

support for your appeal

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Juan Valcarcel Juarez &lt;juan.valcarcel@crq.eu&gt;

sex 12-07-2019 12:49

Para: BioISI Director;

Cc: Rui Malhó; Rainer Pepperkok &lt;pepperko@embl.de&gt;; Klaus Palme &lt;klaus.palme@biologie.uni-freiburg.de&gt;; Shakhnovich, Eugene &lt;shakhnovich@chemistry.harvard.edu&gt;; hanspwessel@ua.pt; Michael Gill &lt;mgill@tcd.ie&gt;;

Dear Margarida,

after having discussed the outcome of the recent evaluation of BioISI by FCT, the members of the Scientific Advisory Board have decided to put together the letter below, addressed to the President of the FCT Directive Board, to support your appeal to the results of the evaluation.

Please let us know if there is anything else we can do to support BioISI

All the best for the future,

Michael, Klaus, Rainer, Eugene, Juan and Hans

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Professor Helen Pereira  
President of FCT Directive Board  
July 12, 2019

re: evaluation report of R&D Unit Instituto de Biosistemas & Ciências Integrativas (BioISI)

Dear Prof. Pereira,

we are writing as members of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Instituto de Biosistemas & Ciências Integrativas (BioISI), Lisbon regarding the recent evaluation report of this R&D Unit by the Panel HEALTH SCIENCES - Biomedicine and Molecular Biology, appointed by FCT, which has been forwarded to us, along the rest of the evaluation documents, by the Director of BioISI Prof. Margarida Amaral. We are very familiar with the development of BioISI since its inception, having attended yearly meetings to provide our feedback on its structure, the scientific progress made and the implementation of initiatives such as its technical facilities or its PhD Program.

We have learned that BioISI Direction will file an appeal against the summary evaluation by the Panel on the basis of administrative/procedural issues and the overall R&D score, which was rated as "Good", two steps below the last evaluation report in 2013. On the basis of our knowledge of the Unit and our reading of the current evaluation report, we would like to bring to your attention the following points:

1) we consider that the main issues raised by the panel, namely a) certain dispersion of the scientific and technical focus of the Unit, and b) the pace of its recruitment strategy, are relevant points for discussion. As a matter of fact, these points have been discussed in the past between us and the BioISI's Direction and Faculty and we fear that the Panel may have had an incomplete perception of the efforts that the Unit has made (and plans to do) to address specifically these issues. In any case, the report of the Panel provides constructive food for thought and we will be happy to work together with BioISI's Direction to further streamline the focus of the Unit and the timing of strategic recruitments, as long as the funding allows to maintain an ambitious plan to make progress.

2) the Panel acknowledges that BioISI is "a very special organization" with a quite attractive special focus combining physics and biocomputation in the context of biosystems and technological approaches, and that the Institute has a clear added value for the country because of the impact of its technological offer. They also praise the record of publications "with papers in top Journals", and the PhD and postdoctoral programs. It is difficult for us to reconcile all these positive remarks with the final scoring of "Good". What seems to us clearly unfair are the final consequences of the evaluation in the context of the general praise made in the report, and we would like to take with the PhD Program as an example. The Program is highly praised, as it has provided unique, high level, internationally competitive training in Systems Biology (an expertise in growing demand in Biomedicine and Biotechnology) to several tens of students. However, the direct immediate consequence of the evaluation outcome will be to reduce the number of fellowships per year from 11 to 2, which will effectively terminate this highly successful Program. A similar case can be made for the recommendation to make important investments in a Protein Facility or bring internationally competitive new Faculty.

3) the Panel seems not to have fully taken into account all the research, funding and internationalisation outputs of the Unit, nor the scoring criteria set by FCT for evaluation, as detailed in the BioISI Director's appeal.

In summary, we would like to express our concern about the inconsistency between the overall appreciation by the Panel of the special role and added value provided by the mix of disciplines and technological offers of BioISI (which is very much in line with our global opinion of the Unit) and the overall rating of the evaluation, with its dire consequences for the function of the Institute.

Therefore we fully support the appeal of the BioISI's Director and urge you to reconsider the final scoring of the Unit and provide higher level of funding for BioISI to realise its full potential as a major Research and Training Center of strategic value for Portugal.

Sincerely yours,

Prof. Michael Gill, Trinity College Dublin (Ireland)  
Prof. Klaus Palme, University of Freiburg (Germany)  
Prof. Rainer Pepperkok, European Molecular Biology Laboratory, Heidelberg (Germany)  
Prof. Eugene Shakhnovich, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (USA)  
Prof. Juan Valcárcel, Centre for Genomic Regulation Barcelona (Spain)  
Prof. Hans Peter Wessel, University of Aveiro (Portugal)