

AVALIAÇÃO DE UNIDADES DE I&D: Publicação de Resultados (Comentários do Painel de Avaliação)

Unit Name: Centro de Ecologia Aplicada Prof. Baeta Neves (AGR-LVT-Lisboa-520)

Evaluation Panel (Unidade I&D visitada em: 13-02-2008)

(c) Fons Werrij

(r) Soren Mikkelsen

(r) Jim Flanaga

(r) Atanas Atanassov

(r) John Williams

(r) Gianluca Brunori

(r) Jan Klijn

(r) Mari Walls

(r) Svetla Batchvarova

Legenda: (c) Coordinator; (r) Reviewer

Resultado Global da Unidade:

Very Good

Financiamento Base Anual:

€ 33.000,00

General Comments*

The centre was created in 1995, focuses at ecology applied to nature and forest management and links to agricultural land use. The centre is relatively small (9 PhD staff, other staff comprises 20 + people. PhD students count 15, MsC 's 15. Despite its limited size it is divided in very small research groups, a subdivision that seems rather theoretical, as most people seem to work within the frame of the unit as such. The five "groups" are effectively working areas: biodiversity in agriculture and forest landscapes, wildlife management, fire management, ecological design and landscape architecture; agro-environmental education and dissemination. The panel sees such areas hardly as an organizationally structure; the unit level therefore is chosen as main and most relevant entrance for evaluation.

Goals, ongoing and planned projects, strategic development in the future

The unit sees itself as the interface between biodiversity – agro-and forestry related land use and the environment. This ambition however seems far from realistic as the unit limits itself to specific topics, does not seem happy to expand and rather stick to its current size and pleasant housing. Structural working relationships with scientifically spoken near neighbours does not seem a priority. The impression arises that most people are content with some splendid isolation rather than being ambitious in accomplishing cooperation that should fit the "interface-ambition". The Unit has undertaken initiatives towards an Associated Lab (CIBIO) with Units outside Agri-research rather than with neighbours in Lisbon in related fields (LEAF). The unit has (very) good scores on scientific productivity and the international quality of its products.

Remarkable feature is that the Unit has limited obligations in teaching (20%) so that net research time per member is high.

Training of young researchers and students

Training of PhD's and Masters seem to be sufficient / good.

Organization of workshops

Seminars are given each 2 weeks; seemingly the size of the unit and intensive cooperation over the group-boundaries does not impede exchange of experiences and ideas.

Interdisciplinary activities

Between members of the Unit sufficient to good; between Unit and other research units elsewhere in Lisbon major improvements could be made, if time, money and mutual willingness should exist.

Interactions with other national and international research units and companies

The unit showed impressive numbers of institutes (> 100) all over Europe where contacts exist. This rises the question why not a more selective approach to find and maintain cooperation with key institutes could be arranged. The same applies for national cooperation (see above)

Participation in international research programmes (EU etc)

Tit and especially some scientific areas within shows remarkable efforts and successes in European cooperation, all acting as coordinators (Fire ecology and fire abatement (PARADOX); also from publications it becomes clear that international cooperation is OK.

Knowledge and technology transfer

The Unit seems to be successful in many respects, especially in fire ecology and fire prevention research, where also courses are given and practical advice is handed to end users

Outreach activities

The Unit is very active and effective in reaching the public by active education and dissemination of results. (High school teachers, school kids, others)

Attitudes and work environment

Adequacy of unit organization and leadership: It seems that the Unit acts as a unit, rather than as an organization of research groups, a feature that does not seem to bother anyone.

Leadership is on group level not evaluated. Unit leadership seems to be done by the coordinator and some PI's and evidently leads to results in what has been undertaken.

Question marks however appear when the actual meaning of the Unit's mission should be assessed: making links to related fields and units, where agricultural land use and forest research are at stake. Initiatives could be developed far more than now

Culture of creativity and opportunity/encouragement of younger researchers' initiatives: The Unit is creative within its own, often too narrow field and lacks creativity in developing broader, interdisciplinary cooperation to really act as interface. The attitude of "small is beautiful" and its attachment to their own restricted housing is impeding necessary steps.

What the unit does, it very well, but the challenge is to go beyond!

Most pertinent comments and recommendations:

- Although the Unit performs still as very good (partly even as excellent) according to the criteria, its mission, vision on the future and general attitude towards cooperation with self evident groups/units elsewhere (Lisbon, Centro de Estudos Florestais, Centro de Botânica Aplicada à Agricultura, Evora (ICAM)) deserves a strong impulse in order to accomplish its role as interface towards forestry and agriculture in a broader sense. Also its activities in biodiversity alone could gain from more intensive cooperation.
- In view of the above discussion should be started with Lisbon university to establish structural cooperation or if necessary a real merge, with Evora to establish structural cooperation.
- Initiatives to take part in an associated lab should be in line with the above:

Participation in the LEAF initiative is preferred above the INBIO initiative.

Specific Group Comments*

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