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MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-RECTOR



A brief analysis of the research-related numbers in 2017 clearly shows that UA has kept on its track and keeps working towards a more innovative and internationally recognized institution. In fact, it was a year marked by the start of the 6 interdisciplinary research lines, aligned with the strategy of the region; by the start of the project Smart Green Homes, which demonstrates the strong link between UA and one of the most important regional industry representatives (Bosch Termotecnologia SA) and also by the beginning of the work in the frame of the TEAMING approved project – “The Discoveries Center for Regenerative and Precision Medicine”. Furthermore, there were 26 EU-funded projects (H2020, Erasmus+, Interreg Atlantic Area) that started during 2017 and 26 national projects. 2017 was also a challenging year marked by outstanding number of UA applications to the FCT call for projects in all Scientific Domains, 388 as proponent and 122 as partner. Also of relevance were the several protocols and projects with the Portuguese Speaking Countries.

UA consolidated, as well, its position on the different rankings (e.g. 501-600 position on Times Higher Education; 81 on THE 100 Under 50 Universities, 280 on the CWTS Leiden Ranking, PP_top10%; 403 on Sir Global, and the first time on QS world ranking, etc.) and accomplished the goal of having 10 scientific areas on ISI Web of Knowledge – essential indicators.

These numbers are important as they furthermore reflect the concerns and impact of Academia UA at different levels, namely in what social responsibility is concerned. In fact, the new economic and social reality in a global and globalized World imposes a reflection on the role of regional, national and international institutions in the development of a more sustainable and responsible World. In this context, the Universities/Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) role is of major relevance as they can and should create socially responsible spaces and dynamics, promote a fair development and act as a catalyst for change in the field.

Our University has been aware of its importance in this context and since its early beginning defines itself as a socially responsible institution committed to the global sustainable development. Its mission encompasses three major areas – teaching, research and cooperation with society, – strengthened by four major cross-cutting themes: quality, internationalization, attractiveness, heritage. Thus, UA seeks to promote excellence in higher education, in basic and applied education and research, in the formation and transfer of knowledge and technology to society, as well as in the promotion of cultural and

humanistic activities. Strongly linked to the region, UA recognizes the need for universities and society to strengthen ties and focus their efforts in fostering regional and national development.

This means that UA has been making its path but there still is a long way to go and its commitment to social responsibility needs to be and should be strengthened. UA, as a university, has in hands the great challenge of providing the future professionals with an education based on the pillars of social responsibility, that they will implement, hopefully, in their lives – big changes in the way how we teach and train our young (and elder) professionals are needed, as Universities of XXI cannot teach as they did it in the past. This necessarily materializes in the management of the relations with its students, employees, suppliers, and all the organizations they interact with and a different concept campus more broad, beyond the traditional vision associated with infrastructures and physical characteristics, valuing the involvement of all members of the Academic Community and integrating concerns of social responsibility in a transversal way.

New governing models, more transparent and democratic, ethics, the development of inclusiveness politics based on social justice, gender balance, non-discrimination, conciliation of personal and professional life, life-long training, policies to overcome any constraints posed by social factors, need to be set in place.

Making our campi environmentally sustainable, secure and healthy, new and innovative measures to promote employability and life-long training, measures to fight university drop-out, new teaching models, based on a project approach, stimulating volunteer work, strengthening mobility and national and international collaboration, promoting the relation with alumni, Open Science and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) implementation are some of the issues and challenge that UA needs to address in a structured and strategic way in order to boost its place both at the national and international panoramas.

Ultimately, the goal is that UA will become each time more an actor that builds bridges and social spaces to improve mechanisms to promote the social responsibility, contributing to a more sustainable society. I count with the contributions of all to achieve this goal!