

The International Union of Soil Sciences: A Centennial documentation of its national members

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Executive Committee of the SPCS for the period 2022-2026

The Portuguese Society of Soil Science (SPCS) has celebrated, in 2023, 50 years of its official constitution in 1973, but several records allow us to date its foundation to 17 years before. In fact, by proposal of J. Botelho da Costa, thirteen researchers affiliated in the International Soil Science Society (ISSS), gathered in June 15th of 1956 to organize the first section – Natural Sciences – of the Portuguese Society of Agricultural Sciences (SCAP). E. Mendes Frazão was the first President (1956-1960), and J. Botelho da Costa was the delegate to the ISSS Consultant Council. This first step towards the constitution of the SPCS was announced in the ISSS Bulletin No. 10 (National Societies section) and it should be seen as an outcome of a period of great activity and of rapid increase of the Portuguese ISSS members: from 12 in 1-08-1954 to 47 members in 1-08-1956 (ISSS, 1956).

There are also records of some notable events organized by the SPCS before 1973. It is noteworthy the first scientific excursion of the SPCS, in May 23, 1962, to the recently installed Erosion Experimental Station in Vale Formoso, Mértola (southeast of Portugal), and the international scientific excursion, in October 1966, to the Alentejo and Algarve regions, integrated in a meeting of the V Commission of the ISSS, held in Madrid, and dedicated to the Mediterranean Soils.

Almost up to the end of the 20th century, the governance structures of the SPCS (Executive Committee, Board of the General Assembly, and Fiscal Council) were formed by members of the Instituto Superior de Agronomia (ISA) and of the Estação Agronómica Nacional (EAN), the only higher education school and national research centre for agriculture and forestry in Portugal, respectively. There was even an informal agreement to alternate the presidency of the SPCS between these two institutions. With the onset of the 21st century, the Executive Committee began to include members from a wider range of institutions and geographical distribution. Based on the available records, Table 1 lists the members of the SPCS Executive Committee until present.

A brief history of the SPCS can be outlined splitting its membership evolution in four main periods. The first one, before its formal constitution (from 1956 to 1973-74), was a period of strong growth, with the number of members reaching 101 in 1968, and a peak of 120 in 1970. SPCS members were mainly agronomists and foresters, working in a few public institutions (ISA, EAN, Tropical Research Institute, and Ministry of Agriculture, especially staff of the soil mapping service). The second period, from ear-

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ly seventies to mid-nineties, showed a reverse trend, with a decrease from 114 (1974) to 63 members in 1984, followed by very small increases for more than a decade. This trend mirrored the progressive retirement of many technical staff engaged in soil mapping efforts, in Portugal mainland (at the 1:25 000 scale), in the insular territories (Azores and Madeira islands), and overseas before 1974.

Table 1 – Members of the SPCS Executive Committee since the first available records to present. Names follows the sequence: President, Secretary, Treasurer, and two extra members, since 2006.

Period	Executive Committee
1956-1960	Eduardo Mendes Frazão; Fernando da Câmara de Freitas; Luiz Brito Canhão
1960-1964	J. Botelho da Costa, J. Almeida Alves, A. Franco de Oliveira
1965-1968	J. Carvalho Cardoso; L. Rodrigues Balbino; Maria Luísa Franca
1969-1972	Rui Pinto Ricardo; Manuel Teixeira Bessa; M ^a Amélia Câncio Fragoso
1973-1978	António J. Silva Teixeira; Augusto C. Zagallo; Maria Iracema Barreto
1978-1982	Edgar C. Sousa; Mário A. Mayer Gonçalves; José E. Bailim Pissarra
1982-1986	Eugénio Menezes Sequeira; (...); (...)
1986-1990	Edgar C. Sousa; Manuel A. V. Madeira; António Sanches Furtado
1990-1994	Edgar C. Sousa; Manuel A. V. Madeira; António Sanches Furtado
1994-1998	Eugénio Menezes Sequeira; José M. A. Vieira e Silva; José Casimiro Martins
1998-2002	Manuel A. V. Madeira; Nuno Cortez; Fernando Girão Monteiro
2002-2006	Manuel A. V. Madeira; Carlos Alexandre; Fernando Girão Monteiro
2006-2010	Fernanda Cabral; Carlos Alexandre; Fernando Girão Monteiro; Henrique Ribeiro; Raquel M. S. Dias Mano
2010-2014	Carlos Alexandre; Henrique Ribeiro; Fernando Girão Monteiro; Fernanda Cabral; Raquel M. S. Dias Mano
2014-2018	Carlos Alexandre; Maria Conceição Gonçalves; Fernando Girão Monteiro; Henrique Ribeiro; Tiago Ramos
2018-2022	Carlos Alexandre; Ana Marta Paz; Nuno Cortez; Carmo Horta; Paula Alvarenga
2022-2026	Carlos Alexandre; Ana Marta Paz; Nuno Cortez; Carmo Horta; Paula Alvarenga

(Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinee-Bissau, Timor, São Tomé). Table 2 mentions some distinct, deceased, SPCS members, mostly active in these first and second periods, and whose work, among many others, greatly contributed to the development of soil science in Portugal, and to improve the knowledge about the soils of the Mediterranean and the tropical regions.

