

CERENA

Centro de Recursos
Naturais e Ambiente

JANUARY 2026

**20 YEAR
EDITION
#1**



SCIENCE IN MOTION

YOUR MONTHLY CERENA NEWS

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A message from the President

Once upon a time, in 2006, three complementary geoscience-related research centres came together with a bold ambition: to create a multidisciplinary space capable of advancing knowledge in environment, raw materials, and energy. **That seed became CERENA.**

Fast forward to 2026, that initial vision has flourished. CERENA is now a mature and vibrant research unit—medium-size with broad impact—nationally and internationally recognized across its three scientific areas: environment, raw materials and energy. Yet, a classification unable to illustrate our diversity, complementary and multidisciplinary.

To mark **CERENA's 20th anniversary**, we are preparing a series of initiatives celebrating the Centre in all its dimensions—its people, its science, and its collective achievements. Our first event will take place on **January 22nd, 2026**, shining a spotlight on the work developed by our **PhD student community**. This event is fully designed and organized by the students themselves, and I encourage everyone to participate and support their effort, ensuring a strong and memorable start to our anniversary year.

The past three years have represented a period focused on consolidation and growth. During this time, we strengthened our internal processes, improving document workflows, reinforcing internal and external communication practices, and expanding pre-award support services. These collective efforts culminated in **CERENA's first ERC Grant**, awarded to Ricardo Araújo. This is a milestone for our Centre, and one that, I hope, inspires us all.

Looking ahead, 2026 promises to be another transformative year. Our laboratory and computational infrastructures will continue to be upgraded across all scientific areas, with expansion into emerging domains. These investments place our community at the forefront of the upcoming major challenges in energy, raw materials, and environment.

With the talent, commitment, and collaborative spirit that define CERENA, I can only foresee a successful year to come. **Let us make this 20th anniversary not only a celebration of our past, but a launchpad for an even brighter future.**

Leonardo Azevedo

December highlights



XX Saint Bárbara Conference

Bárbara was the daughter of a rich man, Dióscoro, that lived during the III century in Izmit (Turkey). Bárbara's father locked her in a tower, with only two windows, until he was able to find her an appropriate suitor. However, Bárbara did not want to get married. She converted to Christianity during her captivity, ordering the construction of a third window in the tower. This window was illuminated by the Holy Trinity and allowed the realization of several miracles.



Bárbara's father could not accept her disrespect for the Olympus Gods and reported her to the Major, who ordered her death by decapitation. Bárbara's father executed this sentence and when Bárbara's head rolled through the floor, lightning illuminated the skies, making her dead father fall to the floor. From this day, Saint Bárbara was invoked as a **protector against lightning and adopted by miners** and all of those who must work with fire.

To celebrate Saint Bárbara, the Mining and Energy Resources Engineering Students of Instituto Superior Técnico organize the XX Saint Bárbara Conference, a yearly round event dating back to 2005, with seminars about Mineral and Energy Resources Engineering. This year's edition, which took place on **December 4th 2025**, brought a new addition to the program, with the attribution of the **Professor Dinis da Gama Award**.



This prize, awarded by ORICA, aims to reward a distinguished Geological and Mining Engineering Master Student every couple of years. The first winner was CERENA's student **Margarida Grou**. Congratulations, Margarida!

December highlights



XX Saint Bárbara Conference

CERENA's Invited Assistant Professor **Pedro Bernado**, who also works as a territory manager at ORICA, gave an enlightening talk about the **evolution of the mining industry overtime**. Pedro focused particularly on today's and tomorrow's challenges in mining engineering, considering the wireless initiation, the initiation of civil explosives by laser systems and the search for digital solutions.



The event closed with a round-table involving **Professor Maria João Pereira**, **Engineer Mário Bastos**, **Engineer Miguel Albino**, **Doctor Francisco Veiga Simão** and was moderated by student Santiago Bilbao. This panel focused on the **European Legislation for critical raw materials and Europe's plan to ensure access to resources in the green transition**. The panelists presented different perspectives on the theme, namely concerning the ambition of the proposed goals.

