

Interview with Claudiu Supuran Florence University- Florence, Italy



Prof. Claudiu Supuran



Claudiu T. Supuran is Professor at of medicinal chemistry at the NEUROFARBA department, section of pharmaceutical and nutraceutical chemistry, at the University of Florence, Italy. He received his BSc in chemistry, in 1987, from the Polytechnic University of Bucharest, Romania and he obtained his Ph.D in chemistry at the same university, in 1991. He became Assistant then Associate Professor of chemistry at the University of Bucharest. He hold a few visiting positions in different foreign countries, a visiting scholar at University of Florida, Gainesville, USA, then at Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia and a visiting Professor at the University of Plata, Argentina. Later on, in 1994, he moved to the University of Florence, Italy, where currently he leads a research group of 10 people.

**What made you opt for a career as a researcher?
How would you define your job?**

Curiosity. I wanted to understand how things “work” since I was quite young. At 12 I wanted to become an astronomer as the universe seemed to me so huge and mysterious, then I realized that astrophysics would better fit my interest and from there I arrived to be very much interested in physics. However as radioactivity was my hobby at that age, I became more and more involved with chemistry, and finally at 14 I realized that I'll be a chemist. And this was indeed the case. **I would add that I am a chemist with a very deep interest in biology, especially evolution. Starting more than 20 years ago by now,** my other main interest (apart medicinal chemistry) is molecular biology and more generally biology, evolution (even at the molecular level). **In the end, the fact that I had a deep interest in almost all natural sciences was very helpful for my career/job, since my work is indeed quite interdisciplinary.**

**We'd like to catch a glimpse of your daily activities.
What is a typical day (or week) for you?**

A typical day: I wake up early, around 7-7.30, and if it is a nice weather period, I like to do some jogging for 30-50 min. Then I go to my office where normally I arrive by 9-9.30. In the morning I do some editorial activity for the two journals for which I act as editor, then I meet collaborators, discuss about experiments to do or which have been just done, program writing the manuscripts, eventually design further experiments or additional compounds to be included in the future papers. I have lunch at 12.30 with my ex-boss and good friend Prof. Andrea Scozzafava, and after lunch I continue my activity, normally working on some manuscripts, correcting drafts I receive from students or collaborators abroad. I am able to work like that till 16-17, then I need a break, I return home, and around 18.30-19 I am able to work for another hour (again for the journals). The evenings I listen music (my greatest love are Mozart, Bellini and Brahms) or watch TV (National geographic, I enjoy documentaries with wild life and similar issues that normally children look). I go to bed rather early, i.e., 22-22.30.





Dynamic Interactive Nanosystems

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Claudiu, you are associate Professor, you're also a researcher with your team at the university and you are now Editor in Chief of the Journal of Enzyme Inhibition and Medicinal Chemistry after being for a few years Associate Editor. What led you from science to edition?

I was interested in editorial work quite early in my career. In the period 1990-1993 I was editorial assistant to Prof. Mircea D. Banciu who was in that period the Editor in Chief of Revue Roumanie de Chimie. After I moved to Florence in 1994, I was coopted in the editorial boards of many journals (to many of which I am still member in the EB), and later on I became first associate editor and in 2011 Editor in Chief (EiC) to Journal of Enzyme Inhibition and Medicinal Chemistry. **In 2012, I was nominated EiC to Expert Opinion on Therapeutic Patents (EOTP), and in 2015 to Current Enzyme Inhibition.** The first two journals are published by Taylor & Francis in Oxford, and their impact factor increased since I am EiC. **I think the work as editor is important as it gives me a rather broad view of what is "hot" in our field. In addition EOTP also deals with patents and most of the scientists publishing there are from the big pharmaceutical companies. Thus, this is also relevant to my own research.**

Let's move on to DYNANO: DYNANO is now in its final year: have the research-industry collaborations reached your expectations?

Not really, and this is always a difficult issue in this type of network. The people from the two companies involved are very nice and helpful, but Solvay withdrew the first year of the project and the secondments to be done in the remaining companies were not very much achieved (as far as I know).

Claudio, you are from the "enzymology field": what do you bring to the multidisciplinary DYNANO project and what does DYNANO bring you?

DYNANO is a highly multidisciplinary project, and as I mentioned above, my research is very multidisciplinary. Indeed, we are predominantly doing enzymology, but we are also designing/preparing new compounds (usually belonging to the enzyme inhibitor type of derivative), we characterize them in complex with the enzyme by means of X-ray crystallographic techniques. We also perform molecular biology work for cloning, expression and purification of many of the enzymes on which we work. Finally, we are interested in nanosystems with applications in life sciences. For example we were among the first to report nanoparticles derivatized with enzyme inhibitors which may have biomedical applications (this was before DYNANO, but continued and was developed a lot during DYNANO, through collaborations with the groups of Mihai Barboiu and Stephane Vincent). **Finally, we did very nice dynamic combinatorial library work, again in collaboration with Mihai. I should say that DYNANO brought a lot to me and my group, probably for two reasons: the Ph D candidate that I choose, Muhammet Tanc, was an excellent, hard working student, who achieved a lot and learned many new techniques in these three years, which led to a large number of high quality publications. He has defended his Ph D thesis last February and obviously got the title with congratulations from all the commission.**

I think we brought to the network our competence in working in such interdisciplinary fields as the ones I mentioned above, and indeed, the good number of collaborations we did is a sign that we were essential to the project.



DYNANO received funding from the European Union's 7th framework programme under grant agreement n° 289033.



University of Florence, Florence Italy

What advantages will DYNANO's interdisciplinary training give to the PhD students and post-doc researchers recruited?

I think they were in contact all these years with high profile scientists from very diverse fields, from whom they were able to learn interesting things (at least this is my feeling). All this may also give them a glimpse of how real research/life is. They were then able to interact with their peers from other countries and diverse cultures, and this is highly important from different viewpoints nowadays. Finally, as there are many different countries involved, they were able to better know some parts of Europe in which the different DYNANO events were held. I think this was an excellent network, but it lasted too short, or maybe this was the impression I had, as I enjoyed a lot being part of it.

*Thank you Claudiu,
and all the best for DYNANO and
other projects you are involved in.*

Interviewed by Laurence Bosch



DYNANO in brief

Starting date: 1st November 2011

Project duration: 48 months

Number of partners: 15

Project Coordinator: Dr. Mihai BARBOIU,
European Membrane Institute -IEM, Montpellier, France.

FP7-PEOPLE-2011-ITN

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www.dynano.eu



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