

## Evaluation Panel: SOCIAL SCIENCES - Sciences of Communication

### Panel Members

Nathalie Fenton (Chair)	Goldsmith University of London, United Kingdom
Barbie Zelizer	Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania, United States of America
Greg Elmer	Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada
Paula Chakravartty	New York University, United States of America
Sarah Banet-Weiser	London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom

### R&D Units

Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade (CECS)	Universidade do Minho (UM)
Centro de Investigação em Comunicação Aplicada, Cultura e Novas Tecnologias (CICANT)	COFAC, Cooperativa de Formação e Animação Cultural, CRL (COFAC)
Instituto de Comunicação da NOVA (ICNOVA)	Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas (FCSH/UNL)
LabCom - Comunicação e Artes (LabCom)	Universidade da Beira Interior (UBI)



## Evaluation Panel: SOCIAL SCIENCES - Sciences of Communication

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**R&D Unit:** Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade (CECS)

**Coordinator:** Moisés Adão de Lemos Martins

**Integrated PhD Researchers:** 68

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**Overall Quality Grade:** EXCELLENT

### Evaluation Criteria Ratings

- (A) Quality, merit, relevance and internationalization of the R&D activities of the Integrated Researchers in the R&D Unit Application: 5
- (B) Merit of the team of Integrated Researchers: 5
- (C) Appropriateness of objectives, strategy, plan of activities and organization: 5

**Base Funding for (2020-2023):** 1201 K€

### Recommended Programmatic Support

PhD Fellowships: 12

Programmatic Funding: 894 K€, including for 3 (Auxiliar) New PhD Researchers Contracts.

### Justification, Comments and Recommendations

CECS is a large, dynamic and internationally recognized research center with a coherent approach to research. While the Unit's 131 integrated researchers and 141 PhD students cover a vast range of socially relevant research topics drawing from interdisciplinary social science, there is a clear focus on situating the role of communications and culture in relation to questions of citizenship and community. Thematic areas of focus especially relevant to debates across global social science include cutting edge research on media and multiculturalism and inclusivity, technoscience, the environment and climate change, media literacy for engaged citizenship, media and cultural policy and regulation, journalism and democracy in information societies, and the expansion of intercultural relations in the Portuguese regions of Africa, Europe and the Americas.

CECS stands out as a research institute in its overall approach to generating novel and socially relevant interdisciplinary research in the field of Communications, and has a substantial presence in international research networks in terms of research funding and collaboration, publications and conference participation. However, the Unit is also unique in putting Communications and Cultural Studies research about Portugal and the Portuguese-speaking world on the map for scholars of Communications more broadly. In addition, CECS researchers are engaged critically in rethinking the "global" significance of Portuguese language and culture across colonial and postcolonial linkages from Africa to Europe and the Americas, as well as re-orienting discussions of media and communications theory away from English-dominated debates. Of perhaps greatest significance in the field, CECS remaps the terrain of "global" Communications research with its emphasis on cultivating and highlighting research and theory through its active collaboration with universities in Angola, Mozambique and Cape Verde, Macao, East Timor as well as Brazil and Spanish-speaking Latin America.

The Unit is organized around three productive research groups with Cultural Studies/Intercultural Communication the most internationally recognized research area. This group focuses on the interrelated themes of cultures, representations and visual culture and postcolonial and counterhegemonic cultures, representations and inequality and communication of science.

The second research group on Communication, Organizations and Social Dynamics is organized around strategic communication and social change; health, demographic changes and well-being; and inclusive, innovative and reflective societies. The main contributions of the group include examples of strategic communication in improving civic behavior corporations and NGOs and has been actively involved in the Unit's knowledge transfer between academia and society most notably through the Communication and Culture Policies Observatory (<http://www.polobs.pt>).

The third research group on Media and Journalism focuses on developments in the field of information and media, spotlighting media literacy, institutional analysis and regulation and critical analysis of media coverage. Its main research contributions include the Media and Information Literacy Observatory (<http://www.milobs.pt>) AND Communitas (<http://www.comunitas.pt/>) a media policy and practice think tank.

Finally, SoundScopeLab (<http://soundscopelab.org/>) focuses on research on radio in a digital era.

Productivity is evident across individual group and subgroup. Both the Media Literacy unit and the Strategic Communication and Social Dynamics unit have shown strong service in producing research and intervention of a practical nature: the first in setting up a guide for pedagogic work on media literacy for the Portuguese Media Education Guidance Referential; the second in establishing management guidelines for Bosch-Braga-Portugal and Quality Alive, both with social value. The Public Policies unit, aiming to influence public media policy, has been advising multiple public entities, including the Independent General Council of Public Service Broadcasting, the European Observatory of Audiovisuals and the Latin-American Organization of Media Ombudspersons.

