

The International Year of Chemistry

Events for Everyone

■ The International Year of Chemistry 2011 has been widely celebrated in Finland. Events have been organised for the general public, schoolchildren, students and their teachers, professionals, and journalists.

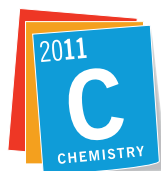
Markku Leskelä

In Finland, the opening of the International Year of Chemistry (IYC) took place in January in connection with the national Science Days. In addition to the opening ceremony, with three lectures dedicated to chemistry research, the Science Days programme included two chemistry sessions, chemical workshops on the Night of Sciences, and a separate lecture in honour of **Marie Curie**. The IYC coincided with the 100th anniversary of her Nobel Prize in chemistry. All these events gathered more than 600 people.

The main public event was held on May 12 in Helsinki. At Narinkkatori on the main stage of a big marquee experts were interviewed on topics varying from biofuels for transportation to clean water, new pharmaceuticals for Parkinson's disease, fuel cells, thin coatings for silver, and composites made from natural fibres.

Heureka Science Centre gave interesting popular science shows. The public was also invited to taste and compare meat grilled on gas and coal grills and participate in a soap bubble blowing competition. The day was very successful, with about 5,500 people visiting the place, and wide media attention on both radio and TV channels.

Besides Helsinki, activities have been hosted all over Finland by the nine local societies of Finnish Chemical Society. The Chemical Society of Northern Finland, for example, organised an event titled Everyday Miracles in April. In the Tietomaa Science Centre, chemists did, among other things, spectacular experiments. The event attracted a



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IYC2011 in Finland

Coordinator: The Association
of Finnish Chemical
Societies

www.kemia2011.fi

lot of attention partly thanks to one of the performing chemists being Rector **Lauri Lajunen** from the University of Oulu. The number of people that visited Tietomaa on the day exceeded 1,000.

SciFest 2011, an annual science festival organised in Joensuu, in Eastern Finland, especially focused on chemistry. The programme included lectures, demonstrations, and workshops organised by the University of Eastern Finland and the Chemical Society of Eastern Finland. So far, SciFest has been the largest event under the umbrella of IYC2011, since close to 10,000 students, school children, and their teachers visited the Joensuu Science Park and Arena.

A local event in Turku, the Children's University attracted lots of youngsters to chemistry workshops. In Jyväskylä,

an event in Kallioplanetaario (Rock Planetarium) was dedicated to the chemistry of the stars and wonders of space. The IYC was also visible during the Market of Possibilities in Lahti, Suomi Arena in Pori, and Maritime Festival in Kotka.

The chemical society of the Tampere Region has been very active, organising popular Studia Generalia lectures on the topics of IYC2011.

In connection with the Kokkola Housing Fair 2011, local chemists presented chemistry and the themes of IYC to the public on August 11.

All local activities were quite successful, gathering thousands of visitors. Discussions have commenced on repeating some of these events in years to come.

Teachers and students

Teachers, students, and schoolchildren form an important target group for IYC2011, since one of its main aims is to encourage interest in chemistry among young people. Finnish schools received information on the IYC from many sources, for example, an IYC jubilee magazine produced by the *Finnish Chemical Magazine* and special posters.

Teachers have also been supported by the national LUMA Centre, focusing on teaching and learning of natural sciences, mathematics, IT, and the Gadolin Chemistry Class.

Organised by the science teachers' association, MAOL, the biannual Teachers' Days has chemistry as the main theme of this year's programme. The



Leena Hovi

Heleena Karrus, the Secretary of the Finnish Chemical Society, together with Matti Santala and Seppo Sipilä, the Head and the Secretary of the Chemical Society of Western Finland, presenting the themes of the International Year of Chemistry at the Suomi Arena event in Pori.

Finnish Chemical Congress in March also had a separate session for chemical education, continuing the following day at the University of Helsinki where the national LUMA Centre organised workshops.

The Heureka Science Centre organised several workshops on chemistry where it has been possible to study, for example, water, acids and bases, gases, and gas mixtures. About 6,500 students participated in these workshops.

Organised by IUPAC, the IYC Global Experiment is uniting students around the globe. They participate in activities highlighting the role that chemistry plays in issues of water quality and purification. Primary school to high school students have been invited to explore one of the Earth's most critical resources, water, and report their findings on water quality and water treatment.

The global experiment currently includes four planned activities designed to cover intriguing chemical concepts with the use of minimal required equipment and resources. Teachers work

with their students to complete the four activities, giving them an overview of a variety of concepts including acidity, salinity, filtration, and solar still water purification. During the spring term, 15 Finnish schools reported their results on a special website.

Professionals and journalists

The main event for professionals was the ChemBio exhibition and Finnish Chemical Congress held in Helsinki in March. IYC 2011 was very visible at the exhibition, and the congress programme contained several IYC topics. The programme in the exhibition plaza also covered this year's themes, the most interesting being the Chemistry Saves the World panel. About 8,000 people visited the exhibition, while the eight symposia of the congress attracted around 1,000 participants.

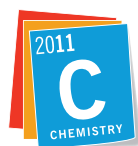
A theme forum for professionals was organised by the Chemical Industry



The third Helsinki Chemicals Forum brought together hundreds of authorities and leaders in chemistry.



Markku Ojala



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Federation of Finland in April, the topic being young entrepreneurs.

The media visibility of the year is very important. This year's aim is to inform the public on the importance of chemistry. So far four events have taken place and journalists have been informed about this year's topics.

The first event was a science bus ride in the Greater Helsinki area, during which relevant lectures were given. In February, journalists were invited to the Helsinki University's Chemistry Department to listen to lectures on new achievements in chemistry and a lab tour.

In May there was a full day excursion to Kilpilahti, the theme was alternative fuels for transportation. The event held in June was directed at women's magazines and contained themes from food to health care products. The four events have captured about 70 journalists.

Helsinki Chemicals Forum Developing Further

The third annual Helsinki Chemicals Forum (HCF), held in May 2011, turned out to be a success. The forum brought together 250 international and national authorities, politicians, industry leaders, NGOs, academics, and media representatives, from about 42 countries, to debate and seek solutions to the most topical questions related to chemicals regulations and the chemical industry.

Next year, the agenda and content of the forum will be developed further. "The ultimate goal of the HCF is to offer an international platform for debate aimed at development of chemicals policy. In the debates, special focus

will be given to the most critical issues of current chemicals legislation in such a way that work on them can move forward", says **Hannu Vornamo**, Secretary General of the forum.

In 2012, the HCF will be held on May 24–25. The event is well on the way to developing into the key international forum for action and forward-looking debate on chemicals control, drawing from the position of Helsinki as a global hub for actors in the field, which are clustering around the European Chemicals Agency.

Henna Koppala

In Finland, the International Year of Chemistry has been celebrated visibly and with great enthusiasm. Events have been organised for different audiences and in different cities. All this has been possible thanks to the large group of organisations on the organising committee and the economic support of events by several companies, organisations, foundations, and the Finnish Chemical Society.

Rough calculations show that the message of IYC2011 has so far been distributed face to face to more than 20,000 people in Finland and through the media to millions of Finns. □

The writer is Professor of Chemistry at University of Helsinki and Head of the National Organising Committee of IYC2011.
markku.leskela@helsinki.fi