

Contribuții Botanice – 2014, XLIX: 25-27
Grădina Botanică “Alexandru Borza”
Cluj-Napoca

**LAUDATIO TO PROFESSOR VASILE CRISTEA, ON HIS 65th BIRTHDAY
AND 43rd ANNIVERSARY OF TEACHING AND SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITY**

by Mihai PUȘCAȘ



It is a great pleasure and honour to express this *Laudatio* of Professor Vasile Cristea on the occasion of his 65th birthday anniversary. This is a very special moment, not only because the person whom we celebrate today is one of the leading scientists in the field of Botany in Romania, but also because it gives us the opportunity to highlight the broad scientific activity of our colleague, Prof. Vasile Cristea.

He was born on 5th January 1949 in Sibiu. After graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Biology-Botany at Babeș-Bolyai University in 1971, Prof. Cristea immediately started his academic career as a junior assistant within the same faculty (i.e. Biology-Geography). In fact, the entire scientific and teaching activity of Prof. Cristea ever since, spanning more than four decades, has been devoted to Babeș-Bolyai University.

In 1981 he was awarded a Ph.D. degree in the field of *Geobotany*, for his thesis "*Flora and Vegetation of Secașe Tableland*". Fourteen years later (in 1995), he became a full Professor at the Faculty of Biology-Geography.

Professor Vasile Cristea is an author or co-author of 11 books, of which two are published in Italy. After more than 15 years (!) of intense documentation and work, a comprehensive book entitled "*Vascular Plants: diversity, systematics, ecology and importance*" will be released in the coming months, as proof of his vast knowledge in this field of research. Prof. Cristea has published more than 110 scientific papers on botany, phytosociology and nature conservation. His main scientific fields of activity include: flora and vegetation of Transylvania, plant community ecology, population ecology of rare and endangered species, and ecological restoration. Additionally, he has studied the history of botany in Transylvania, the plants used in religious rituals, and he is one of the most active promoters of zoology in Romania. All the above confirm his broad scientific and cultural background.

As part of his scientific activity, Professor Cristea was involved in numerous national and international research projects, some of which he coordinated as grant director or individual figure responsible. I only want to mention here that he is one of the few Romanian botanists who have actively participated in two EU Sixth Framework programmes (*IntraBioDiv* and *ECOCHANGE*).

Professor Cristea is a widely known scientist. He is a member of the Editorial Board of several scientific journals, and has been Editor-in-chief of *Contribuții Botanice* since 2000. He has organized a series of international and national conferences and was a member of scientific committees or invited speaker at many such events (in Romania, France and Italy). Beside scientific achievements, his qualities as leader and organizer are well-known!

His excellent professional reputation has been acknowledged by other universities in Europe, where Prof. Cristea was invited to lecture on botany and nature conservation to students in biology, or to participate as referee in Ph.D. theses or *habilitation* committees: Université Libre de Bruxelles (1993, 1997, 2004), University of Catania (1994), University of Cameriono (1994, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001), The Academy of Sciences of Moldova - Chișinău (2010).

Professor Cristea has been actively involved in the administrative work of his faculty and university as: Head of the Department of Botany (1990-1993), Dean of the Faculty of Biology and Geology (1993-2000), General Chancellor of the University (2000-2001), Vice-Rector (2001-2004), member in the Academic Council of Babeș-Bolyai University (2004-present), Director of Al. Borza Botanical Garden (2007 – present). He was an active member of two national councils of scientific evaluation, subordinated to the Ministry of Education and currently he is the president of the Biology and Biochemistry Commission within the National Council for Attestation of Academic Titles, Diplomas and Certificates.

In recognition of his high level of scientific activity, Professor Cristea has been granted many awards, including the "*E.C. Teodorescu*" prize of the Romanian Academy for his contribution to the monograph *Flora and Vegetation of Zarand Mountains* (1980), the award *UICN-50 years* of Federazione Nazionale Pro Natura (Italia, 1998), and *Diploma of Excellence* granted by the Rector's Office of Babeș-Bolyai University. He was awarded *Doctor Honoris Causa* of the Banat University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine in Timișoara, and *Honorary Professor* of Al. I. Cuza University, Iași. He is a member of the Ecology Committee, and the Committee of Natural Monuments of the Romanian Academy.

However, one of Prof. Vasile Cristea's main achievements is that he has been able to pass on his expertise and knowledge to students and junior scientists who have collaborated with him. More importantly, he has created a "school" – indeed, surrounding him is perhaps one of the most active groups of young researchers in the field of Botany (*sensu lato*) in Romania. His qualities as an academic teacher are reflected in the 18 Ph.D. theses that he has supervised in the last 10 years. Several were jointly supervised with renowned universities and/or research centres in Europe (Budapest, Grenoble, Zurich, Hamburg). Most of his former Ph.D. students are now mature researchers, holding scientific or teaching positions in Romania and even abroad.

On behalf of all his colleagues, former and actual students, and friends from Romania and abroad, let me wish Professor Cristea all best wishes, much health and happiness, in order to continue his work as researcher and teacher. We hope we shall be able to profit from his experience, knowledge and friendship for many years to come.

AD MULTOS ANNOS, Dear Professor Vasile Cristea!