In each of these areas, the Unit demonstrates rigorous activity throughout the last funding cycle including 30 nationally and internationally funded research projects including from the ERC, European Commission, FCT, Aga Khan Foundation, Bosch, as well as other Public entities. Moreover, the CECS bilingual (English and Portuguese) open access repository of its publications, has led to close to 1 million downloads of documents both nationally and internationally.

In terms of graduate education and training, the Unit has trained and mentored almost 100 PhD students and 200 Masters Students in the review period. The student body is highly international with half of the PhD students coming from other countries including Brazil, but also Portuguese-Speaking Africa and as well as from across Europe. During our site visit, it was apparent that doctoral students, postdoctoral fellows and junior researchers worked collaboratively and closely with senior researchers across the three research areas. PhD students had strong records of publications and co-authorship with senior researchers, and it was clear that there was genuine encouragement of “bottom-up” research from student and junior research interests driving a number of regular symposia and discussions including an excellent quality doctoral symposium.

In sum, our site visit confirmed the excellence of CECS’ research profile. CECS’ has an established research record and reputation, plays a leading role in Portugal in using research to respond to societal changes, and is a leader in its innovative approach to internationalization and global research.

CECS comprises 131 integrated researchers, 70 of whom have PhDs, and 142 PhDs advised by integrated members of the R&D Unit.

The scientific merit of the team of integrated researchers is markedly robust and internationally acclaimed. The leaders/PIs of the Unit’s major funded projects and research groups speak to a particularly productive and rigorous set of researchers, who are internationally recognized and widely published across multiple key subfields of communication. Scholarly and media output is notable across the board, including over 90 books published between 2013-2017 and numerous research articles and book chapters that are equally strong across the three research themes that comprise the Unit: Communication, Organizations and Social Dynamics; Cultural Studies; and Media and Journalism. Covering a wide range of significant theoretical and empirical areas of interest, the integrated researchers are very well-embedded in international professional networks and are often at the helm of such networks nationally, regionally and internationally, are highly active in professionalizing forums for the field such as editorial boards, have produced a strong mix of publications in Portuguese and English, including a healthy number of research articles in top-level international peer-reviewed journals, and maintain two Open Access bilingual journals and three publication series. Activity during this past funding cycle has been rigorous, with 37 ongoing projects with national and international funding.

There is a very clear organization of the Unit: with three well-defined areas of research interest (discussed above) and four clear areas of activity listed: Research: Intervention, Publication and Education. Given the expansive and active nature of the Unit’s research footprint and its relatively large scale of activity across all three units of research, one consistent issue that arose during our site visit was the need for administrative infrastructure to support the expansion and activities of this Unit. The ambitious scope of translation required for the various online and publication projects, the scale of applications for funded research at the national and international level (especially EU grants) and the dynamic and collaborative that then leads to new areas of research. Three specific items were mentioned appear justified following our site visit: funds for help with dedicated translation (to help with the significant translation work required in the maintenance of bilingual publications and documentation), funds to hire grants management staff (to help with the bureaucratic processing of grant applications), and a small pool of “seed research” funds for new projects based on new ideas generated internally by integrated researchers and graduate students.

As a large, dynamic and productive research Unit CECS unsurprisingly has extensive and ambitious research priorities and plans for the next five-year period. With some concerns over the stability of funding, the Unit also plans to consolidate its existing strengths, particularly in research dissemination, internationalization efforts, and the ongoing

publication of its scientific, peer reviewed journals. Overall the plans are well aligned to the multidisciplinary goals of the Unit, the commitment to addressing pressing social issues, and also plans to further enhance the scholarly leadership exhibited in the Unit's impressive bilingual journals.

Apart from broad goals to intensify their research effort (increase publications in English, and forge new external and community (NGO) partnerships and collaborations), the Unit's principle research goals and plans for the next five years are structured around a series of thematic cultural repositories or 'platforms', a media literacy observatory, and a knowledge transfer think tank entitled 'Communitas'. Given the large size of this Unit and the diversity of its research base and competencies, these initiatives will provide important organizational and thematic spaces to the Unit, while also supporting and growing its research projects and proposals.

The Unit highlighted the Virtual Lusophony Museum for particular attention in both its written documentation/proposal and during the site visit. This cultural platform will serve as repository for cultural materials through the Lusophony countries and regions. In addition to serving as a magnet for potential partnership, networks, grants and other international research collaborations, this project might also serve as a template or format for other international research groups and institutions.

