

Nº13 October / December 2020

PORTUGAL ON THE MOVE

Essential BUSINESS

SPECIAL EDITION


**OEIRAS
VALLEY**
PORTUGAL

MUNICÍPIO DE
OEIRAS

**MAYOR
ISALTINO MORAIS**

Oeiras - an international case study

CISCO

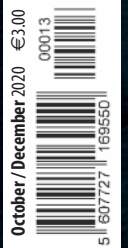
Investing in Portugal

TAGUSPARK

A science and technology ecosystem

**INTERNATIONAL
SHARING SCHOOL**

Innovation in international education



JAMES MARTIN'S

O REGRESSO

AS ANTIGAS CAVES DE WHISKY DE EDIMBURGO FORAM PALCO DE UMA DESCOBERTA EXTRAORDINÁRIA, EM 2020. VÁRIOS BARRIS DE UM WHISKY ESPECIAL TINHAM SIDO ESQUECIDOS NO TEMPO E ENCONTRAVAM-SE EM EXCELENTE ESTADO. LÁ DENTRO UM LOTE RARO, COM CARACTERÍSTICAS EXTRAORDINÁRIAS, POTENCIADAS PELO ENVELHECIMENTO, QUE SÓ PODIA SER JAMES MARTIN'S.

A MARCA MÍTICA VOLTA AO ATIVO, PARA COMERCIALIZAR EM EXCLUSIVO PARA O MERCADO PORTUGUÊS, ESTE JAMES MARTIN'S 32 YEARS OLD. JAMES MARTIN'S É UM DOS GRANDES NOMES DA HISTÓRIA ESCOCESA. CONSERVADO EM BARRICAS PRECIOSAS, ESTE JAMES MARTIN'S QUE CHEGA AGORA AO MERCADO ENVELHECEU NA PERFEIÇÃO. O FAMOSO BLENDED SCOTCH WHISKY JAMES MARTIN'S ESTÁ DE REGRESSO, NO SEU BALANÇO COMPLEXO ENTRE SUAVIDADE E RIQUEZA. JAMES MARTIN'S NÃO É RARO, É ÚNICO.

SEJA RESPONSÁVEL. BEBA COM MODERAÇÃO.



JAMES
MARTIN'S



ISALTINO MORAIS

Welcome to Essential Business Issue 13 - a special edition focusing on Oeiras Valley!

This is the first printed as well as digital issue since March when the Portuguese Government issued a State of Emergency and the country went into lockdown until May. To say that 2020 has been a difficult year for the Portuguese and the Portuguese economy would be an understatement.

Unemployment levels alone soared to over 40% by November while Portugal's tourist and hospitality industry, one of the main drivers of the economy, were particularly hard hit with an estimated 60% of hotels remaining closed and the country's restaurant, bar and entertainment segments on the edge of economic collapse.

Nevertheless, two sections of the Portuguese economy did well, rest estate investment and development, which recorded its third highest gross performance in a decade, while technology based companies and startups continue to attract overseas investment, particularly from the United States of America which is now Portugal's 5th most important client market for investment, and exports of goods and services.

It is on the theme of technology and cutting-edge science that Essential Business focuses on in this issue as we zoom into the municipality of Oeiras, its visionary Mayor, Isaltino Morais, and its ambitious, forward-thinking Oeiras City Council which has created an exciting new brand concept 'Oeiras Valley' which aims to build on the municipality's 30-year legacy as a hub for modern, dynamic technology-based national and multi-national companies, and a centre for scientific institutions of excellence, and extend it further to turn Oeiras Valley into the Silicon Valley of Portugal.

Oeiras is an important economic hub, being one of the most highly developed municipalities of Portugal and Europe. It has the highest GDP per capita in the country, being also the second highest municipality (immediately after Lisbon) in terms of purchasing power as well as the second one collecting taxes in the country. These economic indicators also reflect the education level of the inhabitants, as Oeiras is the municipality with the highest concentration of population with higher education in the country. It also has the lowest unemployment rate in the Lisbon area.

We hone in on some of the business, technology and science park ecosystems in the municipality that help to explain this success: Taguspark, Quinta da Fonte and Lagoas Park, as well as the many top-quality science and academic research institutions in the borough, including IST, iBET, ITQB, INIAV and Gulbenkian Science and examine the synergies they have with Oeiras Council in helping to create this ambition of creating a Silicon Valley in Oeiras.

We speak to some of the most important and dynamic companies in the municipality such as Cisco Systems Portugal, PHC Software, the media group Impresa, Merck and Novartis which are all leaders in their respective areas.

And since companies and institutions are only as good as the educational calibre of the people they attract, we also look at two of the most successful and dynamic international schools in the municipality: Oeiras International School and the International Sharing School, as well as academic institutions like the Lisbon University Faculty of Kinetics.

And since public awareness of environmental issues and the ecological health of our oceans are now more important than ever, we report on an exciting new initiative from the Sharing University and Universidade Atlântica, OceanLiteracy4All, which aims to bring the science of the oceans to the general public through a range of interactive courses.

Black swan events like the Covid-19 pandemic, which the science institutions in Oeiras have been working on, are catastrophic and disruptive events, but they are also catalysts for positive technological change, in the areas of digitalisation, telecommunications, artificial intelligence, and computer sciences, and it is here that Oeiras Municipal Council is well placed and prepared to lead Portugal into a bright and prosperous future.

Chris Graeme, Editor

Estatuto editorial

A revista Essential Business pretende dar a conhecer à comunidade empresarial e internacional em Portugal e a quem visita o país em trabalho, para eventos profissionais ou para investimento, a realidade e atualidade sobre negócios em Portugal.

Enquanto temas relacionados com a imobiliária e o turismo são uma presença constante, a revista e os seus suportes digitais cobrem todas as áreas de negócio, incluindo a saúde, o retalho e as mais diversas indústrias.

A revista Essential Business assume o compromisso de assegurar o respeito pelos princípios deontológicos e pela ética profissional dos jornalistas, assim como pela boa-fé dos leitores.

Editorial Director

Cátia Matos - catia.matos@open-media.net

Features Editor

Chris Graeme - chris.graeme@open-media.net

Art Director

João Cardoso - joao.cardoso@open-media.net

Contributing writers

Chris Graeme, Marina Watson Peláez

Comercial Director

Paula Mouco - paula.mouco@open-media.net

Proofreading

Inês Lopes

Subscriptions

subscriptions.open-media.net

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Rua das Maçarocas

Abrunheira Business Center nº 03

Abrunheira 2710-056 Sintra

Tel.: +351 219 158 150

geral@grafisol.pt

Lisbon Office

Av. Engenheiro Duarte Pacheco, Torre 2, 10º, Fracção 11

1070-101 Lisboa

Tel (+351) 213 224 812

essential.lisboa@open-media.net

Algarve Office

Apartado 59,

Parque Empresarial Algarve 7, 8401-901 Lagoa

Tel (+351) 282 341 333 Fax (+351) 282 341 360

essential.algarve@open-media.net

London Office

40 Craven Street, Charing Cross

London WC2N 5NG, England

Tel: +44 (0) 207 389 0527

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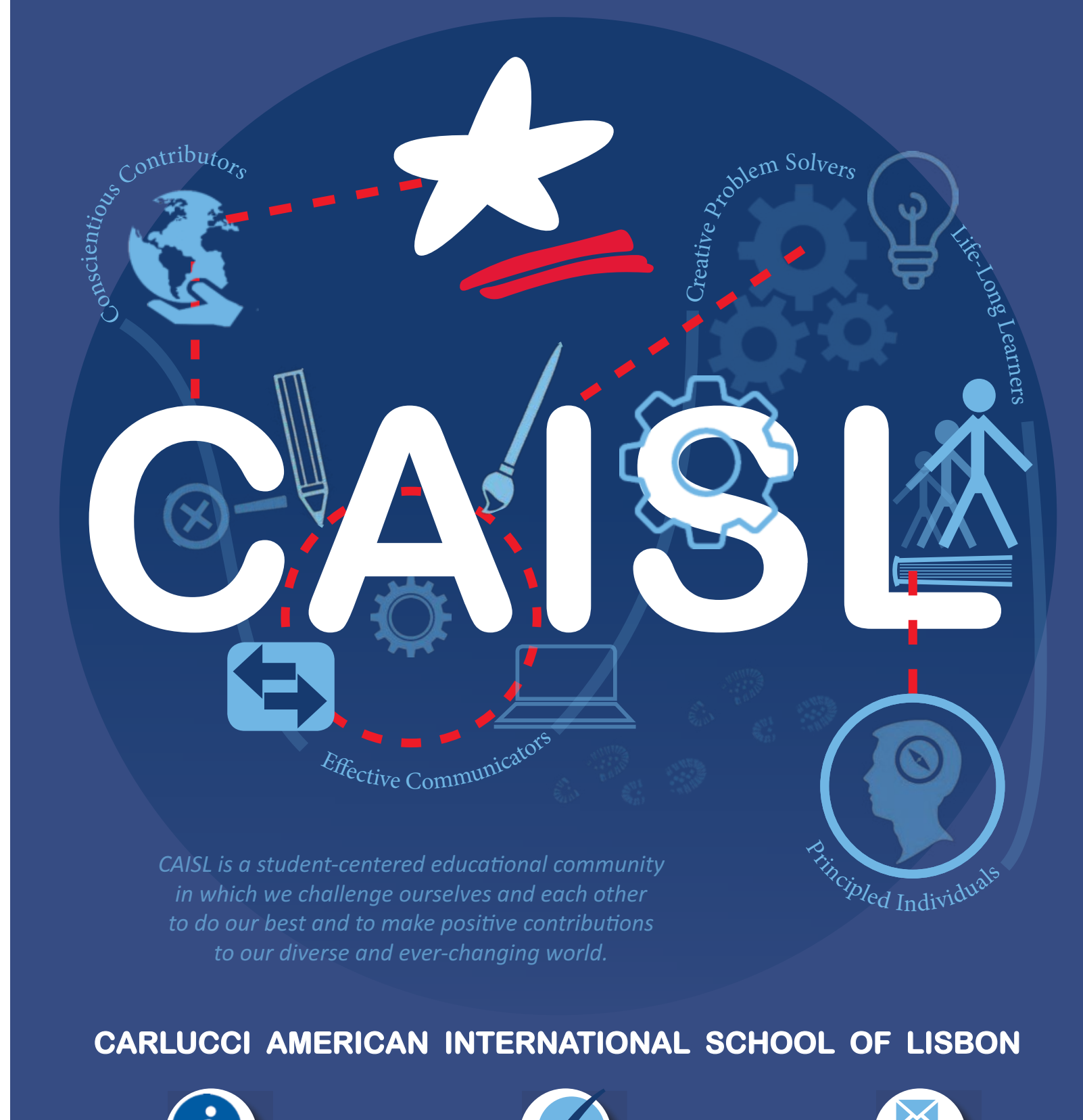
Miguel Ladeira Santos

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Portugal
351-219-239-800
info@caislisbon.org
www.caislisbon.org

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ATLÂNTICA
INSTITUTO UNIVERSITÁRIO

Fábrica da Pólvora de Barcarena
2730-036 Barcarena
+351 214 398 200
geral@uatlantica.pt
www.uatlantica.pt





Oeiras Council invests €400 million to make Oeiras Silicon Valley of Portugal

The Mayor of Oeiras Isaltino Morais has a bold plan to turn the municipality, already a science and technology ecosystem, into the Silicon Valley of Portugal.

The Mayor of Oeiras Isaltino Morais has a bold plan to turn the municipality, already a science and technology ecosystem, into the Silicon Valley of Portugal.

The ambitious new programme already has a name, 'Oeiras Valley' and foresees the creation of a unique and integrated ecosystem for business, science and technology in Portugal which he says will be a "case study in Europe".

The Council, which has four major business parks with some of the most technologically and scientifically advanced companies in the country, will invest around €400 million in the project until 2026.

The goal is to attract innovative companies in the areas of technology, pharmaceuticals, nanotechnology and research and development.

"With this ambitious programme want to create a showcase to the world of all the best that exists in the most innovative sectors in the economy and science," says Isaltino Morais.

Morais says that the Council will achieve this by attracting more investment to the borough which is the third most advanced and wealthiest in terms of per capita earnings, and higher educational qualifications.

"We want to put Oeiras on the International radar in terms of investment, innovation and multinational business," says the Mayor.

The Oeiras mayor says that the Oeiras Valley programme is the distillation of the Council's vision to create a municipality that is more modern, intelligent, developed and international, but also more inclusive.

To achieve the objectives of the programme, the Council will focus and invest in social and economic development programs and improving mobility because of the recognised transport problems that the area still has.

Oeiras invests €1.8 million in science and technology

The municipality of Oeiras will invest €1.8 million a year between 2020 and 2025 in science and technology.

Called Oeiras Science & Technology 2020-2025, the plan will focus on three key pillars: education, innovation and internationalisation. The amount set aside for these areas represents around 1% of the council's budget.

In education, the goal is to create an agenda of scientific events, invest in the development of experiment lab teaching in sciences in schools, with a focus on primary education, and concentrate on seminars, workshops and conferences as well as creating the Oeiras Valley Science Fair.

The Council will also support the creation of business startup incubators and business accelerators with the aim of creating the conditions for local development from research to application.

The scientific and academic research institutions in the borough such as ITQB NOVA (Instituto de Tecnologia Química e Biológica António Xavier), iBET (Instituto de Biologia Experimental e Tecnológica), Gulbenkian Science Institute, IST (Instituto Superior Técnico), FMH (Faculdade de Motricidade Humana) and INAV (Instituto Nacional de Investigação Agrária) will be part of the team to develop the strategy for Oeiras Science & Technology 2020-2025.

This initiative from Oeiras Municipal Council represents a commitment for the next five years to turn the municipality into a leader in Science and Innovation in Portugal and reaffirm the inclusion and involvement of all the scientific and academic institutions in the borough as well as science and technology-based companies. A project management team has already been appointed under the council's education department head Pedro Patacho.

The Council will award a financial support package of more than €300,000 to the Gulbenkian Science Institute, ITQB NOVA and the Higher Technical Institute (IST) and others as part of the strategy.



Aeronautics, Space and Defence partners meet in Oeiras

Experts and partners met in Oeiras this month to sign a strategic development protocol in aeronautics, space and defence.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between representatives from various institutions linked to technology research and development and upper educational establishments who met up at Oeiras Municipal Council.

The protocol aims to transform the borough into an "international hotspot" for the defence, aerospace and aeronautics industries.

This protocol brings together various strategic partners with Oeiras Council including the AED Cluster Portugal, the Higher Technical Institute (IST), the Welding and Quality Institute (ISQ), the academic institutions Universidade Atlântica and Nova School of Business & Economics (Nova SBE), Taguspark (a business park) and NATO's Academy of Communication and Information.

This initiative called AED - Oeiras Valley is part of the Council's strategic thinking to boost and increase the technological aspects of companies based in the borough under the brand Oeiras Valley.

The goal of this protocol is to establish a basis for understanding, coordination and collaboration between AED Cluster Portugal, Oeiras Municipal Council and the other partners which have committed to undertake various campaigns, actions and activities set out in the Strategic Plan.

The activities in the Strategic Plan cover different areas: "Markets and Opportunities," "Innovation and Value Creation," "People and Skills" and "Context and Infrastructure."

Oeiras to receive new research and innovation hub from Altice Labs

Taguspark, the largest science and technology park in Portugal, is preparing to receive the new research hub from Altice Labs. The investment was made official on 5 March as part of the company's fourth-anniversary celebrations.

For this purpose, a memorandum was signed between the Municipality of Oeiras and Altice Labs in order to establish initiatives that contribute to the development of competitiveness, within the scope of the new development cycle of the municipality.

After the hubs of Madeira, Viseu, Olhão and the Azores, Oeiras thus becomes the fifth location — outside Aveiro — chosen by Altice Labs for the installation of its new research and development centre. This hub will help produce technology for 60 countries.

The mayor of Oeiras City Council, Isaltino Morais, explained at the time: "This expansion of the Altice group to Oeiras follows our strategy of having the centre of knowledge, technology and research in our municipality".

Alcino Lavrador, Director-General of Altice Labs, said: "It is with great satisfaction that we open yet another Altice Labs hub in Portugal, this time in Oeiras. The digital transformation process means that we are always innovating and our effort and commitment must be dedicated to bringing more and better services to the Portuguese population. In this sense, and like the other hubs around our country, this laboratory will have research, innovation, development and export of cutting-edge technology."

With the opening of this new research hub, Oeiras reinforces its position as a national reference municipality in attracting talent and exporting innovation and technology.





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Isaltino Morais

The visionary who turned Oeiras into a European case study

The Mayor of Oeiras, Isaltino Morais, is one of Portugal's few visionaries whose ambitious plans to turn the municipality into the Silicon Valley of Portugal through the brand 'Oeiras Valley' is now taking shape

TEXT CHRIS GRAEME

Isaltino Morais, the Mayor of Oeiras, is a charismatic man, whose larger-than-life presence seems to fill the room, a room dominated by an enormous painting of the Portuguese statesman Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, the Marquis of Pombal who redesigned and rebuilt the capital Lisbon after a devastating earthquake in 1755.

In some ways, the man whose office he now occupies in part of the marquis' stately 18th century Baroque palace in the old part of town, is not unlike him. He is a visionary and has a vision for the borough.

Every part of Oeiras has been thought out and planned to take advantage of the past and integrate it with the best of the present to create the wealthy, modern and dynamic municipality of the future that can compete in terms of learning, skills, sophistication and cutting-edge technology with any similar science, technology and business ecosystem in Europe.

The Oeiras Valley project's genesis came about after the mayor and his team visited selective technology hubs in the United States, namely Silicon Valley, and came to the conclusion that the municipality of Oeiras had all the right ingredients to become the Silicon Valley of Portugal thanks to its scientific research and development institutions, high-tech companies and a concentration of some

of the most highly qualified professionals in the country.

"We want to turn Oeiras into the Silicon Valley of Portugal, and this Oeiras Valley programme represents the distillation of our vision for a municipality that is modern, intelligent, developed, international and inclusive," Morais says.

"We had a marketing company come in and develop a branded concept, which is 'Oeiras Valley', and which foresaw the creation of a unique ecosystem for business, science and technology in Portugal," the mayor explains.

"What was interesting was that when compared to the other council logos we already had in the municipality, the Oeiras Valley logo was most widely recognised and fixed in people's minds," Morais adds.

To that end — and the mayor admits that the municipality is "flush with cash" — he and his team earmarked around €400 million to be invested in the project over a six-year period, to 2026.

The aim, he says, is to attract innovative companies in key areas such as technology, pharmaceuticals, nanotechnology, and biochemical and medical research, as well as developing a plan to attract engineers to the borough.

A CASE STUDY

"Oeiras has a position in terms of business turnover which is unique in

Portugal. In this 46 km² — which is much smaller than many other municipal districts in Portugal — we have the largest concentration of technology entities in the country, and this makes Oeiras a case study in this area," the mayor says.

All in all, delivering the Oeiras Valley concept is a tall and ambitious order, but promises to place Oeiras increasingly more on the Portuguese map as a showcase of the best in cutting-edge science and technology areas by attracting more investment to the borough, and put "Oeiras on the international map for innovation and business".

