



## Discurso do Secretário de Estado da Digitalização e da Modernização Administrativa | 1 de junho | Hannover Messe | PMS6: Digital Ecosystems | Expert panel: “Digitally global”

Good morning to all

Is an absolute pleasure to be here at Hannover Messe 2022.

Being here at such an historic and iconic event, as one of the world’s largest trade fairs dedicated to the industry, representing the Portuguese Government as the partner country it is of the highest importance and relevance.

I will start by thanking the organization, for the invitation to do the opening remarks of the next Expert Panel. Let me also greet the moderator of the panel, the Vice President of the Deutsch-Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Pedro Miranda, the key note speaker right after me, Mrs. Liliana Ferreira Executive Director, Fraunhofer Portugal, and all the panellists.

Portugal and the world were faced with a situation that put their ability to function as a society to the test.

An unexpected situation. New because of the proportions it assumed in a globalized world, and which strongly conditioned the flows of people and goods between countries.

The digital dimension has therefore acquired a crucial importance, never seen before.

As the Portuguese government official responsible for Digital area, I am pleased to say that Portugal had already embraced the commitment to digital on the previous governmental cycle, and now with the new Government in place we intend to reinforce it even more.

This reinforcement will have a triple focus: 1) on people’s empowerment and digital inclusion; 2) in the digital transformation of our business fabric; 3) and in the digitization of the State.

Behind this triple focus, there must be a base of enabling elements, or catalysts, such as connectivity and infrastructure, data reuse, the adoption of disruptive technologies, always with special attention dedicated to cybersecurity.

**Portugal’s ambition is to be considered a true digital nation,**

... and besides some geographical aspects that work in our favour like being the closest country closer to North America, being the entry to markets that speak Portuguese as their native language (+ 261 Million people), considered as on of the safest countries in the world with great quality of life, we also have very strong assets that we are proud of, like:



- Being 4<sup>th</sup> world wide on women participation on the workforce;
- Being 7<sup>th</sup> on linguistic competencies;
- Have the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest rate in Europe of graduates in engineering courses;
- Also, on infrastructures and telecommunications being 3<sup>rd</sup> on fixed broadband access or having 76% of investors considering that this factor as one of the most important factors of attractiveness.
- As for our Innovation and Research ecosystem, we've been showing robust development, with 18 industrial clusters, 26 collaborative laboratories, 30 technology interface centres and more than 150 incubators/accelerators.

That leads me to the significant progress we've been doing also on the *startup* ecosystem. Portugal has received good international reviews concerning the dynamics and potential of its ecosystem, being already recognized as a **Startup Nation**. We have one of the most evolved ecosystems, where I could highlight three dimensions:

- (1) The number of startups and dynamics of creation of new businesses: we have one of the highest numbers of startups per capita including our 7 unicorns with Portuguese DNA;
- (2) The great capillarity of the network of incubators and accelerators, being spread across the country, enabling and incentivizing entrepreneurship;
- (3) On the investment side, with a growth of national actors that play the role of investors in its multiple formats, but also strengthening the capacity of the ecosystem as a whole to attract more international investors looking to the national market with growing interest. Last year, Portugal broke the record of investment for startups, reaching 1,1Bi €.

It is very pleasing to see that we have Portuguese startups being represented on this venue. Startups are digital native business, they incorporate “innovation and technology” in their DNA, they most often count with highly skilled professional in their ranks, that leads to the creation of knowledge and consequently to value creation for the economy...

... and that is why it is also worth mentioning the 125M€ investment the government is doing, through the RRF to support the continuous bet on this ecosystem.

We are reinforcing the national structure for startups, that is Startup Portugal, that is justified by the growing responsibility that it will have to assume in the coordination and management of these funds, as well as for the role it will assume in the new European structure for entrepreneurship, based in Portugal, that is the Europe Startup Nations Alliance - ESNA.



Now focusing specifically on the digital transformation of businesses, in a broader sense:

The ability of companies to transform their business models and digitalize their products and services assumes greater importance not only in the response to the existing crisis, but also in strengthening of the Portuguese economy.

