

Media Release

Düsseldorf-Neuss / Brussels, 23.4.2018

3rd edition of the EYDC launched in Düsseldorf-Neuss

European Youth Debating Competition: youngsters know how to debate!

Students aged between 16 and 19 gathered from different parts of Germany, and had one common aim: be among the winners of this year's European Youth Debating Competition (EYDC). The topic under discussion was: *"Living, learning, working and moving in Smart Cities of the future: with or without plastics and petrochemicals"*. In the end, the jury selected 3 winners: Friedrich Reichel (Meissen), Robin Balzereit (Wiesbaden) and Joanna Maria Kesicka (Görlitz). They will be representing Germany when they fly to Vienna to compete at the European Finals 2018, scheduled to take place on Monday 8th October 2018 during the EPCA 52nd Annual Meeting, the largest gathering of the Petrochemical industry in Europe.

The background: Based on the extremely successful 2016 and 2017 editions, EPCA (the European Petrochemical Association) and PlasticsEurope (the association of plastics manufacturers) once again partner and organize a series of debating competitions for youngsters in Europe. This time, nine countries will be hosting the National Finals: Belgium or the Netherlands for a joint "Benelux" Finals, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Italy, Poland, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Germany with the first National Finals.

What is it all about? The EYDC offers a unique opportunity for students to acquire new skills, by interacting and expressing themselves about societal and industry linked topics. For the industry, it is an opportunity to connect with the new generation, listen, learn about their views as well as their visions of our future. During each National Finals, some 50 students between 16 and 19 years old have the chance to participate. In-depth research, high standards of debating skills and the ability to interact with each other are needed to convince the jury. The judging criteria does not look at whether the students debate from a pro or con stance, as the classification into the pro- and con-factions is done by random. To win, students will need to display public speaking skills with well-informed, logical and persuasive arguments.

In Neuss near Düsseldorf, where the German finals were held, around 57 students from 37 schools from all over Germany were present, together with representatives of the Petrochemical and Plastics Industry, the German Green political party as well as members of the press.

It was indeed astonishing how deeply the participants had delved into the world of petrochemistry before they came to the finals and their perspectives on smart cities, knowing that it is an evolving concept with different form of practices to make cities work better, for better living. The “Con”-Speaker of the debate, Moco Ippers, member of the Green party in Düsseldorf, pointed out that the Earth Overshoot Day, the date when humanity has exhausted nature's budget for the year, in 2017 already was on August, 2, and that in consequence each individual is responsible for reducing its ecological footprint.

After the event, the pro-speaker, Ms. Anne-Gret Iturriaga Abarzua, Head of Communications for INEOS KÖLN gave a positive summary: “The aim of the EYDC is to engage young people with future trends and challenges, and encourage them to formulate their own arguments on these issues – which was well reflected in the debate. I personally very much enjoyed listening to their thoughts, which were presented with great enthusiasm. The EYDC is a great initiative to get involved with as it enables young people to engage in a dialogue with both their peers and the wider petrochemical industry – and provides an open forum for celebrating new ideas that will help us all work towards a sustainable future.”

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The European Petrochemical Association (EPCA)

Based in Brussels, EPCA is the primary European Business Network for the global petrochemical business community consisting of chemical producers, their suppliers, customers and service providers. It operates for and through more than 700-member companies from 54 different countries. EPCA organises conferences and events in Europe offering members all over the world the opportunity to meet industry leaders and selected external stakeholders and stay abreast of international market developments as well as technological and societal trends. EPCA also supports members on specific topics that underpin the sustainable development of the global petrochemical industry. EPCA promotes STEM education, with a clear focus on gender and diversity inclusion. EPCA also highlight the multidisciplinary approach and the variety of challenging career paths that the petrochemical industry offers.

PlasticsEurope is one of the leading European trade associations with centres in Brussels, Frankfurt, London, Madrid, Milan and Paris. The association is networking with European and national plastics associations and has more than 100-member companies, producing over 90% of all polymers across the EU28 member states plus Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.