Professor Mihaela Hillebrand

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PROFESSOR MIHAELA HILLEBRAND AT HER 85th ANNIVERSARY

Revue Roumaine de Chimie is honoured to celebrate the 85th anniversary of Professor Mihaela Hillebrand, *emeritus* professor at the University of Bucharest and corresponding member of the Romanian Academy. Prof. Hillebrand's distinguished career has significantly advanced our understanding of molecular structure, and profoundly shaped those who have had the privilege of working under her guidance. This recognition is not the formal praise that she has always modestly discouraged, but a genuine expression of gratitude from her colleagues, collaborators and former students.

Prof. Mihaela Hillebrand was born in Bucharest on May 31st, 1941. She began her higher education at the Faculty of Chemistry of the University of Bucharest in 1957, graduating in 1962 with a specialization in Physical Chemistry. That same year, she joined the Faculty as a teaching assistant in the Department of Physical Chemistry, beginning a remarkable academic career that led to a full professorship and, in 2009, the title of professor emeritus. At the Faculty of Chemistry, she taught Structure of Atoms and Molecules, Chemical Reactivity, Spectroscopy and Quantum Chemistry. She also served as associate professor at the Faculty of Biology of the University of Bucharest and at the University *Politehnica* of Bucharest.

Prof. Hillebrand's scientific contributions cover a broad spectrum of topics, from electronic structure and chemical reactivity of molecules in ground and excited states, to the chemistry of free radicals and molecular interactions in supramolecular systems, including host–guest inclusion complexes with cyclodextrins and ligand–biopolymer interactions. She developed a concerted research strategy combining complementary spectroscopic methods – absorption, fluorescence, electron paramagnetic resonance, circular dichroism, Raman – with quantum chemical calculations. By using theory to rationalize experimental data, she built a complete picture of molecular properties and reactivity. She also elaborated and published a series of quantum chemistry programs. Author of over one hundred scientific papers, reviews, books and book chapters, she has delivered numerous lectures and acted as co-organizer of international conferences. She became a doctoral supervisor in 1982 and subsequently guided Ph.D. research, including Ph.D. theses in co-supervision with Université de Provence (France) in 1995 and 2004.

Beyond her scientific achievements, Prof. Hillebrand has shaped the intellectual and professional paths of generations of chemists, many of whom now hold respected positions in Romania and abroad. As a mentor who led by personal example, she created a laboratory environment that was at once welcoming and stimulating, a place of curiosity, lively discussion and generosity in sharing knowledge.

Prof. Hillebrand held visiting professor positions at prestigious institutions, including Université de Provence Aix Marseille I, France, in the *Laboratoire de Spectroscopies et Dynamique Moléculaire* (1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2001) and the University of Colorado Boulder, USA (1996), and carried out research stages at the *Institut für Molekulare Biotechnologie*, Jena, Germany (1993, 1994, 1995, 1996). During these visits, she established collaborations that directly benefited her students, either doctoral studies or research visits.

Following her long-term collaboration with Université de Provence Aix-Marseille I, Prof. Hillebrand established at the University of Bucharest the first Francophone lecture series, "Spectrochimie et Reactivité Chimique", later developed into the Francophone master's program (*Diplôme d'Études Approfondies*) "Chimie Organique Physique". Prof. Hillebrand also served as academic coordinator of the Romanian team

participating in the International Chemistry Olympiads, inspiring countless high school students to discover the secrets and beaury of chemistry.

Between 1996 and 2009, as director of a series of research grants funded by the Romanian Academy, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Health, Prof. Hillebrand developed a modern, internationally competitive spectroscopy laboratory within the Department of Physical Chemistry.

Her scientific contributions have been recognized through several distinctions, including the "I. G. Murgulescu" Award of the Romanian Academy (1993), the Award of the Romanian Chemical Society (2004), and the "Eugen Segal" Medal of Excellence granted by the Romanian International Chapter of the American Chemical Society (2017). In 2014, she was elected correspondent member of the Romanian Academy, where she now serves as President of the Quantum Chemistry and Spectroscopy Commission.

Prof. Hillebrand's work ethic and dedication, enthusiasm and generous mentorship inspire deep admiration and respect. On the occasion of her anniversary, the Editorial Board of *Revue Roumaine de Chimie* together with the Roumanian chemical community, her colleagues, collaborators and former students extend their warmest congratulations. We look forward to her continuing to inspire us to make rigorous science "fun", and to always seek answers because, as her favourite saying goes, the "molecules are not insane".

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