The path for the digital transformation of businesses is based, above all, on measures and actions that support investment and encouraging this process, the awareness-raising and upskilling of the workforce, in particular Small and Medium Enterprises, which represent the vast majority of the economy and employment in Portugal.

But it also is through the dynamization of the already mentioned ecosystem of entrepreneurship and incentives to startups, as well as the development of initiatives that promote the adoption and consolidation of the scientific and technological knowledge in the business's activity.

For this purpose, we will continue to focus on three main areas related to the digitalization of the economy, which are:

- (1) The Entrepreneurial ecosystem and attraction of investment;
- (2) The transversal effort on transforming digitally the Business fabric, focusing on SMEs and
- (3) Transfer of scientific knowledge and technology for the economy.

We also aim to give continuity to the work in place and to keep seeking for the proper policies that allow to cover all the business activity cycle and respond not only to the challenges inherent to its digitization, but also to stimulate and accelerate innovation, via availability of structures that allow testing and experiment with digital technologies and solutions, as well as reducing prototyping time and industrialization of new products.

Knowing that the following panel will share with us successful business cases, I will also would like to share some specific policies, that we believe will contribute to this common goal, that is to raise the bar on the capacity to innovate to be sustainable and to upgrade our business level through their digital transformation process.

First the **National Network of Test Beds**, that aim to, overcome the well-known “valley of death” of the innovation process, by creating the conditions for businesses to develop and test new products and services and accelerate their digital transformation, either through physical equipment's and infrastructures or virtual/digital simulators. The model that we intend to implement in Portugal has followed international benchmarks. However, we did not want to replicate without adapting to the reality of our own economy profile and own

characteristics. Instead of the traditional research centres or Universities, here we want top companies to be leading the way.

Another initiative worth mentioning are the **Digital Innovation Hubs** as also part of our macro strategy, with strong links with the European network, that is to promote the digital transformation of businesses and this network consists, among other services, in disseminating knowledge, to SME's, on three specific technologies: AI, HPC and Cybersecurity. We designed an approach to include all economy sectors, leaving no one behind.

I would like also to highlight the **Digital Maturity Seals** that are a system of digital seals to be awarded to companies, promoting the growing digital maturity of the business sector and contributing to creating trust in the digital environment. This certification system allows companies to guarantee their customers and partners a security seal and digital trust. We expect to contribute to a structural change in the way digital businesses are developed and create a positive and long-term impact on the way data is treated and shared, a fundamental aspect in strengthening the resilience, trust and security of company systems. The generation of trust goes beyond the issue of digital identity, and for this reason it is intended to promote in an integrated way the multiple dimensions of these seals, such as privacy, sustainability, cybersecurity and usability

Lastly but not the least, I should mention the “**Free Zones for Technology**”. An innovative regulatory framework, that allow for some innovations to flourish, it is worth to work with regulators on removing temporarily some rules and laws that prevent their innovative process. This unique regime will act as an enabler of innovation.

So in conclusion, If I may leave you with the key messages, I would say:

- (1) Portugal prior to the pandemic already defined its course and the relevance to give to the digital agenda;
- (2) Our ambition is to be considered a true digital nation, that encompasses digital maturity of key areas like people, businesses and state digital transition;
- (3) We have many geographical, infrastructural and societal factors working in our favor and a mature startup ecosystem that potentiates the digital mission
- (4) We have several public policies that incentivize innovation and technology adoption for different maturity stages of business and ones that even are unique

But better than my word, the following panel is composed with very good examples of success cases, the level of our entities and even foreign companies that decided to invest and operate from Portugal.



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Once again, I thank you for being able to be here, to have the opportunity to share some of our thoughts with you, to hear and keep learning from you and hoping to keep the conversation going on how to improve and for Portugal to reach a Digital Nation Status.

Thank you again and I wish you all success and a pleasant stay at Hannover Messe.