



SCS  
Swiss Chemical  
Society

## Community News

[www.scg.ch](http://www.scg.ch)

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### Invitation to the SCS General Assembly 2017



The Board of Directors invites all members of the Swiss Chemical Society and the delegates of its associated societies to the 27<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

April 21, 2017, 13.30–14.00h  
Big Auditorium, basement floor,  
Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry,  
University of Bern, Freiestrasse 3,  
3012 Bern.

#### Provisional Agenda

1. Welcome and approval of the agenda
2. Election of the vote counters
3. Minutes of the 26<sup>th</sup> General Assembly from April 22, 2016 in Zurich (published in CHIMIA 5/2016, A373)
4. Annual report 2016 (published in CHIMIA 1-2/2017)
5. Financial statement 2016 incl. audit report
6. Discharge the Board
7. Elections
8. Formal approval of the new SCS Division of Chemical Education
9. Formal approval of the new SCS Section of Catalysis
10. News and strategic projects
11. Outlook 2017/18
12. Varia

Motions to the assembly can be submitted until April 8, 2017 to [info@scg.ch](mailto:info@scg.ch). A summary of the financial statement 2016 will be published on the homepage as news message after the formal audit.

<http://scg.ch/ga/2017>

Swiss Chemical Society (SCS)

Dr. Alain De Mesmaeker  
President

David Spichiger  
Executive Director

### SCS and University of Neuchâtel, Centre of Competence in Chemical Ecology (C<sub>3</sub>E) started a partnership



The Centre of Competence in Chemical Ecology (C<sub>3</sub>E) was created as a follow-up of the National Centre of Competence in Research Plant Survival (2001-2013), in which research in chemical ecology played a dominant role. Chemical ecology is a highly interdisciplinary field that concerns chemically mediated interactions. It involves,

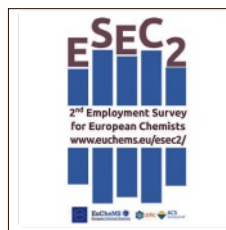
among others, chemists that identify and synthesize bioactive substances, physiologists that study the production and perception of these chemicals in plants and animals, but also ecologists that may study the impact of the chemically mediated interac-

tions at the individual or ecosystem level. Chemical ecology is also all-inclusive at the organismal level and relates to all taxa, ranging from bacteria to humans, and therefore is of great importance to all of biology. Most importantly, the research has great potential for application in the context of food security, ecosystem management, as well as in human and animal healthcare.

At present, C<sub>3</sub>E comprises seven research groups at the Faculty of Science of UniNE. It is also closely associated with the simultaneously created Neuchâtel Platform for Analytical Chemistry (NPAC), which provides analytical services to research institutions and industries worldwide. Together with partners at other Swiss universities and the SCS C<sub>3</sub>E strives to conduct internationally recognized research and provide education in chemical ecology at the highest possible level.

<http://www.unine.ch/centres-of-excellence/home/ecologie-chimique.html>

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Employment Survey for European Chemists (ESEC2)



All Swiss chemists and chemistry related scientists are invited to participate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Employment Survey for European Chemists (ESEC2).

The survey, which is completely anonymous, is accessible at <http://www.euchems.eu/esec2/> until 31 March 2017, and its main objective is to create a clear snapshot of the chemistry labour market.

This snapshot will allow an analysis of educational offer and labour market needs, gender balance, salary differences, etc. As the situation of chemistry greatly differs from country to country (as the previous iteration of this survey shows - <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/chem.201501364/abstract>) it is important that we gather enough specific information to define a Swiss specific country profile. Having such a level of detail will be in the best interest of employees, employers, and universities.

Results of the 1<sup>st</sup> Employment Survey for European Chemists were published in Chemistry, A European Journal. The article is accessible as follows:

‘The Professional Status of European Chemists and Chemical Engineers’, Reiner Salzer, Philip Taylor, Nineta H. Majcen, Francesco De Angelis, Sophie Wilmet, Evangelia Varela, Ionnis Kozaris,  
Chem. Eur. J. 2015. DOI: 10.1002/chem.201501364

Access the 2017 survey on <http://www.euchems.eu/esec2/>

SCS strongly supports this initiative and encourages you to participate. Thanks in advance for your contribution.

## Horizon 2020: Associated! Swiss National Conference held in Bern on March 14, 2017



Since 1 January 2017, Switzerland is fully associated to Horizon 2020. This information is of particular importance for applicants to the European Research Council (ERC) and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), whose participation would have been impossible if Switzerland had been downgraded to “Third Country” status. An important

change concerns small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are now entitled to participate in the “SME Instrument”. Euresearch and the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) organized a Swiss National Conference entitled “Horizon 2020: Associated!” in Bern on 14 March 2017, in order to broadly inform about Switzerland’s new status.