Looking at the various Oeiras Valley outdoor placards posted in strategic positions around the borough, one might be forgiven for thinking this a recent phenomenon. In fact, as Isaltino Morais points out, It has been in the pipeline for years.

"This has been extremely well planned out and we are achieving our goals. Of course, the brand concept is important, and studies show that out of all the brand visibility in the area, the Oeiras Valley brand is the most recognised," says Morais.

"The planning, particularly the land-use planning, and our policy of attracting added value high-tech companies, has been a 30-year strategy at a time when Lisbon was run-down, and well before the boom in tourism which the capital





“WE WANT TO TURN OEIRAS INTO THE SILICON VALLEY OF PORTUGAL AND THIS OEIRAS VALLEY PROGRAMME REPRESENTS THE DISTILLATION OF OUR VISION FOR A MUNICIPALITY THAT IS MODERN, INTELLIGENT, DEVELOPED, INTERNATIONAL AND INCLUSIVE.”

has experienced over the past four years, and which Oeiras naturally benefitted from too,” the mayor continues.

However, the Oeiras mayor is quick to stress that tourism is not its focus despite the many thousands of tourists who may have stopped off in the borough on their way to Sintra or back from an afternoon on one of the many beaches at Carcavelos, Estoril and Cascais and who also brought spending power to the many shops and restaurants in the municipality.

“What we’ve got to offer is quality: quality of environment, and a modern and vibrant municipality so that companies, particularly multinationals linked to technology, have all the services and infrastructure that they need. We’re preparing the municipality, and we’re concentrating our investment in these office park hubs like Taguspark, Lagoas

Park, Quinta da Fonte and Arquiparque,” Morais explains..

BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY PARKS

In fact, Oeiras will, in many ways, already be capitalising on what it now has. It has already been a pioneer for business and technology parks in Portugal for over 20 years, with three ultra-modern and infrastructure rich parks - Taguspark, Quinta da Fonte and Lagoas Park.

“We helped develop those parks in the 1990s, and they have been very successful, and it was really in this last term that we were able to move forward with the brand and the vision for the area with all its scientific institutions. A new educational model will be aligned with the different universities, scientific institutions and companies,” says Morais.

But Morais wants to build on this success and take his vision forward to turn Oeiras into the “Number One municipality in Portugal in the sciences” and leverage its role in terms of export companies.

To achieve this, Oeiras Valley programme goal, the mayor is focusing on economic and social development policies and improving mobility which, apart from the superb motorway that links the town and its business parks to Lisbon and the airport, is still hampered by recognised problems in the transport area.

“The great leap we made in Oeiras was over 30 years, the problem for this country and why it lags behind others is that few districts have made the quantitative leap that we’ve achieved in Oeiras.

“In the 1980s, Oeiras was essentially a Lisbon dormitory outer suburb, with

most of the people living in the municipality going to work in Lisbon. There is a surplus relative to Lisbon of around 5,000 people (45,000 people who come from Lisbon to Oeiras-51,000 that go from Oeiras to Lisbon), but on the other hand, we have a surplus in terms of all of the other municipalities in the Greater Lisbon Metropolitan Area - Sintra, Amadora, Cascais, Almada and Vila Franca de Xira - in terms of commuters that come to work in Oeiras from these boroughs. This means that today Oeiras is the municipality that receives most commuters and has therefore become a new central hub in terms of work for the

Greater Lisbon Municipal Area,” explains the Oeiras mayor.

In other words, an astonishing 130,000 people come to work in Oeiras each day from other Lisbon municipal boroughs.

This has been possible, Morais points out, because Oeiras had a strategic vision 30 years ago to turn the municipality into a business and tech park hub. Rather than try and compete as an industrial, tourist or even cultural centre, Oeiras went for the white-collar service and technology-based companies.

What the Council did was plan the territory with organised detailed urban

plans precisely to house this type of companies, while paying attention to that environmental quality that Lisbon would not be able to provide.

The problem now, says the mayor, because of the popularity of the strategy, with companies that have 2-3,000 employees, is finding the space to house the new companies that want to set up in the borough.

TAGUSPARK - A FLAGSHIP OFFICE PARK

Morais points out that the creation of Taguspark as a flagship office hub in Greater Lisbon broke new ground for





Portugal. The park attracted large multi-nationals like Cisco (and Microsoft at the time), in technology, big pharmaceutical companies like Novartis, educational research institutes like the Instituto Superior Técnico (IST), Atlantic University and international schools such as the International Sharing School, all of which gradually created an image that it is a world-class science and technology park.

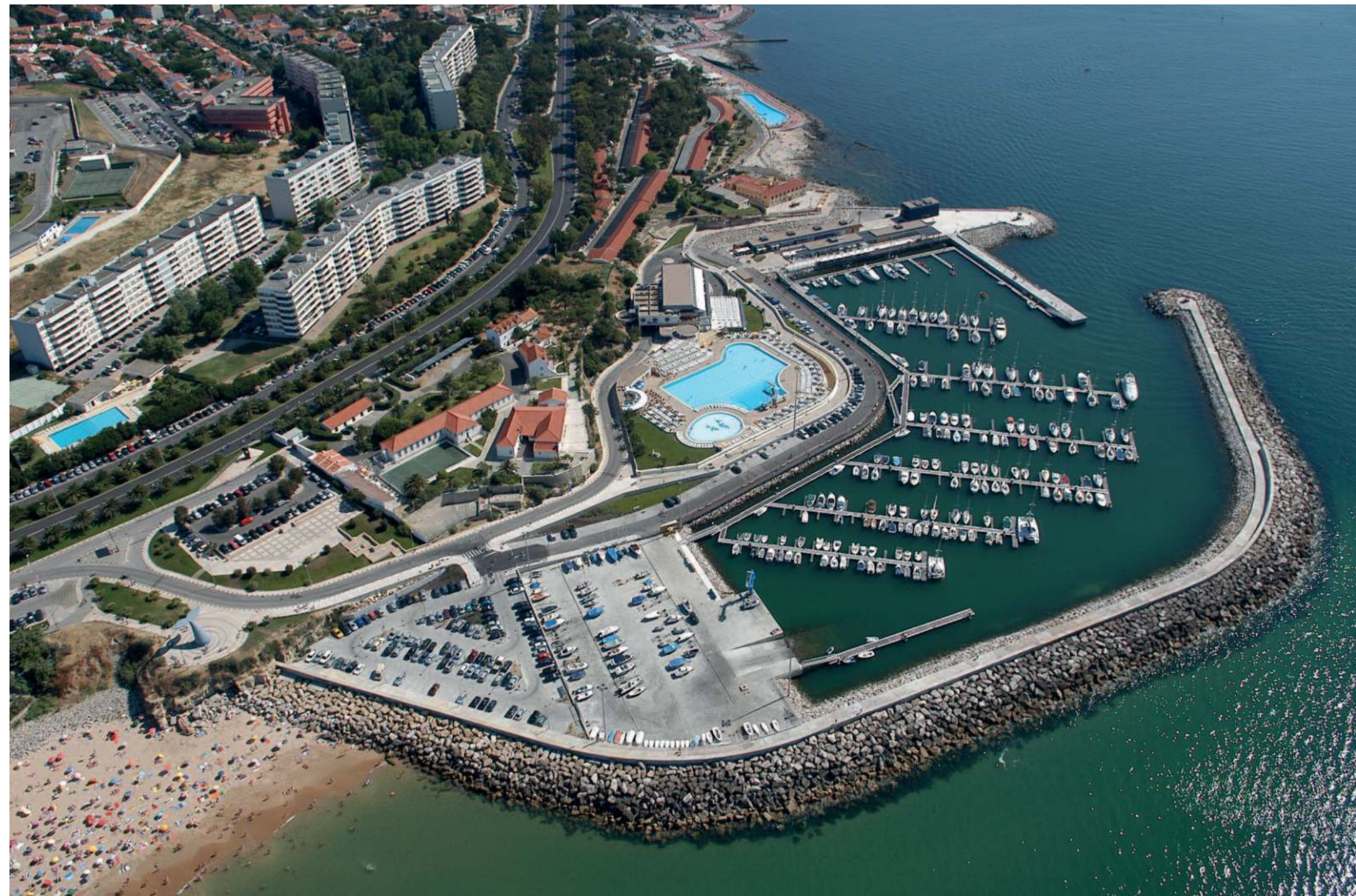
And since birds of a feather flock together, these companies have concentrated together. “Prestigious companies want to be next to other prestigious companies, whatever their sector of operation, and the strategy has been a success

because of effective territorial planning,” says Morais.

CLEARING THE SHANTY TOWNS

Oeiras had rundown neighbourhoods in the 1980s and 1990s, some of them shantytowns, which the council cleared, rehousing the borough’s poorer families in social housing. “We made this a priority and Oeiras was the first municipality in Portugal to end the shanty towns, whereas in neighbouring Amadora there are still several,” Morais points out.

“Obviously, it wasn’t compatible or desirable to have business parks cheek by jowl with shantytowns. But we do now



have council house estates and this is very important. Over 20 years ago the opposition parties here in Oeiras wanted to wind up the industrial activity in the municipality. The question was, what were we going to do with the blue-collar workers here? I always realised that the white-collar value-added companies here needed unskilled workers, and it is here they’ve often found jobs,” he says.

During the troika period (2011-2015), the municipalities surrounding us had a high level of unemployment and more complicated social problems, but here in Oeiras our unemployment levels for unskilled workers was much lower because the wives of these unskilled workers had jobs as cleaners in the business parks and ensured there was at least one salary coming into the household. In fact,

Oeiras had and still has the lowest unemployment rate in the Greater Metropolitan Area of Lisbon,” Morais adds.

INVESTING IN YOUNG TALENT

Oeiras Council is planning to launch a scholarship programme that will give young people in the borough, regardless of their socio-economic background, the chance to access university education.

One area of education pin-pointed by the mayor which the municipality, and indeed the entire country will need, is engineering, and he says that Oeiras will need around 12,000 engineers in various areas.

“In addition to the fact that we have the highest concentration of graduates and post-graduates in Portugal, we are also the municipality that invests the





“THERE IS NO POLITICAL ROLE IN PORTUGAL MORE RELEVANT THAN BEING THE MAYOR OF OEIRAS. OEIRAS IS A CASE STUDY, A MUNICIPALITY OF EXCELLENCE. THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT THAT OEIRAS VALLEY WILL HAVE OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS IS NOTHING SHORT OF EXTRAORDINARY.”

most in higher education student grants. In 2017, we offered 33 grants worth €45,000 per annum to students. Now we have 400 grants worth €580,000. The students who benefit from these grants will go on to generate around €60 million since a graduate earns more than twice than a school leaver with basic secondary education,” notes the mayor.

The mayor emphasises that from next year onwards, access to higher education will be supported by grants paid for by the Council for any young person who completes their secondary education and successfully applies for higher education, but cannot afford the fees.

“This means that the number of graduates per 6,000 inhabitants will increase dramatically relative to other municipalities, so therefore this gulf between us and the other municipalities will become even greater,” he says.

Morais stresses that the Council is investing in education because the companies based in Oeiras are large and can survive economic crises like the one currently caused by the pandemic. Technology-based companies have continued to do rather well and this has accelerated the digital transition process. These are precisely the companies that will need IT, AI and software programming engineers.

“We are aware that the growth of these technology companies and their investment projects in the coming years will be considerable, and there will be a significant need for IT engineers. We estimate there is a need in this municipality alone for 12,500 engineers and we are creating the conditions now, through these grants, for these young students to get well-paid jobs and stay within the municipality.”

A LONG-TERM VISION

Morais says: “The fact that some countries lag behind has to do with a lack of strategy in this respect. The problem for the countries in the West is that what China - which we know is a dictatorship, but then in some cases this can help in planning — is achieving today the fruits of a strategy that was planned out 40 years ago. I call this vision”.

“The problem in Portugal is that having a vision for Portuguese politicians usually means only the four years of an electoral term,” he notes.

The mayor says that another of Portugal’s problems is that it is still highly centralised, an inheritance of the Napoleonic system of governance, and therefore centred around the capital, Lisbon.

OEIRAS VALLEY AGENCY

The municipality will also set up an agency or company which will support companies in overcoming bureaucratic red tape as part of its bid to project Oeiras Valley and attract more companies.

“Our municipality has 10.8% of all the IT and communication sector companies in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area” citing the choice of Cisco, HP and Google choosing Oeiras to have their headquarters in Portugal.

The borough already has three Entrepreneur and Investor Support Points, one of which was launched in September and is located next door to the council’s offices in Rua Marquês de Pombal, N° 38. It has another within the premises of ACECOA (The Commercial and Enterprise Association of the Boroughs of Oeiras and Amadora (Rua Parque Anjos, Algés), and a third in the premises of AERLIS - Lisbon Region Enterprise Association in Rua Coro de Santo Amaro de Oeiras.

“The idea of having these posts sprang from the need to help small and medium companies (SMEs) and traders in difficulty, which often has to do with red-tape issues,” says Moraes.

“These posts will facilitate a hot-line with the council by making their lives easier. We have to be prepared to provide the conditions for entrepreneurs to invest

and manage resources. It is important that investment creates wealth, both at a municipal level and nationally. We want small businesses to continue to thrive and grow in Oeiras and have a future and we will provide support, not just in situations of emergency, but also in helping them apply for European Community funds,” says Moraes.

MEETING HOUSING NEEDS

A lack of affordable middle class and social housing will be tackled by building various affordable apartment blocks with homes for both sale and rent.

“We used to have shanty towns in the borough and one of them was next door to one of our business parks. We couldn’t have this. It gave the borough a bad image and just didn’t look good next to some of the most cutting-edge companies in Portugal,” Isaltino says, admitting that there are still around 9,000 families living in or close to poverty in a municipality of nearly 130,000 people.

In fact, in the early 1990s, the Jamor area of Oeiras had several shanty towns in which immigrants from East Timor



lived. The neighbourhood of Pedreira dos Húngaros was another in which the ramshackle homes of breeze blocks and corrugated iron were replaced with decent social housing.

The mayor explains that the problem at that time hadn't been one of money, but rather the political will to do something. "I made it a priority to clear out the shanties and replace them with council homes and we did it," he says.

TRANSPORT

Improving mobility and reducing traffic is another big ambition for the Oeiras Valley project and the mayor and his team.

The council is looking at a type of shuttle bus or electric tram service that would link the Cascais railway line at the station of Paço de Arcos and the business parks Lagoa Park and Taguspark as well as Quinta da Fonte.

"This type of transport will circulate between these four areas until we find a

dedicated transport system, which if not an Automatic Urban Transport System, (which had been on the cards but was abandoned incomplete), could now be resurrected and include a London Docklands style light railway system.

The idea for the overground light rail would be to link the coastal stations of Cruz Quebrada and Alcântara on the Lisbon-Cascais rail line, with the Lisbon riverside station of Santa Apolónia and on to Sacavém, linking the municipalities of Oeiras, Lisbon and Loures in a project that has already been approved by Oeiras Council.

The result is a Protocol of Cooperation signed by the leaders of the various municipal councils of Oeiras, Lisbon and Loures, the bus company Carris and Lisbon Metro authorities.

But the mayor admits that getting consensus between the different municipalities is not always easy, and highlights this lack of cooperation and tendency to

"turn their backs on each other" as one of "the problems of this country."

The mayor says: "We want a common electric tram network linking Lisbon and Oeiras, but if you were to ask if we have a strategic common relationship between us and the other municipalities next door, then I would have to say, no, we don't.

"The Lisbon Metropolitan Area exists physically as a region, but the regions don't have competencies and the Greater Lisbon Metropolitan Area is probably one of the few metropolitan areas in Europe that doesn't have an elected metropolitan government, because in Portugal everything is very centralised," explains Morais.

He adds: "The only country that doesn't have politically effective regions is Portugal, and I don't mean that we should have devolution in terms of transferring to the boroughs those aspects of bureaucracy that are tiresome for Central Government and costs money," stresses



Morais, adding that: "who lives in Oeiras, knows what's best for Oeiras".

And it is precisely this lack of borough autonomy, within a political system that only thinks in the short term of the electoral cycle, that it is so difficult to implement a strategic vision of 10, 15 or 20 years.

IN TOUCH WITH THE COMMON PEOPLE

One of the principles the mayor has is to really be in touch with the locals living within the municipality, not just at election times, but on a regular basis. He regularly takes strolls around different neighbourhoods and listens to what

people have to say, taking notes and seeing what can be done to resolve problems or make improvements, reminiscent of a king giving largesse to the people.

Walking into the impressive main room of the council offices, dominated by paintings of the Marquis de Pombal, and seeing the mayor smoking a Cuban sized cigar in front a dark mahogany desk and chair of throne-like proportions, surrounded by a group of anxious and attentive staff and assistants, certainly does give you the feeling of being ushered into an audience with a king, if not a Tsarist provincial governor, but the mayor stresses the importance of his 'walkabouts' among what in centuries

gone by would have been termed the 'great unwashed'.

"I hold audiences on a daily basis, although the official day is Thursday. But hardly a week goes by when I don't take a tour of the entire borough to make sure the streets are clean and the parks well-maintained. I like to do this, and chat with the locals because that way I often hear first hand about problems which otherwise I might not get to learn," he says.

OEIRAS EUROPEAN CITY OF CULTURE

While tourism may not be very high up on the municipality's agenda, culture certainly is, which is why Oeiras is being



“WHAT WE’VE GOT TO OFFER IS QUALITY: QUALITY OF ENVIRONMENT, AND A MODERN AND VIBRANT MUNICIPALITY SO THAT COMPANIES, PARTICULARLY MULTINATIONALS LINKED TO TECHNOLOGY, HAVE ALL THE SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE THAT THEY NEED.”
“I THINK BEING A CURRENT GUARDIAN OF THE LEGACY OF THE MARQUIS DE POMBAL AND COUNT OF OEIRAS TOWERING BEHIND ME IS A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY, PARTICULARLY GIVEN THAT HE WAS A VISIONARY FOR THE ERA IN WHICH HE LIVED, WHO UNDERTOOK GREAT ADMINISTRATIVE, COMMERCIAL, ECONOMIC, LEGAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL REFORMS THAT AFFECTED ALL SECTORS OF THE COUNTRY AND SOCIETY.”

put forward as European Capital of Culture for 2027.

In fact, a debate was already held in January at the town’s Templo da Poesia (Temple to Poetry) at Poets Park at which the Council’s director of Education, Social Development and Culture, Jorge Barreto Xavier, who will be the commissioner for the candidacy, was present.

The debate sounded out the opinions of various specialists in the fields of culture who discussed models for organising cultural activities and had studied previous such events (Guimarães was European Culture Capital in 2012), the characteristics of land development in the borough as well as the guidelines laid down by the European Commission to apply.

Among the speakers was Robert Palmer, director of two European Capitals of Culture (Glasgow, 1990 and Brussels, 2000) who Barreto Xavier says was “an inspiration”.

