

Preface

It was in 1984 that the Ciba Foundation organized the symposium *Enzymes in Organic Synthesis* in London, one of the very first international meeting on the use of enzymes in synthesis. It was attended by less than 30 scientists, authors of the most cited pieces of work in the field.

Since then, *Biocatalysis* has experienced a tremendous growth, and the biannual European Conference in Biocatalysis and Biotransformation is nowadays one of the main forum for assessing the state of the art.

Biotrans '99, the fourth appointment in this series of Conferences, was held in Giardini Naxos (Italy) from September 26th to October 1st 1999. The symposium, which was supported by the EC, the CNR (Italian National Research Council) and several private companies, was sponsored by Associazione Italiana Biocatalisi e Bioseparazioni (AIBB), Società Chimica Italiana (SCI) and the Working Party on Applied Biocatalysis. It was the most attended meeting on Biocatalysis ever organized, gathering more than 450 scientists from all over the world, with about 120 of them coming from non-European countries.

Over 40 lectures and oral communications and more than 300 posters, presenting results coming from the academic as well from the industrial world, are in the scientific record of the symposium, and part of them are presented in this special issue of the *Journal of Molecular Catalysis B: Enzymatic*.

The papers presented here were refereed according to the usual procedure of this journal. They are grouped into the following topics:

Review articles

- Enzymes in organic synthesis
- Industrial case studies
- Improvement of biocatalyst performance
- Biochemical engineering and enzyme stability-stabilization
- Biocatalysis in non-conventional media
- Artificial enzymes
- Molecular modeling and mechanisms of enzyme catalysis
- Biocatalysis and environment, food and textiles.

We take this occasion to thank the distinguished scientists whose contribution, as members of the Scientific Committee and of the Organizing Committee, was of outmost importance for the success of the Biotrans'99 Conference.

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Finally, it is our pleasure to invite the readers of these short notes to participate in the next Biotrans Meeting (Biotrans '01) that will be held in Darmstadt, Germany in the period of Sept. 2–7, 2001 under the chairmanship of Prof. Wolf-Dieter Fessner.

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