



PARTICIPATION OF MACEDONIAN TEAM AT THE 47TH INTERNATIONAL CHEMISTRY OLYMPIAD, BAKU, AZERBAIJAN 2015 (20–29 JULY)

One of the brand new activities of the Society of Chemists and Technologists of Macedonia (SCTM), that is of crucial importance, was the organized participation in the 47th International Chemistry Olympiad (IChO) for high school students (<http://icho2015.msu.az>). The Olympiad took place in Baku (Baku branch of the Lomonosov Moscow State University – LMSU), Azerbaijan, from 20 to 29th July, 2015 and there were 79 participating countries, 292 students and 237 mentors, observers and guests. The IChO is an annual global competition that dates back to 1968 when the first competition was held in Czechoslovakia.

Initially, a team of four participants to represent Macedonia was selected based on eliminatory practical and theoretical exams. Then the team was further prepared at the Institute of Chemistry, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, according to the strict guidelines given by the IChO 2015 Steering committee. The four high-school students that competed for the Macedonian national team were: Zoran Gavrilov, Filip Trajkovski, Elena Stefova and Gorjan Stojkov. They were lead by the Head Mentor, Prof. Dr. Marina Stefova and Mentor Prof. Dr. Jane Bogdanov. Immediately upon arrival, the students and mentors were separated and there was a communication ban (no use of cell phones, internet, not meeting with guests). On 21st of July there was grand reception and opening ceremony in Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku, where all the competing countries were introduced (thanks to the host speaker we were introduced under the name Macedonia instead of FYROM, which later on caused an official reaction from Greek and Cypriot teams by a protest note to the organizers by the Greek embassy in Baku!!!). On the 22nd of July the students were given safety instructions and on the 23rd of July the experimental exam was held at the Baku branch of LMSU. Prior to this, the Mentors were responsible for translation of the practical exam in Macedonian and inspection of the laboratory glassware and equipment to be used by the students. The students were near the testing center but the mentors were transported to the picturesque mountainous part of Azerbaijan in the town of Gabala (Caucasus Mountains). The theoretical exam was held on the 25th of July after the same procedure of translation of the problems by the mentors.

The overall winner (practical and theoretical part) of the 47th IChO was Yifu Ouyang from China. The next three places also belonged to the Chinese team. Even though our students did not win any medals or honorary mention, they have gained valuable experience, met and communicated with students from different countries and learned first-hand about the history and culture of Azerbaijan. From chemistry point of view Azerbaijan and Baku are considered as one of the birthplaces of the modern petroleum industry. The first oil-well commercially drilled was Bibi-Heybet which is on the outskirts of Baku, on the coast of the beautiful Caspian Sea.

The cultural exchange did not only happen between the students but also between the mentors. We have met people from all over the world, but the most camaraderie was between the teams from former Yugoslavia (Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian and Montenegrin teams). Overall that was a valuable and memorable experience for all of us and now we know what needs to be done so we can catch up with the Chinese.



The Macedonian team at IChO 2015

The main coordinators of these high-school chemistry competitions that preceded the Chemistry Olympiad were Prof. Dr. Vladimir Petrusovski and Prof. Dr. Marina Stefova. The team involved in the competitions and preparation of the students were: Jasmina Petreska Stanoeva, Slobotka Aleksovska, Marina Stojanovska, Miha Bukleski, Nataša Ristovska, Arianit Reka, Sandra Dimitrovska-Lazova and Jane Bogdanov. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to State Video Lottery of Macedonia for their generous support of our Olympic team by sponsoring the flight tickets and to the Ministry of Education and Science for enabling this sponsorship.

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