

Division of Analytical Chemistry

European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences



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Among the many obligations of a Division of the European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences, EuCheMS - the umbrella organization of European national chemical societies – is the duty to hold a European conference on a regular basis. The conference of the Division of Analytical Chemistry (DAC) is the well known EUROANALYSIS which will be held in 2007 for the 14th time. Extrapolating from the sequence of the previous three events in the current millennium, i.e., Lisbon 2000, Dortmund 2002, and Salamanca 2004, one would have expected the next one in 2006 – the 2007 exception is taken the motivation to dedicate this Column to the 35-year history of the EUROANALYSIS conference series and their continuation.

From the very beginning, the European aspects of EUROANALYSIS were of outstanding importance. The conferences served as a bridge bringing together the colleagues from Eastern and Western Europe and thus offered personal contacts when unhindered co-operation and free exchange otherwise were not possible. This in turn fostered the interest in the European idea and its manifestation in the formation of the Federation of European Chemical Society (FECS), as EuCheMS was called before 2005.

FECS was founded in 1970 and its second General Assembly in July 1971 decided to set up a Working Party on Analytical Chemistry (WPAC) whose inaugural meeting took place on 1 March 1972. During this exact period of time and based on similar ideas of European cooperation, a European Conference on Analytical Chemistry was being prepared on behalf of chemical societies in Germany, UK and Netherlands and was held in Heidelberg in September 1972. This conference developed out of a number of precursors, among which was an international conference in Eindhoven in 1970 and other bilateral or trilateral joint meetings of European national chemical societies in the late sixties. For the event in Heidelberg the name EUROANALYSIS was coined and the newly founded Working Party took over the patronage of this series of conferences. From the very beginning it was intended to rotate the conference between all European countries and until now EUROANALYSIS has been hosted by 13 countries.

Until 1996 the first 9 EUROANALYSIS conferences were held every three years, since then - due to its success and the commitments of the Division - every two years. The biennial sequence is advantageous since most other series of international conferences favor this rhythm so that the constellation of neighboring conferences is known and can be taken into account when selecting the venue, times and programme. The fact that more and more conference series arise, makes it increasingly difficult to avoid time clashes of conferences competing for the same audience. To try to avoid clashes is a basic task of every EuCheMS division. When EuCheMS announced plans for a European Chemistry Congress emphasizing "Europe as the cradle of chemistry" and envisaged for 2006, the DAC saw the danger of a double clash, namely with this EuCheMS congress aiming to have "American dimensions" as well as with the International Congress on Analytical Sciences (Moscow, June 2006). This latter is most often based in the Far East and offers the potential of meeting colleagues who are not visiting European conferences regularly. As a consequence DAC decided to break the rule of 'biennial

sequence' and to shift EUROANALYSIS XIV by one year: it will take place in September 2007 in Antwerp under the auspices of the Koninklijke Vlaamse Chemische Vereniging. The subsequent conference is scheduled for 2009 in Innsbruck and DAC is presently awaiting the invitations for the 2011 event. Thus, in the future as far as it can be seen now, EUROANALYSIS will be held biennially again, however in odd years.

Five years ahead of the year in which a EUROANALYSIS is due to take place, the DAC calls for invitations of that particular conference. The invitation is usually presented by a group of organizers and backed by a EuCheMS member society. The submitted bid-book provides the basic information on the venue, date, scientific focus and main theme, accommodation, provisions and transport etc. etc. - and how the budget is expected to be balanced under the general proviso that each EUROANALYSIS shall financially be self-supporting. The decision on the location is taken by the DAC Annual Meeting four years ahead of the planned event.

The application procedure is laid down in the DAC Statutes and their Appendix I (www.dac-euchems.org) which also oblige the organiser with particular duties among which are

- to strive for participants from all European regions,
- to make participation attractive to young scientists,
- to take measures to ensure the participation of all bona fide scientists, however,
- not to invite a person for a plenary or keynote lecture who had given such a presentation in the preceding EUROANALYSIS..

There was also the intention to produce proceedings, however, since it became increasingly difficult to collect all the manuscripts of plenary and keynote lectures, nowadays the product is a special issue of the journal *Analytical and Bioanalytical Chemistry* comprising of submitted contributions having been presented at the conference. This preserves, at least, an idea of the conference's flavor, and because the usual peer reviewing of the journal is applied, the standard of the publications is kept high.

The continuity of the conferences is secured by a rotating Presidium which for a given event consists of organizers of two previous, the present and the forthcoming EUROANALYSIS and which is chaired by the DAC Chairman. This Presidium provides an enormous pool of experience - from the political background and physical necessities of the venue, to the dealing with problems of individual participants. Another factor contributing to continuity are the travel grants given by the previous EUROANALYSIS to its follower in order to balance the participation with respect to geography or where necessities are seen. The visible sign of the continuity is the EUROANALYSIS flag, a donation of the Irish colleagues at the occasion of EUROANALYSIS III held in Dublin in 1978.