At the time, Morais, who rounded off the event with a speech, said he was “very enthusiastic about the prospect of Oeiras being a candidate, adding: “It had never crossed my mind that Oeiras would be a candidate for European Culture Capital, but actually, we have everything it takes to be a strong front runner and we’re going to give it our best shot and work hard to win.”

In fact, the Oeiras mayor is at pains to emphasise the conservation work that has been done in preserving the municipality’s cultural and historic heritage, and gives by way of example the restoration and renovation of the National Agromomic Station for which an €8 million investment has been earmarked and the restoration and refurbishment of the Cartuxa Convent.

For the latter, the council expects an agreement with the Government to purchase the property which will then receive around €4 million of funds for the facelift.

If Oeiras does win its bid, it would be the fourth time that Portugal hosts the EU event. Lisbon (1994), Porto (2001) and Guimarães (2012).

The competitions that decide the cities that will be European Culture Capitals are launched six years beforehand, so that in the case of Portugal, the selection process will only begin in 2021.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

But does Isaltino Morais, who won his mayoral ticket as an Independent candidate, have greater political aspirations in the country? He says not.

“For me there is no political role in Portugal more relevant than being the Mayor of Oeiras. Oeiras is a case study, a municipality of excellence and growing exponentially. It is a borough in which we’ve been executing planning for many years, and with the development that Oeiras Valley will have over the next five years, is nothing short of extraordinary, with a qualitative leap in terms of companies, education, mobility, urban development, through an investment of €400 million over six years.”



And sitting confidently beneath the portrait of the Marquis de Pombal, who dominated Portugal in the second half of the 18th century, and was the first statesman to have a vision for Oeiras, does Isaltino Morais think the Count would approve of his achievements in the borough?

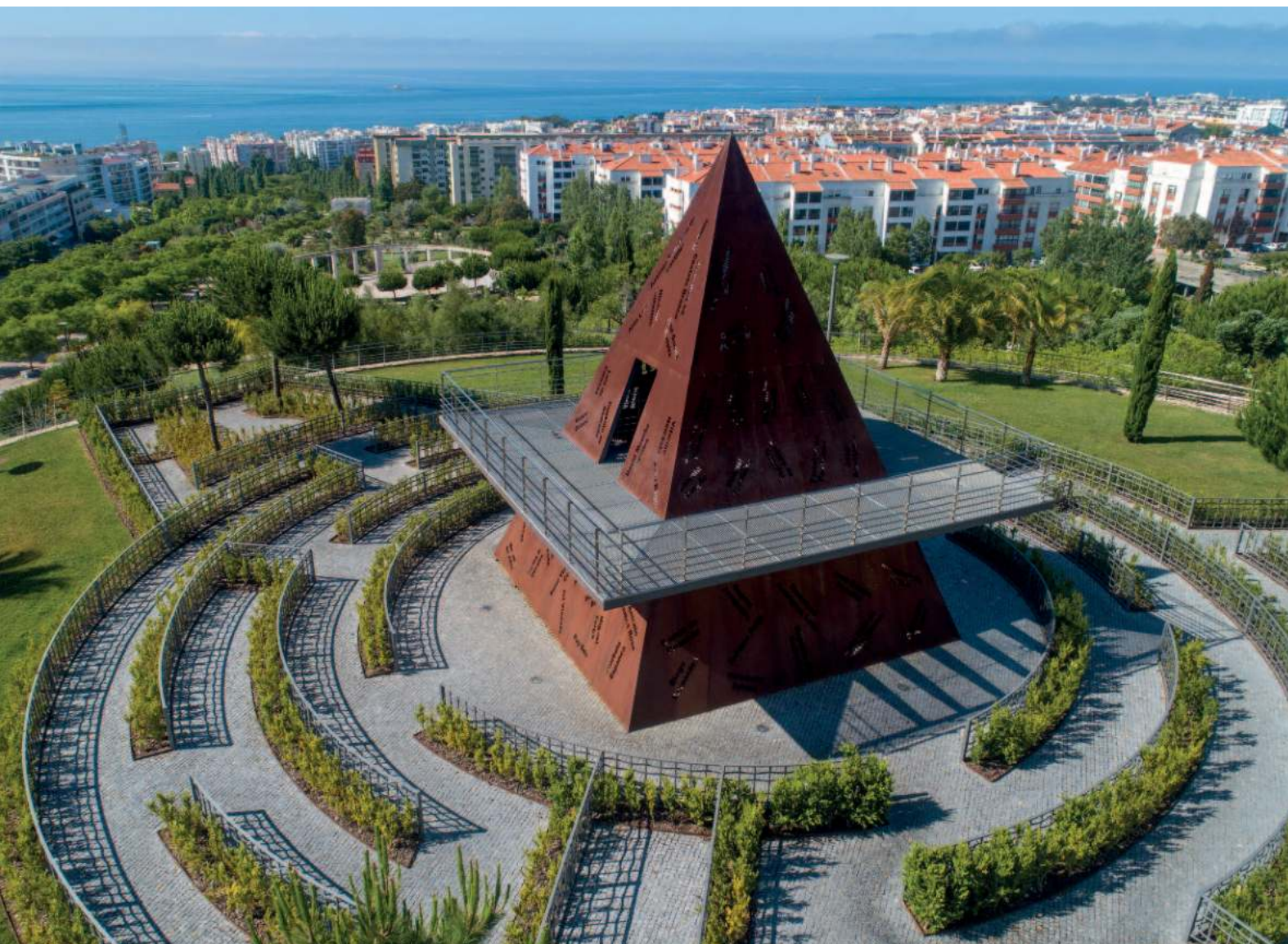
“Oeiras owes its existence as a municipal borough to the marquis (he elevated its status from a village to a town in 1759) and I actually feel an extraordinary positive energy sitting here below this portrait, and when dealing with big issues and developments for the borough, it’s true, I used to think what would the great man think about this or that, and imagine him saying: ‘think big, don’t think small’.

“I think being a current guardian of his legacy, having the Marquis de Pombal and Count of Oeiras towering behind me, is a great responsibility, particularly

given that he was a visionary for the era in which he lived, who undertook great administrative, commercial, economic, legal and ecclesiastical reforms that affected all sectors of the country and society,” adds the mayor.

And if Morais could be remembered generations later for something he had achieved and have that engraved on his tombstone, what would that be?

“I arrived here sufficiently long ago, and have been here as mayor for enough time for people, particularly the elderly, to remember me. If they hold a memory of me as someone who always did his best to do better and more, in terms of wealth creation, companies, investment, job creation, mobility and green issues and, above all helped the poor people living in this borough, then I’ll be satisfied,” Morais concludes. ■





Taguspark

The best place to innovate

Taguspark was the first business park in Portugal. With its state-of-the-art architecture and a plethora of multinational companies and scientific institutions, its open public spaces and gardens have been redesigned to make the park an even more attractive place to work

TEXT **CHRIS GRAEME**

Taguspark is not your average business and technology park. For a start there's the stunning, streamline architecture and carefully landscaped gardens and green areas which give you the sense that you're in a highly sophisticated, contemporary and innovative environment.

But then again, it has evolved over the past 30 years into a scientific and technological hub worthy of Oeiras, a charming town which blends history with the future, and which has become a

beacon of technological innovation and cutting-edge knowledge.

The 150-acre Taguspark was envisaged at a time when Portugal was pursuing a policy of European Union integration, modernisation and economic development.

The then Mayor of Oeiras, Isaltino Morais (He is currently mayor again now) and the minister for planning and territorial administration, Valente de Oliveira, decided to develop a project inspired by what was already standard practice for science and technology hubs in many advanced European countries.

The most advanced business, science and technology park in Portugal, today

Taguspark slots neatly into the third wealthiest municipal borough in Portugal, with the highest concentration of research institutes, technology companies, incubators and the best-qualified population in the country per head of population.

"We've really got it all here. Top-level international companies, research centres, universities and a benchmark startup incubator," says Taguspark CEO Eduardo Baptista Correia, who is proud to be positioned in Oeiras, near Cascais and Lisbon, with excellent transport infrastructure, an enviable lifestyle, close to a world-class business school - Nova SBE - and of course some lovely beaches





“WE’VE REALLY WORKED HARD ON THE QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC SPACES. THE WHOLE PARK IS GEARED TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY PRACTICES.”

which all provide “a great environment for students, young families and retired people alike”.

“We’ve really worked hard on the quality of the public spaces and the external and internal architecture of the buildings, and the whole park is geared towards sustainable and clean energy practices,” he says.

“Not only that, we’ve turned out exterior areas into an outdoor urban art museum, while at the same time we’re very focused on fair pay for our outsourced employees,” Baptista Correia stresses.

The minimum salary for service provision outsourced employees working for or at Taguspark via third parties has been set at €900, representing 41.7% above the national minimum wage of €635.

This has been particularly beneficial for the 12 staff who provide outsourced cleaning and gardening services.

“This fits in with our labour dignity policy to make Taguspark the most civic park of its kind in Europe. We achieved

this by negotiating with service supply companies to which Taguspark pays a monthly fee for these services,” Baptista Correia explains.

INTERACTION MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

What makes Taguspark different from the many other business parks spread out in the Greater Lisbon area, and indeed in Portugal as a whole, is its interactions between the technology university Instituto Superior Técnico (IST), the research institutes, and the companies. It is also home to the International Sharing School acquired in 2018 by the Sharing Foundation.

It is the quality of this interface that enables Taguspark, its academic and research institutions, entrepreneurial companies and startups to develop market solutions which can be exported overseas.

Its excellent motorway access to the capital Lisbon, the upmarket resorts of Estoril and Cascais with their conference



centres and world- class hotels, the proximity to the UNESCO world heritage site Sintra, the wide-open parks in Oeiras and multiplicity of smart shops and a major shopping centre, makes this the location of choice for multinational companies to expand, and for professionals and academics to relocate and enjoy a lifestyle that is second to none.

All of these amenities and facilities slot neatly into an urban and technological infrastructure that is embodied within the vision of Oeiras Valley and its overall philosophy of socioeconomic and civic policy development.

Taguspark currently has 150 companies: 25 startups, a congress centre, health centre and gym, the International Sharing School, and a clutch of big-name multinationals and institutions including Hoya, Grenke, Hertz, Hitachi Vantara, LG, MEO, Miniclip Portugal, Novartis and the bank Millennium BCP, not to mention the IST - Instituto Superior Técnico and Instituto de Informática.





.....
TAGUSPARK IS DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER BUSINESS PARKS IN THE GREATER LISBON AREA, AND INDEED IN PORTUGAL AS A WHOLE, BECAUSE IT INTERACTS WITH THE TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTO SUPERIOR TÉCNICO (IST), THE RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND THE COMPANIES."
.....



“We have two expansion phases. The first involves building two new buildings, each with 4,000 m2, as well as a business hotel by the Central Square. In the medium term there are plans for Phase II which foresees a construction area of around 200,000 m2,” says the Taguspark CEO.

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

In line with its green policy, Taguspark aims to increasingly cater for electric

cars and is planning to upscale the electrification of the park, not to mention creating more cycle ways, so that within five years Taguspark will arguably be the most civic science and technology park in Europe.

“This is what will make Taguspark stand out from the others and firmly put it on the map of benchmark international business, science and technology parks,” concludes the CEO of Taguspark, Eduardo Baptista Correia. ■


It is also home to the Portuguese borders and immigration service SEF and a range of restaurants and cafés serving the 1,200 employees, ancillary and service staff.

COMPANIES RARELY LEAVE

Testament to its success is that despite two major economic challenges facing Portugal - the Great Economic Recession and Covid-19 - the park’s occupation level has remained at a solid 90%, and in fact, there is a waiting list for companies wanting to move in, but are constrained by space requirements, rendering existing office offer unsuitable for some.

“Of course, some companies move, but the number is small. In fact, our turnover is very low and we’ve had companies with us for 10 and even 20 years at Taguspark” says Baptista Correia.

But in order to attract large new multinationals, there must be the land available to house them and on this question Taguspark has the solution covered.




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Lagoas Park Transforming ordinary work days

Although Lagoas Park, which houses global companies like Oracle, CISCO, BMW, Google, SAP and Johnson&Johnson, was recently acquired by British private equity fund Henderson Park Capital Partners, its objective to change its residents' daily lives hasn't wavered

TEXT **MARINA WATSON PELÁEZ**

Working from home can be convenient, but with over 100,000m² of office space, a 4-star business hotel, conference facilities, a health club and 12 restaurants set in over 80,000m² of natural landscaping, Lagoas Park looks to keep thriving even during unprecedented times. Recently acquired by Henderson Park Capital Partners, a British Private Equity Fund, its focus is still on its people.

"We foresee Lagoas Park to have further developments, activities and innova-

tions in the near future, consolidating its reputation of the most technological park in the country, and a place where what is most important is its people," Ana Isabel Costa, director of property management at Lagoas Park, tells Essential Business.

DESIGNED WITH VISION

World class companies have set up in Lagoas Park, near Portugal's capital Lisbon, including Google, Samsung, BMW, Johnson&Johnson, Sanofi, Oracle, Cisco, Volvo, SAP and BP. Lagoas park doesn't





just offer a physical place for people to work, it also recognises the important role of happiness in people's performance, and offers a number of activities to encourage staff to interact and keep motivated.

"Everything in Lagoas Park was designed with a vision that integrates companies, people, environment and technology, ensuring a sustainable development," Isabel Costa points out. "It is a project that has been developed according to a design strategy that helps improve people's well-being and performance,

attract talent, promote business efficiency and optimise resources."

So that people can focus solely on their business, Lagoas Park offers an "all-included," service, taking care of office management, maintenance and cleaning, as well as outdoor maintenance, all year round. There is also a 24-hour security service and shared building and office utilities.

These great conditions might have contributed to many of the companies here having won awards throughout the

past years for Best Place to Work. "We like to believe that we have been part of this choice, as we offer them a great environment and conditions, as well as events that help to improve their employees' wellbeing," says Isabel Costa. tells Essential Business

BE LAGOAS

For the last decade before the summer holidays, Lagoas Park has organised a music festival at lunch hour, with top artists performing here. There are also



"WE AIM TO CONTINUE TO BE AN INTERNATIONAL REFERENCE IN OFFICE PARKS, COUNTING ON THE BEST COMPANIES AND THAT MEANS WE WILL ALWAYS PUT PEOPLE FIRST."



“EVERYTHING IN LAGOAS PARK WAS DESIGNED WITH A VISION THAT INTEGRATES COMPANIES, PEOPLE, ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY, ENSURING A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.”



other activities including book fairs, charity clothes sales and tree planting. The BE LAGOAS program is divided in three main types of events: cultural events, networking events and social responsibility events. There are food trucks almost every week of the year, a Lagoas Executive Breakfast networking event, fundraisers to help charities, and even blood donations.

“In short, we live to transform ordinary days into extraordinary days,” Isabel Costa explains.

While Lagoas Park has had to put these kinds of events on hold during the pandemic, their ethos is to contribute to engaging the community.

“The pandemic has completely changed our lives and we had to adapt,” she points out. “We have put signs up in the buildings to remind people to keep social distance and to remind them that we have to follow some new rules like the use of masks. We also redesigned our shopping area in order to keep the social distance during lunch time.”



Despite the pandemic, they are still working to ensure that their clients are happy at their workplace. Lagoas Park benefits from modern infrastructure and companies can occupy 40m2 or entire buildings – their spaces are totally flexible. The buildings were also designed to be sustainable, with naturally-lit atriums and the use of glass with high light transmission ensuring all workplaces have natural light. The quality construction and modern technology also means a reduction in energy costs.

Being in touch with nature is essential at Lagoas Park. There are vast garden areas with lakes and waterfalls surrounding the office buildings, for employees to relax or stroll around on their lunch breaks.

“We aim to continue to be an international reference in office parks, counting on the best companies,” Isabel Costa concludes. “And of course, that means we will always put people first.” ■

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Quinta da Fonte

Providing the perfect work-life balance

When it was launched in 1995, Quinta da Fonte was one of the first office parks to understand the need to connect both high-quality real estate and its 'countryside' surroundings. Today, under new management, it has refurbished and repositioned the park to create a high-calibre environment for premium occupiers

TEXT CHRIS GRAEME



The Quinta da Fonte office park in Oeiras Valley is today one of the flagship parks of its kind in Portugal.

The office park is a favoured business address for white-collar and blue-chip multinational pharmaceutical, engineering, financial services and technology companies.

Celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, it has over the past two years invested heavily in renovating its outdoor areas, particularly the gardens, and has installed support and convenience services and reimagined and created leisure areas as part of a new environmental agenda.

Founded in 1995, and strategically placed on the A5 motorway which rapidly takes office workers to Lisbon and Lisbon airport (15km), Oeiras and Cascais, it has over 5000 people working there at 45 national and international companies which are some of the best in Portugal and include Amplexor, DXC Technology, Electrolux, Europecar, Holmes Place, HP, MSD, P&G, Regus, Schweppes and Whitestar Asset Solutions to name a few.

These are distributed in 21 office buildings, providing a total of 80,177 m²

of rented office space with 3,483 parking spaces, surrounded by five gardens and leisure spaces, a 2,400 m² health club, six restaurants, hairdresser's, a newsagent's, post office, ATM cashpoints, a pharmacy and convenience store.

BIG-TICKET CONTRACTS

Despite the economic downturn and health restrictions caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, office rental take-up has been brisk in 2020. In one of the most significant office rental transactions in

Portugal, three entire buildings at Quinta da Fonte have been taken by an expanding multinational.

Quinta da Fonte is majority controlled by Acacia Point Capital which has a portfolio of 15 office buildings in the





“OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, WE’VE REALISED THAT MANY OF OUR CORE VALUES AND AMBITIONS FOR QUINTA DA FONTE ALIGN WITH THOSE OF OEIRAS VALLEY.”



park progressively acquired over the past two years.

Acacia Point Capital and the pan-European fund Signal Capital Partners, LLP acquired in 2020 three office buildings which had belonged to a defunct Portuguese banking group.

The transaction was structured so that Acacia Point Capital could refurbish these capex-starved buildings prior to acquisition, which then enabled a substantial pre-letting to be secured in advance of purchase.

AN INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT APPROACH

During this period the park overall has benefited from extensive refurbishment and repositioning initiatives, which has seen it attract premium occupiers seeking a high calibre office environment for their employers and customers as Luís Rocha Antunes, Partner and General Director of Acacia Point Capital Advisors Portugal explains:

“Two years ago, when Acacia Point Capital took control of Quinta da Fonte, there hadn't really been an integrated management approach for the business park.”

“When we began doing our internal brand forming and were thinking about how we wanted to protect Quinta da Fonte we realised two things: first, we have a rather interesting legacy in that QF was the first large office park on the Greater Lisbon Western Corridor, with blue-chip companies like Microsoft and the first Holmes Place and was a place of prestige,” he explains.

“Over the last few years with the brand Oeiras Valley and its values, we noticed that many of these values were our values and what Oeiras Valley wants to be, so we want to be,” says Rocha Antunes.

The QF general director says that there was a perception that everything along the Western Corridor all seemed the same, and that companies only went there to cut costs. “Our vision is the





ALL OF THE COMPANIES AND ENTITIES THAT WORK IN THE OEIRAS VALLEY BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM ARE INTRINSICALLY INTERLINKED. WE'RE NOT JUST AN ECONOMIC ECOSYSTEM BUT ALSO AN ENVIRONMENTAL ONE."

interlinked, and we are not just an economic ecosystem but also an environmental ecosystem of health and wellbeing," he says.

