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## Preface

On 19 December 1994, a number of colleagues involved in lipase research received a letter from Giancarlo Ortaggi stating that the Biotechnology Section of the Chemistry Department of the University of Rome "La Sapienza" and the Italian Chemical Society had planned the organization of an International Meeting on Lipases. From this stage on, it took 16 more months and about 200 pages of telefax messages exchanged between Rome and Bochum before the International Workshop "Lipases in the Biocatalysis" took place on 11–13 April 1996. A total number of 120 participants from 15 different countries (Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Malaysia, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and The Netherlands) gathered at the Meeting Center of the University "La Sapienza" in Rome to present and discuss their results in 27 lectures and 35 posters.

It was an unusual conference which will be remembered as the 'Mediterranean Meeting' which means that speakers were asked but not pressed to stick to the time frame and discussions were never interrupted. Unexpectedly (especially for participants from Europe North of Italy), the overall time schedule was not violated and people felt relaxed and perfectly content. In the evening of Friday, April 12, the participants stopped by at San Pietro to ask the Pope for his support of lipase research. After having tasted a Neapolitan Pizza (the real one), people experienced the wonderful atmosphere of a spring night in Rome.

This Special Issue of the *Journal of Molecular Catalysis B: Enzymatic* summarizes the scientific results of the Workshop in 26 papers which have been grouped into four chapters covering I: Molecular Biology and Genetic Engineering of Lipases, II: Structure and Stereoselectivity of Lipases, III: New Methodologies with Lipases, and IV: Biotechnologi-

cal Applications of Lipases. The contents of this issue clearly indicates the steadily growing importance of lipases for biotechnology which is reflected in increasing research activities searching for new lipases, tailoring already existing ones towards novel applications, and trying to understand at a molecular level their structure–function relationships. We hope that this Special Issue will provide novel and inspiring informations not only to the 'Lipase Family' of colleagues thereby contributing to a steadily developing progress in basic research and biotechnological applications of lipases.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions in the preparation and organization of the workshop by the following persons: Prof. Lilia Alberghina, Università Di Milano, and Prof. Enrico Cernia, Università Di Roma belonging to the Scientific Committee, and Armandodoriano Bianco, Patrizia Borello, Manuela Cerimoniale, Adele Mannarino, and Antonella Di Mitric belonging to the Local Organizing Committee. The Conference was financially supported by the Biotechnology Section of the Chemistry Department, "La Sapienza" University of Roma, the University of Viterbo "La Tuscia", the Lazio Section of the Italian Chemical Society, the Associazione Italiana Biocatalisi e Bioseparazioni and the Fondazione Per Le Biotecnologie. In addition, we would like to thank Dr. Kostas I. Marinakis and Ing. Wim P. Vonk serving as editors of Elsevier Scientific Publishers, Amsterdam, for their help and patience during the preparation of this Special Issue.

Rome and Bochum, March 1997

Giancarlo Ortaggi  
Karl-Erich Jaeger