



ASSOCIATION OF CHEMISTRY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Newsletter 2025

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Special issue on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Association

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- 1) Branimir Jovančičević, Jan Schwarzbauer and Stuart Gibb:
**25 Years of ACE and EMEC: Celebrating Science,
Collaboration, and Friendship**

In the beginning: The formation of the Association of Chemistry and the Environment (ACE)

The inaugural Meeting on Environmental Chemistry, was held in December 2000 in the city of Nancy in north-eastern France. During this gathering, a group of young environmental scientists from across Europe came together with a shared vision: to establish a society dedicated to fostering the exchange of scientific knowledge and promoting academic collaboration. This marked the founding of the Association of Chemistry and the Environment (ACE) with its founding board members Josef Caslavsky from the Czech Republic, Branimir Jovančičević from Serbia, Jan Schwarzbauer from Germany, Roland Kallenborn from Norway, and Mark Fitzsimons from the United Kingdom. Eric Lichtfouse served as the association's first president. During this formative period, the board made a pivotal decision: to continue the organisation of the European Meeting on Environmental Chemistry (EMEC) on an ongoing, annual basis thus creating a cornerstone event for the environmental chemistry community.

Over the years, ACE has grown significantly, expanding its membership to include experts from a wide range of disciplines related to environmental chemistry. These disciplines include atmospheric chemistry, water and soil pollution, sustainable chemistry, and green technologies. Some initiatives have been implemented to foster the cooperation between environmental scientists such as the ACE Collaboration network Database that worked from 2002 till 2006. Also smaller workshops beside the EMEC events have been organised or supported such as the Chemistry and Climate Workshop in Tromsø 2011 or the ACE Seminars in 2021/22.

Furthermore, ACE is also deeply committed to nurturing the next generation of scientists. Through awards, scholarships, and mentoring programs, the association actively supports young researchers and students, ensuring the continued growth and advancement of environmental chemistry as a vital scientific discipline. As a milestone, in 2020 an Early Career Scientist Chapter has been established by a very active group of ACE members.

All activities and outcomes are the result of the commitment of the ACE board members. The composition of the board certainly changed over the years (as figured out below) but always an international and enthusiastic group of environmental scientists was willing to promote intensively the association. And the board members originate from whole Europe, from the Iberian Peninsula in the West to Russia in the East, from Scotland and Norway in the North to Italy and the Balkan region in the South.

Now ACE is well established as a non-profit scientific organization with a clear mission: to foster international collaboration among scientists from academia, research institutions, industry, and governmental bodies. By uniting diverse expertise, ACE aims to address

pressing environmental challenges and promote education in environmental chemistry. The association provides a platform for networking among professionals, disseminating research findings, and facilitating collaborative projects aimed at solving environmental issues through chemistry.

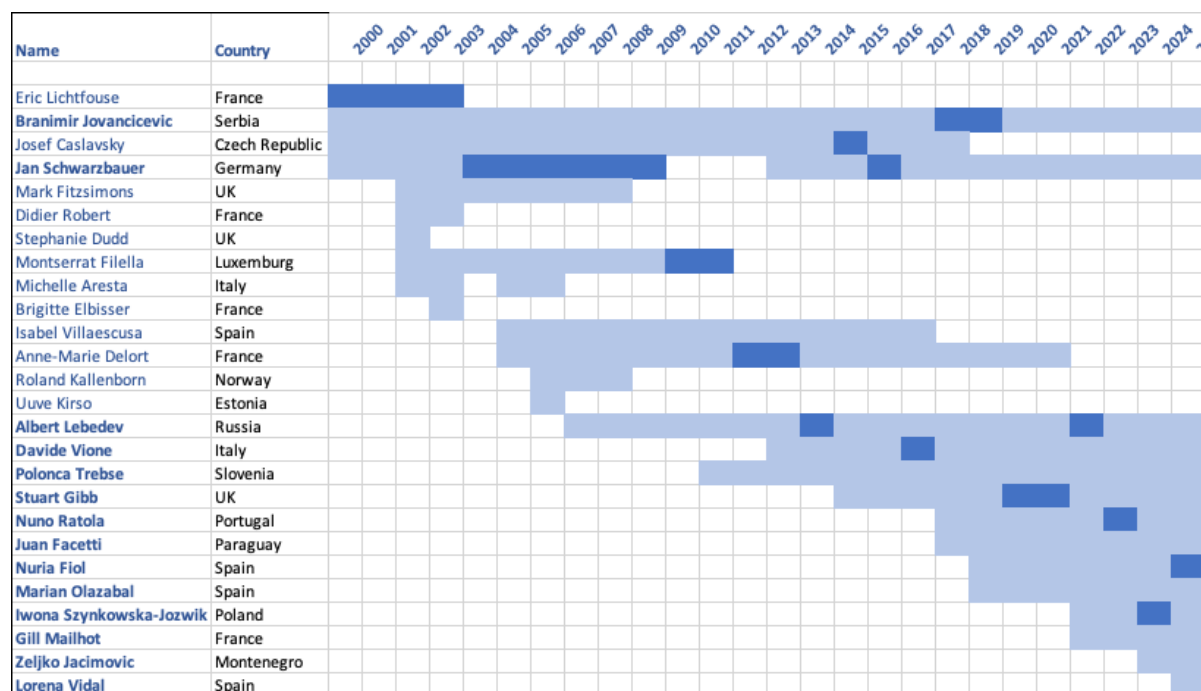


Figure 1. The ACE board members over 25 years. Dark blue timelines represent the presidentship, bold members are currently active.

Today, ACE Board comprises experts from various fields of environmental chemistry from around Europe and beyond including:

- Prof. Juan F Facetti, Instituto de Desarrollo del Pensamiento, Patria Sonada, Paraguay
- Prof. Nuria Fiol, Chemical Engineering Department, Escola Politècnica Superior, Universitat de Girona, Spain
- Prof. Stuart Gibb, Environmental Research Institute, University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland UK
- Prof. Željko Jaćimović, Faculty of Metallurgy and Technology, University of Montenegro, Montenegro
- Prof. Branimir Jovančičević, Department of Chemistry, University of Belgrade, Serbia
- Prof. Albert T. Lebedev, Shenzhen MSU-BIT University, Shenzhen, China
- Prof. Gilles Mailhot, Institut de Chimie de Clermont-Ferrand, Université Clermont Auvergne, France
- Dr. Lydia Niemi (Early Career Representative), Environmental Research Institute, University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland UK
- Dr. Marian Olazabal, Analytical Chemistry Department, Faculty of Science and Technology, University of the Basque Country, Spain
- Dr. Nuno Ratola, LEPABE – Faculty of Engineering, University of Porto, Portugal
- Prof. Małgorzata Iwona Szykowska-Jóźwik, Institute of General and Ecological Chemistry, Faculty of Chemistry, Lodz University of Technology, Poland

- Prof. Jan Schwarzbauer, Institute for Organic Biogeochemistry in Geo-Systems, RWTH Aachen University, Germany
- Prof. Polonca Trebše, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
- Dr. Lorena Vidal, University of Alicante, Spain
- Prof. Davide Vione, Department of Chemistry, University of Torino, Italy



Figure 2. Members of the ACE Board at EMEC24 (2024): Alicante, Spain.

A journey around Europe: The European Meeting on Environmental Chemistry (EMEC)

The **European Meeting on Environmental Chemistry (EMEC)** is usually held at the end of November or in early December each year. It covers a broad spectrum of topics within environmental chemistry and often features interdisciplinary presentations. Over the years, EMEC has gained international recognition for attracting high-quality scientific contributions, engaging keynote addresses from distinguished researchers, and fostering collaboration among participants.

