

**Speech at the opening session of ECER 2014 - European Educational
Research Association 2014**

Sebastião Feyo de Azevedo, 2nd September 2014

Dear Mayor of our City of Porto, Dr. Rui Moreira

Dear President of EERA – European Educational Research Association, Professor Lefj Moos,

Dear President of SPCE – Portuguese Society of Educational Sciences, Professor Almerindo Janela Afonso,

Dear Director of CIIE – Research and Action Center for Education), Professora Helena Costa Araújo,

Dear Local Organizers of ECER 2014, Professores Carlinda Leite and Sofia Marques da Silva

Distinguished Conference speakers

Distinguished Guests of this session

Dear Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by greeting and welcoming all the more than 2600 delegates, coming from 75 countries of all continents of our world, to attend this so relevant conference concerning the past, present and future of educational research in Europe, which I am sure is absolutely relevant for all the world and not only for Europe, as the presence of so many colleagues from all continents so clearly indicate.

Welcome to Portugal, welcome to Porto, welcome to the University of Porto, today in this visiting room of our Faculty of Engineering.

I am delighted to address this audience, in this opening session, for what this conference means and these are not words of occasion. Indeed these are words of someone that in all his professional life, as academic and educator, as researcher, as Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and now as Rector, has been working for more than 35 years in favour of international cooperation.

International cooperation is the only way for the future in our open and global world of this XXI century.

The proactive contact and cooperation between academic and research communities, and between these and the society as a whole, is decisive for educational, scientific, technological and intellectual advancement in all fields of study.

On this major issue of cooperation, let me share with you this thought – our success in doing well, through international cooperation, is largely dependent on how much and how strongly we are able to promote a major value in our open society. The keyword for this value is TRUST, and this value we shall be able to promote in as much as our quality is perceived and understood by all stakeholders and partners, both at national and international level.

The dimension of international cooperation that we are able to promote and attract is thus simultaneously a promoter of our development and a key indicator of the stage of development where we stand.

To have been chosen to host this so relevant conference, is for us, and for me as Rector, a very good signal and indicator that our strategic goal of internationalization is being met and that we have the capacity and conditions to be successful in our work, in our public mission.

It is absolutely clear to me that ECER Porto 2014 is an event of great academic and scientific interest. It is a conference with major international scope, gathering most prestigious speakers and addressing topics of undeniable scientific relevance. It is therefore an opportunity for the worldwide community specifically concerned with research in educational issues to share their recent achievements, to exchange valuable experiences and, not the least, to inspire young researchers for their so relevant work.

For all these reasons, it is quite gratifying for the University of Porto to host this conference. We are very honoured and be sure that we all will do our best to deserve the trust placed in us.

A word of acknowledgement is due to our colleagues and to the staff from the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences in charge of the organization of this conference - Sofia Marques da Silva, Carlinda Leite, Cristina Queirós, Isabel Menezes, Helena Araújo, Preciosa Fernandes and Ana Milheiro.

I am sure, because I know well how these developments occur, that bringing to Portugal and to Porto this major event has much to do with the international recognition, the quality and visibility of your work in this area. By all means this is good for Portugal and for our university and you deserve high credits and our public recognition of your work.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me give you a very short introduction of the University of Porto.

The University of Porto was formally established on the 22nd of March 1911, but its origins date back to the 18th century, with a succession of institutions, the first of them created in 1762, that after several merges gave rise to the University in 1911. So, we are speaking of more than 250 years of history and experience in education and research.

Specifically, over the past 40 years, the University of Porto has been putting a lot of effort into expanding its international scope, as well as promoting the exchange of advanced knowledge with experts across the globe.

Today our institution is the second largest of Portuguese universities, with more than 32.000 students, more than 1800 FTE Faculty and more than 1600 technical support staff.

We are organised in 14 faculties, covering essentially all areas of knowledge, and we are the academic partner of a business school, in association with the major companies and institutions of the region.

About 10% of our students come from 112 countries.

About 10% of our students work for their PhD.

Our research is mainly organised in 51 certified research units and is responsible for more than 20% of the Portuguese scientific production indexed in the Web of Science.

Several indicators of academic quality show a continuous progress along the years.

It is clear that we must do better, much better, tomorrow, than what we are doing today, but we have reasons to say that we are doing reasonably well.

The University of Porto is catching up with the top 100 European universities, being clearly within this group in several fields.

I know that many of you are in Porto for the very first time. According to historical descriptions, we can trace back to the days of the Romans, more than 2000 years ago, the existence of a settlement known as *Portus Cale*, located by the Douro river, close to where the Luis I bridge and the Port Wine cellars are today. The name of Portugal derived from Portus Cale. So, we come from ancient civilizations. Therefore, I would like to invite you to enjoy the architectural heritage and the cultural and human wealth that our city has to offer, and also to invite you to visit the University of Porto.

We appreciate very much your presence. We wish you a pleasant stay in our city and a very fruitful conference.

Thank you.

Thank you.

2nd September 2014,

Faculty of Engineering, University of Porto

Sebastião Feyo de Azevedo, Rector