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## In memory of Professor Graziella Berta, an inspiring scientist, leader, and colleague

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## OBITUARY

# In memory of Professor Graziella Berta, an inspiring scientist, leader, and colleague

A few words are not nearly enough to capture the full legacy of Professor Graziella Berta, whose influence extended far beyond her scientific endeavors. A renowned researcher and mentor, Graziella was also a compassionate leader, a dedicated educator, and a cherished friend to many.

As a group leader, Graziella created an environment where collaboration, independence, and personal growth flourished. She empowered her colleagues by offering them a rare combination of intellectual freedom and steadfast support. Her remarkable ability to connect with researchers and scholars across Europe - and beyond - resulted in her active participation in numerous EU-funded projects and COST Actions. These international collaborations led to the publication of many impactful scientific papers.

In 1994, following her appointment as Full Professor of General and Systematic Botany, Graziella made a pivotal move from Turin to Alessandria, joining the Second Faculty of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences at the University of Turin. There, she was offered a rare opportunity: to help lay the foundations of a new university. With the transformation of the "second faculties" into the newly established *Università del Piemonte Orientale Amedeo Avogadro*, Graziella became an instrumental figure in its growth and development.

She served the university in numerous roles: as President of the degree course in Biology, as a member of the Academic Senate, and as the first Director

of the Department of Science and Technological Innovation (DiSIT). Among her many achievements, one stands out for its long-lasting impact: the establishment of the university's first PhD program, in Environmental Sciences. She directed this program for over a decade, guiding and inspiring a new generation of researchers at a formative stage in their careers.

Beyond her professional life, Graziella was a person of exceptional warmth and generosity. She was friendly, approachable, and deeply in tune with the beauty of the natural world. She found joy in music, literature, sport, and the arts, and she loved sharing good food and good company. Those who knew her will remember her as kind-hearted and merciful, someone who always believed in offering others a second chance.

Graziella's legacy lives on through the many lives she touched: the colleagues she supported, the students she mentored, the institutions she helped shape, and the friends who will always remember her with love and gratitude.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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