

## NESACS-GDCh German Exchange Program 2026: Program Report



The 2026 NESACS-GDCh German Exchange Program was a resounding success!

This exchange provided a week-long academic and cultural exchange in Cologne and Leverkusen, Germany for NESACS student delegates. The annual exchange was held in collaboration with the German Chemical Society JungChemikerForum and centered around the Frühjahrssymposium. NESACS sponsored six student delegates along with two committee member hosts to participate in the exchange. A unified theme within each of the delegates personal feedback summaries described the program as highly impactful, professionally enriching, and well-coordinated, combining exposure to cutting-edge science with meaningful international and cultural engagement.

As is tradition, visits to academic and industrial institutions were also central to the program. At the University of Cologne, students toured laboratories spanning biochemistry, materials science, inorganic chemistry, and physical chemistry. These interactions provided insight into the structure and culture of German academic research environments and enabled direct engagement with students and researchers across disciplines. The industrial component of the exchange, including visits to Chempark and Currenta in Leverkusen, was highlighted as a particularly impactful experience. Delegates gained exposure to large-scale chemical manufacturing operations and supporting infrastructure, including environmental monitoring, quality control, and waste management systems. Observing the scale and complexity of industrial production expanded students' understanding of the broader chemical enterprise. Interactions with analytical and quality control chemists provided insight into career paths in manufacturing, environmental safety, and regulatory science, particularly for those with backgrounds in R&D.

Students reported strong scientific value through participation in the main conference, which focused on the theme of "Colorful Chemistry," highlighting advances in spectroscopy, photochemistry, and light-driven catalysis. Delegates attended plenary lectures, student presentations, and poster sessions, and several participants delivered oral or poster presentations to large international audiences. These experiences were consistently described as important professional milestones that strengthened communication skills, built confidence, and provided valuable scientific feedback.

A recurring theme across feedback was the strength of the networking environment fostered by the program. Delegates formed meaningful professional connections with members of JCF as well as participants from across Europe and the United States. Interactions during conference events, social programming, and informal gatherings were described as highly valuable for building lasting relationships and exchanging perspectives on research, graduate education, and career development. Several students noted that the program reinforced or inspired their interest in pursuing advanced degrees or international career opportunities.

The cultural exchange component was also a defining element of the experience. Delegates participated in a guided tour of Cologne, including major historical landmarks, and engaged in local cultural programming such as a fragrance seminar at the House of 4711. Social events aligned with local traditions, including Karneval celebrations, were consistently described as memorable highlights that enhanced the overall experience and deepened engagement with German culture.

Overall, the 2026 NESACS-GDCh German Exchange Program provided significant scientific exposure, professional development, and cultural enrichment for participating students. Delegates reported lasting benefits, including expanded international networks, increased confidence in scientific communication, and broader perspectives on global research and career pathways. The continued collaboration between NESACS, GDCh, JCF, and partner organizations contributed to a highly successful and impactful program that will shape participants' academic and professional trajectories going forward.





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