

GLOBAL REPORT ON THE EVALUATION OF THE HISTORY RESEARCH UNITS

The present Global Report was originally written in Portuguese. For reasons of uniformity with the other reports and inner consistence of the Overall Report, it was translated into English. The Panel's Coordinator acknowledges this fact and assumes responsibility for any misinterpretation arising from it.

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The evaluation of History Research Units, concerning the three-year period assessed in 2002, took place from December 9 to 16, 2002.

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

1.1. Strong Points

Twenty nine Units were assessed from all over the country (Lisboa, Évora, Faro e Mértola, Coimbra, Porto e Braga) were assessed in this Evaluation exercise. The meeting with the *Núcleo de Estudos de População e Sociedade* (NEPS), from Minho University, did not take place because the Panel had not received the tri-annual report from NEPS until 72 hours before the scheduled time.

All the meetings were held in a totally relaxed and open atmosphere. The Units' Coordinators were nearly always present, and the majority of the members actively discussed and exchanged points of view with the Panel. With three exceptions (two of which were properly justified), the Units' presentations were made by the Coordinators.

Therefore, as a first, general, positive observation, and in what concerns the researchers, the enormous availability demonstrated by all of them should be highlighted, especially because many had teaching duties, being evident, in the majority of cases, the quantity and quality of the individual achievements.

In global terms, as can be concluded by inspection of the following Table, there has been a consistent increase of the number of R&D Units in the History area, which, just by itself, can be considered a strong point:

1996		1999		2002	
Funded Units	Assessed Units	Funded Units	Assessed Units	Funded Units	Assessed Units
10	09	16	11	18	29

It should also be mentioned the great effort that some Research Units put into improving their scientific performance, as substantiated in the following tables:

A. Comparison of the Results of the 2002 and the Previous Evaluation per Unit

UNIT NAME	PREVIOUS EVALUATION	2002 EVALUATION
GABINETE DE HISTÓRIA ECONÓMICA E SOCIAL (Lisbon Technical University)	Very Good	Excellent
CENTRO DE ESTUDOS DE HISTÓRIA CONTEMPORÂNEA PORTUGUESA (ISCTE)	Very Good	Good
CENTRO DE HISTÓRIA (Lisbon University)	Good	Good
CENTRO DE ARQUEOLOGIA – UNIARQ (Lisbon University)	New Unit	Good
CENTRO HISTÓRIA DAS CIÊNCIAS (Lisbon University)	New Unit	Good
CENTRO DE HISTÓRIA DE ALÉM-MAR (New University of Lisbon)	Very Good	Excellent
CENTRO DE ESTUDOS HISTÓRICOS (New University of Lisbon)	Very Good	Excellent
CENTRO DE HISTÓRIA DA CULTURA (New University of Lisbon)	Good	Good
INSTITUTO DE HISTÓRIA CONTEMPORÂNEA (New University of Lisbon)	Excellent	Excellent
INSTITUTO DE ESTUDOS MEDIEVAIS (New University of Lisbon)	New Unit	Fair
CENTRO DE ESTUDOS DE HISTÓRIA RELIGIOSA (Portuguese Catholic University)	Very Good	Very Good
CENTRO DE ESTUDOS HISTÓRICOS INTERDISCIPLINARES (Open University)	New Unit	Poor
CENTRO DE ESTUDOS ARQUEOLÓGICOS DAS UNIVERSIDADES DE COIMBRA E PORTO (Coimbra and Porto Universities)	Very Good	Very Good