It was highlighted the necessity of Europe to become independent of external countries and the necessity to further educate the civil population about mining exploration.

It was an enriching day for all the involved parties and we can't wait to repeat it next year!

December highlights



SIMIACCI Consortium Meeting

The SIMIACCI project – Sustainable Intelligent Management of Indoor Air Quality for the Culture and Creative Industries, funded by Horizon Europe and coordinated by IST-ID (CERENA and CEGIST), held its latest consortium meeting on **December 11th–12th, 2025**, at the **Centre de Recherche sur la Conservation des Collections (CRCC)** in Paris.

The meeting brought together all the project partners to review progress and strengthen collaboration. Representing CERENA were project coordinator **Moisés Pinto** and **Abeer Mohtar** and **Telma Henriques**, alongside **Ana Carvalho** from CEGIST.



The first day focused on sharing results and developments across the work packages, showcasing the strong engagement and commitment of all partners. The second day shifted attention to the GLAM sector (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums), providing an open forum to discuss critical challenges and explore tailored solutions for indoor air quality management.

The event concluded with an inspiring visit to the **Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle**, reinforcing the project's mission to protect cultural heritage through sustainable and intelligent technologies.

SIMIACCI continues to deliver promising outcomes, driven by a collaborative spirit and a shared vision for healthier environments in cultural spaces.



December highlights



CERENA Seminar

On **December 18th 2025**, CERENA hosted a seminar focused on *Applied Research, the golden triangle: research, funding and industrial partnership*. Maria Teresa Carvalho invited Susana Ângelo, from Sociedade Ponto Verde, and André Freches from Valorsul. This seminar series is part of the 20-year anniversary celebration of CERENA and aims to **bring closer academia and industry**. This month, the panelists took advantage of Maria Teresa's expertise to discuss the **gains from the synergy between academia and industry** – it should be a win-win situation for both parties involved! Maria Teresa highlighted the value of scientific progress, as, in her words, **"projects can be successful even if the targets are not attained. Their relevance relies on the process."** As a final message, Susana stressed Sociedade Ponto Verde's focus on innovation, with the existence of programs about solid waste to which researchers can apply. Know more [here](#).



We thank our sponsor, NORLEQ, for this seminar series.

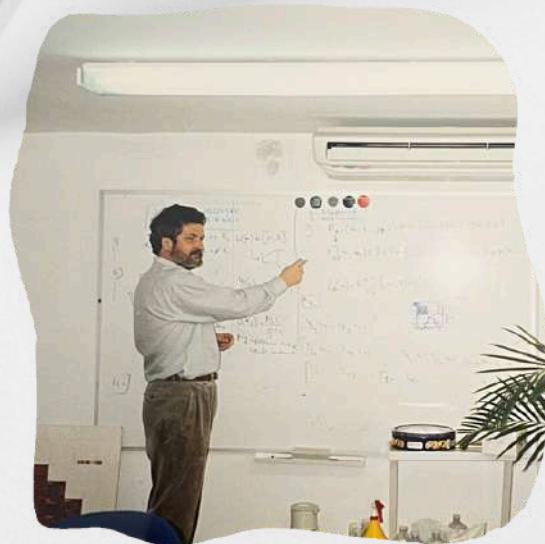
Amílcar Soares and Maria João Pereira reflect on CERENA's 20 years



2026 marks the **20th** **anniversary** of CERENA! The center's mission comprises the sustainable use of natural resources and the evaluation of their environmental impact. But have you ever wondered how this mission was shaped over time?

As we reach this amazing 20-year milestone, we celebrate by revisiting some of CERENA's history. In this newsletter edition, **Amílcar Soares** and **Maria João Pereira** reflect on the center's beginnings, the challenges it has faced, and its future.

At the beginning of the 90s, research in the country and in Instituto Superior Técnico (IST) was completely different than the reality we live in nowadays. The centers were smaller, financed exclusively by Fundação para a Ciéncia e Tecnologia (FCT), and consisted of people working in their specific fields with limited collaboration among different groups.



