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ERNEST SOLVAY MEETS ALBERT EINSTEIN: AN INDUSTRIALIST DEDICATED TO INNOVATION

An exhibition in Brussels celebrates the life of a genius

Solvay is one of the privileged partners of the "Einstein: Another View" exhibition which will be held in Brussels from the 15 December 2005 to the 1 May 2006, and which is part of the centenary celebration of the publication of Albert Einstein's most pivotal works. This is a support which forms part of the policy of promoting the sciences embraced by the group's founder, Ernest Solvay, as well of the innovation strategy which Solvay upholds to this day in order to contribute to lasting and viable growth.

The ties between Ernest Solvay and Albert Einstein originated in 1911 when the industrialist invited the young scientist to participate in the first Solvay Physics Council in Brussels, attended by the greatest physicists of the time. Ernest Solvay had established a new mould in scientific meetings, where everyone could express themselves in accordance with their knowledge of a chosen topic – in this case, the quantum and radiation theories. Amongst the 21 participants, 11 would later see their works rewarded with a Nobel prize.

"To nearly be a scientist, to become somewhat of a scientist oneself (...) such was the golden dream throughout my life." one day declared Ernest Solvay. This self-taught man was able to stimulate debates within the scientific community and to encourage the spirit of competition amongst the greatest of them. The celebrated Dutch physicist Henrik Antoon Lorentz one day pointed out that in his proposition to attribute mass to energy, Ernest Solvay had an intuition which in a certain manner foreshadowed the works of Albert Einstein.

The meetings initiated by Ernest Solvay continue to this day under the leadership of the Faculty of Science of the Université Libre de Bruxelles. The XXIII Solvay Physics Council took place in Brussels from the 1 to the 3 December 2005, and notable participants were David Gross (Noble Prize in Physics 2004) and Gerard 't Hooft (Noble Prize in Physics 1999).

"Ernest Solvay's conviction that science must contribute to social progress is still to this day reflected in the passion for progress which drives the Solvay Group, which is amongst the most innovative companies in the world" stresses Aloïs Michielsen, President of the Solvay Group Executive Committee. Today's innovation will generate tomorrow's growth and jobs. It is for this reason that we are supporting an educational, entertaining and interactive event which, we hope, will awaken vocations of inventors amongst young visitors", continues Aloïs Michielsen.

For more information on the "Einstein: Another View" exhibition, visit www.alberteinstein.be.

SOLVAY is an international chemicals and pharmaceuticals group with headquarters in Brussels. It is present in more than 50 countries and employs some 33,000 people in its Chemicals, Plastics and Pharmaceuticals activities. Including Fournier Pharma, its 2004 sales amounted to EUR 8.5 billion. Solvay is listed on the Euronext 100 index of top European companies. Details are available at www.solvay.com.

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