

EuChemS Historical Landmarks Award (HLA)

Background

Chemistry is an integral part of the Cultural Heritage of Europe. However, while there are many touristic signs marking the very place where important intellectual developments or events happened, only a few chemical sites are identified and publicized. Most of the existing programmes are run by national chemical societies (RSC Blue Plaques, GDCh “Historische Stätte der Chemie” and across the Atlantic, the ACS with the National Historic Chemical Landmarks, for instance), and therefore often overlook the European, and even the international dimension, of the chemical sciences.

For all these reasons, EuChemS decided to set up EuChemS Historical Landmarks Award. It will reinforce the sense of belonging of European chemists and remind them that as far as the history of chemistry goes, people and ideas alike have circulated, been shared, and shaped through meetings and communication. It would also bring to the general public some sense of how chemistry is part of the general cultural heritage and history of every European citizen, especially as the plaques are accompanied with communication material providing information on the discoveries and breakthroughs celebrated, and the impact they had.

EuChemS takes into account that some countries already have national landmarks programme, while others have an interest but have no such scheme in place. Given this, two levels of EuChemS Landmarks are foreseen:

- i) for initiatives with impact at the European level and
- ii) for initiatives with impact at the regional level.

Aim of the EuChemS Historical Landmarks program

The EuChemS Historical Landmarks program aims at designating sites¹ in Europe where (i) events in chemistry (be it social, theoretical, experimental, pedagogic, industrial...) occurred that (ii) have been important to the European² or local chemical community and/or (iii) have inspired a sense of European or local (for the regional level) belonging.³

The application and selection process

A call for application is typically opened annually, and the selection process shall not take longer than a year since the deadline for a certain call.

The nominations are evaluated by the Historical Landmark Award Committee (HLAC), who makes recommendations to the Executive Board. The Historical Landmark Award Committee

¹ Thus a physical place, with a preference, but not a requirement, that the original building is still standing.

² For the European level, it could even have an international impact.

³ The HLA can, therefore, be linked to a person, a group of persons, an institution, or a chemical plant.

comprises members from a variety of backgrounds, and involves a representative of the EuChemS Working Party on History of Chemistry and representatives from other EuChemS Professional Networks. A mandate for members of the HLAC is four years, renewable once. There shall not be more than five members of HLAC. As the whole of chemistry is concerned, the HLAC is allowed to invite guest members to help review the applications and draw back on the multifaceted expertise of EuChemS Professional Networks.

The final decision is with the EuChemS Executive Board.

Maximum two awards per year can be awarded at each level to allow to focus on quality events and documents.

A call for nominations for the EuChemS Historical Landmark Award and HLAC members, promotional and other activities related to the HLA are done by the EuChemS Secretariat.

The applicants shall provide the following documents when submitting a nomination:

- 1) A document with description on the historical role of the site, including its impact on the development of chemistry at either European⁴ or the regional level.
- 2) A support letter by at least one additional member society.
- 3) A support letter by the local community. In this support letter, the local community shall
 - a. express its willingness to carry the responsibilities for organising the award event at the place where the plaque will be mounted;
 - b. explain how the sites are or will be brought to life or made accessible to visitors and the local community;
 - c. what communication (promotional)⁵ material is intended for the general and learned public (including teachers).

The promotional materials prepared by the community of the awarded sites are available on the EuChemS website, but to integrate this task in the academic life and also make sure the word is widely shared inside the chemical community, producers of the materials are invited to publish in scientific journals.

Plaques in English and local language, with embossed metal, are provided by EuChemS. The local community is in charge of the organization of the event during which the plaque is unveiled, in close collaboration with the EuChemS Secretariat.

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⁴ Having an impact on the European or regional level is an important criterion. An example: a chemist was working in at least two countries in Europe. The EuChemS Historical Landmarks Award is limited to deceased chemists.

⁵The promotional material has to be produced in original language and in English.