Over the 35 years of its history, EUROANALYSIS passed through a number of ups and downs. As to the number of participants, three conferences are outstanding: EUROANALYSIS II in Budapest 1975, EUROANALYSIS VII in Vienna 1993 with the very maximum for the series of 1100 participants, and EUROANALYSIS XIII in Salamanca 2004; the other conferences attracted between 400 and 700 participants. In recent years conferences covering a wide and general field have encountered a reduction in attractiveness, while small conferences specialised on new fields, upcoming methods or breaking achievements flourish – they cost less in time and money and thus participation is more easily justified. Important sectors of analytical chemistry are well developed and covered by dedicated meetings of the experts. This stresses the need to provide an informative but not too deeply specialized view "over the fence into the neighbor's garden" to see what is going on there - a traditional intention of EUROANALYSIS, which however is a challenging task as the items of current interest have to be selected afresh, every time.

The DAC and the EUROANALYSIS organizers regret the hardly adequate number of participating colleagues from industry. It has been an ongoing discussion how to attract them and various advices have been given and explored – with "modest" success. An often heard assumption is that increasing work pressure on the colleagues in industry forces them to focus on their particular business. This is not too different from other sectors of science, where also specialization is mandatory to such an extent that it impedes the holistic view on problems. Anyhow, the aim to involve industrial and public sector analytical chemists along side colleagues in academia with DAC and with EUROANALYSIS will not be abandoned.

Generally, the EUROANALYSIS programme is composed from invited plenary and keynote lectures and contributed oral and poster presentations. The general topics of education and history as well as the full spectrum of modern analytical methods and tools and their application in sectors as different as environment, geochemistry, food safety, bio and material sciences are covered. Each conference is accompanied by an exhibition where manufacturers of analytical equipment and publishers present their products. Since some years short courses on various topics, principally aimed at post graduate students and new entrants to industry, are being organized on the Sunday before the conferences are opened.

The 2007 EUROANALYSIS in Antwerp will be held under the general theme "The role of Analytical Chemistry in the preservation of mankind's natural and cultural environment". Strong partners in the organization providing expertise and support in specific areas, are the Micro- and Trace Analysis Centre (MiTAC) at Antwerp University and the European Joint Research Centre IRMM (Institute for Reference Materials and Methods) in Geel nearby. While the former is not only active in the important fields obvious from its name but also in exciting topics such as the preservation of cultural heritage, contributions from IRMM continue a EUROANALYSIS tradition of discussing the impact of metrology and reference materials, which can be traced back to Dublin 1978.

EUROANALYSIS programmes are additionally spiced with several named lectures, whose lecturers are not chosen by the committee on purpose to fit into the programme but according to the relevant statutes. Already at the 1981 EUROANALYSIS in Helsinki Bengt Samuelson (Nobel laureate 1982) gave a FECS lecture. Also for the three recent EUROANALYSIS conferences the competition for the FECS Lecturer of that year was won by proposing the speakers Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen (for EUROANALYSIS in Lisbon 2000), the originator of the "Southern Blot", Ed Southern (Dortmund 2002) and the lab-on-chip pioneer Andreas Manz (Salamanca 2004), granting an immediate accent to the conferences on atmospheric chemistry, biology and miniaturization, respectively, which was then underlined by specialised sessions.

In memory of the late chairman, the DAC has established the "Robert-Kellner Lecture", which is sponsored by Springer. The award is made to honour substantial contributions to the advancement of analytical chemistry research or education, and is given as a prominent plenary lecture of EUROANALYSIS. It was given for the first time by Jaromir Ruzicka in Salamanca in 2004. Seven candidates were nominated for the 2007 Lecture and the jury consisting of five renowned analytical chemists agreed to award the Lecture to Prof. Alfredo Sanz-Medel of Oviedo University.

With great pleasure it is noted that the prestigious "Heinrich-Emanuel-Merck Prize" will be awarded again at EUROANALYSIS in Antwerp. The fascinating lecture by the previous awardee Yoshinobu Baba on 'Nano-Biodevice for Genomic Medicine and System Biology' was an outstanding contribution to EUROANALYSIS XIII in Salamanca. So another highlight is expected for Antwerp.

EUROANALYSIS XIV will be held in a brand new complex of the University of Antwerp located in the historic quarters of this beautiful city. Antwerp is easily reached from all Europe by car, train or plane. The conference excursions stress the many remains of the “golden ages” of Antwerp and Flanders and the present splendor of the locally cut diamonds, so that the accompanying persons should also eagerly look forward to spending this week in and around Antwerp. More information on the programme, location as well as on technical details is available at the conference website (www.euroanalysisxiv.ua.ac.be).

At the end of the Antwerp conference, the organizers of EUROANALYSIS XV (2009 in Innsbruck) will give us a glimpse of their most attractive plans, while in the DAC Annual Meeting on the preceding Sunday before the site of EUROANALYSIS XVI to be held in 2011 will be confirmed. Looking ahead, it appears to have been a reasonable decision to shift the EUROANALYSIS conferences into odd years: the European Chemistry Congress held in August 2006 in Budapest turned out to be such a success that the next Congress has been announced for 2008 in Torino and there are already considerations on the subsequent one in 2010. DAC will contribute ideas to the programme of these Congresses to attract analytical chemists, so that we can now foresee an annually alternating sequence of attractive and rewarding conferences.

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