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**A WORD
FROM THE
VICE-RECTOR
- 2016 IN
REVIEW
AND BEYOND**



Throughout the years, UA has been able to anticipate and adapt to societal challenges, consistent with its mission and strategic vision. UA has sought to be innovative and pioneering, aspects that echo in the high quality of the education it provides, the research it develops and its liaison with the society. Its matrix organizational structure and the strong emphasis it has given to the relationship with the region are also innovative. These factors have proved to be crucial in the growth and development of UA over the years and the 2016 achievements revealed it again.

2016 was a fruitful year in terms of big strategic projects for UA, namely those that reinforce the university's role and relationship with the Centro region. Six interdisciplinary, basic research-oriented projects, aiming the development of research lines aligned with the strategy of the region and to potentiate UA's research capacity in pivotal research areas (Energy; Agrofood; Sea; Health; IT and Territorial Innovation) were approved. These will start in mid-2017 and will have profound impact in terms of attraction and fixation of highly skilled researchers. International collaboration has been a fundamental aspect to advance and maintain UA visibility and success. The research support office (RSO) kept working on helping researchers in the preparation/submission of applications and on screening and scanning national and international calls of interest for UA researchers. Due to their outstanding role in recruiting doctoral students and researchers of international merit, Marie Curie actions also deserved special attention from the RSO. This is also related to the work of the Doctoral School (EDUA). Bearing in mind the need to constantly adapt to the challenges imposed by the new policies and dynamics of markets and society, its activity focused on stimulating policies for the promotion of doctoral courses better suited to today's societal challenges.

For its dimension and strategic importance, I must highlight the TEAMING – “The Discoveries Center for Regenerative and Precision Medicine”, approved in 2016. Led by the University of Minho, it is a partnership between University College London, University of Porto, University of Aveiro, University of Lisbon and New University of Lisbon. The Aveiro campus will be an asset to UA and to the region, as it will allow networking in the areas of regenerative and precision medicine with institutions of reference at national and international level, namely with the University College London and with the hospitals in the region. Also, it will strength the competences already installed in the research units (RU) oriented to these scientific areas. A relevant role in the development of the teaching component in the area of medicine, which is one of the future challenges of UA, is also envisaged.

The next year will be challenging for our RU, with the upcoming evaluation period which will require a reflection on the partners to be involved, the scientific areas and the guidelines to follow, promoting, where appropriate, their reorganization, by reorienting research to new interdisciplinary areas, making them more competitive and aligned with regional, national, european and international funding policies. There is also the constant need to strengthen existing areas, interconnecting, whenever possible, research in the social and human sciences and arts with research in engineering, natural sciences and health sciences, taking advantage of the UA matrix structure. Furthermore, it is imperative to continue monitoring and guiding the restructuration plans which are under implementation, in order to overcome, in the next evaluation process, the less positive classifications.

By reinforcing the capacity of the R&D of the RUs, namely in terms of equipment and staff, I must highlight the participation of UA in 9 research infrastructures identified by FCT. These will work in network, with different nodes along the country, maximizing resources and potentiating collaborations.

The consolidation of the path that UA has been pursuing is also reflected in the results obtained in the world rankings, namely Times Higher Education ranking (2016-2017) (456th position worldwide; 2nd best position at the national level). Equally revealing of the excellence of the research carried out in UA are the results of the 4th edition of the FCT Researcher call with 22 researchers funded (3rd national position).

People make the difference and these new researchers are the face of renewal. In line, UA is already setting up its internal recruitment program that foresees the opening of at least 10 researcher posts by the end of 2017. Also, the proposed national scientific employment strategy and the approval of DL57 imply major changes both for UA and for the academic community and its implementation should be carefully monitored.

The contemporary challenges require a full response in terms of scientific innovation. It is hoped that scientific research, carried out in different areas and branches of knowledge, will have repercussions on the lives of individuals and on the social and cultural dynamics of communities, in a logic of strengthening ties and relations between Science, Innovation, Art and society. UA will keep working on that direction as we want to do more and better.