



INESC Capable-ID

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Welcome to the sixth edition of INESC Capable-ID, the official newsletter of INESC-ID. A shopping trip with no queues, Portugal's new digital voice, an excellent evaluation result, a new room for our PhD students, outreach activities that open curious minds and even overcoming the Adamastor. A lot has happened in the last couple months — and you can read all about it below.

In Depth



Reinventing shopping with PT Smart Retail

What if shopping had no queues, no cashiers — just pick up and go? That's the future envisioned by PT Smart Retail, a PRR-funded project transforming how we interact with stores. Led at INESC-ID by Nuno Santos, the project is aiming at key challenges in privacy, cybersecurity, and AI trust, ensuring autonomous stores are not only smart but secure. With 19 partners and cutting-edge research into video anonymisation, data protection, and secure AI, INESC-ID is making this a reality. The world's largest autonomous store is already functioning in Leiria, powered by this very tech.

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Awards and Achievements

Pedro Orvalho overcomes the Adamastor

Aiming to reduce the time spent correcting errors in coding, Pedro Orvalho, who recently completed his PhD thesis at INESC-ID and Instituto Superior Técnico developed the artificial intelligence tool MENTOR, which earned him the third edition of the award “Vencer o Adamastor” (“Overcoming the Adamastor”). Established by INESC and the newspaper “Público”, the prize aims to reward innovative national iworks by young scientists. The award ceremony took place on April 11 at Técnico Innovation Center.



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Spotlight



INESC-ID rated “Excellent” by FCT

INESC-ID has achieved the highest possible rating—“Excellent”—in the national evaluation of R&D Units by FCT, scoring top marks across all criteria. Recognised for its international-level research, high-impact projects, and societal relevance, our institute was praised for its excellence in AI, security, and digital transformation. The evaluation panel highlighted INESC-ID’s strong industry ties, innovation through 10 spin-offs, and ethical commitment.

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People of INESC-ID

Ruxandra Barbulescu

Ruxandra first visited INESC-ID in 2015 during her PhD and was quickly won over by the Portuguese people and the rare sense of home she felt outside Romania. She returned for a postdoc and stayed. Now, as coordinator of the LHT thematic line, she's drawing on her background in computational biology to build collaborations from the ground up. She's used to grasping big challenges — with both hands. A competitive rock climber, Ruxandra has climbed everything from short boulders to 700-meter walls, in a sport that's shaped her identity and values. She co-founded a project for women in climbing and brings that same energy to promoting gender balance at INESC-ID.



Rafael Belchior

“Freedom with responsibility.” That's how Rafael Belchior, 28, describes the relationship he built with his PhD advisors, André Vasconcelos and Miguel Pupo Correia, over five years of research. After defending his thesis in September 2024, he stayed on through the Blockchain.pt project, working on interoperability between blockchain systems — “previously isolated and unable to communicate,” he explains. Originally from Elvas, Rafael discovered computer science as a teen through online forums. Drawn to the intersection of math and philosophy, he pursued informatics as a natural path. Sports have also been a constant — even during a Fulbright at MIT. “Doing a PhD without hobbies is really tough,” he admits.



Hugo Morais

How many hours are in Hugo Morais' day? Coordinator of three European projects in energy systems, Hugo Morais is undeniably one of the world's leading experts on the energy transition. In fact, Stanford University's 2024 ranking places him among the top 2% of scientists worldwide. A former working student, Hugo admits research came into his life by chance—he started his scientific career while unemployed. Now 48, he has contributed to over 40 national and international projects, including developing operational planning tools for France's electricity distribution operator, Électricité de France. He's also an editor for top scientific journals and manages to stay active playing basketball.



Research Highlights



AMALIA: Giving Portugal a Digital Voice

Inspired by the emotional depth of fado and the legacy of Amália Rodrigues, AMALIA is the first Large Language Model (LLM) developed from scratch for European Portuguese — with INESC-ID playing a key role in speech and multimodal processing. Coordinated by Alberto Abad and supported by Portugal's PRR, this open-source AI model will serve as a cultural and linguistic asset, designed to operate securely in key sectors like education, media, and public administration. More than just a tool, AMALIA is a strategic step toward technological sovereignty and the preservation of national identity in the digital age.

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Reaching Out



INESC-ID opens minds at Técnico Open Day

What do mushrooms, robot dogs, and the ocean have in common? From hands-on sustainability games and chips helping Europe stay ahead in tech, to robots for emergency response and AI that tracks marine animals or spots dangerous mushrooms — these are the projects INESC-ID showcased at this year's Técnico Open Day, held on April 5. An enthusiastic team of volunteer researchers and students from GAIPS, HPCAS, and IDSS, supported by the Communication and Outreach Office, delivered a full day of science-in-action demos to hundreds of curious minds of all ages.

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Reaching In



R.617: INESC-ID PhD students cut the ribbon on their new room

On April 2, around 30 people attended the symbolic ribbon-cutting ceremony at the entrance of the new PhD Students Room. The inauguration was attended by two members of the board, João Paulo Carvalho and Helena Galhardas, and concluded with

the students left to chat and enjoy the music and snacks provided. What started as a storage room has undergone a complete makeover. Now, Room 617 is a space especially dedicated to PhD students — where they can study, socialize or take a breather from a day's work.

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We Recommend

New art museum in Lisbon

It's Lisbon's newest museum — and it comes with a major twist: it was built entirely from privately owned contemporary art, collected over the past five decades. MACAM – Museu de Arte Contemporânea Armando Martins opened its doors to the public last March, breathing new life into an 18th-century palace that has been fully renovated, with full respect for its original architecture. Spread across 2,000 square meters, the museum showcases 600 works by both Portuguese and international artists. Located at the base of a five-star hotel — whose operation is designed to help finance the museum — MACAM is well worth a visit. Pro tip: set aside at least an hour and a half to truly take it all in.



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