

President's Letter

2009 was marked by the profound consequences of the world economic and financial crisis. Expressions such as “the new poor” or “prolonged unemployment” began to form part of our everyday vocabulary, forcing States to take extraordinary measures to stimulate economic recovery and promote social inclusion. In fact, the recession was to alter both the extent and the face of poverty by throwing many more people into unemployment and reducing the opportunities available to those seeking to join the labour market for the first time. This context is made even more serious by the fact that, for many years to come, we will have to bear the costs of servicing the high levels of debt associated with the present crisis, or at least which the crisis has made it more difficult to manage. We are placing a heavy burden on future generations, which calls for an urgent redefinition of the question of inter-generational responsibility.

The new economic and social circumstances have therefore also led Foundations to reassess their priorities and to re-examine the structures on which their activities are based, in relation to both their expenditure (budget) and income (investments). It was in such a context that the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, for example, undertook a profound reassessment of the architecture that had been set up for the governance of its investments, as can be read in the chapter in this report relating to the economic and financial situation. On the expenditure side, on the other hand, some adjustments were made in an attempt to reduce operating costs, without harming the launch of new programmes and new budget lines, such as the Gulbenkian Human Development Programme or the New Interventions budget line.

The Human Development Programme, created in January 2009, is designed to consolidate and build upon the Foundation's previous experiences in the area of social intervention, specifically in regard to five key areas: urban communities; children and young people at risk; migrants; the elderly; and social innovation. In turn, the New Interventions budget line is itself the result of a new type of approach that the Foundation has been testing with the aim of supporting innovative projects that satisfy at least two of the following requirements: they must be transverse projects cutting across the Foundation's different statutory aims, take place in more than one country, be developed in the form of a partnership and involve either distributive

activities or activities designed for the funding of other institutions from the non-profit sector. An example of the activities that meet the requirements of the New Interventions budget line is the support that has been given to the “Dialogue Café” project, which involves the setting up, in different countries around the world, of a wider-ranging digital network of places equipped with display monitors for videoconferencing, with the aim of establishing a forum that helps people from different cultures to establish links and draw closer to one another.

One evident consequence of the changes occurring in the context of the Foundation’s intervention was the launch of the *País Solidário* (United Country) Campaign, designed to promote a direct response to the serious indices of poverty that have begun to be noted in certain areas of the country. This was an activity that was limited in time and brought together different foundations, companies, organisations from civil society and important figures in our public life. It also sought to combine forces in order to respond to the needs and difficulties of families who do not benefit from public social protection schemes.

The Gulbenkian Conference in October was dedicated to the theme of the global environmental crisis, which represents a paradigmatic example of how the intersection between the past and the future requires the immediate adoption of decisions that can no longer be postponed. This conference took place one month before the 15th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was held in Copenhagen, and at which the world’s States sought to define a new international regime for climate change. The conference therefore represented a unique opportunity for meeting with a group of highly respected specialists, at the Foundation’s headquarters, to discuss a question that, for better or worse, will affect the future of our planet.

In September 2009, the Foundation’s London Branch moved to its new premises in Hoxton Square. This was once a predominantly industrial area, but it has since gained a new dynamics, becoming a vibrant centre for artistic and creative activities and displaying a tremendous social and cultural diversity that both favours and stimulates the initiatives promoted by the Gulbenkian’s UK Branch.

As far as Portuguese society and the European foundation movement are concerned, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation has certain responsibilities that derive from its history, size and the institutional positions that it occupies. At this moment, the Foundation presides over the Portuguese Foundation Centre and the European Foundation Centre, representative

organisations of the foundation sector at a national and European level, respectively. Our participation in these organisations has not only made it possible to increase the geographical scope of our intervention, but also to benefit from the advantages of concerted action in dealing with the various issues that form part of our mission. At a time of instability and uncertainty, when problems take on a new dimension and available resources are inevitably scarce, it is only through cooperation between the different social actors that we will be able to maximise the impact of the initiatives and projects that we seek to launch.

The Foundation has therefore continued to work in keeping with the strategic priorities that it has defined, employing a structured method of intervention that is characterised by increased knowledge and thereby allows for a more accurate understanding of the problems and their causes, investing in people and their personal improvement, undertaking innovative projects that can be replicated, and, whenever possible or desirable, forming partnerships with different relevant institutions, both public and private.

Emílio Rui Vilar

President of the Board of Trustees