

The Fruits of Leadership, Knowledge, and Vision: On the 80th Anniversary of Professor Emeritus Dr. Stanislav Radovan Pejovnik



Photo courtesy: Marjan Verč

On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of Professor Emeritus Dr. Stanislav Radovan Pejovnik, we express our deep appreciation for a lifetime of work and that has fundamentally shaped Slovenian science, education, and the broader academic community. His career is a rich tapestry woven from meticulous research, visionary leadership, and profound dedication to the generations that follow him. To reflect the full breadth of his multifaceted legacy, we consider three distinct yet interconnected pillars that define his professional life.

Visionary: Shaping the National Institute of Chemistry of Slovenia

A major turning point in Professor Pejovnik's career was his transition from the Jožef Stefan Institute to the National Institute of Chemistry, where he was appointed Director in 1982. In 1985, he founded the "Chemical Sources of Electrical Energy" research group, effectively establish-

ing the foundation for battery research in Slovenia. The visionary nature of this decision became evident with the field's subsequent global development, including the rise of hybrid and electric vehicles. The group grew into a department with more than 80 researchers, contributing significantly to the global knowledge in energy storage and conversion.

As a leader, Professor Pejovnik did much more than direct research; he established a culture of excellence in a demanding multidisciplinary field connecting materials chemistry, materials science, and electrochemistry. Through his charismatic approach, he created an environment where fundamental curiosity was systematically transformed into impactful results. He fostered a pleasant and stimulating work atmosphere with a high degree of research freedom, enabling the development of several generations of outstanding scientists in Slovenia.

His tenure as Director of the National Institute of Chemistry (1982–1999) was a period of transformative growth. At a critical time for Slovenian science, he demonstrated exceptional foresight, guiding the institute toward international recognition and scientific relevance. He understood that a world-class research institution requires not only talented individuals but also new facilities, robust infrastructure, a clear strategic vision, and a culture of openness to global collaboration. His leadership laid the foundations that enabled the institute to become the internationally recognized center of excellence it is today.

The Heart of the University: Educator, Dean, and Rector

Alongside his research leadership, Professor Pejovnik's influence is deeply embedded in the University of Ljubljana. As a professor at the Faculty of Chemistry and Chemical Technology, he earned a reputation as an educator of the highest order. He possessed the rare ability to demystify the complexities of materials science, turning dry academic concepts into engaging intellectual adventures. His lectures were legendary not only for their clarity but also for the passion he conveyed, inspiring many young

people to pursue careers in chemistry and chemical engineering.

This commitment to the institution led him naturally to serve as Dean of the Faculty (2005–2009), where he worked tirelessly to improve the quality of study programmes, strengthen the faculty's research capacity, and build bridges with the broader chemical industry and research institutions. His ability to lead and reconcile diverse interests was instrumental in the successful and high-quality reform of study programmes in line with the Bologna Process.

His successes at the faculty level paved the way for his most significant institutional role as Rector of the University of Ljubljana (2009–2013). In this role, his broad vision, diplomatic skill, and unwavering commitment to academic freedom and excellence came to the forefront. He guided the Slovenia's oldest and largest university through a period of change, advocated for its autonomy, emphasized its importance at the national level, and strengthened its role as a cornerstone of Slovenian society. His term was marked by significant milestones, including the construction of a new Faculty of Chemistry and Chemical Technology building. He had a deep understanding that the strength of a university lies in the synergy between top-level research and the holistic development of students.

A Lasting Presence: Materials and Polymer Engineering and Professor Emeritus

Even after concluding his formal administrative duties, Professor Pejovnik's commitment to his field and the academic community remained as vital as ever. The third phase of his distinguished career is embodied in his ongoing association with the Chair of Materials and Polymer

Engineering. In this role, he continues to exemplify the essence of the discipline. His expertise in materials science has served as a crucial bridge between fundamental research and practical application, ensuring continuity and mentorship for successive generations of researchers and university teachers.

His door has always been open to young researchers and to anyone seeking advice or wishing to share his passion for materials and the processes that shape the modern world.

Prof. Pejovnik's reputation extended beyond the university and national institute, as evidenced by his election as a full member of the Slovenian Academy of Engineering. This recognition affirms his exceptional contribution to the development of engineering and his outstanding expertise, which he consistently linked with fundamental research throughout his career. Within the academy, he has continued to promote the transfer of knowledge between science and industry and to advocate for the importance of engineering education for societal progress.

In recognition of his indelible contributions, he was awarded the title of Professor Emeritus of the University of Ljubljana. Yet this honor was far from a farewell. As Professor Emeritus, he has remained an active and respected member of the academic community. He continues to be a source of wisdom, a critical yet constructive voice, and a living symbol of the values that define a true academic: integrity, curiosity, and selfless dedication to the advancement of knowledge.

On his 80th anniversary, we celebrate a life of purpose. Professor Dr. Stanislav Radovan Pejovnik has not only held positions of great responsibility but has left a lasting imprint on his colleagues, his students, and the very fabric of Slovenian science. We extend to him our deepest gratitude and our most sincere congratulations.

Prof. Dr. Anton Meden
Prof. Dr. Miran Gaberšček
Dr. Marjan Bele
Prof. Dr. Robert Dominko
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