

MESSAGE FROM VICE-RECTOR FOR RESEARCH AND DOCTORAL SCHOOL



2013 was a special year for the University of Aveiro (UA), not only because it was its 40th anniversary, but also because it was the closure year of the first mandate of the present Rectory. It was the time to reflect and to take important decisions, but, simultaneously, a year to celebrate and to be proud for the great achievements in such a short history.

The interrelation and integration of research, education and cooperation with society have always been present in the history of UA and its reinforcement has marked this last mandate. Training young researchers with high quality education and ensuring that the research developed at the UA research centres has impact at the fundamental and technological levels, contributing to a more sustainable society, continues to be a part of the UA main objectives.

In the prosecution of those objectives, in the last years the UA carried out major efforts to maintain and attract some of the best researchers in strategic research areas and to invest in cutting-edge scientific infrastructures in order to provide to its researchers the best conditions to compete in the national and international levels. Through the programme SAICT - Support System to the Scientific and Technological Infrastructures, the UA has been able to co-finance, in the past few years, several scientific infrastructures of major relevance for its research community. These infrastructures comprise new research facilities, specifically the ECOMARE (research centre for innovation and sustainability of the economy of the sea) and the building for optical communications, radio communications and robotics; the recovery of two buildings which integrate the associated labs CICECO and CESAM and the acquisition of several scientific equipment for the research centres I3N, QOPNA and TEMA and to the Polytechnic School Aveiro North.

During 2013, the scientific projects of two invited Chairs have started in two important scientific fields, with the partnership of the Caixa Geral de Depósitos, the Nokia Siemens Networks Portugal S.A. and the Foundation for Science and Technology - the Chair CGD - Marine Studies and the Chair NSN - Telecommunications, respectively. Furthermore, in the beginning of the year, the projects, co-funded by the program "Mais Centro" in the strategic areas of biomaterials, ICT, energy, neurosciences and marine studies, initiated its work plans, which allowed the recruitment of more than 50 researchers to strengthen the development and impact of those areas.

Additionally to the aforementioned measures, efforts have been made to promote the diversification of funding sources, mainly through the participation in EU-funded projects. The participation in new European projects has been increasing along with the number of exchange programs, joint master and doctoral programs and other internationalization actions. In fact, 2013 was a special year in terms of EU-funded projects, since it was the year in which the UA had its first ERC Grant approved with the project "IgYPurTech", promoted by Mara G. Freire, a young researcher of associated laboratory CICECO.

Taking into account the national constraints and uncertainty in which respects the funds for research, that is, undoubtedly, a strategy to maintain and reinforce with special attention to the new framework programme (Horizon 2020), the most relevant funding instrument for the next seven years. The multidisciplinary nature of the UA research centres will, certainly, be one of our main strengths to potentiate our participation in research projects funded by the Horizon 2020.

In line with the strategy adopted in the previous year with the creation of the Aveiro Institute of Nanotechnology (AIN), and considering the relevance of the research topic at a regional, national and European levels, in 2013, it was launched the Aveiro Institute for Marine Science and Technology (AIMare). This virtual institute integrates researchers from seven research centres and aims at fostering capacity building and know-how transfer, as well as promoting synergies between academia, industry, policy-makers and society, and contribute to the national and international recognition of UA excellence in coastal, marine and maritime sciences and technology. Recent results demonstrate that the UA has been following a path of success. The positions achieved in several international rankings highlight the quality of its research and education. The Leiden ranking has recently acknowledge UA as the best national institution; in the National Taiwan University ranking the UA is among the best world institutions in two fields and in eight subject areas; and the Times Higher Education ranking classified the UA among the best institutions with less than 50 years.

Important prizes attributed to successful students and researchers and prestigious distinctions endorsed to UA faculty members are also important drivers for the university development and its national and international recognition. Currently, UA has members in the prestigious Academia Europaea and in the Sciences Academy of Lisbon in several sections among other relevant distinctions.

Furthermore, in the scientific highlights section of this edition it can be found some of the great achievements of the UA scientific community, resulting from the work developed in the last years in several different research fields, reflecting the important collaborations established with numerous renowned national and international organizations, as well as the multidisciplinary environment that characterizes the UA.

I hope this fourth edition may be considered an exciting and encouraging reading and, who knows, the starting point for new future collaborations!