

“How to support INESC TEC community in an emergent Polycrisis Context?”

We face unprecedented challenges, from worldwide level crisis, from Triple Climate Crisis (Global Warming and Pollution Effects, and Biodiversity alarming losses), to new levels of nation-wide tensions (geo-conflicts, wars, health crisis-pandemics, cyberwarfare and cyber-terrorism, migrations and large re-location, war-tariffs, political extremist movements, etc.), materializing what is called as the emergent Polycrisis “new standard”. Part of these crisis effects are already being noticed in Portugal and in/directly to INESC TEC community. Although, of course, several of these challenges/menaces are beyond our capabilities and knowledge areas, to tackle them in science and innovation-based projects, other part is already being addressed and should be reinforced our contribution for change and mitigation (e.g. Triple Climate Crisis; health systems support and diseases prevention, dual-use technologies, etc.). Therefore, some dimensions of INESC TEC’s Social Responsibility can be related.

Nonetheless, focusing on our large community, these challenges, should be framed in the institute strategic vision and translated into an action program roadmap, either in the “Scenario A” of more Grow R&D and Services activities and corresponding growth in headcount (internal permanent staff or variable collaborators); but also in a “steady state” of headcount number, “Scenario B”, activity growth by internal optimization of processes and economic valorisation of Intellectual-industrial property, for instance. This enters in the “dilemma” for the future of INESC TEC: should the institution expand rapidly in numbers (number of projects, overall revenue, outcomes)? or first continue to assure high quality delivery while consolidate existing teams by ensuring stability, well-being (physical and mental), intellectual and personal career development, good working conditions? Separating the challenges in two planes of reflection, it is first considered the menaces/opportunities to our institution as a whole; secondly, the risks and strengths in our community and workforce.

Institution Challenges

IC1. How to create a more “mission-oriented” common ground to our institution, and structure a more united spirit across INESC TEC between poles, to tackle these “polycrisis novel common reality”? We have vast areas of knowledge, solid multi-disciplinary experience, large network for partner search and capacity to lead complex mission type projects.

IC2. Foster national/international impactful projects, and our own example, on building more resilience via effective Decarbonization (Energy, Materials, Digital driven), Cost-Control/Reduction, Environmental Sustainability Roadmaps of our activity (NetZero vision).

IC3. How to proactively share solid science-based awareness and prepare ourselves, and support companies and public entities, for the different menaces derived from Climate Changes effects, which start to get noticed? More severe (frequent and long) heatwaves (or very cold winters); violent storms and floods; wildfires; agriculture and agro-industries higher risks (biodiversity); pollution diseases, etc.

Collaborators Challenges

CC1. How to assure safety for all in our laboratories, test-beads, field work sites? Personal Protective Equipment, clear safety instructions, specific trainings depending on risk and hazardous levels.

CC2. How to support better work-environment, while monitoring and mitigating mental health risks and diseases? Promote awareness, prevention and support health services. Promoting inclusive and open communication, encouraging flexible and fair work practices.

CC3. How to provide information on public health and security regarding Climate Crisis and extreme events? Raise awareness on climate and extreme event risks through clear guidance, regular updates, notifications alerts, workshops training with related protocols.

CC4. How to mitigate ongoing severe constraints in urban living (costs sky rising) and inflation variations, with direct impact on the work-force stability and attractiveness? Continue to promote remote-work capabilities and enduring wise-strategies via partnerships for re-location/accommodation.

To the above challenges addressment, INESC TEC should take concrete steps, promoting - according to the nature and complexity of the challenge - multiple stakeholder workgroups of analysis and roadmapping, either on the mission to society and internal community. In this latter regard, the strategic deployment for the implementation of ESG principles at INESC TEC, adopting clear metrics to measure impact and action plans, will support more resilience awareness, responsible practices, and foster a sustainable future; with an organization more adapted to rapid evolving challenges.