



City of Santa Maria da Feira Intercultural profile

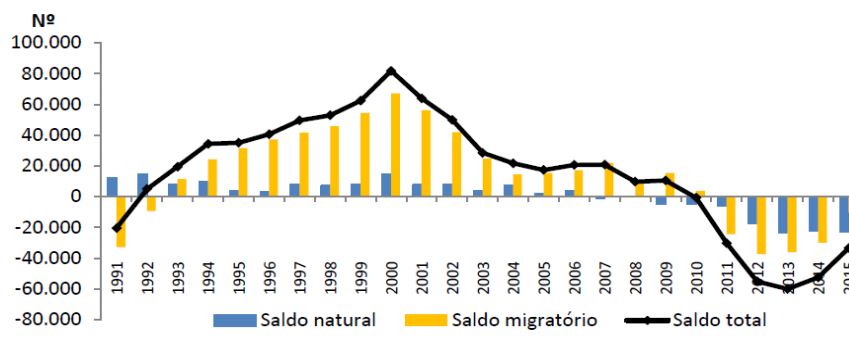
1. National Migration Context

Foreign immigration in Portugal is a recent phenomenon. As other Southern European countries, Portugal has traditionally been, and seems to still be, a country of emigration. Portugal has increasingly become a country of immigration since the mid-1970s, although emigration is still a strong phenomenon, which made 110.000 Portuguese change their residence to another country in 2014 alone. Demography is a major issue of concern for Portuguese economists, and they welcome immigration to the country as extremely positive and necessary to counterbalance the aging of the population. In just 40 years, Portugal has shifted from being the EU state with the highest birth rate, to the oldest state of the Union.

Significant numbers of migrants from African Countries of Portuguese Language settled in Portugal from the 1960s onward. It is suggested that their shared language, religion and strong cultural overlap with the native Portuguese resulted in an easier integration and fewer cultural clashes. Notwithstanding this, their descendants remain disproportionately disadvantaged regarding education, jobs, housing and income, and that is a major issue of concern. Recently, migrants from Eastern Europe, China, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh have significantly increased the country's diversity.

In the 1990s, with the construction boom in Portugal and the collapse of the URSS, unprecedented routes from Eastern Europe towards the country were established. The response of the Portuguese government to the recent flow of illegal migration was to settle a process of legalization of immigrants. The process benefited 174.558 Eastern European immigrants, changing the migration landscape. In 2010, because of the economic recession, which severely hit the Southern European countries, fewer immigrants reached, the country and many previous immigrants return to their origin countries, especially Brazilians and Angolans.

Annual population balances: total, natural and migratory between 1991 and 2015



Source: ACM

Since 1991, when the first integration policy was created, a body focused on migration and

intercultural dialogue has been present in the Portuguese administration. In 2002 it was a High Commissioner, which turned into a High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue in 2007. Portugal was one of the first European countries to have a centralized public body aimed to manage diversity and interculturality. The High Commission intended to reflect the importance of including all stakeholders in the dialogue on migration, and it was possible mainly thanks to the wide administrative autonomy of the body. Among the activities performed by the High Commission was the implementation of good practices for hosting immigrants.

2. Local Context



Santa Maria da Feira is a Portuguese municipality located in the district of Aveiro, in the northwest of the country. Santa Maria is the most populous municipality in Entre Douro e Vouga and has a vast territory that includes several towns (*vilas*) and 3 cities (Santa Maria da Feira, Fiães and Lourosa). The municipality is divided in 21 parishes (*freguesias*) and it is part of the Greater Metropolitan Area of Porto.

The main tourist pick in the city is the Castle of Santa Maria da Feira, an emblematic exponent of the medieval military architecture and national monument since 1910.

Economically, Santa Maria is an industrial region, with half of its inhabitants working in the industry. The city of Santa

Maria is important for its cork transforming and shoe factories. The purchasing power for Santa Maria in 2013 was 84,7% (over the Portuguese's 100%). The unemployment rate is 10%, and it is especially high amount young people.

In the 2011 census, the municipality counts a total of 139.312 inhabitants, out of which 1.033 people (hence the 0,74% of total population) have a foreign background. Furthermore, the questionnaire indicates that the majority ethnic groups are Brazilians (0,26%) and Ukrainians (0,21%). The city received an important inflow of migrants during the late 90s and 2000s, but some foreign residents have left the city during the economic crisis.

1991/2006	
PORTUGAL	SANTA MARIA FEIRA
Taxa de Crescimento	Taxa de Crescimento
7,42%	22,43%

Source: Atlas de Santa Maria da Feira.

3. Commitment and public governance

Santa Maria da Feira joined the Intercultural Cities Project in 2013, as part of its commitment to rights, diversity and development. The city is also part of the Portuguese Network of Intercultural Cities (RPCI).

Even though foreign residents in Santa Maria are less than 1% of population, the municipality is committed to strengthen the advantage of diversity, specially linked to investment and trade relations. In that sense, local leadership is promoting Santa Maria as an opportunity and

destination for foreign population and investors, to strengthen local development. Diversity is also a transversal element in the cultural events and festivities in the city, as well as a topic discussed at local schools.

Nevertheless, the city lacks of an intercultural integration strategy to provide an integral perspective and to define specific actions related to diversity, foreign population or ethnic minorities in the city. Besides its implication in the CLAIM which runs under the High Commission for Migration (ACM – Alto Comissariado para as Migrações)¹ and the role of the Local Agency for Employment, which pays special attention to underrepresented groups such migrants, youth and women, there is no instrument to offer a comprehensive approach on integration policies and actions. Santa Maria's "Social Action and Quality of Live Division and Presidency: local centre for support the integration of migrants" is a fine first step that should be further developed.