The Acacia Point Capital partner says that QF is in the centre of Oeiras Valley, with a good blend between old, historic Oeiras with the 18th-century farm and charming architecture and ultra-modern and functional buildings. "We are proud to be in Oeiras Valley, we have a €2.7 million viaduct from the council which reduces traffic, increases mobility and offers an alternative to the A5 motorway, and we share the same values and ambitions," reflects Luís Rocha Antunes. ■



opposite — we offer excellence, lifestyle and work-style quality, wellness, comfort and a good forum for investors."

Luís Rocha Antunes says that their focus over the past two years has been about repositioning Quinta da Fonte, and the idea arose to change the name from Quinta da Fonte Office Park to Quinta da Fonte Business Ecosystem and there was a certain scepticism

"Today, with the pandemic, this vision of the environment, ecology, open space and a modern clean environment with green areas and parks is a lot more clear and makes sense. All of the companies and entities that work in the Oeiras Valley business ecosystem are intrinsically





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A collage of images showing the exterior of a modern building, interior living spaces, and outdoor areas.

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Novartis

Reimagining medicine through digital innovation

The international pharmaceutical company Novartis says that working at Taguspark in Oeiras Valley provides the unique conditions to help it develop transformative innovation in healthcare

TEXT **MARINA WATSON PELÁEZ**

With COVID-19 evolving at a dramatic speed, disrupting communities and lives, Swiss global healthcare company Novartis has had to act quickly, mobilising R&D capabilities, medicines, clinical trials expertise and philanthropic aid to address the pandemic.

“What Novartis offers - to reimagine medicine to improve and extend people’s lives - has come into sharp focus,” Cristina Campos, director general of Novartis Portugal said in a statement.

“We continue to provide value to associates, patients, healthcare systems and communities, while ensuring business continuity and advancing a compre-

hensive set of efforts to support the global pandemic response.”

Novartis, which provides solutions to address the evolving needs of patients worldwide, recognises that we are living unprecedented times and that COVID-19 is affecting the health and wellbeing of millions of people, while damaging healthcare systems, economies, and livelihoods.

PROTECTING HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Novartis has recently focused on strengthening health infrastructures and in protecting healthcare professionals

who are most exposed and who are essential to care not only for COVID-19 patients, but for everyone else. In total, Novartis has already donated €375,000 to combat the pandemic in Portugal under the ‘COVID-19 Response Fund’, an international US\$20 million fund created by the company to support the most affected communities worldwide.

Novartis has also been active in two key cross-industry research initiatives, the COVID-19 Therapeutics Accelerator, coordinated by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Wellcome, and Mastercard, as well as a COVID-19 directed partnership supported by the Innovative Medi-



“PART OF OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO SOCIETY IS HELPING ENSURE OUR MEDICAL INNOVATIONS REACH AND BENEFIT AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE, SOMETIMES AT ZERO PROFIT IN LOWER INCOME COUNTRIES.”

cines Initiative (IMI). It is also supporting COVID-19 related clinical investigations of several Novartis medicines and also making 15 drugs that treat key symptoms of COVID-19 available to low- and lower-middle income countries at zero profit until a vaccine or curative treatment is found.

Of course, Novartis also has to deal with setbacks, with Novartis’ canakinumab medicine recently failing to help COVID-19 patients survive without invasive ventilation compared with standard therapy.

But amid the pandemic, millions of patients around the world continue to rely on Novartis treatments for many devastating diseases. Novartis associates are working to ensure the uninterrupted supply of its medicines, often in challenging conditions, and to maintain open communication with doctors, health care units and governments.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

“Part of our responsibility to society is helping ensure our medical innovations reach and benefit as many people as possible. One of our five priorities is to build trust with society through our efforts to operate with high values and integrity, and to find new ways to expand patients’ access to our treatments,” Campos stressed.

Novartis integrated the Oeiras Valley in 2013, moving all associates from the

different divisions within Novartis Group to the same building at Taguspark.

“The conditions were unique, not only due to the location, closer to central Lisbon where most stakeholders work enabling easier external interactions, but also we were able to provide a better work experience for employees, due to the space available and its ideal conditions, enjoying natural light and greater privacy,” Campos said.

“Working in an open space allowed much more integration and synergies between the different divisions of the Group and productivity gains, for example with the use of the various meeting rooms for holding internal and external events,” she added. Novartis also frequently uses the Tagus Park auditorium, allowing it to bring all associates and stakeholders together. The company has benefitted from initiatives that allow companies to get to know each other and interact, more green spaces and lounge areas.

HELPING STARTUPS

Last January, Novartis gathered 15 top startups from all over the world in a boot camp where they showcased their solutions. Five of these startups are now running a pilot with Novartis.

“Health is possibly one of the areas that can benefit most from new solutions that facilitate health promotion and dis-

ease management,” Campos told Essential Business.

Novartis aims to continue to deliver transformative innovation, as it faces a new kind of health crisis: the impact of a sharp reduction in visits to hospitals, health care centres and clinics for almost every disease area unrelated to COVID-19.

“This is a concern to us, we are aware of the impact that will cause in the near



future, as the number of consultations and surgeries are cancelled or delayed and patients are left without the support they need,” Campos explained.

The pandemic has led the company to want to further embrace the digital revolution, relying on digital technologies, advanced analytics and artificial intelligence to help drive innovation and improve efficiency.

“Embracing operational excellence is another important piece of our strategy. We are rethinking how we work, embracing agile teams and building better productivity into our company to free resources that we can invest in innovation.”

Novartis has already been making progress in cultural and digital transformation in the past few years. “Our people

embraced new ways of working with healthcare professionals, patients and with each other, and we used digital tools to limit disruption,” Campos concluded. “This will continue to be critical to our success in the future, and to our mission of reimagining medicine, making sure we overcome the obstacles, we learn with the challenges and continue to improve and extend peoples’ lives.” ■

Merck

Helping people through science

Merck Portugal is one of the few pharmaceutical companies that has been giving a voice to patient carers, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. But then that's all part of its core philosophy. Essential Business learns how

TEXT **MARINA WATSON PELÁEZ**

German multinational science and technology company Merck Group describes itself as a company that develops solutions to improve lives, “from great human questions to small everyday joys.” Curiosity drives its goal to offer excellence to patients and customers and to imagine the future.

During the pandemic, informal caregivers have increased and have been particularly vulnerable. Merck Group, a

German multinational science and technology company with offices in the Oeiras Valley, didn't turn a blind eye to the almost 1.4 million caregivers in Portugal. Instead, it organised a Caregivers Movement to raise awareness.

“Although the informal carer statute has been approved, there are too many carers that have no access to support” Pedro Moura, Merck's Managing Director, tells Essential Business.

Merck's purpose is working together ‘As one for Patients’. It believes that with this shared purpose of working as one, people will be engaged into creating a team

able to help patients and to prolong lives around the world, through innovation, research, and constant curiosity. Up to now, Merck has managed to bring together 24 associations from different areas to support this particular movement.

The approach entails helping caregivers, which in turn will contribute to improving patients' lives.

“The movement to help informal carers arose from the need to reflect on how important carers are in a patient's life, giving up so much in their lives to help others, despite their work being unrecognised,” Moura explained.

“It is vital, more than ever, to give informal carers a voice during the pandemic,” Moura adds. “With social support institutions having closed, they were forced to give up their time and professions to support people in need,” Moura stresses.

EMBRACING DIFFERENT AND INNOVATIVE AREAS

Merck is currently working in a vast range of areas, from fertility and cancer treatments to laboratory tools and products or technologies that contribute to the future of mobility and architecture, combining design with energy efficiency.





“WITH SOCIAL SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS CLOSED, IT IS VITAL, MORE THAN EVER, TO GIVE INFORMAL CARERS A VOICE DURING THE PANDEMIC.”

“We stopped being a classic pharmaceutical and chemical company a long time ago, to embrace innovative and different areas,” Moura says. Some of Merck’s priority areas are oncology and immunotherapy, fertility, where it is a market leader, and neurology with a focus on multiple sclerosis, but the company has also been successful in areas relating to hypertension, heart failure, endocrine disorders, diabetes, and thyroid disorders..

During the pandemic, Merck has also supported various other campaigns. One

of these campaigns was carried out by the Portuguese Fertility Association and the Portuguese Society of Reproductive Medicine, to raise awareness about fertility problems but also to give out a message of hope: that many couples can overcome related problems and don’t necessarily have to give up on the dream of having a child.

Merck also implemented the Make Sense Campaign, to raise awareness about preventing head and neck cancer - which Moura says is little known despite being the 6th most common cancer in Europe,

with 160,000 people diagnosed every year, 6,000 of which in Portugal. As well as providing information, Merck encouraged people to walk or run for this cause and to share the kilometres they achieved on social network sites, which it transformed in a donation for the Association of Investigation of Support Care in Oncology to carry out research in this area.

Now more than ever, Merck is embracing digital media, not only by reinforcing its presence on, but also by releasing a series of webinars about hypothyroidism, women’s health before

it is evaluating for urothelial carcinoma. The trials confirmed that this therapy can fundamentally change the clinical practice for treating such patients.

In September, the company presented 30 papers at the congress of the European Society of Medical Oncology, related to advances in the field of oncology. That same month, at the annual meeting of the American Committee (ACTRIMS) and the European Committee (ECTRIMS) for the Treatment and Research in Multiple Sclerosis, Merck presented data on its multiple approved sclerosis treatments. There were a total of 54 studies, which included new data on the efficacy and safety of one of its medicines.

The COVID-19 pandemic has, of course, highlighted the need for science innovation to address global challenges, and Merck is involved in more than 45 vaccination programs and more than 35 diagnostic tests, as well as more than 20 molecular antibodies, plasma products and antiviral drugs. During the pandemic, Merck has also maintained its production and distribution in the rest of the world and, in each affected region, has provided patients with their medicines (unrelated to COVID-19).

REIMAGINING THE FUTURE

“For over 350 years, curiosity has been - and continues to be - the driver that has led Merck to reimagine the future, to want to go further, always focusing on the patient, and on what we can do to improve people’s quality of lives,” Moura said.

The Oeiras Valley as a whole focuses on innovation, making it the perfect location for Merck. “We need to have conditions to take our innovation further, to materialise and transform it in real benefits for patients,” Moura pointed out.

Merck aims to be among the scientific and technological leaders in its business sectors and to overcome its competition in terms of sales growth and margin growth to continue to generate sustainable value.

Merck’s innovation success is achieved in partnership with iBET - the Institute of Experimental Biology and Technology - which is also based in Oeiras and which recently inaugurated a new laboratory there dedicated to developing biochemical tests and studying molecular interactions.

Within the Oeiras Valley, Merck has also worked closely with the Gulbenkian Science Institute and with the Oeiras Municipal Council on a fellowship that promotes exchange between researchers and innovative solutions for humanity. The Merck Family Foundation also supports the Gulbenkian Science Institute’s research grants for people from Portuguese-speaking African countries and East Timor.

While Merck operates in Portugal, its main headquarters is in Darmstadt, Germany, where it has an innovation centre with 7,100 squared metres divided in six floors, where initiatives, startups, visionaries and companies from around the world join synergies. But Moura says innovation can happen anywhere. “A curious mind is enough,” he said. ■

Cisco Systems Portugal

Driving change for the future

Cisco Systems Portugal has developed a proactive role in education in Oeiras Valley by helping the municipality's school children to continue to participate in classroom learning from home

TEXT **CHRIS GRAEME**

Cisco Portugal is a shining example of a state-of-the-art technology company at the heart of the Oeiras Valley business, science and technology ecosystem.

The Cisco Systems Portugal office of the US multinational technology

conglomerate which is a world leader in developing, manufacturing and selling networking hardware, software, telecommunications equipment and other high-technology services and products, has been based in Lagoas Park in the heart of Oeiras Valley for eight years.

The company set up in Portugal in 1995 with just 30 staff, today Cisco Systems Portugal is headed by CEO Miguel Almeida and employs over 600 people from 36 nationalities working in key areas of Sales, Operations and Customer Experience (CX).

Cisco Systems views Lisbon and Oeiras Valley as a strategic location entry point for the EMEAR (Europe, Middle East, Africa and Russia) region and, says Almeida, it has the ambition to turn the Portuguese subsidiary of the US company into "a very important part" of the Cisco Systems conglomerate.

INVESTING IN JOBS AND TRAINING

Almeida, who took the helm of Cisco Portugal in July 2019, wants to put the company's national offices at the centre of the group and bring more development centres to Portugal.

And Cisco Portugal had grown significantly in terms of numbers since August 2019 thanks, he says, to a "great team and a fantastic relationship with the market".

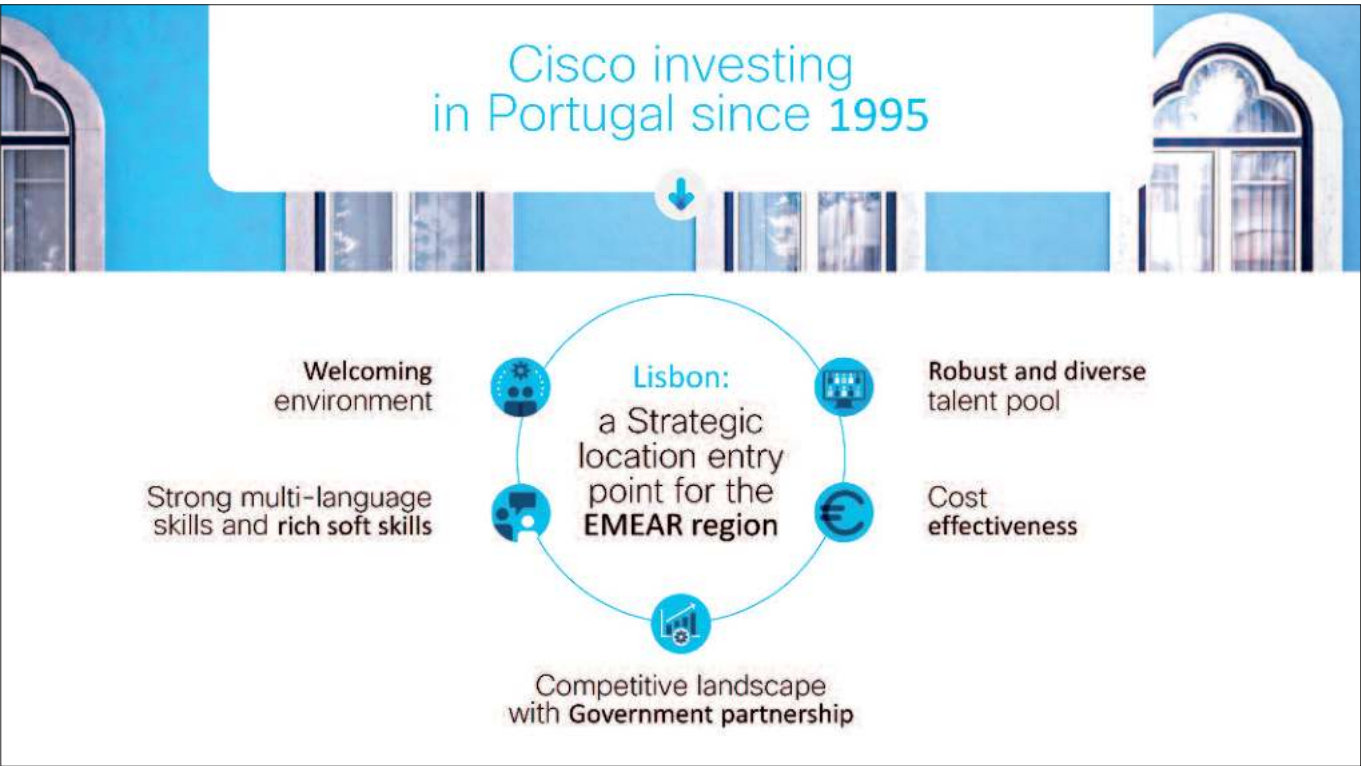
It is also ranked as the best company to work for in Portugal in 2020 by both Forbes and Great Place to Work.

"With this growth that Cisco has enjoyed I feel ready and willing to make Cisco Portugal big within the corporation as a whole," he says adding that it would mean taking on 10% more staff in 2021.





“IT’S GREAT BEING PART OF OEIRAS VALLEY IN LAGOAS PARK BECAUSE WE HAVE A LOT OF IT COMPANIES SURROUNDING US WITH WHOM WE HAVE MEETINGS AROUND IT ISSUES. THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE AND OEIRAS VALLEY CREATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT WITH A HIGHLY QUALIFIED AND MULTILINGUAL WORKFORCE”.



And it has certainly been a busy two years for the company which launched its new Customer Experience Centre (CX) in 2019 which will create a projected 200 jobs.

“There are many teams working in CX, teams from other areas,” he says, explaining that Cisco is currently implementing its third investment phase in Portugal. It opened its Sales department in 1998, its European Operations Centre in 2008 and its third investment, CX which is more client care and technology focused.

The company has doubled its workforce in Portugal since June 2019 and all of them are engineers.

Cisco Systems also has 54 network academies where it has trained around 26,000 students, with 5,000 alone this year in a total investment of around €10 million.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Cisco Systems Portugal is also in the forefront of helping Portugal transit to a digital economy and highlights its Country Digital Acceleration programme (CDA).

To this end, it signed an agreement with the Government in 2017 and the programme is still ongoing with the company working with polytechnics, universities and organisations to provide training.

And for those who complete this training, the final diploma, which is seen as a very important qualification, ensures a job at the end.

Cisco is also part of the Upskill programme, a project devised by the Secretary of State for Digital, Transition, André de Aragão Azevedo, while on the companies side, Cisco has been working alongside to assist them with the transformation.

Regarding the digitalisation of the Portuguese State, Miguel Almeida points to the CDA programme which mostly helps speed up the Public Administration’s digital transformation processes.

Web Summit is also an important annual event for Cisco Systems Portugal, which has a strong presence at the world’s largest technology fair because it provides an opportunity to build brand awareness among customers and students, and is so focused on innovation given that Cisco makes a lot of investment in R&D.

COVID-19

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the Cisco office in Lagoas Park remained closed and staff worked remotely from home and although its building meets all the measures laid down by the Portuguese Directorate-General of Health, the company does not plan to

return to the office before the end of the year.

“Because of its speciality in advanced digital technology systems, it was really easy for us to adapt to the new restrictions imposed by the virus. Working with digital, remotely with computers and interfaces is already in our DNA and part of our culture,” admits Miguel Almeida.

OEIRAS VALLEY

Miguel Almeida says that with all the changes at Cisco, the one thing they have not had to change to date is the company’s location in Oeiras in what he says is “one of the best business parks in Oeiras”.

“It’s great being part of Oeiras Valley in Lagoas Park because we have a lot of IT companies surrounding us with whom we have meetings around IT issues. The Portuguese people and Oeiras Valley create a welcoming environment with a highly qualified and multilingual workforce”.

