

## ■ Immigrant Entrepreneur of the Year Award

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**Abstract** The Immigration Platform, an initiative of a number of Portuguese civil society organisations aiming to promote the welcoming and integration of immigrants, launched the Immigrant Entrepreneur of the Year Award. The Award has the objective of rewarding immigrant entrepreneurs who are examples of positive and innovative integration into Portuguese society.

**Keywords** immigration, Immigration Platform, integration, Common Basic Principles, entrepreneurship, award, innovation, intrapreneurship.

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The deepening of the economic globalisation process has been accompanied by an increase in the intensity, diversity and complexity of migratory movements of populations between various regions of the world.

There are today more than 200 million people who live outside their country for reasons that are above all related to the search, which can be more or less desperate, for better living conditions, or even just the opportunity to survive. They are fleeing from unemployment, misery and hunger, but also from environmental disasters or war and ethnic and religious persecution.

The regions of destination are, at least in these people's imaginations, lands of dreams and opportunities, but sometimes reality takes it upon itself to harshly demonstrate that this is not so and that there also life is not easy.

We all know that modern societies are increasingly diverse in ethnic, cultural and religious terms, which can create conflicts, but can also be a factor of development and for defining social innovation for receiving societies. The management of this diversity and the integration of these people are currently one of the main challenges we are faced with.

In view of the significance and the sheer breadth of this challenge - and the role that civil society can and should assume in the promotion of integration processes -, a group of foundations and other institutions or civil society organisations that have organised activities or supported research or analysis around the theme of immigration came together in a common initiative: the *Platform on Welcoming and Integration Policies for Immigrants* (Immigration Platform).<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, on 21 November 2006, in the presence of Franco Frattini, Vice-President of the European Commission and Pedro Silva Pereira, Portuguese Minister of the Presidency, the Immigration Platform was launched, aiming to promote and disseminate the Common Basic Principles for the Integration of Immigrants (COM (2005) 389 final) and their incorporation into policies and practices implemented in Portugal.

The core group of founding organisations of the Immigration Platform comprises the Aga Khan Portugal, Calouste Gulbenkian, Luso-American, Luso-Brazilian, Orient and Portugal Africa Foundations; the Entrepreneurial Association of Portugal and the Portuguese Industrial Association; the Episcopal Commission for Human Mobility; the Confederations of Farmers of Portugal, of Trade and Services of Portugal, of Portuguese Industry, and of Portuguese Tourism; the General Workers' Union; and the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers.

With this initiative, the signatories to the Immigration Platform seek to pursue the following main objectives:

1. Come together, combining efforts and activities in the context of the integration of immigrants in Portuguese society, contributing in a decisive way in this area to civil society organising itself, developing capacity and acquiring competences to better participate in the larger debates and influence the definition of policies in these areas;
2. Identify, disseminate and promote activities considered to be 'good practices' in the area of immigrant integration;
3. Raise awareness among the public about immigration issues, giving visibility to the subject and the debates associated with it;
4. Raise awareness among public or private institutions with competences in areas related to immigrant integration about the importance of taking the Common Basic Principles into consideration; and
5. Dialogue with social communication media in relation to the importance of having an informed and impartial coverage on this theme, free from stigmas or prejudices.

As the integration process involves a deepening of knowledge and understanding among various groups of citizens that has to result from an effort, not only on the

part of the receiving societies but also of those that arrive, that is, of the immigrants themselves, the Immigration Platform decided to create a Distinction that would annually distinguish and recognise the local authority which, through its activities, has best interpreted, promoted and applied the Common Basic Principles for the integration of immigrants. In parallel, it was also decided to create an Award to be attributed to immigrants who constitute examples of pro-active and innovative integration into Portuguese society.

In 2007, the Immigrant Entrepreneur Award was attributed for the first time, on foot of a public competition, widely disseminated in the press and through immigrant associations and the main organisations that support immigrants.

The evaluation and selection of applications was undertaken by an independent jury, on the basis of the following evaluation criteria:

- A career that reveals attitudes and competences commonly associated with entrepreneurship – particularly a liking for realisation of projects, acceptance of calculated risks, tolerance for mistakes and perseverance, the capacity to learn from experience, the sharing of knowledge, the search for excellence and taking responsibility;
- Use of the entrepreneurial ability in the promotion of innovative initiatives (leading to new products, services or processes, forms of organisation or markets). To this effect, the entrepreneurial ability is understood in a broad sense, covering not only activities of business creation but also activities by employees, where they reveal 'intrapreneurship' or an element of pro-active social responsibility;
- Economic and/or social sustainability of the initiatives in question;
- Contribution to a closer relationship between the immigrant's country of origin and Portugal;
- Contribution to the development of the immigrant's country of origin;
- A career that shows pro-active integration by the immigrant and by their initiatives in the Portuguese socio-economic context;
- Respect for the fundamental values of citizenship.