An update on Horizon 2020 and the status of Switzerland is available on the website of Euresearch: [www.euresearch.ch/](http://www.euresearch.ch/)

## A Warm Welcome to Our New Members!



Period: 21.01.2017– 04.02.2017

Daniel Abegg, Lausanne - Andreas Biemann, Wallisellen - Arthur Bodenmüller, Neuchâtel - Juliane Bremi, Zuzikon - Sarah Folliet, Neuchâtel - Natalia Guerrero Albuquerque, Saint-Louis (FR) - Agron Ilazi, Seltisberg - Malika Makhlof Brahmî, Lausanne - Irina

Markova, Zurich - Jennifer Müller, Dübendorf - Heiko Oertling, Geneva - Anna Ilaria Przytula-Mally, Zürich - Michal Mateusz Racz, Spiez - Manoj Ravi, Basel - Mattia Sabetti, Cugnasco-Gerra - Lukas Schuler, Winterthur - Ted Turlings, Binningen - Camille Villequey, Dietikon - Stephan von Reuss, Annemasse (FR).

## HONORS AND AWARDS

### Winners of the KGF-SCS Industrial Science Awards 2017

The KGF-SCS Senior Industrial Science Award (CHF 10'000) is given to



**Dr. Emmanuel Pinard**, F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd, Basel, for his very successful research on several therapeutic targets as enzymes (Bace1, COMT), ion channels (NMDA), GPCRs (Orexin, Vasopressin) and transporters (GlyT1) that address high unmet central nervous system disorders such as Parkinson’s Disease, Stroke, Schizophrenia, Depression, Autism and Spinal Motor Atrophy.

and to



**Dr. Thomas Netscher**, DSM Nutritional Products, Ltd, Kaiseraugst, for his achievements in advancing synthetic methodology and total synthesis of natural products, specifically vitamins and isoprenoid derived compounds.

The KGF-SCS Industrial Science Award (CHF 7'000) is given to



**Dr. Richard Sedrani**, Novartis Pharma AG, Basel, for his achievements in many important projects as research chemists, team leader, project leader and unit head that resulted in the discovery and development of the mTOR inhibitor Everolimus, which is the active ingredient of several successfully marketed drugs: Certican®/

Zortress®, Afinitor®, Xience™.

### KGF Award Lectures

The Award Lectures are planned as follows:

SCS Fall Meeting, August 21–22, 2017, vonRoll Areal, University of Bern

- KGF-SCS Senior Industrial Science Award Lecture I Dr. Emmanuel Pinard, F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd, Basel SCS Fall Meeting, 1<sup>st</sup> day: Mon, August 21, 18.00–18.30h
- KGF-SCS Senior Industrial Science Award Lecture II Dr. Thomas Netscher, DSM Nutritional Products, Ltd, Kaiseraugst SCS Fall Meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> day: Tue, August 22, 17.00–17.30h
- KGF-SCS Industrial Science Award Lecture I Dr. Richard Sedrani, Novartis Pharma AG, Basel SCS Fall Meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> day: Tue, August 22, 09.45–10.15h

The price programme is supported by the Contact Group for Research Matters (KGF, [www.kgf.ch](http://www.kgf.ch))

<http://scg.ch/kgf-scs-awards>



### Prof. Helma Wennemers, ETH Zurich receives the Inhoffen Medal



The Inhoffen Medal is the most prestigious German prize within the area of natural compound chemistry. **Prof. Helma Wennemers** will receive this prize at the Inhoffen Lecture in July 2017.

The Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research (HZI) and the Technical University (TU) Braunschweig annually organize the Inhoffen Lecture and award

the Inhoffen Medal since 1994, in memory of the chemist Prof. Hans Herloff Inhoffen.

Source: <https://www.chab.ethz.ch>

## Dr. Sandra Luber, University of Zürich, receives Clara Immerwahr Award 2017



**Dr. Sandra Luber**, project group leader in the group of Prof. Jürg Hutter, has been awarded the Clara Immerwahr Award 2017 for her contributions to the development of computational methods for catalysis. The award was presented at a public ceremony at the Technical University of Berlin (TU Berlin), Germany, on February 10, 2017.

The annual Clara Immerwahr Award honors a young female scientist at an early stage of their career for outstanding achievements in catalysis research. The award is presented by the Cluster of Excellence UniCat (Unifying Concepts in Catalysis), TU Berlin, and includes 15,000 € of financial support for a research stay at UniCat.

Source: <http://www.chem.uzh.ch>

## JOURNAL NEWS

### 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Helvetica



The Swiss Chemical Society and Helvetica Chimica Acta share a long history, and the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of HCA brings them closer together than ever before. To commemorate the remarkable history of HCA and the relaunch of the journal as Helvetica – A Journal of the Swiss Chemical Society, we invited two distinguished speakers with strong connections to Switzerland, to hold a lecture at the SCS Fall Meeting 2017 in Bern..

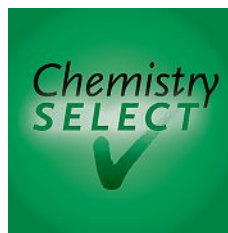
- Prof. Harry Anderson, University of Oxford
- Prof. Luisa De Cola, Université de Strasbourg

This event will celebrate the spirit of Helvetica – fantastic science, insightful scholarship, and molecular surprises – and serve as a launchpad for its next 100 years!