Regarding Cisco’s relationship with Oeiras Municipal Council, Miguel Almeida says the company is very involved at various levels. For example, in education it partnered in the project Oeiras Educa to ensure distance learning in the borough through its platform Cisco Webex which involves 2,000 teachers and 20,000 pupils. ■



PHC

Better management for happier people

PHC Software provides services to more than 33,000 clients and 155,000 users in more than 25 countries. Despite COVID-19 it has remained committed to its partners

TEXT MARINA WATSON PELÁEZ

For six months, PHC Software was working on its annual event or PHC Channels, a big event for over a thousand people. And then COVID-19 struck, and Portugal went into lockdown. But PHC Software didn't cancel the event. It took the event digital, instead.

"It was a huge success," says PHC Software's CEO Ricardo Parreira, "and an example of our company's cohesion and determination. "It showed we are committed to our channel partners, and that the pandemic crisis would not stop us from being in business."

Parreira started PHC Software in 1989 when he was 20 years old, with university colleagues and with just 500 euros. Since then, his company has become one of the leading software management companies worldwide.

Today, PHC Software provides its services to more than 33,000 clients and





“OUR NEW BUILDING, WHICH IS BEING BUILT FROM SCRATCH IN TAGUSPARK, WILL BE AN EXPERIENCE. WE ARE COMMITTED TO PROVIDING THE BEST EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE AT WORK.”

productivity and creativity and combats work-related stress. The company is currently running a ‘workshop to reduce stress in times of COVID,’ with a psychotherapist invited to talk about how to manage and cope with the anxiety caused by recent unsettling events.

He is also in favour of flexible working, defending that working from home enables employees to be more productive and focus, without the office distractions. He also recognises that visiting the office weekly is important to see colleagues face-to-face, to enjoy lunch together and interact without a screen.

PHC is still growing and hiring developers, testers, and data analysts, as well as in the areas of marketing, sales, or finance. “The main qualities we’re looking for are people that have great potential, that want to keep growing as professionals and make an impact, and essentially, that fit into our company culture.” He refers to the work culture in PHC as “cool but pro”. Parreira hopes to keep growing PHC despite the current climate and to provide better management for companies around the world, with top business software, and happy people building it. ■

155,000 users in more than 25 countries, with the company’s headquarters being in the Oeiras Valley. “Not only is the weather and the location great, but we also have a lot of services and a welcoming mentality to the importance of companies to the development of the area,” Parreira pointed out.

ADAPTING TO THE PANDEMIC

During the pandemic there is of course great uncertainty for everyone, but Parreira said the company was making sure they would be prepared to fully recover and was not firing any employees, focusing instead on keeping partners and clients on board.

“We’re a software house that believes in better management for happier people,” Ricardo Parreira tells Essential Business. PHC Software helps people better manage their processes, comply with legal norms, improve internal collaboration, control costs and grow sales, through software solutions and a network of specialised channel partners.

PHC Software recently collaborated with newspaper Expresso to write the guide ‘New Digital Challenges’ which explains how companies will adapt to the pandemic and future perspectives, and which is available as an ebook.

Their new building, which they are building from scratch in Taguspark, will be “an experience,” Parreira said. “We are committed to making the best emotional impact that you can have in your work life.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF MINDFULNESS

Parreira is known to be an avid meditator and the company already has a room for staff to meditate and offers weekly meditation sessions. Parreira believes mindfulness is essential for





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Impresa

Oeiras Valley, the right place for Portugal's leading media group

Portugal's Impresa group has become the audience leader nationwide thanks to its engaging television content, investment in digital technology and new streaming services. Essential Business speaks to board member Cristina Vaz Tomé who explains why Oeiras Valley is the perfect home for the company

TEXT CHRIS GRAEME



The Impresa media group had a good year in 2019, enjoying soaring profits only dented in 2020 by a fall-off in advertising caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The overall revenues of the group which owns the country's most prestigious weekend broadsheet, Expresso and the TV station SIC, climbed 5.6% to €181.9 million which were boosted by audience share results which threw its rival independent TV station TVI off the top ranking in terms of viewers.

In fact, the media empire founded by a founding member of the Partido Social Democrata (PSD) — one of two political parties in Portugal that have generally held power, along with the Partido Socialista (PS), since the Carnation Revolution in April 1974 - and one-time prime minister, Francisco Pinto Balsemão, saw its profits on 2018 increase by 150%.

2019 was also the year in which for the first time in 15 years it returned to the top of the audience ranking with the TVI station at Paço de Arcos in Oeiras Valley enjoying a 19.5% share.

The results were the fruit of good quality and entertaining programmes, which included talk shows 'O Programa da Cristina' and 'Olhó Baião' and several successful soap operas at prime time viewing like 'Nazaré' and Alma e Coração' (Heart and Soul), as well as the amusing 'Quem Quer Namorar com o Agricultor' (Who Wants to Date a Farmer).

OEIRAS - A TECHNOLOGICAL ECOSYSTEM THAT DELIVERS

Impresa board member Cristina Vaz Tomé says Oeiras is a borough that combines several characteristics which have propelled it to one of the most important





“OEIRAS IS A BOROUGH THAT COMBINES SEVERAL CHARACTERISTICS WHICH HAVE PROPELLED IT TO ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT MUNICIPALITIES IN TERMS OF PROJECTION IN PORTUGAL, PARTICULARLY REGARDING THE PROFILE OF THE HIGHLY QUALIFIED PEOPLE WHO LIVE AND WORK THERE, AND THE HIGH TECH COMPANIES, ALL OF WHICH PROVIDE AN EXCELLENT BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM AND LIFESTYLE QUALITY”.

municipalities in terms of projection in Portugal, particularly regarding the profile of the highly educated and often affluent people who live and work there, and the high tech companies, all of which provide an excellent business ecosystem and lifestyle quality.

“As the most relevant media group in Portugal, with two flagship brands, SIC and Expresso, the conditions provided by the borough mean we’re in a comfortable situation in terms of road and rail access, with an ease of mobility and circulation which is vital when you have reporters coming and going at all times of the day,” says the group’s chief revenue officer.

The only woman on the board points to all the technology companies in Oeiras Valley within an ecosystem which is vital for Impresa’s technologically and digitally based business. Companies that are all “cutting edge and easily fulfil our requirements as a broadcaster” and which has

to constantly innovate and work with different delivery platforms.

OPTO - AN INNOVATIVE STREAMING SERVICE

Being surrounded by high-tech companies specialising in state-of-the-art digital and internet technology has been vital for Impresa which has recently launched a streaming service bringing together the best in entertainment and news - OPTO SIC.

Launched in November 2020, it promises to revolutionise the media landscape in Portugal, with a new way of accessing the best audiovisual content, and was announced on the same day that the TV station celebrated its 28th anniversary.

“SIC was born a market leader. A leader in independence, non-conformism, inspiration and now we’ve gone a step further on our path to providing innovative and original content delivered

in an entirely new way in Portugal with this new platform which will revolutionise the media panorama in this country,” says Cristina Vaz Tomé echoing the words of CEO Francisco Pedro Balsemão.

“Digital is already having a very important impact on our activity, and being in a municipality which has the infrastructure and conditions to attract Grade A technology companies is very good for us, so I think Oeiras Valley has all these characteristics which is extremely relevant and leads us to conclude that we’re in the right place in Portugal,” says the Impresa executive board member.

The Impresa director also says that in future Impresa will be collaborating more closely with Oeiras Municipal Council in terms of legislative changes affecting the launch of TV competitions, the remit for which has now passed from the Ministry of Internal Administration to the control of the municipal councils. “This means we will have a closer and more integrated working relationship with the council concerning our activity”.

Finally, Impresa is in contact with council officers regarding synergies from a communication standpoint when the council needs to communicate news about one of its programmes or activities, or those linked to companies within the borough operating in areas of tourism, agriculture or gastronomy, so the idea is to work together with Oeiras Council in promoting these activities, and thereby promoting Oeiras Valley as a whole. ■



Ponto Verde

Paving the way to a zero waste future

Ponto Verde is actively engaged in Oeiras Valley in encouraging local school children to understand the importance of separating waste through its academy. Essential Business finds out more

TEXT **MARINA WATSON PELÁEZ**

Over 20 years ago, Sociedade Ponto Verde released a video featuring a chimpanzé called Gervasio, who is seen climbing around a laboratory showing men in white suits just how easily he can learn to separate used packaging.

“Gervasio learnt how to separate used packaging in exactly 1 hour and 12 minutes,” the scientist tells the audience. “And you, how much longer do you need?”

A lot has changed since then in people’s habits, CEO of Sociedade Ponto

Verde, Ana Trigo Morais, recalls, in a video conference from her office in Oeiras Valley, outside Lisbon.

“When Sociedade Ponto Verde began operating, we were still debating the end of landfill sites,” she points out. Since Sociedade Ponto Verde was set up over two decades ago, over 7.5 million tonnes of residues have been recycled.

Sociedade Ponto Verde is a private entity created in 1996 by a group of companies that place packaged goods on the market. Since then, it has been at the forefront of recycling packaging and has created the necessary conditions for a virtually infinite sustainability loop, as well as increasing the lifecycle of materials and preserving the environment.

In both 2005 and 2011, Sociedade Ponto Verde met the EU’s recycling objectives, with 393 million tonnes of packaging being recycled in 2011, up from 209,000 from 2005. EU legislation requires that at least 55% of municipal waste is recycled or reused by 2025. (These figures have been updated to 60% by 2035 and 65% by 2035.)

As the European Commission mentions in a recent report, good waste management is vital for the circular economy, helping prevent waste from having a negative impact on the environment and health. And proper implementation of the EU’s waste legislation will speed up the transition to a circular economy. Unfortunately, the report also noted that half of European Union member countries were at risk of missing their 2020 recycling targets.



RECYCLING - PORTUGAL CAN DO BETTER

Portugal is among the 14 countries at risk of missing the original 2020 goal and which the European Commission has stressed needs to address gaps and challenges with policy changes. Some of the measures it suggests for these countries includes improved extended producer responsibility (EPR) plans, measures such as taxes to discourage landfilling and incineration, encouraging municipal infrastructure and service cooperation, and improving municipal data reporting.

Meanwhile though, the Integrated System for Packaging Waste Management, which is managed by SPV, has been praised by the European Commission for bringing a range of environmental, economic and social benefits - among these, avoiding around 116 kilotons (kt) of CO2 equivalent emissions in a single year, equal to the emissions associated with the electricity use of 124,000 households.

What this system does is organise and manage a loop for collecting, recovering and recycling non-reusable packaging waste from households and businesses, prioritising recycling as the main form of waste treatment. When something cannot be recycled it is composted, incinerated for energy recovery, or as a last resort, landfilled.

ENCOURAGING YOUNG CONSUMERS TO RECYCLE

Portugal has gone a long way in what it does with its used packaging, with the country now boasting around 50,000 dropoff containers around the country. Sociedade Ponto Verde knows that this system isn’t enough without engaging consumers to recycle, though. One way it manages to change consumer behaviour is by having teams that carry mobile containers in big sports or music events. Members of the team go around reminding people to put their plastic glass in the right container and just how important that is for the environment.

It also has an academy for the younger generation, with children at schools receiving fun and informative lessons. In one of the digital games, for instance, kids have to drag the right packaging (plastic, metal and drink cartons) into a yellow container, and are awarded with small prizes. Teachers are also given materials to ensure their students learn how small



gestures can change the world. There are currently 200 schools integrated in the academy, and Sociedade Ponto Verde expects the number of schools joining to keep growing.

“Young people are ambassadors for recycling. They help to promote recycling both at school and at home,” Trigo Morais stresses. Sociedade Ponto Verde has studied the habits of different generations and found that the older generation are also committed to recycling, and know the importance of putting packaging in the right places in order to give it a new life.

The Ponto Verde Lab offers companies tips to make its packaging easier to recycle, including using lighter colours and making them small enough to fit into the dropoff containers, to make it easier for their consumers to recycle. The Lab also offers valuable relevant information for consumers to realise why leading a sustainable lifestyle.

Infrastructure also plays a vital role in creating positive change. “Recycling not

only results from awareness but also from convenience,” Trigo Morais points out. Their aim for the near future is to implement recycling pick up services from people’s homes, so that they don’t have to walk so far to get to the nearest dropoff container. It also wants to promote more modern recycling systems at supermarkets and other commercial establishments.

INNOVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Innovation is one of Sociedade Ponto Verde’s core values, Trigo Morais points out, and that’s the common thread of the companies that integrate the Oeiras Valley.

“Companies that work in Oeiras, but also in other areas of the country, are aware of the importance of our mission of sustainability and of adapting our needs in line with environmental responsibility,” she tells Essential Business. Sociedade Ponto Verde acts locally together with the local council, and develops initiatives in local schools.

While she is confident that Portugal will reach the European Commission’s goals for reducing packaging waste in 2020, Trigo Morais hopes that Portugal will continue to work alongside other member states to promote better waste management and also to have more transparency in its data, and more supervision from public entities.

Amid the current uncertain climate we are facing with the pandemic, Sociedade Ponto Verde recently found that people have been recycling more. “At a time of great uncertainty, I hope that these changes in consumer behaviour and greater awareness will be here to stay,” Trigo Morais said.

“At a time of great uncertainty, I hope that these changes in consumer behaviour and greater awareness will be here to stay,” ■



ITQB

25 years in the City of Science

ITQB is a trailblazer in molecular research whose pioneering work in molecular biology and chemistry is in the forefront of pre-clinical research into finding effective ways of tackling Covid-19

TEXT CHRIS GRAEME



ITQB Nova is an interdisciplinary research and advanced training institute of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa.

Headed by the Dean, Professor Cláudio Nunes Soares, the António Xavier Institute of Chemical and Biological Technology's (ITQB Nova) main research specialisation area is molecules. The work of its scientists and researchers all has a molecular biology and chemistry base, focusing on their importance and impact on life.

However, within this broad scope, its scientists research various fields of structural biology, microbiology, biochemistry, plant sciences and biotechnology. Through this research, it aims to make an impact on specific areas that are important for society. One of them is health, the molecular basis for health and illnesses. The other is water resources, for sustainable development. Professor Cláudio Nunes Soares admits: "Sometimes we joke that we're looking after both people and the planet".

Cláudio Nunes Soares says the advantages of being part of the Oeiras Valley ecosystem is that Oeiras is the "City of Science" because it has the greatest concentrations of scientific institutions per square metre in the municipality, with the largest amount of people with post-graduate qualifications and its institutions partly contribute towards this.

"We have a critical mass in Oeiras in terms of scientific institutions, both public and private, and having these here makes the municipality more competitive. The other advantage, of course, is the support that Oeiras Municipal Council has given to promoting science and it has supported us in various initiatives and programmes, with Oeiras Science & Technology 2020-2025 and Oeiras Educa being prime examples," he says.

OEIRAS SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY 2020-2025

ITQB in common with other scientific research institutions is part of a team to develop the strategy for Oeiras Science & Technology 2020-2025.

This initiative from Oeiras Municipal Council represents a commitment for the next five years to turn the municipality into a leader in Science and Innovation



in Portugal and reaffirm the inclusion and involvement of all the scientific and academic institutions in the borough as well as science and technology-based companies. A project management team has already been appointed under the council's education department head Pedro Patacho.

The Council will award a financial support package of more than €300,000 to the Gulbenkian Science Institute (IGC), ITQB NOVA and the Higher

Technical Institute (IST) as part of the strategy, of which just over €46,000 has been earmarked for ITQB NOVA.

OEIRAS EDUCA

Oeiras Educa is a programme from Oeiras Municipal Council developed as part of its Municipal Education Policy 2017-2021.

The programme aims to link formal education with the non-formal educational offer that exists in the borough, creat-



ing facilitating mechanisms to that effect: an online portal and a dedicated transport service. The programme is organised into themed areas, one of which is science and follows the disciplinary model of the education system in Portugal.

For example, ITQB Nova researchers visit schools in Science and Technology Week which takes place in the second half of November and carry out experiments and demonstrations, give talks and give pupils a little taste of the science that goes on at the institute.

ITQB Nova also takes part in various school activities through the programme 'PlantLab Sketching' displays drawings produced by 'urban sketchers' as part of ITQB's 'Doodle Project'. The young drawers do sketches during the guided visit of the plant biotechnology laboratories.

NOVA - A 25-YEAR PARTNERSHIP

Last year ITQB Nova celebrated its 25th year of integration with the Lisbon university Universidade Nova de Lisboa in 1993, although ITQB was actually founded in 1989.

Since its creation, its researchers have published over 4,000 papers which have generated almost 150,000 source citations according to Web of Science. The institute's genesis originates from the dream of António Xavier to create an open institution, where researchers could pursue science of excellence.

Research in molecular biosciences is today carried out in three research facilities — two of which are coordinated by ITQB Nova and all evaluated as 'Excellent' by the Foundation for Science and Technology.

Some 80% of ITQB's funding is competed for through the research units for national and European projects, including grants from the European Research Council and partnerships with private companies.

The science that ITQB has developed has enabled, among many other examples, an understanding of antibiotic resistance, the discovery of processes to break down micro-pollutants, or sequencing the genome of a cork oak tree, the results of which could form the basis of disease-resistant varieties.

With its integration 25 years ago with Nova de Lisboa, ITQB Nova is also an academic institution which has awarded around 600 PhDs and master's degrees.

The students on the more than 15 courses are interlinked with the laborato-

ries where they undertake original research and the institution influences thousands of careers, not just in research, but also in technology transfer, in science communication and policy management in science and technology.

COVID-19

ITQB started looking at COVID-19, as did other institutions locally and decided to research since it was relevant for the research it was already doing in virology and clinical virology, as well as proteins and the protein systems of SARS COV-2 are targets for many things.

"We are working on potential pharmaceuticals for Covid-19 in 'blue skies' pre-clinical research. It was in December when we got the news out of China that my lab started working on Covid straight away after working with several other viruses like influenza and Zika. I am a computational biochemist, which means working on simulations rather than working in wet labs, but we have connections with experimental institutions in our work," explains the dean.

"At the same time we began working on finding new, faster and cheaper tests and developing new protocols for tests with our partners, but we are looking at this disease and its mutations from the molecular level," says Cláudio Nunes Soares.



ITQB is set in a rural part of the municipality close to INIAV (Instituto Nacional de Investigação Agrária e Veterinária) and the Agronomic Station.

"I decided to come and work and live in Oeiras because it really was the place to be — small enough to be calm, yet close to Lisbon. It has a highly educated population, and the concentration of research institutions and high-tech companies is clearly beneficial. This is a good ecosystem and its personal in the same way, unlike a big metropolis. You can have a nice life here and I love living in Oeiras Valley," Cláudio Nunes Soares concludes. ■

"I DECIDED TO COME AND LIVE AND WORK IN OEIRAS BECAUSE IT REALLY WAS THE PLACE TO BE. THE CONCENTRATION OF RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS AND HIGH-TECH COMPANIES AND THE SUPPORT OF OEIRAS MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ARE CLEARLY BENEFICIAL."



