

EUROPE ENGAGE

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING
WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE



PORTUGAL NATIONAL REPORT



EUROPE ENGAGE SURVEY OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & SERVICE-LEARNING ACTIVITIES

2016



Funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Report written by Maria Vargas Moniz and José Ornelas

This report offers an independent analysis of the “*Europe Engage - Developing a Culture of Civic Engagement through Service-Learning within Higher Education in Europe*” [Reference 2014-1-ES01-KA203-004798].

This project was funded in 2014 by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. The final publication only reflects the author’s view and the Agency and the European Commission are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

Europe Engage logo designed by Miguel Ángel Tejedor.

Report designed by Héctor Opazo.

Typeset in Garamond.

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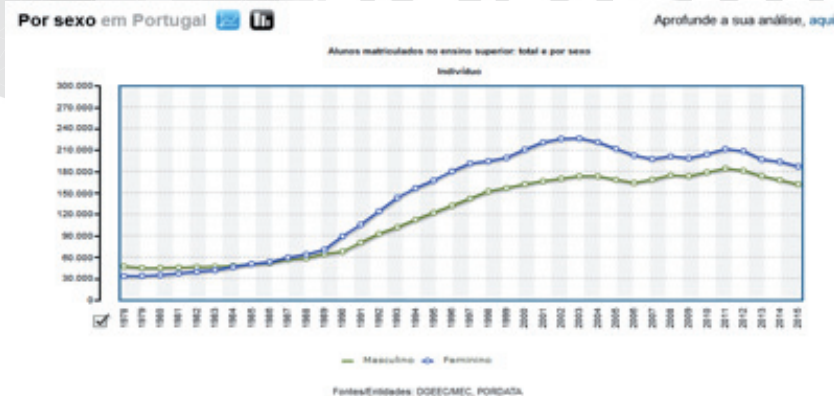
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1. INTRODUCTION

Portugal is located in the Southwest of Europe, is the western territory of the Iberian Peninsula, and includes the Northern Atlantic archipelagos of Azores and Madeira. The territory has a total area of 92 090 km². The designation of the country comes from a Latin Celtic designation Portus Cale. The current population is 10.349.684 (PORDATA, retrieved in Feb. the 10th 2016).

In Portugal there are fourteen different Public Universities, territorially dispersed within the national territory, and including the two autonomous regions of Azores and Madeira. The Universities of Coimbra (10 Faculties), University of Evora (4 Faculties), University of Lisboa (20 Faculties), University of Alto Douro e Trás os Montes (6 Faculties), University of Algarve (3 Faculties), University of Oporto (14 Faculties), Azores (3 Faculties), Nova University of Lisboa (9 Faculties), which totalize 76 Public Higher Education entities. Polytechnic Institutes or Organizations in the public sector, there are another 95 teaching locations disseminated in all the territory. In terms of private Institutions on Higher Education, there are 117 institutions also disseminated within the national territory. All of these provide a total of 288 Higher Education locations in Portugal (DGES, 2016).

In 2015 there were a total of 349 658 students integrated in the Higher Education Institutions, being 162 323 (47,8%) men and 187 335 (52,2%), these numbers represent a gross rate of 52% of the population integrated in the Higher Education. In the table presented bellow it is possible to observe the evolution from 1978 to 2015 of the Higher Education population (PORDATA, 2015).



The strengthening and consolidation of an autonomy management system for Higher Education, was introduced by the Law N° 62/ 2007 September the 10th, that included a governance model based on the experience of other European countries.

The governance model adopted was inspired in the OECD (2003) guidelines, including a complex myriad of factors including legislation, external relation, internal participatory procedures, as well as financial systems. All these factors are aggregated in four main dimensions of autonomy within the Higher Education framework adopted that are: a) Organizational; b) financial; c) academic; and d) human resources management.

The first consequence of the adoption of this model was the increased accessibility to Higher Education to different social groups, and simultaneously ensuring quality patterns for education, research and the capacity to accommodate foreign students.

Regarding the increasing number of students enrolled in Higher Education, Portugal report the largest rate of growth since the sixties up to the end of the Twentieth Century, with 6% as compared to the EU-15 average of 3% (OECD, 2006).

This system has contributed towards an increased participation of students in the institutional governance, clearer regulations of rights and responsibilities of all the Higher Education stakeholders. The students consolidated their formal participation in the school boards, varying from 12 to 17%, with a national average of 15% (Bettencourt, 2013).

The main result of this strategy was the effective democratization of Higher Education with 38% of young people (20 years of age) enrolled (more than 1 in 3 of the whole population with that age. However this result is still below the European guidelines fixed at 40% of the population aged 30 to 34 with a Higher Education diploma; the Higher Education sector has been the educational sector that registered the most significant progress in the global education panorama in Portugal (National Council of Education, 2011).

