

Conference on International Connectivity and the EU-Atlantic Data Gateway Platform

May 27th and 28th



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João Cadete Matos, ANACOM Chairman

Address to the Conference on International Connectivity and the EU-Atlantic Data Gateway Platform

Sines, 27th and 28th May 2021

International connectivity is essential to ensure the efficient functioning of the entire Internet ecosystem. It is a fundamental ingredient for both socioeconomic development and those domestic and international projects focusing on innovation and scientific research. These two applications fully justify the establishment of new international underwater routes for greater connectivity.

I am proud that since the early days of my mandate, started in summer of 2017, ANACOM has been actively promoting a national strategy involving the international connectivity of mainland Portugal and its Autonomous Regions (Azores and Madeira). As always, our intention is to defend the interests of Portugal and in particular to achieve social and economic cohesion across all the Portuguese territory. We are sure, that by doing so, we are also defending the interests of the European Union.

We also believe that neither the European Union, neither Portugal should be dependent on third countries or regions for its connectivity, interconnection and data storage.

By June of 2018, so three years ago, ANACOM organised a workshop where was highlighted the need of replacement of existing domestic submarine cables interconnection carrying communications between mainland Portugal, the Azores and Madeira (the so-called CAM ring).

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At the same time, ANACOM challenged the sector to include seismic detection in the new CAM Ring.

From May 2019, I was also proud to chair the working group set up by the Portuguese Government to study and analyse the most suitable technical and financial configuration for the timely replacement of the existing CAM Ring.

Besides ANACOM, the Working Group also included representatives of the Regional Governments of the Azores and Madeira and the Ministries of Planning and of Infrastructures and Housing. In addition, relevant stakeholders, many of which will be addressing during this Conference, were consulted and their opinions taken in the utmost account.

We welcome the spirit of dialogue and cooperation that guided this Working Group and the excellent outcome of this joint effort.

The Group delivered scheduled recommendations, to fit in with the start of operations for the new CAM Ring. (I recall that the READY FOR SERVICE is scheduled to 2024).

We note with responsibility that the Portuguese Government welcomed such recommendations, including the provision of the new CAM ring with the necessary configuration and sufficient capacity for the creation of a platform that would foster international connectivity and the ability to offer a number of new services, including seismic and environmental detection through telecom submarine cables.

The provision of innovative services offered to submarine cables is a key component that ANACOM embraces with enthusiasm as Submarine Cables are becoming increasingly critical in terms of electronic communications infrastructure.

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Among other services, ANACOM advocates:

- seismic and environmental detection by telecom submarine cables;
- the easy and transparent licensing process for submarine cables crossing its *Exclusive Economic Zone* (EEZ) by introducing a one stop shop Portal through which the industry and public entities can easily interact;
- the Introduction of surveillance and protection services of submarine cables in the Portuguese EEZ;
- the creating of a R&D cluster for the utilization of telecom and energy Submarine Cables for environmental and seismic detection in Portugal;
- periodic restoration trial exercise for submarine cables landing in Portugal;
- particular attention to cable ships in order to facilitate their activity (installation and repair of submarine cables) in Portuguese EEZ;
- the use of green energy to feed Submarine Cables, Interconnection Hubs and Data Centres.

Excellencies,

In 1870 an international submarine cable landed in Portugal for the first time which consolidated our geostrategic position at the time.

Such position is unique given its diversity. It provides easy access of the European Union to North and South America, to Western Africa and to the Mediterranean and through this, the Middle East and Asia.

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Nowadays, there is no other country in the world connected by direct submarine cables to all Continents! In fact, Portugal was until the end of 2020 the only country in the world that had direct submarine cables linked to all Continents (except Antarctica).

The geographic location allows Portugal to easily interconnect cables from South, North and West. The Autonomous Regions also bring strategical advantages: Azores has a strategic position given its location of midway between New York and Brussels; while Madeira location is a plus in the connectivity to the Southern Hemisphere.

We know that Portugal is a natural junction point for international submarine cables interconnection. But we need to add value: Portugal aims to be a data hub in the Western European Union.

In these circumstances, we believe that Portugal is in a unique position to contribute to the EU Data-Gateway Platform strategy, in particular to the EU Atlantic Data-Gateway Platform where Portugal is inserted. By doing so, Portugal is contributing to Europe's digital sovereignty and its global competitiveness and leadership.

I look forward to hearing the debates throughout this Conference and to learn from key stakeholders in this industry, hoping that it will also serve as a network opportunity for new business developments.

I wish you all a fruitful Conference to both physical and remote participants.