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Conference Report

ECM-30 - European Crystallographic Meeting 2016 Bringing the Crystallographic Flame to Basel, Switzerland

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After five years of preparation the European Crystallographic Meeting 2016 (ECM-30) finally saw the light on Sunday, August 28th, 2016 at five p.m. with close to 600 people attending the opening ceremony in the congress center of Basel, Switzerland. Entertained with chemical experiments and intermezzi of the alphorn trio Solodurum, and after the welcoming talks by Katharina Fromm and the Swiss State Secretary for Education, Research and Innovation, Mauro Dell'Ambrogio, welcome messages from Hans-Peter Wessels from the Government of the Canton of Basel-City, Joël Mesot, Director of the Paul Scherrer Institute, Piero Macchi, President of the Swiss Society for Crystallography and Alessia Bacchi, President of the European Crystallographic Association were addressed to the delegates. Udo Heinemann, vice-president of the European Crystallographic Association (ECA), had the honor to hand over the 9th Max Perutz Prize of ECA to Vaclav Petříček from Prague for "his practical application of the theory of aperiodic and modulated structures in his computing system JANA". The welcome reception sponsored by the City of Basel allowed all participants to mix well with the numerous exhibitors and generous sponsors of the conference.

In total, 931 participants from 47 countries were registered, showing that the European Crystallographic Meetings are not only visible in Europe but throughout the world. Indeed, participants from as far as Australia, Malaysia, Ecuador, Brazil, Mexico, Singapore, Canada, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, the US or Korea were present. Close to one third of all participants were female, an upward trend which hopefully continues in the future. 178 participants came from Switzerland, 166 from Germany, 116 from the UK. The fact that 47 different countries were represented shows that the mobility of scientists across borders is very important for our community.

Nobel Prize winners Ada Yonath from Jerusalem and Jean-Marie Lehn from Strasbourg gave fascinating plenary lectures framing the conference. ECM-30 offered an excellent scientific program for physicists, chemists, biologists, mineralogists and, of course, crystallographers within 70 sessions, close to 300 oral presentations (16 of which were keynote lectures) and two poster sessions based on more than 715 submitted abstracts. The

K. M. Fromm (Fribourg) and J. Schefer (Villigen) opening the ECM-30. Photo: ECM-30, S. Maharajan.

Assembling speakers and chairs of the microsymposia 'Molecular compounds and MOF's at ambient conditions and under high pressure' (MS37): W. Queen (EPFL), P. Macchi (Bern), E. Patyk (Poznan), B. Zakharov (Novosibirsk), S. Moggach (Edinburgh), F. Fabbiani (Göttingen), X. Xou (Stockholm), from left to right. Photo: ECM-30, J. Schefer.

-participation to the conference sessions proved to be very good and intense from the first to the last day including the closing ceremony.

For the first time, an ECM-science slam has been organized, where young scientists presented their science in an entertaining way within a 3-minute talk. At the end of this session, the 8th Erwin Felix Lewy Bertaut Prize (ECA/ENSA) was awarded to Linda Reinhard from the Department of Cell and Molecular Biology of the Karolinska Institute at DESY, Hamburg, for her "pioneering contributions to the crystallographic analysis of enzymes and the optimization of protein preparations for diffraction studies".

ECM-30 was surrounded by eight satellite meetings, mostly before the conference and held at universities or research centers:

- PSI Powder Diffraction School PDS2016 – Modern Synchrotron Methods (Paul Scherrer Institute, Villigen)
- Robert F. Stewart School on Electron Density and Related Properties (University of Lorraine, Nancy, France)
- Young Crystallographers ECM-30 Satellite Meeting (Pharmacenter, University of Basel)
- Crystallography in the Pharmaceutical Industry Workshop (Biocenter, University of Basel)
- The CSD Python API: A Foundation for Innovation (Biocenter, Basel)
- High Data Rate MX Satellite Meeting (Biocenter, Basel)
- A Workshop on Methods in Crystallographic Computing (Lossburg-Wittendorf, Germany)
- SMARTER 5 Meeting – Structure Elucidation by Combining Magnetic Resonance, Computational Modelling and Diffraction (University of Bayreuth, Germany)

ECM-30 in Basel showed that the area of crystallography gives an essential input to today's science topics. Not only that fields of physicists, chemists, and biologists are more and more overlapping, but also technologies, as reflected by talks involving diffraction, microscopy and local probing techniques. A special microsymposium 'Teaching and Education' chaired by H. Flack (Geneva) and H. Stoeckli-Evans (Neuchâtel) as well as the creation of a general interest group on the same topic underlined the permanent effort of the European Crystallographic Association ECA to support teaching of crystallography and crystal growth and technology especially to young scientists. We hope this will also be reflected by common European education programs.

In the closing session, ECM-30 delivered a total of 21 prizes to young promising scientists. A list of the winners and the sponsors will be published on the ECA website. After the conference, 70 participants used the opportunity to join a tour to visit the Swiss free electron laser SwissFEL at the Paul Scherrer Institute, which is close to the commissioning phase.

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