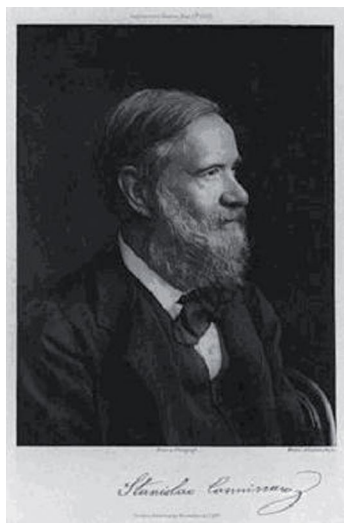


## The Italian Chemical Society Is 100 Years Old

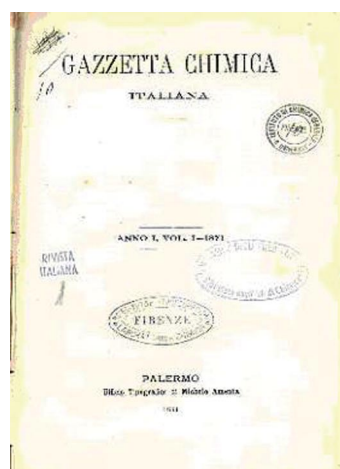
The initial organization of the Italian chemical community started around the year 1870, at the end of the *Risorgimento* (the period of political unification of Italy), and is closely connected with the history of the Country. In fact, Italian chemists were particularly responsive to the birth of the new nation, and numerous leading scientists became directly involved in important political duties. However, the foundation of a unified Italian chemical society took about forty years, from 1870 to 1909. The reasons for such a late establishment are rooted in the social and economic fragmentation of the Country, which in turn was the result of a centuries-old political division of Italy in many States. The year 1870 marked the Italian unification and the first attempt to establish a national chemical society. In the autumn of 1870, Stanislao Cannizzaro (Professor at Palermo) called a meeting of Italian chemists in Florence, at that time the capital of Italy, with the aim of founding an Italian chemical society similar to the chemical societies of other European countries. Unfortunately only seven chemists showed up, but the meeting was not a complete *fiasco* because it ended with the proposal to publish a national chemical journal as a means to aggregate Italian chemists. In the spring of 1871, the first issue of *Gazzetta Chimica Italiana* was published in Palermo, and the journal quickly gained a national and international reputation.



Stanislao Cannizzaro (Palermo 1826 – Rome 1910).

In the following decades the economic and social situation of Italy strongly improved, and three chemical societies were established in Milan (1895), in Turin (1899), and in Rome (1902). In 1895, the *Società Chimica di Milano* was founded by chemists from academia, industry, and analyti-

cal laboratories, almost all living in northern Italy. In 1899 the *Associazione Chimica Industriale* was founded in Turin with the aim of offering members, almost all resident in Piedmont, the Italian region with the most important chemical industries, the chance of exchanging ideas and information concerning new processes or materials. In 1902, the *Società Chimica di Roma* was founded with the aim of gathering chemists from central and southern Italy. Almost all the chemistry professors became members of the Rome Society, because the Society was established by Emanuele Paternò and his mentor Cannizzaro, men of great academic and political power (both at that time Professors in Rome and Senators of the Italian Kingdom), whose presence underlined the national relevance of the initiative. In 1906 the Sixth International Congress of Applied Chemistry was held in Rome, and the triumphal success of the event spurred the unification of Italian chemists in a national society. Eventually, the Milan and Rome societies decided to merge, and on January 1st 1909 the *Società Chimica Italiana* was established as a federation of the two associations.<sup>[1]</sup>



The frontispiece of the first issue of *Gazzetta Chimica Italiana* (1871). In 1998 the journal merged with other European journals to form the core of *EurJIC* and *EurJOC*.

Since then one hundred years have passed, and the Society (<http://www.soc.chim.it/>) is currently strong with approximately 5000 active members and has 17 regional sections, 11 thematic divisions, and 17 interdisciplinary groups. The Society is governed by an Executive Committee (composed of the President, the Past-President, and two Vice-Presidents) and a Central Council (including also the Presidents of the regional sections and of the thematic divisions). The Central Council is assisted by a number of consulting com-

missions, operating in many fields (international affairs, public perception of chemistry, communication with chemical industry associations, communication with the Ministry of Education and Research, chemistry and energy, etc.). The Society's main mission is to foster the communication of the chemical sciences and their applications in order to raise the public awareness and understanding of chemistry. Moreover, the goal of the Society is to promote chemical education so that chemistry can be perceived as a precious ally to solve the problems that plague mankind and to improve the quality of life and of our environment. These goals are pursued in strict contact with other national and international scientific societies, cultural associations, the media, political players and institutions, the school, and through the school with students.

