

Report on the 6th International Congress of the European Society for Soil Conservation (ESSC)

Thessaloniki, Greece, 9–14 May 2011

The 6th ESSC Congress was held in Thessaloniki, between 9 and 14 May 2011, in the Conference Center of the Grand Hotel Palace. Theodore KARYOTIS (Institut for Soil Mapping and Classification, NAGREF) as president of the Organizing Committee and his collaborators prepared everything for a successful congress in an exemplary way.

Most participants arrived on the first day and the conference began with an ESSC Council Meeting, followed by the opening ceremony and a cocktail reception. The presentation of the scientific papers and posters started the next day. The papers were classified into 6 sessions.

Session 1 on Policies and Thematic strategies started with a keynote lecture by C. KOSMAS about the indicators and thematic strategies for soil protection. Consecutive papers highlighted different effects of the topic emphasizing the importance of the interaction between science and policy making.

The keynote speech of Session 2 on Forest fires, impacts on natural resources and cultural heritage was given by J. RUBIO, who is a well known specialist of the subject. The subsequent oral communications discussed several aspects of this very important and interesting topic. In addition to the European presentations two papers from Asia were also included in this session.

The topic of Session 3 was Sustainable management of wetlands and drylands. D. GABRIELS and his co-authors put together an interesting and provocative keynote paper on the role of vegetative buffer strips and erosion dams as sediment traps. A wide range of various topics such as soil erosion and desertification studies was provided to the audience.

The introductory paper of Session 4 (Soil and water management under global climatic change scenarios) was given by S. RUNOLFSSON and his co-authors from Iceland on soil conservation in Iceland putting the issue in a European context. The session covered many of the aspects of soil and water management. In the session a large variety of conservation techniques were discussed. Presentations were not limited to the technical aspects of the methods. Several contributions discussed the carbon stock issue and some results obtained by modeling methods.

Session 5 on Conservation and management of soil biodiversity started with an introductory lecture on soil biodiversity given by P. PANAGOS representing also his collaborators. Only one paper given by myself discussed also avian biodiversity not only soil biodiversity. Carbon dynamics as a very up-to-date issue was also dealt with.



Photo 1. Professor José Louis RUBIO, past president, Professor Carmelo DAZZI, new president, Professor Edoardo CONSTANTINI, general secretary and Professor Theodore KARYOTIS, president of the organizing committee



Photo 2. Discussions in the audience



Photo 3. Participants of the scientific conference at BOUTARIS winery in the village of Stenimachos



Photo 4. A phantastic hospitality was provided by our Greek hosts, the local organizers. In the middle Professor Theodore Karyotis, the president of the Organizing Committee

The question of how to manage already degraded land and to foster education and public awareness were the topics of Session 6 (Restoration and remediation of degraded lands – Education in soil conservation and public awareness). The keynote of N. MISOPOLINOS and M. FULLEN presented by N. MISOPOLINOS concentrated mainly on salinization processes and remediation of Mediterranean soils. A wide range of papers was presented in this session.

A lively discussion followed each paper presented and the discussion continued in the poster room and during coffee and lunch breaks.

There was a one day excursion after four days of paper and poster presentations. First the participants visited the archeological site of Vergina where two hours were spent admiring the exposed objects of the tomb of Philip II, father of Alexander the Great. The golden larnax and the golden grave crown of Philip are the most fantastic pieces of jewelry I have ever seen. The second stop was a visit to a vineyard in the famous wine growing region of Naoussa. The vineyards of Naoussa occupy a total area of about 700 hectares, on the slopes of Mount Vermion at an altitude of 150–3,000 m a.s.l. The continental climate and the slopes provide ideal conditions for wine cultivation. An explanation about wine production was provided by the winery including some information on soil and water conservation.

Two council meetings were held during the congress. The most important decision of the council was to elect the new council, to nominate members of the Executive Committee including candidates for the positions of the president, vice presidents etc. The most remarkable event of the conference was the election of the new council and executive committee. Carmelo DAZZI was elected as the new president and Eduardo CONSTANTINI became the new secretary. José RUBIO is now past president, Ádám KERTÉSZ, Mike FULLEN and Peter STRAUSS are the vice presidents. Wim CORNELIS remained the treasurer and Donald GABRIELS the co-treasurer. Mike FULLEN retains the post of editor-in-chief of the Newsletter.

Each participant should be grateful to the organizers for a very well arranged congress. It was agreed that the following conference would be organized in Reykjavik, Island in four years.

Ádám KERTÉSZ