The first designation of a ‘Chemical Landmark’ in Switzerland has been established in Winterthur, where Johann Heinrich Ziegler (1738–1818), Johann Sebastian Clais (1742–1809) and Johann Jakob Sulzer (1738–1797) built the first chemical factory in Switzerland in the years 1777 to 1781. This complex of buildings (called Laboratorium at that time) was located at the untere Neuwiese some hundred meters outside of the existing town. Unfortunately, the last buildings were demolished in 1960.

The main products of the factory were vitriolic acid (sulfuric acid) and products made of it, which were used as bleaching and coloring agents in the local and nationwide textile industry, which flourished during the 18th and 19th centuries. The factory also produced other products such as hydrochloric acid and soda as the chemical catalog of 1781 shows.

The designation as a ‘Chemical Landmark’ took place on November 11th, 2009 directly on the Laboratoriumsstrasse in Winterthur. More than 50 people attended the ceremony; among them local politicians, chemists and historians from all over Switzerland, but also residents and other interested people from the regional community.

Felix Escher, Vice-president of the SCNAT, welcomed the attendees and gave a short introduction to the SCNAT. The laudatio, written by Karl Gademann, member of the board of the «Platform Chemistry», emphasized the historical importance of the Laboratorium at the beginning of the industrial revolution and its role as a starting point of a prospering chemical industry, which plays nowadays a major role in the economic system of Switzerland. Afterwards, Rudolf Gamper, a local historian from Winterthur, gave an overview of history of the Laboratorium and the biography of its founders. Hans-Jürgen Hansen, Emeritus of the Organic Chemistry Institute of the University of Zurich, illustrated in his speech the rapidly developing chemistry of the 18th century, which is very well seen in the discovery of a major number of elements, among them oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen and chlorine. The practical chemical knowledge was mainly exploited in the mining industry, salines, metallurgy, gunpowder manufacture and handicrafts, such as tanning, dyeing and bleaching industries. Also in the late 18th century, Lavoisier, Berthollet and Fourcroy jointly published their work ‘Méthode de nomenclature chimique’, which can be seen as the starting point of modern chemical nomenclature.
After the commemorative plaque was unveiled, Ernst Wohlwend, Mayor of the City of Winterthur, thanked the SCNAT in the name of the city for this honor. In his speech, he emphasized the importance of the first chemical factory for the industrial history of the city and the innovative character of former and present enterprises in Winterthur.

More information about the 2009 'Chemical Landmark' designation may be found at www.chemistry.scnat.ch/Chemical_Landmark_2009.