



To the attention of the Scientific Board of the
Centre of Advanced Studies "A.S.Cent."

Final REPORT on the Centre's activities - year 2024

Dear colleagues,

Below is a summary of the activities and critical issues that affected the Centre for Advanced Studies in 2024.

General Remarks

This year was characterised by an evident consolidation and further improvement in terms of dissemination, promotion and visibility of the Centre's activities. In addition to staying involved as an organiser and partner in numerous initiatives, the positive trend that began last year has continued and strengthened.

However, it should be noted that some of the critical issues already highlighted in previous reports remain and it is hoped that can be positively resolved in the coming months since these problems are closely related to the Centre's *mission statement* (we will limit ourselves here to mentioning, once again, the impossibility of using the premises of the former Hotel de France to accommodate foreign colleagues, as well as the lack of an official Centre head office, and the lack of a 'senior common room' for Fellows' meetings).

We should also mention the difficulties faced in providing the fellows with adequate workstations and web services. For example, up to now, it has not been possible to obtain a temporary e-mail address (which is easily provided at any other university in the world), a 'badge' to be recognised in the workplace, and other similar critical issues.

Thanks to the commitment of Dr Annalisa Lorito and Dr Francesca Schiavo, the following has been organised:

- a welcome kit for the Fellows,
- solutions to problems accessing the university web network,
- adequate support for obtaining entry visas,



- all the information necessary for the Fellows' stay,
- identify departmental and research facilities where the fellows can be hosted,
- provide the necessary support for the scientific and educational initiatives of the fellows,
- provide the necessary administrative support for the fellows to fill in the documents needed for reimbursements,
- provide support to the fellows for accommodation.

In an additional improvement, the management of the centre's web page has been greatly enhanced, with the inclusion of various activities carried out and in progress, the timely publication of calls for fellowships, and the creation of a special web page with information on the Fellows and their research areas.

A social media manager will also be appointed to manage the Centre's web pages and social media, to improve the dissemination of information about the Centre's activities and initiatives.

I would like to add that, thanks also to the availability of the Department of Political Science and International Relations, simple but welcome and farewell ceremonies for the Fellows were organised with the presence of the Director and/or the Board and interested university colleagues, which were greatly appreciated by the Fellows themselves.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the skill of the administrative staff, who unfortunately are not exclusively dedicated to ASCent, and their perfect knowledge of the English language which allowed us to communicate with the Fellows without problems. Dr Lorito prepared and supervised the entire process of producing the forms, in English, to be distributed to the Fellows, and of course also the preparation of the calls for applications, again in English. Dr Schiavo managed communications very well, again in English, with the selected Fellows and, of course, also with those who were excluded.

I would also like to emphasise the fact that as the Centre's activities become more established, it will be necessary to increase the administrative staff dedicated to the Centre itself.

Funding



The Centre has once again obtained funding of 40,000 euros for this year. We can only repeat the considerations already made in the 2023 report. In fact, the funding is completely insufficient for the proper functioning of the Centre, limiting the possibilities of hosting Visiting Fellows for whom, in addition to partial reimbursement of travel expenses (maximum 800 euros for intercontinental return flights), in the absence of the availability of the guest house of the former Hotel de France, the Board has planned a maximum contribution of 700 euros per month to reimburse accommodation costs.

It should be noted that the monthly cost of rooms at the 'Casa del Goliardo' in agreement with ERSU is much higher (between 1,000/1,200 euros). It is obvious that, as previously explained, if the rooms of the Hotel de France were available, a considerable saving would be made, and we could accommodate a greater number of Fellows while maintaining the same budget.

The Centre has therefore asked again to be able to use at least part of the funds originally reserved for the International Relations Commission (CO.R.I.) to cover the long-term incoming, i.e. expenses related to stays of more than one month for foreign professors and Researchers. In fact, in synergy with the Vice-Rector for Internationalisation, it was decided to concentrate the management of long-term stays at the Centre to avoid unnecessary duplication and guarantee savings. However, so far, there has been no sign of the effective transfer of even a part of these funds (only a third of the funds allocated to CORI for this specific activity at the Centre, i.e. 20,000 euros, would be enough to drastically improve performance).

