

freiheit.com technologies is a German company which develops software and helps clients with their digital transformation. The company has decided to invest in Lisbon and to open its second office, the first one outside Germany.



Claudia Dietze, Managing Director and Founder of freiheit.com with the Lisbon team – from left to right Sebastian Heumann, Guilherme Ramos, André Jorge Esser and Benedikt Jost.

FREIHEIT.COM INVESTS IN PORTUGAL AND OPENS AN OFFICE IN LISBON

By: **Mafalda Freire**

Created by Stefan Richter and Claudia Dietze, freiheit.com has its head office in Hamburg. Founded at the same time as Google - with whom it partners and «shares certain values and working methods», the company celebrated its 20th birthday in October 2018. The Founder and Managing Director of freiheit.com, Claudia Dietze, explained to businessIT that the company's name means 'freedom' in German and is «related to open-source software which started spreading when the company was founded». The idea «was to be one of the best in the world, not the biggest». The people in charge soon realised that in order to achieve this goal they had to hire the best software engineers. This again would require «an environment where everybody could grow and people would

help each other to be the best every day». The software company's first client was Daimler and still is today. By developing e-commerce solutions, freiheit.com enjoyed great success in the early years, then turned to products for streaming data, music and video. Claudia Dietze said that these days «most of the large clients are linked to the automotive industry». She believes that this is due to the fact that the manufacturers in this sector have understood that in the future «all companies will use software». There is one thing that is true for all of freiheit.com's client relations: «They always develop solutions that are so important that the client's business depends on the availability of this product». Therefore, from the very first day, the focus has remained unchanged - «on the quality of the systems which they develop», said the Managing Director.

LISBON WAS A NATURAL CHOICE

«The choice of Lisbon was an interesting process», said the Executive. Everything started with the fact that the company was recruiting professionals from all over the world (about 40 per cent of the employees are from abroad) but they never managed to hire «any candidate from Portugal or Spain». As they found it strange, the founder decided to «set up a team to find out why».

Before leaving Germany, they researched which places had the best universities and selected three cities: Barcelona, Madrid and Lisbon. Claudia Dietze revealed how they proceeded: «Over four weeks, we travelled, we worked in coworking spaces, we had meetings with the founders of other companies and with the chambers of commerce».

A culture based on quality focussed on professionals, solutions and a constant learning process. This is the basis of freiheit.com's success.



Claudia Dietze at the Hamburg office where there are 150 employees, 85% of whom are software engineers.

Claudia Dietze revealed that continuous learning is one of the most important aspects: «This is in our DNA».

The choice was «easy» because it became obvious that Barcelona «was not the right location since most people are foreigners there». With view to Madrid, the situation was different. However, the city was «not open enough for international business». Lisbon «was a pleasant surprise». The Managing Director praised the city for the way it welcomed freiheit.com: «Everybody was enthusiastic about our idea of opening an office here and wanted to help us with the first steps». In addition to this, two of the main clients had teams or development centres in Lisbon: Daimler (through Mercedes) and Volkswagen. «Honestly, it was very easy to choose Lisbon as the host for our first international office». The company was established at the LACS - Lisbon Arts Communication & Studios.

In November 2018, five Portuguese engineers plus another person were recruited. freiheit.com has brought four engineers from Germany, since the objective was not to open just a subsidiary «but to open an office at eye level with Hamburg, with the same culture and with the best engineers». This is why all new employees spend six weeks in Germany when they are onboarded - so that they acquire «the culture and spirit of the company».

RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN PORTUGAL

Claudia Dietze emphasised that the technology company has «good relations with Portuguese universities».

«We recruit directly from the universities. If people do not yet have much experience – it doesn't matter. This is what we can offer». The big challenge in Portugal is that freiheit.com «is not well known yet », whereas in Germany it has a «good reputation» among software engineers. «We usually do not have problems finding candidates, but in Portugal it is different, we need more visibility». This is why the company is organising hackathons, workshops and meetups to «inspire people» to learn, grow and bring out the best version of themselves», promises Claudia Dietze. Growth is the big challenge for the German technology company. The executive said that freiheit.com has a

USE CASES

Stefan Richter, Founder of freiheit.com, gave some examples of what the company develops:

- Creating software for the automotive initiatives of Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen - freiheit.com designs software systems to provide global services for mobile applications, activated by voice and intelligent touchscreens for the new car generation. These will be launched in 2019 and 2020.
- All projects have the aim of creating intelligent software with machine learning and data science. One example is a system for predictive maintenance, which analyses data from sensors and can then predict whether the technical systems of a cooler container, (so-called 'reefer') will fail or needs maintenance.
- freiheit.com created a large-scale B2B platform for the giant supply company METRO. Hotels, restaurants and catering companies can use the platform to order goods for their business. This allows businesses, of which the majority are family businesses, «to save time and money and be more successful in the market».