CENTRO DE ESTUDOS INTERDISCIPLINARES DO SÉCULO XX (Coimbra University)	Very Good	Very Good
CENTRO DE HISTÓRIA DA SOCIEDADE E DA CULTURA (Coimbra University)	Very Good	Very Good
CIDEHUS (CENTRO INTERDISCIPLINAR DE HISTÓRIA, CULTURAS E SOCIEDADE (Évora University)	Fair	Good
CENTRO DE ESTUDOS DE HISTÓRIA E FILOSOFIA DA CIÊNCIA (Évora University)	New Unit	Good
CENTRO DE ESTUDOS DO PATRIMÓNIO (Algarve University)	New Unit	Fair
CENTRO DE CULTURA ÁRABE, ISLÂMICA E MEDITERRÂNEA (Algarve University)	New Unit	Poor
CAMPO ARQUEOLÓGICO DE MÉRTOLA	New Unit	Very Good
CENTRO INTERUNIVERSITÁRIO DE HISTÓRIA DA ESPIRITUALIDADE (Porto University)	Very Good	Good
CEPESE - CENTRO DE ESTUDOS DA POPULAÇÃO ECONOMIA E SOCIEDADE (Porto University)	Good	Very Good
GRUPO DE ESTUDOS DE HISTÓRIA DA VITICULTURA DURIENSE E DO VINHO DO PORTO (Porto University)	Very Good	Good
INSTITUTO DE HISTÓRIA MODERNA (Porto University)	Good	Fair
CENTRO DE INVESTIGAÇÃO HISTÓRICA (Porto University)	New Unit	Good
CENTRO DE INVESTIGAÇÃO E DOCUMENTAÇÃO DE HISTÓRIA MEDIEVAL (Portugalense University Infante D. Henrique)	New Unit	Poor
NÚCLEO DE ESTUDOS DE POPULAÇÃO E SOCIEDADE – NEPS (Minho University)	Good	[did not take place]
NÚCLEO DE ESTUDOS HISTÓRICOS (Minho University)	Fair	Poor
NÚCLEO DE ARQUEOLOGIA (Minho University)	Fair	Good
CENTRO PORTUGUÊS DE ESTUDOS DO SUDESTE ASIÁTICO (Lisbon Geographical Society)	New Unit	Fair

B. Distribution of the 2002 Evaluation Results per Ratings' Level

UNITS <i>Excellent</i>	UNITS <i>Very Good</i>	UNITS <i>Good</i>	UNITS <i>Fair</i>	UNITS <i>Poor</i>	TOTAL	UNITS not assessed
4	6	11	4	4	29	1
13,8%	20,6%	38%	13,8%	13,8%	100	Not applicable

C. Comparison of the Global Results of the 2002 and the Previous Evaluations

UNITS with better Ranking	UNITS with the same Ranking	UNITS with worse Ranking	New UNITS	Total	UNITS not Assessed
6	7	5	11	29	1

In summary, concerning the ratings awarded to the Units, it can be concluded that 58.6% of the Units (17 out of 29) were rated as *Very Good* or *Good*. On the other hand, the same percentage (13.8%) corresponds to both extremes of the ratings distribution (*Excellent* and *Poor*) which, in statistical terms, can be considered an interesting result. Additionally, the table that compares the results of the 2002 and the previous evaluations portrays only modest progress: 7 Units maintained the same ratings, whilst 6 got better marks and 5 got worst ones. With the admission of new Units, a great effort ought to be made to augment this progress in the next evaluation exercise.

1.2 Weak Points

As a matter of fact, several weak aspects were detected. Their correction is, in the Panel's view, a necessary condition to improve the scientific performance of the Research Units. The previous Evaluation Panel had already made explicit recommendations on many of these aspects with only partial practical results. Hence, it is our understanding that the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) should dully supervise, in the next three-year period, the application of those recommendations, namely in relation to the Units where more deficiencies were detected.

In some Units, a fundamental problem – already pointed out in the 1999 evaluation – is the lack of congregation of the individual research efforts (most of which of undeniable merit) into a collective patrimony. This congregation is the only way to build an image of the Unit as an entity with its own merit, which will bring several benefits at different levels. The Units must carefully consider this point.

Obviously, the Panel does not deny the value of individual work (which in the human sciences field, at least, will always be indispensable), but, rather wishes to reinforce the importance of different investigators joining efforts in the persecution of common visions and goals. Probably, for this reason, on several conversations that took place during the site visits - mainly with Unit leaders - an undesirable confusion between the characteristics of a university "Department" and the quite different requirements of a "Research Centre" was evident.

In summary, the most common deficiencies found are:

- A not always clear relationship between Units and host Institutions, reflected, for instance, on the demand of payment of overheads on the funds transferred by FCT, which, in the Panel's opinion, is undesirable;

- An incomplete definition of the universe of the Unit's investigators, which implies, for instance, the presence of the same name in the Activity Report of more than one Unit, sometimes even accompanied by the indication of the same list of bibliographic references.
- The existence of research lines with just one eligible researcher, or oriented by a not eligible one;
- Scarcity of information on the application of the funds provided by the Foundation for Science and Technology, without discrimination of the main options behind that application, and insufficient information on alternative funding sources;
- Deficient indication of the Unit's bibliographic output, mixing that pertinent to the period under evaluation with the one produced in precedent years; above all, without making distinction between the publications that resulted from the Unit's research lines and those generated by investigations freely carried out by individual researchers;
- Misconceptions about the parameters that determine the requirements of the Unit's internationalization, considering on the same level the requirements of the Foundation for Science and Technology, and the occasional international personal relations of some of the Unit's members;
- Deficient specification of the Unit's goals;
- In some cases, failure to mention the names of the Unit's Advisory Board members, as well as to present their periodical reviews;
- A misplaced conviction that the training of young investigators, namely through post-graduation courses, should not be considered among the Units' duties;
- A strange belief that the adoption of the last Panel's recommendations can be undertaken in the right before the new Panel's visit, without paying a price for it.

2. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. According to the points above, the Panel believes that some concrete measures ought to be implemented in order to help Units fulfil their full potential. Furthermore, the Panel thinks that this goal can be achieved through some minor requisites, such as the inclusion of the following information on the annual Reports (and subsequent integration in the tri-annual Report):

- 1.1 Clear definition of the universe of the researchers of each Unit, making explicit the difference between those who are eligible and those who are not (collaborators and researchers without a doctoral degree); the indication of short and medium-term projections would also be desirable;
- 1.2 Clear definition of Units' own projects and research lines, making a precise distinction between the output resulting from them and that arising from individual researchers' efforts;
- 1.3 Total clarification of the bibliographic production, making an unambiguous distinction between that resulting from that Units' projects and research lines (as mentioned in 1.2.) and that arising from individual efforts. Additionally, only publications directly concerning the three-year period under evaluation should be presented;
- 1.4 Specific indication, especially in what regards internationalisation, of:
 - Networks (due diligence for their implementation and/or results)
 - Common research projects (due diligence for their implementation and/or results)
 - Participation in scientific events (detailing whether the corresponding expenses were supported by the investigator himself or by the Unit, or, alternatively, by the corresponding Organising Committees; in the latter case the participation has a clear added value)
 - Scientific Societies to which the Unit or their investigators belong
 - Scientific Commissions, either national or international, to which the Unit or their investigators belong
 - Advisory Boards of national or international peer-reviewed journals to which the Unit or their investigators belong;
- 1.5 The unambiguous identification of the Units' Advisory Board members, as well as the presentation of the contents of their periodical reviews;
- 1.6 Detailed information on the Units' research facilities, either directly owned or belonging to other institutions. In the latter case, the corresponding utilization conditions should be explained;
- 1.7 Clear indication of the schemes for training young investigators (to obtain a post-graduation degrees or any other system), and how many per year; in the case of post-graduation students, it would be desirable to indicate the numbers and titles of the respective master's or PhD's dissertations and the names of the supervisors;

- 1.8 Mention of the teaching duties in conferences and workshops devoted to scientific and cultural extension, in Portugal and abroad, as a relevant element to assess the *social* dimension of the scientific activity;
 - 1.9 Indication of the Unit's website, explaining clearly what kind of material and information is available therein;
 - 1.10 The Unit's statutes, as well as the indication of the approval date of the three-year Activity Plan (that must not exceed 6 months after the publication of the previous evaluation results);
 - 1.11 The total Units' budget (exclusively in Euros, and itemised in % of the total), indicating the different annual revenues (from the Foundation for Science and Technology and from other sources), as well as expenses, organised by items, in order to crosscheck the overall incomes and expenditures.
2. The panel considers that, if the Units abide by these recommendations, organisation and scientific output can be significantly improved, facilitating simultaneously the tri-annual evaluation. As a matter of fact, with the admission of multiple new Units and considering the limited time available for the site visits, it is imperative to make available to the Panel objective and clear information. Furthermore, there is undeniable advantage in developing, as uniformly as possible, a database that, through the organization of comparability indicators will allow assessing the performance of the Units, the identification of the main obstacles and the prospective potential for growth.

3. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Finally, beyond the specific recommendations mentioned in §2, the Panel suggests the adoption of the following measures:

- * The Foundation for Science and Technology should establish a mid-term evaluation, to keep the Units regularly informed on any requirements and new policies adopted, as well as allowing awareness of their needs and difficulties.
- * The Foundation for Science and Technology should also implement a methodology of regular exchange of information with GRICES, Gabinete de Relações Internacionais da Ciência e do Ensino Superior (the *Office for International Cooperation in Science and Higher Education*).
- * The Foundation for Science and Technology, finally, should reinforce the support to History research, through the introduction of mechanisms that, without added costs,

may allow economies of scale and increase the productivity, visibility and prestige of the area, such as:

- Regulations that induce the increase of the number of medium size Research Units (for instance, imposing a minimum number of 6 to 8 eligible researchers per Unit);
- Ways and means to increase the number of consistent projects, in terms of the researchers involved, and thereby improving their visibility, for instance by: a) increasing to 3 to 4 the minimal number of eligible researchers per project or research line; b) establishing that all eligible researchers should be associated with a project or research line; c) promoting the free integration of researchers in Units whose scientific objectives are closer to their curricula and scientific interests, independently of the institution to which they are affiliated;
- Procedures that might catalyse the articulation between activities and/or expenditures of similar Units (by thematic or institutional proximity), in order to avoid undesirable dispersion;
- Models and criteria of financial support to the History area, equivalent to those already applied to other scientific areas;
- Personal rewards (with characteristics to be studied) to Units with better results. E.g., with *Excellent* or *Very Good* ratings, that might be considered as stimulus for more intense individual commitments.

