

Evaluation Report of the *Institut Català de Paleontologia Miquel Crusafont (ICP)*

October 29th, 2018

Members of the Evaluation Commission (EC)

- Philippa Christoforou, Oxford University Innovation, UK
- Charles Marshall, Museum of Paleontology - University of California, Berkeley, USA
- Jorge Morales, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Spain
- Isabel Palmtag, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology, Germany
- Lorenzo Rook, Università di Firenze, Italy
- José Luis Sanz, Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain
- Lluís Rovira, CERCA, Catalonia (*Rapporteur*)
- David Fernández, General Directorate for Research, Catalonia (*Assistant to Dr. Rovira*)

The present evaluation report is based on the fulfilment of the mission of *Institut Català de Paleontologia Miquel Crusafont* (hereafter **ICP**) in the last four years (2013-2017). The mission of ICP is focused on the research, conservation and dissemination of vertebrate and human palaeontology at the highest international level.

Discussion, conclusions and recommendations,

After the presentation of Dr David M. Alba, Director of ICP, the EC discussed the main issues regarding the fulfilment of the mission such as scientific production and productivity, management of the Institute including funding, knowledge and technology transfer activities, and outreach and dissemination activities.

All agreements on conclusions and recommendations have been achieved by consensus.

The main **conclusions and recommendations** are the following:

1. Achievement of the recommendations stated in the first evaluation report (2013)

ICP was evaluated for the first time on March 15th, 2013. The evaluation report contained a set of recommendations to be implemented by the Institute in subsequent years.

Conclusion 1: The EC established that most of the recommendations stated in the first evaluation report have been fulfilled. However, some of them have just been partially completed:

- Recommendation 2. Increase ICP-UAB collaboration
- Recommendation 5. Market survey to analyse real potential of the Museum
- Recommendation 8. Benchmark with other institutions the management of IP issues

In such cases the EC was supportive for the rationale and reasons for partial implementation. The only exception was with regard Recommendation 2 about the affiliation of UAB professors to ICP in order to reinforce critical mass for the Institute and join a larger qualified team for challenging projects.

2. Scientific production and productivity

Conclusion 2: The scientific production of the Institute is very good at international level, showing prominent publications with a certain level of leadership.

Conclusion 3: As regards competitive funding of projects, the EC noted that at the moment no European funding has been awarded to ICP. **Recommendation 1:** The EC believes that this issue is one of the main challenges for the Institute for the next period. ICP should work hard to improve the current situation, leveraging its strengths. ICP has the potential to gain ERC funding, for instance, via the research collaboration agreement involving an ICREA Research Professor of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF) in the area of palaeogenetics and palaeoproteomics, which could lead to an interdisciplinary project. ICP should also apply to ERC Synergy Grants, in collaboration with other prestigious institutions in the European arena (for instance, in the field of climate change research).

Conclusion 4: The EC is aware that the communication between ICP and the members of its Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) is done by e-mail when that is required. Until now, however, no formal and face-to-face meetings have been organised. **Recommendation 2:** The EC recommends that the Institute schedules at least one meeting of the SAB every two years at ICP headquarters. An agenda of the meeting should be made and delivered to the members of the SAB before the meeting. This procedure will be useful to support the scientific decisions of importance to be taken in the Institute. **Recommendation 3:** At the same time, the EC recommends to renew the composition of the SAB as well as to define duties and agenda in advance to optimise its

contribution. Consider inviting some foreign ERC grantees to join the Board, by seeking new members that can help optimise ICP's approach for gaining ERC funding.

Conclusion 5: From the point of view of scientific performance and financial solvency, the EC identifies a risk for the Institute due to the likelihood of the retirement of two Senior Group Leaders in the next few years. The financial risk stems from the fact that their salaries are external to ICP, and thus that their retirements may mean a substantial loss in resources available to hire replacements. **Recommendation 4:** This issue should be addressed during this next period, trying to define a strategy to replace the Group Leaders before that happens and taking into account that current ICP researchers are not eligible for permanent ICREA contracts.

