

MIT Portugal Program (MPP)

External Review Committee

Report of Assessment April 2009

The External Review Committee of the MIT-Portugal Program (MPP) met in Lisbon on March 27 and 28, 2009.

The following members were present:

- Prof. dr. Henk G. Sol, Professor of Business and ICT and Founding Dean Faculty of Economics and Business, Groningen University, Professor of Systems Engineering and Founding Dean Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management, Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands (Chair)
- Prof. César Dopazo, Ph.D., Full Professor of Fluid Mechanics, University of Zaragoza, Spain
- Prof. Jonathan Dordick, PhD., Isermann Professor, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, USA.

The other members submitted their contributions beforehand and participated partly by telephone:

- Prof. Roland Clift, Ph.D., CBE, Distinguished Professor of Environmental Technology, University of Surrey, UK
- Prof. Nick Oliver, Ph.D., Head of School of Management and Economics, University of Edinburgh, UK
- Mr. Robert Skinner, Executive Director, Transportation Research Board, National Academy of Sciences, USA.

The ERC noted that since its last meeting in March 2008 several external interventions and changes have occurred.

The ERC invited the MPP directors to resubmit a new report for evaluation.

It is appreciated that MPP took appropriate actions to improve the level of professionalism at the Lisbon co-ordination office.

The ERC received a new report for assessment on April 23, 2009. The members conveyed their opinions through its chairman, who attended a strategy meeting in Cambridge, MA on April 26. He reported their (initial) observations to the Program Governing Committee on April 27, 2009.

The ERC is happy with the impressive progress that has been made in the report over the last month. It appreciates the efforts of many closely involved. It welcomes an introductory chapter indicating the consistent development of the program and the realistic ambitions for the final years, a reflection on the earlier recommendations of the ERC, a self assessment of the achievements based on objective measures and a revised budget proposal.

The ERC notes that over the first formative years MPP has met or exceeded the goals and objectives that were presented to and approved by the ERC. The participants in the program can be proud of the achievements of such a complex program.

At the same times it realizes that the changes in the outside world are putting new demands on such a program. Especially accountability, scientific visibility in objective terminology and recognition of the role of MPP in the European and global research arena are drivers for a precise articulation of the achievements of the program.

The ERC made the following observations:

In general the ERC is not unhappy with the progress and achievements in the respective Focus Areas. More detailed remarks are made in the enclosed Focus Area Reports.

The ERC notes a very constructive atmosphere among the Portuguese deans, the PhD students and the Industrial Affiliates. However, in order to strengthen the MPP bases, increase the rate of change of traditional structures and improve the chances for the extension of the Program beyond the initial five years term, deans should be persuaded to forcefully exercise their autonomy and foster precise targeted changes allowed under the new Portuguese University law.

On the other hand, Industry should be encouraged to more actively participate in defining their domains of interest, finding the corresponding intersections of these with the MPP research portfolio and launching real Integrated R&D Projects viable, visible and beneficial to Portugal.

Suggestions are made to improve the communication among participants.

The ERC notes with pleasure that progress is made around the 'Association for Furthering Engineering Systems Research'.

The ERC very much supports the initiative for strategy development reflected in a draft white paper.

In its opinion the white paper is a start of a process in which MPP can be recognized in the upcoming two to five years as the 'MPP movement, exploiting a network of participants well - educated in engineering systems thinking'. It potentially drives virtual and institutional arrangements for continuation and development of the intellectual role models that are and will be provided by MPP.

The ERC welcomes the focus chosen through the so- called application areas.

It expresses the following points of attention while further developing the draft white paper:

- The 3 dimensional arrangement of the program requires some guiding principles on creating scientific insights.
- The procedure for 'open calls' needs careful attention with a precise formulation of requirements.
- The commitments made in the Focus Areas and the initiation of new application projects ask for appropriate governance and communication.
- Expressing realistic ambitions, goals and objectives might lead to a further appreciation of the MPP movement.

On behalf of the ERC,

Henk G.Sol, chairman

Encl. Focus Area reports