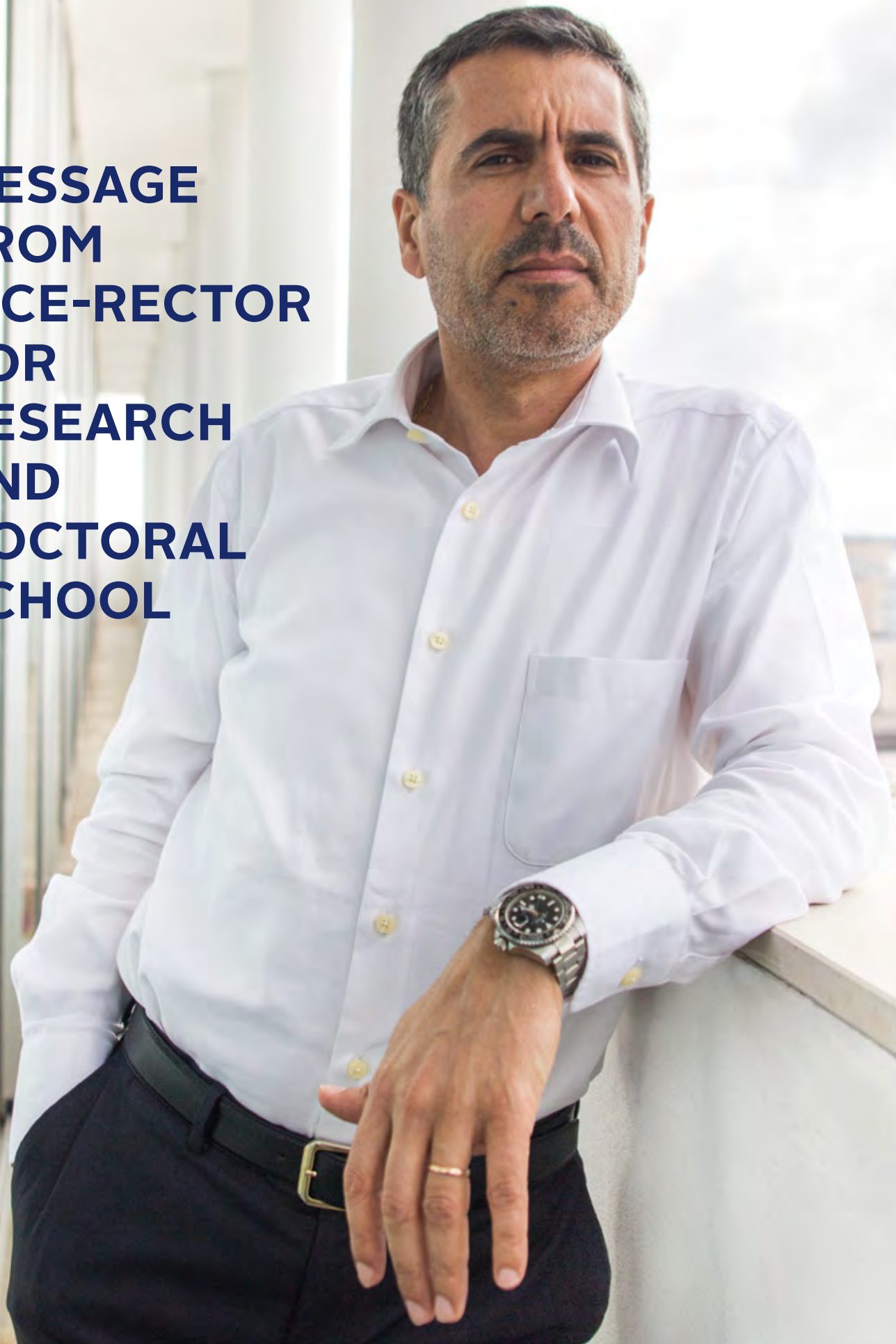


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**MESSAGE
FROM
VICE-RECTOR
FOR
RESEARCH
AND
DOCTORAL
SCHOOL**



A strategy with an international focus: a perspective by the Vice-rector José Fernando Mendes

Bearing in mind the need of a stronger and united European Research Area (ERA), it is utterly important that institutions participate more and more in international activities, either in the form of R&D projects, collaboration networks, staff exchange or other instruments / forms of fostering ERA outputs.

