

Creating a European Space on Theoretical Chemistry and Computational Modelling (TCCM)

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This presentation, to honor Antonio Laganà, describes the process initiated in 2003 to launch a Master and a Doctorate, in the field of Theoretical Chemistry and Computational Modelling (TCCM), with a clear European flavor and European dimension. The contribution of Antonio to the success of this initiative was simply crucial. The kickoff meeting was organized in 2003 in El Escorial (Madrid) with the participation of representatives from 47 European Universities from eight different countries. This meeting contributed to define the scope of TCCM, and the level to be reached after completing the Master in this area. Also the basic structure of the studies was designed, and a clear commitment of all the participants to go ahead with this initiative was made explicit, providing that the different national regulations allowed to put to work a structure that was, by its characteristics, rather different from the traditional structure of post-graduate studies in Europe. However, everybody in that meeting was convinced that this novelty in the structure, with a clear international dimension, with emphasis in the mobility of both, students and teachers, was one of the strengths of the new project.

Two years later, after a new meeting in Madrid, it was decided to launch a two-year Master on TCCM. We had at that moment no financing sources, but Antonio accepted the responsibility of organizing the First Intensive Course associated with these studies, in Perugia in 2006. This was a critical decision that convinced everybody that the project was feasible. So, not surprisingly, the TCCM community is very grateful to him for his courage in rather difficult moments.

In 2007 the first quality distinction was awarded to our Master: the Eurolabel issued by the ECTN (European Chemistry Thematic Network), and in this recognition Antonio also played a fundamental role. In 2009, the Master was selected as Erasmus Mundus and renewed in 2014 as an Erasmus+ Master. We can say, with pride, that nowadays TCCM is a prestigious trademark at the international level.

The adventure initiated in 2003 was happily completed in 2014, the year in which a similar project at the Doctorate level was selected by the REA (Research Executive Agency) as an Innovative Training Network-European Joint Doctorate, that started as such in January of 2015, and that includes 15 top-level research projects, involving 12 European Universities and 14 Associate Partners, including Supercomputing Centers, and Companies from the private sector.

The impact of these initiatives is reflected in a series (TCCM series) of books published by Springer, that constitutes the first series of text-books, specifically adapted to the Master level. A series of Workshops (we have already completed 5 editions) on TCCM gave also international visibility to our projects. For all that we have to say: Thanks Antonio!