With its stated interest and strengths in public communication, the Unit has also proposed to develop a public communication barometer. This is an innovative research project that promises to develop important research tools, interfaces and platforms that could assist researchers, media professionals, practitioners, and other public officials in determining the reliability and veracity of public claims, arguments and 'facts'. This is a crucial need for our times, and promises to be a core, overarching research contribution from this Unit. This initiative also dovetails nicely with the Unit's plan to create a think tank to assist in knowledge translation and dissemination to the public and media.

Going forward this Unit expressed interest in leading a large European grant and project. For the size and reputation of this Unit it is a little surprising that this has not yet occurred, though clear financial constraints and the lack of administrative research support may be factors. The Unit needs to develop a strategy to garner advice, support and other forms of mentorship on how to lead a major European project – perhaps a summer school, grant writing camp or retreat might help to foster these skills and competencies within this Unit.

## Evaluation Panel: SOCIAL SCIENCES - Sciences of Communication

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**R&D Unit:** Centro de Investigação em Comunicação Aplicada, Cultura e Novas Tecnologias (CICANT)

**Coordinator:** Maria Cláudia Silva Afonso e Álvares

**Integrated PhD Researchers:** 33

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**Overall Quality Grade:** GOOD

### Evaluation Criteria Ratings

- (A) Quality, merit, relevance and internationalization of the R&D activities of the Integrated Researchers in the R&D Unit Application: 3
- (B) Merit of the team of Integrated Researchers: 3
- (C) Appropriateness of objectives, strategy, plan of activities and organization: 4

**Base Funding for (2020-2023):** 399 K€

### Recommended Programmatic Support

PhD Fellowships: 1

Programmatic Funding: 190 K€.

### Justification, Comments and Recommendations

CICANT is a relatively small but cohesive R&D Unit that brings together researchers from Lusófona University studying communication and the media. It is organized into three subject areas: MTL (media technologies and literacies) MSC (Media, society and culture) and MACI (Media arts and creative industries). Most of the institute's activities are organized around funded research projects. These projects provide a justifiably narrow slice of communication research – the focus is on applied communication methods and case studies, principally concerning the reception and use of media technologies and practices.

CICANT has strengths in Media Technologies and Literacies, Media, Society and Culture and Media Arts and Creative Industries. Outside of the PhD training (the Unit participates in four PhD programs), the funded projects organize the main activities of the Unit, more so than the other institutes under review. The Unit often contributes research support to industrial partners and private media and technology companies. The Unit has three private funded research labs.

The Panel noted that the Unit has recently separated from the CIC.Digital institute. Hence the organization of CICANT is nascent and under development. There is a small, three-person executive team and a balanced group of senior, junior and PhD researchers.

The Panel found clear evidence of quality research being produced on media literacy, facilitated by both national and European funding agencies. This project is guided by an interest in different forms of radicalization. This research initiative also dovetails nicely with the Unit's participation in European COST initiative "transforming audiences", specifically focusing on populism and extremism in the media. This research focus represents the most impressive sustained, internationally recognized research. There are indications that this research strength may lead to more projects in relationship to gaming.

The Unit's other main research strengths lie in the innovation use of media technologies, in conjunction with historical media artefacts (principally stereo photos). Once again, this research is organized through a research grant, and makes important contributions the understanding and appreciation of local media history, culture, and media innovation. We found clear evidence, both in the proposal documentation and on site, of important research, artistic and social contributions to Portuguese cultural history. This project brings together a series of contemporary media technologies (AR&VR) to disseminate media history and older forms of media. This is highly original applied research that demonstrates the innovative, cultural application of new media technologies. This project also exhibits the Unit's strengths in collaborating with outside partners. The Panel also found that the stereo photos project, and the work of the AR/VR lab, could likely garner support and partners from other locations in Europe and beyond.

The Unit's third, more nascent research stream focuses on health, in particular how new media technologies can assist in the diagnosis of corporeal movements and ailments. While this stream of research is currently under development, there is evidence that the Unit's AR/VR research lab has the capacity to develop more projects on this topic in the future.

Since separating from CIC.Digital this Unit seems to be focusing their identity on applied, commercial research. With the support of a number of private businesses the Unit has been able to fund research labs. The subsequent research projects are closely aligned with the interest of business and the strengths of the integrated researchers. There is concern however about the broader intellectual and scholarly contributions of the Unit's researchers. There is a risk that following the lead of commercial partners (and having private companies serve as lead on grants) might lead to the stagnation of this Unit's contributions to the more conceptual, theoretical, and critical research in the discipline of communication studies/science. Moreover, the Unit may in the future struggle to reconceptualise and readjust to new opportunities in the absence of a well-established and rigorous conceptual understanding of the role of media technologies in society.