IGC

Anticipating the crisis of tomorrow

The Gulbenkian Institute of Science (IGC) is leading the way in research into some of the most challenging bacteria, viruses and cancers which could pave the way for innovative new treatments. Essential Business talks to the institute's director Mónica Bettencourt Dias

TEXT CHRIS GRAEME

The Gulbenkian Institute of Science (IGC) is one of Portugal's most advanced international centres for biological and biomedical research and graduate training.

Based in Oeiras, near Lisbon, it was founded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 1961 and is still supported by the foundation, but is organised into small, independent research teams that work in an environment designed to encourage interactions with minimal hierarchical structure.

It currently has 400 researchers and staff from 44 different nationalities, depending on career level, with over one-third from overseas.

"I think we are one of the most international institutions in Portugal. From our latest group leader recruits, we had people from Germany, Chile, Spain, Italy and Portugal working on infectious diseases such as Covid-19, malaria and influenza, as well as conditions such as cancer, toxoplasma, transmission of dengue fever and Zika virus, among many others," says the institute's director, Professor Mónica Bettencourt Dias.

OEIRAS - A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK

Mónica Bettencourt Dias stresses that Oeiras is a "great place to live and work," with many different research institutes with which the IGC cooperates, and which is important because critical mass is vital in science. "We have this in Oeiras, both in terms of research institutes and the companies based here."

"The quality of life is excellent. We are close to the beach, several parks, we are near to Lisbon and 30 minutes from the international airport. For younger people the institute is close to the attractions of the capital Lisbon, whereas people with families may prefer to be in the calm surroundings of Oeiras where they can even walk to the institute," she says.

"The other aspect is that we now have a municipal council which is very active in promoting the sciences and its internationalisation. Our partnership with Oeiras Municipal Council (CMO) has been in existence for a long time. Since 2000 it has provided funding which helped set up new research groups and laboratories, and I was one of the





researchers funded by this programme,” the IGC director continues.

More recently, when Mónica Bettencourt Dias became director and thought about partnerships, and projects with the town council came to the fore again since Oeiras has the highest number of PhD holders in Portugal.

“It was not like that in the past. I think we can be more ambitious and turn this town into a ‘City of Science’ and set an example to other towns and cities in Portugal and elsewhere,” she says.

SCIENCE FROM ALL FOR ALL

There were three avenues which the IGC explored at the time, and which made sense in terms of building links with residents in Oeiras Valley: One of them was the relationship between science and society; meaning making science a part of people’s daily lives and creating a dialogue between the scientists and citizens.

Mónica Bettencourt Dias says that science should be part of people’s lives from an early age, at schools. Together

with the town council, a programme was established and aimed at children of all ages, creating activities based on science so that they become used to thinking in a rational way, to be creative and proactive about finding solutions.

“We also have a citizens science programme ‘From Everyone to Everyone’ in which we hold discussions with different citizens in Oeiras about their interests, to inform them about ways they can take part in what is going on in the municipality involving science,” she says.

INTERNATIONALISATION

At IGC they have created the Gulbenkian Collaborative Centre aimed at bringing people to Oeiras since many do not know that Portugal practises outstanding science in Portugal. This way it is hoped that Portugal in general and the IGC more specifically can attract more top-level scientists since it is so important for a research institute or company to attract the best talent in the world.

The centre runs sabbaticals to attract top minds to spend some time in Oeiras, people that come to run workshops and short courses. It also fosters a close relationship with some African-speaking countries through fellowships. “The overall idea is to expose the science that we do here to attract the best minds”.

The IGC also runs a programme to finance some of the outstanding groups in Oeiras. “We have an innovation programme that again fosters the idea that science is for everyone, that we use science and some of that science can have real practical applications. This means teaming up with industry and hospitals to create synergies from our research for new treatments and products to be developed,” explains Mónica Bettencourt Dias.

This is achieved through an innovation office funded by Oeiras Council and is a venture involving iTQB — a bio and chemical technology institute in the municipality.

COVID-19 - TEST AND TRACK

Gulbenkian Science also has agreements with the private hospital group CUF and several other public hospitals. It has researchers working in immunology, oncology and infectious diseases and has special relationships with certain specialist medical doctors in these fields.

More recently, within the framework of Covid-19, the IGC has been helping hospitals with testing, including hospital personnel as part of a research programme to test and track people in the health sector who have been involved with Covid-19. “Through these partnerships we aim to do research on Covid and help hospitals deal with the illness,” says Mónica Bettencourt Dias.

Gulbenkian Science is also interested in antibiotic research, how they affect us, including killing those bacteria that are beneficial for us, but also does research

into finding new antibiotics as well as understanding the process of evolution mechanisms that bacteria go through in order to find a way to escape the harmful effects of antibiotics. IGC researchers are trying to discover the Achilles’ heel of these pathogens.

COOPERATING WITH EUROPEAN INSTITUTES

The IGS is part of an alliance of 14 research institutes in Europe called EU Life that pushes for excellence in the life sciences, and include such prestigious institutions such as the Babraham Institute in the UK, Curie Institute in France, NKI (Netherlands Cancer Institute) in Holland, and the European Institute of Experimental Oncology (IEO) in Italy. It cooperates and exchanges methods with them on how to run an institute, how to train people, how to recruit and welcome foreigners, as well as working together on the European Policy for Science.

FUNDING

Half of the IGC’s funding comes from the Gulbenkian Foundation, which is important to maintain its technical facility infrastructure with expensive equipment. It also has to compete to provide the best conditions to attract researchers who come from all over the world.

“At the IGC our main focus is to produce new knowledge that can anticipate the crises of tomorrow. That means being

bold and taking risks. It’s like starting a new company that you know might fail, but the risk is worthwhile,” says Mónica Bettencourt Dias.

“When you apply for funding from an institution, they want results, and before you apply you have to show these results. That’s why the Gulbenkian funding and the funds we get from Oeiras Council too are so vital, so we can achieve those results to compete and secure greater funding internationally from entities like the European Research Council for projects that could change the world, and that’s what we are about,” concludes the IGC director. ■



iBET

Providing Biotech Solutions Globally

iBET – Instituto de Biologia Experimental e Tecnológica is one of the most advanced organizations of its kind in the world, dedicated to applied research to the progress of Biotechnology and Life sciences

TEXT **CHRIS GRAEME**



iBET works in a broad range of fields that encompass multidisciplinary approaches, from the development of complex biopharmaceuticals and novel therapies to areas in food and health, including nutraceuticals and support to the agro-food industry.

It was founded in 1989, at a time when the world was rapidly changing and nowhere more so than in Portugal which was awakening to the need to break with traditional economic models heavily reliant on primary resources, inexpensive products and cheap labour.

A couple of Portuguese scientists nurtured the idea of bringing public institutions together with private companies to work towards a common goal: harvesting the knowledge created by the former and transferring it to the economy and society to create wealth and quality



of life. These visionaries created the Institute of Experimental Biology and Technology - iBET.

iBET is a private non-profit research organization in the area of Biotechnology and Life Sciences. It bridges university and industry research by establishing partnerships particularly in the areas related to Biopharma and Food and Nutraceuticals, while also creating and organizing autonomous knowledge and expertise.

Thirty years later, iBET is still the largest private Portuguese non-profit institution devoted to Biotechnology research.

“One of our main areas of research in the biopharma area is gene transfer for therapeutic use. This is an area with a great potential nowadays, with applications in gene therapy, oncotherapy and vaccinology. However this is just a fraction of the research performed at iBET. We also work in structural biology for

drug development, advanced cell therapy products and in 3D disease cell models for drug testing. A strong focus on improving processes for the production of biologics towards sustainability and cost efficiency differentiates iBET globally” explains the CEO of iBET, Professor Paula Alves.

Prof. Alves says iBET is unique in Portugal, acting as a bridge between academia, companies and hospitals, advancing therapies and solutions for a healthy life.

“We organize our research with a focus on creating value to our partners. We are unique because we invest early-on in strategic research lines, identifying areas where we can compete globally. And we deliver! Our most valuable capital is our people. We have world class experts in our teams and we know how to attract and retain them, as they say, good people attract good people”, she says.



WELCOME TO THE FUTURE

iBET CEO says that working and living in Oeiras provides a tangible sense of Future.

“When you look at Oeiras Valley, you see companies, scientific research institutes, and startup incubators, which triggers the feeling the future is developing underneath our feet and you are part of it. This cutting-edge scientific and technological ecosystem generates value for the people and for the city and attracts highly qualified people to the municipality.”

“Oeiras Valley has something unique, which isn’t just about the weather and feeling safe. Here in Oeiras we do value people and our institute is world-class, on the same kind of level you would expect to find in the United States, Germany or the United Kingdom and that makes me proud,” concludes Dr. Paula Alves, iBET Executive Director of iBET. ■



iBET CEO concludes, the success of iBET is all down to a commitment to excellence. “When, as a result from your reputation for quality, you secure a contract with a large pharmaceutical company there is only one thing to do: offer a valuable work that meets the expectation of the company, communicate actively and build an open and trust based relationship. It’s all about the people.”

Like most research institutes, iBET hosts several PhD and Master’s students and other academic fellows in collaboration with different national and international academic organizations. Additionally, as research contracts with industry require scientists to work exclusively in R&D projects for the companies, iBET also creates high value job opportunities, offering non-academic scientific career opportunities in Portugal.

WORKING ON COVID-19 TESTS

This year iBET was involved in developing a prototype blood test for COVID-19 to detect the presence of anti-SARS-CoV-2 antibodies in blood samples.

“A serological test is crucial to understand the disease, how a vaccine might work and to monitor how the virus is spreading and undertake the epidemiology. For more than 20 years iBET has

produced numerous recombinant proteins for the pharma industry coping with highly demanding quality criteria. This expertise qualified iBET as a key partner for the production of SARS-CoV-2 antigens, the key reagent in these serological tests.

In a joined effort, Serology4COVID, a consortium of several research institutes, coordinated by Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência (IGC) combined the expertise of their scientists to rapidly develop a Made-in-Portugal assay with superior quality and performance. “This challenge illustrates how in challenging times, Portuguese scientists can join efforts and provide solutions rapidly” Dr Alves says.

The project to develop serologic tests was supported by Fundação Francisco Manuel dos Santos, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian and by Oeiras Municipal Council with whom iBET has forged a close working partnership for the last 30 years.

“For us, the interaction with the Mayor of Oeiras, Isaltino Morais, is of utmost importance, because we feel that the Council values research organizations and the scientists working in Oeiras. We feel integrated and welcome in the city we live and work”, says iBET CEO Prof. Paula Alves

“FOR US, THE INTERACTION WITH THE MAYOR OF OEIRAS, ISALTINO MORAIS, IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE, BECAUSE WE FEEL THAT THE COUNCIL VALUES RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS AND THE SCIENTISTS WORKING IN OEIRAS. WE FEEL INTEGRATED AND WELCOME IN THE CITY WE LIVE AND WORK.”

ISQ

Forecasting the future to Mars and back

ISQ Group works with big companies worldwide, including the European Space Agency and CERN. It has been actively involved with missions to Mars and its many exciting discoveries and plans to do more

TEXT **MARINA WATSON PELÁEZ**



When the Oeiras Valley was little more than a vast plot of land, 25 years ago, ISQ Group - a private Portuguese entity that works with the European Space Agency among other big international companies - was the first to set up here and recognise its potential. Since then, ISQ Group has witnessed this plot of land become the country's largest innovation ecosystem. ISQ is today present in 14 countries around the world and has 1,400 employees.

"Just like Silicon Valley, this area today is a rich ecosystem. It is so important for

companies that work in producing knowledge to have access to other realities around it, from startups to higher education entities to technology companies and banks," head of ISQ Group, Pedro Matias, tells Essential Business in a video interview from his office in Oeiras Valley.

ISQ Group works with big companies all over the world, including the European Space Agency (ESA), CERN (Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire), ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor) and ESO (European Southern Observatory). ISQ helps its

clients with rules and regulations, applied to in the areas of quality, safety, asset management and social and environmental responsibility, among others.

Having provided quality Assurance and Quality Control services at the European Space Centre (ESC) in French Guiana for the past 15 years, ISQ also has engineers working at the Space Centre, at CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research), ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor), the European Southern Observatory, and at the Petroleum Institute.





MISSIONS TO MARS

Being actively involved with missions to Mars and its many exciting discoveries, the ISQ has a permanent team at the Kourou space base. What started with one engineer now involves a team of seven people, and ISQ plans to keep growing.

Recently, ISQ completed a project coordinated by Amorim, for instance, which involved developing the thermal protection system for a capsule that will bring samples of Martian regolith back to Earth for analysis. ISQ was in charge of development tests and final validation tests of the working model. Cork was found to be resistant to very high tempe-

ratures and had a high capacity for absorption and impact, as well as offering ESA a simpler solution, since it is lighter (25% lighter than the maximum weight permitted), and guarantees a reduction in production costs.

ISQ has also been involved in building the European Extremely Large Telescope (E-ELT) at the European Space Observatory (ESO) - the world's largest optical telescope, having implemented quality assurance across the whole project. ISQ's consultancy focuses specifically on quality and safety, and its involvement in this project arose following its collaboration with the ESO in projects such as the VST Survey

Telescope, the latest to be installed at the ESO's Paranal Observatory, designed to map the sky in visible wavelengths.

NUCLEAR FUSION REACTOR

The International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor project (ITER) is ISQ's largest scientific investment, and resulted from the international agreement between the USA, Japan, Russia, South Korea, China, India, and the European Union. ITER, the world's largest nuclear fusion project, estimated to be worth 20 billion euros, aims to build the first experimental nuclear fusion reactor in a Tokamak configuration, and to demonstrate the scientific and technical viability of nuclear fusion as a source of clean energy.

"If this project is successful, it will lead to a complete change and prove that the energy source of the sun and stars is possible and more sustainable," Pedro Matias explains. "We believe it's a really important investment because we foresee big growth on a global level in this sector in the upcoming years.

ISQ relies on both national and international funding and has a high success rate in this regard, according to Pedro Matias, having only recently received funding amid the pandemic

through the programme Portugal 2020 to develop tests to check contaminated surfaces for COVID-19.

"We are talking about something completely innovative, we are foreseeing and quickly advancing in this area," Pedro Matias points out. "We also believe that the coronavirus will be prolonged in time, with different types of COVID emerging. This is bad news but the good news is that we will be better prepared to react."

Not only does ISQ constantly look to the future, but it also believes cooperation worldwide is key. "We cannot evolve if we don't look for excellent networks on a world level. We have to find them, interact with the best teams around the world and get the best out of each place in order to evolve." Matias highlights that Portugal has taken a big leap in terms of scientific innovation and that this needs more promotion. "We not only have excellent footballers, we also have excellent academics and scientists," he says.

Now, ISQ aims to keep growing on a global level and to keep innovating in digital technology, with the COVID 19 pandemic leading to a coming of age of Industry 4.0. While most of us are still confused about the current uncertain climate, Pedro Matias is already looking towards a post-pandemic world. ■

"JUST LIKE SILICON VALLEY, THIS AREA TODAY IS A RICH ECOSYSTEM. IT IS SO IMPORTANT FOR COMPANIES THAT WORK IN PRODUCING KNOWLEDGE TO HAVE ACCESS TO OTHER REALITIES AROUND IT, FROM STARTUPS TO HIGHER EDUCATION ENTITIES TO TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES AND BANKS."



INIAV

Working with farmers to find solutions

The National Institute of Agrarian and Veterinary Research (INIAV) produces results-based solutions to diseases that affect farmers and foresters, working hand-in-glove with them on the ground

TEXT CHRIS GRAEME



The National Institute of Agrarian and Veterinary Research (INIAV) is an entity with a strong scientific research component based in Oeiras Valley.

Its mission is to carry out research that supports government and European Union public policies on livestock and food safety.

With a portfolio of over 160 ongoing projects, INIAV carries out research that more than ever seeks to find solutions to problems, not only for farmers but also for the agro-industry.

“The main challenges that agriculture faces today are a subject of many of our ongoing projects,” says Nuno Canada, president of the INIAV. He points to climate change, the circular economy, treatment of emerging diseases and smart farming.

For example, with its project PARRA, INIAV developed a tool that could automatically detect golden flavescence on grapevines, a disease for which there is no cure, diminishing its spread and devastating economic impact on the wine industry.

With the EntoValor project, the organic residues produced by some



“WE ARE FACING HUGE CHALLENGES SUCH AS CLIMATE CHANGE, PESTS AND EMERGING DISEASES. THERE IS A NEED TO MAKE MORE EFFICIENT USE OF WATER AND ENERGY RESOURCES, AND THE TRANSITION OF THE ECONOMY FROM A LINEAR TO A CIRCULAR MODEL WHICH REQUIRES SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY TO ACHIEVE THIS.”



industries can be reintroduced into the value chain and used by others. The link that allows this connection is the Black Soldier Fly larvae (*Hermetia illucens*).

A PARADIGM SHIFT

Nuno Canada, says that 90% of its research is developed in partnership with farmers to solve specific problems that

they come up against on a daily basis. However, he recognises that achieving growth in the food farming sector needs more public investment in research and development which is essential for the success of companies.

Regarding climate change, Nuno Canada says INIAV has several projects that study the best varieties, best produc-

tion systems, or best use of resources for soil and water, that allows challenges to be mitigated both now and in the future.

“The food farming and forestry sectors are changing rapidly, plus we are facing huge challenges such as climate change, pests and emerging illnesses. There is a need to make more efficient use of water and energy resources, and the transition of the economy from a linear to a circular model which requires science and technology to achieve this,” he explains.

Nuno Canada says that in recent years INIAV’s priority has been to focus on transferring know-how and knowledge from research directly to farmers as part of an “up close and on the ground” support policy.

“The way researching was done in the past, researchers would develop a project and only after the results were obtained would others see if they had an application in the sector and this was usually very time-consuming,” Nuno Canada points out.

“The new model pinpoints the problems farmers have and works with them and agricultural technicians to solve them, then as solutions arise, the actual technicians transfer that knowledge back to the farmers,” Nuno Canada.

The INIAV President says they needed to renovate the experimentation network in order to work more closely



with the farmers and meet the needs of the sector.

FINANCING

To support the research projects, the institute competes for all types of possible funding and a great number of the project proposals are partnered with producers’ organisations.

“Nowadays all our research is co-financed by European funds. We are constantly applying to the open calls available for research and innovation – Horizon 2020. All the regional and thematic programs within Portugal 2020, Interreg and FCT are our main sources of funding, now,” he explains.

“They allow us to participate in both national and international consortia addressing the main challenges that the sector faces today,” he adds.

The Rural Development Program (PDR2020) is also a major tool through the operational groups which are now already being implemented.

These projects comprise a partnership of firms, producers’ associations and research institutions, thereby ensuring knowledge transfer and the dissemination of results amongst those who are going to use them.

Besides this, the institute has also prepared a number of proposals (two of which are already ongoing projects) as part of a research and innovation partnership in the



Mediterranean region called PRIMA which was set up by the EU Commission.

PRIMA, for example, is a joint programme on the development and application of solutions for food systems and water resources in the Mediterranean basin. In recent years, the agriculture sector has been suffering from severe water shortages and decreasing crop yields. Today, 180 million people in the region are considered water-poor. The lack of clean water and nutritious food and their adverse effects on the health and sustainability of populations are matters these projects seek to address.

