

PRESS RELEASE

Entrepreneurs and Scientists send manifesto to the Government standing for the reinforcement of science and innovation's position

15th July 2020 – Scientists, entrepreneurs and managers united in a call for the definition of visionary strategies for financial and social development supported by a strong stake on science and innovation. The Manifesto, which was sent today to Prime Minister António Costa, brings together 50 scientists and 50 Portuguese entrepreneurs and managers and stands for urgent action to reanimate the future of Portugal. The signatories defend that to guarantee financial mechanisms and the cooperation between the public and the private sectors will allow Portugal to take a leadership position and make a strong contribution to the increase of competitiveness in Europe.

At the moment when, in the European Council, negotiations occur to define the budget for the European Framework Programme (Horizon Europe, 2021-2027), already with a possible cut of 5 billion euros, and when, in Portugal, the Social and Financial Recovery Plan (2020-2030) will be discussed at the Government Meeting of the 17th and the 18th of July, it is urgent that action is taken supported by strategies that put research and innovation on top of national and European priorities.

More than ever, science and innovation play a crucial and decisive part in society, namely in the identification of solutions for public health emergencies, in the definition of response strategies, in the determination of necessary public policies or even the existing business models. The current pandemic placed on the spotlight a known yet often forgotten reality.

The position taken by Portugal in the fight against the pandemic is the result of the investment of production of knowledge over the last 30 years: in record time, there was mobilisation, reorganisation in knowledge production, in methods of diagnosis and the use of indispensable equipment to the fight against the pandemic.

For Mónica Bettencourt-Dias, Director of Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência, *“fundamental and translational science, Innovation and the assurance of the interaction between different sectors are strategic pillars in the answer to current and future challenges. Now is the moment to consolidate what we have verified as inevitable and guarantee Portugal's leadership in the definition of visionary strategies”*.

For Paulo Azevedo, Chairman of Sonae, *“innovation is fundamental to reinforce the economy's competitiveness, to create jobs and foster social development. For that reason, it is crucial for the future of the Nation to define urgent public policies which foster this stake and the cooperation between business, science and academia. Only through a joint effort of all private and public players is it possible to face challenges created by the pandemic, to build knowledge-based economy and boost competitiveness and employment in Portugal”*.

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The Manifesto points to a consolidated strategy around three fundamental pillars: a vision for the future, the cooperation between public and private sectors and the reinforcement of the investment in innovation. Therefore, the document stresses the need for a long term strategic vision, defending that only a fundamental quality research will allow the creation of knowledge and tools to face future challenges and fulfil our aspirations.

The signatories also stand for the cooperation between public and private sectors, with a joint stake on investigation and innovation throughout the chain of value and its integration in national society and economy. For that to happen, we need more investment in the long term in excellent human resources, ecosystems and technological infrastructures for universities, polytechnic schools, research institutes and companies. It is also necessary to invest in the connection between national and international industry and research and innovation as well as to ensure a greater articulation and coordination between national and international institutions, anticipating scenarios and improving the joint answer to global challenges.

For that to happen, a budget reinforcement is demanded to allow Portugal and Europe to stand out worldwide, boosting competitiveness and employment. Portugal and its partners must support an investment in strong research and innovation, either through the multi-annual financial framework or the Economic and Social Recovery Plan (Next Generation EU). The European budget must complement – and not replace – the basic national investment.

Today, to act in a concerted way, anticipating the future, will be crucial in the answer to the next challenges. To stimulate the production of new ideas, new approaches in health, in climate change, education, energy and digitalisation and automation requires a strategy that makes the future possible.

The Manifesto intends to integrate all members that wish to join. Subscription may be made through the website: <http://cienciaportugal.org>

Manifesto and list of the subscribing 50 scientists and 50 national entrepreneurs (attached)

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