Since its inception, the conference has been hosted in various European cities, reflecting its growing influence and the expanding community of environmental chemists. Following the inaugural event in Nancy, France (2000), subsequent EMECs were held in Dijon, France (2001); Geneva, Switzerland (2002); and Plymouth, England (2003). Each year, the event brings together scientists from diverse fields such as atmospheric science, biology, geology, industrial chemistry, medicine, soil science, ecotoxicology, green chemistry, remediation techniques, and water science. These gatherings aim to address a wide range of challenges within environmental chemistry, with inter- and multi-disciplinary contributions strongly encouraged.

A significant milestone occurred at **EMEC5** in Bari, Italy (2004), when the ACE Board underwent notable changes and the association introduced new initiatives, such as the **Young Researcher Award** and a **poster prize** for EMEC participants. Additionally, the conference

expanded its reach by hosting meetings in Eastern Europe, attracting many new delegates and broadening its international engagement.

Over time, EMEC has evolved into a forum particularly relevant and attractive to **PhD students** and **early career scientists**. In 2015, ACE established a **scholarship program** to support the participation of research students, providing them with networking opportunities and the chance to interact with established colleagues. This initiative continues to thrive today, fostering exchange between junior and senior participants in the constructive and collaborative environment that has become a hallmark of EMEC.

EMEC has built a strong reputation for attracting high-quality scientific presentations and keynote addresses from internationally renowned researchers, as well as for facilitating lively scientific discourse. EMECs have often provided first contacts that have led to new networks, collaborative grant applications and proposals; to staff and student exchanges and to joint publications. Many of the professional, and personal, relationships established through these activities have been enduring.

EMECs embed topical scientific discourse in supportive & highly social settings, making the events rewarding from both professional and personal perspectives. The **social program** has also become an integral part of each event. Participants are offered unique opportunities to engage with the local culture, history, food, and drink, culminating in a special conference dinner. By often choosing locations away from capital cities or more frequently visited destinations, EMEC provides attendees with fresh and exciting personal experiences that complement the professional engagement.

- **EMEC1 (2000):** Nancy, France
- **EMEC2 (2001):** Dijon, France
- **EMEC3 (2002):** Geneva, Switzerland
- **EMEC4 (2003):** Plymouth, United Kingdom
- **EMEC5 (2004):** Bari, Italy
- **EMEC6 (2005):** Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro
- **EMEC7 (2006):** Brno, Czech Republic
- **EMEC8 (2007):** Inverness, Scotland
- **EMEC9 (2008):** Girona, Spain
- **EMEC10 (2009):** Limoges, France
- **EMEC11 (2010):** Portorož, Slovenia
- **EMEC12 (2011):** Clermont-Ferrand, France
- **EMEC13 (2012):** Moscow, Russia
- **EMEC14 (2013):** Budva, Montenegro
- **EMEC15 (2014):** Brno, Czech Republic
- **EMEC16 (2015):** Turin, Italy
- **EMEC17 (2016):** Inverness, United Kingdom
- **EMEC18 (2017):** Porto, Portugal
- **EMEC19 (2018):** Clermont-Ferrand, France
- **EMEC20 (2019):** Łódź, Poland
- **EMEC21 (2021):** Novi Sad, Serbia
- **EMEC22 (2022):** Ljubljana, Slovenia
- **EMEC23 (2023):** Budva, Montenegro
- **EMEC24 (2024):** Alicante, Spain

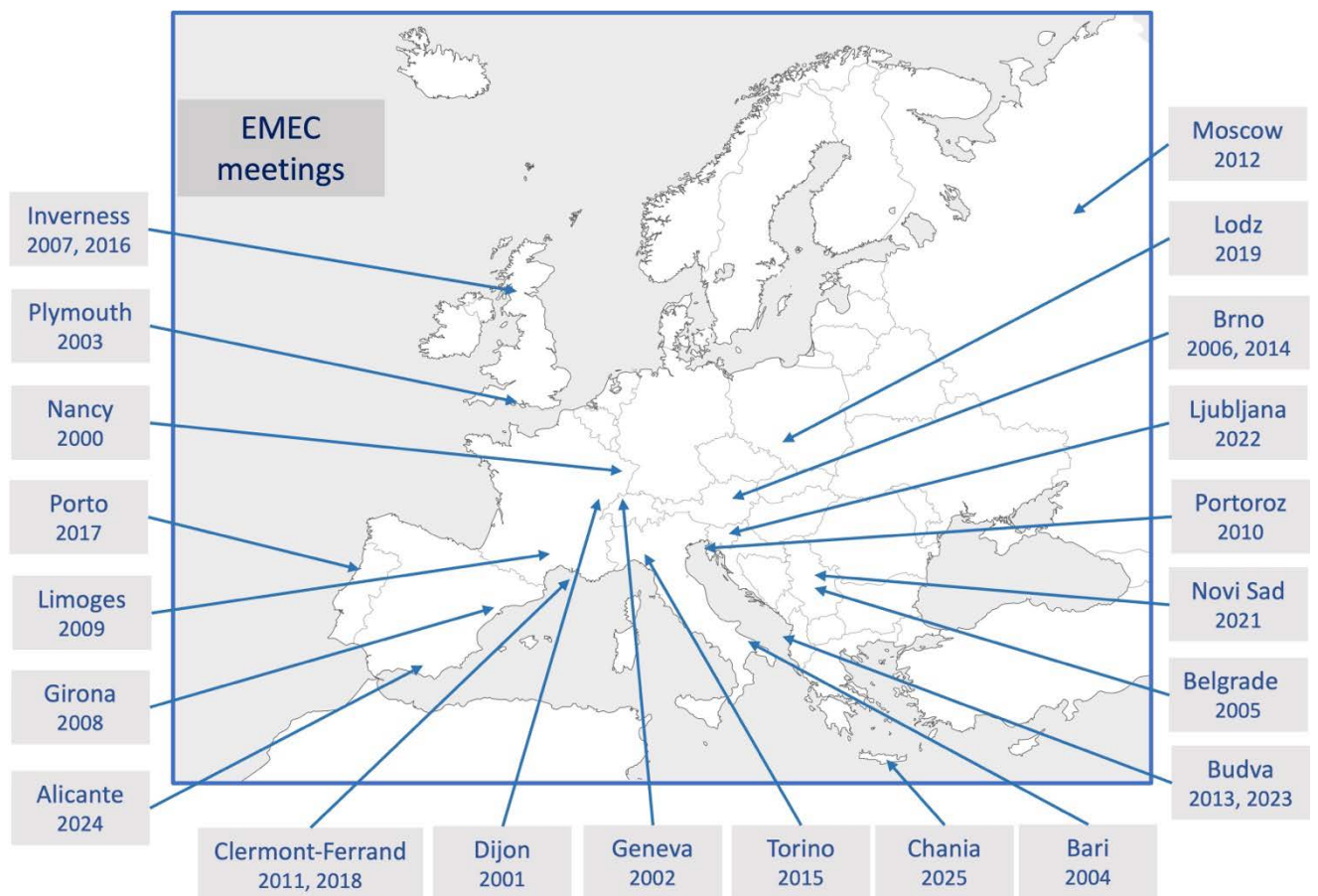


Figure 3 EMECs in almost all parts of Europe.

Books of Abstracts for most EMECs can be accessed on the ACE website at:
<http://www.europeanace.com/about/meetings>



Figure 4. Participants at our most recent gathering, EMEC 24 in Alicante Spain.

