

IFE INFO presents panel on “Cutting Edge Energy Innovation”



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On Wednesday, June 11th, 2014 His Excellency Nuno Brito, Ambassador of Portugal to the United States, and his wife Dr. Rosa Batoreu hosted IFE's INFO salon on "Cutting Edge Energy Innovation". The panel featured Jorge Moreira da Silva, *Portuguese Minister of Environment, Spatial Planning, and Energy*, Dr. Peter C. Evans, *Vice President of Center of Global Enterprise*, and Matthew Theall, *Presidential Innovation Fellow at the U.S. Department of Energy*, which was moderated by John Paul Farmer, *Director of Technology and Civic Innovation at Microsoft*.



After the welcoming remarks by Ambassador Brito and introductions by Coach Kemper, Minister Jorge Moreira da Silva kicked off the conversation by giving the audience some insights into the energy policy of Portugal. Da Silva noted that energy policy is at the forefront of Portugal's agenda, and the government has been active not only in addressing sustainability issues, but also cost efficiency and energy security—Europe is presently heavily dependent on Russian oil, which is a pressing issue given the current geopolitical situation in the region. In addition, da Silva highlighted Portugal's commitment to renewable energy, and is hoping to position the country as a renewable energy provider in Europe.

Peter Evans followed by remarking on some observations that he made from his experience over the last few decades in the energy sector. Evans argued that the focus of innovation or policies in energy should be on the infrastructure networks, in particular the ways in which these networks interconnect as well as coordination problems that might arise. He pointed out that an interesting trend is the increasing interconnection of different infrastructure networks, such as interconnection between gas and rail, as well as roads and electricity in order to enable the operation of electric cars. In addition, Evans emphasized the importance for energy policies to not just focus on sustainability but, with a world that is increasingly facing big shock events, policies should better address the issue of robustness and resilience of infrastructure.



Matthew Theall built on Evans' point about improving infrastructure robustness by sharing his thoughts on the role of technology, especially the global shift towards smart grids, in making the grid more resilient to shock events. Theall also pointed out the importance of the use of big data and machine-to-machine in further improving energy infrastructures.

All three panelists agreed that there is an important role for the government to play in the energy sector. Da Silva emphasized the government's role in correcting market failures and providing clear targets for the private sector. Evans talked about the government's ability to act as a facilitator between different parties in the private sector and resolve some of the coordinating issues. Theall stressed the need for the government to create an environment that accelerates innovation.

Contributed by Joanne Ke, IFE Fellow

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