In this sense, the **Center for Modelling Petroleum Reservoirs (CMRP)**, founded by Amílcar Soares and Maria João Pereira, was truly disruptive at the time – able to be fully funded by the industry, with researchers from different scientific fields coming together.

Amílcar Soares and Maria João Pereira reflect on CERENA's 20 years



The funding from the industry financed **research focused on the environment**, which was one of the pillars of the group and was capitalized to teaching – it allowed the funding of master's (pre-Bologna Agreement) and PhD students.

As we entered the 2000s, and FCT started to favor the financing of larger research centers, the **Modelling and Process of Georesources Group (GMPG)** and **Geotechnical Center (CEGEO)** were merged with CMRP to give rise to CERENA.

The primary areas of interest were mineral resources and the environment. For Amílcar, CERENA's first president, it was gratifying to create the center, as it changed the paradigm in research, **fostering a more collaborative environment**. But make no mistake – it was a hard challenge to navigate when the three groups came together and later (in 2013), with the further enlargement of the center with four other IST research centers (**CEPGIST** (Center of Petrology and Geochemistry), **CPQ** (Center of Chemical Processes), **IBB** (Institute of Biotechnology and Bioengineering), and **ICIST** (Institute of Structural Engineering, Land and Construction), as well as **CIGAR** (Center of Geo-Environment and Resources based at Faculdade de Engenharia do Porto (FEUP)). The people based in Porto were physically far away from Lisbon, so, for Maria João, it was fundamental to **promote initiatives to improve collaboration**. In that sense, the center gave preference to funding projects based on collaboration between groups who usually did not work together. The relevance of collaboration was reinforced with the funding of PhD projects whose students had two supervisors from different scientific fields.

Amílcar Soares and Maria João Pereira reflect on CERENA's 20 years

Despite the difficulties, both Amílcar and Maria João highlighted the benefits of fighting the traditional management tendency of separating people according to their expertise. CERENA's greatest asset is its people! The enlargement of the center favored a consolidation of competences, but **without human connection cannot be innovation**. Bearing this concern in mind, the idea of the annual meeting was born. In this event, CERENA's community meets to present results and debate strategy outside of IST. The last one took place at Foz do Arelho, and we can't wait for the next one!

CERENA's history cannot be dissociated from IST, as it shaped the center over time. CERENA is part of the Department of Mineral and Energy Resources Engineering (DER), which has been highly involved in the Environmental Engineering course, given CERENA's focus on this field since its beginning. This particular course brings together expertise from the chemical, mechanical, civil, and mining departments, being living proof of the interdisciplinarity practiced at CERENA. CERENA's researchers have always fought for better conditions while keeping their multidisciplinary culture, which ultimately paid off. This has been shown by CERENA's victories over the years.



Amílcar Soares and Maria João Pereira reflect on CERENA's 20 years

Since 2004, CERENA has been pioneer in having research projects financed by industry. Both Amílcar and Maria João highlighted project **GISA** (Gestão Integrada Saúde e Ambiente), which comprised a consortium of 12 institutions, from the private and public sectors, including gas companies and Repsol, with **1.2 million euros for health and environmental management** in Alentejo coast. In 2018, when Maria João was president, CERENA achieved the **Classification Excellent**, which, the former president highlights as **one of the most rewarding moments of her work**, compensating for some drawbacks, such as the time CERENA saw the associated laboratory refused. This year, CERENA's greatest news was the **ERC** (European Research Council) Consolidator Grant attributed to **Ricardo Araújo**. In the words of Amílcar, this grant shows all that CERENA stands for, with a **multidisciplinary project with different fields** (from veterinary to paleontology) coming together.

As we look into the future, Maria João underlines the changes the European Union has faced and the **importance it now recognizes to raw materials**. Raw materials are the basis for everything we consume as a society, and in CERENA, we are in a great position to take advantage of our new researchers, with improved strategies and ideas to do better for mineral resources in Portugal and Europe.