In this first year the jury unanimously decided to select the application of Elisabeta Ecaterina Necker – a Romanian citizen, engineer by training, residing in Portugal since 2000 – as they concluded that she best fulfilled the objectives of the Immigrant Entrepreneur Award 2007, namely in relation to her marked entrepreneurial ability, showing 'intrapreneurship', and her intense and pro-active activity of responsibility and social intervention. The jury emphasised their choice, stating that they particularly appreciated the applicant's experience which showed exceptional qualities of perseverance, courage and availability in putting herself at the service of her compatriots and the community into which she is integrated.

The objective of the Immigration Platform is to repeat this initiative for five years, that is, until 2011, followed by a necessary process of evaluation. The Regulations for this competition are to be found in the annex below, providing the opportunity to gain a more detailed understanding of the initiative.

## **Annex**

### **Regulations for the “Immigrant Entrepreneur of the Year” Competition**



Considering that

- During the coming decades, immigrants will be called upon to play a crucial role in the economic and social development of Portugal;
- The importance of their role will be in accordance with the extent of their social and professional integration in our country;
- It is of great importance to inform all the residents of the country – both Portuguese and immigrants themselves – of cases of immigrants who have distinguished themselves through their role as entrepreneurs and leaders in our society; and
- One of the concerns of the Immigration Platform, and particularly of the foundations that form part of it, has been the promotion of initiatives that actively seek to achieve the integration of immigrants into Portuguese society,

the Immigration Platform shall promote the organisation of a competition regulated by the following clauses:

1st Clause  
(Nature and objective)

1. The Immigration Platform institutes the competition "IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR", hereafter referred to simply as the Competition.
2. The Competition has the central objective of rewarding and publicising immigrants who have distinguished themselves through their entrepreneurial and leadership role in the context of Portuguese society and who constitute examples of pro-active and innovative integration in our economy and, where possible, of stimulation of cooperation between their countries of origin and Portugal.
3. In the context of the Competition, applicants will be evaluated on the strength of their entrepreneurial careers in Portugal - for their foreseeable impact on the Portuguese economy, in light of the central objective defined in the previous article of this clause and the priorities and criteria of evaluation laid out in the 5th Clause.
4. The Award will be attributed on an annual basis on foot of deliberation by a jury constituted to that effect by the Immigration Platform and hereafter referred to simply as the Jury.

2nd Clause  
(Eligible applicants)

The applicants for the Competition shall be immigrants who fulfil the following conditions:

- a) possess a residence authorisation in Portugal at the time of application;
- b) have been resident in Portugal for more than five years, counted until the date of application;
- c) on the date of taking up residence in Portugal to not have been a citizen of the European Union;
- d) have a profile which is within the framework of the objectives of the competition.

3rd Clause  
(Concept)

1. It is understood that an entrepreneur is a persistent individual who likes to take risks and accept challenges, and who creates something new or adds value to something already in existence, through much dedication and effort.

2. The concept referred to in the previous article includes not only the creation of new businesses and organisations (self-employed entrepreneur), but also the introduction by creative employees of innovative processes, products or services within the companies or organisations where they work (employee entrepreneur) and, also, attitudes of pro-active social responsibility.

#### 4th Clause (Applications)

1. The announcement of the opening of the Competition will be, at a minimum, disseminated through two newspapers with national circulation and by organisations that represent immigrants.

2. The application processes should be preferably sent electronically or by post to the Secretariado da Plataforma Imigração, at the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Av. de Berna 45-A, 1067-001 Lisbon, within a period to be fixed and disseminated annually by the Immigration Platform.

3. The applications should be submitted individually by the applicants, by institutions within the diplomatic corps of the countries of origin or by organisations that represent immigrant communities.

4. The applications to be considered should be structured along the following lines:

- Identification of the applicant (full CV);
- Summary of the immigrant's career in Portugal, with an indication of the main initiatives of an economic or social nature;
- Detailed description of the applicant's career, with a particular emphasis on the period of residency in Portugal (maximum 10 pages, with 12-point font and single line-spacing), including
  - Presentation of the career, including dates, difficulties felt in each phase and ways that were found to overcome them, support received and offered in the course of the career and
  - Indications of the reasons why their career merits the Award, in light of the central objective of the Competition (see 1st Clause) and of each of the evaluation criteria adopted (see 5th Clause);
- Declaration of honour in relation to residence in Portugal for over five years, counted until the date of application;
- Letters from Portuguese or foreign institutions (except those involved in the submission of the application processes), demonstrating support for the merit of the applicant, in light of the central objective of the Competition and the evaluation criteria adopted.

