# PORTUGUESE HIGHER EDUCATION:

# A VIEW FROM THE OUTSIDE

CRUP
CONSELHO DE REITORES DAS UNIVERSIDADES PORTUGUESAS

EUA
European University Association

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***Disclaimer**:*

*All team members worked on this report in their personal capacity as higher education experts. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in the report are entirely those of the authors and should not be attributed in any manner to the institutions to which the team members are attached or to the countries where these institutions are located or which they represent.*

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This report presents an independent appraisal of the problems and challenges facing the Portuguese Higher Education (HE) system. It has been drawn up by a team of experts nominated by the European University Association (EUA) at the invitation of the *Conselho de Reitores das Universidades Portuguesas* (CRUP).

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## ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| A3ES | *Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior* |
| ADI | *Agência de Inovação* |
| APESP | *Associação Portuguesa do Ensino Superior Privado* |
| CCDR | *Comissão Coordenadora do Desenvolvimento Regional* |
| CCES | *Conselho Coordenador do Ensino Superior* |
| CCISP | *Conselho Coordenador dos Institutos Superiores Politécnicos* |
| CET | *Cursos de Especialização Tecnológica* |
| CNAEF | *Classificação Nacional das Áreas de Educação e Formação* |
| CNCT | *Conselho Nacional de Ciência e Tecnologia* |
| CNE | *Conselho Nacional de Educação* |
| CNEI | *Conselho Nacional para o Empreendedorismo e Inovação* |
| CNRS | *Centre national de recherche scientifique* |
| CRUP | *Conselho de Reitores das Universidades Portuguesas* |
| DG EAC | Directorate General for Education and Culture (European Commission) |
| DG EMPL | Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (European Commission) |
| EAP | Economic Adjustment Programme |
| EC | European Commission |
| ECB | European Central Bank |
| ECDU | *Estatuto da Carreira Docente Universitária* |
| ECPDESP | *Estatuto da Carreira do Pessoal Docente do Ensino Superior Politécnico* |
| EHEA | European Higher Education Area |
| ENQA | European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education |
| EQAR | European Quality Assurance Register |
| EQF-LLL | European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning |
| ERC | European Research Council |
| ESF | European Social Fund |
| ESG | Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area |
| EUA | European University Association |
| FCG | *Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian* |
| FCT | *Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia* |
| HE | Higher education |
| HEI | Higher education institution |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| IPB | *Instituto Politécnico de Bragança* |
| IPL | *Instituto Politécnico de Leiria* |
| IPL[1] | *Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa* |
| IPP | *Instituto Politécnico do Porto* |
| IPS | *Instituto Politécnico de Setúbal* |
| ISCTE-IUL | *Instituto Universitário de Lisboa* (formerly the *Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa*) |
| LLL | Lifelong learning |
| MOOC | Massive open on-line course |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |

[1] Referred to subsequently as IP-Lis, in order to avoid confusion.

| | |
|---|---|
| PAEF | *Programa de Assistência Económica e Financeira* |
| PALOPS | *Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa* |
| QREN | *Quadro de Referência Estratégica Nacional* |
| RIS3 | Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisations |
| RJIES | *Regime jurídico das instituições de ensino superior* |
| SME | Small and medium-sized enterprise |
| STEM | Science, technology, engineering and mathematics |
| UA | *Universidade de Aveiro* |
| UAB | *Universidade Aberta* |
| UAC | *Universidade dos Açores* |
| UALG | *Universidade do Algarve* |
| UAS | University of applied science |
| UBI | *Universidade da Beira Interior* |
| UCP | *Universidade Católica Portuguesa* |
| UE | *Universidade de Évora* |
| UL | *Universidade de Lisboa* |
| UMA | *Universidade da Madeira* |
| UMinho | *Universidade do Minho* |
| UNL | *Universidade Nova de Lisboa* |
| UP | *Universidade do Porto* |
| UTAD | *Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro* |
| UTL | *Universidade Técnica de Lisboa* |

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. At the request of CRUP, EUA convened an expert group to make recommendations regarding the re-structuring of the Portuguese HE system and the rationalisation of the national course portfolio. These two issues had been the object of discussion for some time and government had placed them, unresolved, on its agenda. The austerity measures imposed by the EC-ECB-IMF rescue package had brought matters to a head in 2012.

2. The expert team visited Lisbon and Porto in October 2012 and met with as wide a range of stakeholders as was possible in five days. It also monitored press coverage of HE developments from January 2012 onwards and enjoyed access to detailed data and analysis kindly provided by A3ES.

3. Its recommendations are predicated on increased investment in higher education and research. While acutely aware of the current financial difficulties, the team assumes Portugal's continuing commitment to a range of percentage targets agreed at EU and at Bologna Process levels:

- spending on higher education as a fraction of GDP: 2%
- spending on research as a fraction of GDP: 3%
- HE participation and graduation rate by the 30-34 age range by 2020: 40%
- adult participation (25-64 age range) by 2020: 15%
- transnational mobility of HE students by 2020: 20%

4. Higher education, if adequately resourced and regulated, can make a major contribution to sustainable economic growth. Portugal faces the problems posed by demographic decline and by the migration of population from interior and islands to the mainland coast. Regional development is thus a key consideration of this report. However, the team considers that the network of higher education institutions is not optimally structured to stimulate cultural and economic regeneration. Universities and polytechnics, public and private, are located in such a way as to aggravate regional imbalance, rather than to redress it.

5. All sub-sectors of the HE and research establishment must be mobilised so as to bring to bear on Portugal's structural and economic difficulties the most effective combination of education and training, basic and applied research, knowledge creation and transfer, innovation, and international collaboration. Trans-binary cooperation, in particular, is crucial, but it cannot operate to its full potential until the binary distinction is clearly defined.

6. To this end, the CCES (*Conselho Coordenador do Ensino Superior*), enshrined in legislation but never activated, should be convened, re-configured and re-empowered. Representative of all stakeholders, and acting as a buffer between government and institutions, it will be able to formulate a national higher education strategy based on consensus. It will retain advisory functions, but will gain important regulatory duties, allowing it to steer the creation of a flexible, user-friendly, effective binary system based on distinctiveness of mission and parity of esteem.

7. In particular, the CCES will oversee the setting up of separate funding and budget allocation councils for universities and polytechnics in the public sector. These will be managed predominantly

by the sub-sectors themselves, with the CCES assuring liaison with government, regional development, research/innovation and quality assurance agencies, and external stakeholders. CCES will put in place a multi-annual cycle of institutional contracts and funding allocations.

8. The ethos of the Portuguese HE system will shift to one in which funding is progressively output-based and in which curriculum design is primarily focused on learning outcomes.

9. In order to allow major reform to be implemented and embedded, the team considers that RJIES should not be revised until its next scheduled review date (2017). If changes to the legal framework are envisaged in the meantime, the degree of autonomy enshrined in current legislation should be maintained and reinforced.

## INDICATIVE ROADMAP

| *When* | *Who* | *What* | *Recommendation* |
|---|---|---|---|
| As soon as possible | Government | Convene CCES | 36 |
| | Government | Incentivise mobility of young academics and researchers from coast to interior and islands | 8 |
| | Government/ Parliament | Enact *Estatuto do Estudante Estrangeiro* | 29 |
| | Government/ HEIs | Fully implement *Estatuto da Carreira do Pessoal Docente do Ensino Superior Politécnico* (ECPDESP) | 10 |
| | | Initiate steps to raise level of international lecturer/researcher recruitment | 31 |
| | A3ES, APESP, CCISP, CRUP | Establish list of indicative first- and second-cycle course titles, in line with CNAEF | 35 |
| | A3ES, APESP, CRUP | Develop professional doctorate provision | 11 |
| | Student organisations | Consolidate to achieve national identity | 37 |
| Within three months | CCES | Propose amended remit, composition, mandate | 36 |
| Mid/late 2013 | Government/ Parliament | Amend Regulatory Decree 15/2009 and convene reconfigured CCES | |
| 2014 | CCES | Produce draft national HE strategy featuring clearly defined, flexible and effective binary system | 22, 27 |
| | | Put in place instruments and processes to address data collection, distance and e-learning, graduate tracking, student-centred learning, student finance, widening participation | 2, 3, 4, 5, 19, 24, 25, 26, 31, 42 |
| | | Devise terms of reference, composition, mandate for university and polytechnic funding and budget allocation councils | 15, 38 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Government/ Parliament | Legislative action to operationalise funding councils | |
| | CCDRs, APESP, CCISP, CRUP | Set up regional HE and research facilitation bodies | 7 |
| 2015 | CCES | Initiate multi-annual funding round on four-year contract basis | 16, 40 |
| 2017 | All stakeholders | Review RJIES | 12, 13, 20 |

## METHODOLOGY

In late 2011, the *Conselho de Reitores das Universidades Portuguesas* (CRUP) requested the European University Association (EUA) to convene a team of European experts, with a view to appraising the Portuguese higher education system, identifying its principal problems and making appropriate recommendations.

For some time CRUP had been monitoring developments, conscious of the need for a strategic review of the system's structure and patterns of course provision. By 2011, however, the situation had reached crisis point. The EUR 78 billion rescue package, put together by the so-called troika,[2] had begun to impact seriously on the already declining financial health of Portuguese higher education institutions, as well as on the affordability of their programmes.

The stresses occasioned by the conditions attaching to the bail-out brought more long-standing difficulties into sharp relief, notably the consequences of demographic decline and the concentration of population and educational opportunity in the coastal cities, at the expense of the interior and the islands. It was an opportune moment to take stock and to consider new directions.

An expert team was assembled. It consisted of:

- Ms Andrea Blättler, former member of the executive committee of the Swiss Students Union and of the European Students' Union
- Professor Dr Jean-Marc Rapp, former Rector of the Université de Lausanne, former chair of the Swiss Rectors Conference (CRUS), former president of EUA, and currently director of the Centre de droit des affaires (CEDIDAC) of the Université de Lausanne
- Professor Dr Carles Solà, former Rector of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, former chair of the Spanish Rectors' Conference (CRUE)

Dr Howard Davies, UK-based independent consultant and senior adviser to EUA, acted as convener and rapporteur.

In addition, the team drew heavily on the knowledge and experience of its 'national expert', Professor Doutor Pedro Teixeira, Associate Professor in the University of Porto and director of the *Centro de Investigação de Políticas de Ensino Superior*.

The team's investigations were focused on a one-week visit to Portugal in October 2012, during which it met as wide a range of stakeholders[3] as was possible – specifically:

- representatives of government and parliament

[2] In June 2011 the European Commission (EC), European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) imposed a regime of deficit reduction by austerity as the condition of the bail-out (this was the Economic Adjustment Programme [EAP] – in Portuguese, the PAEF, the *Programa de Assistência Económica e Financeira).* By the end of 2012, the troika had made six quarterly reports. These were cautiously optimistic, while voicing anxiety about rising unemployment. The EAP had by then reached its half-way mark. In January 2013 Portugal successfully re-entered the bond market, but still had the third highest debt-to-output ratio in the EU, at 120.3% (*Financial Times*, 24.01.13).

[3] The full list of meetings can be found in Annex 1.

- the quality assurance and research funding agencies
- bodies representing rectors and presidents of polytechnic and university sectors, private and public, together with the chairs of *conselhos gerais* of public universities
- trade unions and student unions
- representatives of the international relations and research communities
- the *Conselho Nacional de Educação* (CNE) and the *Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian* (FCG)

From them it gathered face-to-face testimony as well as relevant published material. Prior to the visit, it had monitored the Portuguese press over a period of several months, consulted a variety of sources and studied the detailed analysis of higher education provision undertaken by the *Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior* (A3ES). Following its visit, the team continued to monitor press reports and maintained contact with a number of its interlocutors.

