



Lauri Niinistö

* 1.10.1941 † 28.2.2024

Lauri Salomon Niinistö, Professor Emeritus of Inorganic Chemistry at Aalto University, died in Vantaa on 28 February 2024. He was 82 years old, born in Helsinki on 1 October 1941.

Niinistö graduated from Apollo Coeducational School in 1961, obtained his master's degree from the Department of Chemistry at Helsinki University of Technology (TKK) in 1968 and Doctor of Science (Technology) in 1973. After earning his doctorate, he held locum positions as Assistant Professor/Professor until 1977, when he was appointed Professor of Inorganic Chemistry at TKK, a post from which he retired as Professor Emeritus in 2007.

Niinistö continued exploring the research topics of his predecessor, Professor Olavi Erämetsä, both in his master's and doctoral theses. The former dealt with the chemistry and structures of elemental sulphur, and in his doctoral thesis, he studied the structures of rare earth sulphates.

In 1981, Niinistö's inorganic chemistry laboratory started studying atomic layer deposition (ALD), becoming the first research group in the world to focus on ALD chemistry. ALD research continues strong in Niinistö's old laboratory and Fin-

land remains one of the three leading countries in the world in this field. In the late 1980s, another major line of research was born, namely high-temperature oxide superconductors. In this field, too, Niinistö's laboratory became an important player by international standards. Niinistö actively published high-quality scientific papers, producing more than 400 international publications over his career.

Niinistö's career was strongly international from the start. He was an exchange student in the USA, wrote part of his doctoral thesis at Stockholm University and spent research leaves in Paris (CNRS 1976), at the Vienna University of Technology (1981–1982) and the University of Florida (1985–1986), and later again in Vienna and Budapest and at the Max Planck Institute in Halle.

Nordic cooperation was important to Niinistö, and he served on the board of *Acta Chemica Scandinavica*, a jointly managed journal of chemistry, and as its editor-in-chief throughout the 1990s. He was actively involved in the organisation of Nordic conferences on structural chemistry and thermal analysis. Niinistö believed in the importance of organising international conferences in Finland and also chaired

major conferences such as EUROANALYSIS IV in 1981 and ICFE-4 (International Conference on f-Elements) in 1994. In 1990, the international ALD conference series was launched in Espoo on Niinistö's initiative. Later, the American Vacuum Society took over the responsibility of organising this annual conference. In 1991, Niinistö started a series of ALD meetings between TKK and the University of Tartu, which soon grew into the Baltic ALD conference series covering the Baltic countries. For the past 10 years, Baltic ALD has been part of the EuroCVD conference.

Niinistö also valued cooperation with kindred Estonian and Hungarian researchers. He facilitated a lively exchange of researchers and supplied Western chemistry literature to these countries whenever possible. He was consequently awarded honorary doctorates from the Tallinn and Budapest Universities of Technology.

A wide-ranging and thoughtful expert, Niinistö was active in various scientific organisations and foundations. He was Chair of the Board of the Alfred Kordelin Foundation from 1999 to 2004. He also served on the Board of the Finnish Chemical Society (1970–1977, Chair 1974) and on the Board of the Association of Finnish Chemical Societies (1976–1986). His excellent language skills and highly driven approach also led him to international positions, most notably on the Board (1973–1983), various working parties (1987–1993) and Presidency (1994–1999) of the Federation of European Chemical

Sciences (FECS, the forerunner of EuChemS). He was also an honorary member of the Estonian and Romanian Chemical Societies and the Austrian Society of Analytical Chemistry.

Niinistö received multiple awards and honours, including the award of the Finnish Chemical Society in 1991, the Gold “Cannizzaro” Medal of the Italian Chemical Society, the FECS Award in 2000, and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Materials Science Award in 2007. He was a member of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters and the Finnish Academy of Technical Sciences since 1982.

Niinistö was interested in a wide range of topics and had a very broad general knowledge. His hobby was history, especially the history of chemistry. He amassed an extensive collection of historical chemistry books. He wrote a 75-year history of the Finnish Chemical Society entitled: *75 vuotta toimintaa kemian hyväksi* (“75 years of work for chemistry”).

Lauri Niinistö's family consisted of his wife Leena and children Sini, Jussi and Jaakko. Their summer house in Joutsa was an important retreat for the whole family, including seven grandchildren. It was also a place to meet friends and host international guests.

We remember Lauri Niinistö as a knowledgeable teacher and a pleasant colleague. We are grateful for the vision and drive with which he supported and promoted our entire chemical research community for multiple decades.

*Obituary by Markku Leskelä and
Maarit Karppinen*