

Conference Report

Swiss Snow Symposium 2024 – Chemistry on Top of the Mountains!

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This year's Swiss Snow Symposium took place in Saas Almagell from Friday, the 19th to Sunday, the 21st of January 2024.



Swiss Snow Symposium 2024 group picture.

Upon arrival in beautiful snow covered Saas-Almagell, the participants started with the registration, followed by a delicious dinner and a first get-together.

The president of youngSCS officially opened the symposium. The first invited talk of the evening was given by **Dr. Maud Reiter** from dsm-firmenich who showcased the efforts chemists have made to recreate the muguet fragrance from synthetic materials and the discovery of four new analogues. Apart from the interesting challenges of flavor and fragrance chemistry, the participants had the opportunity to smell different samples during her talk.

The next invited talk of the evening was given by **Prof. Stephan von Reuss** of the University of Neuchâtel. The star of his presentation was *Caenorhabditis elegans*, a model organism used in biological studies. His research aims at understanding how and about what these organisms communicate among each other. His group attempts to identify and characterize the molecular species employed in the organisms' communication using different analytical techniques, as well as synthesis in order to characterize their biological functions.

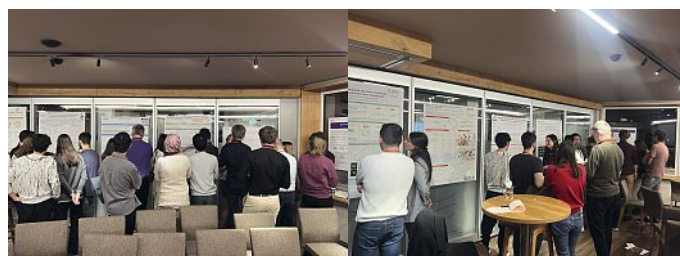
After a short break, it was time for the first two contributed talks of the evening, given by **Leonardo Palaferri** from University of Zurich and **Çağrı Özsan** from University of Bern. The last activity of this long evening was a pub quiz about chemistry and Switzerland. The participants were split into six teams, each having 30 minutes to find answers to the questions. The quiz fostered exchange among the attendants and discussions that continued at the hotel bar.

The second day started early for people who wanted to enjoy the slopes of the Allalin mountain. The conditions were simply perfect: fresh snow and a sunny day were waiting for the participants. The organizing committee provided the attendants with a variety of snow activities, from skiing and snowshoeing to relaxing in a spa.



The two pub quiz winning teams.

In the afternoon, the conference continued with the invited talk of **Dr. Lukas Bani** from Stiftung HFSJG who described the research activities at the Jungfrauoch Research Institute, situated at 3450 m above sea level. After dinner, the evening was dedicated to four contributed talks given by **Ghewa Alsabeh** from EPFL/AMI, **Ariana Serban** from EPFL, **Emmanuel Billeter** from the Technical University of Denmark and **Jingtao Zhao** from the University of Geneva. In between the talks, 16 students presented their work in the poster session. The discussions were intense, and it was a great occasion for everybody to learn more about different research topics, to exchange ideas and to make connections for possible future collaborations. Again, some of the discussions continued at the bar after the official end of the conference day.



Impressions of the poster session.

On Sunday, the last day of the conference, we started with the fourth invited talk by **Dr. Vlad Pascanu** from Syngenta. He gave interesting insights into his research on new compounds to improve crop protection. After the break, it was time for **Prof. Chan Cao** from the University of Geneva to delight the attendants with her research on the detection of alpha-synuclein post-translational modifications using nanopores. Before the lunch break, the stage was left to two contributed talks. The first talk was given by **Andres M. Bran** from EPFL, followed by **Stefan Schmid** from ETHZ. The afternoon session started with the inspiring talk of **Prof. em. Antonio Togni**, retired professor at ETHZ and pioneer in fluorination chemistry, about the evolution of science publishing in recent years. The conference continued with the last two contributed talks, which were presented by **Monja Schilling** from the Helmholtz Institute in Ulm and **Dr. Timur Ashirov** from the University of Fribourg. After a short break, the stage was set for the last invited talk of the conference given by **Prof. Wendy Lee Queen** from the EPFL. She showcased her efforts in synthesizing new porous materials, namely metal-organic frameworks (MOFs) combined with polymers, which possess higher stability and efficiency for valuable gas and liquid separations.

Before heading back home, the prize ceremony, sponsored by Helvetica and presented by Dr. Richard Smith, took place. The best oral presentation prize was awarded to **Stefan Schmid** from ETH while the two poster prizes were awarded to **Christine Marty** from EPFL and **Leonie Braks** from the University of Fribourg. The organizing committee then officially closed the conference, thanking all the attendants for their participation and hoping to see them again next year for the SSS25!



Fig. 4. Awardees of Best Talk and Best Poster Awards sponsored by *Helvetica Chimica Acta*.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the other members of the organizing committee for their commitment and dedication to the smooth running of the conference, namely Dr. Tara Forrest (Eaglenos Sciences (Switzerland)), Ghewa AlSabeih (EPFL and AMI), Dr. Jaime Martín Gonzalez (UZH) and Patrick Fritz (UniFr). We thank Ghewa AlSabeih for taking the pictures throughout the whole conference. We gratefully acknowledge Dr. Richard Smith, Dr. Maud Reiter, Prof. em. Antonio Togni, Prof. Stephan von Reuss and Dr. Hans Peter Lüthi for their help in evaluating the abstracts and for selecting the best talks and posters.

We would also like to thank David Spichiger and Céline Wittwer for the administrative support behind the scenes, but without which we could not hold the SSS24.

We want to thank all sponsors for their generous support and finally all the speakers and participants for contributing to this fantastic experience.



Fig. 5. Organizing Committee SSS24.