The Internationalization of the Unit is somewhat underdeveloped, and as such requires particular attention. There was little evidence of strategic thinking concerning the recruitment of international graduate students. This absence is likely due to the Unit being strictly focused on applied projects, supported by specific partnerships and grants. The relative lack in conceptual and theoretical research, going forward, may also hinder the capacity for this Unit to make more lasting and in-depth research contributions outside of specific Portuguese related (and fundable) applied projects. This Unit's focus on applied funded research, in other words, makes efforts at internationalizing their research far more difficult.

CICANT is comprised of 59 Integrated Researchers and 41 PhD Students. The stated aim of CICANT is to integrate applied and theoretical research, although there is more evidence of success in its applied research. The Integrated Researchers have notable accomplishments, publishing in first-tier, international and peer-reviewed journals, often with scholars from abroad; serving in strong leadership roles in international communication organizations and editorial positions; and producing three open-access journals. Several of the Unit's researchers have been very active in representing the Unit.

CICANT recently led a H2020 application in the area of media and cultural heritage with more than 20 European academic and industry partners that scored above the threshold after second stage evaluation). The reinforcement of the Unit's profile has also been achieved via the regular publication of three open access journals: International Journal of Film and Media Arts <http://revistas.ulusofona.pt/index.php/ijfma/> International Journal on Stereo & Immersive Media <http://revistas.ulusofona.pt/index.php/stereo> and "Caleidoscópico". These three journals are currently undergoing the indexation process in Latin index, Scielo and Scopus.

For the 2019-2022 funding cycle, CICANT plans to strengthen research in its three main subject areas: Media Technologies and Literacies (MTL); Media, Society and Culture (MSC); Media Arts and Creative Industries (MACI). The Unit have clear and concise strategies to build upon existing strengths and develop new initiatives for institutional development.

While the Unit is closely focused on Lisbon based research opportunities, it is commendable that CICANT plans to prioritize more intensive international collaborations and partnerships, from participation in international organizations to significant roles in international research consortiums.

CICANT's objectives include institutional research intensification and development with the addition of post-doctoral researchers through the Marie Curie program, which is an important move towards increasing the internationalization of the research Unit.

The Unit is placing particular emphasis on the development of their junior researchers through the expenditure of existing funding. The Unit also plans to prioritize H2020 applications to build their team of integrated researchers, and continue network development with established partners.

The Unit is also in the early stages of developing projects focused on health research, in particular 'e-health'. This initiative makes good use of its pre-existing research lab space and technological infrastructure, but could use more staffing support to take it to the next level – that is, where they could become important research leaders and international collaborators.

This Unit has recently split from a larger more topically diverse research institute. The new organizational structure that manages CICANT is tight and nonredundant, though more researchers – potentially a junior researcher- could be added to increase the size of the executive committee. CICANT has an executive committee comprised of a Director and two Vice-Directors that meets with the Integrated Researchers every fortnight. While junior researchers did not express

concerns about being excluded in the administration of the Unit, efforts could be made going forward to include broader groups of researchers into the executive group.

The PhD students and Integrated Researchers seem remarkably happy with all elements of the Unit; indeed, there were very few complaints from any of the groups about any part of the Unit or its operations and initiatives. That said, in conversations with junior researchers there was a reticence to discuss recommendations for improvement, or other forms of self-reflection that are needed in healthy and vibrant research Units. There is a concern that the culture of scholarly inquiry may be taking a back seat to more instrumental goals and tasks of the Unit.

Lastly, given the applied nature of the research Unit and the focus on research collaborations with private enterprises, it is suggested that the Unit develop a more rigorous and explicit ethics policy that can be transparently communicated and discussed with junior researchers and PhD students in particular. The Unit has some conditional proposals for an ethics council, however the context of this proposal was expressed with some conditional and vague language. The ethics section of the proposal in other words was much more conceptual and indeed philosophical as opposed to procedural and explicit, particularly with regards to its relationships and research collaborations with private companies. At this stage the Unit seems to be working on an ad hoc, case by case ethics policy set by the executive committee.