2. BACKGROUND TO SURVEY

The institutional partner survey was completed with the support and contribution of the two Vice-Rectors at ISPA-IU, the President of the Pedagogical Council, and the representatives of the partners at the Europe Engage Project.

Concerning the short-survey the document has been sent to a selection of 25 Public and Private Higher Education Institutions, but the response rate was quite low. Three have effectively identified the practice of Service-Learning. In two others we have identified practices that may be associated with elements of service learning but do not include all the criteria of SL practices.

3. LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE SURVEY

The surveys were sent by email, but only those that we had some previous specific contacts did provide responses. We have generally concluded that the culture and practice of Service Learning is not very developed in Portugal, however one of the exemplars collected for this survey has an institutionalized practice, and the others have significant elements associated with the aim of providing students community connections and opportunities to develop other competencies or capacities.

The limitations referred about the survey was it was long and difficult to understand, particularly for those organizations where the practice is not present or having some elements those were difficult to explain. We here would just bring a note that one of the contacts made reported that was not available to serve other people's projects, but here it should be noted that the contact person was not the Department Coordinator, all the other experiences were very positive and very collaborative.

From the systematic search made to the Universities websites, following the Universities guide provided at <http://www.dges.mctes.pt/DGES/pt> only very few present some information that could be associated with service learning or volunteering in community projects; it is interesting to emphasize however, that we have found focused Service Learning practices in the Secondary Schools e.g. The St. Julian School, and Secondary School in Funchal, Madeira.

4. UNIVERSITY CULTURE AND IDENTITY

In this section we report the mission statements of Universities that accepted to participate in this initiative and we have found some similarities and some differences regarding the mission contents.

M1. Our mission is to develop and promote soft skills in students. We want a holistic training for our students; we try the reconciliation of an academic training with interpersonal training. For us the involvement in society is very important. Create a close relationship with partners is fundamental for their growth.(Nova University of Lisboa)

M2. The mission is training, to carry out necessary research to accomplish its mission and to cooperate with the regional community of Alto-Minho, and to create, manage and disseminate knowledge and culture. (Politécnico de Viana do Castelo)

M3. Our aims: advance culture, promote research and higher education; educate ecclesiastical members in the humanities, philosophy and theology; prepare students to contribute to society; create a genuine university community; continue graduates training; carry out extra-university activities; contribute to Portuguese society through both the study of its problems and the promotion of its cultural values; spread Christian thought, values and ideals. (Universidade Católica Portuguesa)

M4. We probe for a high level qualification and the production and dissemination of knowledge in the fields of the Psychological, Social and Life Sciences, ensuring the cultural, technological, scientific and civic training of the students, within the international frameworks. ISPA – IU articulates teaching, learning, research and the needs of the social environments with extension and intervention projects in order to contribute for the population's well-being, and the betterment of society. The institutional values are: a) Critical Thinking; b) Excellence; c) Innovation; d) Humanism; and e) Solidarity. (ISPA – IU)

In terms of general statements we may observe the role of Universities in advancing scientific, cultural and civic training, or holistic training, and elements such as contribute towards society and the dissemination of knowledge.

For more specific elements associated with Service-Learning we would emphasise contributions towards populations well-being (M3+M4); promoting values of Humanism and Solidarity (M4). Even more specific would be the promotion of soft skills and self-learning (M1+M2). The introduction of a service-learning perspective in these organizations does

not seem to be an obstacle because in these examples the philosophy, the principles and the focus on potential practices is contained in the statements, therefore it is a practical concern of the concrete stakeholders to take action and deliberately introduce or adapt already existing practices into more objective criteria associated with the service learning and community-based learning.

5. SERVICE-LEARNING ACTIVITIES

From the information gathered considering the partner organization and two more that responded the survey and the interviews conducted, we have identified three strands of activity associated with Service Learning: a) Courses that are directly focused in the implementation of service learning activities; b) The focus on a transversal philosophy of Service Learning within all the school activities, and c) the connection of HEI directly with community organizations to support the engagement of students in volunteering and service learning.

For the strand related with the courses (a), the Novabase-UNL provides two courses with ECTS named Impact Management Programme (where the students develop a project that is presented before a Jury composed by scholars and community representants, e.g. Deloitte or other Organizations) and Volunteering Programme, that involve Service Learning activities and have engaged since 2011/2012 400 students. The volunteering programme involves 90 partners in civil society, with the main aim of engaging the students in societal challenges. In the interview with the scholar of Novabase and within one of the courses the students are engaged into developing the profile of someone who has been an inspiration. The profiling of an inspiring character is also implemented in the Politécnico of Setúbal.

