Innovators Forum '23
Education

Press Release

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Education experts call for new teaching models in the first Innovators Forum

Education was the central theme of the first edition of Innovators Forum, which gathered more than one thousand people, between online and on-site attendants. National and international experts addressed topics like the role of technology in Education, the skills of the future, new educational models, reskilling and upskilling.

The Innovators Forum, a knowledge-sharing initiative promoted by Sonae, had its first ever edition at the LX Factory, in Lisboa, where Education was the central theme gathering national and international experts to discuss trends, challenges and opportunities in this critical area for society, always under a future-focused lens. The event counted over one thousand participants, on-site and online, including teachers, students, entrepreneurs and decision-makers.

Among those attending was **Cláudia Azevedo**, CEO of Sonae, who spoke at the opening session and explained the reason behind the creation of this initiative, *"We realised that a lot of what we do at Sonae stayed within the company. Therefore, we wanted this knowledge to become public and reached society. Mostly, we wanted that knowledge to lead to action."*

Regarding choosing Education as the motto for this first edition, Cláudia Azevedo highlighted the importance of this area as a major social elevator, citing the example of her father's life story, Belmiro de Azevedo, founder of Sonae. The CEO furthered concluded that, *"the future needs to be designed and invented. We need new approaches, new experiences and plenty determination from the several stakeholders within society."*

Throughout the morning, several specialists took to the stage to debate the changes needed in order to scale the Education of the future. Among them, **Sugata Mitra**, a computer scientist and education theorist, who shared his vision on the future of Education, particularly the importance that students' success should not be measured by the level of knowledge, but rather by their ability to understand, communicate and compute. He finished by imparting his belief that, more than educating, *"the purpose of Education entails allowing people to live happy, healthy and useful lives."*

In turn, **David Kellermann**, consultant and university professor, recognised by his work using artificial intelligence and machine learning to improve the education system, invited the audience to reflect on the challenge that technology poses to current teaching models: how

can digital, Artificial Intelligence and Augmented Reality improve the human experience in the education setting. On this topic, the scholar explained the work he has been developing at the University of New South Wales, in Sydney, where he has been focusing on integrating technology to drive potential in the learning process across four realities: in the relationship with school community and of itself; in the classroom context; in student evaluation processes (in exams, for example); and also, in the research lab setting. In short, David Kellermann concluded that, *"the physical campus is something we have been improving throughout more than a thousand years. Now, we must start evolving in the digital campus."*

The Innovators Forum also featured several debates on topics such as the new education models in Portugal or the need to rethink the traditional teaching system. **José Pacheco**, educator, anthropologist, pedagogist, and founder of the Escola da Ponte and the Open Learning School, even stated that the current *"system does not work, it is useless. It cannot be improved, it must be changed".* On the other hand, **Pedro Santa Clara**, professor at NOVA SBE, founder of 42, and director of TUMO Coimbra, refers the main problem lies in the fact that *"the industry of Education is highly regulated. For the future, it is crucial that we, as a society, can enable more experimentation, allowing more educational models to emerge."*

Another hot topic was lifelong learning, where the concepts of reskilling and upskilling were widely mentioned. According to **João Magalhães**, co-founder and CEO of Code For All, *"there is a huge challenge: people are going to have to change jobs. It is a super complex problem, and one that is very difficult to solve."* In terms of the solution, **Marta Cunha**, Head of Transformation at Sonae and coordinator of the Reskilling for Employment (R4E) initiative, stressed that companies must take on a pivotal role in upgrading employees' skills, highlighting the effectiveness of projects like PRO_MOV, with employability rates of 80%. In turn, **João Duarte**, professor at NOVA SBE and coordinator of the ReSkill Hub platform, places the focus of the solution on universities, assuming that, for this to happen, it will be necessary to *"revisit our curricula, with study programmes less focused on content and more on technical skills",* while also *"having our doors open for professionals to visit these institutions. Without that, we won't know what the skills of the future will be."*

Overall, all participants agreed that the future of Education will necessarily imply combining the evolution of what we do best today with a revolution in obsolete models and practices.

This years' Innovators Forum ended with a speech by **Paulo Azevedo**, chairman of the Board of Directors at Sonae, who pointed out the significant improvements Portugal has achieved in the last 50 years, while not overlooking that inclusion remains one of the major issues, *"Nowadays, depending on where one is born and with what means, one can't reach the best schools, the best universities. Without that, one starts off to life with inequality."* In order for that to be possible, Paulo Azevedo states it will be paramount to build a vision of the future

for Education, which, in particular, *"will require investment, if we want to evolve, if we want to transform our Education."* In addition to investment, Paulo Azevedo also mentions prioritising forward-thinking, partnerships, recognising and motivating students, the skills of the future and, finally, inclusion and diversity.

About the Innovators Forum

Promoted by Sonae, it is an initiative to share knowledge on areas that directly impact society. From the way we educate our future generations to the sustainable practices we adopt and the digital revolution shaping our world, the Innovators Forum is a platform for exploration, collaboration, and progress, adopting a future-focused lens. And since the future is shaped by different areas, each year the forum will tackle a different theme, exploring its possibilities and potential.

The Innovators Forum aims to:

Inspire: be a space for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and discovery.

Innovate: be an accelerator of change and an enabler of innovative actions.

Impact: create a positive and lasting impact on society.