

Minutes of the Meeting of the EFCE Working Party on Polymer Reaction Engineering

Date: October 12, 2010
Place: University of Hamburg, Hamburg DE

Present: Dr. Timothy F.L. McKenna (CNRS, Lyon, FR)
Prof. Markus Busch (University of Darmstadt, Darmstadt, DE)
Prof. Jose-Maria Asua (Polymat - UPV, San Sebastien, ES)
Prof. Costas Kiparissides (A.U. Thessalonika, Thessalonika, GR)
Prof. Werner Pauer (University of Hamburg, Hamburg, DE)
Prof. Hans-Ulrich Moritz (University of Hamburg, Hamburg, DE)
Dr. Klaus-Dieter Hungenberg (BASF, Ludwigshafen, DE)
Prof. Giuseppe Maschio (U.S. Padova, Padova, IT)
Dr. Rolf Bachmann (Bayer Technology Services, Leverkusen DE)
Dr. Wilhelm Barlage (Cognis GmbH, Duesseldorf DE)
Dr. Michael Bartke (Fraunhofer Institut, Schkopau DE)
Prof. Juraj Kosek (ICT Prague, Prague CZ)
Dr. Sebastien Kroener (MLU Halle-Wittenberg, Halle DE)
Prof. Jose-Ramon Leiza (Polymat - UPV, San Sebastien, ES)
Prof. Jan Meuldijk (TU Eindhoven, Eindhoven NL)
Dr. Christophe Serra (University of Strasbourg, Strasbourg FR)
Dr. Stefan Speigel (Wiley-VCH, Weinheim DE)
Dr. Giuseppe Storti (ETH Zurich, Zurich CH)

- Agenda:
 - Opening remarks
 - Election of chair/secretary
 - Proposals for orientation of WPPRE activities.

1. Opening Remarks

Professor McKenna welcomed the participants and proposed that the meeting be focused toward a reorienting of the activities and objectives of the working party. The first order of the day was a nomination of a new chair and secretary.

2. Election of Chair and Secretary

Prof. McKenna proposed the combination of him himself as chair and Prof. Busch (Germany, TU Darmstadt) as secretary and asked for further nominations / suggestions. As there were none, the direction of the working party for the period 10/2010-10/2014 will be:

Chair: Professor Timothy McKenna (CNRS C2P2, Lyon, FR/Queen's University, CA)



Secretary: Professor Markus Busch (University of Darmstadt, Darmstadt, DE)

Dr. Hermann Feise of the EFCE will be informed of this decision by Professor McKenna.

3. Orientation of WPPRE activities

The next points of discussion were:

- Past focus and activities
- Potential point for evolution
- Integration of activities and groups outside of Europe

Past Focus and Activities

The following is a summary of the presentation of Prof. McKenna, intended to put the current state of the WPPRE in context.

The WPPRE was established in the early 1990s to provide a forum for European practitioners (academia and industry):

- to exchange views;
- develop relationships;
- form new partnerships
- raise awareness of the discipline

In the past focus was on:

- Scientific meetings/presentations and networking/generation of proposals. Under the direction of Prof. Fernand Pla, the WPPRE activities were centred around a series of scientific meetings across Europe. These meetings were successful in so far as they:
 - o helped develop a sense of community in the discipline;
 - o helped develop new relationships, especially at a time when the borders of Europe were changing, and different funding mechanisms were being established. At least one EC-funded project was a direct output of a WPPRE meeting
- PRE Handbook; Under the direction of Prof. Thierry Meyer (EPFL Lausanne) the WP produced a well-received handbook on Polymer Reaction Engineering. This is proving to be a very useful reference tool for the PRE community in General and has helped to raise awareness of the discipline within Europe (and elsewhere).

Despite the successful nature of these activities, the WPPRE currently finds itself at a bit of a cross-roads. An ever-increasing number of specialised conferences makes it difficult to ensure high levels of attendance of top level researchers at WP meetings organised as technical conferences. And while the PRE Handbook was a very constructive contribution, such editorial activities cannot form the basis of the long term success and usefulness of the WPPRE. In 2006-2007 Professor McKenna was chosen as Chair of the WPPRE, and attempted to revitalise the WP activities using an interactive web site www.wppre.com. While interest in this was brisk for a short period of time, it turns out that the need for this



type of electronic forum for the exchange of information and views was not seen as being useful for the PRE community as a whole and the website fell into disuse with Professor McKenna's departure for Queens University (Canada) during the period 2007-2010.

Thus, as mentioned above, the WPPRE is at a critical juncture in its existence, and the question about its long term usefulness and viability was clearly posed at the meeting. The general consensus of those present was that the WP can be useful to the community as a whole, however we will need to address specific points.

3.1 Inclusion of members (EU and extra-EU).

Dr. Hungenberg (BASF) pointed out that while the working party is an institution of the EFCE (essentially for historical reason), most significant activity in the field such as the regular conferences on polymer reaction engineering are truly international events. Prof. Asua (UPV) pointed out the problem that splitting a community as small the PRE one would send a strongly negative signal to our partners in the Americas and in Asia.

A consensus was thus established that the WP should include any group that is working in the field and expresses interest in joining. To respect the rules and regulations of the EFCE the WP board will always contain members from European groups for purposes of reporting to the EFCE and participating in EFCE conferences etc. In addition, if other activities (e.g. an EFCE-sponsored PhD prize or a European Ph.D. award) are successfully implemented they will be restricted to European actors when this is not inappropriate (i.e. avoid sending the message that we are excluding any specific groups.)

