



Croatian Biophysical Society

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BIOPHYSICS IN CROATIA

Biophysics is essentially an interdisciplinary science requiring mutual cooperation of scientists from different backgrounds in basic scientific disciplines: physics, chemistry, biochemistry and molecular biology. The need for introduction of a biophysics course into the curriculum of undergraduate and graduate studies of natural sciences was recognized in the former Yugoslavia, which included Croatia, more than thirty years ago. The Yugoslav Biophysical Society was founded in 1970, at the 1st Biophysical scientific symposium. The first president was Siniša Maričić. After only a year, the Society joined the International Union for Pure and Applied Biophysics (IUPAB), the world association of biophysical societies. Several scientists from Croatia were members of IUPAB bodies: Siniša Maričić, Greta Pifat and Jasminka Brnjas-Kraljević.

The symposia of the Yugoslav Biophysical Society were regularly organized until the last one in 1990 and symposia's abstracts were usually published in the journal *Periodicum Biologorum*. Many scientists from abroad participated in the meetings as invited lecturers.

The Society, together with the Universities, initiated a graduate program in Biophysics, mainly through summer schools and the cooperation of Universities of Ljubljana and Zagreb. The undergraduate program in Biophysics at the Department of Physics, Faculty of Science, was organized by Dr Janko Herak.

The Croatian Biophysical Society was founded in 1980, similarly as other regional societies. It started with its activities as an independent society in 1991 after the break up of Yugoslavia. In 1993, the Society joined two international associations in 1993: IUPAB and EBSA (European Biophysical Societies' Association).

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CROATIAN BIOPHYSICAL SOCIETY

The Croatian Biophysical Society regularly organizes lectures and seminars dealing with different areas of Biophysics. Many foreign scientists have participated in these activities, a fact which has often fostered international cooperation between different groups in the field.

An important activity of the Society is its participation in the organization of summer schools of biophysics. These schools are now well known and recognized in the international scientific community. The tradition started in 1981 in Dubrovnik with the 1st International Summer School on 'Supramolecular Structure and Function', organized by the Croatian Biophysical society and the Ruđer Bošković Institute. To date, seven summer schools have been organized, each one under

the sponsorship of UNESCO and IUPAB. Due to great personal efforts of Dr Greta Pifat, the main organizer, many important scientists, even several Nobel prize winners, have participated as lecturers at the school. There is an increasing interest of young scientists and students worldwide in attending the school. The up-to-date and intriguing content of lectures in top areas of biophysics; the possibility to meet and talk with senior scientists and the chance to partake of the beauty of many social activities offered by the Adriatic coast continue to attract young people to the school.

Members of the Croatian Biophysical Society participate intensively in biophysical courses at both undergraduate and graduate level. The undergraduate courses of Biophysics are offered at the Faculty of Science, Medical School, the School of Dentistry, the School of Veterinary Medicine, and the Faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry. The graduate program in Biophysics is offered at the Physics Department of the Faculty of Science, mainly for students with a major in physics. Members of the Society assist in helping students find adequate laboratories in which to perform their master's and doctoral theses, whether these facilities be in Croatia or abroad.

By virtue of rapid development and of increased interest in biosciences over the last several years, many

undergraduate and graduate students with majors in Physics, Chemistry and Molecular Biology have joined our Society.

The Croatian Biophysical Society has started organizing its own scientific meetings, and so far two of them have been held, the first in 1999 and the second in 2001. At these meetings, the scientific work of different research groups in Croatia was presented and round table discussions were held on important topics concerning the place of Biophysics in Croatia, the education of young scientists, and cooperation among universities, institutes and companies.

In order to stimulate the communication between scientific societies with biological orientation in Croatia, the Coordination Board for Molecular Life Sciences was founded last year and our Society is one of its members. The 1st Croatian Congress on Molecular Life Sciences was organized last year.

The Croatian Biophysical Society has now about sixty regular members and about twenty young members in the section of young scientists. The Society's thirty year old tradition of gathering the biophysicists together, as well as increasing participation of young scientists in the field gives us hope that Biophysics will continue to both play a role in the scientific community in Croatia and develop as a field of research.