

Discover Chemistry in Europe

by Marc Devisscher

It was in May 2001 that the group of national federations within the European Chemical Industry Council, Cefic, took the initiative of organizing "Discover Chemistry in Europe," a series of Open Door days throughout Europe. Between May 2002 and October 2003, member associations of Cefic from 13 countries are holding Open Door events involving some 1000 sites, with an estimated number of about one million visitors. These events often also involve universities or research laboratories, and include events such as conferences and exhibitions.

Through this initiative the chemical industry wants to clearly demonstrate to the European Union institutions, to national and local communities, and to the public at large that it is indeed a transparent and open industry, committed to dialogue with all the stakeholders in the community.



The fact that Open Door events of all kinds are being organized by the chemical industry is not new in itself, but this will be the first time

that they have been coordinated across Europe, allowing for experience sharing, common measurement of impact, and creation of a consistent industry image.

Through this coordinated effort, Europeans are learning that they can be proud of their chemical industry. Since the industrial revolution in the 19th century, it has been one of Europe's most international, competitive, and successful industries, embracing a wide field of processing and manufacturing activities. The chemical industry is one of the main pil-

lars of the European economy and makes a huge contribution to its welfare. With about 32% of global chemicals production and employing nearly 2 million people, Europe is the largest chemicals producing area in the world, generating a turnover in 2001 of € 629 billion. Furthermore, the EU chemical industry has the largest manufacturing industry trade surplus, amounting to € 65 billion in 2001.



Where and When the Doors Opened

Country	Federation	Period	Companies/Sites	Visitors
Belgium	Fedichem	4-5 May 2002	45	70 000
Spain	Feique	May 2002-2003	70	30 000
UK	CIA	May to October 2002	55	15 000
Italy	Federchimica	2 September to 2002 (also scheduled for 2003)	60	50 000
Finland	KtRv	September 2002	15	9 000
France	UIC	October 2002	300	100 000
Netherlands	VNCI	2 November 2002	90	30 000
Portugal	APEQ	end 2002 & 2003	15	5 000
Germany	VCI	20 September 2003	200 + 50 universities	-
Sweden	Kemikontoret	Autumn 2003	40	-
Greece	HACI	Autumn 2003	-	-
Switzerland	SGCI	end 2003	20	-
Hungary	Mavesz	2003	18	-

The "Discover Chemistry in Europe" Open Door events offer an excellent forum to demonstrate and to explain in person that the chemical industry has taken voluntary initiatives that contribute to meeting today's societal demands. One such example is the "Responsible Care" initiative of the global chemical industry, under which companies, through their national associations, commit to work together to continuously improve their performance in protecting people and the environment throughout the life cycle of their products and processes. At the launch of the project in April 2002, Cefic President Jean-Pierre Tirouflet said, "we create wealth and add value to society and despite all that, the opinion surveys conducted over the last decade in Europe indicate that the reputation of the chemical industry has not kept up with the industry's improving environmental performance. There is clearly a gap to be bridged here, and the Discover Chemistry in Europe initiative should



Open Door event at Proviron in Belgium, May 2002.

Feature

help bridge this gap." Furthermore, the current EU Chemicals Policy Review also reflects growing political and societal demands regarding the production and use of chemicals.

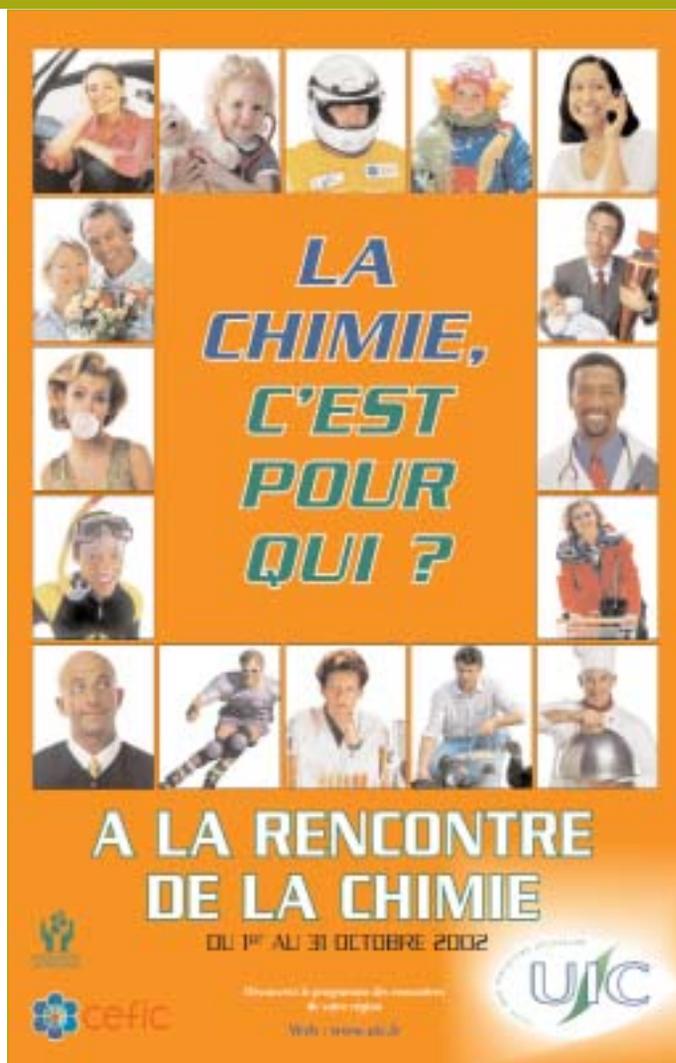
... surveys conducted over the last decade in Europe indicate that the reputation of the chemical industry has not kept up with the industry's improving environmental performance.

