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Gabinete da Secretária de Estado da Ciência, Tecnologia e Ensino Superior

**Conferência “Languages and the Internationalisation of Higher
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**Maria Fernanda Rollo, Secretary of State for Science, Technology and Higher
Education**

Acknowledgments

I would like to greet the European Languages Council for the organisation of this initiative and to thank the opportunity to take part in this session. I am so sorry I cannot be present and would like to thank Manuel Célio for his availability to address a few words on my behalf on the role of language for the development of education as of science and technology.

Languages are a structuring element of cultural identity and one of the pillars of national sovereignty. In science there is a supremacy of communication and publication in English. This is an acknowledged reality since, generally, most of the leading journals are based in the U.S.A, meaning scientists, whose native language is not English, are compelled to write in a foreign language in order to be published in those journals.

However, one can clearly perceive that asymmetries in terms of production and fruition of knowledge are increasing exponentially. Looking at a world map what we see is that there is no meaningful and significant research produced in the South. Also a certain inexorability, at least with a broad temporal range, of a need and dependence of the South towards the North.

The fight against geographic, linguistic and cultural asymmetries that persist in the production of knowledge is a joint challenge on a global scale. It demonstrates that the permanency of the current system will not produce the social, cultural and economic benefits that constitute the assumptions and principles inherent in the production of scientific knowledge. The less consideration for the importance of languages of science



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such as Portuguese, Spanish, French, German, or other languages is an imminent danger to the multilingualism of European science.

For those countries where Portuguese is the official language, the sharing of knowledge, in the context of Open Access and Open Science is an opportunity for the appreciation and projection of a scientific production in these geographies, thus reinforcing collaboration amongst them and the recognition of Science in Portuguese at an international level.

It is also an opportunity to put knowledge at the service of development, in particular in the context of cultures which have both culture and Portuguese language as a reference. One should point out the possibilities of the digital technologies, namely open access resources and open science practices, which can be used in teaching and training, notably in distance learning.

There are currently 261 million people who speak Portuguese in the World, with an expected figure of 380 million over the next 40 years.

Portuguese is, without a doubt, a language of science. One should also consider the significant rise in the demand on an international level towards learning in Portuguese and, on another note, a growing international recognition of the Portuguese scientific production, as well as both training and education offer in Portugal. To all this is complemented the economic value of the Portuguese language and tourism movement as Portugal is increasingly chosen as a tourism destination.

This context of multiple opportunities must be taken into account as the challenges that the digital era poses to the Portuguese language and that open access/open science bring to the consolidation of science in Portuguese.

Like Portuguese, there are other languages, in other regions, of similar relevance. On the one hand, one should point out, that on an international level, the Portuguese language faces many challenges, in comparison to other languages / other countries endowed with strategies / policies in the scientific field and in the defense of their own



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language, with infrastructures and significant financial and technological resources. On the other side, the defence of the Portuguese language, such as some other languages, needs to be suitably researched and technologically prepared so that it can be ensured that all people, services and goods will be available and accessible.

Throughout many years, several Portuguese Speaking Countries science and culture institutions have built digital repositories that aggregate content within their scope of action. However, in the majority of cases, such content is dispersed, without coordinated efforts being done to stimulate its usage.

Yet undoubtedly, digital repositories, due to their characteristics and content availability, are key tools with great potential to broaden and democratise access to knowledge, making science, culture and the Portuguese language more global and contributing towards its visibility and impact.

Some final remarks

The inevitability of us looking at Language as a collective heritage and simultaneously as a representation for memory and cultural heritage that should be preserved and valued: in its identity, specificity and alterity.

In this context, and in particular to Portugal and for Portuguese Speaking countries, Portuguese language should be consolidated as a language of knowledge. Diversity of languages should be recognised as an essential tool for the construction of a fairer, more democratic and more sustainable society.