After all, every new mind entering the center should ask itself, "**What can I offer to improve CERENA's position in Portugal's scientific landscape?**"



Community news

Ricardo Araújo receives ERC Consolidator Grant

On **December 9th 2025**, we celebrated Ricardo Araújo's ERC Consolidator Grant. The **2-million-euro** grant will be fundamental for the advancement of the DAEDALUS project, a multidisciplinary project that aims to study evolution from dinosaurs to birds. Back in 2022, Ricardo published a paper with his latest finds about the mammalian endothermy evolution, focusing on the changes of the semicircular duct system in the inner ear and the alterations in the endolymph viscosity during evolution.



In the present project, Ricardo and his team aim to use the previously established thermo-motility index (TMI) to estimate the body temperature of extinguished species from anatomical data present in fossils. The main aim is to understand **when the endothermy appeared in the dinosaurs to birds axis**, with the central hypothesis indicating the Triassic period. However, the validation of TMI deals with critical limitations, particularly the lack of data, as there are only viscosity measurements for one bird species (the pigeon) and no reptiles.

The project proposes the development of a **nanoviscometer** (which aims to measure the viscosity of endolymph) using AI algorithms. To achieve this goal, the team is composed of otorhinolaryngologists, veterinaries, biologists and engineers. Additionally, the project comprises field work with planned excavations in Portugal (Algarve) and Mozambique.

The five-year project is 11th time ERC distinguishes Técnico's projects, being **CERENA's first**. This year's ERC call had an approval rate of 11%, with only one other Portuguese based researcher being distinguished - Juan Gallego at Champalimaud Foundation, who will receive 2.1 million euros for his SELECT project. The full news can be read at Técnico's website.

Congratulations, Ricardo!



Community news

CERENA researchers participate in the 38th International Minerals, Gems and Fossils Fair of Lisbon

From **December 5th to December 8th 2025**, the International Minerals, Gems and Fossils Fair returned to The National Museum of Natural History and Science (MUHNAC). This 38th edition had the theme of "Minerals that move the world" which aimed to reinforce the importance of minerals in our daily lives, as well as raise awareness of the environmental and social questions originating from extracting activities.

As in previous years, the Geosciences Museum of Instituto Superior Técnico was invited to participate. Some of CERENA's researchers (Edite Martinho, Joana Lobo Antunes, Ricardo Araújo and Sofia Patrocínio), as well as DER (Mineral and Energy Resources Engineering Department of Instituto Superior Técnico) students (Amabel André, Ayanda Amone, Catalin Ioan Calin, Constança Paixão, Guilherme Jesus, Inês Ruivo Veiga, Ivan Kolesnikov, Jacinder Navalha, Pedro Bernardo, Pedro Gama, Ruben Canga and Teresa Manuela Kibinz) and professors (Ana Paula Flor, Alexandre Gonçalves and Teresa Melo) took part in this activity, engaging visitors in their daily work. Congratulations to everyone involved for the successful initiative!





Community news

João Gomes receives Education Researcher register

João Gomes, Coordinator of CERENA's Energy Group has received the Education Researcher register, the highest degree in the International Professional Register of Engineering Educators (ENTER). This degree recognizes teachers who apply innovative pedagogical approaches, leading to the improvement of Higher Education. More information can be read on ISEL's website. Congratulations, João!

Ana Filipa Duarte takes part international shipboard training

Our PhD Student, Ana Filipa Duarte, took part in an international shipboard training. Read her testimonial about this enriching experience:

*"From **November 12th to December 13th 2025**, I had the privilege of joining the German research vessel Polarstern, operated by the Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research (AWI), as part of a shipboard training programme in marine science.*

This experience was part of the Ocean Capacity Exchange Programme within the North-South Atlantic Transect (NoSoAT), supported by AWI, the Partnership for Observation of the Global Ocean (POGO), and The Nippon Foundation.



