Jure Piškur
(1960 – 2014)
Honorary Chairman and Inspirer of the ISSY31

Jure Piškur was born in Slovenia, in the ducal town of Celje. He studied biology and chemistry at the two different faculties at the University of Ljubljana. Besides his research work, already as an undergraduate student, which won him the most prestigious award given to students at the University of Ljubljana, he was also devoting his time to studying the language and literature of his second homeland-to-be, Sweden. He did his final research diploma project on the physical chemistry of DNA at the University of Stockholm.

In the mid 1980s, enchanted by the treasures of the wider world, and frustrated by the growing unrest and militarism in the then-Yugoslavia, Jure emigrated to Australia. There, at the Australian National University in Canberra, he met yeast genetics for the first time. He devoted the whole of his subsequent professional career to yeast genetics and molecular biology, although he also very successfully ventured into studies on enzymology and structural biology, and took on the use of other model organisms, such as the fruit fly. From Australia, he returned to Europe and worked in the Carlsberg Laboratory, the cradle of applied yeast sciences. He then moved his research to his newly established lab at the University of Copenhagen. It was there that he developed his hypothesis for an uneven evolution of duplicated genes, working on yeast evolution. He later moved to the Technical University of Denmark where, apart from studying yeast, he devoted much of his time to the enzymes involved in the metabolism of nucleic acid precursors. He discovered a new enzyme, multisubstrate deoxyribonucleoside kinase, which later became a model suicide gene for cancer gene-therapy – a discovery that sparked the establishment of three companies which he co-founded, but which unfortunately did not help him in his personal battle with this disease.

In the field of yeast research, he was proud of his achievements in establishing and popularising the novel yeast model organisms, *Saccharomyces kluyveri*, *S. castellii* and Dekkera/Brettanomyces bruxellensis. His next lab at Lund University developed several molecular tools to study and modify these and other non-conventional yeast species. One of the final topics of his dynamic and often unconventional scientific path was the understanding of the evolutionary foundations for differences in basic carbon metabolism in the yeast realm. Part of this research has been conducted in the Cornucopia project, which he coordinated, as well as at the Wine Research Centre in Vipava where, in 2010, he became a part-time professor and the main driving force behind the yeast research. He nurtured close ties with his Slovenian colleagues throughout his career abroad, in particular with the Marine Biology Station in the town of Piran, which Jure took as his own, and chose as his hub in the fatherland.

The closer the ties that Jure wove with Slovenia, the longer he lived elsewhere, was one of the reasons why he decided to organize the ISSY31 in Slovenia. He was very enthusiastic about the establishment of the Wine Research Centre of the University of Nova Gorica, which found its home in the renovated Lanthieri palace in Vipava. It was a combination of those things he always held dear – prospects of good science, natural and cultural beauty and richness, and excellent local culinary tradition and wines. This is where he wanted to host his friends, collaborators and fellow yeast researchers for the ISSY31 and for the Cornucopia final meeting.

Jure Piškur was not only an outstanding scientist, but also an exceptional and highly charismatic person. He has had a strong positive influence on his numerous students, colleagues and collaborators. His passion for science, endless enthusiasm and joy of life touched many people round the globe. He has been admired and cherished, and will be missed by many.