

Press Release

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European Youth Debating Competition 2017: UK National Finals Winners selected after debating our future with or without petrochemistry and plastics

- EPCA and PlasticsEurope organised for the second year in a row the European Youth Debating Competition (EYDC).
- The UK National Finals gathered over 50 students from 10 schools. The event was hosted by the Imperial College London.
- Three winners were selected to represent the UK in the European Finals that will take place on 1st October in Berlin, during the EPCA 51st Annual Meeting, the largest gathering of the global chemical business community in Europe.

Over 50 students participated at this year's UK edition of the European Youth Debating Competition, a joint project organised by the European Petrochemical Association (EPCA) and PlasticsEurope. The youth debate in London gathered students aged between 16 and 19 from London and surroundings from 10 schools to discuss the theme "**People, Planet, Profit in the Digital Age: With or without Petrochemistry and Plastics?**". Three young debaters were selected to represent the UK at the European Finals to be held in Berlin on 1st October, during the 51st EPCA Annual Meeting.

Students discussed the role of petrochemical products in our daily lives especially through key applications such as computers, sportswear and innovative plastics used in both modern medicine and renewable energy. They also underlined the side-effects of our society's consumerism, and the need for a change in our behaviour to better re-use and recycle products. Furthermore, they have concentrated on issues that are of high importance to them, the young generation: How interconnected will we live tomorrow? What kind of education is required to be successful in this new digital age? How are society, environment and the economy affected by the digital revolution? During the debate, the participants are divided into fixed speakers with pro and con factions, and free speakers who have the possibility to argue from any position. Moreover, participants and members of the audience are encouraged to

show how convinced they are of the speeches and arguments, by displaying green or red ballot cards, thereby ensuring an interactive and enjoyable debate.

The 7-strong members of the jury was composed of representative from the plastics and petrochemical industry sector, academia and media representatives, who analysed the young debaters' performances based on their knowledge, ability to express themselves and interact with each other. At the end of the debates, the jury rewarded the three outstanding debaters: **David Fagmeni** (*Westcliff High School for Boys*), **Cecili Ward** (*Prendergast School*) and **Rachel Kale** (*Prendergast School*).

Harbinder Bhanvra, Business Manager at SABIC who presided over the debate, praised the students' debating skills: *"I was really impressed by the students. From the way they handled the difficult content matter to the way they formulated and delivered their thoughts. It is truly remarkable to see young people taking up public debate in our country"*, he said.

Nathalie Debuyst, Communication and Education Manager at EPCA, and member of the jury was delighted: *"This competition gives us a unique opportunity to connect with a new generation. It gives us the chance to listen and learn about their views and expectations about the future. I witnessed an engaging debate amongst digital natives who showed great enthusiasm and understanding of society's development and needs and the contribution of science, petrochemistry and plastics in our daily lives"*.

Prior to the debate, Kim Christiansen, North Region Director at PlasticsEurope, reflected on the concept of engaging with young debaters. *"For the past two years, we have been engaged in these debates and once again, this debate reminds us of the impressive standards of British debating societies."* In the last edition of the EYDC, Caroline Gakpetor, a UK student, was one of the joint first-place winners of the European Finals in Budapest, during the 50th Anniversary EPCA Annual Meeting.

The next national debate will take place in Paris, France on 15th September 2017 after the summer break.

About EYDC

EPCA and PlasticsEurope have launched a new series of the European Youth Debating Competition (www.eydc.eu) targeting young students aged 16 to 19, throughout Europe. The main objectives of the European Youth Debating Competition (EYDC) and its organisers from the petrochemical and plastics industry, are: to promote STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), to empower students with soft skills and to encourage them to further discover and exchange on the contribution of petrochemistry and plastics in the digital age. Whilst for industry, it is an opportunity to listen to the views and expectations of the next generation of leaders. Technological dimensions of this new era with sustainable mobility, energy efficiency, smart living, societal wellbeing, are key ingredients for the future of both industry sectors and the overall competitiveness of the EU.

The European Petrochemical Association (EPCA)

Based in Brussels, EPCA is the quality network in Europe for the global chemical 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 provides a platform to meet, exchange information and transfer learning, and serves as a think tank for its members and stakeholders. EPCA promotes STEM education, with a clear focus on gender and diversity inclusion. EPCA also highlights the multidisciplinary approach and the variety of challenging career paths that the chemical industry offers.

PlasticsEurope

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.