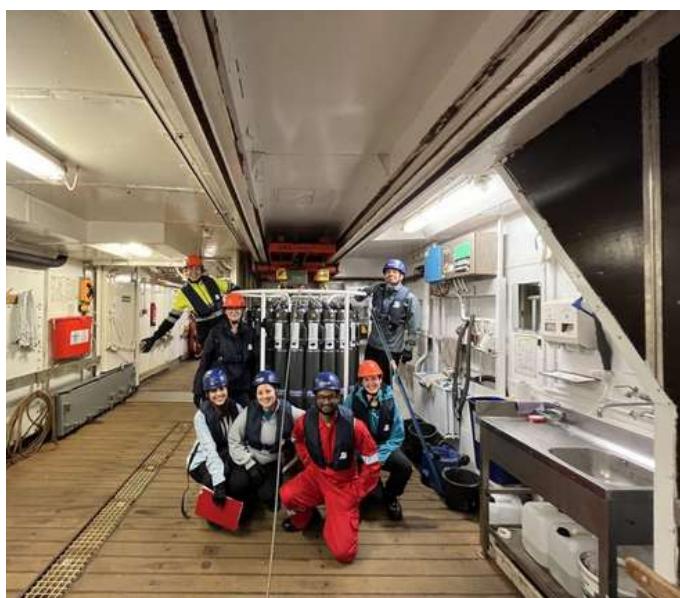
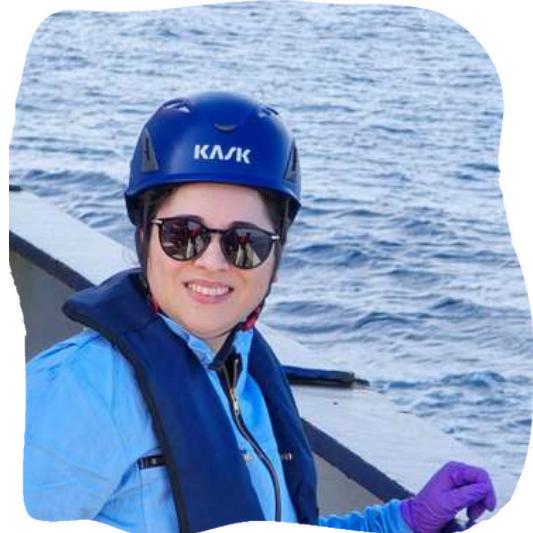


Community news

Ana Filipa Duarte takes part in international shipboard training.

During this month-long journey, I gained hands-on experience with advanced marine research instruments, from the more sophisticated as the CTD with rosette to the more traditional as the Assmann Psychrometer. I received advanced training in oceanographic, meteorological, and climate observation techniques, actively participated in sampling and processing data from the Atlantic Ocean, and explored critical topics such as climate variability, climate change, and ocean governance. I had the unique opportunity to collaborate with leading scientists in climate change and oceanography and to exchange ideas with fellow scholars from diverse academic and cultural backgrounds.

I am deeply grateful to the organizers and all participants for making this an unforgettable and enriching experience."





Pre Award

Grants won

- ERC Consortium Grant - researcher Ricardo Araújo with project DAEDALUS

Grants you might want to apply

European Commission has launched the Horizon Europe Work Program (2026-27). The updated Pillar 2 | Cluster 6: Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment might be of interest to our community. More information can be found in the Pre-Award Sharepoint. Reach out to Pre-Award team, namely Joana Barrelas, if you have any doubts or fill in the Expression of Interest.



Pillar 2 - Clusters 2026-2027

Horizon Europe is organised into three pillars - 1) Excellent Science, 2) Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness, and 3) Innovative Europe. There is also a fourth component, on widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area, which cuts across the entire programme.

The pillar 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness' is established through clusters of research and innovation activities, in order to maximise integration and synergies across the respective thematic areas while securing high and sustainable levels of impact for the Union in relation to the resources that are expended.