Ever-present: The EMEC Stalwarts

Special mention is worthy for the only two individuals who have attended every single EMEC to date: Prof. Branimir Jovančičević from the Department of Chemistry at the University of Belgrade (Serbia) and Prof. Jan Schwarzbauer from the Institute for Organic Biogeochemistry in Geo-Systems at RWTH Aachen University (Germany). Both have served as Presidents of ACE and remain active members of the ACE Board today. Their unwavering dedication and continuous involvement have endowed them with a unique perspective, carrying with them the complete collective experience and memory of EMEC's journey across Europe. Their contributions have been instrumental in shaping the legacy and success of EMEC over the years.



Figure 5. EMEC devotees Branimir Jovančičević (left) and Jan Schwarzbauer (right).

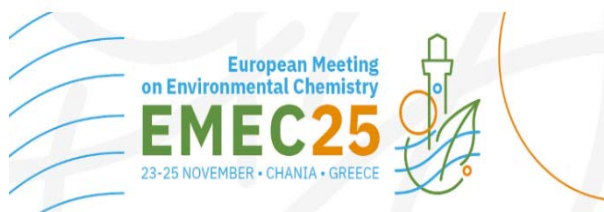
Environmental Chemistry Letters

In 2003, the first edition of ‘**Environmental Chemistry Letters (ECL)**’ was published as the official journal of the **Association of Chemistry and the Environment (ACE)**. The journal operates at the intersection of geology, chemistry, physics, and biology, publishing research of high significance to the study of both natural and engineered environments. The journal features articles of outstanding importance across a wide range of topics, including: Characterisation of natural and perturbed environments; Behaviour, prevention, treatment and control of mineral, organic and radioactive pollutants; Interfacial studies involving media such as soil, sediment, water, air, organism, and food; Green chemistry, environmentally friendly synthetic pathways, and alternative fuels; Ecotoxicology and risk assessment; Environmental processes and modelling; Environmental technologies, remediation and control; Environmental analytical chemistry, biomolecular tools and tracers e.g. stable isotopes.

Since its inception, the journal has achieved remarkable growth and recognition. Its first impact factor, recorded in 2008, was **1.4**. By 2024, this had risen to an impressive **20.4**, securing its position as the **second-ranked journal** out of 81 in the **Environmental Sciences** category.

Future Prospects and the 25th Anniversary

In 2025, ACE will celebrate its 25th anniversary, marking a quarter-century of dedication to environmental chemistry. The 25th European Meeting on Environmental Chemistry (EMEC25) is scheduled to take place in Chania, Crete, from November 23 to 25, 2025. This milestone event aims to continue the tradition of bringing together scientists, researchers, policymakers, and industry professionals to discuss the latest advancements in environmental chemistry.



2) Davide Vione and Gilles Mailhot:
Contributions of ACE to Environmental Chemistry

A total of 26 members are or have been part of the ACE board, some of them for one year, others for over 20 years. As active scientists, they have all given contributions to the broad field of environmental chemistry. Their main scientific contributions are listed below, together with representative references.

- 1) Reduction of CO₂ (photocatalytic, enzymatic) to obtain organic compounds to be used as feedstocks and synthetic building blocks (Michele Aresta, ACE board member 2002-2006) [1].
- 2) Effect of CO₂ and climate on plant growth, and use of stable isotopes to understand palaeoclimatic conditions (Josef Caslavsky, ACE board member 2000-2018) [2].
- 3) Presence and role of microorganisms in the cloud aqueous phase and evaluation of their impact on atmospheric chemistry (Anne-Marie Delort, ACE board member 2004-2021) [3].
- 4) Use of stable isotopes for the characterisation of animal fat in ancient pottery, demonstrating the past importance of milk processing (Stephanie Dudd, ACE board member 2002-2003) [4].
- 5) Use of sewage sludge in agriculture (Brigitte Elbisser, ACE board member 2002-2003) [5].
- 6) Hydrology of lakes, rivers and dammed rivers; sediment-water interactions with emphasis on transfer of pollutants and nutrients (Juan Francisco Facetti, ACE board member since 2016) [6].
- 7) Cycling of elements and toxic metals between water and biota (Montserrat Filella, ACE board member 2002-2011) [7].
- 8) Valorisation of biomass and waste biomass for green synthesis (e.g., of Ag nanoparticles) and environmental remediation (green sorbents) (Nuria Fiol, ACE board member since 2018) [8].
- 9) Occurrence, cycling and remediation of organic compounds in oceanic waters, inland waters, and soil (Mark Fitzimons, ACE board member 2002-2008) [9].
- 10) Occurrence and fate of pharmaceuticals in the aquatic environment, and their correlation with prescription habits and procedures (Stuart Gibb, ACE board member since 2015) [10].
- 11) Synthesis and physico-chemical characterization of transition metal complexes and study of their biological activity (Željko Jaćimović, ACE board member since 2023) [11].
- 12) Characterisation of organic matter constituents for the assessment of pollution sources, palaeoclimate, and oil origin (Branimir Jovančičević, ACE board member since 2023) [12].
- 13) Identification, quantification and risk assessment of organic legacy pollutants and chemicals of emerging concern (Roland Kallenborn, ACE board member 2006-2009) [13].
- 14) Monitoring of the occurrence and study of transformation of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in environmental compartments (Uuve Kirso, ACE board member 2006-2007) [14].

- 15) Use of mass spectrometric techniques for the characterisation of environmental contaminants and natural molecules (Albert Lebedev, ACE board member since 2007) [15].
- 16) Molecular studies and dynamics of soil organic matter, novel tools for soil analysis (Erich Lichtfouse, ACE board member 2000-2003) [16].
- 17) Water chemistry and photochemistry applied to environmental chemistry, atmospheric chemistry and advanced oxidation processes for water treatment (Gilles Mailhot, ACE board member since 2022) [17].
- 18) Development of new analytical methods and processes for the diagnosis and conservation of cultural and natural heritage. (Marian Olazabal, ACE board member since 2019) [18].
- 19) Identification and monitoring of emerging contaminants in the natural environment and technological systems (Nuno Ratola, ACE board member since 2018) [19].
- 20) Synthesis of photocatalytic TiO₂ nanoparticles for heterogeneous photocatalysis, solar photocatalysis for water detoxification. (Didier Robert, ACE board member 2002-2003) [20].
- 21) Characterisation of organic pollutants and organic pollution history in sediments (Jan Schwarzbauer, ACE board member 2000-2009 and 2013-) [21].
- 22) Applications of modern techniques (ToF-SIMS, SEM-EDS, ICP-OES, ICP-MS, LA-ICP-ToF-MS, AAS, LIBS) to monitor poisonous substances in the environment and in forensic chemistry (Iwona Szykowska-Jozwik, ACE board member since 2022) [22].
- 23) Identification and fate of contaminants in the natural environment and assessment of human exposure (Polonca Trebse, ACE board member since 2011) [23].
- 24) Development of environmentally friendly methods for trace analysis of pollutants in environmental, food and clinic samples based on liquid-phase and solid-phase (micro)extraction techniques (Lorena Vidal, ACE board member since 2024) [24].
- 25) Metal toxicity by using Microtox and other biological models and biosorption of metals and organics by using agro-food residues (Isabel Villaescusa, ACE board member 2005-2017) [25].
- 26) Photochemical transformation of organic pollutants in surface and atmospheric waters (Davide Vione, ACE board member since 2013) [26].