The face-to-face encounters with Portuguese stakeholders were conducted according to 'Chatham House rules', i.e. on the understanding that statements of fact and opinion could be cited but not attributed. This report abides by that convention: it asserts on behalf of its informants, without naming them. The team's own views and recommendations are clearly identified.

Debate in Portugal is intense and public; the views of each constituency are well known to the others. The team nevertheless found a diversity of opinion in each group of informants. This was helpful, since its purpose was to achieve as nuanced a view as possible. Where the team found a broad consensus or a welter of competing perceptions, these are recorded in this report.

The team endeavoured to act as a sounding board. Its report does not present data, systematically explore alternative scenarios, rehearse stereotyped positions or embrace those of any particular stakeholder group. It reflects on the testimonies which it heard and sets them against the backdrop of European higher education policy in order to venture a set of recommendations.

The team was aware of the triple evaluation undertaken from 2006 onwards by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and EUA.[4] Indeed, some of the team members were active in the EUA institutional evaluations. The conclusions and recommendations of previous appraisals were borne in mind, since to some extent they – and other sources – covered features of the geo-academic landscape (for example, the Azores and Madeira) which the team could not visit.

In practice, the team's investigations were more tightly referenced to the current context. In particular, to one of the strategic aims set out by the government in its 2012 budget legislation: 'to rationalise the HE network, with a view to optimising the use of available resources and to aligning educational and training provision more closely with national need'.[5]

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[4] *Tertiary Education in Portugal*, OECD, 2007; *Interim Report on Institutional Evaluations undertaken in Portugal in academic years 2006-07 and 2007-08*, European University Association at http://www.eua.be/iep/types-of-evaluations/coordinated-evaluations.aspx; *Quality Assurance of Higher Education in Portugal - An Assessment of the Existing System and Recommendations for a Future System*, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2006, at http://www.enqa.eu/pubitem.lasso?id=91&cont=pubDetail

[5] Law 64-B/2011, *Diário da República*, December 30, '*Orçamento do Estado para 2012*', p.5538-(46): '*Racionalizar a rede de instituições de ensino superior com vista a optimizar o uso dos recursos disponíveis e melhorar o ajustamento da oferta formativa às necessidades do País*'

At that stage – at the end of 2011 – the government's agenda was clear,[6] although it gave no indication of the timeframe, the means or the criteria which it would use to secure its objective. One year later, the text of the 2013 budget[7] reiterated the preoccupation with higher education provision, still without spelling out the detail of its intended interventions:

> The network of [HE] institutions and training programmes is heterogeneous and unbalanced. Areas of high quality coexist with others which are problematic in terms of teaching, research and sustainability.[8] [rapporteur's translation]

Taking note of the government's position, the team opted for a dual focus around which to pitch its dialogue with stakeholders and its eventual recommendations: the re-structuring of the higher education system and the rationalisation of the national course portfolio.

In the course of its visits to Lisbon and Porto, however, it found that stakeholders' concerns covered a range of policy strands which, while related, could usefully be addressed as discrete items.

The team's report therefore looks at the two central issues in turn (Parts A and B), using each as an umbrella under which to examine particular issues: the binary system, regional development, research, foundations and mergers, funding, lifelong learning, learning and teaching, internationalisation, and quality assurance.

The re-structuring and rationalisation addressed in Parts A and B are not independent of each other. The team entrusts their articulation to the *Conselho Coordenador do Ensino Superior* (CCES) and Part C spells out its functions.

Each section contains a summary of the stakeholders' perceptions, as they were communicated to the team in October 2012, together with the team's observations and recommendations.

[6] See also its English-language website: 'Higher Education is essential to the country's development. The quality of university institutions' graduates and of the research done at them is the driving force behind cultural and economic wealth. The quantitative increase in higher education must be complemented by a rise in quality that makes it possible to **match the offer to the existing needs via the rationalisation of the network of institutions and courses'** [rapporteur's emphasis] (MEC website accessed on March 28 2012, http://www.portugal.gov.pt/en/the-ministries/ministry-for-education-and-science/about-this-ministry.aspx**)**

[7] Law 66-B/2012, *Diário da República*, December 31 '*Orçamento do Estado para 2013*', and Law 66-A/2012, *Diário da República*, December 31 '*Grandes Opções do Plano para 2013*'

[8] '*A rede de instituições e formações apresenta-se heterogénea e desequilibrada, coexistindo situações de elevada qualidade com casos problemáticos nos planos pedagógico, científico e de sustentabilidade*', Law 66-A/2012, *Diário da República*, December 31 '*Grandes Opções do Plano para 2013*', para.5.10.2

## BACKGROUND

Too many institutions, too many courses… This was the view that the team heard often as it listened to the stakeholders. It was not universally held, however. A strong current of opinion conceded that while there might be too many courses, it was wrong to assume that there was institutional capacity that the country did not need. Portugal is committed, as are other European countries, to achieving a 40% graduation rate in the 30-34 age range by 2020.[9]

Nevertheless, virtually all stakeholders agreed with the government's assertion that some re-structuring of the higher education system and some rationalisation of the national course portfolio were essential. This appreciation pre-dated by some years the 2012 budget, which administered cuts that were greeted with opprobrium by the bulk of the higher education community. What history and what tensions lay behind such evidence of near and long-standing unanimity? The team was keen to find out. This section spells out the factors which its interlocutors declared most relevant.

Portuguese higher education expanded rapidly over a thirty-year period. In the final years of the Salazar regime, new public universities were created to train the qualified labour force required to administer the African colonies. After the revolution of 1974, these new institutions grew, in part to accommodate the return of expatriate families during the years of decolonisation. Where there was shortfall of provision, notably in the major urban areas, private sector institutions came into existence and also enjoyed rapid growth. Subsequently, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Bologna reforms added complexity and volume to the course portfolio, by splitting the long *licenciatura* into Bachelor and Master qualifications.

By common consent, the binary framework, into which these public and private initiatives were integrated, lacked a coherent philosophical and strategic underpinning. There was and still is, it is said, insufficient clarity of mission and of division of institutional labour. Expansion has been rapid, *ad hoc*, driven in many instances by local political considerations and uninformed by national strategy – a surprising feature of what in most respects is a highly centralised country. The broad consensus was encapsulated for the team by the words of one informant: 'Portuguese higher education is not a system, it is a landscape'.

The landscape is diversified: very small institutions co-exist with large ones and institutional focus ranges from the local to the internationally competitive. Of itself, this is not automatically a problem, yet stakeholders point to the absence of a widely accepted binary rationale at system level. Of the three evaluations embarked on in 2006, only the report delivered by ENQA elicited prompt action, with the setting up of A3ES. A final report from EUA on the institutional evaluations was never commissioned, while the OECD report contained a raft of recommendations which were not systematically addressed.

[9] In 2012, 12% of the population had an HE background – due to the combined effect of HE expansion and demographic ageing – while 19% of the population had no formal educational attainment whatever; in both categories women were the majority. Eurostat data shows that the numbers gaining HE qualifications at all levels, including doctorates, rose by over 50% in the period 2000 to 2009, from 48,533 to 76,567. HE qualifications are less common in all age groups above 25.

This is not to say that the then government was inactive. On the contrary, it passed into law an impressive number of laws and regulations, many of which were Bologna-related. The most radical of these was the measure known by its acronym RJIES,[10] which put in place various modes of institutional autonomy (academic, financial, human resource and real estate management), and did so differentially by sub-sector, i.e. for universities, polytechnics, public and private.

However, the timeframe for the elaboration and implementation of the new statutes required by the law was tight. The three institutions that aspired to Foundation status[11] engaged in searching internal debate and detailed negotiation with government; others put in place far-reaching changes; the remainder either adopted the statutes outlined in RJIES, or followed models proposed by the leadership of the sub-sectors, or stuck with the wording of Law 108/1988, insofar as it was consistent with the new legislation.

The team found general agreement that RJIES represented a significant reform of institutional governance, the implementation of which is still underway; it was positive in the sense that it reinforced the concept of autonomy that was already inscribed in legislation – and gave it greater practical expression. Public universities were allowed to make rectoral appointments from outside the institution and were given a governing body – the *conselho geral* – of which 30% was to be made up of external members. It is too soon to say whether these changes at institutional level will contribute to a coherent re-structuring or rationalisation of the network of institutions.

In respect of the HE landscape, however, the prevailing outlook of the stakeholders encountered by the team remains, on the whole, negative. They generally consider that strategic thinking is lacking at system level. So, too, is the labour market planning which would be expected to inform, although not necessarily to determine it. The funding regime in the public sector is based on *numerus clausus* set by the ministry, which admits of annual minor adjustments but which is unlikely to be the vehicle of a new strategic vision. The private sector, for its part, has lost the buoyancy and dynamism which once it had. No serious attempt has been made to address the problem of regional imbalance.

The intervention of the troika and the decision by government to focus almost exclusively on deficit reduction has understandably depressed spirits further. Low participation and graduation rates, whether due to demographic decline, raised entry criteria, financial hardship, or the prospect of graduate unemployment, loom large in current debate. So, too, do high drop-out rates, salary bills driven upwards by the accession of large numbers of academic staff to doctoral status and the sense of insecurity induced by cuts in public support for student and family finance. The 2013 budget has maintained the freeze on all academic staff recruitment.[12] Higher education employment law, officially in a transitional phase to allow for the implementation of Bologna reforms (notably the upgrading of public polytechnic staff to the level at which they can deliver Master degrees), has entered a state of limbo, in which conflict is easily sparked.

[10] Law 62/2007, *Diário da República*, September 10 '*Regime jurídico das instituições de ensino superior*'
[11] *Instituto Universitário de Lisboa* (ISCTE-IUL), *Universidade de Aveiro* (UA), *Universidade do Porto* (UP)
[12] Law 66-B/2012, *Diário da República*, December 31 '*Orçamento do Estado para 2013*', Article 60

Unsurprisingly, the re-structuring of the HE system and the rationalisation of the national course portfolio are widely hailed as timely ways to resolve the protracted loss of direction and the crisis which threatens the very existence of some institutions. But should such re-engineering take place? If so, when? At whose initiative and through which agencies? According to what criteria? And with what ends in view? It is here that consensus breaks down. The team heard a broad range of stakeholder opinions. These, together with the team's reactions, are set down in the sections that follow.

# PART A: RE-STRUCTURING THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

## A1 BINARY SYSTEM

**Stakeholder perceptions**

The separation into two streams after year nine of compulsory education extends into twin-track provision at post-secondary level. Portuguese HE is thus officially binary; both public and private sub-sectors have universities and polytechnics. Article 3.1 of RJIES reads as follows:

> Higher education is organised as a binary system, with university education oriented towards the provision of solid academic training, combining the efforts and responsibilities of both teaching and research units, whilst polytechnic education concentrates particularly on vocational and advanced technical training that is professionally orientated. [Official translation][13]

Yet the team found general agreement that the formality of the differentiation is not so clear in reality. True, the proposed merger of the *Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa* ('IP-Lis') and the *Universidade de Lisboa* (UL) in 2009, which might have blurred the distinction conclusively, did not come to fruition. Nevertheless, seven universities – over half of the total – contain elements of polytechnic provision.[14] Historically, it has been possible for polytechnic institutions to mutate into universities; theoretically, in law, a move in the opposite direction is also possible.

