

OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation

Meeting of the National Contact Points Network, 15APR

**“Participatory pulses: civic trust, open government and
innovation in the public sector”**

**Secretary of State for Innovation and Modernization of Public
Administration**

Maria de Fátima Fonseca

Good afternoon

Let me begin by greeting all the participants, with a special thank you note to OPSI for enabling this meeting.

It is an honour to be here, sharing experiences and highlighting the Portuguese commitment to public sector innovation.

A commitment reinforced by the pandemic crisis.

Today there is no doubt that Innovation is the cornerstone to recovery, resilience, better services to citizens and businesses and better policies to tackle the complexity and uncertainty we all live in.

Innovation is also more than investigation, simplification, or digitalisation. It is about building a culture of curiosity and proactiveness in Public Administration, encouraging cross-sectorial collaboration and an open mindset to design, implement, and evaluate a new generation of public policies.

To develop this capability, we need to have a comprehensive approach.

This is why the Portuguese Strategy for Innovation and Modernization of The State and Public Administration 20-23 combines the empowerment of civil servants with the development of leadership and management models, aiming to improve results through a strategic vision on digital transformation and opening up to people, changing the way public administration relates to society, with an ecosystem of policies and tools to enhance civic and democratic participation.

Innovation is all about human capability. And this view takes us straight to the OECD Declaration on Public Sector Innovation and to its core principles.

As we know, this declaration, adopted almost 2 years ago recognizes that innovation is both a commitment and a roadmap.



And urges us to question ourselves: how can we move forward and improve our actions in order to accomplish greater value and impact in our societies? How can make sure that innovation is really becoming a core and strategic function in our organisations?

We believe the path is clear.

Our commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development challenges us to combine different drivers, players and tools, promoting an expanding governance ecosystem, building on personal engagement, institutional frameworks and political commitment.

To achieve these results, in Portugal, we are ensuring that we make the right investments in people's skills and setting the stage for participation, involving civil servants and civil society in public policies.

Civic participation is crucial not only to respond to the global and complex challenges of our time, but also to strengthen people's trust in institutions, at a time in our history where deep transformations are challenging the governance models.

Participation is therefore essential to democratic governance and should be addressed consciously and collectively, as a cornerstone of cohesive and renewed democracies.

This means evolving from instrumental processes to a broad and inclusive participatory ecosystem, embedding participation in public management models, improving legitimacy, ensuring better decision making and effectiveness.

This ecosystem should place citizen's voice at the centre of decisions, developing new participation processes besides those which are mandatory by law, such as the allocation of budget resources, public policies or, simply, the evaluation of public sector performance.

This is why the Portuguese government has identified participation as a priority, and reinforced its commitment to civic participation by improving participatory processes' maturity in order to address the challenges of our time: eradicate inequalities, build a fairer society, deal with demographic issues, fight climate change and support the digital transition.

This commitment is extremely important since the pandemic has suspended most of the participatory processes and, in line with

the European Union, we recognise civic participation as part of a human centric and value based digital government.

At a national level, we are stressing our commitment with three major initiatives in this area:

- A new model for the National Participatory Budget, to be adopted this year, which establishes new rules to make this deliberative model more effective in its execution, and also to enhance mobilisation, taking advantage from more than a hundred participatory budgets in local governments, which stimulate proximity and reinforce multi-level governance;
- we will also have, for the first time, a Participatory Budget in public administration, challenging public sector organisations to set the example by adopting participative processes to involve their workers, placing their empowerment and good management at the centre of the public management models;
- Finally, through the empowerment of the National Network for Open Administration, created in 2018 to support the Open Government Partnership, we will be promoting civic participation and collaboration with



public administration. The II National Action Plan for Open Administration, which turns proposals and ideas into future commitments, will be concluded this summer.

But other projects are also contributing to the ecosystem. For instance, the Healthy Neighbourhoods Program, to improve health conditions, well-being and quality of life in vulnerable territories. This program supports projects presented by associations, non-governmental organizations, civic movements and residents' organizations, in collaboration with local authorities, health authorities or other public entities, with a total budget of 10 million euros.

Dear friends

Participation and innovation are twin concepts. And we are embracing the challenge of encouraging renewed frameworks to foster innovation through participation.

By equipping public servants with the right skills and tools, stimulating capacity building, experimentation and collaboration, we will be developing motivated and committed teams that build bridges and partnerships, working beyond silos and organisational

borders, sharing experiences, learning from each other and embracing citizen participation as a core value.

So let's take bold steps making the most of simple things.

A common purpose is a powerful driver for change. And we can find it anywhere. In daily issues, in small problems, in big challenges.

It's up to us to set the stage in which we can work together, testing new ways to do so.

These choices define us as individuals but also as governments and societies. Choices that allow us not only to react, but to adapt and anticipate the responses we need to build more cohesive societies and foster renewed trust in democratic institutions.

We know that we have a lot of work ahead, but we truly believe that participation is the key to meaningful and effective innovation.

Thank you.