3.2 Scope and Name of the WPPRE

With respect to widening, the scope Prof. Kipparissides (AUT) strongly stressed the need of the WP to strengthen its profile with respect to current trends and socio-economic needs, and to extend the scope of WP activities to include up- and downstream applications ranging from formulation to (non-reactive) processing. He addressed the concern that if this were not activity done, the WP will be very specific and will have a lack in growth potential and impact. Professors Asua (UPV) and Moritz (Germany) underlined this idea by saying that the most relevant European groups in PRE are included in the WP and there is not too much growth potential sticking to the actual of polymer reaction engineering (or to European groups alone; see 3.1 above).

One suggestion was made to consider renaming the WP to reflect a broader range. Various alternatives of titles were discussed until Dr. Hungenberg (BASF) pointed out the concept of DECHEMA group on Polyreactions that has kept its title in tradition over years as a kernel of identity but is inviting regularly other specialist to interact and stimulate with new topics and fields. The final consensus was to avoid causing confusion by changing the name of the Working Party, and to simply focus on actively including other groups and specialties in practice.

3.3 New Orientations and Activities.

As mentioned above (section 2) interesting in the WP activities as been on the wane for several years, and it is essential that we look long and hard at how we can continue to achieve the objectives of the WP for the current generation of researchers, but also (perhaps at least, if not more, importantly) for the up and coming generation of polymer reaction engineers. Several ideas were discussed:

- a) Ph.D. conference. Professor McKenna suggested that rather than building our scientific exchanges around presentations by experienced researchers (e.g. mini-conferences), we could (at least occasionally) focus on setting up a conference for and by PhD candidates. The general idea would be to have experienced members of the WPPRE “volunteer” 2 or 3 PhD students who would form the basis of an organising committee. The students could set up an agenda, and eventually invite a guest speaker (eg Professor, someone from industry). However the core of the presentations would be by PhD students alone. The advantages of this are multiple: (i) opportunity for the next generation of scientists and engineerings to develop communication skills and their won networks; (ii) an opportunity to have an external, critical review of work in progress by experts (experienced researchers are encouraged to be in the audience); (iii) for companies, this is an excellent opportunity to have a critical look at eventual future employees (one can even imagine that the HR departments of polymer producers could be involved in attending/supporting the conference).

The concept found broad support as DECHEMA practices similar things in the “Fachgruppen”, Prof. Moritz raised the example of the Italian summer schools, which are obligatory in studies, and Dr. Hungenberg addressed as major benefit the formation of networks within the community. It was therefore decided to go ahead with this initiative.

Stefan Spiegel (Wiley – VCH) agreed to sport a Ph.D. price with a free subscription of one year of the MME journal. The price should be yearly and limited to Ph.D.s in Europe. The winner will then be invited to give the presentation at a major workshop if this is contiguous with the PhD conference (see below).

This conference could be a stand-alone event if the circumstances permit this (i.e. if there are no major polymer conferences for several moths) the PhD conference would be a stand-alone event. Otherwise, it could be on the days immediately preceeding a major conference in the area. In particular Professor Moritz has indicated that his team would be willing to help out by integrating this into the Dechema-run Workshop on PRE held every 3 years in Hamburg.

An initial suggestion was that we could attempt to attach such a PhD meeting to the EFCE conference in Berlin, however Professor McKenna will take a poll with community members to see if they prefer that or a stand-alone conference in 2011. He will then contact the WP members with a final proposal before Christmas 2010.

- b) Scientific/Technical Meetings. In addition to the PhD conference, Dr Hungenberg stressed that in the past he always found the technical meetings of the WP to be useful. The group present suggested that we not totally abandon the idea of running separate technical meetings in available time slots (perhaps not on a yearly basis, but at least occasionally). While most people agreed on this point, a clear consensus of where and when was not forthcoming. This point will be raised at the next meeting of the WP (TBA).
- c) Awards for PhD excellence. Professor McKenna also suggested that a “Best Europeand PhD in PRE” award be established and a committee of academic and industrial members of the WP PRE be named to evaluate submissions and pick a winner. It will be necessary to identify a prize for this activity, and establish some regulations. The idea had a positive response so Professors McKenna and Busch will look into the best way to set this up.
- d) Newsletter. Borrowing a successful activity from the International Polymer Colloids Group (IPCG) it was suggested that we establish a community newsletter to increase awareness of activities, publications and relevant activities in the area of PRE. This would essentially consist of collating the activities every 6 months based on input from the WPPRE members. Stefan Speigel of Wiley-VCH has said that he will examine the possibility of making a limited nnumber of pages available in the journal Macromolecular Reaction Engineering for the publication of an abridged version of the newsletter, and inquire as to whether or not it is possible to post a complete version on the “Materials View” website of Wiley-VCH where it would be visible to all people around the globe visiting the publisher’s website.
- e) Website. The www.wppre.com website is still available and can still be used as a forum for cirulating information relative to WP activities. Professor McKenna will be making an informal survey of WP members to see what, if any modifications can/need to be made to make this a more useful tool. There is no time frame attached to this particular activity.

3.4 Additional Action Points:

- enrolled members should be encouraged to advertise the activities of the WP to other colleagues working in the field of PRE. (Markus Busch & members)
- Raise sponsors for the workshop and Ph.D. prize. (TMcK & MB)