Moreover, in recent years, as competition for domestic students has become more intense, universities and polytechnics have encroached on each other's assumed territory by mounting Bachelor courses in areas such as journalism, a recent disciplinary arrival with no obviously pre-ordained location in the binary system. Reciprocal mission drift has thus helped further soften the binary distinction. The priority given to employability and to innovation means that institutions have strengthened their relations with business and industry, in terms of research and work placements – the universities, as a general rule, with major corporates and the polytechnics with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

In matters of definition, designation is important. The team's dialogues with stakeholders highlighted two preoccupations: the characterisation of the courses delivered and the naming of institutions. Currently, the designation of courses as either 'university' or 'polytechnic' courses is said to lack clarity. As far as the naming of institutions is concerned, there is some interest among the polytechnics in following the practice of peer higher education institutions (HEIs) in, for example,

[13] 'O ensino superior organiza-se num sistema binário, devendo o ensino universitário orientar-se para a oferta de formações científicas sólidas, juntando esforços e competências de unidades de ensino e investigação, e o ensino politécnico concentrar-se especialmente em formações vocacionais e em formações técnicas avançadas, orientadas profissionalmente.'

[14] UA, UAC, UALG, UE, UMA, UMinho, UTAD, to varying degrees of formality and volume, all contain schools or colleges delivering polytechnic programmes.

Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, and in assuming the second identity – in English – of 'university of applied sciences'. In some cases, provision for this has been made in the statutes established under RJIES.

The question of parity of esteem was one raised by many stakeholders in the course of discussion. Most regarded it as highly desirable, although they were aware of the challenge involved in altering perceptions within HE and among the general public. Entrenched opinion has it that polytechnics tend to recruit students from the technical stream of the secondary system and/or students who have failed to gain a place in university and/or those who originate in lower socio-economic groups. Accordingly, the aspirations of future students tend to focus first and foremost on the prestigious public universities. These are located in the densely populated cities of the coast, as are the large public polytechnics. However, it is in the depopulating regions of the interior that public polytechnics outnumber all other HEIs. Geography compounds the disparity of esteem.

Regional development will be discussed in the next section. Other key factors, notably funding and research, will be touched on here and elaborated subsequently. Before turning to them, it is worth stressing that – whatever they may choose to be called in English – polytechnics, both private and public, wish to remain polytechnics. The polytechnic sub-sector, despite its current predicament, has confidence in its competence and in its role – to the point at which it hopes to export its model to Angola and Mozambique.

The team heard no strong voice arguing for the total dissolution of the binary distinction; the question always concerned the strength, prestige, ethos and income of its component parts. When asked whether a dual funding system might be a way of securing parity of esteem for public universities and polytechnics, the team's interlocutors tended to think not. A better guarantee of parity, in their view, would be a re-casting of current funding arrangements based on *numerus clausus* and on cost, such that they reflected more accurately class sizes and staff workloads, while at the same time according an equal degree of financial autonomy and of capacity to diversify revenue streams. A higher level of investment, in other words, to create a level playing field.

An example of inequity cited on more than one occasion was the discrepancy between the 'Bologna' Bachelor in the universities (of three or four years) and in the polytechnics (of three years only).[15] Why, it was asked, should polytechnic students – perhaps academically 'weaker' than their university peers – be subjected to a more intellectually demanding but cheaper regime? Why should course duration depend on institutional status rather than on academic and pedagogic considerations? And why should not all Portuguese Bachelor programmes contain a research or dissertation element in line with good European practice in student-centred learning?

Regarding research, the team was told that teaching loads are heavier in the polytechnics (even though the teacher evaluation methodology is the same) and that this is at least in part due to the

[15] A university post-Bologna *licenciatura* [Bachelor] 'normally lasts between six and eight curricular semesters of student work', while the comparable programme in a polytechnic 'normally takes six curricular semesters of students' work', *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in Portugal*, Report of the International Committee on the verification of compatibility with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, 2011, p.41.

concentration of research and relief from teaching duties to be found in the universities. Research, indeed, the traditional object of academic esteem *par excellence*, is acknowledged to be the major stumbling block for those who wish to equalise the public perception and potential prestige of universities and polytechnics. We take up this discussion in section A3 below.

If it were possible to satisfy the requirements of mission distinctiveness and parity of esteem, then – to judge by the substance of the team's encounters with stakeholders – it would involve sharper definition of the academic and technical character of courses, revision of funding mechanisms, reform of academic staff recruitment methods and employment contracts to allow comparable workload and professional incentives on both sides of the binary line, as well as access to research funding by the polytechnics.

How far are staff and students willing to cross the binary line in the interests of their careers? The total volume of trans-binary mobility is not monitored and is probably low. Yet the team found a generalised wish to avoid rigidity. Some stakeholders spoke of a unitary HE system with two complementary and interlocking tracks. Others preferred a vision of a binary system with flexible contours and multiple cross-over points.

**Team's observations**

Currently, the binary system is a confused landscape, in which a theoretically sharp distinction between tertiary level academic and vocational education is obscured by numerous factors: competition for students; the partial integration and co-location of the public polytechnic sector within the universities; regional imbalances; patterns of intake reflecting socio-economic determinants rather than career aspirations; lack of clear demarcation in programme designations; absence of overarching strategy at national level.

By contrast, academic employment statutes, funding differentials, contrasting degrees of research intensity, and disparity of esteem – all these operate to keep the binary distinction alive without clearly specifying its content.

The team considers that Portugal cannot be said to have a functional binary system, transparent in its dual mission, and attuned to individual and collective need. The existing arrangement does not make the best use of the institutional capacity and human capital (see section A3 below) which has been built up over time.

In the view of the team, parity of esteem does not mean identity of mission. Nor does it exclude a sub-sectoral division of labour. The proposed expansion of the provision of *Cursos de Especialização Tecnológica* (CET) in the polytechnics is welcome, in the sense that assigns a specific service to a specific category of provider, even if many CETs are delivered in the polytechnic components of universities.

The team understands that CETs are typically of three semesters in length and that, while technically post-secondary and presented as level 4 qualifications in Decree-Law 88/2006,[16] they sit at level 5 in

[16] Article 4

the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL).[17] In the Bologna framework, they may therefore be regarded by other countries as short-cycle HE qualifications. Indeed, the Portuguese system allows them to be used as a bridging mechanism for access to HE, with due recognition and credit for successful completion.

The introduction of the CETs appears to the team to be a significant development. Cohorts of students, hopefully large, will progress from the technical stream of the secondary system into short courses delivered by the polytechnics. Since these will be students for whom entry to university is more difficult, the short-term effect may be to stress the vertical differentiation of the two sub-sectors. In the medium and long terms, however, these students will be able to access Bachelor programmes in the polytechnics and, subsequently, Master programmes in both polytechnics and universities. There therefore exists the prospect of a binary differentiation which becomes increasingly horizontal, with the reduction in the disparity of esteem a likely outcome. Doctoral and post-doctoral programmes nevertheless remain the province of the universities.
A recent study of binary HE systems in five European countries concludes as follows:

> … there are two conditions upon which horizontal differentiation and parity of esteem must be built: first, it needs visible, strong and different reward structures which help to sustain the differing orientations and value systems on which they feed. Second, and as a consequence of the first, horizontal differentiation needs relatively high levels of expenditure in order to provide sufficient incentive to support the diversity sought. Without considerable funding, any parity of esteem will dissolve in the face of limited resources and prioritised activities.[18]

The team believes that this is the appropriate platform for Portugal to build, if the HE system is both to grow and to stimulate growth. As the present report will indicate, successful knowledge creation and transfer in Portugal depend on the identification of synergies best exploited by autonomous institutions collaborating in specific regional contexts with the support of government.

This requires increased investment.[19] In addition, it implies a binary distinction, which is substantive as well as formal, but which is implemented pragmatically rather than dogmatically, on the basis of a consensual sense of equal partnership to which the sub-sectoral representative bodies and institutional leaderships fully commit. Furthermore, it implies a binary divide which is bridgeable by individual students, academic staff, research teams, planners and policy-makers, according to the task in hand.

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[17] See *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in Portugal*, op.cit., 2011, para.2, p.17

[18] Reichert, S, *Institutional Diversity in European Higher Education*, European University Association, Brussels, 2009, pp.148-9

[19] While acutely aware of the current financial difficulties, the team assumes Portugal's continuing long-term commitment to a range of percentage targets agreed at EU and at Bologna Process levels:

- spending on higher education as a fraction of GDP: 2%
- spending on research as a fraction of GDP: 3%
- HE participation and graduation rate by the 30-34 age range by 2020: 40%
- adult participation (25-64 age range) by 2020: 15%
- transnational mobility of HE students by 2020: 20%

**Recommendations**

R 1 The team **recommends** that government commit to raising the funding level of HE and research to the EU average in the medium term.

R 2 The team **recommends** that government and stakeholders plan for a higher percentage of secondary pupils to progress to HE, either directly or via bridging courses such as the *Cursos de Especialização Tecnológica* (CET).

R 3 The team **recommends** that efforts be made to ensure maximum publicity of cross-over points for university and polytechnic students, bridging courses, recognition of prior learning, and careers counselling, and that these be embedded in internal quality assurance procedures.

R 4 The team **recommends** that these measures be part of a long-term implementation programme, consisting of regular monitoring and impact assessment, and involving graduate tracking, external stakeholder involvement, peer review and sustained government backing.

R 5 The team **recommends** that they also assure equality of access and progression, by putting in place effective support systems at both secondary and HE levels. They should incentivise the recruitment, by HEIs, of under-represented groups. They should closely monitor the performance of access students, measuring the value added and adapting learning and teaching methods accordingly.

## A2 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Stakeholder perceptions**

Stakeholders agree that in Portugal, unlike France and Germany, the geography of the binary system is critical. The institutions in the sub-sectors are not regularly distributed. Only the island jurisdictions have a balanced complement of post-secondary provision, much of it incorporated in a public university. The large public universities and polytechnics and virtually all of the private providers are located on the mainland littoral. In the interior, the few small public universities are outnumbered by small public polytechnics, which often have satellite outposts in very small towns. The movement of families from the interior to the coast threatens to hasten the decline of these; countervailing factors, such as their lower costs, are few in number.

The team found a strong consensus regarding the paramount importance of regional development and the role of the polytechnics in delivering it. This does not mean, however, that universities would stand aside from regional interventions. The statutes of *Universidade do Algarve* (UALG), *Universidade do Minho* (UMinho) and *Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro* (UTAD) have just as strong a regional focus as those of *Instituto Politécnico de Bragança* (IPB), *Instituto Politécnico do Porto* (IPP) and *Instituto Politécnico de Setúbal* (IPS).

When asked what measures might be introduced to reverse current trends and to stimulate the growth of the institutions in the interior, stakeholders volunteered a number of suggestions. First, it was felt that the future lay to the north and east rather than to the west, i.e. that there were opportunities for cross-border student recruitment in closer collaboration with Spanish institutions. Secondly, that the EU structural funds should be used to build a momentum of knowledge transfer to fuel start-up enterprises; this funding stream, historically not used to its maximum advantage by Portugal,[20] should be managed in parallel with funding from FCT, the former administered in the framework of cohesion, the latter on the basis of excellence. Thirdly, that government commit to affirmative action using the *numerus clausus* and *per capita* funding mechanisms; here, however, there was no consensus, some informants regarding the proposal as politically unrealistic.

Another body of opinion recommended measures to promote consortium-building, mergers and consolidations. These would be regional, trans-binary, and appropriately regulated to allow for different levels of autonomy and development between consortium members, in order to maximise the rational use of human, financial and physical resources. This approach envisages a flexible binary system, featuring university schools in polytechnics and vice versa, according to the needs of the region.

**Team's observations**

The magnetic force exerted by the coastal cities is a major factor in any consideration of how to re-structure the HE system.

