

## CETRAD Program Review by the External Advisory Committee (EAC)<sup>1</sup>

The Vice-Rector for Research and Innovation opened the morning event on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2017. The programme continued with a meeting to present information about the two new doctoral programmes associated to CETRAD and meet with our research fellows and Ph.D. and master's degree students working and studying in the various research projects in the Centre. We also invited Ph.D. students not involved in the research projects, to present their research proposals. The meeting allowed the EAC members to interact with these research fellows and graduate students along with the two directors of the recent doctoral programmes. In the afternoon of the 20 October, the programme included an event with our Stakeholders (members from civil society, governmental and non-governmental organizations, businesses, cooperatives and associations) to permit the members to observe and hear the opinions about CETRAD's research role in regional development through two focus groups. The event was called a Stakeholder Forum. In the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup> October, the executive group at CETRAD met with the EAC members to interact and discuss the research groups and thematic lines. After these short presentations, the EAC ask clarification questions and spoke concerning suggestions about our research activities and projects, future plans, strengths and areas for improvement. Also, the day events resulted in the structuring and completion of the report about their findings and recommendations.



### 1. CETRAD's Governance

The governance structure was identified poorly in the report sent to the EAC. Discussions during the meetings gave the idea that the real structure may be very complex and needs to be simplified. One thing is the process of organization and development of research and another for the governance structure. For instance, research lines should organize the research process but it does not need to be identified in the governance structure. The EAC recommends simplification and clarification.

The objectives of a research centre have to be priority linked to scientific criteria and the governance options have to reflect this. The commission acknowledges the importance of Ph.D. Courses and recommends a relation between them and CETRAD governance.

The above considerations are about the internal construction of a governance structure. During our visit we have understood that the relations with stakeholders were a central concern. It seems important that their role in governance could be also clarified, through a clearer definition of the role of stakeholders in governance.

### 2. PhD students and research fellows

Ph.D. students and Ph.D. programmes can be considered a key resource for the Centre. This commission acknowledges the outstanding quality and diversity of the research topics carried out by Ph.D. students. Ph.D. students may have an important role in the strategy of the centre, as they provide support to existing research projects and contribute to enrich the research

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activity of the Centre with fresh ideas, and may provide contacts with the territory and with other research institutions abroad.

For this reason, we recommend that the links between Ph.D. activity and the research of CETRAD be strengthened. This may imply actions for further alignment between Ph.D. research and CETRAD strategy through specific initiatives, as for example periodical joint workshops. We also recommend that the centre take into consideration the possibility to involve Ph.D. students in the governance of CETRAD through their representatives.

### **3. Relations with Stakeholders**

The relations with local stakeholders are clearly emphasized by CETRAD and the meeting with them brought a lot of valuable information to the table. However their role has to be clearly defined and settled now in order to catch as many opportunities as possible for their involvement. It has to be reminded and confirmed that CETRAD is before all else a research entity, and not a development or consultancy agency. This means that the researchers do not have to bring immediate responses or solutions to the interrogations of the stakeholders, given the different times and agendas of both groups, but that their role is: 1) to translate their demands in scientific questions or issues, in order to work on them in the medium and long term, and 2) to inform them clearly of the main research results in an accessible form (like pages at CETRAD site, posters...). As a matter of fact the Unit has to organize meetings on a regular base with a group of stakeholders and try to make it as broad as possible, as well as to identify strategic stakeholders and cultivate special relations with them.



### **4. Publication and working papers**

The main topics and goals of the research led by CETRAD are by essence multidisciplinary, which means that the results must encompass a broad range of subjects and cover various fields of research, as well as social and economic concerns. However, this does not imply that all the research be multidisciplinary. But that they have to be coordinated in order to cover the maximum topics, and to be combined in the end to encompass the planned targets. The strategy of publication must follow several goals in this respect 1) to identify multidisciplinary journals in social sciences in order to publish the most advanced research locally produced, 2) to follow a strategy of identification of good scientific citation index journals for the most academic papers, 3) to promote the integration of the research members on editorial boards and 4) it is interesting to monitor about the way and the necessity to initiate a CETRAD working papers series

### **5. Resources for CETRAD**

The research effort of the CETRAD has been constructed in difficult conditions, with a shortage of means, in an interior University. Good results can be optimized with more resources. First of all, a deficit of technical research administration for projects and professional project managers in the structure of the Center is detected. Many projects must be requested and directed by professors/researchers who must attend other everyday university tasks. For this reason, it is recommended to promote the recruitment of more professional and technical managers to support projects, and at this time there is only one administrative fellow currently at the centre.



Similarly, the financial funds of the CETRAD, and in particular those from the FCT, must be aligned with CETRAD strategic proposals. Finally, the realization of contacts with institutions and regional private actors, are encouraged to procure additional funds for CETRAD. It should be encouraged that both the practice of patronage and the signing of contracts, where a public or private company will demand results, yearbooks of juncture or regular reports by CETRAD in exchange for increased financing.

## **6. Diagnostic activities**

The external advisory board praises the effort of CETRAD to carry out a diagnostic of its activity, especially for what concerns productivity indicators. This activity may be further strengthened and documented, with a deeper SWOT analysis and a reflection on implications for action, especially as far as strategic objectives are concerned. The EAC should be further involved in the evaluation of the performance of the Centre.

## **7. Strategic objectives for the future**

The external advisory board recognizes the role of CETRAD as a point of reference for research on challenging and emerging issues from the region. It also acknowledges the effort to internationalize, with a relevant increase in peer-reviewed publications in international journals. However, productivity and internationalization should be pushed further. Initiatives in this direction could be put in place such as increased links with international networks, sandwich Ph.D. thesis work with the centre, joint authorships with foreign research institutes and universities. Part of CETRAD resources could be allocated to these initiatives. CETRAD staff should also encourage PhD students to publish during their PhD course.

Intensified relational activity, both with stakeholders and academic/research partners is the key to attract more resources. Moreover, CETRAD should place a specific effort to get at least one FTC research project funded as its strategic objective for its future.

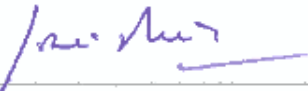
Vila Real, UTAD, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2017



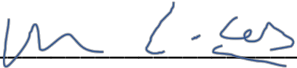
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