Horizon Europe budget allocates more than €53 billion for pillar II:

- Health
- Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society
- Civil Security for Society
- Digital, Industry and Space
- Climate, Energy and Mobility
- Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment
- Non-nuclear direct actions of the Joint Research Centre

The Pillar will encourage **cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral, cross-policy and cross-border collaboration** in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by following the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the competitiveness of the Union's industries.

CLUSTER 6: FOOD, BIOECONOMY, NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Destination - Biodiversity and ecosystem services

Call title and reference	Action	EU contribution per project	Nº of financed Projects	Call Open date	Submission deadline
HORIZON-CL6-2026-01-BIODIV-01: Understanding and tackling the decline of insects	RIA	~6.5ME	2		
HORIZON-CL6-2026-01-BIODIV-02: Developing methods to assess the presence, functions and sensitivity of groundwater ecosystems	RIA	~5ME	2		
HORIZON-CL6-2026-01-BIODIV-03: Pushing the frontier of knowledge and conservation action for deep sea ecosystems	RIA	~9ME	2		
HORIZON-CL6-2026-01-BIODIV-04: Ensuring continuous effectiveness of protected areas in conserving habitats and species while facing intensifying drivers of biodiversity loss	RIA	~6.5ME	2	17/04/2026	17/09/2026
HORIZON-CL6-2026-01-BIODIV-05: Enhancing international cooperation in biodiversity					

Cluster 6: Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment



EN

Horizon Europe

Work Programme 2026-2027

Cluster 6: Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment



Inside our labs

New microscope available at CERENA

The **AXIO Imager.A2m** from Zeiss is a highly versatile optical microscope equipped with transmitted, fluorescence, and reflected illumination. With multiple filter sets and a wide range of objective lenses, it delivers high-resolution, high-quality imaging that supports diverse applications across materials science, geology, biology, chemistry, and other disciplines. This new instrument is now available to entire CERENA community and is located in the **MIL – Multi-Scale Imaging Laboratory**. For access, please contact [Sílvia Carvalho](#).



Welcome to CERENA

This month, CERENA welcomed a visiting PhD student. Let's join in giving him a warm welcome!

Zhen Wang

Zhen Wang began his PhD studies in Mining Engineering at China University of Mining and Technology (Beijing) in September 2022. He is currently a visiting researcher at CERENA, Instituto Superior Técnico, University of Lisbon. His research focuses on rock mechanics and the effects of acidic conditions on the pore structure evolution of coal samples.