The team found that discussion of this issue is not easy. There is a strong tendency 'on the coast' to regard inland polytechnics as so closely bound to municipal authorities that they become entrenched in their defensive positions and unwilling to engage in productive debate. In the interior, meanwhile, institutions allege that systematic disregard by 'Lisbon' forces them into the arms of the municipal authorities. This impediment to dialogue is one of the negative features of the Portuguese HE landscape and acts as a barrier to focused thinking about regional regeneration.

The team notes the gathering strength of the regional development agencies. The existing Norte and Centro regions are set on an east-west axis, in which it is precisely the pull to the west which has historically created many problems. In order to address situations such as this, recent EU policy initiatives have progressively facilitated the participation of HEIs in regional development. The platform set up in 2011 in the framework of the initiative on Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisations (RIS3) is steered on an inter-service basis by European Commission staff drawn from a range of Directorates General, including Education and Culture (DG EAC). Portugal's five mainland and two autonomous island jurisdictions are all registered in the S3 platform and the Azores region has already been active in a peer review exercise.[21] HEIs are represented on the regional development agencies (CCDRs).

[20] Portugal makes insufficient use of the structural funds. It is not alone. Across the EU the bulk of the EUR 86 billion programmed for 2007-13 was still unspent at the half-way point, in October 2010. (European 2020 Flagship Initiative – Innovation Union, COM (2010) 546, p.20)

[21] http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/azores

Given the historical intractability of the problems of the interior, the team considers that concerted consortial action by HEIs is imperative. There is a pressing need to attend to the disadvantaged areas within the administrative regions and to halt and reverse the east-west demographic drift. They urgently require regeneration and it is essential that all available resources be brought to bear. A recent guide to the contribution of HE to regional development, published by DG EAC, makes the following point:

> … enhancing the universities' capacity to reach out to regional business and the community will fail if sufficient capacity for innovation is not in place within the region. This will be a particular challenge in some less favoured regions where investment in the capacity of business, community organisations and public authorities to reach into universities will be required. This may involve regional public authorities encouraging co-operation between different actors in the higher education sector (universities, polytechnics, research and special purpose institutions, community colleges) to establish an appropriate division of labour that plays to the strength of each.[22]

It follows that, when consortial activity is trans-binary, there should be no dogmatic insistence on mission differentiation between polytechnics and universities, precisely because the required synergies and the availability of expertise may vary from region to region.

**Recommendations**

R 6 The team **recommends** that universities and polytechnics in the same region be incentivised to develop shared proposals regarding curriculum development at CET, Bachelor and Master levels, within the EU regional and HE policy frameworks, such as will favour seriously disadvantaged areas.

R 7 The team **recommends** that each region have an HE-focused facilitation authority to interface between HE consortia and the *Conselho Coordenador do Ensino Superior* (CCES) [cf. Part C below], as well as to liaise with other relevant agencies such as national funding sources, private and public sector bodies operating at national level, and municipal authorities.

R 8 The team **recommends** that the government introduce incentives for young academic staff and early stage researchers to move from the coast to the interior and to the islands, for example, by making a one-year post-doctoral grant conditional on two years of service in a designated higher education institution.

[22] Goddard, J, Kempton, L, *Connecting Universities to Regional Growth: A Practical Guide*, European Commission, Brussels, 2011, p.53

## A3 RESEARCH

**Stakeholder perceptions**

Some stakeholders – although aware of the pitfalls of international rankings – are concerned that Portugal has no 'world-class' university. This, they feel, impacts on the ability of its HEIs to raise their credibility as producers of knowledge, to attract the 'best' researchers, to network with research-intensive universities world-wide and to contribute to the country's cultural and economic profile.

This view is not shared by all. There is, however, broad agreement between government, the FCT and the HEIs that research output needs to grow in quality and in quantity[23] and to be more effectively harnessed to knowledge transfer and innovation. The team understands that FCT, although not blessed with the resources to effect counter-cyclical regeneration, will be able to add a third funding stream – for doctoral programmes – to the two already available (project grants and grants to individuals). On the model of the European Research Council (ERC), it envisages the annual recruitment of up to 400 Portuguese and foreign researchers,[24] funded at three levels of scientific profile on five-year contracts. It also envisages setting aside a substantial sum for co-funding within the EU's Horizon 2020 envelope. Taking its steer from government, it will develop a strong focus on inter-disciplinary research and joint doctorates and, while in principle allocating funds across the disciplinary spectrum, will prioritise science, technology, engineering and mathematics (the STEM subjects). The team understands that its allocation methodology will shift from a formula-based model to a mix of core, competitive, collaborative and co-funding set within a clear strategic framework; international evaluators will play a major role. At the same time, there will be a stronger emphasis on entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer and collaboration with the business and industrial sectors.

This swathe of policy measures represents an attempt to help researchers access funding. In outline, it addresses some of the criticisms that the team heard in the course of its conversations: that too little is done to encourage knowledge transfer and entrepreneurship; that academia and the business community fail to make their expectations of each other explicit; that Portugal has no non-governmental body, operating at a level above that of the HEIs, both coordinating and conducting research in the manner of the French *Centre national de recherche scientifique* (CNRS).

Once again, in its discussions, the team found an express wish to avoid dichotomisation and to favour a differentiated but supple HE system, run according to a principle of inclusion rather than exclusion, and capable of fostering whatever consortial arrangements were appropriate to a particular task in hand. The associated research laboratories established under the previous government, working in all disciplines except humanities and mathematics, bringing together partners from universities, polytechnics, business and industry, employing a blend of successful

[23] Portugal seriously under-performed in the first four years of the seventh Framework Research Programme, when compared to Belgium and Sweden, which have populations of similar size. Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index_en.cfm?pg=country-profile

[24] This measure has now been costed at EUR 8.9 million for 2013. See Law 66-B/2012, *Diário da República*, December 31 '*Orçamento do Estado para 2013*', Article 61

female, foreign and young researchers, and sceptical of any hard and fast distinction between fundamental and applied research, were cited as exemplary in this respect.

In respect of research funding, the team was informed that the bulk of the funding awarded by the *Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia* (FCT) was taken up by the public universities. While polytechnics have less critical mass and less scope for making successful application to EU framework research programmes, funding is also available from the *Agência de Inovação* (ADI) and through the national strategic reference framework (QREN).

**Team's observations**

The team sensed that the research debate was informed by an implicit set of binary oppositions: on the one hand, science, fundamental research, the criterion of excellence, the FCT and the universities; on the other, technology, applied research, the principle of social cohesion, the EU structural funds and the polytechnics. It believes, however, that the scope for trans-binary research and innovation should be expanded and that national and EU funding streams should be used creatively to this end.

In this light, it is particularly urgent to address the inequality of access to research activity. The current situation is unstable, for in giving the polytechnics the right to deliver Master degrees, RJIES required a dramatic increase in the percentage of their academic staff qualified to doctorate level. The implementation of this measure has brought business to the universities, which have provided the doctoral supervision, while at the same time creating in the polytechnics a cadre of young academics striving to achieve the research profile on which teaching at Master level, as well as their sense of academic identity, depend. These research aspirations are now structured into the sub-sector. Not only are they unlikely to subside, but they are a resource which should be utilised.

Complementary sub-sectoral missions are best sustained by comparable salary structures, terms and conditions, incentives and rewards. While it may well be the case that staff members engaged in research are granted more relief from teaching in universities than in polytechnics, it is important that appropriate relief be given for other significant duties and that both sub-sectors calculate staff timetables from the same baseline.

The question of research funding is complex. While FCT allocates funds on the basis of excellence, the trans-binary consortia discussed in the previous section will also require access to structural funding awarded in line with the principle of cohesion. It is essential that the optimal interplay of the two criteria be worked out on a case-by-case basis, with guidance from the regional development authority and CCES, and therefore that all bodies facilitate bids from consortia as well as from individual HEIs.

Extrapolating from the degree of consensus that it detected, the team observed that the solution favoured by most stakeholders is indeed that research intensity be vested in the public universities and that a prevailing orientation (fundamental research) be associated with them, but not to the exclusion of, or in isolation from, institutions in other sub-sectors. This solution implies a spirit of openness to trans-binary cooperation on the part of all HEIs and a willingness to abandon perceived vested interests in favour of the greater good.

**Recommendations**

R 9 The team **recommends** that the funding bodies increase the scope for interdisciplinary and trans-binary research.

R 10 The team **recommends** that the *Estatuto da Carreira do Pessoal Docente do Ensino Superior Politécnico* (ECPDESP) be fully implemented.

R 11 The team **recommends** that universities consider developing the provision and award of practice-based professional doctorates, in line with the lifelong learning imperative.

## A4 FOUNDATIONS AND MERGERS

**Stakeholder perceptions**

Since the passing into law of RJIES, it is the public university sub-sector that has been subject to the greatest change. As indicated above, three institutions opted successfully for Foundation status, which meant that they were public universities operating within private law. UMinho also submitted a proposal to the ministry. Other HEIs – notably *Instituto Politécnico de Leiria* (IPL), IPP, *Universidade Nova de Lisboa* (UNL) and UTAD – wrote into their statutes the possibility of translation to Foundation status. Theoretically, this remains a possibility, although the team heard a considerable degree of scepticism regarding whether Foundations would be allowed to continue. Not only were they not foundations in the accepted sense of the Portuguese term (entities put in place by endowments), but their very brief history had been marked by the withdrawal of their privileges in the context of the financial crisis.

The team found the situation to be far from clear. It assumed that any removal of the Foundation option would require a change to the RJIES law. It was also told that such a change would leave hundreds of academic staff stranded within private employment law and with uncertain rights and futures. However, it was not evident that government was considering such a change or whether, if it did, it would propose a reduction in the various levels of autonomy enshrined in RJIES. Neither was there any strong consensus for or against the Foundations.

It was in this complex process of institutional differentiation (in respect of the provisions of RJIES) and sectoral crisis (brought on by the austerity measures) that the merger of two of the largest Lisbon public universities – UL and *Universidade Técnica de Lisboa* (UTL) – was proposed, planned, approved by government and set underway. The two universities have been keen to stress that their vision predates the economic crisis and the prospect of systemic re-structuring; they present their initiative as a spontaneous in-house reaction to prevailing apathy and inertia.[25] At the time of the

[25] *Uma Nova Universidade de Lisboa*, *documento de trabalho*, UL-UTL, January 2012, passim

team's visit to Lisbon, a four-month transition period was about to begin. It is intended that the merger will be completed at low cost, with no relocation of staff, with the exception of the integration of the administrations and the IT services.

The desired outcome is that the merged institution (known as UL and bearing the UTL logo) will have the critical mass to compete at European and global levels. It will be the largest Portuguese HEI and the fourth largest in the Iberian peninsula - in terms of student numbers, if not in income. It will be research-intensive, with a strong emphasis on inter-disciplinarity, employability and lifelong learning, with correspondingly flexible course structures. The proponents of the merger expect the new university to enjoy the same degree of autonomy as that enjoyed, at least in principle, by the Foundations. Moreover, their intention is that it will more closely resemble a traditional foundation; they envisage setting up within three years a trust fund of EUR 200 million, deriving at least in part from donations.

Beyond the institutions concerned, the team detected anxiety that the presence of one high profile HEI would depress the level of resources available to the others. The creation of the Foundations and the ongoing high profile merger appear to have brought uncertainty and instability to the public university sub-sector – exacerbated, as previously noted, by the difficult economic and financial circumstances. Both changes are too recent to admit of any useful assessment. What is clear is that the greater autonomy brought by RJIES has been welcomed and that more autonomy would be even more welcome. This applies not only to the public universities, but to all the sub-sectors.

