

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



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