



# THE CHALLENGER BANK TO LOOK OUT FOR

## A Conversation with **Chairman Pedro Coelho** BANCO BNI EUROPA

In today's business arena, innovation is considered as the holy grail of progress. It is due to this notion that almost all enterprises and organisations across industries are scrambling for ways on how they can successfully put innovation at the core of their strategies in order for them to be on top of the wave of dynamism and disruption. The financial services industry, like other sectors, is constantly evolving as various disruptive forces are stepping in. Aimed at revolutionising and redefining banking, a significant number of challenger banks have appeared on the horizon over the past year. One particular challenger bank that is rising to prominence is BANCO BNI Europa, a Portugal-based financial institution focussed on innovation and Fintech partnerships creating an ecosystem of

financial products and services. With the efforts and commitment of this particular financial institution to provide amazing customer experience through its services that are tailored to the needs of their clients, it's interesting to know why Banco BNI Europa is indeed the Challenger Bank to look out for. In light of this, we spoke with the bank's Executive Chairman, Mr Pedro Pinto Coelho.

**Q** Good day, Chairman! Thank you for taking the time to talk to us. To start this interview, would you please share with us what do successful leaders like you have in mind every single day especially in today's fast-paced business environment?

**A** I always look to the ever-changing business



**"Our key growth factor is that we do not depend on a single market; we aim to be European and grow across Europe."**

environment and see how to turn threats into opportunities. I believe leaders today have to look at such perspective as well.

**Q Before you became the CEO and Chairman at Banco BNI Europa, you were affiliated with other international companies. How was the transition to Banco BNI Europa?**

**A** The transition was fine. I knew it was not going to be an easy ride. However, I enjoy challenges and I had a clear idea we could create something different with some imagination and with the support of a dedicated team.

**Q You have been in the financial services industry for more than 20 years now and in your decades of experience what's the most interesting transformation you've witnessed?**

**A** The change we have witnessed over the last few years has been the most dramatic and will continue for some more years. The financial services industry is being challenged with new approaches from outsiders and it is likely that the industry will be changing very fast which means business model and key drivers will also change.

**I BELIEVE THE MOST IMPORTANT INGREDIENT FOR SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP IS FLEXIBILITY ASSOCIATED WITH PERSISTENCE.**



Banco BNI Europa is an international reference as a "Challenger Bank" based on its strategy of open architecture and differentiation. This positioning also allows Banco BNI Europa to stand out as the leader in the new "Fintech" generation of European banks and to continue with significant growth rates. In this context, Banco BNI Europa has also been specialising in the management of alternative solutions for raising funds and credit, having already established partnerships with several European Fintech's providing term deposits and credit products in several European jurisdictions, namely Germany, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Austria, France, Belgium and Finland. Those credit products include consumer credit, student loans, credit to SME's, factoring and real estate bridge lending.

Resulting from its modern digital platform and low-cost processes with innovative products, in 2018 Banco BNI Europa was awarded, in the Digital Banking category and based on Portuguese consumer surveys, "The Consumer Choice Award" by Consumer Trends and "The Five Stars Award" by the Five Star Committee.

**Q Banco BNI Europa is the fastest growing digital-only bank in Portugal. With your expertise in investment banking, you have helped the company innovate successfully. How has the journey been?**

**A** The journey has been interesting. We look at the business not as a closed model but we think outside the box by looking at how we can help clients with their challenges and serve them better. Whether they are personal clients or SMEs there are always new approaches to make life easier for them.

**Q Your vision is to provide your customers a modern, low-cost digital platform with innovative products tailored to their needs. How do you keep your whole management deeply rooted in your vision?**

**A** We are always trying to identify inefficiencies and improve our offering. A digital bank like BNI Europa is above all a bank that tries to innovate at all

levels and not only at the front end. We know that we need to have all processes optimised also from the support and control functions and not only on the business side. Therefore, we try hard to provide everyone in the organisation the full view of the bank's objectives.

**Q Speaking of your offerings, what's significant about your products and services that make you achieve an impressive growth rate?**

**A** I believe that our key growth factor is that we do not depend on a single market; we aim to be European and grow across Europe.

**Q In terms of what sets you apart, can you tell us what makes Banco BNI Europa a challenger bank?**

**A** Above all we see ourselves as a challenger bank because we do not have the legacy the incumbent banks have, we are more flexible and above all we focus on being the best on each product we offer.



We see ourselves as a *challenger bank* because we do not have the legacy the incumbent banks have, **we are more flexible and above all we focus on being the best on each product we offer. We do not try to be everything to everyone like the typical universal bank.**

We do not try to be everything to everyone like the typical universal bank.

**Q** Many would agree that innovation is a constant process. Having said that, would you let us know what you are focussing on at the moment and what your present and future clients should look forward to?

**A** At the moment we are looking at different ways to provide the most competitive lending products by reducing the credit risk and lowering our processing cost. We want to be the cheapest and quickest option in the market.

**Q** All companies had a fair share of disappointments and shortcomings, how do you deal with those and make sure that your whole team is heading to same directions as yours?

**A** We also had our share of disappointments. However, we believe sometimes we need to go through those phases to improve and grow stronger.

**Q** What do you think are the features of a remarkable leader today? What's your advice for the people who want to catapult their career forward in the financial services industry?

**A** I believe the most important ingredient for successful leadership is flexibility associated with persistence. The world is evolving fast and we need to learn new approaches to succeed.


**Q** When it comes to habits, there is no one-size-fits-all agenda. What are your favourite routines to keep yourself focussed and healthy at and off work?

**A** My routine is simple: harness the "body and mind". What I mean is keep your body in shape and nurture your mind by reading and learning new things everyday.

**Q** What does success mean to you? Any message you wish to share with our readers?

**A** Success to me means being able to create something that fulfils you. To fulfil you it has to be a shared fulfilment with your team and recognised by your clients as something they see as making their lives better.

**Q** What are the three things you will not leave home without?

**A** A good night rest, my vitamins taken and my mobile. 

**Q** Thank you very much, Chairman Coelho. It was a pleasure speaking with you.

**WE WANT TO BE THE CHEAPEST AND QUICKEST LENDING OPTION IN THE MARKET.**

### About the Interviewee

**Pedro Pinto Coelho** is the Executive Chairman of Banco BNI Europa. He is also Chairman of the Portuguese Fintech and Insurtech Association. Mr. Pinto Coelho has more than 20 years of international experience in the financial services industry across three continents. Before joining BNI Europa, he held several leadership positions such as CEO of Azure Wealth, a Wealth manager based in Switzerland; Founder and CEO of Standard Bank Angola, Founder and CEO of Amorim Global Investors, a private equity firm, Global Head of Financial Advisory at Banif Investment Banking Group, and Head of Investment Banking for Portugal at Citigroup, among others. He holds a MBA from HEC School of Management a MSc in Management Information Systems from ISCTE-IUL and a MSc in Industrial Engineering from UNL.

