

## In memoriam



### **Professor Maria Miguel (1949-2021)**

It is with a heavy heart that we, former collaborators and above all friends, write these lines, on the event of Professor Maria Miguel's passing. Professor Maria Miguel was a beloved and highly appraised member of the scientific community of IACIS and the European Interface and Colloid Society (ECIS). She was member of the ECIS board between 2006-11 and served as president for 2008-09. Her presence never went unnoticed, and she handled her tasks very professionally with a clear sense of duty, always serving the common good. She was always on the move, quick minded and ready with a smile and a friendly comment. She will be dearly missed.

Maria da Graça Martins Miguel, known as Maria Miguel in the scientific community, was born in Vila Nova de Poiares, near Coimbra, Portugal, in April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1949. She got her B.Sc. degree in Chemistry from the University of Coimbra, in 1972, and in the following year she started her academic career there as Assistant Lecturer. At that time, she started working in the local Photochemistry group and in 1976 published her first paper entitled *Quenching of the luminescent state of uranyl ion by metal ions: evidence for an electron transfer mechanism*. In 1986, she obtained a Ph.D. degree from Coimbra with a thesis on the photochemistry and photophysics of the uranyl ion. Alongside with her passion for photochemistry for which she achieved international recognition, early in her career she developed an interest for the self-assembly of lipids and surfactants, membrane models and biointerfaces. Owing to her inquisitive mind, restless spirit and constant drive for new challenges, she started a group in the early 1990's in colloids and soft matter at the University of Coimbra, one of the pioneering groups in the field in Portugal.

From then onwards an intense period of scientific productivity spawned, alongside the establishment of a broad network of collaborations worldwide. She first went to Sweden in the beginning of the 1990's, to the Institute of Physical Chemistry in Uppsala University, and later became a regular Visiting Professor at the Division of Physical Chemistry, in Lund

University, developing many collaborations between Coimbra and Lund through her PhD students. Her research interests spanned a wide range of themes encompassing photochemistry and photophysics, fluorescence methods, surfactant self-assembly, DNA/surfactant and DNA/biopolymer interactions, DNA gels for drug and gene delivery — all areas where she made significant contributions. In 2005, she was appointed Full Professor of Chemistry at the University of Coimbra, becoming the first woman to obtain such position in the Department of Chemistry. In fact, Maria served as a natural inspiration for young female researchers in the field of colloids and interfaces and science in general. Many were looking up to her not only for her academic achievements, but also for the fact that she simultaneously succeeded in keeping her wide interest in humanities, literature and arts alive.

She supervised many master and doctoral students, and published more than 200 papers and book chapters. She had a pivotal role on establishing links among the Portuguese and Spanish scientific communities of colloids and interfaces, promoting bilateral Iberian meetings since 2005, in University of Salamanca. She was Visiting Professor in several universities around the world, where she taught courses on colloids and interfaces and conducted collaborative research activities in her favorite topics. In more recent years, she was a Visiting Professor at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, where she spent considerable amount of time. She had the rare gift of breaking barriers and bringing people together, and this could be seen in the IACIS and ECIS meetings. In the ECIS meeting in Antalya, in 2009, her 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated with a symposium, gathering colleagues and friends from around the world.

Her rigorous and demanding scientific spirit, together with an unfettered enthusiasm, openness and kindness, both as a teacher and as a supervisor, inspired many young scientists to pursue an academic career and to thrive for scientific excellence. Her office was always opened to students who sought advice, inspiration or, simply, words of comfort and encouragement. She had the same open and human attitude towards all her colleagues, younger or older. Inspired by her success, many of her former Ph.D. students and young collaborators currently hold academic professorships in universities or prominent positions in companies across Portugal and abroad.

Maria was a very talented and unconventional person. Outside academia and the scientific realm, she had a wide interest in arts and literature that created many memorable and joyful conversations. She published two books of poetic prose in Portuguese, “Pássaro do Paraíso” (*Bird of Paradise*) and “Canto dos Remadores” (*The Rowers’ Chant*) and among her friends many were writers and artists.

For us, it feels like an exquisitely bright comet passed through our careers and lives. Maria was always positive, enthusiastic and caring and she reminded us about the human aspect of scientific life and made us see the joy and benefit of working together. Our utmost gratitude

and admiration for Maria, and all the beautiful memories of private occasions with her, will endure.

Our deepest thoughts are with Björn Lindman and her whole family in Portugal and Sweden.

**Karin Schillén, Artur Valente, Tommy Nylander and Eduardo Marques**