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3) Nuno Ratola: ACE scholarships and awards for young researchers

The commitment of ACE towards the encouragement and support of the younger generations of scientists has been paramount since day one. Twenty-five years have passed and although some of the founding members are still on the Board, there has been some renovation and the future upon us is being built under such premises.

In later years the preponderance of young scientists in ACE activities is increasing. In fact, in 2020, a division of the ACE called “Early Career Researchers” (ECR) was constituted, and since then they have been organizing events directed to the younger scientists/science students on a yearly basis, such as Chem2Change meetings and the ECR Events at each EMEC meeting. Also, they have a representative attending all board meetings.

Some of these ERC members were also recipients of what can be considered the most enduring action of the ACE towards the promotion of the young scientists’ work: the ACE Scholarships. This effort comprises the coverage of registration fees and travel/accomodation up to 500€ to typically 3 participants of each EMEC meeting, among MSc and PhD students and early-career post-docs. There is a call for applications made on the ACE website by the meeting organizers, and an evaluation committee of five Board members (with no conflicts of interest) ranks the proposals according to their scientific merits. Since 2023, the ACE Scholarships have had the support of LECO Europe.



Figure 6. Awardees of the ACE Scholarships at EMEC 18 in Porto
(Photo credits: Miguel Marques).

In the last meeting (EMEC 24 in Alicante, Spain) the awardees were (in alphabetical order): André Pinto (University of Porto, Portugal), João Pinto (University of Aveiro, Portugal) and Nevena Antic (University of Belgrade, Serbia).

Other awards for best oral and poster presentations have also been a constant of EMEC, mostly sponsored by each year's organizers and local partners. Since EMEC 18, the ACE has also been receiving the Diamond sponsorship of Prince Sultan International Prize for Water (PSIPW), which conveyed 6 poster and 2 oral presentation Young Researcher Awards in every EMEC meeting. The winners at EMEC 24 were: Alba Benito-Kaesbach and Yongrong Zou (oral); Khanh Toan Vu, Laureen Mori-Bazzano, Leonor R. Barroca, Matea Marelja, Paula Pérez and Rocco Gasco (poster). Awards from other sponsors include Andrés Duque-Villaverde (poster; Restek), César Castro-García (poster; Bruker), María Pau García-Moll (poster; RSEQ-STALI), Marianna Zolyomiova (Poster; Agilent).



Figure 7. Award ceremony at EMEC 24 in Alicante
(Photo credits: Sladjana Savic)

These evidences are proof of ACE's commitment to grant young researchers the possibility of being increasingly engaged in its activities and supported events. In the future, it is our intention to expand this crucial link and promote an even wider participation, reaching new areas of the globe and allowing for their opinion to be heard and considered in the mandatory evolution of the Association to continue to reach its goals in a (each day faster) changing world. Don't hold back, tell us your ideas!

4) Polonca Trebše:
ACE finance - never much, but always enough

ACE as a non-profit organization, has never had permanent sources of income. All our revenue has always depended on our own initiatives—primarily through organizing the **EMEC conferences**, where a portion of the registration fees contributed to our operational budget. Despite our limited financial means, we have always strived to use our resources carefully, transparently, and with purpose.

In the early years, our main expenses were related to **web hosting and digital infrastructure** to support ACE's online presence and conference activities. Until 2013, we also benefited from an additional income stream through **royalty payments**. These were based on an agreement between ACE and the Editors-in-Chief of the journal *Environmental Chemistry Letters (ECLE)*, which ACE founded in 2003. The journal served as the official publication of the association and was published by **Springer Verlag**.

However, in 2013, the publishing agreement with Springer expired. At the end of that year, **ACE sold, transferred, and assigned all rights and assets related to the journal** to Springer. The funds received from this sale were not left idle—they were **strategically allocated to support the next generation of scientists**.

Beginning in 2014, ACE launched an annual **scholarship program** aimed at supporting **MSc and PhD students, as well as early-career researchers**, in attending EMEC conferences. These scholarships covered registration fees and contributed up to **500 EUR** toward travel and accommodation costs. The **first five scholarships** were awarded for participation in **EMEC16**, held in December 2015 in **Turin, Italy**.

Recognizing the importance of international exposure for young scientists, we continuously sought **new sources of co-funding** to sustain and expand this initiative. It has always been a core value of ACE to **empower promising young researchers** by enabling their participation in international scientific events.

In 2019, ACE signed a cooperation agreement with the Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz International Prize for Water (PSIPW). As part of this collaboration, PSIPW provides a grant to support the participation of a distinguished plenary speaker whose work focuses on water-related research. In addition, PSIPW sponsors the **Young Researcher Awards**, which include **two prizes for the best oral presentations** and **six awards for outstanding poster contributions** presented at the EMEC conference.

In 2023, a new chapter began with the establishment of a **collaboration agreement between ACE and the LECO company**, focused on the delivery of scientific and technological products. As part of this partnership, the **first three LECO Scholarships** were awarded to support young European scientists attending **EMEC23**, held in **Budva, Montenegro**, in December 2023.

Although we do not have substantial financial resources, our commitment remains unwavering. We **continuously strive to support students and aspiring scientists** on their

research journeys—because we believe that investing in people is the most impactful investment of all.



Figure 8. Polonca Trebše, ACE Treasurer, during the presentation of the financial report at the EMEC23 conference in Budva, Montenegro, December 2023 (Photo credits: Mojca B. Kralj).

5) Lydia Niemi and Urška Šunta:
ACE early career scientists

The early-career researcher's network within the Association of Chemistry and the Environment was established during the coronavirus pandemic when researchers from the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Serbia joined forces in preparation of an online 2-day conference for early-career researchers in *Environmental Chemistry towards Global Change*. The online conference in the spring of 2022 was well-attended with more than 80 participants presenting their research from 13 countries. Through this event, Chem2Change was formed as a pan-European early-career researcher (ECR) branch of the Association of Chemistry and the Environment.

The Chem2Change network aims to support high-level knowledge exchange, collaboration and discussion between early-career scientists (MSc, PhD, and postdoc-level) across Europe and internationally in environmental chemistry and its applications in addressing current global sustainability challenges. In light of our aims, the group decided to organise the first in-person development workshop and networking session at the yearly ACE international conference EMEC22, which took place in Ljubljana in December 2022. The topic of the event was career development and the journey of post-PhD researchers, followed by a social dinner for all the participants. Both events in 2022 were very successful. Since then, the organising committee regularly hosts two events per year, one online event and one in-person event at the EMEC conferences.

In the next years, new members from Croatia and Serbia joined us. Together we crafted the designs of our events. We have invited established researchers and speakers to lead and participate in the online and in-person workshops on intriguing topics for early-career researchers. The following events were successfully organized with the participation of numerous researchers around Europe:

- Online career development workshop “*Working less but accomplishing more – Alternative practices for productivity*” (Dr Jamie Pei), May 26th, 2023
- In-person career development workshop “*Alternative careers in research and working with stakeholders*” and networking session, December 4th, 2023, at EMEC23 in Budva, Montenegro
- Online career development workshop “*How to tame your supervisor*” (Prof Elspeth Garman), June 6th, 2024, co-hosted with the Serbian Young Chemists' Club
- In-person career development workshop and networking session, “*Hunting for a postdoc that's right for you: Tips & Resources*”, November 27th 2024, at EMEC24 in Alicante, Spain.

Activities of the network encompass monthly online meetings of the organising committee, and planning network activities in between the meetings. The Chem2Change organising committee (present and past members are written below) will try their best to prepare events with topics of interest for early-career researchers. Besides the organization of yearly events, shortly, we want to build a membership base of early-career researchers, and we would like

to extend an invitation to join us in the Network, be it if you're interested in the event's organization or participation only.

