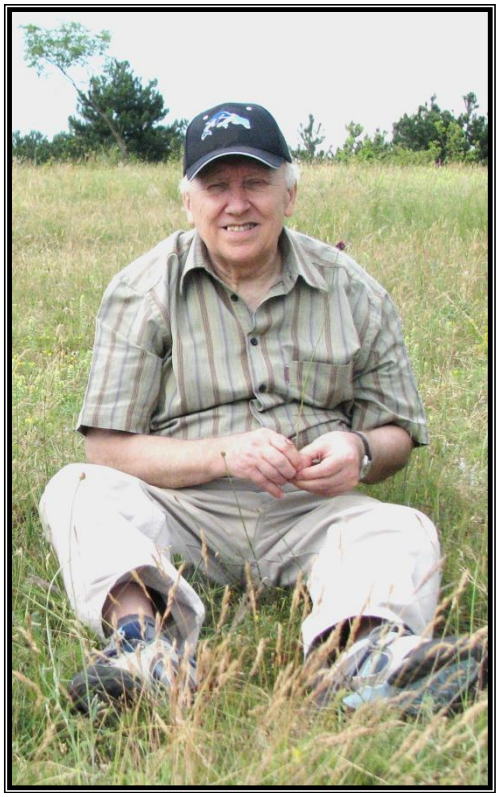
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IN MEMORIAM

Vasile SANDA, Ph.D.

(25 February 1937 – 25 March 2015)



Allah-Bair Reserve, Dobrogea, in June 2008 (photo: K. Öllerer)

The vegetation season in 2015 began without one of its leading and dedicated researchers, phytosociologist Vasile Sanda, Ph.D., who passed away only one month after reaching the age of 78, after a longer period of suffering.

Born in the small rural community of Ciolăneşti (Teleorman county, S. Romania) in 1937, Vasile Sanda became acquainted with the wild flowers at an early age and was one of the few gifted youngsters who managed to go to university during the Communist regime. He graduated the Faculty of Biology, University of Bucharest in 1960. In the same year, following a governmental decision, he started working at the Centre for Biological Research in Bucharest, which became later the Institute of Biology of the Romanian Academy, as it is known today.

Vasile Sanda devoted his life to phytosociology, the analysis and mapping of the flora, and his name marked the study of the plant communities from Romania over five decades. His main research domain was represented by the chorology of the spontaneous vascular flora of Romania, the structure, dynamics and evolution of plant communities in natural conditions or under anthropic influence, including studies of biomass and productivity in some mountain ecosystems and the Danube Delta.

He started his career with a three years period spent analysing the botanical collections of the Institute of Biology and with intensive field studies in order to ground his deep knowledge of the Romanian flora. Already after two years, in 1962, he published his first paper with new contributions to the flora of Dobrogea. Within the plant taxonomy laboratory, he started working on the difficult genus *Dianthus*, and defended his Ph.D. thesis entitled "Taxonomical studies upon some critical species of the genus Dianthus L." in 1968. His taxonomical studies were later extended to other genera, incl. *Valerianella, Taraxacum* and *Polygonum*.

He published chorological data for several families, genera and species, including *Valerianella* (1992), *Ophioglossaceae* (1992), *Caryophyllaceae* (1992), *Lycopodium* (1993), *Dianthus* (1994), *Selaginella helvetica* and *S. selaginoides* (1995), *Fraxinus* (1996), *Filipendula ulmaria* (2003), *Origanum vulgare* (2004), *Frangula alnus* (2004), *Arnica montana* (2004), etc. Another important aspect of his career is represented by the complex ecosystemic studies within the collective of the Ecology, Taxonomy and Nature Conservation Department of the Institute of Biology regarding different forest types of Romania, from lowland regions up to the alpine zone, between the years 1999 and 2004.

He is the leading author or co-author of over 330 scientific contributions, including 28 books, 291 papers and 17 recensions, published in renowned national and international journals (incl. Feddes Repertorium, Documents Phytocenologiques, Contribuții Botanice) and publishing houses. His studies regarding the structure of the plant communities in various regions and especially his syntheses regarding certain vegetation types and the vegetation of the whole country will certainly remain basic elements of the Romanian phytosociological, ecological and biodiversity conservation literature. Among his several publications, the most important titles of his scientific achievements, in our opinion, include[1] "The coenotaxonomy and chorology of vegetation groups from Romania" (1980), "The vegetation of Romania" (coord. Ivan D., 1992), "The phytocoenological bibliography of Romania" (1998), "The flora of the spontaneous and cultivated cormophytes from Romania" (2003), "Atlas Florae Romaniae" – volumes I–VI (2003–2009), "Phytocoenological breviary" – volumes I–IV (2005–2007) and "The plant communities from Romania – Syntaxonomy, structure, dynamics and evolution" (2008), which were all cited on several occasions by those who study the vegetation of Europe, and Romania in particular. His legacy will live on also in the names of the vegetation orders (*Artemisietalia petrosae* and *Tamaricetalia* - emendation), alliances (7) and associations (67) which he described and named, either alone or in collaboration.

He was twice distinguished with the award of the Romanian Academy: in 1975 he received the "Emanoil Teodorescu" award for his contribution to the volume "The biological effects of environmental pollution" (1973), and in 2003 he was offered the "Emil Racoviţă" award for the book "The coenotic structure and ecological characterisation of the phytocoenoses from Romania" (2001). He was a member of the Romanian Society for Biology, Botany Section and of the Romanian Phytocoenological Society.

Only a month following his death, his good colleague at the Institute of Biology and co-author throughout many years, botanist Aurel POPESCU also passed away. Their deaths left a void in the Romanian and European phytosociological research

We pay our tribute and homage and wish their inquisitive work approach, endeavour, tenacity and generosity towards younger colleagues to be an example and an impulse for those who remain and for the future generations.

Kinga ÖLLERER, Claudia BIȚĂ-NICOLAE and Sorin ȘTEFĂNUȚ,
on behalf of the colleagues from the Institute of Biology, Romanian Academy

[1] titles translated from Romanian