

Opening of the French-Finnish Seminar on  
**Chemistry for the Protection of the Global Environment**

Helsinki September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
Academy of Finland

**Opening words**

Paavo Löppönen, Director

Medames et Messieurs, hyvät naiset ja herrat, ladies and gentlemen,

on behalf of the President of the Academy I have a pleasure to welcome you all and especially the French guests to the Academy.

As you probably know already, the Academy is a research funding and science policy expertise organisation. Our task is to advance scientific research and scientific education and its use by different means, to fund it, to advance international scientific cooperation and to function as the main science policy expert in Finland. We fund – according of the budget proposal of the Government – next year scientific research with almost 300 million euros. The Academy is the funder of science in Finland: getting funding from the Academy means quality and excellence. Our acceptance rate is 10-20 %, which is in international comparison very low, but also an indicator of the high level of competition. Funding decisions are made on the basis of evaluations of international panels and experts.

In this context I would take up two new developments in the Finnish science and innovation policy, where the Academy is one of the main players. First is so called FIDIPRO (Finnish Distinguished Professor)- programme, which started last year; second round of applications is in the process at the moment. The main targets of the programme are: to strengthen the Finnish research environments, to internationalize them, to bring here top researchers to improve doctoral education and to contribute to transfer knowledge also to innovation. Academy and Tekes (Finnish National Fund for Technology and Innovation) are the funders of the programme, universities and research institutes are applicants. The terms of the programme are financially favourable from the point of view of scientists. The funding period is 2-5 years, and they can bring the team with them. First experiences have been very good: we have our own opinions and also the foreign distinguished professors as well as their hosts have had good experiences.

Second is the initiative called Strategic Centers for Science, Technology and Innovation. It was decided in 2006 and has developed rather quickly: the first of the centers , forest cluster, has been already established . Other four are:

- energy and environment
- metal products and metal engineering
- ICT and services
- health and wellbeing.

Eg. the food industry has announced that they would also have a strategic center in their trade.

The centers will be large in Finnish conditions, amounting to a few hundred researchers each. No new walls will be constructed but the resources will be invested into creative work and scientific infrastructures. The industry will take the main responsibility for the funding of the programmes of the centers, and the Academy and Tekes (Finnish National Fund for Technology and Innovation) will be main public funders. Universities and research institutes will be stakeholders and they are already among the founding shareholders of these limited companies. All of the centers have an ambition to be in the near future attractive partners for international cooperation.

The theme of this seminar is exceptionally topical, not only from the point of research itself but also from the point of view of global challenges. Personally, sustainability of the global environment is among the three main challenges, others being peace and rapid reduction of poverty. We appreciate very much the presence of you, French chemists, in the Academy premises. French chemistry has a long honourable tradition and an internationally high level also today: you must not go longer than two years into the history of Nobel prizes to find a French chemist, who has worked in the topics which will be discussed today.

European Innovation and Research Exhibition 2008 will take place at the Porte de Versailles in Paris on 5-7 June 2008. The organizers have invited Finland to be the guest of honour at the exhibition. The main theme of the exhibition will be Sustainable Development and Environment. The Academy has decided to participate in the event to enhance the visibility of Finnish science in France and in this way also to promote French-Finnish cooperation in research.

I wish you all creative and fruitful discussions in the seminar and I hope that the French-Finnish cooperation will be strengthened in coming years in concrete terms not only in chemistry, but in all fields of science.

You are welcome.