Portuguese and foreign institutions are striving for excellence. By pursuing joint research agendas, institutions benefit from competitive funding and are therefore able to invest efficiently in world-class facilities, potentiating the attraction of the best resources and reinforcing installed capacity.

However, in order to become international and compete at that level, attention must be drawn primarily to regional development and be aligned with the strategy for the region and country. The University of Aveiro integrates 11 of the research infrastructures (RI) identified by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology. These research infrastructures of strategic interest aim at underpinning scientific and technological advances and reinforcing the capacity of the R&D community in Portugal to be an active member of European and international projects.

International collaborative research is significantly more highly cited than individual work, so scientific missions to foreign universities have become a fundamental instrument to strengthen collaboration with foreign institutions.

The notion of 'excellence' in ERA and its strict connection with research, development and innovation has become extremely popular across Europe and at the University of Aveiro, one must be aware of that notion. Researchers at our units have to work their way towards a culture of creativity and follow the trend of a research-driven university.

Our achievements in Science and Technology over the last 4 decades are inspiring and the proof is that we continue to hold a good position among the best Portuguese and one of the best Southern European Universities, with less than 50 years, according to the Times Higher Education ranking system of the world Universities. Our success is based on a unique interdisciplinary environment and a sophisticated shared research infrastructure. Following the strategic evaluation and restructuration of R&D laboratories in Portugal, research at our campuses is now conducted under the umbrella of 19 Research Units, mostly classified with Excellent or Very Good by international panels, under the sponsorship of the Portuguese National Science Foundation.

As Vice-Rector for Research and Doctoral School, I am aware of the need to maximise research achievements. Strategies are designed to achieve and sustain research excellence.

With the mission of coordinating third cycle activities internally and externally and responsible for developing new innovative courses and admitting candidates, the Doctoral School has focused in creating/reviewing doctoral programs of excellence, including national and international joint ventures, while implementing specific measures to enhance the employability of holders of its doctoral degrees based on training needs and market requirements. It is, to this respect, important to seize opportunities available as the European Joint Doctorates within the Marie Curie Actions or Erasmus+ potentiality.

Invited chairs or catedras are a powerful instrument of internationalization and upgrade of research capacity. In order to promote the area of health sciences in Aveiro, the catedra in neurosciences has been launched and two major scientists in the field of immunology, Phillipe Pierre and Evelyn Gatti, have been hired for 5 years through funds provided by the Foundation Ilídio Pinho. Also fundraising schemes are being planned to provide additional private funds for iBiMED, the Aveiro Institute for Biomedicine, a new initiative of the University of Aveiro to tackle biomedical and clinical challenges of ageing through research.

Some research questions may not be answered at solo, even for the strongest and best-resourced institutions. International collaboration is fundamental in some fields and may be achieved with the help of Horizon 2020 or other EC funding instruments. The participation of the University of Aveiro in EC networking and R&D funding calls is absolutely mandatory to achieving international recognition. During 2014, 110 projects were submitted to EC project calls. Within Horizon 2020, 6 projects have been approved and are running, including two coordinated by UA. To this respect, the research support office maintained its mission of helping researchers in the preparation and submission of project applications and of screening and scanning national and international calls of interest for our researchers.

It is my understanding that universities must be ambitious and researchers must be aware of the importance of promoting high quality research and publishing results in high quality journals, whereas providing the highest level of training to young researchers. Also vital is the capacity to capitalize the interdisciplinary character of our campus and research. The Research Day and the Research@UA magazine are initiatives that aim at fostering this complex environment of scientific fields at a single campus.

It is also my belief that world-class research is crucial to the sustainability of research-led institutions, so researchers should be able make use of their results, envision novel patents and the creation of research spin-offs, following the trend of a 21st century university. It is hoped in 2015 that UA maximizes the impact of competitive funding by combining European, national and regional funds within strategic research fields, fulfilling Europe 2020 objectives.

I hope that Research@UA 2014 may contribute to disseminate the research developed at our campus and bring about future collaborations.