Details about the Fall Meeting: [www.scg.ch/fallmeeting/2017](http://www.scg.ch/fallmeeting/2017)

More information about Helvetica: [www.helv.wiley.com](http://www.helv.wiley.com)

## ChemistrySelect has been accepted into the Web of Science



ChemistrySelect has been accepted into the Web of Science (Science Citation Index Expanded). Three issues have so far been indexed (issues 1, 2, and 13 from 2016) and Anne Deveson, editor-in-chief of ChemistrySelect, hopes to see the rest indexed soon. In 2016 ChemistrySelect received over 2000 submissions and published over 1000 papers. Submissions in 2017 are already indicating an upward trend.

Contact: Anne Deveson, Editor-in-Chief, [adeveson@wiley.com](mailto:adeveson@wiley.com)

## ChemPubSoc Europe Journals Reaching Important Milestones



### ChemSusChem: Celebrating Volume 10

A Special Issue (1/2017) comprises contributions from many past and present board members, highlighting their importance for the development of the journal. In his Editorial Editor David J. Smith looks at some of the highlights of 2016 and the Chairmen of ChemSusChem, Gabriele Centi, Matthias Beller

(both ChemPubSoc Europe Fellows), and Licheng Sun, provide a discussion on the future of sustainability research and the direction it should take. Enjoy free access.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/cssc.v10.1/issuetoc>



### ChemPlusChem: Fifth Anniversary Issue

Board members and selected early career researchers have contributed nine reviews and four original research articles to this celebratory issue (1/2017). In her Editorial Editor Marisa Spiniello takes a look at the journal's first steps, its commitment to publishing multidisciplinary science, and its promising future. Enjoy free access.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/cplu.v82.1/issuetoc>

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## INDUSTRIAL NEWS

Source: [www.chemmanager-online.com](http://www.chemmanager-online.com)

### J&J Clinches Actelion for \$30 Billion

January 27, 2017: Johnson & Johnson (J&J) has won its battle to acquire Swiss biotechnology firm Actelion. The deal announced on Jan. 26 foresees the New Jersey, USA-based healthcare company, regarded as the world's largest, paying \$30 billion in cash – \$280 per share – to take the prize. The boards of both companies have unanimously approved the transaction, which is expected to close by the end of the second quarter if at least 67% of share capital agrees to the spinoff, and regulatory authorities also approve. Under the agreement, J&J would take a minority stake of 16% in the research spinoff, with the right to acquire an additional 16% later, through a convertible note. The participation would give it a stake in Actelion's development pipeline, which includes an option on a phase 2 hypertension drug, ACT-132557. The Swiss company's founder and CEO, Jean-Paul Clozel, would serve as the spinoff's chief executive, and Jean-Pierre Garnier, Actelion's chairman, would be its chair. Reports said Clozel was due to receive \$1.52 billion for his shares and would continue to be in control of the drug development. The R&D unit based in Allschwil, Switzerland, will specialize in small molecule therapeutics across several areas, including specialty cardiovascular, CNS and immunological disorders, along with orphan diseases. News that J&J was in talks with Actelion first surfaced in November 2016, followed by reports that the US suitor had backed out of negotiations, only to step back in after French competitor Sanofi positioned itself to jump into the fray. The fact that Actelion's FDA-approved drug to treat pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH) recently failed a phase 3 trial meant to expand its market evidently did nothing to dampen J&J's or the market's ardor. The biotech's shares traded up nearly 3% on the Zurich stock exchange after the announcement. Analysts said this was because it has other opportunities to expand the franchise. The Swiss biotech firm has a second PAH drug, Uptravi, which they said may be even more attractive. Analysts from Bloomberg Intelligence called the deal expensive compared with recent industry takeovers such as Pfizer's acquisition of Medivation and AbbVie's purchase of Pharmacyclics. J&J is paying more than 21 times Actelion's estimated 2020 earnings per share, more than double what AbbVie spent on its cancer biotech, they said. J&J is believed to hold about \$42 billion in cash overseas. The new Republican government has pledged to rewrite the US tax code to allow – or possibly force – American companies to repatriate untaxed offshore funds at reduced rates.

### EP Committee Wants 70% of Waste to be Recycled

January 30, 2017: In a proposed amendment to the EU's packaging directive, the Environment Committee (ENVI) of the European Parliament (EP) has come out in favor of increasing the share by weight of waste to be recycled from 44% in 2014 to 70% as well as imposing a 30% reduction in food waste by 2020 and 50% by 2030. Similar targets have been proposed for marine litter. According to the EP's environment (ENVI) committee, the percentage of waste recycled in 2004 was only 31%. For packaging material made of paper, cardboard, plastics, glass, metal and wood, the MEPs are pushing for an 80% recycling target by 2030, with interim 2025 targets for each material. The figures and goals for recycling of packaging materials, in particular plastics, largely resemble those of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation presented at the recently ended World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, and exceed those of the European Commission's Circular Economy recommendations revised last year. "We decided to restore the ambitious recycling and landfill tar-

