11th European Family Businesses summit - summary

Between the 13th and 14th of October 2025, European Family Businesses held its 11th Summit under the title of *Unleashing the Power of Family Businesses for A Stronger Europe.*

This year, the summit was held in Lisbon in collaboration with our Portuguese chapter Associação das Empresa Familiares (Association of Portuguese Family Businesses).

Our overarching idea was to demonstrate how family businesses shape not only the communities in which they are founded, but also Europe's economy at large. We also sought to analyse the challenges faced by family businesses in the current geopolitical landscape.

With more than 120 attendees from 15 nationalities EFB's 11th Family Business Summit began with an opening address by José Germano de Sousa, President of the Association of Portuguese Family Businesses, which was followed by a speech from Günther H. Oettinger, former Vice-President of the European Commission, and an excellence award conferred by the Association of Portuguese Family Businesses to the "family business of the year" to the de Mello Family.

The morning of 14th October brought speeches from Jan Kornelis van Oord, President of European Family Businesses and José Germano de Sousa. Both highlighted the importance of family businesses, focusing on both the European level and the national level respectively.

Engaging on the topic of the economy, our keynote speaker Joaquim Miranda Sarmento, Portuguese Minister of State and Finance, offered a detailed analysis of the changing economic situation in Portugal. He noted the success in unemployment reduction, the decreased public debt to GDP ratio, the appointment of a minister for administrative burden reduction and more. His overview provided some insights into how the simplification agenda of the EU has proliferated into the national level.

During our first panel, titled *Rooted in Europe, Stepping into the World,* Alessia Mosca, Chair of the Scientific Committee at AIDAF and Professor at Sciences Po, António Casanova, Executive Vice President, General Manager Portugal and CEO of Unilever, Delphine Hanton, CEO of Thuasne Group, Edoardo Boroli, Partner & Investment Manager at MEGA Holding and 4th Generation of De Agostini Group and moderator Jesús Casado, EFB Secretary General, discussed the global geopolitical shift and what this means for Europe's competitiveness. Going in-depth into Europe's trade relationship with the US, the introduction of tariffs, subsidies and regulatory competition. Their political and business backgrounds made the speakers uniquely placed to explain their response to the challenges faced by their companies in terms of diversifying supply chains and combating overdependence.

The second panel was moderated by Erik Stern, Deputy Director of FBN Sweden, on the topic of *Inheritance Tax Situation: expect the unexpected*. During the panel Peje Emilsson, Founder and Owner of Kreab Worldwide and Neil Davy, Chief Executive Officer at Family Business UK analysed and compared how Sweden revitalized business transfers by removing inheritance taxation in 2004 and the most recent changes to the UK's inheritance taxation system which has gone a different direction. Dr Daniel Waldenström, Professor of Economics at the Research Institute of Industrial Economics (IFN Stockholm), measured the impacts of the social and economic changes in Sweden.

To further demonstrate the importance of family businesses to the economy, we had a panel on *How Does the Next Generation of Family Businesses Boost the EU Economy?* Moderated by Maria Villax, Consulting Expert in Family Governance & Ownership, who framed the conversation with Nicholas H. Vetter, CEO of OncoBeta, and Daniela Simões, Executive Board Member and 3rd Generation of Luís Simões. Here they assessed different aspects of intrapreneurship, and the role of Next Gen business owners in implementing the sustainability and digital agenda.

Adding to the theme of taxation and inheritance, we had an intervention moderated by Peter Villax, Chairman of the Advisory Board of the Association of Portuguese Family Businesses and delivered by Dr Daniel Waldenström, where he discussed his book *Richer and More Equal – A New History of Wealth in the West*. In his talk, Dr. Waldenström presented a reassessment of wealth distribution in Western societies over the past century. He argued that Western societies are becoming more equal, not less, contrary to the prevailing narrative.

Our summit concluded with a conversation moderated by Lídia Tarré, Vice-President of the Association of Portuguese Family Businesses and of Gelpeixe, and three representatives of the de Mello Family. During this conversation, Maria João de Mello, Chair of the Family Development Council, Pedro de Mello, Chairman of the Shareholders' Board, and Catarina Costa Duarte, Member of the Shareholders' Board of José de Mello, respectively, discussed their experience as winners of the IMD Global Family Business Award 2024, as a leading family group in Portugal and shared insights into their family and company history.

European Family Businesses would like to thank the sponsors, the Association of Portuguese family businesses, speakers, moderators and conference attendees for their participation.