

Press release

Date: 17/09/2021

Almadén, Spain

EuChemS Historical Landmarks Award plaque unveiled at Almadén mines, Spain

The Mines of Almadén, after being added to the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2012, together with Idrija Mine, Slovenia, celebrated the unveiling of the EuChemS Historical Landmarks plaque in recognition of the role it played in the history of chemistry and shared European cultural heritage on Tuesday 14 and Wednesday 15 September 2021. Famous for the production of mercury since antiquity, the mines have been awarded the 2019 EuChemS Historical Landmarks Award by the European Chemical Society (EuChemS).

The ceremony was preceded by a symposium on the history of the mines and the element mercury. From EuChemS, Floris Rutjes, President, Pilar Goya, Vice-President and Nineta Hrastelj, Secretary General, attended the unveiling of the plaque in Almadén. The ceremony also welcomed several high-level guests from the scientific community, media, politicians and regional organisers. Amongst others, the President of the Spanish Royal Chemical Society (RSEQ), Antonio M. Echavarren Pablos, the RSEQ Secretary General, Sonsoles Martín-Santamaría, and from Universidad of Castilla-La Mancha (UCLM) María Antonia Herrero Chamorro and Antonio M. Rodríguez García were present. Additionally, the President of the Portuguese Chemical Society (SPQ), Artur Silva joined the unveiling of the plaque.

Located in the province of Ciudad Real (Castilla-La Mancha region), in Spain, the Almadén site is a typical example of a historic mining site producing mercury. Mercury is a relatively rare metal: its extraction took place in a very limited number of mines, and Almadén was one of the largest sites of mercury production worldwide until recently. The extensive extraction of mercury deeply impacted the mining industry on a global scale, thus the Almadén mines constitute an important heritage on the evolution of the scientific, technological, and technical methods of mercury extraction. The site has also seen a long history of mercury trade which has generated intercontinental exchanges over the centuries.

The mines closed in 2000 but remain today one of the world's largest mercury resources.

Quote from Floris Rutjes, EuChemS President, taken from the booklet *EuChemS Historical Landmark Minas de Almadén* (I.S.B.N.: 978-84-9044-478-8):

One of the activities of the European Chemical Society (EuChemS) is to raise awareness for the history of European chemistry and its chemists. This we do by recognising the impact that local historical sites have had on the chemistry community at the European and international level, and the Almadén mines are no exception.

Quote from Brigitte Van Tiggelen, Chair of the Landmark Selection Committee and Chair of the EuChemS Working Party on the History of Chemistry, taken from the booklet *EuChemS Historical Landmark Minas de Almadén* (I.S.B.N.: 978-84-9044-478-8):

The Historical Landmarks emphasises and celebrates the development of the chemical sciences and the circulation of chemical knowledge within Europe (and often beyond as in this case) as well as the constitutive role chemistry has played and continues to play in the making and shaping of society at large.

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More information on the EuChemS Historical Landmarks Award can be seen here:

<https://www.euchems.eu/awards/euchems-historical-landmarks/>

ABOUT EUCHEMS AND CONTACTS

EuChemS, which represents over 40 national chemical societies and by extension some 120,000 chemists established a Historical Landmarks Award programme in order to recognise and celebrate European sites which have played a central role in the science of chemistry, whether at a European or local level.

Currently, the call for nominations for the Historical Landmarks Award 2021 is open. The deadline for submission is 31 December 2021 at 18:00 CET.

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