Chem2Change Organising Committee:

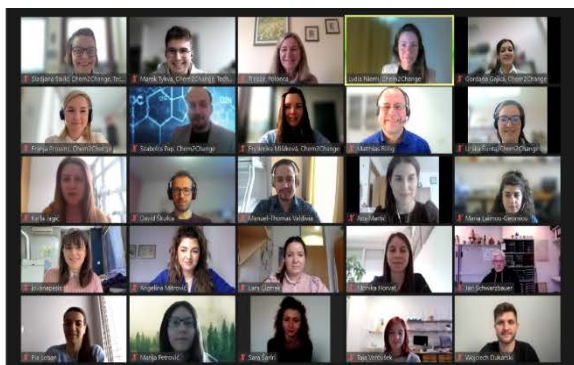
Lydia Niemi, chair	Environmental Research Institute, University of the Highlands and Islands, UK
Franja Prosenc	School of Civil Engineering, University of Leeds, UK
Urška Šunta	Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
Gordana Gajica	Institute of Chemistry, Technology and Metallurgy, University of Belgrade, Serbia
Slađana Savić	Faculty of Chemistry, University of Belgrade, Serbia
Zuzana Redžović	Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb, Croatia
Iva Kokotović	Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb, Croatia
Katarina Antić	Institute of Chemistry, Technology and Metallurgy, University of Belgrade, Serbia
Tijana Milićević	Institute of Physics, University of Belgrade, Serbia
Nives Matijaković Mlinarić	Ruđer Bošković Institute, Croatia

Our former members:

Frederika Mišíková	University of Pardubice, Czech Republic
Anna Krejčová	University of Pardubice, Czech Republic
Marek Tykva	University of Pardubice, Czech Republic
Lisa Shearer	Environmental Research Institute, University of the Highlands and Islands, UK
Szabolcs Pap	Environmental Research Institute, University of the Highlands and Islands, UK

For more details and updates follow us on Chem2Change social media on Instagram ([@Chem2Change](#)) or [LinkedIn](#).

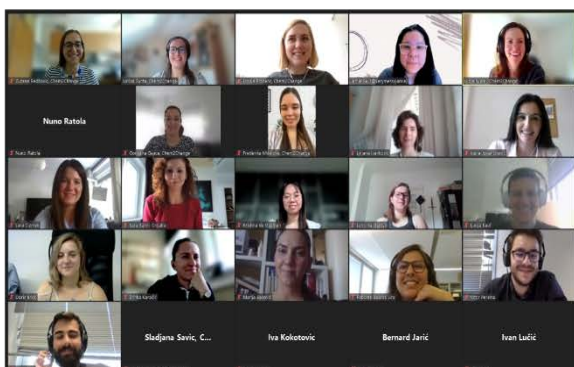
And lastly, a few highlights from our past events!



Environmental Chemistry Towards
Global Change, 2022



EMEC22



Working less but accomplishing more -
Alternative practices for productivity, 2023



EMEC23



How to tame your supervisor, 2024



EMEC24

Figure 9. Activities of the ECR Network
(Photo credits: Chem2Change team).

6) Željko Jaćimović, Juan F Facetti and Marian Olazabal:
ACE's contribution to the popularization of environmental chemistry

The European Meeting on Environmental Chemistry (EMEC), a well-known event in the global environmental science calendar, demonstrates the power of academic collaboration, youth engagement, and scientific innovation. EMEC, an annual event in organization of Association of Chemistry and the Environment (ACE) is a place of meeting for students, researchers, and professionals from across the world, united by a shared concern for the environment and a commitment to sustainable solutions.

As a burning topic and an urging domain of research, environmental chemistry plays a critical role in addressing some of the world's most pressing challenges, including climate change, pollution, and resource management. EMEC serves as a vital platform for communicating the significance of this field to the broader scientific community and, importantly, to the next generation of scientists.

Through keynote lectures, poster sessions, workshops, and interactive discussions, EMEC provides a comprehensive view of how chemistry can be applied to monitor, understand, mitigate and solve environmental issues. Topics range from emerging pollutants, green chemistry innovations, analytical techniques, and many others, yet most of all it dives into a subject of sustainability and understanding of how the world works.

Perhaps the most transformative aspect of EMEC is its impact on young researchers, both those attending as participants and those involved in organizing the event. For student participants, the conference offers exposure to high-end research, opportunities for networking and mentorship, a platform for their own research and an insight into scientific applications. Helping bridge the understanding gap between academic study and practical solutions, young scholars are also able to interact with professionals, seek projects, and explore potential career paths. On the other hand, young researchers who participate as organizers, also benefit from obtained management skills, direct communication with well-established researchers, and with that gain a deeper understanding of all of the subjects presented during the conference. The broader benefits of EMEC extend beyond the individual participants. EMEC conferences play a significant role in strengthening academic networks among European and global institutions, fostering collaboration across borders. It also promotes interdisciplinary dialogue, recognizing the overlaps between environmental chemistry and fields such as biology, pharmacology, engineering, policy, and the social sciences. EMEC encourages innovation by exposing attendees to new problems, and in parallel new tools, technologies, and methodologies and solutions.. Finally, the conference contributes to raising public awareness, as its outcomes are often shared through media coverage, public seminars, and university outreach efforts. Such is the case with small chemistry associations, that do not find it financially easy, or not at all possible, to organize scientific promotional events and to raise awareness on environmental problems and propose the domain as a potential career path. Such is the case especially for small countries and small Chemical Society as Montenegro, or other countries of Western Balkan.

With all that was said in mind, EMEC represents more than just a scientific conference, it is a joint effort toward empowering new generations of scientists to become new leaders in the field of environmental preservation. By fostering a passion for chemistry and a commitment to sustainability, EMEC helps shape a future where science and society work together for a

healthier planet. For those who participated or helped organize EMECs' events, the lessons learned and the inspiration gained are likely to echo throughout their careers.



Figure 10. Young researchers in the organization of EMEC23 conference in Budva, Montenegro.



Figure 11. ACE Board during EMEC23 conference in Montenegro.

7) Albert Lebedev:
Some other activities within the association

Besides main duties like ECL journal and EMEC conference ACE is involved in organization of the international conferences Petromass related to the application of mass spectrometry in oil industry, environmental and food chemistry. These meetings started in mid-1970th and took place in Chechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, USSR, however, stopped in 1990th and were restarted in 2014 with the XI Conference in Tbilisi, Georgia by the initiative of the ACE board member Prof. Albert Lebedev and Dr. Anzor Mikaia from NIST, USA. The Conference was sponsored by Thermo Fisher Company and was held in the Tbilisi University (Fig. 12 and 13) chaired by Professors Georgy Tsitsishvili and Albert Lebedev. ACE was represented by Professors Albert Lebedev and Jan Schwarzbauer (Fig. 14). Altogether there were over 50 participants, including Professors Alan Marshall (USA) (Fig. 15) - the father of the Fourier-transform mass spectrometry, Alexander Schwarzburg (USA) - one of the world leading specialists in the field of ion mobility - mass spectrometry method, and Philipp Shmitt-Koplinn (Germany) – one of the creators of huminomics and numerous applications of the FTMS and NMR to the environmental problems. The meeting was quite successful with rich scientific program and numerous cultural events, accompanied by the traditional Georgian hospitality. It is worth mentioning the visits to the 1000-years old **Svetitskhoveli Cathedral** - an Orthodox Christian cathedral located in the historic town of Mtskheta, the oldest Georgian monastery of the VII Century Dzhvari at the mounting with fantastic view of two famous Georgian rivers Kura and Aragvi, and one of the world-known Georgian wineries.



