

The Year 2011 – International Year of Chemistry and the 60th Anniversary of the Slovenian Chemical Society



Dear Colleagues

2011 – International Year of Chemistry

The 63rd General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the year 2011 the International Year of Chemistry (IYC 2011) with a purpose to increase global recognition of how chemistry and its related sciences contribute to numerous aspects of everyday life and to the future. Partners coordinating the activities during IYC 2011 are IUPAC and UNESCO.

The International Year of Chemistry, IYC 2011, is a worldwide event, celebrating the achievements of Chemistry and its contributions to the well-being of humankind. A unifying theme entitled “Chemistry – Our Life, Our Future” has been chosen for this year. This theme suggests that is important for the future to focus on young people and general public and to reflect upon the Chemistry education that they are offered.

In January 2011 there was a two-day inaugural opening ceremony in Paris, where the following important topics were discussed:

- Chemistry and the progress of humankind
- Women in chemistry

- Chemistry and sustainable development (including themes on environment, climate, water, foodstuffs, health, energy, new materials and various economic and social aspects).

The year 2011 also marks the 100th anniversary of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry awarded to Marie Skłodowska Curie, for the recognition of her discovery of the elements radium and polonium. Marie Curie’s achievements still nowadays continue to inspire students, especially women, to pursue their careers in chemistry.

International Year of Chemistry 2011 in Slovenia

Our understanding of the material nature of our world is related to our knowledge of chemistry. In fact, all processes around us are controlled by chemical reactions. Chemistry, appropriately called the Central Science, is on one hand a philosophical query and an applied scientific endeavor on the other hand. The science of chemistry is fundamental to our understanding of the world around us.

The honourable sponsor of the IYC 2011 activities in Slovenia is the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

Partners for the activities in IYC 2011 are: Universities in Ljubljana, Maribor and Nova Gorica, National Institute of Chemistry, Jožef Stefan Institute and Slovenian Science Foundation.

The following activities will take place in Slovenia during IYC 2011:

- 17th Slovenian Chemistry Days will be organized by Slovenian Chemical Society, this time in Portorož, 14–16 September
- Slovenian Science Festival, an annual event, will be organized by Slovenian Science Foundation and mainly devoted to chemistry
- Numerous local events focusing on the topics of IYC 2011 will be organized throughout the country with an intention of increasing public appreciation and understanding of chemistry.

Activities will be appropriate for all levels of students, from preschool children to university students, and will focus on chemistry demonstrations at appropriate levels.

The purpose of numerous chemistry-related activities in Slovenia in 2011 is:

- To improve the understanding and appreciation of chemistry by the broadest audience and to promote the important role of chemistry to contributing to global challenges solutions
- To increase interest of young people in chemistry by generating enthusiasm for the creative future of chemistry. The activities will underscore the role of chemistry in sustainable management of natural resources.
- To promote and enhance international cooperation by serving as a focal point for activities by national chemical societies, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations.

Chemistry and chemists will inevitably play a key role in overcoming the numerous challenges facing today's world, creating new materials and sustainable sources of food and energy. These are key contributions to developing human knowledge, advancing economic progress and supporting a healthy environment.

The 60th Anniversary of the Slovenian Chemical Society

The beginnings of the Slovenian Chemical Society date back to the year 1951 when Slovenian chemists decided it would be an advantage to have an own professional society. A group of specialists from the Chemical Section of the Society of Engineers and Technicians was the driving force behind the establishment of the Slovenian Chemical Society in Ljubljana in February 1951. The organizational structure had been widened in its scope and aims and grew into an independent professional and scientific, not-for-profit, society. The purpose, goals and aims of the Society are clearly set out in the Statute of the Society.

From the Slovenian Chemical Society's earliest days, its growth has mirrored the ever increasing importance of chemistry in the world. Also, from its inception, the Slovenian Chemical Society was committed to sharing its professional work and interest with

specialists, students as well as with a broad public audience. Over the years, the expanding activities of the Slovenian Chemical Society continued to focus on the science and application of chemistry to a variety of fields. Slovenian Chemical Society continues to pursue the aims of the advancement of chemistry as a science, the dissemination of chemical knowledge, the development of chemical applications and the establishment of the links between academic and industrial chemical scientists. Over these 60 years, however, the Society's responsibilities have broadened and its activities have become more extensive.

The Slovenian Chemical Society grew from the initial 200-member society into an organization that now, after 60 years, includes 1200 members.

During the past 60 years the Society has gone through several cycles of ups and downs with periods of intense activity but also with periods when the activity was almost at standstill, although it never came to a complete halt.

For better fulfilling its mission and for enabling the members to unite within the area of their professional interests, the society has two divisions:

- Division of chemistry,
- Division of chemical engineering and chemical technology

Further subdivisions include several sections, committees and branches.

After the international recognition of Slovenia as an independent sovereign country in 1991, the Slovenian Chemical Society started the processes of integrating into international associations of chemical societies. The Slovenian Chemical Society has since 1991 become a member in FECS (now transformed into Eu-ChEMS), IUPAC and EFCE associations. The Slovenian Chemical Society has also been very active in bilateral relations with chemical societies around the world.

To achieve its mission in the future, the Slovenian Chemical society will focus on:

- Outreach, education and career development
- Support for local sections
- Member recruitment and retention
- Recognition of all aspects of the chemical profession.