STRATEGY OF INIAV HUBS

Nuno Canada says that almost all of INIAV’s projects are developed in consortia that join, to the same end, academic institutions, research labs, producers’ associations, cooperatives and private companies, thereby enabling a close interaction between researchers and farmers who use these products.

Funding programs increasingly require close cooperation and activities within the projects to be shared.

“It is no longer enough to undertake a project. You have to show results and share them with those who will use them. That is why our researchers work with all stakeholders from the first when preparing a research proposal,” Nuno Canada concludes. ■



Atlântica

Leveraging Industry 4.0

Among other subjects, Atlântica has introduced artificial intelligence, big data and analytics, process simulation, Internet of Things (IoT), connectivity, intelligent sensors, and advanced human-machine interfaces in its courses. But the university is also concerned with giving students an education that includes ethical, corporate social responsibility, environmental and diversity and inclusion issues

TEXT **MARINA WATSON PELÁEZ**

In 2017, the Portuguese government changed Atlântica's status from 'university' to 'university school.' This was quite controversial. But this year, Atlântica was recognised by the country as a 'University Institute', and it is determined to keep disseminating new knowledge.

Atlântica - University Institute was set up in 1996 by university professors,

researchers, financial institutions, institutional groups, service and study companies, and the Municipality of Oeiras, which until 2014 remained the main shareholder. That same year, Atlântica introduced a degree in Management, Environment, Territory, ICT and Health Management, leading the Atlântica Higher School of Health to be established in 2001.

IMMERSED IN HERITAGE

Just 10 minutes away by car from the Lisbon capital, Atlântica has its campus at the historic Pólvora Factory, a gunpowder factory that operated between 1540 and 1940. The older buildings were restored and turned into Student Support Services, including a library and a school office. Two buildings were built in 2003 and 2006, with more than 28 classrooms,

three auditoriums, and four Information and communications technology (ICT) laboratories.

Atlântica has a strong focus on training in core areas including health, engineering, business science and technology, but it is also highly concerned with giving students an education that includes ethical, corporate social responsibility, environmental and diversity and inclusion issues.

"Training in social and human areas, valuing soft skills, is fundamental in the present and the future, especially when taking into account the Fourth Industrial Revolution, also known as Industry 4.0, which will soon be 5.0," Carlos Guillén Gestoso, head of Atlântica, stresses. "We are training for a future that we cannot yet fathom. So it is crucial that values are passed on, as well as the methodological tools that will enable students to learn independently."

VALUING INDEPENDENT STUDYING

Atlântica values tutorial teaching and close monitoring of the student. The idea





“TRAINING IN SOCIAL AND HUMAN AREAS, VALUING SOFT SKILLS, IS FUNDAMENTAL IN AN INDUSTRY 4 FUTURE.” CARLOS GUILLÉN GESTOSO

is for the student to be autonomous, but to always have teachers close by for guidance.

Guillén Gestoso also considers that, at a time when the fusion of technologies blur the lines between the physical, digital and human, it is essential to train young people in new technologies.

Among other subjects, Atlântica has introduced artificial intelligence, big data and analytics, process simulation, Internet of Things (IoT), connectivity, intelligent sensors, and advanced human-machine interfaces in its courses.

ADOPTING NEW TECHNOLOGY AMID COVID-19

During the state of emergency, in March 2020, Atlântica had around 1,200 students attending 10 undergraduate courses, 4 master's degrees and 18 post-graduate courses. Atlântica, like other universities all over the country, had to quickly adapt its structure and its teach-

ing model to the new reality imposed by COVID-19.

All classes began to be taught on Teams, Zoom or Skype, with Moodle support. “And, interestingly, the assistance to classes by the students has even become more assiduous,” says Guillén Gestoso. “The adaptation of the students was surprising. Today the situation is different, but we have all changed the way we work and study.”

Mental health also took a central place at Atlântica, with a clinic offering psychology consultations to support and monitor students. New online short courses were also introduced, including Organisational Happiness, Happiness applied to the Person, and Social Marketing. Atlântica also developed a post-graduate course in Materials and Composites Engineering in e-learning, approved by the Order of Engineers, and is currently going to carry out distance learning in different areas.

BORN IN OEIRAS

Atlântica was born at roughly the same time as the Taguspark project and immediately adopted the philosophy of Mayor of Oeiras, Isaltino Morais.

“There is a set of unique conditions here at a national and international level that position the territory as a reference ecosystem in the scope of the development of R&D, entrepreneurship, the attraction of companies and promotion of science,” Guillén Gestoso highlights.

“The synergies and partnerships that exist between Oeiras Valley companies and organisations are an asset to our students and researchers,” he adds.

Atlântica's strategic commitment for the next 10 years involves new scientific areas, creating research and disseminating knowledge, namely in the area of management, exploration and sustainability of the sea.

The area of aeronautics (engineering, maintenance) and air transport will continue to be the focus of this institution, which changed its core business in 2014 when it was acquired in 87% of its share capital by the then multinational company Carbures.

Other goals include developing research that stands out, to create regional and national synergies, and to improve quality in distance learning. ■

CHRONOSWISS

MODERN MECHANICAL



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EDIÇÃO LIMITADA (50)

- Movimento automático C.301 com design inovador “OPEN GEAR” e apresentação retrógrada dos segundos
- Mostrador em guilloché feito à mão, com design sofisticado em 3D composto por 42 peças
- Caixa em aço de 44 mm com revestimento de CVD azul resistente a riscos

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FMH Education for Science, Innovation and Excellence

Lisbon University's Faculty of Human Kinetics in Oeiras has become a pioneer in Portugal for outreach programs in the field of exercise for older adults and programs for reducing obesity in adolescents. Essential Business discovers more

TEXT CHRIS GRAEME

The first striking feature of Lisbon University's Faculty of Human Kinetics (FMH) is the sight of young, energetic students in tracksuits and trainers wandering through the corridors and alleys. It tells you immediately that you are in a Sports Academy.

The Dean of the Faculty, Professor Luís Bettencourt Sardinha, points out the College is now celebrating its 80th anniversary. Founded in 1940 it has been an inspirational success story in terms of training physical educators, trainers and coaches. Yet its valuable accomplishment goes beyond that...

Today, 1.800 students attend four undergraduate programs in Sport Science, Dance, Psychomotor Rehabilitation and

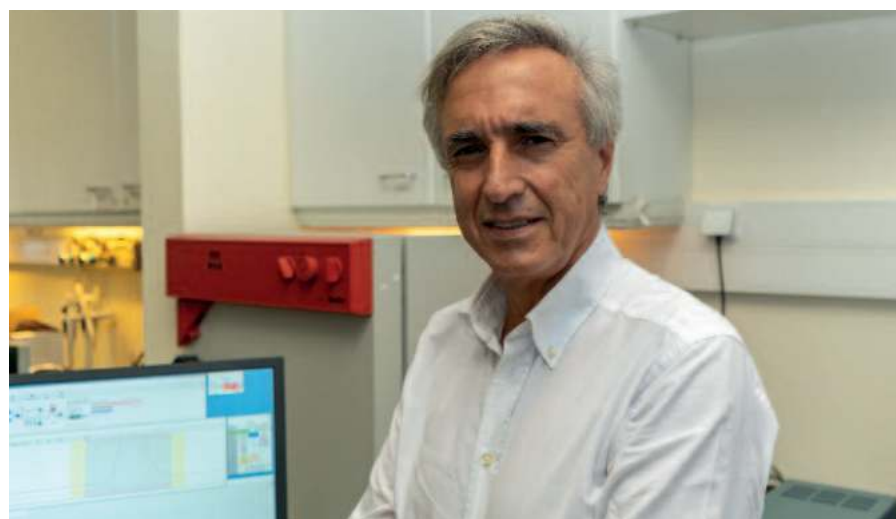
Sport Management, and several Masters including Sports Training, High Performance Training, Exercise and Health, Ergonomics, Physical Education Teaching, Educational Resilience and Psychomotor Rehabilitation. It also offers two PhDs, one in Human Kinetics, and the other in Education. In its beginning, the faculty was committed to physical education and sports performance, but since a long time ago, it has expanded into new areas of knowledge and science, obtaining the leadership in Portugal in exploring new areas of education such as Sports Management, Psychomotor Rehabilitation, Exercise and Health, Ergonomics and Dance. "Our four undergraduate degrees are focused on advanced fundamental

knowledge, providing students the necessary skills to enable their integration in different professional or academic contexts as progress promoters, and holders of high expertise", describes the Dean.

FMH OUTREACH AND RESEARCH PROGRAMS IN OEIRAS

Professor Luís Bettencourt Sardinha mentions that the Faculty has been working closely with Oeiras Council for 30 years and through this favourable partnership paved its way to undertake new roles, being pioneers in Portugal with outreach programs in the field of exercise for older adults. "People in the borough go to different places to do physical exercise but some of them are still coming here and use the facilities. This social work is another way to share our knowledge with the locals while our students gain valuable experience working and practising with them. Outreach programs also provide the inspiration to look at new and relevant research questions to attain superlative and valued science. I remember that in those pioneer years, when we started designing resistance-training programs for older adults, this was a heresy. Now this is the norm," he says.

A program that the faculty planned and implemented was Pessoa Program. This program aimed to reduce obesity in adolescents in the borough. "We've noticed that adolescents living in Oeiras who have higher aerobic fitness tend to have an increased chance of reaching high academic success compared to their





unfit counterparts,” says Luís Bettencourt Sardinha. “Fitter kids may well be smarter. This provides more evidence for families to feel encouraged to keep up with their children, participate and watch them participating in physical activities or sports. By the end of the day, this will result in more resilient and cohesive families”, he states. Certainly, this study, Pessoa Program, implies the recognition that physical activity and sports participation might improve aerobic fitness, which then might favourably influence children and youngsters academic achievement, can facilitate family support and have a contagious effect on promoting greater physical activity behaviour and engagement in sports skills among children. These are times of social fragmentation and deprivation. In some school environments, the challenges to family resilience are enormous, it is necessary to make an effort to invest and implement mental health and wellbeing programs to increase social cohesion and personal empowerment towards families and communities.”

OEIRAS VALLEY - THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SYNERGIES BETWEEN TECHNOLOGY, SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

Professor Luís Bettencourt Sardinha says that FMH is highly integrated into the Oeiras Valley concept. However, further strategic steps and programmatic actions are necessary.

“Oeiras Valley is all about technology, innovation and science. Oeiras Municipal Council and supporting entities helped to develop this concept. Specialized scien-

tific programs, educational outreach activities, and empowered inter-disciplinary research resources with already built advanced research capacity among young and middle-career investigators, will bring about the desired result: Oeiras Valley success at regional, national and international ranks.”, he explains.

“We have a new strategic vision within the scope of Oeiras Valley, which aims to establish a renewed development cycle centred and based on our established knowledge and experience, that will generate an integrated ecosystem for science, technology and business, including an agenda for education, society, innovation and internationalization,” declares the FHM Dean.

THE NEW ACTIVE CLUSTER

This new strategic vision is based on the design of a recent technological and scientific cluster (ACTIVE CLUSTER), committed to physical activity, sport and health. Considering the amount of €10.3 million funding from Lisbon operational program 2020 and Oeiras Municipality, a new ACTIVE CLUSTER will include a first-hand building with laboratories and state of the art research equipment. “This represents an opportunity for a new paradigm shift for the faculty, offering new experiences to the students and giving the opportunity to researchers to work with new technology”.

This educational cluster will also interact with the Oeiras Valley cluster of scientific research institutions and technology companies, will further permit enhanced cooperative research, and improved education outcomes, providing a

great development opportunity for us and for the ecosystem, which we are part. We envisage developing new products and services associated with new technological partners and startups in the Oeiras municipality with the potential for national and international reach,” says Luís Bettencourt Sardinha.

“The development of our research program will further invest in inter-disciplinary research resources and build advanced research capacity among investigators in five central areas of superior scientific training:

i) building expertise in advanced physiological, epidemiological, biomechanical, behavioural and psychosocial measurement; ii) building expertise in intervention development and implementation; iii) research leadership; iv) grantsmanship; v) advanced skills in communicating and disseminating scientific information.” explains the Dean.

“Innovation means experimenting in new areas and trying things out. Above all, it’s about being prepared to fail and not being afraid to get things wrong. This is how we pursue success and it is the keystones of what science is also all about,” concludes Professor Luís Bettencourt Sardinha.

OEIRAS VALLEY WORLD SPORTS PARK

The National Sports Center of Jamor, the largest sports facility in Portugal where FMH is located with an area of 240 hectares, is a unique infrastructure with historical and cultural value. Within the framework of the new intersectoral public policies, with a more effective aesthetic as to the existence of differentiated competencies that may converge towards the same objective of qualification and modernization of the community service, it is important to appreciate the opportunity of the Municipality of Oeiras synergistic contribution.

This strategic re-orientation of cooperation is able to function as an impetus to improve the quality and diversity of services, positioning FMH’s in international terms. It will emerge not only as an FMH project to implement, but also as a promotional project developed through the Government and the Municipality of Oeiras. Only then, it will assume the achievement of a design that the nature and dimension of the National Sports

Center of Jamor impose, with the logic of a full integration in the concept and programs of the Oeiras Valley.

This project values the infrastructure and its use, with new qualified services for athletes and the community that seeks recreational activities. It also constitutes one of the anchors of the development between FMH and the Municipality of Oeiras and, even more, of the advancement of Portugal to a level of world-class positioning.

For this intention, FMH counts with its research centre, the Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Human Performance, with 60 researchers funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology. To go into detail, FMH has two further research hubs: one for dance, the other for education and formation development.

Special attention should also be paid to the recognized role of exercise on several health outcomes. Professor Luís Bettencourt Sardinha stresses that exercise compresses morbidity and helps prevent more than 40 non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia and some types of cancer, which is the reason for exercise to have a determinant role in the sustainability of a society. Exercise further helps seniors stay mobile, independent, and achieve a longer life with less disability. Within the scope of application and

with the support from the EIT Health and the European Commission, FMH runs a Summer School in Mobility and Active Ageing. Its purpose includes the training of professionals to design, develop, and implement support, or health and work out functional independence and promote solutions for persons with reduced mobility or at risk of mobility reduction when carrying out their daily activities. The outstanding goal of FMH is to rebrand the existing outreach programs and develop new ones within the range of exercise and selected NCDs.

“We have links with other research centres, and also with the network of science and technology companies in Oeiras. This is something we are developing as part of the Oeiras Valley concept. We want to empower the human capital at FMH in order to create more patents to offer more services and products, and essentially to better educate our students,” says Professor Luís Sardinha.

OEIRAS VALLEY GLOBAL SPORT EDUCATION

As an academic institution, FMH to fulfil its mission pursues a holistic vision of education in sports and movement.

This strategic axis places FMH and all its mission areas in the position of acquiring a global approach to education, and, consequently, interpreting the meaning and polysemic value of physical

activity and sport in the universality of knowledge. This strategic option is based on the quality of teaching at FMH that is sustained by an accumulated experience of 80 years of history in the training of highly qualified professionals.

FMH’s post-graduate football trainer course is an example of Oeiras Valley Global Sports Education opportunity. The world-famous football manager José Mourinho, who was a former student at the faculty and now comes to the institution to teach, patronizes this course. Ninety-five of the students in the course are from overseas. Now the applications are open for the third edition and a digital course is under preparation for applicants all over the world. The post-graduation courses on Strength and Conditioning, Training and Rehabilitation, and Dance Training have a great success and are good examples to replicate with a wider exposition. Only the quality of teaching at FMH is able to create such a global impact.

It is already an evidence and FMH acknowledges the fact that to face the global changes Education, Science and Technology must accompany one another harmoniously. Education has a fundamental role in achieving a better world, coaching people to be more active and developing their self-awareness to reach their full potential. By means of a more traditional idea, helping each one of us in our quest of the Holy Grail... ■



IST

The academic spirit of Oeiras Valley

The Instituto Superior Técnico (IST) at Taguspark campus in Oeiras is the fulfilment of a vision that was born in Portugal at the end of the last century to create a link between universities and companies. Today it is creating important synergies in aerospace, information technology, marine technology and biotechnology

TEXT **CHRIS GRAEME**

The flagship educational institution in Oeiras Valley is undoubtedly the Higher Technical Institute (Instituto Superior Técnico - IST).

It has 1,800 students at its 12 hectare Oeiras campus at Taguspark and welcomes students from Portugal, Brazil and the Portuguese-speaking African countries Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Cape

Verde, Goa and Guinea Bissau, as well as a small but increasing inflow from China, India and Iran who are doing PhD and master's degrees.

Its importance for Oeiras has come to the fore this year when the Mayor of Oeiras Municipal Council, Isaltino Morais, signed a Memorandum of Understanding in September to create a



cooperation to develop the campus at Taguspark - one of the largest business parks in Portugal.

The stated goal of the memorandum is for the IST to develop a programme of activities at the science and technology hub in Oeiras for the period 2020-2025.

"We had not yet had a real opportunity to establish a relationship with the business and research ecosystem in Oeiras. For any academic institution to be successful, it is essential to establish a relationship with the businesses and institutions in the area in which you are based," says the Dean of the IST, Professor Rogério Colaço.

"We've been in Oeiras for 20 years, and I realised that the Board and I needed to connect more with the muni-

cipality. The mayor and I agreed it was important for Oeiras Valley and the IST to increase the links and synergies between us, and the result was the signing of this protocol or MOU," he adds.

BETTER MOBILITY AND GREENER ENVIRONMENT

The agreement promises support in two key areas: 1) Providing better accessibility for IST students on, around and to and from the campus, by increasing transport services and cycleways; 2) Creating attractive landscaped green areas with gardens and trees.

In return, IST will help Oeiras to develop and increase some research concepts in areas such as aerospace, information technology, marine technology

and biotechnology, as well as organising large international congresses, conferences, symposia and events over the next two years concentrating on those focus areas.

Rogério Colaço explains the aim of further promoting Taguspark and IST as a science, technology research and entrepreneurship hub by developing the network in two ways: 1) By increasing connections with the companies and entities within Taguspark; 2) Bringing international connections to Oeiras since it belongs to a large European network of universities all over Europe. Bringing the activities of these academic clusters to the Oeiras hub will, it is hoped, provide stimulus for Taguspark and the whole metropolitan area.

LINKS WITH THE US

IST has begun negotiations with the Luso-American Foundation FLAD which promotes and encourages student exchanges between academic institutions in the two countries.

"FLAD has an extensive student mobility programme between the US and Portugal. This programme essentially works in the Humanities field but has yet to substantially involve students in the sciences, technology and engineering, but this will change," says Rogério Colaço.

"Up until now we had exchanged students from the United States who came here to Portugal, with our students that went to the States, but not in Science and Engineering, which is not our school's focus," explains the dean.





“From next year, however, we will receive 20 students from the US in industrial and aerospace engineering, while from China, India and Iran we already have around 300 students on PhD and master’s courses,” he adds.

One impediment to academic institutions like IST in attracting overseas students is that at degree level all classes must, according to the law, be conducted in Portuguese. However, the dean says that the IST is currently designing its first undergraduate degree for the academic year 2021-2022 for international students that will be taught in English, including all the support material. This already is the case for master’s degrees.