**Team's observations**

The history of the binary system is generally regarded as one of integrations and co-locations undertaken for circumstantial reasons, rather than for reasons of strategy agreed at national level. The ongoing merger is no exception. The team considers that the present conjuncture offers the opportunity for a new departure, but that this must be embarked upon in the framework of a national strategy for HE. Existing levels of institutional autonomy must be protected and reinforced.[26] Even with the gains brought by RJIES, Portuguese institutions have lower levels of autonomy than peer HEIs in other parts of Europe.[27]

The widely hailed postgraduate business programme run by the *Universidade Católica Portuguesa* (UCP) and UNL[28] is an example of a successful collaboration which falls a long way short of a merger. Other recent initiatives in inter-institutional cooperation have resulted in 22 jointly run Master programmes and 24 doctoral programmes.[29] Once again, the team looks to the CCES to establish a planning framework which can facilitate collaboration of strategic importance at national level.

[26] The Council of Europe has very recently re-affirmed the fundamental importance of institutional autonomy: 'Public authorities have a leading responsibility for establishing a coherent framework which ensures equal opportunities of access to and in higher education for all citizens and which is based on the principle of institutional autonomy.' (Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on ensuring quality education, para.19, December 12 2012)

[27] See the Portugal file in EUA's Autonomy Scorecard, at http://www.university-autonomy.eu/countries/portugal/

[28] See *Financial Times*, September 19 2011

[29] *Estado da Educação* 2011, op.cit. p.169

**Recommendations**

R 12 The team **recommends** that, whatever change to the legal framework might be envisaged, the degree of autonomy enshrined in current legislation be maintained and reinforced.

R 13 The team **recommends** that government commit to retaining a stable legal framework which includes the existence of Foundations.

R 14 The team **recommends** that plans for further mergers and consolidations be set out in four-year institutional strategic development plans, to be approved by CCES.

## A5 FUNDING

**Stakeholder perceptions**

Preceding sections have made frequent references to the funding of public HEIs. In summary, the team found considerable disaffection with the *numerus clausus* methodology. It is cost-based, insensitive to class size, staff workload and regional need. It creates over-capacity at Bachelor level.

The annual budget allocation is said to encourage ministerial micro-management and inhibit long-term strategic planning. HEIs in the public sub-sectors prefer multi-annual funding, which presupposes a high degree of financial autonomy and a capacity to generate income and to carry forward balances without fear of confiscation by government. Some regard it as necessary to set up separate budgets, one for the state block grant and another for other revenue streams.

They also prefer a public funding allocation system which includes incentives to deliver outcomes appropriate to the two binary missions. This would mean some shift of funding from an input-based to an output-based model, with a consequent gain at institutional level in strategic thinking and human and financial resource management. The prospect of a dual funding system is however regarded with caution; it might simply set in concrete the areas of the playing field perceived to be seriously uneven.

**Team's observations**

The team notes that the government has 'established new guidelines for setting the number of student places per programme, one of the instruments used to regulate supply in the public HE sector'.[30] The team nevertheless considers that the system of *numerus clausus*, however refined, weakens institutions' capacity to make regionally relevant decisions in a long-term strategic framework. It also reduces the potential influence of external stakeholders and inhibits effective human resource management by institutions. Finally, it limits the scope for developing modular course structures and expanding student choice, as well as for managing the flexible group sizes

[30] Law 66-A/2012, *Diário da República*, December 31 '*Grandes Opções do Plano para 2013*', para.5.10.2

characteristic of student-centred learning. Where there are special cases for quota-setting (for example, in entry to courses of basic training for medical doctors), this should be by specification by the CCES. The team's recommendations regarding the CCES are set out in Part C.

As already indicated, the team believes that, in binary systems, different but equally strong funding and reward structures sustain the necessary parity of esteem. Switzerland[31] is cited as a country in which a flourishing binary system draws its resource from separate funding bodies for polytechnics and universities. These receive dedicated funding envelopes from government, which they then allocate according to transparent criteria that they themselves set, within the overarching framework of government policy.

The team is aware that stakeholders have expressed caution on whether separate budget allocation bodies should exist in Portugal, but it has heard no convincing objections. The team's recommendations are predicated on growth[32] – economic growth to which HE will be a major contributor, as well as growth in the HE system. The recommendations assume widened participation by post-secondary students and mature entrants, together with increased recruitment of international students. At institutional level, they assume effective autonomy in financial management. In the view of the team, this means the ability to diversify revenue streams on the basis of core funding from government, which covers staffing and infrastructure.

Separate funding bodies for public universities and polytechnics can best assure this, by allowing each sub-sector to develop mission-appropriate allocation criteria, instruments and outcome-based incentives. Of course, this does not mean that the two bodies will act in complete independence and disregard of each other. The team looks to the CCES (as per Recommendation 38 below) to ensure their complementarity within a strong strategic framework.

Although the team has not focused on financial support to students, it welcomes the government's intention to speed up the delivery of grants[33] and notes the recent re-negotiation of the mutually guaranteed student loan facility.

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[31] Reichert, S, *Institutional Diversity in European Higher Education*, op.cit., pp.148-9

[32] The team has aligned its recommendations with the Conclusions of the November 2012 meeting of the Council of Ministers of Education, Youth, Culture and Sport, which agreed, inter alia, 'that

1. Even at a time of scarce financial resources, efficient and adequate investment in growth-friendly areas such as education and training is a key component of economic development and competitiveness, which in turn are essential for job creation.
2. Efficient investment in education and training can be even more important during periods of economic difficulty and at a time of high youth unemployment. Once the crisis is over, an increased supply of high quality graduates from both higher education and vocational education and training can substantially boost growth prospects, foster innovation and help avert a future crisis.
3. Competence and skills levels of both young people and adults in many areas need to be continuously and thoroughly adapted to the changing needs of the economy and the labour market. The employability of people should therefore be promoted both in education and training systems and at the workplace, as a joint public and private sector responsibility in the context of lifelong learning.
4. It is crucial to the attainment of the Europe 2020 objectives to prepare European citizens to be motivated and self-sustained learners able to contribute to promoting sustainable economic growth and social cohesion over a long period.
5. Education and training systems should aim to facilitate the transition from education to work, to strike an appropriate balance between theory and practice and, where relevant, to strengthen links between education and training and the labour market. Learning should better reflect new realities and, where appropriate, include elements of practical training which can contribute to improving the employability of students and other learners.

[33] Law 66-A/2012, *Diário da República*, December 31 '*Grandes Opções do Plano para 2013*', para.5.10.2

**Recommendations**

R 15 The team **recommends** that separate budget allocation bodies be set up for public universities and public polytechnics, charged with receiving funding from government and allocating institutional block grants as well as project-based awards, on a multi-annual basis in line with the national strategy elaborated by CCES, as well as with the principles of transparency and parity of esteem.

R 16 The team **recommends** the drawing up of contracts between the State and public HEIs, based on agreed inputs and outputs over a four-year period and premised upon a clear strategy developed at institutional level, a strategy which is in turn negotiated with regional development agencies and approved by the CCES.

R 17 The team **recommends** that the framework outlined in Recommendation 15 allow for significant, sustainable and affirmative action in respect of HEIs located in the mainland interior.

R 18 The team **recommends** that the system of *numerus clausus*, as currently practised, be discontinued.

R 19 The team **recommends** that the CCES investigate the adequacy of the volume and mechanics of student finance.

## A6 RE-STRUCTURING OF THE HE SYSTEM

**Stakeholder perceptions**

Reflecting on the range of opinion bearing on the questions of whether, when and how to re-structure the Portuguese HE system, what conclusions emerge? First, that there is a widespread sense that all is not well, that if left unaddressed the situation will degrade further, and that the present crisis of confidence and solvency offers an opportunity for reform. Secondly, that recent structural change, notably through RJIES, has been substantial, that it is much too soon to make a reliable impact assessment, and that any further engineering of the system should take place within the current legal framework. Thirdly, that current and future human capital is precious and should not be wasted. Fourthly, that all stakeholders should endeavour to build a robust consensus on the design of a binary system that is flexible, user-friendly, equitably funded, characterised by distinctive but not constraining missions, open to consortial initiative, and moulded to the diverse needs of the regions and the target groups. Fifthly, that research should be undertaken by all HEIs to the benefit of their staff, students, partners and constituencies, but with orientation and degree of intensity appropriate to purpose.

**Team's observations**

As indicated earlier, autonomy and its various expressions (academic, financial, human resource management, property portfolio management) are currently clear in law but much less clear in practice, thanks to the effects of the financial crisis. Law 62/2007 (RJIES) was due for review in the autumn of 2012.[34] This review is now under way.[35] However, the slow speed of implementation, together with the disruptions of the recent past, means that the conditions for a full review of RJIES do not yet exist.

In the view of the team, Portuguese HE requires a strategic framework which is clear in its vision, objectives and timeframe, but which at the same time tolerates fluidity of consortial activity and dynamic diversity, without which intellectual growth and effective knowledge transfer are much more difficult to achieve. Such a strategic framework will give due importance to quality assurance, the affordability of courses, the diversification of revenue streams, reforms to the secondary sector, student-centred learning, the availability of EU funding, demography and the regional development imperative, lifelong learning, and internationalisation.

The team does not advocate deconstructing the existing HE system and rebuilding it from zero. Instead, it envisages a situation in which existing institutions enjoy the autonomy and the responsibility to associate with each other as they judge best, within regional and national frameworks designed to facilitate collaboration. Only a representative, credible and authoritative *conselho*, mediating between government and institutions and thus bringing to the sector a measure of self-regulation, can articulate an appropriately overarching strategy. The team regards the CCES as an indispensable body and makes detailed recommendations regarding its composition and remit in Part C below.

The team formed the view – on the basis of a range of testimonies – that the interface of secondary education with HE is weak. The *Conselho Nacional de Educação* (CNE) monitors the linkage but has only an advisory role. There is scope for identifying and mainstreaming good practice in HEI-secondary school liaison. The team heard reports of a proposal to establish a 'contract of transparency', according to which the transition from secondary education to HE would be reviewed in detail, but – despite recent efforts to strengthen professional secondary education – it is not clear how far this has progressed.

The secondary system as a whole is perceived as under-performing in EU and OECD terms, and while this may well be due to socio-economic factors extraneous to education, considerable scope for stronger strategic linkage of primary, secondary and HE is believed by stakeholders to exist. Their opinion is strong enough to support the view that the re-thinking of HE should not be undertaken in isolation from secondary education.

[34] RJIES, Article 185

[35] Law 66-A/2012, *Diário da República*, December 31 '*Grandes Opções do Plano para 2013*', para.5.10.2

**Recommendations**

R 20 The team **recommends** that the autonomies granted by RJIES be guaranteed by government for a further five-year period, in order that viable strategic planning can take place at institutional, regional and national levels, and that due impact assessment and wide consultation take place before any changes to the law are made. (See also Recommendation 13 above.)

R 21 The team **recommends** that any re-structuring of HE be undertaken in conjunction with the reform of secondary schooling.

# PART B: RATIONALISING THE COURSE PORTFOLIO

## B1 LIFELONG LEARNING

**Stakeholder perceptions**

Is there, or should there be, any strong binary division of labour in respect of lifelong learning (LLL) provision? The team found general agreement that – beyond the expansion of post-secondary access pathways and the recruitment of international students – LLL represented the only potential for growth in the HE system and that it should be prioritised, both to yield immediate benefit for Portugal as well as to approach the EU target of graduation of 40% of the 30-34 age band by 2020.