These suggestions only aim at enhancing the value a scientific area that in the last few years went through a remarkable process of growth, both quantitative and qualitatively, in Portugal, with an undeniable international recognition. It is now important to consolidate this process through the creation of larger and better-organised Units, obedient to more effective leaderships, focused on specific themes, chosen by their scientific interest and potential for international recognition.

4. FINAL COMMENTS

Compared to the previous evaluation, the current one – that covered all History Units (with only one exception) – allows the formulation of a diagnostic closer to reality. Hence:

A.

In what concerns *research quality*, a great deal of different situations were found. If, as previously observed, the average productive level is fairly satisfactory, the situations of institutional fragility are very often evident. In these cases, the majority of Units' members,

judging by their scientific research and publications, follow their personal conveniences, without a global, clearly defined, strategic plan. As a consequence, no significant improvements are observed since 1999: The Report written at the time may be quoted: *the impact of scientific research in History is still behind what is to be expected, judging by the quality of most individual investigations. This issue is more relevant, as, at the international level; there are few cooperation channels regularly organised, no mechanisms for the diffusion of the investigation were detected, and the percentage of publications in foreign languages compared to those published in Portuguese is quite low.*

Therefore, it is easy to understand that the necessity to improve this particular issue (the international dimension of the research in History and its external visibility) must become the foremost objective for the next three-year period.

Obviously, this purpose has a dual implication: although the Units ought to be the main actors, the Foundation for Science and Technology has also an important role to play. It must define, in articulation with the Units, a strategy including the definition of priority areas, aiming at achieving international recognition and divulging the results of the national investigation. A strategy that simultaneously will require a systematic and intensive use of the new information technologies.

B.

In what concerns the investigation profile, undeniably, the support mechanisms used so far by the Foundation for Science and Technology have been important starting points. However, it is also urgent that Units' leaders become aware that, in the History area, Portugal cannot obtain international recognition in all scientific domains, through spontaneous research that follows almost exclusively individual interests. Contrarily, it is necessary to make options that will favour the formation of consistent medium/large dimension groups. There is a need of – to quote already written words – *better-organised centres, obedient to more effective leaderships, and focused on more specific themes, chosen by their scientific interest and potential for international recognition.*

As can be easily concluded, the practical consequences are no different from the ones referred to on §A, concerning *research quality*.

C.

As for the structure of research, the Panel also maintains the 1999 observations. Quoting again the previous Report: *Judging by the reality of the Units visited, the research quality, already significant at the national level, will significantly improve by providing greater intentionality (in terms of planning) and better organisation (in terms of management by*

objectives), and by implementing more agile competitiveness procedures (which will benefit higher quality Units).

Obviously, to pursue this aim – the improvement of the investigation structure – with success, the Foundation for Science and Technology must define goals in what concerns purpose, management by objectives and competitiveness. This requirement is particularly important at a time, in Portugal, when Science and Higher Education are supervised by the same Ministry. Thus, it is critical to articulate Research Units with Universities and define formulas through which the participation in institutionalised investigation activities will be a fundamental element in continuous training and professional progression, at all levels. Only under this perspective will it be possible to justify the urgent need to multiply doctoral degrees, a topic with direct implications on the organisation of post-graduation courses. The History area cannot be indifferent to this issue, in which the FCT Research Units must play an indispensable role.

D.

Finally, in what concerns the utilization of resources, as claimed on the 1999 evaluation, the Panel considers that this is not a question of either good or bad use, but rather a matter of improving that use. And, once more, that improvement depends on the acceptance of many of the recommendations underlined on this Report, especially on § 2.1 above. In any way, it seems indispensable to make an effort in order that the Units became co-responsible for obtaining, managing and making good use of the revenues they need and receive. An effort should also be undertaken to foster the social relevance of the scientific investigation, in which the Foundation for Science and Technology must play an important role

Porto, 26th February 2003

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