

*The President of the Republic*

MESSAGE FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

EUROPEAN THEMATIC NETWORK SHAFE - SMART HEALTHY AGE-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS

The challenge that is launched through the work developed in Portugal by Cáritas Coimbra, for one of the European Commission's Thematic Networks for 2018 - SHAFE Smart Healthy Age-Friendly Environments is one of the most strategic challenges for Europe nowadays and future days.

Facing the ageing of our societies is a challenge that already mobilizes a broad political, economic, social, scientific and cultural debate on an issue that is central to public policies and transversal to the different sectors of our societies. However it is an urgent challenge to become effective and consistent. On it I have left several warnings, synthesized in three ideas.

Firstly, the idea that this is an eminently humanist debate, representing as cornerstone, a fundamental option. The option to decide on what kind of society we want to live. If in a society that cares about human values, or in a technocratic, economic society, that financializes people's lives. It is not about overcoming science and rigor in the analysis of reality. It is about going further, knowing how we want to respond: involving everyone - because today's young people are the parents and grandparents of tomorrow - or just a few. In other words, we must begin by questioning whether we promote a generationally conscious society, where everyone knows that there is room for everyone, with no definite place for exclusions and misunderstandings or unnecessary cleavages.

Secondly, we must recognize that demographic changes have long been identified, that warnings are made and duly noted, that the next step is to define the strategic objectives for the performance of public policies. And this is not anyone's monopoly, neither of political parties nor of social partners. It is a national issue and a European issue, which requires consensus and broad political and social agreements. Only then the answers will match the dimension of the challenge.

Finally, it is important to underline the Portuguese example in addressing the issue of migration, an essential factor when discussing the fight against a severe demographic winter in Europe. To look at the theme of migrations with openness and a vision of the future, to discuss it with the concern to stimulate inclusion and social cohesion, not its inverse.

It is therefore a difficult but stimulating challenge, the one for which Caritas Coimbra proposes to contribute. A challenge that should motivate and unite all the Portuguese.

The President of the Republic

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa

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