

FOREWORD

Five years ago the Consortium decided to contribute to the changes in the Italian University system with the aim of making it more similar to the research systems of the other European countries. To do this, according to the leading research Agencies in Europe, we carried out an external Assessment.

As Chairman of the International Review Committee was chosen professor Alberto Amaral, Rector of the University of Porto and Vice-Chairman of the steering committee for the quality audit programme of the European Conference of Rectors (CRE). The members of the Committee were: Prof. Binne Zwanenburg University of Nijmegen, Netherlands, Professor L. Luisi (Switzerland), Prof. Harun Parlar, Technical University of Munich, Germany and Prof. Martin R. Preston, University of Liverpool, UK.

The two objectives of the assessment were:

- (a) to assess the added value of INCA as a network to the improvement of university-based research in the field of chemistry for the environment;
- (b) to assess the individual units belonging to INCA with respect to their scientific quality and their contributions to the INCA research programmes.

An additional aim was to verify if and how the Consortium responds to the needs of the Italian scientific organization.

The assessment of the research units involved two phases, the first being an internal self-evaluation, which was followed by all external assessment by the International Review Committee. The Structural Evaluation of the Consortium focuses on its organisation, objectives, strategic plan, international collaborations, etc.

The first goal attained during this first Assessment, presented on 1998, was the self-recognition of the 62 Research Units that to be part of a network implied having a common mission. As a consequence of the extended contacts and relations, the budget of the Consortium increased more than 10 times and its internationalisation was strongly reinforced.

Due to this good result, and according to the recommendations of the first assessment, we asked Prof. Amaral to coordinate a second Assessment for the Consortium, with the aim of following our development, and also taking in consideration the rapid changes in the Italian system of research and education. He accepted together with three of the Members of the initial team. We have to emphasise that Prof. Amaral is the co-editor of "Governing Higher Education: National Perspectives on Institutional Governance" (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002) and "The Higher Education Managerial Revolution?" (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003).

We are confident that the work done, which engaged 69 Research Units for one year, will be useful for better understanding the situation and the problems of the Italian research system, due to the comparison with other European networks. Together with the Assessment of individual research programs, the comments given by the Committee will assist INCA to tackle future challenges. In fact, this exercise may be crucial for the present university system where the evaluation is established as the most important moment for financing the programmes of the Universities.

I am grateful for the support of CIVR and of its President Prof. Franco Cuccurullo. We will follow the CIVR Guidelines for Research Evaluation, which were recently delivered.

The added values of INCA network will possibly be of great consequence for improving the activities at national and international level. In this regard, I'm proud to underline a visible added value attained by INCA: the network of laboratories set up with the small resources of our Consortium, which represents now a gold standard useful for networking Italy in Europe and worldwide.

Operating in this transparent way, INCA wishes to become a powerful tool for Italian regulatory bodies and environment Agencies, in order to continuously improve research and environmental protection.

I thank both the Committee members for their willingness to participate in the review and all the research units for their co-operation before and during the assessment process.

Venice, October 28th, 2003

Pietro Tundo
President of INCA