## Evaluation Panel: SOCIAL SCIENCES – Sciences of Communication

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**R&D Unit:** Instituto de Comunicação da NOVA (ICNOVA)

**Coordinator:** Francisco Rui Nunes Cádima

**Integrated PhD Researchers:** 77

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**Overall Quality Grade:** EXCELLENT

### Evaluation Criteria Ratings

- (A) Quality, merit, relevance and internationalization of the R&D activities of the Integrated Researchers in the R&D Unit Application: 5
- (B) Merit of the team of Integrated Researchers: 4
- (C) Appropriateness of objectives, strategy, plan of activities and organization: 4

**Base Funding for (2020-2023):** 1276 K€

### Recommended Programmatic Support

PhD Fellowships: 8

Programmatic Funding: 622 K€, including for 2 (Junior) New PhD Researchers Contracts.

### Justification, Comments and Recommendations

The NOVA Institute of Communication shows a broad investment in the field of communication sciences, developing creative and rigorous interventions around pressing issues in public life. With four separate research groups and two laboratories, it produces a strong number of relevant scholarly publications in well-known academic presses and in international and peer-reviewed journals, holds an average of five conferences per year, engages in training and mentoring of junior scholars across the research groups, and displays a creative mix of scholarship and media output (films, documentaries, infographic videos). It also engages in technology transfer back to industry and across the university.

Research projects have clear social impact goals and design, aligned to ongoing social challenges such as media representations, children's online behaviour, and the sustainability of the arts. There is a strong emphasis on issues of equality, social inclusion, and pluralism as well as evidence of broad cohesion on research themes and aligned researcher strengths and interests. The Unit's articulated aim of promoting diversity and inclusion in an age of social acceleration and mediatization alongside studying cognition and performance goes a long way toward using a wide and relevant array of disciplinary tools to address current social problems. The Nova Institute of Communication appears to have high quality internationally recognized research and productivity across all five areas of research.

The four research groups of the Unit reveal a thoughtful investment in some of the field's most productive subfields, playing a key role in the contemporary landscape of the discipline. The research groups vary in breadth and describe their activities with different degrees of detail. The output of the Culture, Mediation and the Arts group—particularly given its critical nature and important engagement with the memories of Africa among the Portuguese—is noteworthy, though the link between its two research clusters—the culture of online participation and arts, archives and patrimonial collections in digital culture—might profit from more elaboration. Additionally, the Performance and Cognition research group is making strong contributions to theoretical and applied research, via innovative and promising intellectual ensembles and a valuable focus on decision-making in creative environments.

The two laboratories—the BlackBox Lab and the iNOVA Media Lab—develop applied research in different areas: The Black Box Lab provides a web-based collaborative platform that features contemporary performing artists; the iNOVA Media Lab maps the relationship between technology and social practices. The specific projects of both labs are promising, with the BlackBox Lab producing highly original spaces with distinct value internationally, especially the documentation of compositional processes by performing artists in dance and theater.

Additionally, the deservedly high-profile EUKids Online and Media Pluralism Monitor, both co-funded by the EU, and a relatively new project called Afro-European Narratives, co-funded by the EU and the Portuguese government, speak to pressing issues of public interest nationally and transnationally and exhibit strong degrees of international recognition, funding and outreach. There is marked creativity in the Afro-European Narratives project and a fruitful reflection of the field's wide-ranging applicability and practical relevance. Though the Unit overall displays an impressive range of intellectual investments in real-world problems, the varying size of the groups makes it difficult to discern how well each

of them fare together as part of one enterprise. Research and content produced by the Media Pluralism Project feature prominently under the main publications section, and the groundwork for broader research drawing from postcolonial studies on African Diaspora across European societies which is under way currently (2018-2019) appears to be promising in terms of original and critical research.

The international outreach displayed by the Unit is particularly noteworthy, including a long list of networks and academic partnerships: The General Assembly of the United Nations, ECREA, IAMCR, AHC, UNESCO, European Journalism Centre and the Federation of Journalists. The Unit has a strong US-based (UT-Austin) partner that offers summer and winter institutes, as well as strong ties with international research institutions in Europe, Brazil and the US. There is significant participation in EU projects and international questions pertaining to Colonial history in Africa. There is also an important emphasis on Luso-African and Luso-American ties, specifically between Europe, Africa and Brazil around the intersection of communication and culture with policy, which seems critical and more generally under-examined. Overall, the Unit's emphasis moving forward appears to be on the transformative mediated changes in society with the aim of strengthening the study of diversity and pluralism, expanding digital competence and citizenship and paying particular attention to media accessibility across communities. These objectives seem to match well the already existing strengths of the Unit.

Over the last funding cycle, the Unit graduated 45 PhD holders and 283 Masters certificates. For a relatively small faculty—68 integrated PhD researchers—this reflects solid output. There is evidence of large ongoing research collaborations and funded projects, with a strong graduate program that is graduating a sizeable number of students. During the site visit, PhD candidates spoke repeatedly of the Unit's unique character, articulating confidence that its interventions are building toward an enterprise with significant social impact. The Unit has made important commitments to editing research journals in the field of communication, with some focus on the importance of Portuguese contributions to the field. The overall list of main publications is slanted to the research output of performance scholars, followed by those in media analysis.