gets in line with what the Commission had originally proposed in 2015, said lead MEP Simona Bonafé. "There will no longer be the possibility for member states with the lowest recycling rates to have a blanket derogation," she said, adding that derogations would be subject to special conditions. The Parliament's draft legislation would limit to 10% the share of municipal waste to be landfilled to be up to 2030. Following its passage, the MEPs would like to see this tightened to 5% but with an exception for countries that landfilled more than 65% of their waste in 2013. At the EP's plenary session on Mar. 13–16 in Strasbourg, France, the ENVI proposals will be voted on. In a comment, the European Environmental Board (EEB) said over 800,000 new jobs could be created across the EU if MEPs these proposals are adopted – enough to employ one in six of the currently unemployed young people in the current 28 member states. "Creating new jobs and slashing marine litter are just two of the benefits that boosting recycling targets and helping the repair and reuse industries could bring, said Piotr Barczak, waste policy officer.

### Russia Sells Nearly 20% of Rosneft to Investors

January 31, 2017: More than a month after Russia announced one of its biggest privatizations since the 1990s, the true identity of the buyers of a 19.5% stake in its national oil company Rosneft has not yet emerged, according to media reports, Russian news agency Sputnik said the government sold the stake for €10.2 billion to a Singapore-based investment vehicle, ostensibly a 50:50 joint venture between the government of Qatar and Swiss oil trading firm Glencore, without revealing further details. In addition to the buyers, much of the attention to the deal revolves around the question of whether the EU and US sanctions against Russia were violated. The news agency Reuters said it has learned that the Singapore investment company, QHG Shares, belongs indirectly to an array of investment vehicles. It is held by a London-registered limited liability partnership, QHG Investments, which lists as one of its two owners another London-registered limited liability partnership, QHG Holding, created on Dec. 5. One of the partners in QHG Holding is thought to be QHG Cayman Limited, registered at an address of the Cayman Islands office of Walkers, an international law firm. Rosneft is the world's biggest listed oil company by output and, along with natural gas export monopoly Gazprom is regarded as one of two economic "crown jewels" of the Russian state. The sale of the stake was the largest privatization deal, the largest sale and acquisition in the global oil and gas sector in 2016, Russian President Vladimir Putin is quoted as saying in a televised meeting with Igor Sechin, Rosneft's principal, in December. Putin reportedly also called the transaction a "sign of international faith in Russia, despite US and EU financial sanctions on its firms including Rosneft." He said also that Glencore and Qatar had been invited to participate in Rosneft's exploration projects. Identifying the other parties is especially difficult, Reuters said, as the sale was wrapped up through a number of shell companies. While Italian bank Intesa SanPaolo officially lent the Singapore firm €5.2 billion toward the financing, and Qatar contributed €2.5 billion, the origin of more than half the funding is still in the dark. According to Reuters, Singapore public records show that VTB, the Russian government's official bank, actually lent the full sum to QHG, though VTB said it was a temporary ploy to avoid volatility. If the circumstances of the financing sound like a "cloak-and-dagger" affair, some of the other information dug up by international media – including a number of tabloids – may sound like a soap opera-cum-spy novel. Some claim that the so-called Steele Dossier (compiled by a former British secret service agent and supposedly including compromising videos of US President Donald Trump) contains evidence that Rosneft had offered one of the now-president's business associates a 19% brokerage of the company if Trump was elected president and re-

moved sanctions against Russia. However accurate or inaccurate that information may be, the journal *Business Insider* said that in October, “when it looked like Trump no longer had a chance to win the presidency,” Sechin contacted other unidentified business interests about purchasing a stake in the oil company. Rosneft then “scrambled to find a foreign investor,” holding talks with more than 30 potential buyers from Europe, the US, Asia, and the Middle East. A deal was signed on Dec. 7, 2016. Intesa told Reuters that “the financing was completed with strict adherence to the regulations applicable to embargoes and that Italian authorities found nothing that would prohibit such an operation.” The news agency said the deal came as a surprise to some of Rosneft’s existing shareholders, including British oil giant BP, which holds a 19.5% stake.

