

Dear colleagues,

What an extraordinary time we live in. The coronavirus pandemic has not fully receded yet, still greatly affecting our economic and social functioning, including a scientific life. If we had prepared this issue on time, the Editorial would have been full of New Year's optimism. It was tempting to call for full mobilization against future threats and take on the role of modern Cassandra, because, just in a few years, the fact that we have fallen behind schedule will be forgotten and researchers will be astonished at the accuracy of our predictions. However, this would have been incorrect and unethical from many points of view, since our Journal is committed to comply with scientific ethics of reviewing objectivity, as well as most of scientific periodicals which are not chasing after ratings and citations and are willing to join the top journals owing to a high level of the presented results and their relevance for a global scientific community. Let this time lag be recorded in history as starting difficulties and a sign of further growth. The good news is that we have many new manuscripts submitted for consideration, and I precede the first issue of INEOS OPEN in 2020 with a fair share of optimism regarding the regular publication of upcoming issues in accordance with our schedule.

Let me make a few remarks on the peer review objectivity. The appearance of our Journal was connected, not least, with the fact that, due to polarization of the political situation in the world, many well-respected scientific journals began to display a certain tendency to warped judgement and incompetence caused by political factors. Of course, this is a very unpleasant phenomenon but, to some extent, an expected one. We would like to keep sports, arts, and science away from politics, but facts are stubborn things. I am going to devote one of my future Editorials to preconceived expert evaluation. In this respect, we would like to invite you to share with the Editorial office the examples of the most odious decisions on high-quality publications. We are not going to act as an arbitral referee, so do not send us controversial unpublished materials which are under consideration elsewhere. We would like to collect the examples of scientific fakes in the fields of chemistry of our interest, which have been published in high-impact journals, as well as the examples of biased rejections to the manuscripts, which subsequently were successfully published in other journals and became prominent developments and, thus, withstood the test of time. These materials would bring into focus the necessity for further improvement of scientific expertise and enhancement of its objectivity and independence on political situation.

Our Contest, INEOS OPEN CUP, which is intrinsically linked to the Journal, goes into a new format. We introduce a new *Grant Prix* nomination in addition to the existing reward system. This nomination is open for participants whose works are presented in the form of *highlights* published in INEOS OPEN. These works will be passed through a rigorous reviewing process not only by the Journal referees but also by our wide readership. Therefore, the works in this nomination will be available at early stages both to the respected Contest jury and to all chemists who are interested in certain research areas. The greater award fund will be supported by the multiply enhanced evaluation

level. The expertise by the Contest audience will also start working to the full extent since they will get a possibility to consider the detailed materials beforehand. This is especially important as a Grant Prix winner will have an opportunity to perform the initial step of the investigations at INEOS RAS and, in future, even in other institutes and universities, which will join us as the Contest co-organizers. Hence, our Contest will act as a special committee for selection of scientific personnel for our departments. And the Journal, INEOS OPEN, besides accomplishing its major function, will become a powerful tool for renovation of the research staff of INEOS RAS, which is, undoubtedly, a pressing challenge.

Hence, this year is a crucial step in the Journal development. We are going to proceed to smooth work and activate an ASAP section which will include the articles already accepted for publication but not included in certain issues. In other words, everything is as usual, the world is our oyster. As a classic said: "Our goals are clear, our targets are set. Let's get to work, comrades!" We cannot fail to note here that it is highly important to choose not only the correct goals but also the correct means to the end.

To reach the goals, besides their clear formulation, it is essential to define the mechanism for their implementation. In this regard, the members of the Editorial board have decided to strengthen the executive editors' institution by the invited editors. Therefore, our issues will receive an extended and, consequently, firm basis and the ideas developed by INEOS OPEN will sound more profoundly for our audience.

It is also noteworthy that since this issue the Editorial will be published in *Russian* to reach wider audience and to make all the novelties more available. In due course, all the previous Editorials devoted to the Journal development program and various important scientific events will also be available in Russian.

This year, full of numerical symmetries, magic dates, and historical reminiscences, will not be easy. Let's pay no attention to them. Actually this is only our imagination. The Journal materials, in contrast, are objective and fundamental. To put in other words the phrase of another classic: "Let's hit superstitious beliefs and narrow mindedness with scientific achievements!"

Sincerely yours,

Editor-in-Chief

Prof., Full Member of RAS

Aziz M. Muzafarov