

Foreword

The special issue of *Croatica Chemica Acta* that you have in your hands (or at your desktop, as a matter of fact), has grown steadily, bit by bit, over the past several months thanks to the vivid and dedicated joint efforts of those who share the admiration and respect for *emerita* Dr Biserka Kojić-Prodić and her lifelong dedication for a pure and genuine science in every possible sense – motivational, ethical and societal. Biserka, to whom we dedicate this special issue on the occasion of her 80th birthday, has always been, and still is, all about pioneering, the toughest path to choose in science. Skilled and enthusiastic crystallographer, she has fought, at all levels and during her entire career, for the interdisciplinary approach in scientific research as the only possible way to efficiently solve the scientific problems.

In this endeavour, we have joined forces with 16 corresponding authors from nine countries (and their co-

workers) who graciously accepted our invitation to contribute to this special issue. Their names, as well as science they present, were meticulously chosen to reflect, on one hand, plethora of collaborative research projects in which Biserka participated during her fruitful career, and, on the other, her lifelong dedication to the interdisciplinary approach in scientific research.

Biserka was the one who introduced, back in the early seventies, direct methods in X-ray crystallography to the crystallographic community in the former Yugoslavia. She learned about these revolutionary methods in solving crystal structures from Herbert Hauptmann, who later (in 1985) won a Nobel prize in chemistry for this discovery. Biserka recognized, in the very early days, the potential and significance of the data bases, and established first contacts with Olga Kennard and Frank Allen from the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre. Thanks to that, back in the



Biserka Kojić-Prodić, delivering an introductory talk as the programme coordinator at the HTCC2 workshop organized by the Croatian Association of Crystallographers in Poreč, in April 2017.



Biserka Kojić-Prodić with the “orange team” at the 29th European Crystallographic Meeting in Rovinj (August 2015), where she was one of the scientific programme coordinators.

1985, the Yugoslav crystallographic community gained, among the first in the world, the full access to the Cambridge Structural Database, which is today an indispensable tool for crystallographers worldwide. In the eighties she also pioneered (in the former Yugoslavia) the use of molecular modelling methods to complement single crystal X-ray studies in the process of molecular structure elucidation. Biserka spent several months, back in 1988, as a visiting scientist in the laboratory of Ada Yonath, who later won a Nobel prize for her studies on the structure and function of the ribosome. Inspired by this experience, in the early nineties, when Croatian scientific community was heavily suffering the consequences of the bloody war for independence including an extensive brain-drain, shortage of funding and overall discouragement, Biserka was stubbornly decisive to introduce, at the time, emerging field of macromolecular crystallography to Ruđer Bošković Institute and to Croatia. And she did it. She established and ran, until her retirement, the Laboratory for Chemical and Biological Crystallography, one of the few (in sense of scientific output and excellence) showcase labs of the

Institute. Biserka published over 300 original research papers in international scientific journals, ran dozens of international research projects, was granted the National Science award for life achievement in 2010, Ruđer Bošković Institute Award in 2011 and many others. Today, 15 years after her retirement, Biserka is every day in the lab, tirelessly reading, writing, mentoring and sharing her immense knowledge and experience with her younger colleagues. And we could go on like this, for pages and pages, but instead we shall now leave you in the capable hands of our contributing authors, to whom we express once again gratitude and appreciation for their diligence and dedication. Moreover, we warmly recommend the autobiographical essay written by Biserka herself. We asked her to write it knowing that it would bear a strong and important message. And it does, indeed. Enjoy the book.

Marija Luić and Aleksandar Višnjevac
Guest co-editors

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