### Trump Discusses Issues With Drugmakers

February 1, 2017: In a meeting at the White House on Jan. 31, new US president, Donald Trump, held out both a carrot and a stick to pharmaceutical producers. The industry will “have to get prices down,” he told company executives, while at the same time hinting at plans to reduce regulation to facilitate faster approvals of new drugs and to allow companies to bring jobs back to the US. “You folks have done a tremendous job but we have to get prices down,” Trump told the assembled executives from American drugmakers such as Merck & Co, Johnson & Johnson, Celgene, Amgen, Eli Lilly as well as Switzerland’s Novartis and the PhRMA trade group, according to reports, adding: “We’re going to be cutting regulation at a level nobody’s ever seen before.” “You can’t get approval for the plant and then you can’t get approval to make the drug, other than that you’re doing fantastic.” Trump is quoted as saying, before remarking that “US drug companies have produced extraordinary results for our country, but the pricing has been astronomical for our country.” While admonishing the industry to “lower your prices, deliver better innovation and move your companies back” to the US, Trump again took aim at drugmakers that manufacture overseas, although many observers said it wasn’t clear what he meant by “our trade policy will prioritize that foreign countries pay their fair share for US-manufactured drugs, so our drug companies have greater financial resources to accelerate development of new cures.” Trump has already proposed a 20% “border tax” on drug imports. At a press conference earlier in January, Trump had said the pharmaceutical industry, which “has a lot of lobbies, a lot of lobbyists and a lot of power,” is “getting away with murder.” At the same event, the then-president-elect also suggested introducing “competitive bidding” for government drug purchasing, and later in an interview with *Time* magazine called for Medicare, the elder care program, to be given the power to negotiate prices. At the Jan. 31 meeting, the president also urged pharmaceutical industry leaders to hire more US personnel, to which they reportedly replied that they were hiring, but given tax breaks they might hire more. A number of them, including Lilly and Amgen, have recently cut US jobs. Other takeaways from the meeting were that Trump promised to speed up drug development and end “global freeloading” by countries that use price controls to keep their drug spending down. “We’re going to be changing a lot of the rules,” he said, addressing reporters. “Foreign price controls reduce the resources of American drug companies to finance drug and R&D innovation. It’s very unfair to this country.” “Our trade policy,” the president said, “will prioritize that foreign countries pay their fair share for US-manufactured drugs, so our drug companies have greater financial resources to accelerate development of new cures, and I think that’s so important. “Right now it’s very unfair what other countries are doing to us.” According to a pharmaceutical market report published last year by the US Department of Commerce, most drugs consumed in the US are also made there, while about a quarter – valued at \$86

billion in 2015 – are imported. The lion’s share of imports come from Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, Israel and India. The US also exported pharmaceuticals worth \$47 billion in 2015, with Japan, Belgium, Switzerland, the UK and Germany taking the most. After the meeting, which most of those present described as “positive” or “productive,” some released statements or talked to media. Stephen Ubl, president of PhRMA, said the industry “takes seriously the concerns raised about the affordability and accessibility of prescription medicines, and we have expressed our commitment to working with the administration to advance market-based reforms.” The current system, he said, “needs to evolve to enable the private sector to lead the move to a value-driven health care system.” Celgene CEO Robert Hugin told the newspaper *Washington Post* that drugmakers were “excited” to work with the president. “The changes he is proposing are ones I think are going to be great for the country and consumers,” he commented. Kenneth Frazie, CEO of Merck & Co, told reporters after the meeting: “The President is very much focused on how we can actually do better for patients, giving them more choice, helping them to deal with the medical bills that they have in a way that also stimulates innovation.” Remarks by Joe Jimenez, CEO of Novartis, at his company’s annual results press conference last week, were more to the point. He said he would like to propose his own solution for drug pricing in a face-to-face with the president. This, he said, would focus on “pay-for-performance deals that peg drug costs to their real-world result.” At this week’s meeting with drugmakers, Trump touched on plans for the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to speed up new drug approvals, but commentators said it was not clear how this would work when the new administration has frozen hiring by federal agencies. Another executive order by the president – one of several during his first week in office – stipulates that agencies remove two regulations for each new one implemented. He said also that he was close to appointing a “fantastic” person to head the FDA. Some experts on the drug approval process were critical of Trump’s plans. His “horrifying proposal reflects utter ignorance about the FDA’s essential role in protecting public health and once again demonstrates his commitment to placing corporate profits above protecting the safety of the American people,” Michael Carome, director of Public Citizen’s health research group, told the newspaper *New York Times*. Carome explained that many of the regulations had been set up by Congress so they could not easily be removed and, if they were removed, new statutes and new laws would have to be passed. Others said the agency had already loosened the approval process for new drugs in recent years, with questionable benefit. David Vladeck, a professor at the Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, told the *Washington Post* that removing regulatory powers “will cripple the FDA’S ability to do anything other than regulate by non-binding guidance documents.” To hollow out the agency’s authority by forbidding it from dealing with emerging issues through new regulations will jeopardize consumers and threaten the reputation of the agency around the world, he said. In response to Trump’s comments about accelerating drug approval, Vladeck asked rhetorically whether consumers wanted the FDA to rely on “comic book versions” of drug applications.

### Avalon and Bern University Research Formaldehyde Alternative

February 1, 2017: Switzerland’s Avalon Industries and the Institute for Materials and Wood Technology at the Bern University of Applied Sciences are collaborating on a research project to develop an environmentally friendly alternative to formaldehyde, a key material in adhesive resins for wood-based products. In June 2014, the EU reclassified formaldehyde as carcinogenic and mutagenic. The project, which is government-sponsored by the Swiss Commission for Technology and Innovation, will look

at replacing formaldehyde in phenol-formaldehyde (PF) resins with 5-hydroxymethylfurfural (5-HMF), a bio-based, non-toxic chemical platform chemical. Avalon said the project will build on the positive results from similar research run by parent company AVA-CO2 to develop non-toxic urea-HMF resins. Thomas Kläusli, chief marketing officer at Avalon Industries, said the aim is to develop a formaldehyde-free, sustainable phenol-HMF adhesive for industrial use in the wood-processing industry. "We consider 5-HMF to be the most promising formaldehyde alternative for future resin production," he said. The EU produces about 10 million t/y of formaldehyde, with around 47 million t/y produced worldwide, according to Avalon. A large proportion of synthesized formaldehyde is used in the production of glues and impregnating resins for wood-based materials. Adhesive resins are used in the manufacture of particle boards, plywood panels and chipboards, with the furniture industry as one of the main users.