The Unit seems poised to attract resources beyond NOVA across all of its main research groups. It presently has twelve grant applications pending, with only two administrative staff members who are responsible for all administrative tasks. If the Unit is to sustain its national and international profile, it needs additional administrative, grant-writing and technical assistance (especially translation). Toggling between the local issues around communication and the media that are relevant to Portugal and the broader issues for both the continent and field at large, the Unit is well situated to draw increased attention for its declared areas of specialized knowledge.

One noted issue that emerged from the site visit was that several projects engaging with gender, nationalism, internationalism and social media lacked a shared emphasis across the existing research groups. Such engagement might profit from a more targeted platform for considering their relevance today. The evaluation team also recognizes the real value of both strategic communication and digital media, but it urges both groups to sustain their investment in theory development as they develop further.

NOVA has 78 Integrated Researchers with PhDs and 58 researchers without PhDs. The scientific merit of the team of Integrated Researchers is rigorous and notable. The leaders/PIs of the Unit's major funded projects and research groups constitute a particularly productive set of researchers who are internationally published in communication. More broadly speaking, scholarly and media output is impressive across the board and includes a notable collection of books and book chapters. There is a strong mix of publications in Portuguese and English, including a series of top-level international peer-reviewed journals in communication studies.

NOVA has significant international and national recognition through its participation in large European-funded networks and projects. Researchers are playing important roles in the EU Kids Online, Global Kids Online and Media Pluralism Monitor projects. Researchers are also developing innovative links between artistic and performance practices and new media technologies. The Panel was particularly impressed with the Unit's Afro-European Narratives project, which could stand as a model for creatively charting the memories of diasporic communities globally.

There are fewer PhD researchers in in the Culture, Mediation and the Arts research group than in the others, though this could be explained by the participation of more practitioners and artist-researchers. Additionally, the productivity among the researchers in the Unit's legacy research groups appears to be slightly higher than that evident among researchers in the newer groups. At the same time, the two labs are led by energetic and productive researchers with strong scholarly visions, plans and projects. These more applied, artistic and computer assistant research labs promise strong future research contributions.

For the 2019-2022 funding cycle, NOVA plans to focus on Media Practices: Cultural, Societal and Technological Change. Three research streams are noted: Diversity, Pluralism, Inclusion; Cognitive, Mediation and Decision-Making Processes; and Culture, Criticism and Digital Practices. It is commendable that the Unit plans to prioritize international funding calls and prioritize international partnerships, particularly as a number of its European projects are coming to an end. There are 12 national research bids under consideration.

The opening of four new promising venues is noted in the application: The Behavioural Research Lab and the Observatories of Diversity and Pluralism; Media and the Family; Innovation in the Media and Creative Industries; and Net-Activism.

The Unit's objectives are a sound reflection of the strengths of the integrated researcher team. NOVA intends to consolidate the team's international status by focusing on its most visible endeavors and partnerships: EU Kids Online and Global Kids Online, the Media Pluralism Monitor, Afro-European Narratives, COST DigilitEY, the Strategic Communication Network, ERASMUS + KA2 and Private Europe. There is a laudable and clear effort at cultivating public facing events and research collaborations. For example, it is planning outreach across the curriculum at NOVA, including philosophy and healthcare management, and new conferences in Visual Culture, Online Journalism Ethics, Diversity and Inclusion, Strategic Communication, and Performance and Cognition. It is planning to bring in six Phd candidates (4 in communication sciences and 2 in digital media) and to hire 3 new faculty positions—one in strategic communication, one in digital media, and one in media practices. There are also plans to expand the Unit's e-books on open access platforms.

By and large, the governing structure that manages NOVA appears sound and relevant for an institute of this size. Its organizational model is appropriate for accommodating the Unit's varying groups and research clusters. It has an executive committee comprised of the different entities that meets monthly and a scientific council that meet biyearly.

There are both positive and challenges to the diversity of research groups. The Unit has initiated two relatively new groups (Strategic Communication and Performance and Cognition), both of which have much fewer researchers and funded projects than pre-existing groups. The Unit as a whole has some challenges to integrate, grow, and sustain these new groups in particular.