Recently, the Society has focused its efforts on three main topics: (i) the environment, (ii) the young generation of chemists, and (iii) the teaching of chemistry in high school (the last five years of school). The Society is actively involved in promoting sustainable development and it is a stakeholder of the recently launched IT-SusChem Platform. An agreement on "sustainable chemistry" was signed in 2007 with the Italian Section of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). This event marked a dramatic cultural revolution, ending the fierce dispute between chemists and environmentalists. The Society subscribes and promotes the "General Charter of Ethical Principles for the Chemical Sciences", which identifies as the major goals of chemistry to protect the earth, the biosphere and its ecosystems and to improve the quality of life. In 2002, the Younger Members Chemists Group (*Gruppo Giovani SCI*; GGSCI) was founded. The GGSCI provides a focus for the interests of members aged 35 or under (about 1400 members). Students, postgraduate students, young researchers in industry, research centers, and academia have the opportunity to establish useful contacts and to get involved in a variety of interdisciplinary events and activities that stimulate their personal development and professional careers. Every year, the GGSCI awards a prize named after Primo Levi (1919–1987, Jewish-Italian chemist, holocaust survivor and novelist) to a young chemist for a particularly interesting scientific publication and every two years sponsors the Young Chemistry Award at the recently launched European Chemistry Congresses. The 17 regional sections of the Society and the Division of Chemical Education organize every year the "Games of Chemistry" among high school students, as a selection for the International Olympiads of Chemistry. Through its Division of Chemical Education, the Society is very active in promoting the teaching of chemistry as an experimental science (i.e. with laboratory experiments) in high school, keeping the teaching of chemistry well characterized and separate from the other scientific disciplines (physics, biology, geology, etc.). Other priorities of the Society are the involvement of chemistry in the protection of our artistic heritage, the generation of new clean energies, of new effective medicines, and of safe human and animal nutrition and diets.

The Society awards six gold medals named after important Italian chemists of the past (Stanislao Cannizzaro, Domenico Marotta, Emanuele Paternò, Giulio Natta, Raffaele Piria and Amedeo Avogadro) for significant contributions to science and education worldwide. The 11 thematic divisions also award numerous prizes, medals, and honorary lectures to scientists for their research work and to students for their doctorate thesis: to mention just two of the very many, the Ciamician medal of the Organic Division and the Nasini medal of the Inorganic Division awarded to junior chemists for relevant scientific contributions in their respective disciplines.

The Society, the 17 regional sections, 11 thematic divisions, and 17 interdisciplinary groups organize every year a number of scientific meetings and summer schools, alone and in collaboration with other national and international scientific associations, including numerous joint thematic meetings with other European chemical societies. Every year the thematic divisions also organize a national scientific meeting, while the Society organizes it every third year: in 2009 the XXIII National Congress of the Italian Chemical Society will take place in Sorrento (5–10 July) and will celebrate the hundredth anniversary.



The logo of the hundredth anniversary of the Società Chimica Italiana.

The Society publishes numerous scientific books and two journals: *La Chimica e l'Industria* (12 annual issues), which is free for all members, and *La Chimica nella Scuola* (5 annual issues), which is free for high school teacher members. Moreover, the Society is the owner, together with other European chemical societies, of top-ranked European chemical journals like *Chemistry – A European Journal*, *European Journal of Organic Chemistry*, *European Journal of Inorganic Chemistry*, *ChemMedChem*, *ChemBioChem*, *ChemSusChem* (all published by Wiley-VCH) and of *Physical Chemistry Chemical Physics* (published by the Royal Society of Chemistry). *ChemMedChem* is intended to become a premier European journal at the interface of chemistry, biology, and medicine. It replaced *Il Farmaco*, a journal of medicinal and pharmaceutical chemistry, which was published by the Italian Chemical Society until the end of 2005. *ChemSusChem* is aimed to become a top interdisciplinary

journal for research at the interface of chemistry and sustainability with energy research, materials science, chemical engineering, and biotechnology. It succeeded *Annali di Chimica*, a journal of analytical, environmental, and cultural heritage chemistry of the Italian Chemical Society, which ceased publication at the end of 2007. The *European Journal of Organic Chemistry* and the *European Journal of Inorganic Chemistry* replaced, in 1998, among other glorious European chemistry journals, our *Gazzetta Chimica Italiana*.

Historically, each European country had one chemistry society, and in fact many countries had more than one. The Italian Chemical Society strongly supports the collaboration between European national chemical societies and European chemists that is being fostered by the European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences (EuCheMS; <http://www.euchems.org/>), which was estab-

lished in 2006. The EuCheMS now embraces 50 chemical societies that together represent 150000 members from over 35 countries (comprising most European nations, including Russia) and is a new powerful single voice for chemists, chemical societies, and chemical sciences in Europe. The second European Chemistry Congress was co-organized in 2008 in Turin by the EuCheMS and the SCI.

One hundred years have not passed in vain, and nowadays the SCI is one of the most reputable scientific societies, well established at the European level and completely embedded in the most important scientific areas that have sprung from the globalization of knowledge and economy. We are truly confident that our Society is going in the right direction and, together with all the Italian chemists, we are ready to celebrate the centennial anniversary of our Society, wishing it a prosperous and bright future. *Ad maiora, Società Chimica Italiana!*



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- [1] L. Cerruti (University of Turin, Italy), Workshop on “European chemical societies. Comparative analyses of demarcation” at the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on History of Chemistry, Lisbon-Estoril, 6–9 September 2005.