Figure 12. XI Petromass Conference Petromass was held in Tbilisi, Georgia.



Figure 13. Tbilisi University.



Figure 14. A. Lebedev and J. Schwarzbauer in Mtskheta.



Figure 15. Alan Marshall relaxing before get-together party at the outskirts of Tbilisi.

ACE board meeting in 2015 came to conclusion to participate more actively in the future PETROMASS international conferences. Thus, the next XII Petromass international conference was held 15-18 April 2018 in the most romantic European place - lake Bled in Slovenia (Fig.16). There were again about 50 participants (Fig.17), while ACE board members Polonca Trebse and Albert Lebedev chaired the organizing Committee. LECO Corp. was a sponsor of the event. Although ACE was officially not mentioned among the conference organizers, besides the chairpersons quite several ACE members, including board members J. Schwarzbauer, A-M. Delort, B. Jovančičević participated in the event. As a curious issue it is possible mentioning the absence of Albert Lebedev in person at the meeting as he could not get his passport from the US Embassy. Therefore, he had to give his lecture as well as participate in the opening and closing ceremonies online.



Figure 16. Bled lake panorama.



Figure 17. Participants of the Bled meeting
(Photo credits: Mojca B. Kralj).

The plenary lectures were given by:

Allan G. Marshall, USA (Petroleomics: speciation and chemical composition of petroleum crude oil by fourier transform ion cyclotron resonance mass spectrometry),

Elena E. Stashenko, Colombia (Wonderful adventures of mass spectrometry in marvelous macondo),

Nives Ogrinc, Slovenia (Compound specific isotope analysis - new challenges in environmental and food studies) and

Viatcheslav Artsev, USA (Comprehensive steroids analysis using gc×gc-tofms).

Again, it is worth mentioning the atmosphere of science, friendship, good food and drinks, as well as beautiful environment in the spring in Slovenia (Fig.18). The whole program of the meeting may be found at the website www.masseco.org.



Figure 18. Organizers and sponsors are enjoying the atmosphere of the conference (Personal archive: Polonca Trebše)

The XIII Petromass conference was planned to be held 17-22 October 2020 in the All-inclusive Hotel Agapi Beach Resort at the Crete Island in Grece (Fig. 19). This time ACE was an official Organizer of the conference. Unfortunately, Covid 19 pandemia interfered with the plans. Thus, the meeting was postponed to the spring of 2021, then to the fall 2021, and finally to the fall 2022. Due to the numerous shifts only 27 participants were able to assist the meeting in person (Fig. 20 and 21). About 20 lectures more were given on-line. Anyway, it is interesting to mention that due to the low season in Crete the expenses of the participants were record low (organizing fee – 200 Euro, participants; 120 Euro, students; 50 Euro, accompanied persons and accommodation, all inclusive, 100 Euro/day).



Figure 19. Agapi Beach Hotel – the venue of the Petromass 2022.



Figure 20. The first group of participants arrived
(Personal archive: Polonca Trebše)



Figure 21. A pre-welcome party in the hotel
(Personal archive: Polonca Trebše)

Besides the rich scientific program cultural program consisted of several excursions, including one to the famous Knossos Palace. And surely long conversations at the tables with food and drinks should be also mentioned.

Plenary lectures were given by:

Prof R. Zubarev, Sweden (Proteomics-compatible Fourier Transform Isotopic Ratio Mass Spectrometry of Polypeptides),

Prof. J. Schwarzbauer, Germany (Critical aspects on offline pyrolysis-based GC/MS quantitation of microplastic in environmental samples),

Prof. N. Ratola, Portugal (Greener approaches for the analysis of microcontaminants in several environmental matrices by GC-MS) and

Prof. E. Stashenko, Colombia (A wonderful adventure of insects with plants in a tropical garden).

The whole program of the meeting may be found at the website www.masseco.org.

The next Petromass Conference is roughly planned for the fall of 2026. There are several candidates including Armenia, Kazakhstan, Hong Kong, and Paraguay.

One more event worth mentioning involves a visit of ACE board members (Professors P. Trebse, B. Jovancicevic, Jan Schwarzbauer, and Albert Lebedev to Arkhangelsk, Russia in summer 2019. Despite being the largest city in the world behind 64°N, Arkhangelsk has very interesting history. However, ACE team had a special mission to check possibility of organizing the first theoretical-practical European environmental school using the basis of the Center “Arktika”. They were invited by the authorities of the Center (Director Dr. Dmitrii Kosyakov). This Center possesses probably the best bunch of analytical equipment in Russia (over 100 instruments), including all types of GC-MS and LC-MS, microscopy, NMR, ICP, chromatography, etc. The students of the school were supposed to bring their own samples and after theoretical lectures of the ACE and Arkhangelsk teachers run the spectra using the required for their research instruments. The visit was very efficient from the cultural, scientific, and organizational point of view. ACE team met with the Rector of the Northern Arkhangelsk Federal University (Fig.10) and signed the intentions agreement. Quite spectacular was the visit to the open museum – enormous territory filled with several hundred of the Northern houses of different types from 17-19 Centuries – Malye Korely, followed by a dinner in the Pomor restaurant with not very Pomorian name “El Fuego” Fig.11. Everything was prepared to host the European school in June of 2020 (period of white nights) and in the case of success – one of the future EMEC meetings. However, Covid-19 pandemia spoiled all the plans and future political issues completely destroyed this excellent plan. Nevertheless, let us hope, that sometime in the future the idea will be realized.



Figure 22. After the fruitful discussion with the Rector of the University
(Personal archive: Polonca Trebše)



Figure 23. Near the famous restaurant of the classic Pomor food
(Personal archive: Polonca Trebše)

8) Lorena Vidal:
Alicante 2024 – Retrospect on EMEC24

The 24th European Meeting on Environmental Chemistry (EMEC24) took place from November 26 to 29, 2024, in Alicante, Spain (Figure 1). Organized annually on behalf of the Association of Chemistry and the Environment (ACE), EMEC24 was hosted by the Department of Analytical Chemistry, Nutrition and Food Science, and the University Institute of Materials of the University of Alicante.



Figure 24. Opening ceremony of EMEC24.

EMEC meeting traditionally comprises a wide range of topics in the field of environmental chemistry and interdisciplinary presentations and it always attracts high quality scientific presentations, plenary and keynote talks from internationally renowned researchers working in environmental chemistry and related fields. In this case, the EMEC24 conference consisted of a three-day meeting that featured a comprehensive scientific programme and a total of 204 contributions from 32 countries (Figure 2). The scientific schedule comprised 2 Plenary Lectures, 7 Keynote Lectures, 25 Lectures, 25 Young Lectures, and 4 Lectures given by companies specialized in this field, who sponsored the conference. Additionally, two poster sessions showing more than 140 posters, and exhibitions brought us up to date on the latest advances and trends in the field. It is important to highlight those 74 contributions (i.e., posters and oral lectures) were presented by young researchers, who represent the future of this scientific discipline. The event was further enriched by the support of several organizations and companies, including Agilent Technologies Spain, Bruker Española, Leco, Restek, and Productos Químicos de Murcia.



Figure 25. Participants of EMEC24.

