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MAIL FROM ... TEHERAN

The three EU teams:
the BfR was represented by
six PhD candidates and one
jury member.

The Iranian capital was the venue for the final of the 1st International Nanotechnology Olympiad from 10 to 15 April 2018. This competition is designed to help up-and-coming science talents to interconnect with each other. Doctoral candidates from the BfR also qualified and were in Teheran for the event.

Nanotechnology is seen as a key technology in Iran, and the Nano-Olympics are just one of the many national and international programmes of the Iranian government geared towards training the future generation of researchers. Universities, research institutes and companies receive high-level funding, and the federal ministries house the competent offices for the assessment and regulation of these tiny particles, which differ not only in size but also in terms of shape and surface composition from larger particles.

The Iranian government also organised a national Nano-Olympics in 2017, and around 30,000 doctoral candidates, students and schoolchildren participated in the event. Several hundred mobile laboratories – known as “nano-trucks” – regularly travel the country and visit the schools. In these mobile labs, participants can make nanomaterials under supervision, and there are many simple applications for these materials. This nanotechnology promotion programme certainly has a positive effect: whereas in 2001 Iran was ranked 57th worldwide based on scientific publications on the topic of nanotechnology, the country now ranks 4th with over 9,000 publications a year. There are currently over 400 different nano-products on the Iranian market, and

these products are found in the fields of medicine, cosmetics, textiles, dyes or packaging – much as is the case in Europe. Some of these Iranian nano-products are already being exported.

The International Nano-Olympics in 2018 was the next step towards creating a platform via which future scientists can interconnect. Nine teams from Iran, South Korea, Taiwan, Russia and the European Union competed with each other in Teheran to solve real-life tasks in the field of nanotechnology. During the preparations and the competition itself, each team was supported by a mentor, and each of the participating countries posted up to two jury members. The European Union nominated three teams of up-and-coming scientists, and these teams had to take part in a competition to qualify for the final. After a successful European qualifying round, the BfR team went on to the final in Teheran. Each team had to choose a problem from the area of water and waste water, and then search for a solution using nanotechnology, outline this solution in detail and then present it to the international jury.

More information:
<http://nanoolympiad.org>



“In the run-up to the event, we were slightly concerned about the unusual destination, but these concerns were soon allayed by the friendliness and cordiality of our hosts. The programme comprised workshops, exercises in international teams and the preparation of our final presentation and was tightly scheduled. Nevertheless, there was still time for outings to Golestan Palace and a typical bazaar. Unfortunately, we were not able to bring home any of the prizes. The participants from the Asian region had researched and fine-tuned their ideas for a lot longer and were even able to present prototypes or patents. We made an important contribution to the overall discussion, however. Thanks to all organisers and participants for an exciting week in Iran.”