The Director of the Centre has been instructed by the Council to repeat the request for next year for the umpteenth time.

Following up on last year's plans, the Centre has participated in various calls for funding research projects. In particular, it participated in a call for national projects on the 'digital divide' for the training of the ruling classes in Sub-Saharan African countries, funded by the Council of Ministers as part of the 'plan for Africa' (the so-called Mattei Plan) with the municipality of Palermo as lead partner: we have already passed the first admissibility checks and are awaiting the final results.



The Centre also applied for and won a call for a project financed by the EU (Eurojust).

The Director has undertaken a series of meetings with Sicindustria and Confcommercio and other stakeholders to obtain funding for his activities. That said, there remains, however, regret at the lack of consideration given to the work of the Centre and the essential nature of internationalisation which, as envisaged in the University's strategic plan, should be done through the exchange of ideas and research with foreign professors and researchers of high academic prestige who should be attracted and welcomed to the University; the presence of Visiting Fellows at the University also allows our University to be appreciated abroad, increasing its perception and prestige (as in the case of the most important ranking in the world, that of QS). As to QS ranking indeed, all our visiting Fellows have been selected as referee by our Centre and the University of Palermo.

One euro spent for these purposes translates into an increase in the quality of study carried out by our researchers and professors and consequently an increase in the 'value' of our university also for the purposes of university funding.

The Scientific Board of the Centre of Advanced Studies therefore unanimously queries for greater attention and greater availability, including budgetary, from the university's governance.

Institutional, research, promotion and third sector activities

a) Institutional activities:

a.1) In relation to the promotion and strengthening of the University in terms of research, the Centre has planned to co-finance projects for internationalisation with the presence of foreign professors and researchers in 2023. The results of the call for proposals continued into 2024 and particularly concerned the ensuing proposals for collaborations with foreign colleagues:

- 1) Antonia Trichopoulou (Athens) proposed by the BIND department;
- 2) Rebeca Gomez Betancour – Lyon 2 proposed by the Dems department;
- 3) Kresimir Purgar – Academy of Arts and Culture– University of Osijek-Croatia on the proposal of the Culture and Society department;



- 4) Rike Sitas – Senior Researcher- African Center of Cities (University of Cape Town-South Africa) on the proposal of the Darch department;
- 5) Thorsen Botz-Bornstein- Gulf University of Science and Technology, proposed by the Humanities Department;
- 6) Jane E. Everson (Royal Holloway University of London-UK), proposed by the Humanities Department;
- 7) Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly -University of Oxford proposed by the Humanities Department.

a.2) With regards to research valorisation activities, during the Scientific Council meeting held in July, the Centre issued a call for *visiting research fellowships* for the academic year 2024-2025.

For the 2023-2024 call, a total of 50 *applications had been received*, of which 25 were for the position of *senior visiting fellow* and 25 for the position of *junior visiting fellow*.

For the 2024-2025 call, a further 24 applications were received, of which 16 were for the position of *senior fellow* and 8 for the position of *junior fellow*. In total, 74 applications were received for the period from October 2023 to December 2024.

The Scientific Board selected 43 positions, mostly Senior Fellowships, i.e. for scholars of renowned international standing, demonstrating the interest aroused by the call for applications, also thanks to the dissemination work those colleagues from the University wanted to do.

The selected applications concern professors and researchers from the resulting universities:

Paris Institute of Political Studies (Francia), Pompeu Fabra Barcelona (Spagna), Erlangen (Nürnberg), Bialystok (Poland), Weill Cornell Medical College New York (USA), London (UK), Helsinki (Finlandia), University of Abdelhamid Ibn Badis Mostaganem (Algeria), Jagellonian University (Poland), Lebanese American University (Libano), University of Cape Town (Sud Africa), Birjand, Iran; Carlos III de Madrid (Spagna); Freiburg University (Germania); Montclair State University, New Jersey (USA); Busan University of Foreign Studies (Korea); Science Education and Research Center, Philadelphia (USA); Open University, Wales (UK); Middlesex University, London (UK); Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education (India);



University of Picardie Jules Verne, Amiens (Francia); Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport (AASTMT), Alexandria (Egitto); Universidad de Buenos Aires, Facultad de Derecho, CABA (Argentina); Universiti Tenaga Nasional, Jalan Ikram-Uniten (Malesia); Adigrat University (Etiopia); Kyoto University Graduate School of Law (Giappone); Uppsala University (Sweden); Universidade de Lisboa (Portogallo); University of Southern California, Los Angeles (USA); University of Nottingham, (UK).