All sub-sectors claim it as part of their remit. The private providers cater for large numbers of students in the 23+ age range. The role reserved for CET course delivery by polytechnics has already been noted. The public university sector is also active, notably the *Universidade Aberta* (UAB), which has a 'second-chance' mission aimed at students of over 21. It provides courses at Bachelor and Master level to national and lusophone students throughout the world, in all subjects except medicine and English. It also collaborates in course development with other institutions.

For all providers, it seems that the segmentation of pre-Bologna qualifications into two Bologna cycles has helped to increase access by mature and returning students. Despite this, a range of stakeholder groups told the team that Portugal lacked a national lifelong learning strategy, just as it lacked a strategy of access to HE. The existence of two national qualification frameworks developed by different ministries was cited as evidence of the absence of joined-up thinking. The team understands that the government is in the process of remedying this.

**Team's observations**

The development of comprehensive LLL provision is a prominent feature of EU 'flexicurity' policy, regarded as a key element in ensuring that economic growth and social cohesion remain in step. The team believes that in the Portuguese context it can turn out to be a powerful and life-enhancing force for change, particularly given the wish of all HE sub-sectors to contribute to it. The team notes that mature students of 25+ can have their professional experience recognised as prior learning and credited as a CET qualification, thus giving them the chance of accessing HE.[36]

To some extent, the high graduate unemployment from which Portugal suffers can be addressed through lifelong learning provision. A recent report to DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) notes that:

[36] Decree-Law 88/2006 Article 24.

For tertiary graduates having completed a general education degree, there is a particular problem around low levels of available employment in some Member States. Low available levels of employment will be strongly linked to the global economic crisis in some Member States whilst in others unemployment levels may also reflect structural issues. Youth unemployment can have negative effects on lifetime earnings, especially where spells of youth unemployment are experienced upon college graduation. Vocational education and training for graduates of general tertiary education plays an important role in improving their prospects for long-term employment stability, especially where there is a focus on up-skilling and supporting the acquisition of competences directly relevant to the labour market. Where tertiary graduates can reinforce their general education through partaking in LLL, their increased competitiveness is likely to assist them in obtaining employment appropriate to their level of skills and training.[37]

The European Social Fund (ESF) is one source of funding available, for which Member State governments assign their own priorities.[38] EU initiatives for enhancing the employability of future graduates include the new ERASMUS for All programme, currently in the legislative process. It proposes to support 700,000 transnational traineeships in the period 2014-2020, as well as to bring 4000 institutions into knowledge and sector skills alliances.

Re-skilling and up-skilling are important components of an LLL strategy. Changes to EU legislation on the regulated professions are likely to stiffen the requirements regarding continuing professional development. E-learning and distance learning are prominent in LLL provision, but they also feature in the delivery of courses to 'standard' full-time students. The sudden expansion of massive open on-line courses (MOOCs) poses a challenge which requires a national strategic response.

A national strategy, to which government and institutions commit,[39] is needed to integrate these and other features of LLL.

**Recommendations**

R 22 The team **recommends** that such provision be informed by an agreed and explicit national strategy, developed by the CCES, set within the framework of a more flexible binary system, and appropriately funded.

R 23 The team **recommends** that the lifelong learning strategy be informed by regional labour market planning undertaken in the framework of the changes proposed in section A2 above.

R 24 The team **recommends** the setting up of on-course support and graduate tracking systems focused on the 23+ entry cohort, in order to refine existing access mechanisms and introduce new ones, as well as to improve careers counselling, to guide curriculum development at Master level, and to publicise the full range of educational opportunities for mature students.

[37] Evaluation of the ESF support to Lifelong Learning, Ecorys, undated, available (January 2013) at http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=325&newsId=1627&furtherNews=yes

[38] Portugal, in the view of the ESF overall coordinator, needs to complement its excellent infrastructure with investment in people. (Cf. interview with Andriana Sukova-Tosheva, *Social Agenda* 28, DG EMPL, February 2012.) It is important to seize the opportunity, particularly now that new EU legislation allows Portugal and other MSs in difficulty to benefit from revised match funding arrangements, in which the ESF contribution rises from 50% to 95%.

[39] The European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning (EUA 2008) sets out these commitments.

R 25 The team **recommends** that CCES set up a task force to review the scope for expanding internal and external distance learning in conjunction with the measures to increase access to HE.

## B2 LEARNING AND TEACHING

**Stakeholder perceptions**

The team heard a great deal concerning the introduction of the Bologna reforms, and in particular their impact on the *licenciatura* qualification and the problem of the differential duration of first cycle courses in polytechnics and universities. It discerned an acknowledgement that Bologna had not been used to its maximum effect: student choice remained too limited; inter-disciplinary study was not widely available; modularisation and the customisation of study pathways was the exception rather than the rule; too many integrated Master courses had survived in disciplines unrelated to the regulated professions. Some stakeholders believed that the Bologna reforms had been implemented in too great a haste and with an exclusively top-down momentum.

At the same time, the team was told that the three-cycle qualification framework was now in place and that the transition to student-centred learning was proceeding steadily, albeit at different speeds in different institutions. It was in the specification of learning outcomes that the least progress had been made.

One of the difficulties reported to the team was that the academic stream in secondary education and HE are pedagogically misaligned: first-year students coming direct from school are said to lack critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which increases the risk of failure to graduate. The disjunction is growing wider as student-centred learning becomes better embedded in the universities.

**Team's observations**

The team is aware that student-centred learning represents a significant cultural change, not least in academic employment patterns. It typically requires small-group teaching and the retrofit of physical space, a combination of formative and terminal assessment methodology, staff development programmes, and the expansion of learning resource banks and on-line database access. E-learning can to some extent be used to mitigate the cost of the others (see Recommendation 25 above).

Student-centred learning, moreover, is supported by curriculum design based on learning outcomes. It is central to the Bologna and European qualification frameworks and critical to the effective alignment of Portuguese HE with the rest of Europe. Certainly, a durable shift to student-centred learning will represent a significant embedding of the Bologna reforms, the effects of which have been more formal than substantive. In particular, the team believes that the specification of learning outcomes is the most constructive way of distinguishing the academic and the vocational.

When the previous government submitted its 'Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in Portugal' in 2011, it spelt out the extent to which the framework and its binary descriptors, and by extension its generic learning outcomes, aligned with the overarching Bologna framework. The international committee which received the report nevertheless noted that 'a lot of work needs to be done considering the implementation of a learning outcomes approach in institutions'.[40]

In the view of the team, this is the crux of the matter. The HE sector is binary in law, yet the distinction, as indicated already, has been obscured by recent history, the employability imperative and competition for students. Moreover, the need to rectify regional imbalances for the sake of economic growth and the well-being of the population is paramount. To expedite the trans-binary collaboration which the team believes to be essential, it will be necessary to set particular parameters for curriculum development. For it is in the casting of specific learning outcomes as 'academic' or as 'vocational and advanced technical', as well as in their location vis-à-vis prerequisites and progression paths, that the binary character of HE provision will become clear.

Fully implementing learning outcomes in HE will, in turn, have conseqences for secondary education. It is not clear whether or how the gradual implementation of twelve years of compulsory education (with student numbers equally divided between academic and technical streams) will affect entry to HE. The team found no evidence of strong concertation between schools and HEIs, either to adjust the secondary curricula and end-of-secondary examinations for smoother HE access or to fine-tune first-year university and polytechnic courses to the needs of the new cohort of school-leavers. If outcome-based student-centred learning were generalised throughout the secondary sector, it would dramatically ease the transition to HE for both streams.

**Recommendations**

R 26 The team **recommends** that the CCES (see Part C) commission from A3ES a review of the implementation of the Bologna reforms. The review should examine, in particular, the extent to which learning outcomes have been: identified in curriculum design; aligned with the national and European qualifications frameworks; absorbed into quality assurance procedures and practice; translated into assessment methods; and – where appropriate – developed in consultation with external stakeholders, notably professional bodies and employers.

R 27 The team **recommends** that learning outcomes be the primary instrument used to give substance to the binary distinction, in other words, that the polytechnic or university character of a particular module or course be determined at the curriculum design stage, and thereafter to be implemented by the HEI in the context of an explicit institutional or consortial mission approved by CCES.

[40] *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in Portugal*, Report of the International Committee on the verification of compatibility with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, op.cit., p.10

R 28 The team **recommends** that trainee teachers be well prepared to implement student-centred learning techniques at secondary level, in terms of curriculum and assessment design, teaching strategies and institutional organisation.

## B3 INTERNATIONALISATION

**Stakeholder perceptions**

Recruitment from abroad is perceived as another way to raise student numbers. The team asked whether there is, or should be, any strong binary division of labour in respect of internationalisation. The response brought little clarification. All sub-sectors envisage extending their operations abroad, whether by opening campuses in Angola, Mozambique or elsewhere in the EU, or by intensifying cross-border curriculum development and student recruitment, or simply by upgrading participation in EU-funded student and staff mobility programmes.

Once again, there is a belief that the Bologna cycles have opened up opportunities for horizontal (part-course) and vertical (whole course) mobility within Europe and beyond, despite the scepticism regarding the extent to which the Bologna Process has been implemented on the ground.

**Team's observations**

The team notes that, as a result of lobbying by the HE sector, and by CRUP in particular, government has plans to introduce an *Estatuto do Estudante Estrangeiro*, which will specify the conditions on which foreign students (from within and outside the lusophone area) can access Portuguese HE and at what cost. This could bring Portugal into line with many European countries which impose higher tuition fees on 'foreign' students, on the grounds that they should not be subsidised by the national tax-payer to the extent that 'home' students might be. In anticipation, a consortium of UA, UL, UTAD and IPB has launched the SISTEMA ISU - Interface SEF-Universidades, streamlining liaison between HEIs and the immigration authorities.

Brazil is naturally a favoured partner. The team notes that CCISP has concluded an agreement to receive 4,500 Brazilian students and that Portugal participates in the ambitious *Ciência sem Fronteiras* programme. CRUP has reached agreement on the mutual recognition of engineering qualifications. Portugal coordinates nine projects in the Europe – Latin America ALFA programme.

In Europe, Portugal has joined the 'pathfinder' working group on the automatic recognition of academic qualifications, convened by the European Commission at the margins of the Bologna Follow-Up Group. In relation to comparator countries of the same size (Belgium and Sweden), Portugal surpasses them in its level of ERASMUS MUNDUS participation and sits between them in volume of ERASMUS student and staff mobility. All these initiatives will count in the effort to reach the Bologna Ministers 20-20-20 target (20% of students internationally mobile by 2020).

Evidence of a drive to internationalise is strong, but it has no distinctive or intrinsic binary characteristics. In the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) this is to be expected, since universities and polytechnics have equal freedom of cross-border – and trans-binary – association. Any differentiation in their activity derives from their missions, rather than from the parameters of internationalisation.

However, most HEIs have small international offices dealing mainly with ERASMUS and African lusophone (PALOPS) student mobility; these offices often in turn depend on the voluntary support of Faculty-based academics. This is typically the case, even when internationalisation features as a headline strand in institutional strategy. International activities will be strengthened by a more strategic approach – one that integrates student and staff mobility, joint curriculum development, collaborative research and consortial activity into a coherent policy package, backed by foreign language provision and adequate infrastructural support. The team believes, for example, that in European HE there is a wealth of experience of regional regeneration; this could usefully be tapped by targeted transnational cooperation.

**Recommendations**

R 29 The team **recommends** that the incoming *Estatuto do Estudante Estrangeiro* apply to universities and polytechnics alike.

R 30 The team **recommends** the speedy putting in place of legal conditions permitting the recruitment of foreign students to courses delivered in English as well as in Portuguese, in all three Bologna cycles.