Venčeslav Kaučič

President, Slovenian Chemical Society

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Dear Colleagues

Acta Chimica Slovenica is the journal of the Slovenian Chemical Society and has been published for 58 years. Currently in Slovenia there are only five scientific journals with an impact factor (IF) and *Acta Chimica Slovenica* is the one with the highest value in recent years. In 2002, *ACSi* was evaluated for the first time, obtaining an IF of 0.12. In the following years, its IF increased and in 2007 reached the enviable value for a national journal of 1.093. The impact factor in the last couple of years has been around 0.8, which is a success in the national as well in the international chemical world. Of course this is a result of the enthusiastic work of numerous former editors.

Professor Aleksander Pavko has lead the editorial team for six years now. The editorial policy in recent years has been very simple: to keep and increase the quality of the journal as much as possible by publishing good papers of interest to a large number of readers and to manage the reviewing procedure so as to select articles with appropriate scientific novelty and value. Ten years ago the number of submitted articles exceeded

one hundred and a little more than one half were accepted. The year 2005 was a turning-point; as a result of a one year preparation period, *Acta Chimica Slovenica* was given a new and attractive form, two column articles and a technical editor. After that a substantial increase in the number of articles submitted occurred, while interest in *ACSi* has now stabilized in the last couple of years. Around 250 articles are submitted and around one half published yearly. The number of papers in inorganic and structural, as well as in organic chemistry has been rather constant, while the interest in analytical chemistry and biochemistry has been growing. As a chemical engineer by profession I am sorry to say that papers covering this field are still as rare as ever.

It is a valuable experience to have invited guest editors and to prepare issues dedicated to selected scientific fields, chosen by the editors as of particular interest. This also offered the opportunity to slightly increase the number of rather rare authors from Western Europe and the United States. In the last five years twelve such issues have been edited and this year two more are to come. Well known scientists have been invited to prepare contributions. Two years after the release of a particular issue, article citation data analysis showed that this editorial direction has not given the expected result in increasing the impact factor. On the other hand, there have always been some regularly submitted manuscripts which seemed not to be outstanding when accepted, but pleasantly surprised by the number of citations after a couple of years.

Editorial work did not change much in the last five years; editors have to do their best besides their teaching and research responsibilities. They spend a nonnegligible part of their editorial time in communication with authors, sometimes several times, explaining how to prepare and correct their manuscripts, because they do not read the instructions. Also the attitude of reviewers remained practically the same. There are two groups of them; the largest are communicative, answering the editors' requests and doing the job at various

levels of speed and quality, or at least finding an excuse and suggesting another reviewer. Editors appreciate their help in contributing to the quality of our journal. The second group has been mute. Appreciable number of chosen reviewers have not even bothered to answer the polite request of the editors. In such a case it can take several months to get two reviews for an article. This is not the editors' wish but all they can do here and now is to beg their colleagues to take reviewing as a privilege and as a recognition and not as a nightmare. And to apologize to some authors for the long processing time.

Acta Chimica Slovenica is grateful for funding from the Slovenian Book Agency which covers the majority of journal costs, but unfortunately only allow its survival. In addition, a glance at the advertisements now and five years ago shows that financial support from Slovene companies through advertising has substantially decreased. It is not easy to understand that well established Slovene chemical companies cannot find, for example 1000 EUR to support their professional and internationally successful journal with an advertisement. We must point out that the times of enthusiasm are over. Editors are walking on a tightrope between their professional and paid obligations on one hand, and their voluntary but extensive and serious 'honorary' editorial work. They are responsible to the authors, readers and almost sixty years of *ACSi* tradition, but for how long can they continue? Our community should understand this and take responsibility for its indifference which may cause, at a minimum, a drop of scientific quality and eventually menace the journal's very existence. At this point, only gratitude could be expressed to a diligent editorial team, devoted secretary, the authors and reviewers and all the others who helped to ensure that *Acta Chimica Slovenica* has been published regularly.

The editorial team, with its professional work of amateurs, has at least succeeded in keeping up the established scientific level of *Acta Chimica Slovenica* by article selection and reviewing policy. But dissatisfaction is a motive for success and there are future plans. It is

undoubtedly a special challenge and pleasure to turn over the slightly sticky leaves of a new issue and smell the fresh printing odour. However, information technology is developing fast and the number of printed journals is decreasing at the expense of electronic journals worldwide. But it seems that due to the traditional attitude of the Slovene Chemical Society members, *ACSi* will continue to be issued in the paper form for quite some time. It is also a freely accessible journal on the web page of the Slovene Chemical Society which guarantees a good number of readers and submitted manuscripts. In the future, the editors will solicit more authors from Western Europe and the United States. It seems that the impact factor is still too low for most eminent Slovene scientists, and it is the task of editors to arouse a feeling of affiliation and loyalty to Slovene Chemical Society and *Acta Chimica Slovenica*.

According to the increasing number of articles from the prospective fields of biochemistry, molecular biology and biomedical applications, the idea is to endeavour to have *ACSi* included to the Medline data base. This is a project which does not need much of additional editorial work and financial support. But to become a contemporary international scientific journal, communication between authors, editors and reviewers must be modernized by introducing an up-to-date journal management and publishing system like Open Journal Systems, which needs additional work and financial support. There have been meetings with representatives of the Slovenian Book Agency, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, as well as the Slovene Research Agency to support this new project, but after initial compliments and moral support, only promises of financial help were given. Will here one of the engineering rules like 'Don't touch it if it works' be applied? But let's think positive. The editorial team still has some energy and hopefully the arguments are strong enough for financial support to come so that in two years, at the 60th anniversary of *Acta Chimica Slovenica*, will be able to contemplate with satisfaction the achievement of this plan.

Prof. dr. Aleksander Pavko
Editor in Chief