

REPORT ON THE 8TH CMAPSEEC

Association for Medicinal and Aromatic Plants of Southeast European Countries (for details see www.amapseec.org) is established in 2000 upon the initiative of the Institute for Medicinal Plant Research “Dr Josif Pančić” from Belgrade, Serbia, and is registered as a non-profit and nongovernmental organization. AMAPSEEC is the first regional association that gathers people, who are interested in MAP or are working in this field, and it promotes and supports exchange of ideas and cooperation in the entire MAP sector in the region of South East Europe. AMAPSEEC is recognized as an important element in strengthening and development of scientific and professional networking in the herbal sector, not only in the frame of Southeast Europe, but for the whole world’s community interested in research and production of MAP. Nowadays AMAPSEEC has near 500 of regular members coming from 25 EU countries and 15 non-EU countries (e.g. Russia, Ukraine, Iran, Iraq, India, Turkey, China, etc.).

So far AMAPSEEC successfully organized eight scientific conferences, which were held every two years, starting from Association’s establishment: the first was in Serbia, second in Greece, the third in Slovakia, followed by Romania, Czech Republic, Turkey, Serbia (for the second time), and finally, the last one was held in Albania.

The eight Conference on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants of Southeast Europe (8th CMAPSEEC) was held in the period May 19 - 23, 2014 in Durrës, Albania (hotel “Adriatik”). Conference was organized by Agricultural University of Tirana, Albanian Academy of Sciences and the AMAPSEEC. Conference was strongly supported by Albanian Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, USAID and few Albanian MAP processing companies (e.g. Xherdo).

Minister of the Education and Sports of the Republic of Albania, Ms. Lindita Nikolla, together with vice-minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and representatives from Albanian Academy of Sciences, University, USAID, and the president of the AMAPSEEC gave greeting notes at the opening ceremony.

At the 8th CMAPSEEC there were 170 participants, coming from 40 countries. All scientific contributions were classified into eight sessions and three major scientific groups, such as: a) *MAP diversity at all levels and tools for its evaluation*, b) *Pharmacology and biological effects of active compounds of MAP*, c) *Cultivation, breeding and biotechnology of MAP*. Total number of submitted abstracts was 283, number of poster presentations: 233 (49 in the first thematic group, 121 in the second and 63 in the third group), and number of oral presentations: 41, out of seven lectures of invited speakers and eight as introductory plenary lectures.

Among presentations of invited speakers the following should be stressed: “*Ethnobotany in the Balkans: Quo Vadis?*” by Prof. Dr Andrea Pieroni; “*South Africa’s Medicinal and Aromatic Flora – Opportunities for Science and Industry*” by Prof. Alvaro Viljoen; “*New Trends in Extracting and Separation of Compounds from Natural Products*” by Prof. Temel Ozek; “*Metabolomics: just Another “Omics” or an Ideal Platform for Accelerated Lead Finding?*” by Dr Milen Georgiev; “*DNA-based*

Authentication of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants” by Johannes Novak; “ *Postharvest Processing: the Crucial Link in the Value Chain of Medicinal Plant Production*” by Prof. Joachim Müller; and “*Are MAPs Useful or Toxic?*” by Prof. Muhsin Konuk.

Similarly to all previous Conferences, the 8th CMAPSEEC gathers together experts, senior and young researchers, PhD students, professionals and representatives of companies in the field of medicinal and aromatic plants (MAP) from Southeast Europe and all over the world to share their ideas, expertise, scientific results, as well to strengthen the collaboration and networking in science, education and business.

At the regular membership meeting held at the Conference, the need for issuing a scientific journal covering all aspects in MAP research under support of the AMAPSEEC, as well as initiating new research projects with AMAPSEEC support and its membership participation were postulated. In addition, business section was held and small round table on key problems in MAP production and processing in the region. Finally, official collaboration between AMAPSEEC and Southeast European Phytochemical Society supported by UNESCO, was established.

Once again, friendly atmosphere, excellent organization of the host institutions and strong efforts made by Prof. Dr Alban Ibraliu as the president of the 8th CMAPSEEC have contributed to great success of the Conference. It is worthwhile mentioning that apart from a nice seaside landscape of Durres, fantastic post-conference excursion was organized in Nature Park “Divjaka”, as well as cheerful gala dinner at the local ethno-restaurant and very emotional and funny farewell party after official closing ceremony, where Bulgaria was nominated as the next CMAPSEEC host in 2016.

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