

Assessment report of the Centre d'Estudis Jurídics Europeus I Mediació (CEJEM), Universitat de Lleida

1. Introduction

The Centre d'Estudis Jurídics Europeus I Mediació (CEJEM) was founded in 2009 by the Universitat de Lleida. In the Summer of 2013 the Vice-Rector of the University requested that an assessment report would be written on the performance of CEJEM in the first four years of its existence.

This report was written by a peer review committee consisting of Prof. Rafel Bisquerra Alzina ((Director Master en Intel·ligència Emocional I Coaching, Universitat de Barcelona), Prof. Eduard Vinyamata (Campus for Peace director, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya) and Prof. Jan Smits (Academic director of the Maastricht European Private Law Institute, Maastricht University).

In order to carry out its activities, the peer review committee received the annual reports of CEJEM for 2010-2011 and 2012 (<http://www.cejem.udl.cat/memoria-cejem-udl-2010-2011.pdf>, <http://www.cejem.udl.cat/Memoria CEJEM 2012.pdf>). It also received an overview of the CEJEM economic data over the years 2009-2013. The committee visited CEJEM on 24 October 2013. During the visit, the committee spoke with the Direction Committee, the Vice-Rector of the University and with a delegation of CEJEM-researchers.

The committee did not receive terms of reference from the Universitat de Lleida on which the evaluation must be based. This assessment is therefore based on the regular criteria for research assessments. These criteria are the following:

- Quality (including clearly defined mission, leadership, resources)
- Productivity (including strategy, academic output)
- Relevance (including societal relevance, valorisation)
- Vitality (including strategy for the future)

The committee has decided not to give any quantitative evaluation of the center, but to express its assessment of these four criteria in words. The four criteria also form the basic structure for this report (no's 3-6), preceded by a general characteristic of CEJEM (no. 2) and followed by conclusions and recommendations (no. 7).

2. General characteristic of CEJEM

CEJEM consists of nine research groups and of a number of individual researchers. The research groups deal with a wide variety of topics, ranging from penal law, private law and European private law to reform of the United Nations, administrative law, psycho-pedagogy, mediation and sports law. It was a deliberate decision of the University board to accommodate this wide variety of research

groups within one institute. This explains why there is not one central research question that guides CEJEM's activities.

In terms of organisation, CEJEM has one director (Prof. Vaquer), a direction committee consisting of four representatives from the research groups, and an external advisory committee.

CEJEM reports about its activities through the website <http://www.cejem.udl.cat/cat/> and through annual reports. Conferences organised by the participating groups or researchers take place under the heading of CEJEM. Publications in the annual reports are categorised per research group.

CEJEM receives an annual budget from the central University level. The CEJEM Economic Data document shows that this income has been €46.000 in 2009; €31.400 in 2010; €15.120 in 2011; €14.175 in 2012; and €15.000 in 2013 (total €121.695). This money is primarily used to facilitate the participating researchers, in particular for language editing, translation, short travel grants and organisation of workshops.

3. Quality

The committee considers quality as a broad criterion, including not only the quality of the output, but also of the mission, leadership and available resources. The committee is impressed by the overall output of the various research groups and of CEJEM as a whole. It seems that all participating groups contribute considerably to good Spanish as well as to international journals. Noteworthy are publications in very good international journals such *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice*, *Journal of International Criminal Justice* and *Zeitschrift für europäisches Privatrecht*. Some researchers also published with highly reputed international publishers and in prestigious series such as the *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*. In addition, there is much output in terms of conferences and workshops. This is all the more admirable in view of the low budget that CEJEM has available for carrying out its activities. A lot was done with little money. The committee regards the overall output as very good, with some individual researchers within the groups being excellent and having a firm international reputation in their respective fields.

With so many research groups working in different fields, it is difficult to maintain a clear focus of CEJEM as a whole. However, this is the logical result of creating a center that is to host nine groups on different topics. Having said this, it would probably be good if CEJEM could think about possible ways to find a clearer mission and focus. Leadership is good: CEJEM has an inspiring director with an excellent international reputation in the field of European private law. The direction committee seems to work efficiently and meets regularly.

The available resources are scarce. As mentioned before, the committee is impressed by how much was done with little money. The committee considers it essential to the success of CEJEM that a basic funding will continue to come from the University level. Naturally, this funding will have to be supplemented by external funding, for which several possibilities exist (see also below).

4. Productivity

Although the researchers of CEJEM are not assigned a formal percentage in FTEs for research, we understand that a fair estimate would be that an average researcher has two days per week available for research. Given this, the output produced between 2009 and 2013 is very good. Naturally, the output differs from one group to another and from one individual to another, but the overall output of CEJEM certainly meets international standards. There is also a regular stream of conferences organised by CEJEM.

When it comes to external funding, the figures differ from one research group to another. The committee believes that there are more possibilities for attracting external funding, in particular in cooperation with other research centers or societal organisations, and in particular when it comes to European funding. Horizon 2020 would be a good opportunity to make use of, next to available Spanish sources.

5. Relevance

The societal relevance of the research done within CEJEM is generally high. There is good collaboration with outside institutions in some of the research groups. It could be useful to better show to the outside world what the societal relevance is of the many things that CEJEM does. One suggestion would be to start a blog or actively pursue a publicity strategy directed towards the (local or national) press when this is appropriate for a certain topic.

In terms of research, all groups work on topics that will remain academically and societally highly relevant in the years to come.

6. Vitality

During the site visit, the committee has noticed that there is a lot of enthusiasm about CEJEM among the participating researchers. It seems that there is a real added value of the center in terms of cooperation, creating an identity vis-à-vis the outside world, and availability of (modest) funding.

The suggestion of the committee would be to develop a strategy on how CEJEM sees its own future. The research it does is highly relevant and could benefit from a clear future strategy on what CEJEM wants to do and what it does not want to do. Making explicit its ambitions would help in carving out an even better place for the center.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

The overall conclusion is that CEJEM fulfils an important role for the researchers associated with it. The level of research that is conducted within CEJEM is generally high and usually meets international standards. There is also added value to the center in the sense that it offers opportunities for researchers to work together and for modest, but highly important, funding. The peer review committee is impressed by how much was done in a brief period with relatively low funding.

In addition to this, there is a number of suggestions that the committee would like to make. These are the following:

- it would be good if CEJEM would reflect upon the focus of the center. At the moment, a wide variety of different topics is covered. This is on the one hand a good thing because it allows cooperation between the various groups, but this may be at the expense of a clear mission to the outside world. There is great potential within CEJEM to take up topics from an interdisciplinary perspective (including topics such as conflict resolution). In this sense CEJEM can make a real difference by showing that the law is not an isolated discipline.
- the center may wish to think about its publication strategy. The creation of a blog, a working papers series (e.g. on SSRN) and other types of electronic publishing could be a nice way to show to the outside world the many things going on within CEJEM.
- the center may wish to explore possibilities for funding through Horizon 2020. Several topics that are researched within CEJEM seem to lend themselves for this. A general remark directed towards the University administration is that it may wish to put into place incentives to attract outside money (e.g. by way of matching funds).