### **SK Capital Ready to Sell Archroma**

February 8, 2017: US private equity firm SK Capital Partners is getting ready to sell Swiss specialty chemicals company Archroma, according to media reports citing people familiar with the situation. Archroma was formerly the textile chemicals, paper specialties and emulsions divisions of Clariant, which sold the businesses to the New York-based group in October 2013. News agency Reuters said both trade buyers and private equity companies are preparing to bid, citing the UK's Synthomer and Apollo Global Management and Advent International as likely contenders. The report added that SK Capital could also retain a stake in Archroma under its new owner. Under SK Capital's ownership, Archroma has grown organically and through acquisitions. In May 2014, the Reinach-based company bought a 49% stake in Germany's M. Dohmen, a company specializing in producing textile dyes and chemicals for the automotive, carpet and apparel sectors. Archroma then bought the global textile chemicals business of BASF in July 2015. Archroma, which has sales of about \$1.3 billion, operates 25 facilities around the world and employs around 3,000 people. In separate news, SK Capital Partners has completed the acquisition of Niacet, a leading US-based producer of organic salts, including propionates and acetates, for the food, feed, pharmaceutical and technical industries. The private equity group said it is recapitalizing Niacet in partnership with Kelly Brannen who will remain as CEO and retain a significant stake in the firm. The Brannen family purchased Niacet from Union Carbide in 1978.

### **BASF Buys Swiss Photoalignment Specialist Rolic**

February 10, 2017: To further brighten its prospects as a supplier of the electronics industry, BASF has acquired privately owned photoalignment specialist Rolic, headquartered at Allschwil, Switzerland. The transaction, for which financial details have not been disclosed, includes Rolic affiliates in Eindhoven, The Netherlands, and Shanghai, China. Regulatory approvals are not required, BASF said. The deal reportedly includes a number of patents as well as knowhow. With worldwide operations and a workforce of 110 people, Rolic has sales in the double-digit million Swiss franc range and is said to be profitable. Its portfolio includes ready-to-use formulations and functional film products for the display and security industry in addition to barrier materials and films. In products for end consumers, the Allschwil firm's technology, known as Light Controlled Molecular Orientation, is said to offer optimum image quality with high contrast and brilliance as well as very low energy consumption. It boosts the performance of the liquid crystals by adding contrast. Products made with the process are already in commercial use. Rolic was founded in 1994 as a spinoff of the Swiss chemical-pharmaceuticals company Roche – the name

Rolic stands for Roche Liquid Crystals. The liquid crystals part of the business was later sold to German chemicals and pharmaceuticals producer Merck, which is now regarded as the leading player in this part of the display chemicals market. Following the acquisition by BASF, the Swiss company's CEO, Norbert Münzel, told the Zurich newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ) he sees potential for business in particular in Japan, South Korea and China, where BASF has production facilities and can offer technical support, including customer service. Münzel told NZZ also that he expects BASF to expand the business. Markus Kramer, president of the German group's Dispersions & Pigments division, called the acquisition "a further step that reflects BASF's strategic and long-term commitment to grow in the electronics industry," Lothar Laupichler, senior vice president of the group's global electronic materials business, added that the combination of Rolic's strong technology know-how and customer relationships with BASF's market reach will create new opportunities for co-developing next generation LCD and OLED displays with higher resolution, more brightness and deeper contrast.

### **Clariant and CB&I to Design PDH Unit in China**

February 17, 2017: Swiss specialty chemicals producer Clariant and US engineering contractor CB&I have been awarded a contract by Dongguan Grand Resource Science & Technology to jointly develop a new high-efficiency propane dehydrogenation (PDH) plant at Dongguan City in China's Guangdong Province. The project includes the license and engineering design of the unit. The Dongguan plant, which will use a design based on CB&I's Catofin technology using Clariant's tailor-made Catofin catalyst and heat generating material (HGM), will be one of the world's largest single-train dehydrogenation units, according to the Swiss group. Catofin technology continues to demonstrate low cost of production while providing proven reliability and flexibility to our customers, CB&I said. In the Catofin dehydrogenation process, isobutylene, propylene or amylenes are produced from isobutene, propane or isopentanes respectively. To maximize the conversion of propane and generate a high yield of propylene, the process operates at optimum reactor pressure and temperature, which is said to result in low investment and operating costs. Integration of HGM, an innovative metal-oxide material designed to significantly increase the selectivity and yield of Catofin units in the Catofin process, is claimed to further enhance the performance advantages. HGM is already being used in other PDH plants in China and Korea.

