerning endangered elements and pushing for funding of Employability. We would be interested in exploring the involvement of FACS in our next Employment Survey for Chemists. The European Commission also funds research at the highest level so we try to ensure that new initiatives have the necessary chemistry built in and that chemistry in Europe is properly funded. We have been particularly concerned about issues ranging from problems relating to antimicrobial resistance and diseases of ageing, such as Parkinson's disease and dementia, and to materials for clean energy conversion, storage and use. We have been prominent in pushing the agenda on solar-driven chemistry, which will be essential if climate targets are to be reached. EuChemS has signed a joint agreement with chemical societies from Europe, FACS and the ACS to collaborate on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

However, our remit and membership are much wider than just relating to the European Parliament. We have worked to oppose the use of chemical weapons, especially through articles and press releases, including the Seville Declaration deploring the use of chlorine in warfare, which was signed by 40 Presidents of National Societies or their representatives. We have also supported Ehud Keinan in his public attempts to persuade the Israeli government to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention, which it has already signed.

Realising that many chemists entering research fields have had no training in the ethics of what they are doing at home, in school or in religious institutions, we have recently released an on-line course entitled Good Chemistry - Methodological, Ethical, and Social Implications. Designed by Jan Mehlich, originally from Germany but now working in Taiwan, the course consists of sixteen 45 minute lectures supported by case studies, assignments, quizzes and assessments and covers all areas of how to do things right, what might go wrong and how we must be responsible for our planet. This course, which is aimed at final-year undergraduate, masters or first-year PhD students is available to all universities within our member societies and we would be happy to discuss licensing arrangements with Asian Universities.

It was a pleasure to work with FACS under the auspices of IUPAC during the International year of the Periodic Table in 2019. The opening ceremony was held in Europe (Paris) and the closing in Asia (Japan). One of EuChemS's contributions was a new version of the Periodic Table highlighting Element availability and vulnerability as well as which elements can come from conflict minerals and which are in smartphones. The periodic table, which is available in >30 different languages, including Asian ones, places a sharp focus on our vulnerability to dispersing elements we all take for granted so they may not be available in the future.

We very much look forward to developing further ties with FACS in the coming years.

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