

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

ECTN: AN ESTABLISHED FORUM FOR EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY CHEMISTS

These days most people involved in university education know what ECTS is. But the same will not be true of ECTN. The origin of the acronyms is different: ECTS is the European Credit Transfer System, ECTN the European Chemistry Thematic Network. But in fact the two are closely connected. Chemistry was one of the five original ECTS subjects, and when the SOCRATES programme was introduced the European Commission decided to foster the setting up of Thematic Networks as a forum where educators could discuss their problems and look at possible ways of solving them, and disseminate best practices, in a European context. So the members of the original "inner circle" decided to form such a chemistry network, with the aim of attracting representative universities from all the EU countries. It is also hoped to get national chemical societies involved, but so far only the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Czech and Slovak Chemical Societies are members.

ECTN has now grown to a healthy size of over 100 members from 28 different countries and during its six years of existence has managed to do a great deal of useful work. A number of Working Groups have been set up, including Core Chemistry, Safety in Chemistry, Practical Skills, the Image of Chemistry, Chemistry and the Environment, Postgraduate Training, Biological Chemistry, and Green Chemistry. These working groups have presented reports which can be found on the Internet (www.ectn.net). Contacts have been established with FECS and the European Community Chemistry Council (ECCC).

The Core Chemistry group set itself the task of surveying the whole of Europe in order to find out what the member countries consider as the common ground for university education. The tangible result of this was a report published as a sizeable volume. On this basis ECTN has devised a series of computer-based tests to enable students to determine whether they have mastered this core material as well as testing the pre-university knowledge in schools. These tests are available, in demonstration form, in 17 different languages. The initial phase of this project is complete and a CD is being distributed and tested throughout Europe. In the near future these tests will be available on the internet.

The members of ECTN (which are universities, not departments of chemistry) are of course aware that their function is not to aim for homogenisation of chemistry tertiary education in Europe but to act as a forum for discussing ideas which can find wide acceptance within the chemistry community. Presently ECTN is taking part as a 'synergy group' in the EU-sponsored project "*Tuning Higher Education Structures in Europe*", and as part of this activity a paper has been produced which suggests a possible framework for a 'Eurobachelor' degree in chemistry.

ECTN hopes to receive support from the relevant organisations within the countries of Europe and from the national chemical societies and to extend its membership as Europe expands. Since it is possible that financial support from Brussels may eventually dry up, ECTN is at present in the process of forming a separate organisation, the European Chemistry Thematic Network Association (ECTNA), which will allow it to act on a wider basis.

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**RESEARCH ON MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE EDUCATION:
From beliefs to cognition, from problem solving to understanding**

The *Finnish Association for Research in Mathematics and Science Education* (Professor *Erkki Pehkonen*, chair), and the *Finnish Graduate School of Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry Education* (Professor *Maija Ahtee*, chair) have jointly published a book with the above title. It is in English and contains a number of refereed papers by an international panel of reviewers. The papers derive from graduate research work carried out by students of the *Graduate School*. In addition, it contains papers by Professor *Laurence Viennot*, University VII, France, and Professor *Georgios Tsaparlis*, University of Ioannina, Greece, who gave lectures and workshops at seminars of the Graduate School in Joensuu, and Professor *Erkki Pehkonen*, who gave a lecture at a seminar in Vaasa. Publisher is the Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä. Papers related to physics and chemistry education are the following:

- The Finnish Graduate School of Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry Education (pp. 5-10), by *M. Ahtee & V. Vatanen*.
- Problem solving in chemistry and science education (pp. 67-88), by *G. Tsaparlis*.
- Physics education research: Inseparable contents and methods - The part played by critical details (pp. 89-100), by *L. Viennot*.
- The force concept inventory in diagnosing the conceptual understanding of Newtonian mechanics in Finnish upper secondary schools (pp. 101-114), by *J. Jauhiainen, I.T. Koponen, & J. Lavonen*.
- An evaluation of interactive teaching methods in mechanics: Using the force concept inventory to monitor student learning (pp. 115-132) by *A. Savinainen*.

THIS PUBLICATION CAN BE OBTAINED FROM: Institute for Educational Research, Customer services, University of Jyväskylä, P.O. Box 35, FIN-40351 Jyväskylä, Finland. Phone: + 358 14 260 3220; fax: + 358 14 260 3241; e-mail: terttu.airama@ktl.jyu.fi; www: <http://www.jyu.fi/ktl/>

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**CHEMISTRY EDUCATION: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE IN EUROPE
(CERAPIE)**

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Scheduled to be included in the October 2002 and/or February 2003 issues

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Contributions reporting original work are invited for one or two special sections of CERAPIE that will include papers presented in the 6th ECRICE / 2nd ECCE that took place in Aveiro, Portugal (September 2001). A special section is scheduled to be included in the October 2002 and/or February 2003 issues of *CERAPIE*. Suitable manuscripts will be put in the standard review process; however, **REVIEWS WILL BE NOT ANONYMOUS**.

RESEARCH REPORTS: Authors are requested to submit complete research reports (except in the cases where we have research communications - see *Guidelines for submissions*).

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DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION OF MANUSCRIPTS: 31 May 2002

Authors should send **four (4) print** copies of their manuscript, printed on both faces of A4 paper (font: TimesNewRoman; size: 12; space 1.5).

MANUSCRIPTS SHOULD BE POSTED TO:

Georgios TSAPARLIS (CERAPIE) University of Ioannina, Department of Chemistry, GR-451 10 Ioannina, Greece

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**CHEMISTRY EDUCATION: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE IN EUROPE
(CERAPIE)**

Theme Issue on *TEACHING CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS*

Scheduled for publication in May 2003

GUEST EDITOR: *Keith S. TABER*

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Contributions are invited for a themed peer-reviewed issue, on the theme of *the relationship of physics to chemistry teaching*. Possible subject matter for contributions might include:

- the common ground in chemistry and physics teaching
- the role physics plays in supporting the teaching of chemistry
- students' difficulties in appreciating the relationship between associated topics taught under the headings 'chemistry' and 'physics'
- the influence of the incorporation of ideas from quantum theory on the teaching of chemistry
- the influence of the widespread use of physical techniques such as spectroscopy upon the teaching of chemistry (ditto laser, microwave techniques)
- differences in the traditions of physics and chemistry, and how this influences or should influence the teaching of the subjects
- preferred learning styles of physics and chemistry students
- the effect of subject specialism when teaching across the chemistry-physics distinction
- the nature (and future?) of 'physical science' courses
- learning difficulties in science: do alternative conceptions in chemistry and in physics present the same problems for teachers?

This list is not intended to be exclusive, but rather to suggest the scope of possible contributions. Papers could discuss one or more of secondary, college/high school or university level.

The **guest editor** for the themed issue will be Dr. **Keith Taber**, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2PH, U.K. Informal approaches about the suitability of possible contributions may be made to Dr. Taber preferably through e-mail at kst24@cam.ac.uk. Submissions, in the format required by the journal (see GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS) **should be sent by post (NOT BY e-mail) * to the guest editor**, to arrive by **November 30, 2002**. Potential contributions will be subject to the journal's usual peer review process. Where revisions are required as a condition of publication, authors will be required to resubmit by **March 31, 2003**.

- Please remember to submit **four (4) print copies** of your manuscript, of which **three** must be prepared for **anonymous review**.