Latest in the press

1. Barrocas, B.T.; Fernandes, S.M.; Alcobia, T.; Lourenço, M.C.; Oliveira, M.C.; Marques, A.C.; **Optimization of TiO₂ loaded sol-gel derived MICROSCAFS® for enhanced minocycline removal from water and real wastewater**, Journal of Sol-Gel Science and Technology, Volume 116, Issue 3, pages 1968–1983, 1 December 2025
2. Lahlou, R.A.; Carvalho, F.; Pereira, M.J.; Lopes, J.; Silva, L.R.; **Exploring medicinal plant diversity in Serra da Estrela Natural Park (Portugal): An ethnobotanical study (Part I)**, Pharmacological Research – Natural Products, Volume 9, 100396, 1 December 2025
3. Macungo, Z.; Benoit, J.; Araújo, R.; **Inostrancevia africana, the first diagnosable gorgonopsian (Therapsida, Synapsida) from the Metangula graben (Mozambique): new anatomical observations and biostratigraphic implications**, Swiss Journal of Palaeontology, Volume 144, Issue 1, 12, 1 December 2025
4. Rodil, A.; Deska, J.; Precht, M.H.G.; **Formaldehyde and its surrogates as a C1 platform for defossilised modern societies**, Chemical Society Reviews, Volume 54, Issue 24, pages 11398–11422, 1 December 2025
5. Shi, X.; Geng, L.; Deng, X.; Paneiro, G.; Wu, Z.; Li, Y.; Liu, H.; Feng, J.; **Experimental investigation of damage behavior of coal pillars during injection-production in abandoned coal mine gas storage**, Geomechanics for Energy and the Environment, Volume 44, 100766, 1 December 2025
6. Marques, J.M.; Carreira, P.M.; Antunes da Silva, M.; **Contribution of Hydrogeochemical and Isotope ($\delta^{2}H$ and $\delta^{18}O$) Studies to Update the Conceptual Model of the Hyposaline Natural Mineral Waters of Ribeirinho and Fazenda Do Arco (Castelo de Vide, Central Portugal)**, Water (Switzerland), Volume 17, Issue 23, 3443, 1 December 2025
7. Lourenço, B.; Serôdio, R.M.N.; Ferro, A.; Marques, A.C.; Serro, A.P.; Galante, R.; Garcês, A.; Claudio, R.; Figueiredo-Pina, C.G.; **Suitability of Kahili ginger stem fibres for reinforcement/filler of polymeric matrix composites**, Results in Engineering, Volume 28, 107912, 1 December 2025
8. Duarte, A.F.; Mendes, R.; Azevedo, L.; **Seismic oceanography data in the Gulf of Cadiz**, Scientific Data, Volume 12, Issue 1, 1666, 1 December 2025
9. Nazerigivi, A.; Ghiasi, B.; Dionísio, A.; Vasconcelos, G.; **Salt-induced deterioration in granites with different pore structures: destructive and non-destructive assessment**, Bulletin of Engineering Geology and the Environment, Volume 84, Issue 12, 620, 1 December 2025
10. Narciso, J.; Verhegge, J.; Van De Vijver, E.; **Geostatistical joint inversion of frequency-domain electromagnetic data and direct current resistivity data for near-surface modelling**, Scientific Reports, Volume 15, Issue 1, 36006, 1 December 2025
11. Lahlou, R.A.; Carvalho, F.; Pereira, M.J.; Lopes, J.; Silva, L.R.; **Exploring medicinal plant diversity in the Serra da Estrela Natural Park (Portugal): Assessing the influence of socioeconomic variables on medicinal plant knowledge (Part II)**, Pharmacological Research – Natural Products, Volume 9, 100439, 1 December 2025
12. Precht, M. H. G.; Alegria, E. C. B. A.; Rocha, H. B.; Justino, E.; Gomes, J. F.; Puna, J. F.; **Boundaries for a global resilient energy transition**, Green Chemistry, December 2025
13. Lobarinhas, R.; Paneiro, G.; Dionísio, A.; Ribeiro, M.; Cardell, C.; **Impact of thermal exposure on the surface properties of carbonate stones masonry**; Bulletin of Engineering Geology and the Environment, Volume 85, 22, 5 December 2025



Upcoming

16/01

Ricardo Araújo talks about applying to ERC

IST, CTN

29/01

CERENA Seminar hosted by Professor Moisés Pinto

IST C13 | FEUP F405

5&6/02

AgroGeo 2026

IST Anfiteatro Abreu Faro

13/02

Workshop MIL Image Software Segmentation

IST MIL with online broadcast

24/02

IST Graduation Day

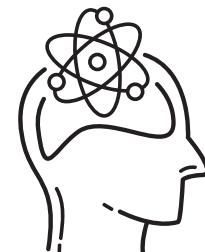
Aula Magna

18/04

IST Open Day

DON'T MISS

CERENA's first **PhD Day** is coming up! Don't miss it, **January 22nd 2026** at IST's South Tower (room **QA 1.1**). Join us to learn more about the amazing work of CERENA's PhD Students!



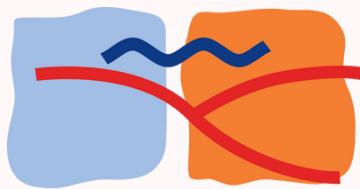
FCT annual report is coming up, so we need your contribution! Tell us all that you published, outreach activities, master and PhD Theses as well as projects you were involved until **January 12th 2026**. Please fill out the [forms available](#).

Do you want to share anything with the community in the next newsletter? Fill in the communication form at [CERENA's website](#).

JANUARY 2026



Thank you for reading! Stay tuned for more updates in our next newsletter.



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