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First prize in DSM Awards for Chemistry and Technology 2005 presented to Belgian researcher for research in the field of biocatalysis

Belgian researcher Davey Loos won the first prize in the DSM Awards for Chemistry and Technology 2005 last Tuesday. An international jury selected Dr Davey Loos, who earned his doctorate from the Catholic University of Leuven, for his research in the field of biocatalysis. Dr Loos has succeeded in developing a technique for studying single enzyme molecules as opposed to ensembles of billions of molecules – something that biochemists have long wanted to be able to do but which has been impossible because of the nanoscale involved. Dr Loos' work opens the way to new research into fundamental questions about how enzymes function, which will enable smarter use of enzymes in a variety of applications, for example in detergents. Davey Loos was presented with a certificate by Mr Jan Zuidam, deputy chairman of DSM's Managing Board. As the winner of the first prize he will also receive a cash prize of EUR 7,500. The winner of the second prize, Jessica Kroeze, will receive a cash prize of EUR 5,000, and the winner of the third prize, Dirk Aarts, will receive a cash prize of EUR 2,500. The other six prize-winners will all receive prizes of EUR 1,250.

Regional juries short-listed three candidates from their own regions from the large number of entries received this year. After the nine nominees had given presentations on their research to an international jury on Monday 6 June, the jury yesterday selected the top three.

Speaking on the occasion of the award presentation, Mr Zuidam said: *"High-quality scientific research and innovation also depend on top-notch university education. Scientific talents need both room and stimulus to grow. Which is of course an important 'raison d'être' of our Chemistry and Technology Awards: to stimulate young scientific talents to exploit their creativity and to uncover new territories."*

Encouraging pioneering research

The prestigious annual DSM Awards for Chemistry and Technology were presented for the twentieth time this year. The contest is rapidly becoming a major event on the international calendar. Until 2001, the contest was open only to doctoral students from research institutes in the Netherlands and Flemish-speaking Belgium. The catchment area was extended to Belgium's French-speaking region in 2002, and since 2003, the contest has also been open to researchers from the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

DSM performs a great deal of its R&D work in close collaboration with universities. DSM hopes that its annual DSM Awards for Chemistry and Technology will encourage young research scientists to undertake creative, pioneering research.

This is important because this kind of research often provides the basis for the development of new, knowledge-intensive industrial processes and high-tech products. DSM also believes that high-quality scientific research goes hand in hand with high-quality university education.

Jury report

The jury had the following to say in its report about the winner of the first prize: *“The work of Dr. Loos opens the way to detailed molecular understanding and intensification of a variety of enzymatic and other scientifically and industrially relevant catalytic processes.”* The jury expects the findings of the research performed not only by the first prize-winner, but also by the other laureates, to make valuable contributions to new developments in the disciplines in question.

The winners of the first, second and third prizes

Davey Loos conducted his research at the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium) under the supervision of Professor J. Hofkens and Professor F.C. De Schryver (Molecular Materials and Nanomaterials department).

Jessica Kroeze conducted her research at the Delft University of Technology (Netherlands) under the supervision of Dr J.M. Warman and Dr T.J. Savenije (Reactor Institute).

Dirk Aarts conducted his research at the University of Utrecht (Netherlands) under the supervision of Professor H.N.W. Lekkerkerker (Van 't Hoff Laboratory for Physical and Colloid Chemistry).

Other winners

The other six prize-winners are:

Belgium

Vincent Lemaur	Université Mons-Hainaut
Alexandre Leonard	FUNDP Namur

Germany – North Rhine-Westphalia

Juan Perlo	RWTH Aachen
Thorsten Balgar	Universität Duisburg-Essen
Tobias Steinke	Ruhr-Universität Bochum

The Netherlands

Ton van Maris	Delft University of Technology
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For further information:

DSM, Corporate Communications
Nelleke Barning
Tel. +31 (0)45 5782017
E-mail nelleke.barning@dsm.com

DSM, Academic Contacts & External Research
Edith de Kreek
Tel. +31 (0)45 5782093
E-mail edith.kreek-de@dsm.com

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