

Dear all,

I am honoured to accept the role of **Honorary President of the EU Summer School for Female Leadership in the Digital Age**, taking place this year in Portugal, in recognition of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU. It is a privilege for my capital city, Lisbon, to be able to provide the backdrop to such a meaningful and memorable occasion.

For more than a decade, Portugal has been committed to creating a favorable environment for innovation, by investing in next-generation networks, implementing cutting-edge systems, and promoting gender equality in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) education and careers. In recognition of our progress, Portugal officially joined others—including Sweden, Finland, and Denmark—as an EU ‘strong innovator’ in 2020.

However, there is still much more to do.

As the world transitions into the digital era, Portugal is embracing the European Commission’s broader commitment to building a Europe fit for the digital era, as well as **a gender-equal Union by 2025**. We believe programmes like this will accelerate our efforts through educating and inspiring the leaders who will ultimately help us achieve these goals.

With these ambitions in mind, I welcome you, the first-ever participants of the EU Summer School for Female Leadership in the Digital Age, to Portugal. The world is more open than ever to seeing you for the bright students and professionals that you are, and to help you thrive so that you can achieve your dreams.

Digital leadership is about shaping the transition to the world of tomorrow, today. It requires vision and boldness to promote innovation and to use technology to solve societal challenges and improve living conditions. It also requires an attentive eye to overcome risks of digital exclusion, to bring everyone on board, and to preserve fundamental rights in our digitized democracies.

Future leaders, I invite you to make the most of your time in Lisbon. To participate fully in the programme, and to speak freely at every one of its sessions. To lead and learn. To be curious, focused, brave, and creative. Lastly, in the spirit of EU cooperation, I encourage you to forge lasting friendships and create unforgettable memories in my beautiful country, Portugal.

Muito obrigada,

Maria Manuel Leitão Marques
Honorary President
Inaugural Edition, Summer School
for Female Leadership in the Digital Age