

## A Word from the Guest Editors

Dear readers,

The Sixth Balkan Botanical Congress (BBC) held in Rijeka (September 14–18, 2015) was one in a series of successful meetings of botanists devoted to the plant life of the Balkan Peninsula and wider area of Southeastern Europe and the Near East. It was preceded by congresses in Thessaloniki (Greece, 1997), Istanbul (Turkey, 2000), Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2003), Sofia (Bulgaria, 2006) and Belgrade (Serbia, 2009) with a slightly prolonged temporal gap due to a congress planned for Montenegro in 2012 that failed to materialize. The problem of disrupted continuity is linked to the specific situation of there being no international organization responsible for coordination of the Balkan Botanical Congresses. After each congress, the Scientific Board becomes somehow responsible for selection of proposals for the next one. Thus topic was discussed at one of the round tables of the 6<sup>th</sup> BBC and we concluded that at least an informal umbrella organization to serve as a network for Balkan or SEE botanical societies and similar NGOs is needed.

There were several reasons why Rijeka had been selected as a meeting place: in addition to the practical touristic reasons, the availability of a modern campus, and its position in NW Croatia (the main organizers were Rijeka Natural History Museum, Croatian Botanical Society and Botanical Society of Slovenia). Two centuries ago one of the most prominent Balkan botanists, Josip Pančić (1814–1888), was born in the vicinity of Rijeka, in Ugrini, part of the village of Bribir. Later his dynamic life brought him to Serbia, where after an Orthodox wedding he changed his name to Josif Pančić. And under that name he became famous as one of the most productive students of Serbian, but also the wider Balkan flora. In 2014 two exhibitions dedicated to Josif Pančić were put on in Belgrade, one of which was opened in Rijeka Natural History Museum in a modified form at the time of the 6<sup>th</sup> BBC. On behalf of congress participants, a small delegation visited a monument to Josif Pančić in Crikvenica and the house where he was born in Bribir.

Comparing to previous BBCs, in Rijeka there were slightly fewer active participants but we could all agree that the level of excellence was high, with an obvious positive trend comparable to past congresses. All in all, there were 50 oral (four plenary lectures) and 160 poster presentations in Rijeka with the total number of over 500 participating authors and co-authors from 19 countries. Oral and poster presentations were grouped in different topics covering the areas of plant anatomy and morphology, physiology, taxonomy and systematics, floristics, invasive species, phylogeography and phylogeny, conservation botany, vegetation and ecology, ethnobotany, archaeobotany, algology, mycology, lichenology and botanical collections. In the five congress days four were spent on the exchange of scientific information and the middle day was devoted to two parallel excursions, one to the northern part of Velebit mountain range and the other to the island of Krk. In addition to that, a post-congress daily excursion went to Snežnik (Slovenia). Two round tables were organized with the topics “Do we still need classical botany?” and “Do we need an umbrella NGO in the Balkans?” with conclusions that offered a strongly positive answers to the title questions.

A small selection of the best presentations (ten articles) from the 6<sup>th</sup> BBC is represented in this volume of *Acta Botanica Croatica*, all of them having passed the standard peer review (pages from 157–216).

At the end, in the name of Organizers of 6<sup>th</sup> BBC, we can all thank the participants for shaping up a pleasant, informative and fruitful congress with an exchange of up-to-date results from various fields of botany. And we have to express our gratitude to the tourist agency PBZ Card Ltd. which took the responsibility for all the complex logistics behind the Congress. And finally, but not the least, we have to thank the organizing consortium of local organizers: Rijeka Natural History Museum and the University of Rijeka, which offered us a comfortable space in their campus, and the active members of the two botanical associations Croatian Botanical Society (HBoD) and Botanical Society of Slovenia (BDS).

The call for organizers of the next Balkan Botanical Congress was informally opened at the end of our meeting in Rijeka; later a circular formal invitation letter was sent to all the 6<sup>th</sup> BBC Boards' members and to additional potential organizers that already expressed their willingness before.

In this issue, we have also hosted publications from the field of plant biology presented at the 12<sup>th</sup> Croatian Biological Congress (CBC) held in Sveti Martin na Muri (September 18–23, 2015). For more than thirty years the CBC has offered biologists from different scientific disciplines from Croatia and abroad a unique opportunity to gather together.

We are looking forward to meeting you at the next BBC, as well as at the CBC.

Sandro Bogdanović and Nejc Jogan

Presidents of 6<sup>th</sup> BBC Scientific committee  
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