The scientific fields to which the researchers belong are:

Jurisprudence, Legal Reasoning; Law and Criminology, Migration Law; Artificial Intelligence; Public International Law, International Relations, Human Rights; Political Sciences, International Relations; Modern History, Women and Gender History, linguistic, architecture, microbiology, chemistry, anthropology, engineering and earthquake-resistant design, rural development, cultural studies, European competition law, political theory, black studies, history, mathematics, legal history, Climate changes, Machine learning and A.I.

With protocol 4423/2024, the Centre has issued a call for 2 one year *visiting fellowships* reserved for professors and researchers from the Palestinian territories. Four applications were received and two were selected. A third application was considered more suitable for selection in the *Senior Visiting Research Fellowship* category and, therefore, the candidate was invited to apply for the latter.

During the meeting of 11 September 2024, the Scientific Board also proceeded to make a statement of opinion regarding the research and teaching activities carried out by the two *fellows*, professors Kresin and Petrushova, during their stay at the University, in line with the *mission* of the Centre.

We then proposed to the University that the fellowship for professors Petrushova and Kresin be extended for one year, given the excellent results already achieved thanks to their research work at the University. Having obtained a favourable opinion, the fellowship was extended, unfortunately only for Prof. Petrushova as Prof. Kresin was called back to Ukraine due to the serious situation resulting from the Russian invasion. The Centre would



like to point out that during his fellowship, Prof. Kresin published two important books in English with the well-known international publisher Brill, which clearly state the support provided by the Centre and the University of Palermo.

b) scientific activities and events

b.1) As concerns the activities organised with the Centre as a partner, we can mention:

- 1) ISFL biennial Conference – 12-13 April, Buenos Aires, Argentina;
- 2) International Conference "Ethics and responsibility of Artificial Intelligence and Medicine 6-8 giugno 2024, Palermo;
- 3) International Conference "I pensieri sull'imitazione di Johann Joachim Winckelmann", 17-19 giugno 2024, Palermo;
- 4) Meeting for the advancement of academic exchanges with the Rector and the Academic Staff of the University of Tartu, Estonia, (22 June 2024);
- 5) Presentation day of the King Sejong Institutes in the world (including the newly established one in Palermo) - 7 July, Seoul, Korea;
- 6) Working day 'A look at the world. The Italian system, the Mediterranean, Africa: the Mattei Plan', (with the Minister of University staying), 24 July, Rome MedOr foundation;
- 7) 41st *Cambridge International Symposium*, Cambridge University 1-8 September. In particular, the Centre, as an official partner, organised (with professors, PhDs and Post-Docs from the University of Palermo) the *Plenary Workshop* 'Making sure Crime does not pay - promoting integrity an Italian perspective';
- 8) 'XIII International Doctorate Network in Particle Physics, Astrophysics and Cosmology School', from 17 to 27 September, Palermo;
- 9) Presentation of the research 'L'universo nascosto' (The hidden universe), 25 September, Palermo;



- 10) Workshop '*Indo-Mediterranean. Italy and India, a special relationship*', 6 November, Rome MedOr foundation
- 11) 35th Annual Conference of Academia Europaea (AE) '*Building Bridges 2024*', 26-28 November, Wroclaw, Poland.
- 12) Conversation with Prof. Metspalu on the development of collaborative projects with the Estonian Genome Center, Institute of Genomics, University of Tartu, 5 December, Estonia,
- 13) Summer school (advanced) planning summit with the Latvian-Italian Cooperation Centre (E. Badamsins), 14 December, Palermo.

b.2) In line with the Centre's *mission statement*, a significant circumstance is that in 2024 the fellows hosted at the University also contributed to teaching activities for the benefit of the entire academic community, through a series of *lectures* and seminars.

