

Academy of Sciences of Lisbon

(received: January 2009)

Characterization of the Institution

Scientific activities in Portugal can be traced to a very early date, a fact that is certainly due to the circumstance that the country is located in a region of strong contacts between scholars of Islamic, Jewish and Christian intellectual traditions. These early activities were greatly increased with the establishment of the first University (1288) and, later, with the maritime expansion from mid fifteenth-century onwards. During the sixteenth century the practice of science was above all related to maritime activities and the exploration of new lands: astronomy, cartography, nautical science, natural sciences, etc. By the end of the sixteenth century and all through the seventeenth century the Society of Jesus established an enormous network of schools and colleges that connected education in Portugal not only with other European countries but also with places all over the world. Several of these colleges were noted for their scientific teaching and activities. This tradition of scientific studies greatly developed in the early decades of the eighteenth century benefiting from the wealthy patronage of King John V: expensive instruments were bought, the first astronomical observatories were founded, the publication of scientific books increased. In 1772 the Marquis of Pombal reformed the University (1772) and, in 1779, Queen Mary I founded the Royal Academy of Sciences (now the Academy of Sciences of Lisbon).

Its founding members – the 2nd Duke of Lafões, who was the first president and the Abbé Correia da Serra, the Second Secretary- envisaged the Academy as an institution which would help to develop science and learning for the progress and prosperity of the country. They guided their actions by the following motto: “*Nisi utile est quod facimus, stulta est Gloria*” (Unless what we do is useful, our fame is vain)

Academy extended its activity not only to the Natural Sciences, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, History and Linguistics, but also to the Applied Sciences, Economics, Agricultural and Industrial Developments, Public Health, Teaching, etc.

It was from the “Instituto Vacínico”, an initiative of the Academy, that the Council of Public Health emerged and the Geological Services of Portugal were created from the Geological Commission of the Academy.

Under the auspices of King Pedro V, The Academy organized and provided the installations for the higher Course of Arts which is nowadays the Faculty of Letters of Lisbon.

Since its foundation, in 1779, the Academy had five different locations and it was only, in 1838, that the old convent of Jesus (a 16th-17th building) became its definitive building.

The Academy of Sciences' main purposes are:

- to promote and stimulate scientific research and to disseminate its achievements;
- to stimulate the enrichment of thought, literature, language and other forms of culture.
- to encourage the study of Portuguese history and its relationship with the history of other nations, and to investigate and publish the sources of documentation;
- to collaborate in education and teaching activities;
- to assist the Government in an advisory capacity with scientific and linguistic problems of national interest.

- to preserve and improve the Portuguese language in connection with the Brazilian Academy of Letters and with similar institutions of Portuguese-speaking countries.
- to participate in cultural exchanges with other countries.

Statutes and bylaws

1. 24th December 1779, Queen's decree
2. 12th January 1978, Decree n. 5/78
3. 31st December, Decree n. 390/87
4. 24th September, Decree n. 179-96
5. 3rd June, Decree n. 90/2005

Membership

The Academy members are selected on merit for scholarly or scientific achievements. The election process involves proposal, discussion of curriculum and balloting in the class meeting of full member convened exclusively for this purpose.

The Academy has two classes: Sciences and Letters, and each has, among national members: 35 full members and 70 corresponding members distributed in seven sections. It has a number of foreign members as well.

The Class of Sciences is composed of the following seven sections: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Space and Earth Sciences, Biological Sciences; Medical Sciences, Engineering Sciences and other Applied Sciences.

The Class of Letters of the Academy is made up of the following sections: Literature and Literary Studies, Philology and Linguistic, Philosophy, Psychology and Pedagogy, History and Geography, Law and Political Science, Economics and Finances and Sociology and other Social and Human Sciences.

Each section has 5 full members and 10 correspondent ones.

A policy has been adopted of electing a large number of young scientists, as well as women members since there are only 19 women among 189 national members, although Portugal has witnessed an increasing number of young women dedicating themselves to research activities as well as university careers. The Academy is proud that two women were elected as its full members already in the XIXth century.

Structure of the Academy.

The main governing bodies of the Academy are: the Plenarium, the Presidency, the Administrative Council and the Secretary-General.

