



José Mariano Gago: RIP

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A man at the heart of European science policy making in the past few decades

On April 17, 2015 José Mariano Gago passed away at the age of 66. He was a towering figure in debates and developments in European policies for science, technology and innovation. Between 1995 and 2002, he was minister for science in Portugal. He will be remembered as a warm man, who was open, hospitable, calm and wise.

Mariano Gago initially trained as a particle physicist, in Portugal and at CERN. In the late 1980s he became president of the Portuguese Funding Agency for research, now called FCT.

He was a key player at the European level. His experience, seniority, personality and intellectual and political acuteness ensured his almost indispensable role in the formal discussions in the EU Research Council, later Competitiveness Council and many conferences organised by the European Commission, member states or organisations such as the European University Association.

An example is the committee which he chaired after his first period as minister on the need for human resources in Europe to meet the requirements of the Lisbon goals. He was key in formulating them and getting them accepted by the European Heads of State and Government.

In late 2003 the European Life Science Forum and EuroScience decided to establish the Initiative for Science in Europe, ISE, with ESF and e.g. the European Physical and Mathematical Society. The goal was to organise the science community's lobbying for the ERC. It was successful, and when in late 2004 ISE decided to don a more formal coat, it was only natural for Mariano Gago to become its first president.

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In his view, the Voice of the Researchers should be heard. And he would insist that the scientific community needed to organise itself to make an impact on finance ministers and prime ministers to be effective.

During the past two years, as a member of EuroScience Governing Board, he has helped enormously in the various activities concerning the impacts of austerity measures on the science base and career prospects of scientists in especially Southern--but also other--European countries. Many remember his chairing a high-profile session at ESOF2014 in Copenhagen.

We will remember him with admiration and fondness.

Lauritz Holm-Nielsen
President

PeterTindemans
Secretary General