SECURING FUNDING

With so much competition for funding from other universities, getting sufficient funds for any academic institution is never easy.

IST receives 50% of its funding from the Portuguese Government, while the

other 50% comes from its own sources which provide several income streams. The largest is from research projects where funding is provided or granted by the entity commissioning the project.

Then, there are specific contracts, such as the one commissioned for the new international airport at Montijo on the South bank of the River Tagus at Lisbon. There are also partnership networks with enterprises with contracts with the IST.

These provide funds and get access to students. Last, but not least, is tuition fees, which by law are kept affordable and depends on the trust that the students and families have with the institution. There are also a few business grants.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Rogério Colaço says that he foresees important developments over the next decade in IT and Communication technology, the interface between engineering and life sciences, particularly with vaccine development — it is currently involved in a Covid-19 project — medical instrument development and research

“FLAD HAS AN EXTENSIVE STUDENT MOBILITY PROGRAMME BETWEEN THE US AND PORTUGAL. THIS PROGRAMME ESSENTIALLY WORKS IN THE HUMANITIES FIELD, BUT HAS YET TO SUBSTANTIALLY INVOLVE STUDENTS IN THE SCIENCES, TECHNOLOGY AND ENGINEERING, BUT THIS WILL CHANGE.”

on treating diseases and extending life quality using this interface.

Another vast area of opportunity is marine science. Portugal’s ocean platform or exclusive economic zone is larger than India. Marine Science, robotics, transportation, civil engineering, nanotechnology, plasmas, physics and Artificial Intelligence will all be very important research areas.

As for work with other academic institutions, “We’ve been working on three large programmes over past 10 years with MIT, University of Texas and

Oeiras Municipal Council (CMO) in different areas like materials sciences to develop environmentally friendly cement.

“Cement is a cheap and magical material, like liquid stone. But to produce one tonne of cement you produce one tonne of CO2, so it’s an environmentally unfriendly material. To develop new cements which are ecologically friendly is a topic of research all over the world and IST is well placed in all the major international research protocols at research universities to be in the forefront,” concludes the Dean of IST, Rogério Colaço. ■



About IST Oeiras Campus

The IST Taguspark campus was completed in 2009 and began operating in 2000. It is located in the Greater Lisbon Metropolitan area, in Oeiras at Taguspark, Portugal’s largest science and technology park. The intention is to foster synergies of cooperation and partnership between the university and companies. It has around 1,200 students studying on a site which has a total area covering 12 hectares.



A number of families who were all set to move to Portugal and had signed their children up for Lisbon's International Sharing School, suddenly found themselves stranded when lockdowns were imposed all over the world. But that didn't have to jeopardise their children's education. Lisbon's International Sharing School reacted quickly, taking its classes online even before the government had closed schools.

"We went into hybrid mode when there was still a lot of panic and every-

thing was still very uncertain," the International Sharing School's CEO, Miguel Santos, tells Essential Business in an interview. "We implemented live streaming and enabled kids to stay at home, and to receive the same content and the same classroom experience. When the government's measures were announced, we were already 100% online. It was business as usual."

The school's rapid move online when COVID-19 struck clearly reflects its adaptability and its approach to learning.

Their flexibility is also very convenient for families who have to travel for work, and for children whose story is shaped by more than one culture. Kids at the International Sharing School learn Mandarin and Russian and are encouraged to reflect on the customs and way of life in different countries. The International Sharing School - Taguspark, which was set up in 2018, is made up of 70% of expat families. English is used as their 'working language' and Portuguese is naturally the 'host country language', with

International Sharing School

A place for sharing cultures in a digital world

The International Sharing School in Taguspark, Oeiras, has an adaptable and flexible method of learning which was tested and passed with flying colours during the Covid-19 crisis

TEXT MARINA WATSON PELÁEZ





“WE BELIEVE IN LEARNING THROUGH SHARING. OUR APPROACH IS ABOUT MULTICULTURALISM AND SHARING AS A BRIDGE FOR A BETTER WORLD. WE BELIEVE THAT MANY PROBLEMS ARISE NOT JUST DUE TO POLITICAL OR FINANCIAL PROBLEMS, BUT BECAUSE DIFFERENT CULTURES DON’T UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.”

lifelong learners aged 4 months to 18 years being taught based on the International Baccalaureate Organisation model. “We believe in learning through sharing,” 28-year-old Santos, whose family started the business, explains. “Our approach is about multiculturalism and sharing as a bridge for a better world. We believe that many problems arise not just due to political or financial problems, but because different cultures don’t understand each other.”

PART OF A FAMILY

The school currently has over 250 students from around the world and already has a waiting list for next year. Students are part of a family, Santos explains, and that has to do with the school’s roots. The school belongs to the Multicultural Sharing Foundation, a foundation set up by his parents and grandmother, who all had a strong background in education. “The most positive thing about being a family structure is that we are way more

agile, so we go and have a casual lunch on the weekend and it becomes a council meeting. That means decisions are made much faster,” he points out. “We also pass on the idea that the team is a family, and we treat our students like family.” Santos and his family constantly discuss their progress and hold PTG (Parent Teacher Group) meetings to see how they can improve and adapt. The way the school teaches also influences their building design. Tradi-

tional classrooms have become obsolete, Santos stresses. The classroom is not an educational hub but an educational lab. The teacher is no longer seen as the holder of knowledge, but as a means for the children to discover the world for themselves.

MEANINGFUL SPACES

The International Sharing School’s refurbishment project was designed by Rosan Bosch, which creates spaces with people in mind, analysing behaviour to make more meaningful spaces. The school is now working with their team of designers to restructure the current building and create new buildings to fit the programmes they teach. Their approach is focused on out-door learning and learning without walls.

There is also a scientific foundation behind their classroom designs. It’s not just about having a beautiful and attractive setting. They’ll actually get down to the physical level of a 3-year-old to imagine what it’s like to see the world through their eyes, and adapt the space to their needs.

The school is now working on getting its own model certified so that it can have the same relevance as other programmes such as the Waldorf model, which is based on educational philosophy and focuses on arts, nature and imagination.

At the International Sharing School, children are being geared up for the workplace of the future.



Kids learn robotics, coding and digital literacy as part of the curriculum. The international baccalaureate gives students the opportunity to choose from six blocks to get ready for whatever they decide to study at university. They also have access to a career counsellor from Grade 9, in order to make the right career choices. There is a special educational needs programme for all kids to have access to adequate resources and to have both emotional and academic support. “Service is personalised for the children

so that we can push their performance,” Santos explains.

CULTIVATING CONFIDENCE

The school’s tutorial method of learning consists in treating the student as an individual and cultivating confidence, critical thinking, the ability to work with others, as well as effective oral and written communication skills. According to the International Sharing School, learning isn’t just about memorising and exams, it is mostly about reasoning, debating, and thinking independently.

The location of the school, in the heart of the Oeiras Valley, is also strategic, and not just because it’s on the seafront. The family recognised that this technology community was growing both quickly and sustainably, housing global companies such as Google and Cisco as well as a number of internationally renowned laboratories, playing an important role in promoting science.

The ecosystem has great potential for the school’s educational lab, where guest speakers from different companies can share their experiences with the students. It also means the school can keep up to date with the kind of skills companies are looking for and to adapt and fine-tune accordingly. The school aims not only to be certified but is also expanding quickly and aims to attract more people from around the world to join its multicultural team. ■



OceanLiteracy4All

Bringing knowledge of the oceans to all



The Sharing University has joined forces with the university institute Atlântica in Barcarena to create a structured, but informal, non-academic course for people of all ages who want to gain a greater understanding of the one geographical factor that has informed Portugal's history, culture and economy like no other — the ocean

TEXT CHRIS GRAEME



With Portugal having one of the largest Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) in Europe (1,727,408 km²), and a proposed Extended Continental Shelf of 2,15 million Km² totalling 3,8 million Km² of Portuguese seafloor jurisdiction and one of the longest unbroken coastlines on the continent (The Portuguese coast is extensive; in addition to approximately 943 kilometres (586 mi) along the coast of continental Portugal, the archipelagos of the Azores (667 km) and

Madeira (250 km)), there has never been a better time to educate people, particularly the young, on the importance of preserving this natural asset for future generations in a world where issues of manmade pollution and ecological and sustainable awareness are so pressing.

The OceanLiteracy4All programme aims to make the literate individual aware of the seven principles of Ocean Literacy and acknowledge the importance of oceans for humankind. Above

all, it works from the premise that ordinary people, not just scientists, can make an important contribution to building an Ocean-literate society, and promote a change in individual and collective behaviour towards the sustainable development of the Ocean and of its natural resources.

Although the initiatives, which are set to start either in the spring or summer of 2021, are non-academic — meaning they are not supported by a



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“WE SEE THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REACH OUT TO ALL, BY BRINGING HIGH LEVEL KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE FROM ACADEMIA AND INDUSTRY TO EVERYONE.”
FILIPA MARQUES
.....

formal academic qualification or exams at the end — they can act as an extra-curricular complement to inspire secondary school children who are interested in ocean sciences or environmental issues and may later be keen to eventually pursue careers in geology, oceanography, maritime sciences, marine biology and many other areas linked to coasts and oceans.

FUN FOR FAMILIES

On the other hand, the initiatives will suit families with members of all ages who simply want to learn more about the coast and the oceans in a lively and engaging way that involves field trips in which the groups of participants can sign up to a wide range of expert-led activities from monitoring variations in seawater and fauna to conservation, ocean observation, scientific diving and even marine photography.

Professor Manuel Pinto de Abreu, Board Chairman at Sharing University stresses that while not academic, the in-class lessons will be led by university lecturers and on-site activities by scientists and other experts in the field.

“The idea is that any ‘citizen of the world’ can understand what the oceans are, how they function physically, geolo-

gically and biologically, and the importance of the ocean for they lives now and in the future,” he says.

“When referring to ‘all aspects of their lives’, we mean economic development, social development, and the way in which we have to look at the oceans from an environmental point of view. We don’t aim to train ocean specialists, rather help people to look at a beach, for example, as a physical and marine biological ecosystem,” Manuel Pinto de Abreu explains.

In a way these are fun and practical learning courses and activities to kindle the public interest in a similar manner to a leisure course, where applicants of all ages can meet new people with similar interests and learn something new at the same time, without the pressure of deadlines, essays and exams that a formal academic course would inevitably require.

To help understand the seven principles of ocean literacy (the Earth has one big ocean with many features, the ocean and life in the ocean shape the features of the Earth, the ocean is a major influence on weather and climate, the ocean made the Earth inhabitable, the ocean supports a great diversity of life and ecosystems, the oceans and humans are inextricably interconnected and the ocean is largely unexplored), the Atlantic/OceanLiteracy4All

programme will offer a syllabus which rests on four key pillars.

The Blue Literacy Club - on-campus sessions covering single subject, captivating introductions to different disciplines in natural and social ocean sciences. Participants are free to choose one-day sessions or the whole season package covering the four subjects.

The Explorer’s Club - takes participants to the outdoors, to explore our Ocean-based surroundings, the coast, the seawater column, and the seafloor. Equally, participants are free to choose one-day sessions or the entire season package covering all the educational actions.

Citizen Science Initiatives - set up initially and occur over a season. Participants will be trained by scientists for specific tasks and if interested may collaborate with scientific monitoring activities. Involvement and training may be seasonal or year-round.

“Live Ocean” - an interactive, permanent, ocean observatory with live streaming of a network of submarine and coastal cameras and sensors at selected sites. Participants can monitor variations

in the seawater and fauna or observe Ocean Literacy actions live through the integration of cameras in ROVs and AUVs. These observatories may be linked to international networks with the opportunity to contribute to global oceanography research.

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

For younger learners the project is not unlike the Blue School (Escola Azul) Government-funded initiative which actively engages the school community in the understanding of the ocean’s influence on us and our influence on the ocean and which integrates the local community into its initiatives and activities and interacts with a broader educational and scientific network. The difference being is that these initiatives are not linked to the national curriculum and are meant to bring different generations together.

“This is an initiative that will be carried out mostly on the beach and the sea, close to the coast, to educate about what the sea is and what the issues are linked to it,” said Manuel Pinto de Abreu.

The Chief Research Officer for the OceanLiteracy4All programme, Professor Filipa Marques says, “This programme is aimed at families who can go to the beach or ocean and learn through activities that are very practical, interactive and accessible to all and doesn’t depend on the level of academic education that they have or age.”

Filipa Marques explains that pending on the type of action, location, logistics and age groups, the course may have up to 20 people. “Our initiatives follow a practice-based approach for actionable knowledge. Participants will gain competency in on Ocean Literacy by choosing One-Day (O), Season (S) or All-Year (Y) Packages, each delivering multiple and exciting opportunities to get to know our local coastal and ocean surroundings. There will be also Citizen Science Initiatives set up to occur over a season or year-round.

“We see this as an opportunity to reach out to all, by bringing high level knowledge and expertise from academia and industry to everyone,” concludes Filipa Marques. ■





Oeiras International School

Giving back to the community

At Oeiras International School education isn't just about learning for academic qualifications. It's about understanding that learning is an ongoing lifelong process. Above all, it's about social responsibility and caring in the community

TEXT **CHRIS GRAEME**

Oeiras International School is a learning institution like no other. First, there is a sense of history, its hallowed 17th-century halls create a link to a prosperous bygone age of successful trade which is reflected on this aristocratic estate.

This is a unique and very special place. Situated on the edge of Lisbon and inserted within Oeiras Valley, it forms a link between the past and the modern and a present dominated by innovative and technologically driven companies and scientific institutions.

The school is nestled in a green valley with steam flowing through the campus where goats, ponies and donkeys roam freely.

Among the many architectural gems on the campus is the chapel with its original marble inlays and ceramic tiles making it officially a national monument.

Yet Oeiras International School is very much a 21st-century multicultural learning institution which attracts over 400 students from all over the world, from China and Russia to Spain, Italy and Germany.

"We are committed to the academic achievements of all of our students. Of course, we are proud of our graduates who attend some of the world's leading universities, but we are equally proud of those who work hard and achieve their very best, at whatever level," says the Principal, Hugo Gonçalves Pereira.

"As an International Baccalaureate school, we value holistic growth and character development, imagination and resilience, teamwork and service to others. We know that a real education extends beyond classrooms and grades

and prepares us with the skills to lead a happy, successful and positive life," adds Gonçalves Pereira.

The beautiful estate or 'Quinta' is on a long lease from the Municipal Council of Oeiras and the Principal is at pains to thank the Mayor Oeiras, Isaltino Morais, for providing the site which actually includes a former early 20th-century primary school building which today, completely refurbished, is still used for children of primary school age.

PROACTIVE LEARNING

Gonçalves Pereira says the school has been going through a process of readjusting its vision and purpose and the concept of teaching which, he says, also means nurturing a learning community which in the case of Oeiras International School means students can learn a wide variety of languages including Mandarin and Russian.

"We are not spoon-feeding the students, we are providing them with the necessary environment to be proactive learners because we understand that today's young people need to be constantly learning and we want to instil the habit of lifelong learning to prepare them for careers in a fast-paced world of constant technological changes," he says.

The Principal explains this is the reason why the school follows the Baccalaureate system (IB). "When I was at school in the traditional Portuguese system, the teacher fed the information which we



had to copy and then replicate, and I think the IB is a very forward-looking system. The teachers work a lot with the students to challenge them and ensure there is a lot more interaction," he says, adding that when a student submits work, it is always a draft from which the teacher gives critical feedback.

Gonçalves Pereira stresses that with so many changes in technology and company working practices, it is important to teach children to be adaptable and flexible, to be able to adjust to many scenarios.

"An international school is a good starting point because the students have to adjust to the 40 different nationalities we have here. You know that when talking to a Russian, Chinese or Spanish student, they will not, for social and cultural



differences, react in the same way, or even work in teams in the same manner and this is one way of being adaptable,” he says.

Another aspect is teaching the students to look at current challenges and see how syllabus subjects like Maths can be applied to find a solution to a specific contemporary challenge today.

“Instead of working from a book that was written some years ago, they have to work from the current reality and it is this practice that allows the students to adapt to changing realities in real-time,” explains.

THE CHALLENGE OF COVID-19

For the Dean, the COVID-19 pandemic can be viewed as an “amazing experience” so that when the students look back in 10 years from now, they can appreciate that they have gone through something that none of their previous or future generations has experienced.

“This required the students to adjust very quickly, from one day to the next, and we are considered one of the schools that adjusted best to the situation because we had all the on-line video conferencing systems prepared,” Gonçalves Pereira points out.

He says the students actually adjusted better than the teachers did, and found it exciting, however, he doesn’t believe that in 20 years all teaching

will be done on-line because the human interaction element is so important for personal development.

OEIRAS - A PROGRESSIVE AND WELCOMING MUNICIPALITY

Hugo Pereira stresses that when they were looking for a place to set up the school, it was important to find a municipality that was progressive, proactive and welcoming, and he says Oeiras ticks all the boxes.

“Oeiras Valley fits very well into what we were looking for since the municipality values education and its Mayor, Isaltino Morais understands the importance of a IB school and was so helpful in finding the perfect site and in setting up,” he says.

“THE TEACHERS WORK A WITH THE STUDENTS TO CHALLENGE THEM AND ENSURE THERE IS A LOT MORE INTERACTION, GIVE THEM CRITICAL FEEDBACK AND TEACH THEM HOW TO USE THEIR LEARNING TO ADDRESS CURRENT PROBLEMS.”

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

One aspect of the philosophy at Oeiras International School which is particularly pertinent given that the students come from privileged backgrounds is the teaching them the notion of civic and social responsibility in the wider community.

“We have a very close relationship with the municipality and we are involved not only at a municipal level, but also at a parish level as major donors of the Barcarena parish through the schools vegetable allotments where all the fresh produce is sent to the local food bank to help the more needy and elderly people in the area,” explains the Principal.

“One of the important aspects of Oeiras International School is our commitment of giving back to the community and all the students are required to do community service and if they don’t do it, they fail the year.”

The school has a very close relationship with Oeiras Municipal Council which was helpful in the planning procedures for converting the defunct primary school building on the site into a refurbished primary educational facility

“We are now building a new sports pavilion and the council’s officer came to the school and made the whole process easier, so we have an excellent relationship with Oeiras Municipal Council,” Gonçalves Pereira concludes. ■

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MASTERS

Sendo o único Major a decorrer sempre no mesmo campo, o Masters tem sido palco de alguns dos momentos mais icónicos da história do golfe desde 1934. A subida para o Magnolia Lane, a primeira tacada na cerimónia de abertura ou as inacreditáveis jogadas no Amen Corner fazem do Augusta National o lugar onde as lendas do golfe são eternizadas. Uma vitória neste torneio é o ponto alto para qualquer golfista da nova geração que queira deixar a sua marca. A Rolex celebra o regresso do circuito profissional de golfe no histórico Masters deste ano em novembro.

#Perpetual



OYSTER PERPETUAL DAY-DATE 40
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MASTERS
AUGUSTA NATIONAL GOLF CLUB
DE 12 A 15 DE NOVEMBRO DE 2020