R 31 The team **recommends** that HEIs, supported by government: take steps to increase the numbers of international academics and researchers and to reduce the volume of in-breeding at institutional and national levels; and ensure that all academics and researchers have operational competence in English-language component skills (reading, writing, understanding, speaking).

R 32 The team **recommends** that the lifelong learning task force (cf. Recommendation 25 above) consider the potential for developing a lusophone MOOC platform.

## B4 QUALITY ASSURANCE

**Stakeholder perceptions**

Quality assurance was not a headline issue for the team, but nevertheless loomed large in its peripheral vision. It is clear that A3ES, the national agency, performs its role to the satisfaction of the full range of stakeholders and is credited with a number of achievements.

First, it has already brought quality criteria to bear on the perceived proliferation of courses, reducing by around 40% the 5000+ programmes which existed at the time of its creation. Secondly,

it has demonstrated its independence, not least by operating in Portuguese and English, by employing foreign experts and by aligning its principles and procedures on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Thirdly, it has embarked on the shift from a model based on programme accreditation to one based on the overseeing of internal quality cultures developed at institutional level. The team learnt that this indeed is a long-term task: as indicated already, there is a long way still to go in establishing student-centred learning, curriculum development based on learning outcomes, and full student participation in quality assurance.

It is as a result of the confidence vested in A3ES that the full range of stakeholders are content to see quality criteria used as the prime instrument of portfolio rationalisation (see section B5 below).

**Team's observations**

The team fully endorses the commitment of A3ES to alignment with European quality assurance principles. At European level there is still considerable progress to be made – in updating the ESG to accommodate good practice in learning outcomes, mobility and recognition, as well as in the expansion of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), to which A3ES is bound by statute to apply, and the growth of cross-border quality assurance. The work of the Portuguese HE sector in the area of learning outcomes will be particularly important – and instructive for the rest of Europe – if, as the team has recommended (see Recommendation 27 above), they are used as the indicator of where modules and courses stand in respect of the binary line. The team notes that, at the initiative of the government, A3ES is to be evaluated by ENQA.[41]

**Recommendation**

R 33 The team **recommends** that HEIs energetically support the efforts of A3ES to move from programme accreditation to the fostering of internal quality cultures developed at institutional level, as an expression of academic autonomy, and reviewed externally in line with the European Standards and Guidelines.

## B5 RATIONALISATION OF THE COURSE PORTFOLIO

**Stakeholder perceptions**

One of the proposals made by interlocutors anxious to re-structure the system was that non-viable institutions should be closed. This conflicts with the widely acknowledged need for widening participation, expansion into lifelong learning and international student recruitment, as well as for

[41] Law 66-A/2012, *Diário da República*, December 31 '*Grandes Opções do Plano para 2013*', para.5.10.2

regional development and for greater research productivity. The majority view favoured harnessing under-utilised capacity, rather than removing it from the system.

There may well, however, be non-viable courses. These are identified in terms of failure either to satisfy A3ES of their quality or to reach the minimum number assigned to them in the annual planning round undertaken by government. The team understands that it is always possible for an institution to maintain a course when intake falls below the required level, as long as its quality is sustained. However, as funding is then discontinued, the strategic reasons for keeping the course open have to be powerful.

Rationalisation raises a number of issues. As mentioned before, the rash of Bologna legislation in the mid-2000s triggered a surge of new Bachelor and Master programmes. These came precisely at the moment when there was a vacuum in quality assurance. Replacing the pre-Bologna *licenciatura*, they were inspired, developed and located in-Faculty, too rapidly to be informed by strategic parameters worked out at institutional level – which, in any case, did not always exist. They were launched in proliferation and bore titles which were subject to no regulatory overview.

The team heard wide-ranging commentary on the fall-out of these developments. One proposition was that rationalisation must begin at home. The elimination of duplicate courses offered in different Faculties would immediately address problems of over-supply and free up academic staff for more innovative course development.

A similar point was made in respect of the autonomous organic research entities which, if absorbed into the fabric of the institution, would create opportunities for articulating research strategy with learning and teaching strategy. One of the features of the UL-UTL merger is the express possibility of creating transversal structures designed to bring research centres (which have the autonomy vested in them by RJIES) into more coherent inter-relationship, within the framework of a strategy elaborated at institutional level.

In other words, there is believed to be scope for institutions to rationalise their own provision – in terms of the volume of programmes as well as of their appropriateness to mission – even before the national distribution of courses is considered.

The team heard a range of approaches to the question of rationalisation at national level: pruning of programmes competing in too close proximity; moving some to distance-learning mode; separating out languages of delivery (i.e. Portuguese and English) in the context of internationalisation; merging courses when savings could be made by sharing access to expensive equipment by several institutions; imposing a standard set of course titles in order to reveal and discourage needless duplication of provision; incentivising the introduction of common first year programmes and modular course structures.

This last suggestion has the advantage, so the team was told, of maximising student choice and the ability of students to customise their study trajectories in the light of their likely career options. Modularisation would also have the effect – benign in the view of many – of forcing the abandonment of the *numerus clausus* methodology (see Recommendation 18 above). Too centrally controlled and undermining institutional autonomy, apparently reluctant to address regional needs,

incapable of supporting flexible study pathways, inter-disciplinarity and trans-binary mobility – these were the criticisms of the current system of programme regulation.

**Team's observations**

Quality, in the view of the team, must remain the prime criterion of course viability. Currently, course closure may result from institutional under-funding affecting the availability of human and learning resources, or from inadequate student finance affecting application, attendance and completion rates. The first factor is quality-related, the second is not. The effects of the cuts are not wholly random, but they cannot be regarded as a strategic rationalisation of the national course portfolio.

Quality assurance should cover the question of the naming of courses, when this is a matter of the clarity of information available to potential students, parents and employers. There is a general wish that there should be some regulation in this area, but academic disciplines have shifting boundaries and it is important that designation does not stifle innovation.

As indicated in the previous section, rationalisation of course provision is a work in progress. A3ES's report on the 2009-10 session revealed that 4044 accredited courses were up and running, one quarter of them in the business and engineering areas. The figure of 4044 had come down from 5262 in 2008 and dropped further to 3623 in 2010. Of the 1000+ courses closed in this period, 60% were at Master level, 35% Bachelor and 15% doctoral.

Any rationalisation, evidently, will have a vertical dimension as well as a horizontal and will have to assess the viability of progression routes on either side of and across the binary line. A3ES noted that the system as a whole was too slow to respond to changes in demand and that HEIs lacked mid- and long-term strategic vision.[42] The team anticipates that the CCES, in approving institutions' strategic plans, will formulate a rationalisation methodology using criteria such as those set out in Recommendation 40 below.

**Recommendations**

R 34 The team **recommends** that institutional leaderships examine as a matter of urgency how to manage their human resources in support of student-centred learning (as per section B2 above), eliminating duplication of provision and shifting the academic focus from input to output, while at the same time ensuring optimal linkage between learning, teaching and research.

R 35 The team **recommends** that the sub-sectoral representative bodies establish a list of first and second cycle course titles, consistent with the *Classificação Nacional das Áreas de Educação e Formação* (CNAEF), so as to clarify the educational offer and the exact meaning of diplomas.

[42] DN archive May 22 2011 http://www.dn.pt/especiais/interior.aspx?content_id=1858329&especial=Revistas de Imprensa&seccao=TV e MEDIA

## PART C: THE *CONSELHO COORDENADOR DO ENSINO SUPERIOR*

**Stakeholder perceptions**

Decree-Law 214/2006 made provision for the setting up of a coordinating council for HE, the *Conselho Coordenador do Ensino Superior* (CCES). The matter was then taken up in the OECD report of 2007, which made suggestions regarding composition and remit. In the same year, Articles 170 and 171 of RJIES indicated the then government's intention to push ahead with arrangements for a CCES. It subsequently published *Decreto Regulamentar* 15/2009 which specified the CCES's mandate, composition, and *modus operandi*. A recent recommendation published by the CNE[43] in November 2012 points out that the CCES still has not been set up and urges the current government to designate its members and to set it in motion.

The team was well aware of the legal basis for the CCES when it visited Portugal in October 2012. It therefore sounded out opinion. Up to a certain point the message was clear. A CCES could effectively address many of the issues raised in the sections above. Specifically, it could be a useful 'buffer body' to sit between government and HEIs, bridging the gap in trust and offering security and continuity. It could stimulate regional development and oversee the articulation of HE strategy and labour market need. It could define the parameters of the binary missions.

The team frequently heard that as a general rule across the private-public and polytechnic-university divides, HEIs have little detail about each other's provision of taught courses, research supervision, lifelong learning, internationalisation, and knowledge transfer. The same is true of performance, that is to say, graduation rates, first destination employment rates, and so on. The CCES could therefore collect data, formulate evidence-based policy and monitor its implementation.

**Team's observations**

Regulatory Decree 15/2009 sets out the composition of the CCES as follows: seven Portuguese and foreign 'personalities' with credibility in the field of HE, nominated by the minister, one of whom then takes the chair; two representatives each of CRUP and CCISP; one representative of APESP; two students, one each representing the polytechnic and university sub-sectors; the president of A3ES; the director-general of HE in the ministry; the president of FCT. The total membership is 17.

The team has two comments to offer on the composition of the CCES. First, it expresses its concern over the fragmentation of the student organisations in Portugal, which divide along binary, institutional and even Faculty lines. This is regrettable at a time when student participation in institutional governance and quality assurance is growing in Europe, encouraged by Bologna ministers, and when the 'social dimension' (i.e. the levels of student support and the affordability of courses) is fragile.

[43] CNE Recommendation 4/2012, *Diário da República*, 2.a série, November 7, '*Recomendação sobre Autonomia Institucional do Ensino Superior*'

Secondly, the team notes that the employers are already represented and that it is standard European practice (including in the Bologna Process) for the social partners to have equal representation.

However, the team also believes that all CCES members should act in a personal capacity and without binding instructions from their constituencies.

As conceived by Regulatory Decree 15/2009, the CCES is a consultative body. It has a dual function: first, it must be consulted when legislation explicitly requires it; secondly, it may be consulted at the discretion of the minister. In the view of the team, it should be more than this. It should be responsible for elaborating, and overseeing the implementation of, a national strategic plan for HE.

The strategic plan should give due attention to the close articulation of learning and teaching with research and innovation. The CCES should therefore work in cooperation with the new *Conselho Nacional de Ciência e Tecnologia* (CNCT),[44] the *Conselho Nacional para o Empreendedorismo e Inovação* (CNEI), the regional development (CCDRs) and HE facilitation agencies indicated in Recommendation 7 above, and other bodies which it deems relevant. The strategy should set an agenda of issues to be addressed as a matter of priority (notably the specification of the binary missions on the basis of consensus, and regional regeneration), together with an array of enabling devices and mechanisms permitting effective consortia to be assembled on a rapid response basis and tailored to the task in hand. Other tasks already expressed in the team's recommendations are oversight of proposed mergers and consolidations (R 14), as well as inquiries into student finance (R 19) and distance learning (R 25).

Both public and private sub-sectors call for greater transparency. The team observes that there is a tendency for each to regard the other as opaque and, in consequence, to limit the extent to which they share information. The CCES should therefore also have an explicit data collection and evaluation function. The team sees no real possibility of consortial collaboration without the transparency that derives from data collected on standard criteria and made publicly available.

Finally, the CCES should also have a regulatory function, with the authority to approve and monitor the four-year institutional contracts (cf. Recommendation 16 above) and to advise the funding bodies accordingly. The team considers the CCES to represent a creative compromise between micro-management by ministry and unconditional sectoral self-regulation. It is a sound and appropriate basis from which to move forward and to build a responsive binary system which is more than the sum of its parts.