Table 2 – Most distinctive deceased SPCS members and their main achievements.

Name	Years	Main achievements
J. Botelho da Costa	1910-1965	Professor, founder of the SPCS in 1956, and delegate of the SPCS at the ISSS Consultant Council (1956-1960). Vice-President (1950-1954) and President (1954-1960) of the Soil Technology Commission of the ISSS. He was an international authority in tropical soils, author of several publications on soil physics, soil genesis and classification, and author of soil science books (Costa, 1973, 1975) used by thousands of undergraduate and graduate students in Portugal. (Ricardo, 2014)

J. Carvalho Cardoso	1923-2010	Researcher, author of the main publication on the Portuguese soil classification (Cardoso, 1965) used in soil maps of Portugal at 1:25 000 scale, mainly published between the forties and seventies of the XX century. He was also Director of the EAN, and a member of the Portuguese and of the European Parliaments. (Sequeira, 2014)
Á. Lobo de Azevedo	1921-2015	Professor, pioneer advocate and research mentor of the conservation agriculture in Portugal. He was also the first Rector of the re-established Universidade de Évora.
A. Teixeira Constantino	1926-2011	Agronomist, collaborator and coordinator of several soil maps, in Portugal and abroad, namely in the tropics and as a FAO consultant; coordinator of two soil maps at the 1:100 000 scale (Northeast, Northwest, and Central East Portugal), the third one was the first adopting the WRB soil classification. (Ricardo & Madeira, 2014)

The third period spans from the mid-nineties to around 2010, and reflects a new growing phase in the number of SPCS members, which added up to 118 by 2004, and reached an absolute peak of 173 in 2010. Most of the incoming SPCS members in this period were still from the broad field of the agricultural sciences, and its increasing number was, mainly, a consequence of the expansion of the university teaching and research staff, during the last decades of the 20th century. In this period, the SPCS was an active collaborator in the restructuration process of the ISSS into the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS), that was concluded in 1998. The fourth period, since 2010, repeats another recession phase, with a very significant decrease in the number of SPCS members to 126 in 2012, and 60 in 2018. Once again, this has been a period dominated by reductions and retirements in the university teaching staff, research staff, and other public technical staff. Table 3 lists some SPCS achievements, in which the third and fourth periods stands out.

Table 3 – Some of the SPCS main achievements, by chronologic order.

Year	Main achievements
1968	First scientific meeting organized by the SPCS: Symposium on mineral fertilization.
1973	Official formalization of the foundation of the SPCS.
1974	First number of the Pedon, intended as a biannual newsletter, irregularly published, and also used as publication support to the communications of three national soil science meetings, in 1986 (Pedon no. 5 and 6), 1989 (no. 8 and 9) and 1999 (no. 12).
1986	First Annual Meeting of the SPCS, though just since 1999 these meetings have being organized on a really annual basis, excepting the years 2011 and 2020, and, since 2004, in years with CICS events (see line 2004).
2000	International Symposium “Managing Forest Soils for Sustainable Productivity” organized by the SPCS, IUSS (Subcommission of Forest Soils), Portuguese Society of Forest Sciences (SPCF), Instituto Superior de Agronomia and Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD), held in Vila Real, Portugal.
2001	First National Congress of Soil Science, which received the visit of the IUSS Secretary General, W.E.H. Blum.
2004	First Iberian Congress of Soil Sciences (CICS), held in the Instituto Politécnico de Bragança, Portugal; the CICS are organized in collaboration with the Spanish Society of Soil Science and held alternately in Portugal and Spain.

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- 2004 Report of a study promoted by the General Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development (DGADR), Ministry of Agriculture, to revise and update the soil classification in Portugal (SPCS, 2004). Collaboration with DGADR to found the Portuguese Soil Partnership (Parceria Portuguesa para o Solo, PPS), now gathering more than forty partners, public and private (<https://parceriaptsolo.dgadr.gov.pt/>).
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Very recently, since 2022, a new period might be starting to unfold, driven by new research opportunities in soil sciences, which are attracting new colleagues from other sciences, namely biology, microbiology, chemistry, among others. This opportunity to embrace colleagues from a wider range of sciences, represents also an important challenge to the SPCS, namely to evolve to a more contemporary society and to change to the Portuguese Society of Soil Sciences.

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