A significant focus of EMEC24 was on supporting early-career researchers. Numerous awards were presented for outstanding oral and poster presentations by young scientists. For instance, The Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz International Prize for Water, The Royal Spanish Society of Chemistry-Alicante Territorial Section, The EuChemS-DAC Sample Preparation Study Group and Network, and, Agilent, Bruker and Restek were sponsoring awards for the two best oral communications and the ten best poster communications presented by young researchers. The Scientific Committee was in charge of selecting the winners on the basis of both scientific relevance and presentation quality. On the other hand, as has become tradition, the Early-Career Researchers (ECR) branch of ACE celebrated its networking event (Fig. 3).

Alicante, known for its pleasant climate and rich cultural heritage, provided an ideal setting for EMEC24. The city's unique combination of liveliness and hospitality offered attendees an enjoyable experience beyond the scientific sessions. The social events that round off the programme were designed to encourage informal discussion between participants, as well as allowing them to enjoy the delicious food and cultural and leisure activities that our city has to offer. Participants could enjoy the social activities, such as a guided tour of the historic old town and a gala dinner by the harbor (Figure 4).



Figure 26. Early-Career Researcher networking event



Figure 27. Plenary and Keynote speakers at the gala dinner
(Photo credits: Sladjana Savić).

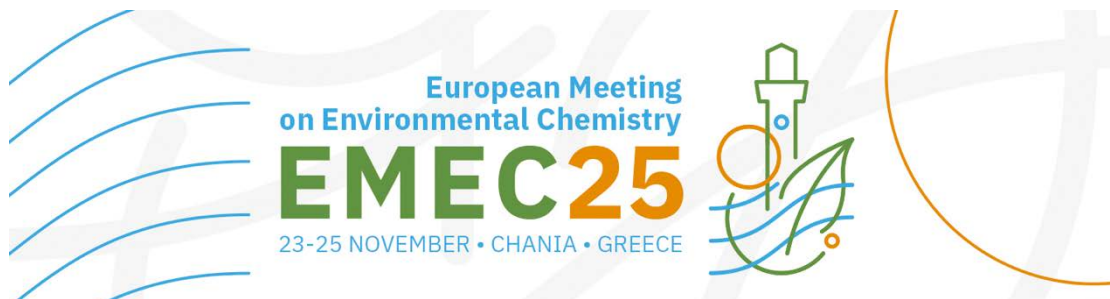
The main objective of the organizers was to attain the level of excellence seen at the previous EMEC meetings. Therefore, the event was prepared with great effort and dedication to ensure a first-class scientific programme presenting the latest research and trends in Environmental Chemistry. The organizing committee (Figure 5) was pleased with the outcome after those stressful but enjoyable days, particularly the feedback received from the participants. In conclusion, the organizers would like to thank again ACE for trusting us to organize EMEC24, the University of Alicante for hosting the conference and providing support, the Generalitat Valenciana for the financial support, and all the companies, and national and international associations for their valuable contributions in making EMEC24 a reality.



Figure 28. The organizing committee.

For more information about EMEC24, including the full program and book of abstracts, please visit the official website: <https://emec24.es/>

9) Elefteria (Elia) Psillakis:
Crete 2025 – EMEC25 is ahead



**Shaping the Future of Environmental Chemistry:
EMEC25 | 23–25 November 2025, Chania-Crete, Greece**

The 25th European Meeting on Environmental Chemistry (EMEC25) is set to take place in the stunning city of Chania, Crete, from November 23–25, 2025. Organized on behalf of the Association of Chemistry and the Environment (ACE), EMEC25 continues its legacy of bringing together global leaders in environmental science to share groundbreaking research and innovative solutions. Recognized by EuChemS and supported by the EuChemS-DAC Sample Preparation Study Group and Network, this year's event promises to be a landmark gathering for the scientific community.



Figure 29. Summer ambience in Chania-Crete.

A Premier Platform for Knowledge Exchange

This year, as we celebrate the 25th anniversary of ACE, EMEC25 will continue its tradition of bringing together scientists, researchers, and industry professionals to share and discuss the latest advancements in environmental chemistry. This year's meeting will focus on advancing sustainable solutions, addressing environmental challenges, and exploring the latest breakthroughs in environmental science and technology. With a diverse program of invited lectures, oral presentations, interactive sessions, and poster exhibitions, EMEC25 aims to spark meaningful dialogue, promote innovative research, and drive impactful solutions for a sustainable future.

Venue & Travel Information

This is the first time that the island of Crete, one of the most attractive travel destinations in Greece, will host EMEC25. The symposium will take place at the "Mikis Therodorakis Theater Hall", an iconic, and historical monument, featuring contemporary architectural interventions that will provide an inspiring backdrop to the meeting. The conferences' venue in the heart of the Venetian port in Chania, surrounded by monuments dating back to 5000 BC, provides the perfect setting for us to interact, collaborate, exchange ideas, and work towards a brighter future. The location is ideal for an unforgettable trip, and we are excited to put together a truly outstanding technically, but also fun, programme. More information on travel and visa requirements can be found on our website (emec25.tuc.gr).

Join Us in Crete

Be part of a unique experience that blends world-class scientific discourse with the rich cultural heritage of Crete. EMEC25 promises not just groundbreaking science, but also the opportunity to connect with peers in one of Greece's most picturesque locations.

Important Dates

Abstract Deadline for Oral Presentations:	Monday, 16 June 2025
Abstract Deadline for Posters to be included in BoA:	Monday, 8 September 2025
Deadline for Last-Minute Posters:	Friday, 31 October 2025
Deadline for Early-Bird Registration Fees:	Friday, 19 September 2025

Chair EMEC25 is Professor Eleftheria (Elia) Psillakis, School of Chemical and Environmental Engineering, Technical University of Crete

