



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Symposium on the Alpha-Amylase Family Smolenice Castle, Slovakia, Oct 3–7, 2004



Edited by  
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The scientists who can informally be called “The Alpha-Amylase People” met together for the second time at The Second Symposium on the Alpha-Amylase Family, Smolenice Castle, Slovakia, October 3–7, 2004, to present, exchange and create new results, ideas and friendships, respectively.

It was really a very nice time. Not only due to a pleasant sunny autumn weather enabling all to discuss at the terrace outside the Castle drinking their coffee or tea during the breaks, but also happily the atmosphere among the people, often competing in the research, was especially friendly. This is a special privilege of a conference organized in the Smolenice Castle, and if I may express my personal view, this warm-heartedness is no less important for the success of an international conference than is the level of the science presented. To exhibit that a friendship, generous collaboration as well as the efforts to help the other to achieve top goals are possible to practise even today, regardless the individual participants come from.

Statistically, The Second Symposium on the Alpha-Amylase Family was attended by ~80 people from 18 countries throughout the world (Europe, America, Asia and Australia). Thirty oral talks were given, both Invited Lectures and Short Oral Presentations in the sessions: *Clan GH-H: Structure-function relationships I and II*, *“Cousin” families*, *Clan GH-H: Protein engineering and laboratory evolution*, and *Family GH-13 enzymes and inhibitors*. Importantly, young scientists and/or PhD-students formed ~40% of the attendees.

The Keynote Lecture was given on Sunday evening by Pedro COUTINHO (AFMB, CNRS, Marseille, France) on *“Starch-active enzymes and related proteins: data integration for evolutionary and functional analysis”*. The Symposium was closed on Thursday noon by the Closing Lecture by Takashi KURIKI (Ezaki Glico Co., Ltd., Osaka, Japan) on *“The conclusive proof that supports the concept of the  $\alpha$ -amylase family: structural similarity and common catalytic mechanism”*. The scientific program was completed by more than 30 posters. Among these, three best posters received cash prizes. The poster awards were announced at the Symposium Banquet on Wednesday evening, which was preceded by Banquet Speaker Ann MACGREGOR (Livingston, West Lothian, U.K.) who talked on *“An overview of clan GH-H and distantly-related families”*. A special talk was presented by Hannes LOHI (University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada) on *“Laforin preferentially binds the neurotoxic starch-like polyglucosans, which form in its absence in progressive myoclonus epilepsy”*.

The social program consisted mainly of a trip by boat to water dam Gabčíkovo on the Danube River (Tuesday afternoon) and a walking trip to the Cave Driny (Wednesday afternoon). In fact, every evening, after the scientific program was finished, it was possible to enjoy a relaxed atmosphere together.

It is a great pleasure for me to mention here also the financial help of our sponsors and supporters – Novozymes, Danisco, Orion and Ezaki Glico; without their help it would hardly be possible to organise the Symposium and publish this Supplement of *Biologia*.

Finally, I am glad, indeed, to express my sincere thanks to members of both Scientific Program Committee and Local Organising Committee for their invaluable help, to all participants for their coming, to all authors for submitting their manuscripts, and to all referees for their generous reviewing. And – definitively – I would like to invite you all to come again for the Third Symposium on the Alpha-Amylase Family that is scheduled to be held again in the Smolenice Castle, Slovakia, in early autumn 2007!

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