The Plenarium is composed of all the academicians and consists of the main decision-making body of the Academy. Academicians meet at the plenarium at least once a year.

The Presidency is represented by the President and the Vice-President, each belonging to a different class of the Academy. They are elected annually.

The Administrative Council is composed of the President, the Vice-President, The Secretary-General, the Vice-secretary-General and the Treasurer and is responsible for the management and budget of the Academy. This council meets normally once a month but it may happen whenever the President decides to do it.

The Secretary-General implements the decisions of the Administrative Council and ensures the continuity of the services of the Academy including administration and communication with other entities.

Publications

Since the 18th century the Academy has published the following serial and regular books:

1797-1922 *Memórias da Academia Real das Sciencias de Lisboa*

1789-1815 *Memórias Económicas*

1792-1814 *Memórias da Litteratura Portugueza*

Annaes das Sciencias e Letras: 1857-1858 Sciencias Mathematicas, Physicas, Histórico-Naturaes e Medicas (1^a Classe; **1857-1858** Sciencias Moraes, Politicas e Bellas Lettras (2^a Classe)

1866-1927 *Jornal de Sciencias, Matemáticas Físicas e Naturais*

1903-1929 *Boletim da Segunda Classe*

1929-1982 *Boletim da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa*

1932-1979 *Anuário Académico*

1935 *Memórias da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa (Classe de Letras)*

1936 *Memórias da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa (Classe de Ciências)*

Budget

Although some projects can be sponsored by private funding, the budget is mainly granted by the government

Prizes and medals

The Academy, pursuing its tradition, awards prizes for outstanding work in both Science and the Humanities, has just established the following prizes:

- - Agostinho da Silva Prize – CPLP and Portuguese Communities (2008)
- - Jorge Álvares Prize – Macau and China relations (2008)
- - Pedro Nunes Prize – Mathematics (2008)
- - Padre António Vieira Prize – Portuguese (2008)
- - Alexandre Herculano Prize – History (2008)

Institutions

- Institute for Advanced Studies
- Institute of Lexicology and Lexicography of the Portuguese Language

The former promotes advanced studies in sciences and humanities, and the latter aims to preserve and expand the Portuguese language. Both institutes are open to scholars and scientists who are not members of the Academy.

The Library

The Academy houses one of the three most valuable libraries in the country with over one million pieces in all. It comprises the first library of the Convent of the Jesus with its most valuable books and manuscripts.

Its rich collections include, besides modern books three thousand Portuguese, Arabic, Spanish and Hebrew manuscripts and a priceless collection of 14th, 15th 16th and 17th century books. This library is open not only to members but also to other scholars, scientists and the public in general.

The Museum

The Museum houses several collections of Natural History, Physics, Etnography as well as a portrait gallery.

Contact

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Activities

The Academy of Sciences of Lisbon has organized a series of symposia on subjects of social, cultural, political literary and scientific interest. These symposia are open to the public and benefit from the collaboration of distinguished speakers invited by the Academy. On the other hand it will promote free access courses through its Institute for Advanced Studies, the first one entitled "Governance; Regulation and Sovereignty in the Contemporaneous Society".

The Academy has been promoting a modern edition of the *Obras de Pedro Nunes* and will reedit three old books such as "Livro das Armadas"; "Missal Iluminado de Estêvão Gonçalves" e "Acervo Artístico e Museológico da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa".

International activities

The Academy of Sciences of Lisbon is member of the following international organizations:

- **International Council for Science, ICSU**
- **Union Académique Internationale, UAI**
- **Interacademy Panel, IAP**
- **All European Academies, ALLEA**
- **European Science Foundation, ESF**
- **European Academies Science Advisory Council, EASAC**

The Academy takes part in international activities by attending international meetings. Moreover the Academy has established an exchange visit protocol with the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Protocol of this type was established with the Royal Society formerly.

The Academy has joined in 2006, the European Polar Board, the European Science Foundation's expert committee on Science Policy for the Polar Regions.

On the other hand, the Academy regularly hosts international meetings as for example, the "ESF Humanities Spring" workshop 2007, in which Professor Wim Blockmans gave his talk under the title "Whither Humanities".