

Topic 1: Breadth of Chemistry

The word "Chemistry" has been practically banned from the last two Framework Programmes (FP) which support R&D at the European level. The contribution of chemistry as a central science to advance economical and societal issues, although inevitable, is not fully recognised by the general public and even the funding agencies and practitioners of other disciplines. Chemistry is changing owing to the development of multidisciplinary areas combining chemistry with material sciences, physics, biology, medicine affording new areas for R&D like nanotechnologies, molecular biology, environmental sciences, etc.

Hence, chemistry could become an old-fashioned science and its applications – chemical industry, will be considered as a mature activity which should be "exported" to developing countries just because of environmental issues and low-cost manpower. This trend must be fought by combining the impetuses coming from each chemical society.

SFC is already acting at the national level, mostly in association with other bodies concerned with chemical sciences and technologies. Since last October the "Conférence Pasteur" brings together the major actors of chemistry in France (French Academy of Sciences, French Academy of Technologies, CNRS, learned societies, Gay-Lussac Conference, Maison de la Chimie) with the aim of promoting chemical sciences and technologies. The Conférence Pasteur works in five fields: i) Communication and promotion of chemistry, ii) Education and continuing education, iii) Scientific meetings, iv) R&D proposals for chemical sciences and technologies, and v) Policy for start-up companies.

On the other hand, SFC has developed since several years a flexible policy with specialist societies dealing either with sub-branches of chemistry or related areas: societies involved in material sciences, polymers, chemical engineering have signed agreements with SFC. Agreements with other associations strongly related to specific French industries (cosmetics, flavours and fragrances, etc.) are presently discussed. The "Gallic village" syndrome is however very strong in the country of Astérix and will require utmost patience. It is noteworthy that the Division of Physical Chemistry is shared between the French societies of Chemistry and Physics. In addition, SFC is broadening its divisional structure to include new interdisciplinary fields like formulation and food chemistry.