

Maria Ribeiro Soares

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ABOUT

Electrical and Computer Engineer working at the intersection of applied AI, robotics, and immersive systems. Active across three vectors: shipping production grade XR products as a founder, contributing to the European immersive technology ecosystem through industry and policy work, and growing Portugal's XR community. Award winning entrepreneur, featured in international and national press, and a regular speaker at international conferences on immersive technology, spatial computing, and AI. Now exploring robotics and AI, with a focus on world models and multi-agent systems.

EDUCATION

Integrated Master in Electrical and Computer Engineering, *Instituto Superior Técnico, Universidade de Lisboa* 2015 to 2021

Major: Systems, Decision and Control (Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Machine Learning). Minor: Telecommunications.

Master's Thesis: *Coordinated Control of Quadcopters for Large Object Positioning*. Conducted at **INESC-ID Lisbon**, Project HARMONY (Multivehicle Control and Coordination). Decentralised coordination of multi-agent aerial systems using real time communication.

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

Founder and CEO, Immersiv Studios, Lisbon 2023 to present
XR startup building scalable immersive solutions. Bootstrapped and profitable from day one. Led the development of 35+ experiences across education, retail, and brand engagement for 20+ clients, including global brands such as Samsung, Volkswagen and Europcar. Built real time data and analytics into every experience, so brands can measure engagement live while an event is still running. Now productising the studio's work into a platform for agencies. Work featured in international and national media and exhibited internationally.

Board Member and Portuguese Representative, Euromersive, European XR Association 2024 to present
Represent Portugal in international policy and standards discussions on extended reality. Contribute to the strategic direction of Europe's XR network and to the annual Portugal XR Report.

Co-founder, Portugal XR Meetups, National community for XR professionals 2025 to present
Co-founded with 6 members and friends to fill a gap: Portugal had no home for XR professionals. Themed meetups bringing researchers, professors and industry into the same room to discuss the state of the art, with the goal of taking the conversation beyond Lisbon. 4 editions to date in Lisbon, Porto and Coimbra, with the next one in the Algarve.

TEACHING AND RESEARCH

Lecturer, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, IPAM, Executive Master in Business Management 2026 to 2027
Teaching innovation and entrepreneurship to executive master's students.

Guest Lecturer, Interactive Virtual Reality Environments, University of Coimbra, Department of Informatics Engineering Sep 2025 to Feb 2026
Designed and delivered an industry to academia bridge course on XR development and user centred design. Guided undergraduate project cycles from ideation to prototype, with emphasis on ethical and inclusive design of immersive systems. Student evaluations: 4.5 to 5 out of 5 across all categories; 100% pass rate.

Researcher, INESC-ID Lisbon, Project HARMONY: Multivehicle Control and Coordination 2020 to 2021
Distributed optimal control for cyber physical multi-agent systems; adaptive control algorithms for mobile robots with unknown dynamics; game theoretic coordination strategies under bounded disturbances; methodological frameworks for multi-robot systems.

HONOURS AND AWARDS

Young Entrepreneur of the Year, 1st Edition Alumni Award, Instituto Superior Técnico May 2025
Awarded alongside António Guterres (Career Award), UN Secretary-General. Recognises alumni whose entrepreneurial trajectory demonstrates technical excellence and societal impact.

Finalist, Prémio Nacional de Inovação, Portugal 2026

Finalist, Prémios EmpreendeXXI, territorial final, CaixaBank / BPI Apr 2026

Top 50, Startup World Cup Portugal, Startup World Cup 2025 and 2026

Winner, Pitch PME, 1st Edition, <i>Crédito Agrícola</i>	Oct 2025
Top 10 Finalist, Rising Female Award, <i>Unicorn Factory Lisboa Entrepreneurship Awards</i>	Oct 2025
Top 6 Finalist, Santander X Portugal Awards, <i>Santander X</i>	Oct 2025
Selected Startup Showcase, Web Summit, <i>Web Summit Lisbon</i>	Nov 2025

INVITED TALKS, CONFERENCES AND PANELS

International

- Immersive Tech Week, Rotterdam, Netherlands, 2024.
- Global Startups Conference, Toronto, Canada. *Navigating Tomorrow, Redefining Brand Futures with Immersive Technologies*, June 2024.
- GatherVerse, Global panel on XR and AI, 2025.
- GatherVerse Middle East Summit, Panel moderator, 2025.
- GatherVerse Youth Summit 2025, United States, April 2025.

National (Portugal)

- Instituto Superior Técnico, Guest speaker, product development and entrepreneurship course, September 2026.
- APPM National Marketing Congress, *Imagens de Marca*. Closing speaker, January 2026.
- Instituto Superior Técnico, Graduation ceremony speaker, 2025.
- Virtual Worlds, *The Immersive Future*, Expert panel *XR plus AI: Synergies Beyond Hype*, October 2025.
- Porto Tech Hub, *Designing Reality: How Immersive Technologies are Shaping the Future of Human Experience*, October 2025.
- Ordem dos Engenheiros, Panel on innovation, 2025.
- Portugal Digital Summit, Speaker on omnichannel and emerging technologies, 2024.

Corporate and Institutional

Invited speaker / panelist at internal innovation programmes for: **ANACOM, Vieira de Almeida (VdA), GfK, Vodafone Innovation Lab, Instituto Superior Técnico, NOVA School of Business and Economics, and Universidade Católica Portuguesa.**

PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

- Contributor, *Portugal XR Report 2025*, APDC.
- Contributor, *Portugal XR Report 2024*, APDC.
- Opinion: “The Future is Immersive: How Technology can Transform our Relationship with Brands,” *Observador*, 2024.

National reports above are reference documents mapping Portugal’s immersive ecosystem, used by industry and policy stakeholders.

SELECTED MEDIA

- *Financial Times*, “Portugal welcomes start-ups seeking scale.”
- *RTP, Os Inovadores*, national broadcast feature.
- *SIC Notícias / Imagens de Marca*, “Raízes no Passado, Visão no Futuro.”
- *Briefing*, “Tecnologia imersiva, criatividade e ética definem o futuro das marcas.”
- *Observador, PME Magazine, Event Point*, among other national outlets.

Full media clipping.

MENTORSHIP

- Mentor for women in STEM and early stage technical founders, helping mostly with technical feasibility and pitch: **Founder Institute Portugal** (mentor rating 8 / 9), **PWN Global** (mentoring programme, 2026), **NOVA Haddad Entrepreneurship Institute (NOVA SBE)**, **Universidade Católica Portuguesa**, **Instituto Superior Técnico**, **Techstars Startup Weekend**.

LANGUAGES

Portuguese, Native. | English, C1 / C2 (full professional working proficiency).