Concerning the strand b), with the Bologna process, the transversal idea of student community engagement and self-learning was systematically introduced with tutoring and individual guidance to enhance autonomy in learning processes. It became integrated in the school culture, and it is integrated in all the undergraduate programs in areas like: Socio-cultural Intervention; Social Media; Sports; Basic Education; Artistic Promotion and Patrimony and Gestural Language, involving around 500 students. As a concrete and probably the most relevant initiative that we have entailed was integrated in the Basic Education undergraduate programme that developed a sexual education project for the local public schools, which was very positively evaluated, and well received both within the school's professionals and the students.

In relation to Strand c) ISPA- IU, is already engaging with community based organizations in the areas of Educational Psychology, Community Psychology, Clinical Psychology (Both undergraduate and Masters and Doctoral Programs) and Community Development (Undergraduate). In these initiatives we have been involving both national students, but also many students coming within the Erasmus Program and also students coming from Brazil, with which we have a long-standing connection that includes language and cultural exchange. Since 2011, we have had over 60 students involved in linkages with community organizations. Although the service learning term is not directly used, the concrete activities developed by the students are totally associated with the SL philosophy.

The undergraduate program on Community Development offers two courses titled, community development: Contexts of Practice I and II, within which we are introducing already directly the SL theory and practice, because it has been positively evaluated by the National Higher Education Agency, and we may now introduce minor changes to the studies plans. Therefore it is an opportunity to introduce an explicit SL philosophy.

The Universidade Católica Portuguesa also offers through the Students Support Office, a program to facilitate the connection of students that are not integrated in the Economy and Business courses that would like to engage in civic activities and there are four main organizations that receive annually students in their activities.

6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PROVIDED

The first example is the Association TRANSFORMERS, and here is the result of the interview with the President, João Rafael Brites, a young scholar and founded this Association that is integrated in Nova University in the School of Business and Economy. The main aim of this civic youth movement <http://movimentotransformers.org/>, to support young people to engage in civic initiatives, and community projects supported other young people in more vulnerable situations. Recently the Association is engaged in projects with Higher Education Institutions, with the Super Powers School, that is a tool for civic engagement and community participation.

This initiative started from a survey from the National Institute of Youth and Sports that in 2005 published a report that concluded the global rate of participation of youth in Portugal was 11%, including civic, political and social engagement. That result lead to the support to youth organizations to increase volunteering and participation levels. JPB, had the opportunity of participating in the initiative global change makers (<http://www.global-changemakers.net/>) aimed at involving youth in community endeavours and to be agents for change. That opportunity has consolidated these ideas of youth participation with several programs and projects aimed at engaging youth in civic and community-based learning.

Another initiative is the GAPA (Student Support Office) of the Universidade Católica Portuguesa, we have interviewed Dr. Eugénia Graça, that developed the Volunteering Integrated Project, that is a transversal programme available for all the students of all the Courses inserted in a Global Programme Católica Activa, that is an initiative to promote experiences on social responsibility, the development of informal competencies, alternative forms of conviviality, personal responsibility and discipline, competencies that are relevant towards the global training of the students. The GAPA provides two initial awareness sessions, on relevance and procedures. The students have to opportunity to enrol in the program and a selection is made according to student availability. The average number of hours is 20 hours per semester (10 weeks – 2 hours per week). Four organizations were selected on elders, youth with addictions awareness programs in secondary schools, volunteering in Hospitals and collaboration with organization that supports families at risk. We are planning to have these initiatives integrated in the final diploma as a supplement for civic engagement. The business school has a program with a Course that provides 2, 5 credits in the final diploma for the students.

Another example of civic engagement took place at ISPA on the course of Philosophical Anthropology, where the students developed a deck of cards with basic concepts associated with human development and the understanding of basic human rights. According to the scholar the student involvement was very interesting and the deck of cards is being used as a fund raising for a community organization that collaborates with ISPA.



7. CONCLUSION

With this report we have provided an initial overview of the implementation of SL initiatives within the HEI culture, and concluded we have scattered practices with specific elements associated with SL. We believe that throughout the project we shall be able to systematize more in-depth qualitative information on initiatives and efforts entailed that are related with SL practices.

The aim of building a national network of SL and Community-based learning in Portugal, shall provide more concrete opportunities to gather and systematize more information.

Additional opportunities may emerge following concrete initiatives, and one example to the multiplying capacity of this project has already been implemented following the participation of Pilar Aramburuzabala (E Engage Coordinator) in a Seminar in Portugal titled “Cooperação e Inovação para Boas Práticas” (Cooperation and Innovation for Good Practices) in Viana do Castelo, we have been invited to integrate a Grant Proposal for an event to be held during 2016, on which we were given the opportunity to participate with a key-Note Speech titled “Europe Engage: Projecto Europeu Envolvimento Cívico e Comunitário de Jovens no Ensino Superior”(Europe Engage: A project for civic and community engagement of HEI Students).

We believe that this project is supporting the development of the SL practices in HEI in Portugal.

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