Belgium, through its association Fedichem, kicked off the series. On 4 and 5 May 2002, more than 40 chemical plants and about 15 university laboratories and museums opened their doors to the public. Despite the torrential rain, almost 70 000 people participated, showing an undeniable interest in chemistry. Open Doors took place in Spain in 2002 and will continue until the end of this year. Over the last months of 2002, Open Doors were successfully organized in the UK, Italy, France, Finland, and the Netherlands. This year, Open Door events will be held in Portugal, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Greece, Hungary, and Italy (again). It is interesting to note that on average, in all the countries that have had these events, 25% of the visitors were younger than 20.

These Open Door days are a unique opportunity to inform the public about the crucial role of chemistry in everyday life. Clothes, CDs, computers, sports equipment, cars, electronic devices . . . almost everything relies on chemistry! This type of event also demonstrates the chemical industry's capacity for innovation as well as its safety and quality concerns. It can provide a high degree of reassurance to the local community. There is no doubt about the benefits and the necessity of repeating and continuing this kind of initiative. The chemical industry's reputation can only get better—probably slowly, but surely! 🏆

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 www.cefic.org



Chemistry—Who Is It For? This was the motto of a month-long initiative of the French Union des Industries Chimiques. A survey of visitors who attended the French Open Door events indicated that 64% had never visited such a site before. More than 90% found the events interesting and felt that the sites they visited were clean, welcoming, and safe. The enthusiasm was shared by the industries and their employees who were eager to make known their activities. UIC is planning for similar events in the future. <www.uic.fr>



Symposia on Chemistry at the Interfaces: Public Understanding of Chemistry

14 August 2003 | Ottawa, Canada

JOINT 39TH IUPAC CONGRESS AND 86TH CONFERENCE OF THE CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR CHEMISTRY

Chemistry cannot flourish in isolation, but must develop within a context of public understanding and mutual trust. To give focus to IUPAC's long-range goal of addressing the critical interfaces between chemistry and society, a new CCE subcommittee focusing on the public understanding of chemistry (PUC) has begun its work. One outcome is a major initiative to bring the chemical profession, chemical industry, and the general public into dialogue at the upcoming joint IUPAC/CSC Congress. Major stakeholders, each focusing on one of chemistry's interfaces with the public, will catalyze this dialogue in three linked symposia on 14 August 2003.

Symposium 1—Morning (Sponsored by Dow Canada Ltd.)

The Flow of Ideas Between Chemistry and the Public Through the Media

How do ideas flow between Chemistry and the Public through the media? What role could the media play in facilitating a credible two-way dialogue between those involved in chemistry and the general public? How can this dialogue help build trust and increased understanding of the role that chemistry plays in people's lives?

- **Madeleine Jacobs**, *editor-in-chief, Chemical & Engineering News, USA*
- **Claire McLoughlin**, *Press & Public Relations, Royal Society of Chemistry, UK*
- **Vince Smith**, *President, Dow Chemical Canada Inc.*
- **Ian Shugar**, *ADM, Health Policy and Communications Branch, Health Canada*

Symposium 2—Lunchtime (Sponsored by Imperial Oil Products and Chemicals, Ltd.)

The Flow of Ideas Between the Research Lab and Industry or Public Use

How do ideas flow between the research lab and industry or public use? How are ideas originating in the research laboratory translated into eventual refinement of technologies for industrial and public use? How are needs perceived by industry and the public translated back into the research laboratory? What are the various interactions among academia, government, and industry within this product cycle, and how can a convergence of interests be optimized?

- **Howard Alper**, *Vice-rector, University of Ottawa and President of the Royal Society of Canada*
- **Jean-Claude Gavrel**, *Director, Networks of Centres of Excellence, NSERC, Canada*
- **Ole Kihle**, *PE Products Technology Manager, Polymers Technology Centre, Imperial Oil Limited, Canada*

Symposium 3—Afternoon (Sponsored by Shell Canada Chemicals)

The Flow of Ideas Through Society

How do ideas flow through society? How can chemistry, the central science, continue to make significant contributions to the well being of society and provide benefits for future generations? How does chemistry position itself and interact with other key disciplines concerned with the health of people and the environment, social justice, economic growth, and the general aspirations of society? How can a convergence of societal interests be optimized?

- **Tim Faithfull**, *President, Shell Canada Ltd.*
- **Bill Leiss**, *Past President, The Royal Society of Canada and NSERC/SSHRC Industrial Research Chair in Risk Communication and Public Policy at the University of Calgary*
- **Stuart Smith**, *Chair, Ensyn Technologies, Past Chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy and Past Chair, Science Council of Canada*
- **David Harpp**, *McGill University Office for Chemistry and Society, Canada*
- **Elizabeth Dowdeswell**, *former ADM, Environment Canada and former Executive Director of the United Nations Environmental Program*

Our younger stakeholders will also participate. The winning entries from an international poster competition for 10–16 year old students on the theme of “It’s a Chemical World” will be prominently displayed at the conference.

All sessions will be open to the public.

More information?

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