## Evaluation Panel: SOCIAL SCIENCES - Sciences of Communication

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**R&D Unit:** LabCom - Comunicação e Artes (LabCom)

**Coordinator:** Joaquim Mateus Paulo Serra

**Integrated PhD Researchers:** 51

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**Overall Quality Grade:** VERY GOOD

### Evaluation Criteria Ratings

- (A) Quality, merit, relevance and internationalization of the R&D activities of the Integrated Researchers in the R&D Unit Application: 4
- (B) Merit of the team of Integrated Researchers: 4
- (C) Appropriateness of objectives, strategy, plan of activities and organization: 3

**Base Funding for (2020-2023):** 690 K€

### Recommended Programmatic Support

PhD Fellowships: 3

Programmatic Funding: 294K€, including for 1 (Junior) New PhD Researchers Contracts.

### Justification, Comments and Recommendations

LabComm is a small, integrated Unit that is dedicated to the online dissemination of scholarly and artistic material about communication, the media and the arts. With 52 integrated researchers (52 with a PhD and 5 without), 43 collaborators, and 52 PhD students, it is divided into two groups: Communication and Media, and Arts. Each has a dedicated PhD program attached: Communication Sciences, established in 2007, and the newly created PhD in Media Arts. The Communication and Media group is interested in addressing the impacts of communication and new media technologies that drive the process of mediatization. The Arts group is invested in examining the relationship between art, communication and new media technologies and interfaces. Together, both groups promote new knowledge building around the relationship between communication, the arts, and design.

The intellectual goals of LabCom are to study the ways that all social and cultural phenomena are progressively created in a media logic, using the concept of mediatization as a theoretical guide. The research projects that have emerged from LabCom include examining the impact of media on communities, individuals, and politics, and are invested in addressing some of the urgent communication issues in the contemporary environment. Each of the 4 research projects address LabCom's investment in connecting communication, the media and the arts.

At its core, LabCom insists on a reciprocal relationship between communication and contemporary arts, which makes it a compelling and unique research Unit. Producing material in the fields of multimedia, cinema, fine-arts and design, and winning several awards, LabComm spans the digital environment and touches upon multiple artistic venues that use media. The Unit is unique in the way it emphasizes both theoretical and media and design production with the Integrated Researchers. The cinematic productions of LabCom are featured across the world in various film festivals and screenings.

Unlike other programs that feature a specific art form (such as literature), LabCom defines the Arts broadly and from an interdisciplinary perspective, from design to multi-media to film, and attracts researchers and PhD students with a strong commitment to this kind of interdisciplinarity. One of the most compelling elements of the PhD is Media Arts is the option for students to write either a traditional theoretical thesis or a practice-based thesis, utilizing art and design (alongside a shorter theoretical writing). The commitment to integrating communication and the arts is clearly a priority for the Unit; however, the PhD in Media Arts is so new that it was difficult to understand the specificities of some of the projects. It is clear that the Integrated Researchers and the PhD students are growing together as they collaboratively define what this PhD will ultimately look like.

Another strong emphasis of the Unit is online communication, both in terms of research focus and infrastructure. LabCom includes five online academic journals, four online libraries, one online publisher and databases on cinema and images. It also produces experimental material such as an online Portuguese academic weekly newspaper, an online radio station and an online TV channel. Two of LabComm's journals during the last funding period were indexed in international databases, providing a useful service to the Portuguese-speaking community in Portugal, Brazil and

elsewhere. Additionally, LabCom hosts the ARS Collection, which features platforms, databases and existing journals in the different artistic fields and the relationship between the art sciences and the communication sciences.

The Unit's emphasis on online communication is particularly important given their geographical location; they are dedicated to research and communication within the municipality of Covilhã, where the University of Beira Interior is located. The Unit is included in the Comunidade Intermunicipal das Beiras e Serra da Estrela / Beiras and Serra da Estrela Intermunicipal Community (CIMBSE). It is clearly important for different areas in this region to be in contact and collaboration with each other, especially given the geographical region, and the Unit's focus on online communication facilitates this contact and collaboration. The Unit also focuses on the importance of Portuguese contributions to the field. While there are impressive publications in English, the Unit is also committed to publishing in Portuguese and emphasize the Lusophone context. This commitment is manifest in one of the labs at the Unit, ReMedia Lab, which researches local media and local press, as well as their research projects on regional and cultural heritage.

They also have maintained a strong international presence. LabCom researchers and PhD students participate in international conferences of the main international associations such as ECREA, IAMCR, ICA, and LUSOCOM (Lusophone Associations). Additionally, there is a commitment to publication in international journals and publishes the prestigious Communication Studies (which is published in 4 languages). The PhD in Communication Sciences has double degree agreements with Brazilian universities: U. Federal da Bahia, U. Federal de Pernambuco, U. Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul. While LabCom benefits from the participation of Brazilian PhD students, it does not have funding to send Portuguese PhD students to the Brazilian universities, severely limiting the potential of a double degree. The PhD in Media Arts, collaborates with the U. Basque Country in Bilbao, allowing the exchange of teachers and PhD students.