In particular:

Prof. Moreso, *senior fellow* at the Centre, held a series of meetings at the DiGi on 26 February, 4 March, 11 March and 18 March in the field of Philosophy and Jurisprudence, entitled '*Outlines of a general theory of defeaters*'.

In April, Dr Jan Stormann held two seminars on economic relations in '*Francophone*' African countries for PhD students in systems dynamics.

From 6 to 8 June the international workshop on '*Ethics and responsibility of artificial intelligence and medicine*' took place in Palermo, organised by Prof. Gouveia, *senior fellow* at the Centre, an opportunity for scholars from the world's leading centres of study in the field of Artificial Intelligence to meet.

Also noteworthy is the series of seminars with talks by Prof. Bellavitis, fellow of the Centre, held in October and, specifically:

On 23 October a seminar for students of the Doctorate in Cultural Heritage and the master's degree course in Historical, Anthropological and Geographical Studies on the theme '*Apprenticeship and service in the modern age*' in which the results of the research project Garzoni Apprenticeship, Work, Society in Early Modern Venice were presented



(Agence Nationale de la Recherche and Fond National Suisse de la Recherche, 2015-2019);

On 25 October a seminar for students of the PhD in Cultural Heritage and the PhD in Gender Studies, which was also attended by students of the master's degree course in Gender Relations, entitled 'Invisible hands. Work, care, family: a gender history approach' in which the results of the research project *Travail en famille, travail non rémunéré. Formes et acteurs du travail domestique productif en Europe (XVe-XXIe siècle)*, (École Française de Rome, 2012-2016) were presented;

On 29 October a seminar was held for students of the master's degree Course in Gender Relations, in which the results of the research project *Producing Change. Gender and Work in Early Modern Europe*, (Leverhulme Trust, 2015-2018) were presented.

On 15 October, Prof. Kresin gave a Lectio Magistralis on 'Comparing Comparative Law'. Previously, Prof. Kresin had given three lectures on international law and the system of institutional sources of the Baltic countries, Poland, Ukraine and Russia.

Prof. Kresin also held a series of seminars on international law and international relations between European states and former Soviet Union states for students of the master's degree course in International Relations.

b.3) The Centre's activities continued with the announcement of the new call for *visiting fellowships* A.Y. 2025/2026, as discussed at the meeting of the Scientific Board on 28th November.

Furthermore, during the year the Centre proposed and helped to create, in collaboration with the University language Centre, the first university King Sejong Institute in Italy.

c) promotion and feedback

In terms of the dissemination of information regarding the Centre's activities and initiatives, this continues to be carried out by all the members of the Board who, as has been the case since the Centre was established, continue to communicate and contribute to the dissemination of the initiatives and opportunities offered by the Centre to the relevant scientific



community, including through department directors and highly personal contacts.

In this regard, I would like to highlight the positive feedback expressed by numerous colleagues from the University regarding the presence of the Fellows in Palermo, with the hope of improving and continuing with this initiative that improves the quality of research and increases the possibilities for knowledge exchange.

Similarly, the feedback from the Fellows on academic visits has been collected, all highly positive, and publicised on the Centre's website.

The Centre's web page on the academic network 'Academia.edu' has been updated.

Despite bureaucratic hitches, discussions with representatives of local institutions, with the Mayor of Bagheria and with the Mayors of Palermo and Monreale have continued.

More specifically, in June there was a meeting with the Mayor of Bagheria and the Councillor for Education to finalise the memorandum of understanding between the municipality and Ascent. The memorandum, already officially sent to the Mayor and the City Council, is in the approval phase. The protocol provides for the concession of Villa S. Cataldo or Palazzo Cutò to Ascent for the carrying out of its institutional activities and to host, from 2025, the seasonal schools organised by the Centre. In addition, it is envisaged that the premises could house the headquarters of the future 'School of Higher Education' with an adjoining guesthouse for students and teachers.

Palermo 21st Jan 2025

In due faith

The Director

Prof. Avv. Antonello MIRANDA