

FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN CHEMICAL SOCIETIES

ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS

on the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Federation of European Chemical Societies on 14 September 1995 in Prague

by

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

25 years Federation of European Chemical Societies, a truly memorable event for the chemical community in Europe!

It is a great honour for me and of course also a pleasure to be privileged to speak on this historic occasion.

It seems that I am the only one here who attended the inaugural meeting in Prague on 3 July 1970 and who since then has continuously been active in the Federation. I am therefore particularly happy that this 25th Anniversary Meeting takes place again in Prague, the Golden City, where the final resolution for the establishment of the Federation was passed, and I should like to thank the Czech Chemical Society, Professor Horak and Professor Simanek very much indeed for giving us the opportunity of returning to this historic place for European Chemistry after 25 years.

I am also thinking with gratitude of the Czech colleagues of the first hour who so intensely and efficiently supported our efforts, particularly the then President of the Czechoslovak Chemical Society, the late Professor Cuta, and the late Dr Chvalovsky - we will never forget them!

17 Chemical Societies attended the inaugural meeting in 1970. Today 41 societies from 32 countries are members of the Federation. The idea first came about in the second half of the 1960s when representatives of some West European Chemical Societies came together to discuss closer cooperation by forming an umbrella organisation. They, however, thought of West Europe only. Taking part in these discussions I myself at a very early stage said that I would prefer cooperation on an all-European basis, because it was my firm opinion that for chemical science and for the learned Chemical Societies "Europe is a geographical term, not a political one". There was some resistance at first, but I insisted, and finally the idea was accepted and the so called "Steering Committee" was enlarged by representatives of some East European countries.

From then on the committee alternately met in East and West European countries to draft the statutes and to elaborate proposals for possible activities and the general scope of an all-European umbrella organisation. The cooperation with our colleagues from the east proved very fruitful indeed.

All members of the committee were enthusiastic about the idea of promoting international cooperation and understanding among nations. They were convinced that chemists could set an example in their field, and contribute their part to worldwide human relations independent of political concept, race or religion. The success of the work of the Federation as well as the image and the acceptance it gained worldwide show that this basic idea was right.

The aim was not only the improvement of scientific and professional cooperation among Chemical Societies in Europe, but also to build up an image of European Chemistry in the public, to strengthen the self-consciousness of European Chemists, and to awake an awareness of European Chemistry, because the cradle of modern chemical science and its industrial applications undoubtedly stood in Europe.

The various activities of FECS based on these principles secured the Federation considerable support by the member societies according to their individual possibilities, and from the very beginning prominent members of the national Chemical Societies personally engaged themselves in the activities of FECS.

We are indebted for thanks to all of them! The Presidents of many of the Societies became active in the Governing Bodies of the Federation like for example, Dr Harms of the Austrian Chemical Society, Professor Jommi of the Italian Chemical Society, Professor Niinisto of the Association of Finnish Chemical Societies, Professor Noth of the Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker, Professor Skattebol of the Norwegian Chemical Society, Dr Arnold Robinson of the Royal Institute of Chemistry, and Professor Baranowski of the Polish Chemical Society. This clearly proved the high esteem which the Federation received by the member societies which represent the chemical community of Europe.

Please, permit me to mention in this context that the Federation has no budget, it has no money of its own. According to the Statutes, the direct costs like travel expenses for delegates attending the General Assembly or the meetings of the Council or of Working Parties are taken over by the member societies. This also applies to the expenses of the General Secretariats which were taken over by the Royal Society of Chemistry, the Hungarian Chemical Society and the Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker. The secretariats of the Working Parties have likewise been taken care of by member societies.

Here I would like to express my thanks to the many prominent colleagues from east and west who took over the burden of Chairmen or Secretary of the Working Parties of FECS so very successfully, and last but not least to the General Secretaries who kept the Federation running. We will never forget the indispensable contributions of the Secretaries of the first hour, the late Dr Eric Parker, Secretary of the Royal Institute of Chemistry, and the late Dr Miklos Preisich, General Secretary of the Hungarian Chemical Society. I also thank the General Secretaries of the later years, Dr Guthrie, RSC, Dr Jakabos, Hungarian Chemical Society, Professor Naray-Szabo, Hungarian Chemical Society, Dr Gow, RSC, Dr Edelenyi, Hungarian Chemical Society and Dr Inch, RSC.

Although professional aspects were always considered by FECS, particularly in the Working Parties on Professional Affairs and on Chemical Education, the main activities have always been directed towards the promotion of chemical science, and in this respect the 8 scientific Working Parties play a prominent part in the overall activities and made FECS visible to very many individual chemists. Apart from the two Working Parties mentioned the Working Parties on Analytical Chemistry and on Food Chemistry were established during the first years of the Federation.

The Working Parties on Organometallic Chemistry, on Chemistry and the Environment, on the History of Chemistry, on Electrochemistry, on Chemistry and the Conservation of the Cultural Heritage and on Computational Chemistry followed during the course of the years.

The activities of the Working Parties were documented in a number of publications like "Education in Chemistry in the Secondary Level in Europe", a "Guide on Organometallic Research Centres in Europe" and a "Guide of European Museums and Exhibitions on Chemistry and the history of Chemistry" to mention only some of them. The proceedings of the EUROANALYSIS Conferences of the Working Party on Analytical Chemistry, of the EUROFOODCHEM Conferences of the Working Party on Food Chemistry and of the Working Party on Chemistry and the Environment Conferences are just as valuable additions to the documentation on actual problems of chemistry of today, not to forget the Information Booklet about the Federation and all its member societies prepared by the Hungarian Chemical Society. It appeared in several editions. Soon after its founding the Federation of European Chemical Societies introduced the FECS Sponsorships which are granted on agreement of the Council as a quality label to high-level congresses and symposia. Such conferences are entitled to bear the FECS emblem. Until now about 210 events received an FECS Sponsorship.

