

As you all might know we have a bi-annual prize for the best polymer-related PhD thesis in the Netherlands. This prestigious award used to be known as the Houwink polymer prize, but in more recent years it is due to a generous gift of Prof. Challa that we can continue our tradition. I am happy that today Prof. Challa is here to help us with the award ceremony which will be the third one in this series. As usual the KNCV section Macromolecules is put in charge of the selection procedure. This year's jury consisted of members of the board of this section, namely: Bert Gebben, Marlieke Breijer-Pepels and Frans Leermakers, and two external members namely Wim Hennink from Utrecht University and Marleen Kamperman from Wageningen University. As usual, the selection procedure was not easy. It is true, not easy! (last Trump joke of this kind). We have examined the work of 8 nominees, we searched for inspiring new polymer insights, independence as a researcher and excellence in presentation, writing and communication.

Many of the nominees already have an impressive publication history and corresponding indices and they worked on diverse polymer topics ranging from synthesis, theory to applications. The jury finally had to make a choice between two candidates who both showed by their thesis to be truly all round polymer scientists. But the prize can, unfortunately, go to only one. So let me therefore first mention this year's runner-up and ask for a round of applause. He is from Eindhoven University worked in the group of Prof Cor Koning on a thesis entitled 'Exploring the potential of polymacrolactones as polyethylene-mimics'. I was told he is in the audience, maybe he can stand up,... Mark Pepels.

I do not want to talk long about today's prize winner, because all the time I will use will eat time from our winner's presentation and certainly our winner can tell better about it than I. Let me first invite Prof. Challa to step forward to hand over the Challa polymer prize 2017. This gives me some time to say a few words of the judicium. The Jury was impressed by the broadness of the research of today's winner:

Complicated polymer chemistry and difficult and non-trivial characterization work is combined with inspiring exploration of unconventional polymer applications such as sensing, transducing and data storage. Our candidate presented pioneering and innovative results in the promising field of fluorinated block copolymers. His results have been ranked at the top 1 to 2% of his research group. He is from Groningen University and worked in the group of Prof Katja Loos. His PhD thesis was defended cum laude and is entitled "Block copolymers based on Poly(Vinylidene Fluoride)". Please step forward Vincent Voet.