

EXPLANATORY NOTE

13 March 2020

The Council of Ministers approved yesterday a series of urgent extraordinary measures in response to the epidemiological situation caused by the new coronavirus/COVID-19 including the **suspension of all teaching and non-teaching activities requiring the physical presence of students in all Higher Education Institutions.**

As part of this process, the following points must be clarified:

- Suspension refers to all **activities requiring the physical presence of students** and it should be ensured **as from Monday, 16 March** and reviewed on 9 April. In the case of HEIs and their academic terms, the period of 15 days set out in the extraordinary measures laid down in the announcement of the Council of Ministers for schools does not apply;
- Every effort should be made to stimulate **distance learning processes** maintaining school activities through digital interaction between students and faculty;
- All efforts to **disseminate scientifically based information to students and the general population** should also be promoted, and in particular researchers, teachers and their R&D units and academic structures should treat and communicate appropriate technical information and mobilise scientific communication efforts to the population. This is also an opportunity that requires the **mobilisation of academics and scientists for the dissemination and enhancement of the scientific culture of the population**;
- **R&D units, laboratories and services of Higher Education Institutions should remain open** and adopt all measures already disclosed to prevent contagion by the virus, avoiding the concentration of users and ensuring the hygiene and public health measures already advertised, as well as **establishing attendance limitations to ensure safety distance**. In the case of services, preference should be given to the use of digital and telephone means, whenever possible;
- In the case of **canteens**, maximum capacity should be reduced and the concentration of students and other users should be avoided, and individual delivery of meals should be encouraged wherever possible;
- As for **residences**, all student services must be ensured as well as their operation in compliance with the prevention measures now disseminated;
- Regarding the **national students on mobility abroad**, namely the Portuguese Higher Education students who are undertaking traineeship under the Erasmus+ Programme, either in European Higher Education Institutions, including internship locations in Europe or outside of Europe, the **Director General of Higher Education ensures regular monitoring and supervision of the Erasmus+ Programme activities**, for a better and more efficient articulation between institutions and students as well as with the services

from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

- All measures adopted and disseminated by the Government to **support the social protection of workers and their families** should be implemented;
- Wherever possible, institutions should favour the use of **teleworking**, giving priority to vulnerable and risk groups;

All the **tasks and work to be carried out by selection panels** in the context of HE teaching and scientific research careers **should be ensured** as well as examinations required to obtain the awards of senior full professor and specialist lecturer, through the **use of technological means at a distance - videoconference**, for which the legal regime in force is duly appropriate.

We call for collective mobilisation and institutional solidarity, as well as respect for others, within a framework in which knowledge really must "occupy a place" and higher education is proactive in promoting our social responsibility as well as in promoting the scientific culture of the entire population for collective well-being.