Symposium website: <https://www.emec25.tuc.gr/>

Contact email: emec25@tuc.gr



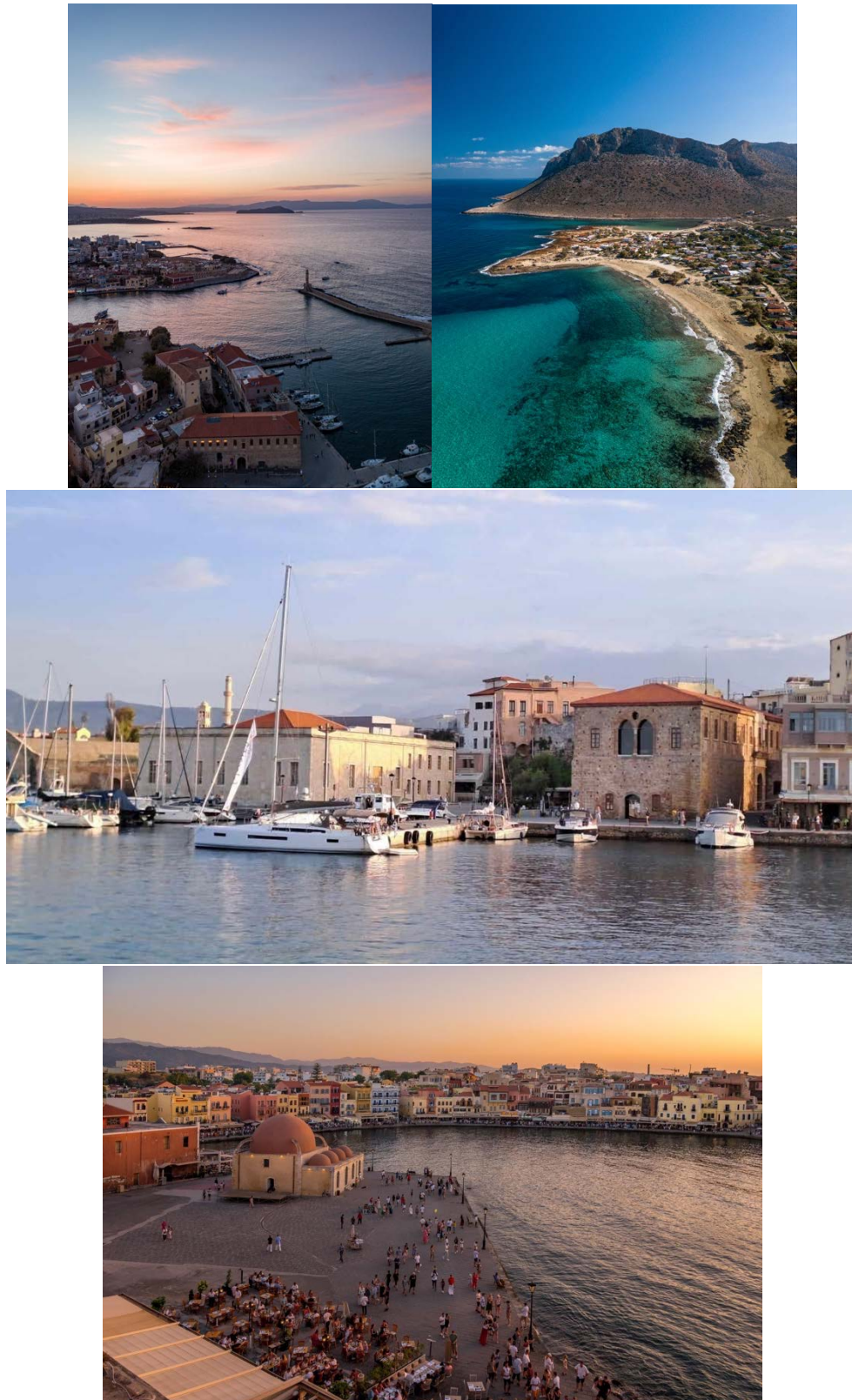


Figure 30. So many beautiful landscapes and buildings from Crete.

10) Nuria Fiol:
ACE activities in the future

The ACE Association has been highly active in organizing and promoting a wide range of initiatives. Several of these activities have been ongoing since its founding 25 years ago, shaping the identity of the association and establishing it as a benchmark in the field of chemistry and the environment. Looking ahead, the association remains committed to continuing these initiatives, with particular emphasis on the following key activities:

Connecting ACE Members to Boost Collaborative Research

Collaboration networks among ACE members have long played a central role in facilitating connections between scientists and promoting joint research initiatives. From its inception, the Association was conceived as a platform to connect researchers and foster collaboration. In its early years, membership was limited to a small number of institutions and countries. However, as the Association grew, the need for structured collaboration became evident. In response, ACE established the Collaboration Database Network (CDN) in September 2002 — a resource designed to support collaborative projects and build a network of scientific partnerships. Today, maintaining a dedicated collaboration database is less essential, given the ease of accessing researchers' profiles and activities through scientific databases and professional social networks. Nonetheless, ACE continues to serve as a vital platform for connecting scientists and organizations across borders, supporting cooperation among its members, and encouraging global collaborative research. As its network expands year after year, ACE remains committed to fostering new opportunities for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and the sharing of research and resources.

Promoting and Supporting the EMEC Conference

One of ACE's core activities is the support to the annual organization of the European Meeting on Environmental Chemistry (EMEC), a flagship event that brings together scientists, researchers, and industry professionals to share and discuss the latest advances in environmental chemistry. Since the inaugural EMEC conference in 2000, both participation and association membership have steadily grown. EMEC has served — and continues to serve — as the Association's primary platform for scientific exchange and dissemination.

The initiative to host the conference in a different country each year has significantly enhanced accessibility, enabling academics, researchers, students, and professionals from local institutions and industries to attend. This approach has broadened ACE's geographic scope and contributed to the consistent growth of its international membership. In this context, the upcoming EMEC25 conference will take place for the first time in Crete, Greece. Leading local scientists in the fields of chemistry and environmental science will join ACE and share their expertise with participants, further enriching the scientific and collaborative value of the event.

Looking ahead, ACE intends to continue expanding the reach of EMEC by selecting new host venues for future editions. The Association remains firmly committed to sustaining the conference for the next 25 years and beyond, strengthening international collaboration and advancing environmental chemistry.

Empowering the Next Generation of Environmental Chemists

The Young Researchers Branch of the Chemistry and Environment Association plays a crucial role in securing the Association's future. For this reason, ACE is committed to supporting the Early Career Researchers (ECR), ensuring the continuity of their activities and guaranteeing that young researchers are fully represented, and their perspectives are taken into account within the Association. Since its inception, ACE has supported all initiatives proposed by the ECR group — from the virtual “Chem2Change” meetings, which proved invaluable for maintaining research dissemination during the pandemic, to recent in-person events held within the framework of EMEC conferences. These include the ECR Network event, and a dedicated social session aimed at fostering professional development and networking among young researchers, both of which are vital for their future careers. ACE's goal is to ensure the continuity and growth of the ECR network as an essential component of the Association's long-term sustainability.

Keeping ACE Publications Alive

The ACE Newsletter is the association's main social publication, highlighting the most significant events of the year involving the association and its members — such as the EMEC meeting, research award winners, and notable research achievements and researchers. The annual newsletter serves as the association's collective memory, with many past and current members contributing articles that have left a lasting impact on the association.

The Association remains committed to the continued publication of its official magazine, which serves as an institutional archive, documenting key milestones and highlighting the scientific and professional accomplishments of its members.

In parallel, the Association will continue to support Environmental Chemistry Letters, its official peer-reviewed journal, launched in 2003. The journal's consistently high impact factor underscores both the growing global interest in environmental chemistry and the scientific rigor of its published contributions. Its sustained increase in publication output over the years reflects the vitality and relevance of research in this field.

Highlighting and Supporting Young Talent in Environmental Chemistry

ACE remains committed to recognizing and promoting pioneering research by young scientists in green chemistry, environmental analysis, and sustainable technologies. In 2000 and 2001, the EMEC First Poster Award and the ACE Young Researcher of the Year Award were established, respectively. Both awards have been sustained and increased thanks to the support of various sponsoring companies and organizations. In addition, ACE introduced master's and doctoral scholarships for students participating in the annual EMEC meeting.

The Association intends to continue organizing these awards and scholarships and serving on their juries to foster and spotlight high-quality research in the fields of chemistry and the environment.

Guiding New Paths in Environmental Chemistry Research

ACE members, experts in chemistry and the environment, work under the framework and support of the Association to address key environmental research challenges. Since its inception, ACE has evolved its research focus from the initial core concerns—such as climate change, contaminant detection, and environmental monitoring—toward emerging issues like the plastic pollution crisis, the effects and removal of pollutants, and the integration of broader perspectives: increasing women's participation in STEMM, promoting sustainable lifestyles, and adapting to paradigm shifts such as those driven by artificial intelligence (AI). ACE members remain committed to advancing environmental chemistry by identifying and leading new research directions, ensuring the Association continues to serve as a benchmark in European environmental chemistry.

Despite the numerous activities already planned, there remains considerable potential to develop additional initiatives, as ACE has consistently done over the past 25 years. Past efforts have included summer camps, virtual meetings during the COVID-19 lockdown, and various other projects, while future activities—still beyond our current imagination—will continue to reflect the Association's dynamic and adaptive spirit.

The Association has a promising future, as research in chemistry and the environment is both limitless and essential for addressing environmental challenges. ACE's future initiatives can play a key role in developing solutions that contribute to a safer and more sustainable world.