

## Enzyme Researcher Receives Evonik Research Award of €100,000

November 12, 2008

- Dr. Paul Dalby wins the Innovation Award for White Biotechnology and €100,000 in prize money
- British researcher develops biocatalytic process for manufacturing new medicines and substance groups
- Evonik Executive Board member Dr. Alfred Oberholz: "Solid confirmation of what happens when we combine outstanding research with entrepreneurial spirit."
- Dr. Arend Oetker, president of the German Stifterverband: "Germany and Europe must not let the opportunity offered by biotechnology pass them by."

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In the end, enzymes won the day: Dr. Paul Dalby, 35, of University College London, outclassed two other European competitors in the final round of the highly remunerated European Science-to-Business Award of Evonik Industries, whose theme this year was "white biotechnology." Dalby's method for combining enzymes and customizing them for new tasks convinced the international jury. More specifically, the method is a biocatalytic process for the biotechnological production of new medicines and substance groups.

"Both the prize winner and the other two teams have solidly confirmed what happens when we combine outstanding research with entrepreneurial spirit," said Dr. Alfred Oberholz, member of the Executive Board of Evonik Industries AG at the award ceremony on November 12, 2008, in Berlin. The projects not only demonstrated the immense future potential of white biotechnology, but all of them are on the threshold of marketability or have already taken this step. "They therefore meet an essential condition of the Evonik Innovation Award: converting scientific innovations into salable products," says Oberholz.

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Evonik launched the European Science-to-Business Award in November 2005. This year, the award is patronized by Dr. Arend Oetker, President of the *Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft* (Donors' Association for the Promotion of Science and Humanities in Germany), and is presented in partnership with the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland, and the *Financial Times Germany*. The research award also offers the opportunity to attend a management course at the University of St. Gallen.

The goal of the award is to promote the fast and efficient conversion of the latest scientific findings into successful products. This is an approach long anchored in the research activities of Evonik. With the opening of the Eco<sup>2</sup> Science-to-Business Center (S2B Eco<sup>2</sup>) at the Marl site, Germany, the Group now operates its third installation of this type, in addition to the Nanotronics and Biotechnology Centers.

According to Arend Oetker, president of the *Stifterverband*, white biotechnology holds enormous opportunities for business and the environment. "The new processes not only generate money but conserve the planet's valuable resources. Germany and Europe cannot let this opportunity pass them by," says Oetker.

The winning project reflects the Science-to-Business mindset in every regard. First, the method opens up new opportunities for the biotechnological manufacture of new medicines and chemicals. Second, it could increase the use of biocatalysis for the production of a special substance group that scientists call "chiral compounds," adding another percentage point to today's roughly 10 percent share. This alone would mean additional sales of as much as €30 million annually. The use of biotechnological processes makes it more attractive, faster and less costly to manufacture chemical products. It is also a gentle, eco-friendly, and energy-efficient process.

Of the many high-quality applicants, two others made it to the final round in addition to Paul Dalby: the team of Dr. Thorsten Eggert, evocatal GmbH, Düsseldorf/Germany, and Dr. Thomas Drepper, Heinrich-Heine University of Düsseldorf/Germany, as well as Dr. Thore Rohwerder, University of Duisburg-Essen/Germany.

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Eggert and Drepper have developed new anaerobic fluorescent proteins that make it possible to track cellular processes, even in the absence of oxygen. These “luminescent reports” allow, for the first time, greater insight into the oxygen-free processes of our lives. They can be used, for instance, to find tumors in the human body. They can also act as environmental markers—“highlighters,” if you will—that can be used to label and localize pollution-degrading bacteria in an anaerobic environment.

Rohwerder has discovered an enzyme that can be used to convert a branched-chain petrochemical-based C4 body into a linear one. This enzyme, built into a sugar metabolism, can generate a precursor to methyl methacrylate. With this new environmentally safer and more efficient biosynthesis, the vision of manufacturing acrylic glass from sugar could become a reality.

### **Company information**

Evonik Industries is the creative industrial group from Germany which operates in three business areas: Chemicals, Energy and Real Estate. Evonik is a global leader in specialty chemicals, an expert in power generation from hard coal and renewable energies, and one of the largest private residential real estate companies in Germany. Our strengths are creativity, specialization, continuous self-renewal, and reliability. Evonik is active in over 100 countries around the world. In its fiscal year 2007 about 43,000 employees generated sales of about €14.4 billion and an operating profit (EBITDA) of more than €2.2 billion.

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