Press Release

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Accelerating the circular economy in the chemical industry

Covestro promotes innovation in electrochemistry

- **Making the climate gas CO_2 and hydrogen usable as raw materials**
- **Donation to RWTH Aachen University enables new professorship**
- **Dr. Anna Mechler appointed as professor for electrochemistry**

The growing circular economy in the chemical and plastics industry requires alternative raw material sources beyond crude oil, which urgently need to be further researched. Industrial electrochemistry can make a significant contribution to the development of new raw material sources by employing energy-saving processes and renewable energies. The necessity for innovation and the resulting expansion of research in electrochemistry are of great importance from this point of view. To this end, the materials manufacturer Covestro is supporting RWTH Aachen University with a donation, thus enabling a new professorship for five years.

“The increasing use of alternative raw materials and the overall transformation from a linear to a circular economy are essential to achieve a future-proof, sustainable economy and society,” says Dr. Markus Steilemann, CEO of Covestro. “This objective demands a high level of innovative strength and increased investment in research and development at universities.”

To this end, RWTH Aachen University is expanding the research branch “Electrochemical Reaction Engineering” with a new professorship. Here, electrochemical processes, which have long been known from chlorine production, are to be further developed using renewable energies. One of the aims is to make the climate gas CO_2 even more usable as a raw material for the chemical industry. Methods for improved storage of the alternative energy carrier hydrogen are also being focused on here. This is an important

contribution to establishing CO_2-neutral value chains in the long term. The goal is to scale up electrochemical processes to industrial standards.

The university appointed Dr. Anna Mechler as Professor of Electrochemical Reaction Engineering on May 1, 2020. Mechler studied applied natural and material sciences in Wuppertal and Osnabrück and received her doctorate in electrochemistry at the Max Planck Institute for Iron Research in Düsseldorf and the Ruhr University Bochum. Before moving to the RWTH, she headed a research group for electrocatalysis at the Max Planck Institute for Chemical Energy Conversion in Mülheim an der Ruhr.

The professorship acts as a bridge between research activities in the field of industrial electrochemistry at RWTH Aachen University and the Forschungszentrum Jülich (Jülich Research Center), thus strengthening the Jülich Aachen Research Alliance (JARA). The integration of the professorship into the Competence Centre for Industrial Electrochemistry ELECTRA will further intensify the cooperation between the two institutions.

About Covestro:
With 2019 sales of EUR 12.4 billion, Covestro is among the world's largest polymer companies. Business activities are focused on the manufacture of high-tech polymer materials and the development of innovative solutions for products used in many areas of daily life. The main segments served are the automotive, construction, wood processing and furniture, and electrical and electronics industries. Other sectors include sports and leisure, cosmetics, health and the chemical industry itself. Covestro has 30 production sites worldwide and employs approximately 17,200 people (calculated as full-time equivalents) at the end of 2019.

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