### **W.R. Grace Wins China PP Project**

February 20, 2017: US chemical and catalysts producer W.R. Grace has announced that it was contracted in the fourth quarter of 2016 to license its Unipol PP gas-phase process technology to China's Dongguan Grand Resource Science & Technology. The new PP plant in Dongguan, Guangzhou province, will produce 600,000 t/y of homopolymer resins in dual reactor lines, using Grace's non-phthalate Consista PP catalysts. The facility is expected to begin operations in 2019. Wang Ligui, vice president of Dongguan Grand Resources, said the technology and catalyst system is the "most economical way to rapidly develop our portfolio of products." According to the Maryland-headquartered chemical company, the Unipol process is the simplest of all PP technologies, with fewer moving parts and less equipment than competing alternatives. This, it said, results in lower capital, operating and maintenance costs while maximizing reliability. The project represents the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Unipol PP licenses in China. Earlier this month, Dongguan Grand Resource awarded a contract to Swiss specialty chemicals producer Clariant and US engineering contractor CB&I to jointly develop a propane dehydrogenation (PDH) plant at its site in Dongguan.

### The 3rd Living Space of the Future

February 22, 2017: For their 2017 concept car Oasis, Rinspeed joined forces with car interior expert Stahl. The Swiss creative think-tank and mobility lab for the automotive industry approached the Dutch chemical company in order to contribute with various solutions to their revolutionary vision of the '3rd living space of the future' – the Rinspeed Oasis. After Rinspeed's self-driving concept car  $\Sigma$ tos, presented in 2015, this is the second time the two powerhouses are working together. Stahl's innovative and sustainable solutions are used in the entire interior, from sustainable tanned leather, comfortable armchair seats to mystically glittering new surfaces technology for car interior materials. "It's no secret that leading experts forecast an automotive future where car interiors are becoming the heart of the car," says Frank M. Rinderknecht, CEO at Rinspeed. "As people are spending a lot of time in their cars, this inspired us to radically rethink the interior and come up with the '3rd living space of the future', which ultimately led to the Rinspeed Oasis. Obviously, we wanted to work with a global player in the car interior industry that would bring something extra to the table. That's where Stahl came in. Their solutions and the innovative materials used deliver an edge to both, the car manufacturers and the end users." "As car interior material surfaces expert and worldwide market leader in our field, we are inspired by working together with leading brands," says Stefan Buri, Global Marketing Director Automotive at Stahl. "The interior of the Rinspeed Oasis concept car is all about innovative and sustainable solutions that inspire and surprise the user. With the interior of the Oasis we did what we do best: push the boundaries for achieving better end-products and helping to create a better future at the same time." The ultimate eye-catcher is the small garden on the sideboard. This adds the element of nature to the car to make it a true third living space. With Stahl's next-gen car interior technologies, the company contributed significantly to reduced emissions and smell and, consequently, clean and fresh air for the passenger. The leather used in the car was tanned with a technology called Stahl EasyWhite Tan that fits Rinspeed's revolutionary vision of the 3rd living space of the future. This chrome-free technology also has the sustainability credentials of reducing water, salt and energy during leather processing. In addition, leather tanned with Stahl EasyWhite Tan is high quality, soft and smooth and offers unique advantages for pale and vibrant colors in leather car interiors. Its high elasticity makes the leather flexible, tear resistant and extremely versatile, enabling thinner and lighter leather than ever. All pluses for a premium sustainable car of the future. Along with this alternative tanning method, the Rinspeed Oasis incorporates other sustainable products such as Green PolyMatte, a bio-based finishing creating future-proof matt surfaces with a warm and pleasant touch. To improve the driving experience even further, Stahl added a special crystal effect solution in the color Mystic Jungle. This revealed a new design freedom: mystically glittering surfaces that respond to changing ambient lighting and viewing angles. Along with sustainability and surprising elements, the interior of the Rinspeed Oasis shows pure white colors. Such materials need to be protected to last for a long time. That is why Stahl used its latest generation of Stay Clean technology to protect the surfaces from dirt and stains. This way an intrinsically white high-performance cover material was created, bringing the long-desired design intent "snow white" closer to automotive reality than ever before.

### Confidence in Agriculture Mergers Solidifies

February 23, 2017: The first of the three mega mergers affecting mainly the global agrochemicals sector, the \$130 billion link-up of Dow Chemical and DuPont, could win EU approval soon, the news agency Reuters has reported, quoting "two people familiar with the matter. While the word from the US and other

international antitrust authorities is still out, the European Commission is seen as the toughest nut to crack. Following a January meeting between the proposed merger partners, at which the two companies offered concessions – DuPont promising to sell a portion of its crop protection business and related R&D and Dow agreeing to sell its acid copolymers and ionomers business to South Korea's SK Innovation – EU Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager said the outcome of the regulatory authority's in-depth probe was "still very much open." The Commission has expressed concern in particular about how the merger of giants would affect innovation in agriculture. One of Reuters' sources commented that the most recent concessions were "very minor tweaks." The source said the fact that the authority would not seek third parties' views on the changes was a "clear sign" that it is a done deal. Earlier this month, Dow and DuPont asked for an extension of the merger review until Apr. 4. The news agency said the EU is also likely to greenlight ChemChina's \$43 billion bid for Swiss agrochemicals group Syngenta as well as Bayer's \$66 billion plan to acquire US agrochemicals and seeds giant Monsanto. In presenting annual results for 2016 on Feb. 22 in Leverkusen, Germany, Bayer CEO Werner Baumann said the group would not officially seek EU approval before complying with the Commission's request for more information. The US Department of Justice also has requested additional information. In Bayer's view, "there is growing understanding for our strategy and the agreed acquisition of Monsanto," Baumann said, pointing to the share price, which is now substantially higher than when the deal was announced.

