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Dear Colleagues,

For the last four years or so I have had the pleasure and privilege of working with Dr. Laura Gagliardi from Italy. The starting point of the collaboration was her idea of looking for 'organometallic compounds' of transition metals where all CH-groups of aromatic rings are replaced by the isoelectronic N. Our first paper on ScN<sub>7</sub> appeared in 2001 and a second paper on mixed 5- and 7-rings in 2002. In 2003 we used the N<sub>7</sub><sup>3-</sup> ring as a tool for studying Ba as an 'honorary d-element'. Also in 2003, the properties of lower-lying, unknown Group-4 tetra-azide isomers were studied. The first of these was later synthesized by Karl Christe. In three later papers we predicted very short, triple U-Ir bonds in NUIr and used the Au/H chemical analogy to look at Group-6 MAu<sub>6</sub> and MH<sub>12</sub>, which just appeared.

It is an understatement that not all of the ideas were mine. Most or all of the calculations were done by Dr. Gagliardi. She is extremely efficient, competent and well organized in execution.

Concerning her methodological competence, she has worked with Professors Nick Handy (Cambridge), Kimihiko Hirao (Tokyo) and Björn Roos (Lund) over extended periods. She also has taught at several international summer schools. In 2004 she received the Medal (for a scientist under 40) of the International Academy of Quantum Molecular Sciences. Her English is very good.

When Dr. Gagliardi was offered a permanent position, roughly at the hierarchical level of Assistant Professor, at University of Palermo in Sicily, my advice was 'go!'. She did, even if it meant a complicated private life. This shows her determination.

Summarizing, I can frankly recommend Dr. Laura Gagliardi to any university which is lucky enough to receive an application from her.

Sincerely yours,

Pekka Pyykkö