

External Review Committee Report, November 2008

The second meeting of the External Review Committee (ERC) for the collaborative program between universities in Portugal and Carnegie-Mellon University (CMU) in the USA — CMU | Portugal, Information and Communication Technologies Institute (ICTI) — took place over the 4 day period from 3rd to 6th November 2008.

The Committee commented as follows:

ICTI is a visionary initiative to advance yet further the standing and standard of research and postgraduate education in Information and Communication Technology in Portugal. Once again we met with a wide range of people involved: the Secretary of State for Science, Technology and Higher Education; the President of FCT and the Executive Director for International Partnerships at FCT; the two program directors (from CMU and Portugal); course leaders and faculty both from Portuguese universities and from CMU; industrial sponsors; a number of students and some potential students. We are most grateful to all for the positive and open way in which they engaged with us.

We especially commend the high degree of industrial involvement and commitment that has been secured; this involvement needs to continue at an appropriately high level. This is necessarily a complex initiative: four Masters programs aimed at professionals in industry, 6 focused dual degree PhD programs and a number of collaborative research projects. We were very impressed with the high caliber of the 100 students, from Portugal and more widely around the world, who have been attracted to participate in the various graduate programs. The resulting outcome will be numerous future leading contributors for the Information and Communications Technology sector – both in industry, academia and public policy areas – for Portugal. ICTI involves interaction and collaboration amongst a large number of Departments and Institutes in some 9 Universities in Portugal engaging with 5 schools at Carnegie-Mellon University in the USA and linked with a number of sponsoring industrial companies in Portugal. This degree of interaction and engagement at such a relatively early stage is impressive indeed. We anticipate that organizational and funding arrangements will need to be adapted – possibly even to the extent of FCT and the industry as funding partners establishing jointly an independent legal entity - to provide yet greater agility and to ensure that the benefits can become deeply embedded and sustained in the university system in Portugal.

Faculty on both sides are to be congratulated for the impressive progress that has been made during this start-up phase; we look forward to the future evolution of the program. Taken together with the other International collaborative programs that have been initiated, ICTI has the potential to contribute substantially to the transformation of university research and graduate education in Portugal, ensuring that the very highest international standards of excellence are attained.

Professor Sir John O'Reilly, Cranfield University, UK (Chair)
Professor Luigia Carlucci Aiello, Sapienza University of Roma, Italy
Professor Tariq Durrani, Strathclyde University, UK
Professor Joel Moses, MIT, USA