He stressed once again that the acquisition of Monsanto "will not come at the expense of our other businesses." Some shareholders had said they feared the pharmaceuticals could come up short when investment monies were doled out. To stem the acquisition, Bayer has developed a complex financing plan. Chief Financial Officer Johannes Dietsch said in Leverkusen that the German group will stick to its plan to raise \$19 billion in equity before moving on to a rights and bond issue. "We want to do the equity first before we enter the bond markets," he told analysts, adding that management needs more visibility as to the regulatory outlook for the deal. In November 2016, Bayer completed the placement of €4 billion in mandatory convertible notes with institutional investors, excluding the pre-emptive rights of its own shareholders. The issue was described as the largest ever mandatory convertible bond for a European issuer and the largest European equity capital markets deal in 2016. In talking to journalists and analysts, Bayer executives expressed confidence that the acquisition would pass all regulatory hurdles by the end of 2017. After what Bayer and Monsanto called a "productive meeting" with US President Donald Trump just prior to his inauguration last month, international media were abuzz with talk that with the two players' commitment to spend \$8 billion on R&D in the US the merger was assured of success, although observers noted that antitrust approval is not part of the president's brief. This week, the financial markets saw another sign they interpreted was one of confidence the deal would go ahead. Berkshire Hathaway, the investment vehicle of US billionaire Warren Buffett announced it had purchased 8 million Monsanto shares valued at more than \$800 million in the 2016 fourth quarter, just after the proposed acquisition was announced in September.

### Industry Pushes EU to Boost Competitiveness

February 24, 2017: European industry is turning up the heat on the EU's institutions to finally come up with a plan to help manufacturers become more competitive. In a joint paper, called the "Joint Declaration for an ambitious industrial strategy", industry associations including the European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC), PlasticsEurope and European Plastics Converters as well as groupings representing other branches of in-

dustry say “the time has come to sound the alarm” about the absence of concrete steps toward goals established years ago. At the beginning of his mandate in 2014, the declaration’s signatories recall, EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker identified the reindustrialization of Europe as one of his top priorities and also confirmed the objective of increasing the share of industry in European GDP to 20% by 2020. However, words have not followed deeds, the industry representatives insist, and Europe’s manufacturing base continues to erode. To turn the trend around, the paper’s backers say they are “ready to step up” their cooperation with the Commission, the European Parliament and the EU’s Competitiveness Council to define and implement an ambitious and coordinated European industrial strategy. European manufacturers have “tremendous capacity” for research and innovation and a skilled workforce, and they have earned a global reputation for quality and sustainability. What is needed now, they say, “is the swift and determined support of the European institutions and the member states to create more jobs and growth.” During a lunch debate this week organized by CEFIC during the Competitiveness Council meeting in Brussels, Hari-olf Kottmann, president of CEFIC and CEO of Swiss specialty chemicals producer Clariant, hammered the message home, telling the assembled representatives of member states that the EU is on the cusp of losing its hold as a major world industrial power.

Other global regions are growing faster, he said, offering industries cheaper raw materials and feedstock and aggressively promoting their own chemical manufacturing. “Europe’s industries urgently need a clear signal from EU lawmakers, with favorable conditions to repatriate investment.” To help kick start action, CEFIC said it has decided to work on Council Conclusions in its May meeting to encourage the Commission to draft a new industrial policy. “In times of political and economic uncertainty we need ambitious EU institutions and leaders who are willing to take bold decisions to restore and enhance Europe’s competitiveness. The European chemical industry stands ready to support EU decision makers in this endeavor because we share a common goal – to secure a stable political framework and maintain a sustainable, competitive chemical industry in Europe,” he said. Even if the industry’s pleas may not to have fallen on completely deaf ears in Brussels, it is not clear how long it will take the institutions to come up with any concrete action. At the lunch debate, internal market commissioner, Elzbieta Bienkowska, said she “personally supports” the idea for an overall European vision for industry, although she “cannot say” that there will be a new proposal from the EU. “Smart and innovative industry is extremely important for Europe, and we have to be in the avant-garde of developments. We need to keep industry and production here in Europe. We have to keep them as well as services.” “Industrial competitiveness is one of the main objectives of our presidency,” Maltese Minister Chris Cardona commented. “We all know the transaction costs to operate in the European Union are high. We need to focus on areas that the presidency has already mentioned: the chemical industry, digitization of industry, logistics, access to finance, startups and scale-ups and the European defense action plan.”



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