REPÚBLICA PORTUGUESA

MINISTRA DA PRESIDÊNCIA E DA MODERNIZAÇÃO ADMINISTRATIVA

SCORUS CONFERENCE 2016

INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE ESTATÍSTICA – 01/07/2016

CLOSING STATEMENT FROM THE MINISTER OF THE PRESIDENCY AND ADMINISTRATIVE MODERNISATION

Dear Alda Carvalho, President of Statistics Portugal,

Thank you for hosting this conference in Lisbon

Dear members of the organising bodies,

Thank you for choosing to hold this Conference in Lisbon. It is always an honour for Portugal to host such events.

Dear speakers,

Dear participants,

Thank you all for your active participation in and your contributions to a rich number of innovative topics.

I sincerely hope that these last few days have been productive and stimulating for all of you.

Today's society can be defined by its increasing demand for and overwhelming production of information.

We have today a broader concept of development, which includes not only economic outcomes, but also people's wellbeing, and the sustainability of resources and the environment. Traditional concepts like GDP, are no longer the only measure to access development.

Citizens are also increasingly demanding more personalised public services and context-aware responses.

For citizens and communities, one-size fits all answers are no longer an adequate solution.

In order to address this pressure, policy makers are asking for more statistics, which are more detailed, and available immediatly, and on new and emerging topics.

Public policies have to be based on accurate and reliable statistics, which have to meet higher quality standards.

And this impacts naturally on the production of statistical information.

The response to this impact relies on a closer cooperation between public and private entities in order to benefit from multiple sources of information.

So, in this context, regional statistics have gained considerable relevance. They allow us to know better the specific nature of regions and communities and their diversity, and they also offer us support for locally and regionally based policy design, including monitoring and implementation.

Statistical information associated with the regions makes it easier for policy makers to assess their potential for economic development, their competiveness, social cohesion, environmental sustainability and wellbeing, by highlighting their distinct assets.

Discussions during this Conference have certainly shed light on the challenges ahead. Challenges that involve providing policy-makers with indicators that combine different sources of information and make full use of a variety of qualitative and quantitative data.

To deal with this, it is necessary to make use of new data sources, including administrative data, geospatial and, where relevant, big data, in order to complement the traditional sources.

In Portugal, administrative data are already widely used in the production of business, demographic, commuting and house-price statistics. And certainly they will be essential in the next 2021 demographic Census.

Additional improvements are expected as a result of measures in administrative modernisation and the adoption of simplified procedures.

The Portuguese Government has recently re-launched SIMPLEX, our flagship administrative and legislative modernisation program, focused on reducing the administrative burden for citizens and companies, and on improving public service efficiency.

Some of these actions will have a positive impact on the production of statistics.

We have a specific measure in this year's programme, which is focused on integrating administrative data from different public entities, such as the tax authority and social security, for statistical purposes.

The combination of data from different sources will allow us to improve our efficiency in statistical production, but also to reduce the burden on citizens and companies.

We, the public sector, should ask **only once** for the information already available to us. And following this principle, supported by European regulations, available data should be provided to Statistics Portugal.

On the other hand, the issue of big data is still not central to official statistical production.

We have some pilot studies that prove the usefulness of, for example, using mobile data for population or tourism statistics, or the use of satellite images for land cover and land use statistics.

These are indeed relevant experiences that are aligned with the big data action plan and roadmap that was established by the European Statistical System.

The fact that this massive data is most of the time embedded with geo-referenced information reveals the potential of its use. Enriching local and regional statistics with this dimension will certainty lead us to design better public policies.

Experiences and innovative approaches in these fields should be shared in forums such as this one, in order to stimulate common progress on their use.

But, at the same time, we need to go even further with the use of this overwhelming amount of detailed information.

We need to use it, in order to foresee scenarios and responses to needs and to plan and anticipate more, and react less.

For example, we need to use analysis about patterns of criminality to determine where a crime is most likely to occur, and mobilize the police to prevent it from happening. This may sound like some science-fiction movie, but these kinds of projects are already in place in cities like Seattle.

Predictive algorithms allow us to analyse large amounts of data, define patterns and predict the probability of events and to make suggestions about suitable action.

The simple presence of a police officer on that corner, where the system indicated a large probability of an event, will help prevent it from happening, which represents efficient resource management.

Another example of the use of such algorithms is fire prevention, both in urban and forest environments.

Again, by analysing past events, housing and terrain conditions, sensor information, user onsite reporting and climate predictions, we can anticipate where, most likely, a fire will occur, and take preventative action. Or to mobilise resources to react more promptly if a fire does occur.

This future is here, and we need to prepare ourselves to address these challenges.

People with new skills, such as data scientists and algorithm programmers will be needed for this.

But most of all, the most challenging task, is always at the organisational and communication level.

We need to improve internal processes and reinforce institutional cooperation, within the public sector, between the public and private sectors, and not forgetting the added value that academia can bring.

In conclusion, and as the topic of this conference states, we need to take a leap further with the exploration of sources of information.

But we also need to take a leap further with our innovative uses of such information.

So we can give more context-aware responses, at a regional level and at a personal level.

And we can improve our policies and our public service delivery.

Thank you for your attention, and I wish you all a nice trip back home.