Conclusion 6: The EC is aware that the industrial Computed Tomography (CT) scan of ICP is currently damaged and is very expensive to fix, given current ICP fund. **Recommendation 4:** ICP needs to balance the beneficial impact of having again fully operational the scan and the cost of fixing this equipment. **Recommendation 5:** At the same time, the EC believes that ICP could explore the access to other scientific facilities, such as synchrotrons (not only ALBA, but also the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility-ESRF in Grenoble), which may open the framework for new ambitious projects, collaborations and funding.

Conclusion 7: The EC believes it is very important to maintain the network of associate researchers in ICP to improve the visibility and influence of the Institute abroad. **Recommendation 6:** The EC recommends articulating the network, in the sense of creating some simple rules or strategies to deal with the criteria for membership within the network as well as making explicit their contributions to ICP. Documentation, on a case by case basis, should be prepared for each associate member, recognising that the details of the contributions are highly variable (oversight of upcoming publications, share of ICP news in social media accounts, etc.)

3. Management of ICP

Conclusion 8: Substantial progress has been made during the review period in developing ICP- Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) relations. Nonetheless, while ICP seems well integrated into UAB, the converse is uncertain. **Recommendation 7:** The EC believes that both institutions should have a common strategy in the palaeontology area. ICP should try to be more pro-active, trying to look for benefits in this collaboration with the University.

Recommendation 8: ICP should try to affiliate professors from the University. A bottom-up approach of trying to convince individual researchers of the benefits being affiliated with ICP should be promoted. The Board of Trustees (BoT) of ICP should discuss this issue and, where possible, facilitate solutions.

Recommendation 9: With regard to the recruitment strategy of ICP, the EC believes that it should be continued in order to implement an open and transparent procedure. The EC recommends not automatically prioritising associate researchers of ICP in order to facilitate external applicants. However, the EC also recognises that sometimes the needs of the ICP might only be met by candidates deeply familiar with the collections and associated research of ICP, expertise that might only be available via internal applicants. But even in these cases, calls should be always open and international.

Conclusion 8: The EC is aware of the efforts undertaken by the Director and the Institute to balance the gender issue and readdress the situation. **Recommendation 10:** The EC believes ICP should always keep in mind this unbalanced current situation at the upper levels of management and consider solving it in all future positions.

Recommendation 11: With regards to fundraising, the EC recommends ICP begin organising events to engage donors and philanthropic Foundations, among other actions. ICP should provide them with information on some specific projects to be funded in ICP. Maybe the BoT could give support to facilitate donors' attendance at the event, for example by inviting people from their networks. Some topics like Catalan heritage of dinosaurs could encourage donors to get engaged to ICP. Cultivating major donors is a long-term commitment and can be very difficult, so it will be important to develop a long-term plan.

4. Knowledge and technology transfer activities

Conclusion 9: ICP has been effective delivering income from services and consulting.

Recommendation 12: The EC strongly recommends ICP try to keep a certain level of equity in those companies born from the Institute. That would allow ICP to maintain a certain degree of control of the company and eventually, if required, preserving the reputation of the Institute, as well as strengthening the visibility and impact of ICP.

5. Outreach and dissemination activities

Conclusion 10: The level of outreach and scientific dissemination of ICP is very good, reaching very good targets at national and international level.

6. Overall qualification¹

Within the EC, there was a lively discussion about which is the overall qualification of the ICP performance during the evaluated period (2013-2017). The EC has taken into account the significant progress highlighted in this report, the high degree of fulfilment of the recommendations stated in the first evaluation report, the scientific production and productivity, the excellent management of the Centre, the performance in the knowledge transfer activities and the outreach and dissemination activities. The EC would like to acknowledge with thanks the hard and excellent work undertaken by Dr David M. Alba, director of ICP, during the last period. The EC trusts that the institute will keep improving in the next period.

On this basis, the EC awarded the **qualification of B to ICP**. Nevertheless, some members of the EC considered that ICP deserved an upmost qualification.

¹ This overall qualification ranks as follow:

A: Outstanding performance, placing the centre among the top international performing institutions on its field.

B: Very Good, with excellent results at national level although some pending issues to be addressed at the international scenario.

C: Fair. Good performance at national level although focus on some strategic issues is required to allow the centre have a feasible performance in the next years.

D: Clear need for Improvement. The centre should be re-oriented or transformed since the current structure and/or performance does not provide guarantees for the board of trustees.