5th Clause  
(Evaluation criteria for the applications)

1. The applications submitted will be evaluated by the Jury according to the following criteria:

- A career that reveals attitudes and competences commonly associated with entrepreneurship (particularly a liking for realisation of projects, acceptance of calculated risks, tolerance for mistakes and perseverance, the capacity to learn from experience, the sharing of knowledge, the search for excellence and taking responsibility);
- Use of the entrepreneurial ability in the promotion of innovative initiatives (leading to new organisations of an economic or social character, or the introduction of new products, services or processes); to this effect, the entrepreneurial ability is understood in a broad sense, covering not only activities of business creation but also activities by employees, where they reveal 'intrapreneurship' or an element of pro-active social responsibility;
- Economic and/or social sustainability of the initiatives in question;
- Contribution to a closer relationship between the immigrant's country of origin and Portugal;
- Contribution to the development of the immigrant's country of origin;
- A career that shows pro-active integration by the immigrant and by their initiatives in the Portuguese socio-economic context;
- Ability for effort and individual valuation;
- Respect for the fundamental values of citizenship.

2. The interpretation of the merit of each application in light of each of the criteria stated in the previous article of this clause and the weight to be attributed implicitly or explicitly to these criteria is the exclusive responsibility of the Jury.

6th Clause  
(Instruction of the application process)

1. The Secretariat of the Immigration Platform will ensure the provision of support to the Jury, namely through the preparation of a dossier that will include all of the relevant information on all of the applications submitted to the Competition for a comprehensive evaluation in accordance with the criteria stated in article 1 of the previous clause.

2. For the preparation of the process of deliberation the Immigration Platform shall have recourse to the support of an external organisation.

3. Both the people responsible for the preparation of the dossier and for the analysis of the applications and the members of the Jury can consult the applicants,

the institutions that submitted the respective applications, or other organisations considered relevant.

7th Clause  
(Constitution and competences of the Jury)

1. The presidency of the Jury will be ensured, in rotation, by a representative of one of the foundations that form part of the Core Group of Founders of the Immigration Platform, and shall involve four additional members invited by the Immigration Platform.
2. The Jury shall guarantee the rigour and the transparency of all of the procedures related to the Competition and to the Award, with the duty to:
  - interpret the criteria of evaluation of the applications submitted to the Competition and
  - select the winning application for the Competition, by simple majority of the members of the Jury, with the President having the deciding vote.
3. The attribution of the Award is the unique and exclusive responsibility of the Jury, and is not subject to appeal.
4. At the exceptional discretion of the Jury it shall be possible to not attribute the Award, or to attribute it, ex aequo, to more than one candidate.
5. It is the specific competence of the President to lead the meetings of the Jury, ensuring the production of the respective minutes and establishing contacts between the Jury and the support provided by the Secretariat of the Immigration Platform.
6. To the exclusive effect of deliberating on the selection of the winning application of the Competition, the Jury shall meet on the dates defined by its President.

8th Clause  
(Publicising and materialisation of the Award)

1. Each year, the winner of the Competition will be publicly announced at a Session organised to that effect by the Immigration Platform, and the corresponding deliberation of the Jury shall accordingly be kept confidential until then.
2. The Award shall be materialised in the attribution to the winner of the Competition of a sum of twenty thousand Euros (€20,000).
3. The Award shall be liquidated through the handing over of a cheque to the winner of the Competition during the Session referred to in article 1 of this clause.
4. The winner of the Competition shall have the right to disseminate their winning of the Award both in their own publicity and in any documentation that uses their image.

9th Clause  
(Guarantees and rights)

1. The Immigration Platform and the Jury will dedicate all of their efforts in order to guarantee the quality and the rigour of the processes of instruction of the applications, of the selection of the winner and of the materialisation of the Award. However, the Immigration Platform and the Jury do not have any civil or criminal responsibility resulting from mistakes, failures or omissions that may occur involuntarily during those processes.
2. The brand, the logo and other materials that are specifically designed for the competition and the Award shall be protected by author's rights and may not, apart from in a situation foreseen in article 4 of the 8th Clause of these regulations, be used without the explicit authorisation of the Immigration Platform.
3. Information received in the applications to the Competition will be kept under strict confidentiality by the Jury and by the Immigration Platform.

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> For more information, please see: [www.plataformaimigracao.org](http://www.plataformaimigracao.org).