**Recommendations**

R 36 The team **recommends** that the CCES be convened and set to work as soon as possible.

R 37 The team **recommends** that student organisations amalgamate to the point at which they have national membership.

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[44] Cf. Law 66-A/2012, *Diário da República*, December 31 '*Grandes Opções do Plano para 2013*', para.5.10.3

R 38 The team **recommends** that the CCES co-opt the teachers' unions – the *Federação Nacional de Professores* (FENPROF) and the *Sindicato Nacional do Ensino Superior* (SNESup) – on a permanent basis.

R 39 The team **recommends** that the CCES be responsible for elaborating a long-term national strategic higher education plan, on the basis of extensive consultation with all stakeholders.

R 40 The team **recommends** that the CCES be charged with drafting proposals on the remits and interfacing of polytechnic and university funding bodies.

R 41 The team **recommends** that the CCES be responsible for identifying the data gaps which inhibit strategic planning at institutional, regional and national levels, and for advising the government on how to eliminate them.

R 42 The team **recommends** that the CCES, in approving strategic plans, use the following criteria: quality; innovative student-centred pedagogy; labour market projections and employer involvement; complementarity with distance learning provision; international collaboration and attractiveness.

R 43 The team **recommends** that CCES coordinate measures to intensify Portuguese efforts to approach the EU target of graduation of 40% of the 30-34 age band by 2020.

## ANNEX 1 – FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS IN LISBON AND IN PORTO, OCTOBER 2012

| | |
|---|---|
| October 15 | *Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia* (FCT) |
| | *Comissão de Educação, Ciência e Cultura da Assembleia da República* |
| | *Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior* (A3ES) |
| October 15, 17, 18 | Members of the *Conselho de Reitores das Universidades Portuguesas* (CRUP) – small groups in different locations |
| October 16 | *Ministério da Educação e Ciência* |
| | *Sindicato Nacional do Ensino Superior* (SNESup) |
| | *Associação Portuguesa do Ensino Superior Privado* (APESP) |
| October 17 | *Federação Nacional de Professores* (FENPROF) |
| | Bologna Follow-Up Group |
| | *Conselho dos Laboratórios Associados* (CLA) |
| October 18 | *Associação Académica de Coimbra*<br>*Associação Académica de Lisboa*<br>*Associação de Estudantes da Universidade de Évora*<br>*Associação Académica da Universidade de Lisboa*<br>*Associação Académica da Universidade do Algarve*<br>*Associação de Estudantes FCT-UNL*<br>*Associação de Estudantes Instituto Superior Técnico*<br>*Federação Académica do Porto*<br>*Federação Nacional de Associações de Estudantes do Ensino Superior Politécnico*<br>*Federação Nacional de Estudantes do Ensino Superior Particular e Cooperativo* |
| | *Conselho Coordenador dos Institutos Superiores Politécnicos* (CCISP) |
| October 19 | *Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian* (FCG) |
| | Presidents of the *conselhos gerais* of the public universities |
| | *Conselho Nacional de Educação* (CNE) |

## ANNEX 2 – MATERIAL CONSULTED

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## ANNEX 3 – SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

**Binary system**

R 1 The team **recommends** that government commit to raising the funding level of HE and research to the EU average in the medium term.

R 2 The team **recommends** that government and stakeholders plan for a higher percentage of secondary pupils to progress to HE, either directly or via bridging courses such as the *Cursos de Especialização Tecnológica* (CET).

R 3 The team **recommends** that efforts be made to ensure maximum publicity of cross-over points for university and polytechnic students, bridging courses, recognition of prior learning, and careers counselling, and that these be embedded in internal quality assurance procedures.

R 4 The team **recommends** that these measures be part of a long-term implementation programme, consisting of regular monitoring and impact assessment, and involving graduate tracking, external stakeholder involvement, peer review and sustained government backing.

R 5 The team **recommends** that they also assure equality of access and progression, by putting in place effective support systems at both secondary and HE levels. They should incentivise the recruitment, by HEIs, of under-represented groups. They should closely monitor the performance of access students, measuring the value added and adapting learning and teaching methods accordingly.

**Regional development**

R 6 The team **recommends** that universities and polytechnics in the same region be incentivised to develop shared proposals regarding curriculum development at CET, Bachelor and Master levels, within the EU regional and HE policy frameworks, such as will favour seriously disadvantaged areas.

R 7 The team **recommends** that each region have an HE-focused facilitation authority to interface between HE consortia and the *Conselho Coordenador do Ensino Superior* (CCES) [cf. Part C below], as well as to liaise with other relevant agencies such as national funding sources, private and public sector bodies operating at national level, and municipal authorities.

R 8 The team **recommends** that the government introduce incentives for young academic staff and early stage researchers to move from the coast to the interior and to the islands, for example, by making a one-year post-doctoral grant conditional on two years of service in a designated higher education institution.

**Research**

R 9 The team **recommends** that the funding bodies increase the scope for interdisciplinary and trans-binary research.

R 10 The team **recommends** that the *Estatuto da Carreira do Pessoal Docente do Ensino Superior Politécnico* (ECPDESP) be fully implemented.

R 11 The team **recommends** that universities consider developing the provision and award of practice-based professional doctorates, in line with the lifelong learning imperative.

**Foundations and mergers**

R 12 The team **recommends** that, whatever change to the legal framework might be envisaged, the degree of autonomy enshrined in current legislation be maintained and reinforced.

R 13 The team **recommends** that government commit to retaining a stable legal framework which includes the existence of Foundations.

R 14 The team **recommends** that plans for further mergers and consolidations be set out in four-year institutional strategic development plans, to be approved by CCES.

**Funding**

R 15 The team **recommends** that separate budget allocation bodies be set up for public universities and public polytechnics, charged with receiving funding from government and allocating institutional block grants as well as project-based awards, on a multi-annual basis in line with the national strategy elaborated by CCES, as well as with the principles of transparency and parity of esteem.

R 16 The team **recommends** the drawing up of contracts between the State and public HEIs, based on agreed inputs and outputs over a four-year period and premised upon a clear strategy developed at institutional level, a strategy which is in turn negotiated with regional development agencies and approved by the CCES.

R 17 The team **recommends** that the framework outlined in Recommendation 15 allow for significant, sustainable and affirmative action in respect of HEIs located in the mainland interior.

R 18 The team **recommends** that the system of *numerus clausus*, as currently practised, be discontinued.

R 19 The team **recommends** that the CCES investigate the adequacy of the volume and mechanics of student finance.

**Re-structuring of the HE system**

R 20 The team **recommends** that the autonomies granted by RJIES be guaranteed by government for a further five-year period, in order that viable strategic planning can take place at institutional, regional and national levels, and that due impact assessment and wide consultation take place before any changes to the law are made. (See also Recommendation 13 above.)

R 21 The team **recommends** that any re-structuring of HE be undertaken in conjunction with the reform of secondary schooling.

**Lifelong learning**

R 22 The team **recommends** that such provision be informed by an agreed and explicit national strategy, developed by the CCES, set within the framework of a more flexible binary system, and appropriately funded.

R 23 The team **recommends** that the lifelong learning strategy be informed by regional labour market planning undertaken in the framework of the changes proposed in section A2 above.

R 24 The team **recommends** the setting up of on-course support and graduate tracking systems focused on the 23+ entry cohort, in order to refine existing access mechanisms and introduce new ones, as well as to improve careers counselling, to guide curriculum development at Master level, and to publicise the full range of educational opportunities for mature students.

R 25 The team **recommends** that CCES set up a task force to review the scope for expanding internal and external distance learning in conjunction with the measures to increase access to HE.

**Learning and teaching**

R 26 The team **recommends** that the CCES (see Part C) commission from A3ES a review of the implementation of the Bologna reforms. The review should examine, in particular, the extent to which learning outcomes have been: identified in curriculum design; aligned with the national and European qualifications frameworks; absorbed into quality assurance procedures and practice; translated into assessment methods; and – where appropriate – developed in consultation with external stakeholders, notably professional bodies and employers.

R 27 The team **recommends** that learning outcomes be the primary instrument used to give substance to the binary distinction, in other words, that the polytechnic or university character of a particular module or course be determined at the curriculum design stage, and thereafter to be implemented by the HEI in the context of an explicit institutional or consortial mission approved by CCES.

R 28 The team **recommends** that trainee teachers be well prepared to implement student-centred learning techniques at secondary level, in terms of curriculum and assessment design, teaching strategies and institutional organisation.

**Internationalisation**

R 29 The team **recommends** that the incoming *Estatuto do Estudante Estrangeiro* apply to universities and polytechnics alike.

R 30 The team **recommends** the speedy putting in place of legal conditions permitting the recruitment of foreign students to courses delivered in English as well as in Portuguese, in all three Bologna cycles.

R 31 The team **recommends** that HEIs, supported by government: take steps to increase the numbers of international academics and researchers and to reduce the volume of in-breeding at institutional and national levels; and ensure that all academics and researchers have operational competence in English-language component skills (reading, writing, understanding, speaking).

R 32 The team **recommends** that the lifelong learning task force (cf. Recommendation 25 above) consider the potential for developing a lusophone MOOC platform.

**Quality assurance**

R 33 The team **recommends** that HEIs energetically support the efforts of A3ES to move from programme accreditation to the fostering of internal quality cultures developed at institutional level, as an expression of academic autonomy, and reviewed externally in line with the European Standards and Guidelines.

**Rationalisation of the course portfolio**

R 34 The team **recommends** that institutional leaderships examine as a matter of urgency how to manage their human resources in support of student-centred learning (as per section B2 above), eliminating duplication of provision and shifting the academic focus from input to output, while at the same time ensuring optimal linkage between learning, teaching and research.

R 35 The team **recommends** that the sub-sectoral representative bodies establish a list of first and second cycle course titles, consistent with the *Classificação Nacional das Áreas de Educação e Formação* (CNAEF), so as to clarify the educational offer and the exact meaning of diplomas.

**The *Conselho Coordenador do Ensino Superior* (CCES)**

R 36 The team **recommends** that the CCES be convened and set to work as soon as possible.

R 37 The team **recommends** that student organisations amalgamate to the point at which they have national membership.

R 38 The team **recommends** that the CCES co-opt the teachers' unions – the *Federação Nacional de Professores* (FENPROF) and the *Sindicato Nacional do Ensino Superior* (SNESup) – on a permanent basis.

R 39 The team **recommends** that the CCES be responsible for elaborating a long-term national strategic higher education plan, on the basis of extensive consultation with all stakeholders.

R 40 The team **recommends** that the CCES be charged with drafting proposals on the remits and interfacing of polytechnic and university funding bodies.

R 41 The team **recommends** that the CCES be responsible for identifying the data gaps which inhibit strategic planning at institutional, regional and national levels, and for advising the government on how to eliminate them.

R 42 The team **recommends** that the CCES, in approving strategic plans, use the following criteria: quality; innovative student-centred pedagogy; labour market projections and employer involvement; complementarity with distance learning provision; international collaboration and attractiveness.

R 43 The team **recommends** that CCES coordinate measures to intensify Portuguese efforts to approach the EU target of graduation of 40% of the 30-34 age band by 2020.

The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 47 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with its members and a range of other European and international organisations EUA ensures that the independent voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact on their activities.

The Association provides a unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, website and publications.

The Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities (CRUP) is a coordinating body of higher education in Portugal and integrates as full members all the public universities and the Catholic University of Portugal, hence corresponding to a relevant and significant part of the national higher education system.

CRUP's main activities are mainly directed to the coordination and global representation of its members, as well as an active collaboration in the formulation of national policies in education, science and culture, including a direct involvement in national higher education policy debate.

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