The FECS Lectures were introduced on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Federation in 1980. They are awarded to prominent chemists, and are usually combined with a major event.

FECS set up a Code of Conduct about ten years ago which was agreed by the General Assembly and then accepted by all member societies.

About ten years ago the Czechoslovak Chemical Society made a generous donation to the Federation of European Chemical Societies by establishing the Honorary medal of Merit which is awarded "For Outstanding Services to the Federation and for the Furthering of International Cooperation in the Field of Chemistry". The beautiful medal was designed by the famous Czech sculptor Antonin Kulda. Many thanks once again to our Czech colleagues for this contribution to the Federation.

The work on defining the interfaces between chemists and other professions in fields where the interests

tend to collide was another very important activity. It must definitely be continued and even be intensified in future. It is in the interest of all chemists in Europe and of benefit for the human society that chemists occupy positions - particularly in public life - where their knowledge qualifies them as the competent and responsible persons.

The Federation always carefully watches that its functions do not overlap with the activities of IUPAC. It mainly restricts its activities to Europe and to problems which are of more or less primary interest to Europe. This does not mean, however, that it would not also contribute to items of interest to the chemical community of the world.

The international appreciation of the successful operation of FECS was for instance reason enough for UNESCO to support the establishment of a similar Federation on Asia, and to ask us to give some assistance in preparing the founding of the Federation of Asian Chemical Societies. So I went over to Bangkok where FACS was created in 1979 with almost equal Statutes, with similar Working Parties. In the meantime it has developed an admirable activity and image.

Now let me try to look into the future. I would like to do so by setting a brief highlight on the importance of chemistry and chemical industry for economy and personal welfare.

The products of chemical industry from the very beginning served the needs of mankind in regard of basic requirements like food, health, clothing and housing of an ever growing population, but they also made life easier, more comfortable and pleasant. Chemical industry therefore growing parallel to the requirements of people became a more and more important factor in economics at least in the industrialized countries. The economical welfare of a country in fact profited from the activities of the chemical industry directly, in addition however also indirectly, because many industries were able to build up on the achievements of chemical science or could develop by employing new products from chemical productions. Thus there has been a direct and an indirect positive influence and impact on economics.

Many key technologies cannot be realised without a modern and efficient chemistry. The relation between chemistry and high technology in general reflects the considerable responsibility which chemists and chemical science are obliged to carry out for the progress of technological and economical development.

In this context we should not forget the many branches of infrastructural services and manufacturing industry outside chemical industry as such which depend on chemical industry by providing raw materials and energy or by manufacturing apparatus and equipment. Taking this into account it is evident that the influence of chemistry on economy is even larger because of this indirect effect.

The indirect effect has even enlarged during the last decades because of the additional investments of chemical industry to cope with environmental problems. Chemical industry traditionally takes the responsibility in this sector very seriously, and there were relevant initiatives even long before this topic was discussed in public. Today, however, protection of the environment and safety are an integral component of planning and management. Research and development for the protection of man and his environment is considered a central task, and environmental protection and safety receive equal priorities as quality and profitableness.

Why did I say all this? I said it, because this very important economic factor, the chemical industry, is highly research oriented. It therefore depends on the progress in basic and applied research, and this again depends on the transfer of knowledge and information. This on the other hand has been the major task of the learned chemical societies since their foundation. They pursue this task with current adaption to the requirements of the day, and they have done so efficiently and successfully in their national surroundings. It has been and it will be the task of international bodies like the Federation of European Chemical Societies to foster these aims and to be active on their own along the same lines in their region.

The future of the Federation of European Chemical Societies has already begun. Its basic activities will have to be continued and extended in the years to come, its public relations activities to improve the image of chemistry and chemists have to be widened in cooperation with the member societies.

The opening of the borders between east and west six years ago in 1989 demands the speeding up on the performance and of realizing the goals which have to be defined on an ongoing basis. It will also take initiatives whereby the larger societies help the smaller ones, particularly in Eastern Europe. The

cooperation between east and west has been extremely good and efficient as I already mentioned at the beginning. The work of the Federation, which has always been neutral from a political or ideological point of view, received the appreciation of the authorities in east and west, in the east even at times before "Glasnost" and "Perestroika". Meetings of FECS bodies and other manifestations in eastern countries including the former Soviet Union took place without hindrance, and eastern delegates were able to attend the meetings in the west and bring in their ideas and proposals.

I dare say that we can be proud to have shown to politicians and to the public that an all-European cooperation among intelligent people of good will is possible. In this way the Federation performed a pioneering example for what happened in Europe six years ago.

FECS in some fields has cooperated for many years with the European Communities Chemistry Council (ECCC) which among other activities worked out schedules for the comparability of qualifications among the member states of the community as a basis for the freedom of mobility. These schedules are now of course of interest to all European countries, because more and more countries join the community.

A merger of FECS and the European Communities Chemistry Council which represents 25 member societies in 15 countries of the European Union is at present under preparation. The aim is to create one new strong and effective single organisation for chemists under the well established name "Federation of European Chemical Societies". The European Communities Chemistry Council will then be reconstituted as a Council within the Federation provided that this proposal is accepted by the governing bodies of both organisations.

Building up on the good traditions of the past 25 years, the Federation of European Chemical Societies is well prepared for the challenges of the future.

I close my Anniversary Address by expressing the gratitude of the Federation to all Chemical Societies in Europe from which we had support in our work, and to all colleagues who took over special tasks, thus giving substance, life and continuity to the Federation.