Conference report on the 50th German liquid crystal conference

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The 50th German Liquid Crystal Conference (GLCC) convened from 13 to 15 March 2024, in Essen, which is located centrally and the second largest city of the Ruhr region, known as Germany’s largest urban area. This year, the event was organised by Prof. Dr. Michael Giese and Prof. Dr. Jens Voskuhl as well as their working groups and took place in the University of Duisburg-Essen. Once again it offered an opportunity for scientists from around the world to share knowledge and insights into liquid crystal research.

The conference comprised eight sessions, chaired by Prof. Michael Giese, Prof. Sabine Laschat, Prof. Heiner Detert, Dr. Johanna Bruckner, Prof. Frank Giesselmann, Prof. Alexey Eremin and Prof. Jens Voskuhl. With around 60 participating scientists, depicted in Figure 1, the event featured a total of 23 oral presentations and 22 posters contributions.

Starting with the oral presentations, Prof. Heinz Kitzerow from the University of Paderborn opened the first day with a personal reflection on the 50th anniversary of the German Liquid Crystal Conference. Dr. Mariaia Nesterkina from the Helmholtz Institute for Pharmaceutical Research, followed with an insight on chiral liquid crystalline nanoarchitectures as a controlled way of delivering drugs through skin applications. Subsequently, Yang Xiao, from the University of Stuttgart, showed her very interesting research on photonic film fabrication from xanthan aqueous solutions. On the second day, Alexander Jarosik from the Otto von Guericke University in Magdeburg provided a fascinating insight into magneto- and electrooptical effects in the ferro-electric nematic phase. Later in the afternoon, Zhuoqing Li from the German Electron Synchrotron in Hamburg shared his research on the self-assembly of discotic ionic liquid crystals in nanoporous solids. The third and final day of the conference commenced with an insightful presentation by one of the four invited speaker, Prof. Dr. Paul van der Schoot, from Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands, who explained the formation of tactoids in colloidal chitin suspensions and discussed the impact of an applied electric field. This presentation was followed by Max Dombrowski, another speaker from the University of Stuttgart, who showed the time dependence of the gel formation in lyotropic nematic liquid crystals. In conclusion, the oral presentations encouraged scholarly exchange and scientific discussions during the subsequent coffee and lunch breaks.

The poster contributions, shown in Figure 2 (left), were spread over two days, taking place in the afternoons of the first and second day of the conference. Each poster contribution was introduced beforehand with a brief oral summary presentation. During the first poster session, attendees enjoyed a local favourite, the ‘Currywurst Pommes’, a delicious snack common in the Ruhr area.

Figure 1. Top left: GLCC 2024 program flyer. Bottom left: Conference badge holder. Right: Group picture of participants of the 50th German Liquid Crystal Conference. Picture taken by the group of Prof. Dr. Giese.

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Figure 2. Left: GLCC 2024 poster sessions. Right: Impressions on the conference dinner at the “Essener-Hof” hotel, near the essener main station. Picture taken by the group of Prof. Dr. Giese.

Figure 3. Award winners of the GLCC 2024. Top: Prof. Dr. Albert Schenning, winner of the alfred Saupe Award, pictured alongside (from left) Melanie Klasen-Memmer (Merck Electronics KGaA), Prof. Dr. Matthias Lehmann, and on his right, Dr. Johanna Bruckner. Bottom Left: Dr. Eva Otón, speaker of the Daniel Vorländer Lecture, together with Prof. Dr. Heinz Kitzerow. Right: Foteini Trigka and Florian Kolb, winners of the 2024 Young Scientist Award. Picture taken by the group of Prof. Dr. Giese.
Following the conclusion of the poster session on the second day of the conference, participants had the opportunity to extend their discussions into the late evening during the exclusive conference dinner. Hosted in the elegant dining halls of the renowned ‘Essener-Hof’ hotel, guests were treated to a delicious buffet, adding to the convivial atmosphere seen in Figure 2 (right).

Another highlight of the conference was the announcement of this year’s awards of the German Liquid Crystal Society, including the Alfred Saupe Prize, which is awarded together with the Alfred Saupe foundation and recognises exceptional contributions to the field of liquid crystal science. This year, the prize was awarded to Prof. Dr. Albert Schenning from Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands, seen in Figure 3 (top), who gave a highly interesting talk about ‘Stimuli-responsive Materials based on Liquid Crystal Polymers’. Additionally, Dr. Eva Otón from the Military University of Technology in Warsaw, Poland, seen in Figure 3 (left), held the prestigious Daniel Vorländer Lecture, an honour for scientists at the beginning of their independent careers. Her presentation included fascinating images of spiral and spherical structures from chiral nematics, obtained with varying chirality and topological frustrations.

Continuing the tradition, the 2024 Young Scientist Award was bestowed upon two promising PhD students launching their careers. Foteini Trigka from the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, was awarded for her remarkable poster contribution titled ‘Rational Design of Liquid Crystalline Elastomers with Programmable Multi-Step Deformation’. Florian Kolb from the University of Stuttgart in Germany was honoured for his exceptional oral presentation entitled ‘The Biological Source Matters - Chitin Nanoparticles From Different Organisms And Their Liquid Crystalline Behavior’. Both award winners are seen in Figure 3 (right).

The next German Liquid Crystal Conference is scheduled to take place in Göttingen, Germany, in spring of 2025, organised by Prof. Dr. Kai Zhang and his research group. The organisers are looking forward to welcoming numerous participants interested in the field of liquid crystals.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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