Though overall the two groups, Communication and Media, and the Arts, display an impressive range of intellectual investments in real-world problems, the varying size of the groups, and the fact that the Arts group has a new PhD programme (only 2 years old, so no graduates as of yet) makes it difficult to discern how well each of them are integrated as part of one Unit. While some of the major contributions of the Unit included publications that investigate various topics in the arts, the Arts group seemed focus more on infrastructure, such as design and databases, as well as media production of the Integrated Researchers and the PhD students, than on theoretical publications.

During the funding cycle, the Unit applied for 10 different research projects and received 5, which is an impressive percentage. There is no dedicated staff person at LabCom to assist in grant and fellowship applications, which may account for the relatively low number of applications between 2013-2017. It is clear that they have a very good success rate in being awarded grants, and that this could potentially be much higher if there was a staff person to help facilitate the application process.

Over the last funding cycle, LabCom graduated 55 PhD holders in the PhD in Communication Sciences, which reflects solid output for a relatively small Unit. During the site visit, PhD candidates spoke repeatedly of the unique character of the Institute and the sense that it is building an important endeavour in its focus of the relationship between communication and the arts. Many students commented that they felt that they did not "fit" in other communication and media PhD programs, and that the PhD in Media Arts fulfilled their interdisciplinary needs.

The Integrated Researchers at LabCom have achieved national and international recognition for their scholarship and artistic/media productions. They have a strong international presence, and hold leadership positions in national and international communication organizations. Scholarly input is remarkable during 2013-2017, with 129 books published, 169 peer-reviewed articles in international journals, 123 peer-reviewed articles in national journals, as well as book chapters, films, and other media/artistic productions. They are to be commended for their commitment to publishing in Portuguese as well as English. It is particularly noteworthy that many of the PhD researchers were attracted to the Unit because of the reputation and strength of the Integrated Researchers and their highly regarded publications.

Researchers are playing important roles in the four major projects hosted by the Unit, "Communicating Science and publication cultures in the humanities;" "Public and Private in mobile communication;" "New media and political participation, the case of the sites of Portuguese political parties," and "Media, reception and memory: female audiences in the New State." Additionally, the Integrated Researchers in the Arts group are active practitioners in the arts, producing films, performances, and work in the digital humanities. This combination of theory as research and art as research is a truly distinctive element of LabCom, and makes it very attractive in terms of recruitment of PhD students and future junior researchers.

The artistic and experimental production of LabCom requires a different form of evaluation and valuation. One of most commendable aspects of LabCom is the way in which they value artistic and media production.

The Labcom research Unit is well balanced in the two research strengths, in terms of projects and initiatives, integrated researchers, PhD students and most relevant for this section, in its organizational structure. There is sound, experienced leadership in these two areas with deep knowledge of the institution and established international connections and reputations.

The Unit is structured by admirable and inclusive democratic principles (all key coordinators being elected), a scientific council comprised of all PhD integrated members, and then a larger “general assembly” that serves as an advisory body (which draws upon all researchers and collaborators. This is a sound, inclusive structure that affords active participation from all researchers and stakeholders.

Given the recent development of the practice based PhD, the Unit could develop more organizational structures and mechanisms for mentoring graduate students, integrating them into research projects of senior researchers and professors. There is also a need to develop a more explicit and rigorous ethics policy, again particularly for the media arts component of the Unit that can often produce more experimental ideas and projects. A media arts methods committee could also serve as a place where researchers and students can discuss the contours, expectations, and challenges of producing practice based projects and research publications.

For the 2019-2022 funding cycle, LabComm intends to further its in assessing the impact of digital technologies on everyday individual and social life, focusing on mediatization and the relationship between communication, media and the arts. The Unit plans to primarily consolidate projects and entities established during the earlier funding cycle, including extensive online publishing, online trilingual journals and the maintenance of digital data bases that help give LabComm visibility, as well as continuing cooperation with international research centers in Spain and France.

If given the requested resources, particularly additional staff to assist with IT and grant-writing tasks, LabCom intends to develop three research projects: institutionalizing Portuguese government communication, setting up a regional media lab, and addressing representations of textile workers in the region.

Potential hires moving forward are consonant with the strengths of the integrated researcher team. There are also plans to facilitate periods of research in Brazil for one PhD student per area per academic year.