

Carnegie Mellon Portugal Program

Statement following External Review Committee Meeting, January 2021

The External Review Committee (ERC) of the Carnegie Mellon Portugal Program in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) convened, using video-conferencing technology given constraints inherent to the on-going COVID-19 Pandemic, during January 2021 to review progress. The Committee had received in advance an extensive written report covering the objectives and outcomes for the earlier phases of the program and an update on developments, with both the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) and the National Innovation Agency (ANI) now engaged. It was noted that the broad intent remains: *'The mission of the Carnegie Mellon Portugal Program is to place Portugal at the forefront of research and technological development in the area of ICT, by promoting an innovation ecosystem with a tight coupling between cutting-edge research, world-class graduate education, and highly innovative companies in the data-driven economy'*.

Over a period of three days, from the 25th to the 27th January 2021, the ERC interacted with program participants (university faculty, researchers, participating industrialists, students, alumni etc.) as well as senior representatives of the funding organisations, the Board of Trustees and other key stakeholders. It was observed that the collaboration between FCT and ANI, working with the Directors coordinating this third phase of the program, had achieved a high degree of industrial participation both in terms of sectors and individual companies represented, many new to the program or to collaborating in research with universities at this level.

Following these interactions, the ERC comments: 'It is clear from the outcomes to date that this innovative program has already served as a powerful driver for advancing ICT research capability and performance in both academia and industry in Portugal, with clear potential to continue to contribute yet further. We consider the unique Dual PhD arrangement together with the associated links with industry, to play a seminal part in the ICT research, innovation and enterprise eco-system in Portugal by giving participants at one and the same time the opportunity to act both as research performing agents contributing to the desired societal/industrial objectives and outcomes while progressing their further professional development as top-tier individual researchers gaining experience both in Portugal and in Carnegie Mellon University in the USA. And not only have the participants in the program benefited, but there is a network effect as they interact with others, sharing, influencing and enriching the local research culture with new ideas and methods. We already see very positive impact and believe this will persist and perhaps spread for decades.

Professor Sir John O'Reilly, UCL UK and A*STAR Singapore (Chair)

Professor John Guttag, MIT USA

Dr Fernando Pereira, Google USA

Professor Yvonne Rogers, UCL UK

Professor Giulio Sandini, IIT Italy

Professor Ali Sayed, EPFL Switzerland