This weak institutional scheme is balanced with an important level of commitment from the mayor and the local officials to promote and strengthen the role of diversity in the development of the city. The binomial diversity-development/business is strong in Santa Maria, and could be also enhanced with the participation of social actors such as universities or the local chamber of commerce.

Regarding ethnic communities, especially Roma community, the municipality also shows an important level of commitment to support individual and group empowerment, but different initiatives should be defined to innovate and develop public actions with further impact.

In Santa Maria, integration topics and the intercultural approach are managed in a relatively transversal approach. Further development in this sense could enrich the local actions to be developed.

The current scenario in Santa Maria opens a wide range of possibilities to further develop public actions to deal with diversity and integration at local level.

4. Employment and business

Santa Maria is an industrial city, in which intra-EU trade has a significant importance, but also the exportations to extra-EU regions. In that sense, economic growth and development has been linked to foreign trade and, especially, to increase the economic relations with other cities around the world. To open new markets for local products and to intensify commercial relations with other cities and industries has become a challenge for the city, and the municipality plays a key role on that.

In 2008, the municipality launched the Biz Feira², an online platform which aims to bridge the gap between companies and citizens from all over the world who wish to develop contacts and business with companies and citizens from Feira. As quoted from its website: "*The BizFeira business network platform is an active and cooperative virtual space for business where companies and people can establish a network of opportunities, enabling the leveraging of the economy*". Through this platform, the municipality aims to project Santa Maria at international

¹ ACM has recently approved its Strategic Plan for Migration (2015-2020), defined as "the foundation for a more comprehensive migration policy. A modern, broad spectrum and pro-active migration policy". See <http://www.acm.gov.pt/>

² See <http://www.bizfeira.com/en/>

level, helping to create a business network that impacts positively in the municipality.

In 2016, BizFeira raised first National Prize of the European Awards of Business Promotion 2016 in the category "Support to Companies' Internationalization", an initiative of the European Commission.

Furthermore, Santa Maria held the Europarque, a congress centre also defined as a cultural centre, in which several events and activities take place during the year.

In the private sector, cork industries have an important role in the city's economy. In Portugal, there are around 500 factories that employ about 20,000 workers. Although Alentejo is the mainly cork-grower area, the transformation industries are national-wide based, with special concentration in the Santa Maria's municipal area. Most of the companies are subsidiary firms that distribute Portuguese cork worldwide. The workforce of these companies is mainly autochthonous population, as it seems that cork industry (mainly the growing and peeling processes) is based in traditional how-know, which is transmitted over generations. Differently, CEOs and senior managers are often foreign workers (and gender percentage seems really balanced in the leadership teams), who could bring new market techniques and new connections to their own firms.

Cork companies in Santa Maria have a strong connection with the municipality and they support municipal initiatives and social projects. Although most of them don't have a particularly diverse workforce, they have a strong feeling of local responsibility that could be used to raise awareness on diversity or labour inclusion of specific groups.

5. Education and training

Santa Maria's educational system pays attention to diversity from different perspectives, from the pre-scholar level to the high-school one.

In the preschool centres, diversity has been a topic of work in several occasions (Elements of cultural identity for this year). It means that during all along the scholar year, kindergartens organize several activities in which diversity is the central topic, and in which pre-schoolers get involved via games, draws, music, etc. Kindergartens use tale books to help children to understand differences between people (using animals as a subject³) and to deal with these differences in a positive and enrichment way, avoiding conflict and exclusion. Activities have been developed to included also elderly people and make art presentations in the school, also open to the community.

An interesting project is the so called "Janela Aberta" (Open Window) one, in which Santa Maria's kindergartens get in touch with kindergartens from other countries. The project aims to promote interculturality and human rights knowledge to children, inviting them to contact via Skype with children from other countries and share and learn about their languages, cultures and traditions. Currently, "Janela Aberta" works for children aged 4 to 6 in JI Escapães in Santa Maria da Feira and the École Maternelle du Parc du Bois de Mons in Belgium.

³ For instance, "My neighbour is a dog" by Isabel Minhós Martins.

The “twinning cities” is also a positive initiative and allows an annual international exchange with children.

Newcomer children have Portuguese as foreign language three times a week, and their involvement with other children in daily basis has motivated them to learn Portuguese faster and, at the same time, has pulling Portuguese students up.

In Santa Maria’s high schools, Erasmus + programme well developed, with special support to foreign students to help them learning Portuguese. The higher education institutes also receive students from Eastern Europe and Africa.

Santa Maria will participate in a new project on immigration and integration with schools from other seven EU countries to exchange knowledge and ideas to improve staff and teachers’ skills. This is an important element, as some of the professors have expressed their needs to have better tools and instruments to help students with language’s difficulties.

Regarding training, Santa Maria should developed further training offers for youth, specially from vulnerable groups, working in collaboration with local enterprises and firms, which may provided temporal offers for trainees. This could be part of the firms’ social commitment and a good opportunity for the municipality to provide training.

A mentorship programme could be also set as a tool to encourage students to don’t early leave schools and to help them to strengthen their own skills and abilities.

6. Neighbourhoods and housing

As indicated above, Santa Maria da Feira is a territorial entity that includes several towns and parishes. In fact, the city is 213,45 km². This geographical magnitude implies difficulties all around the city to move from one part to the other. This situation is especially complicated because there is a small number of public transportation lines’ (mainly buses), which normally go from different neighbourhoods to the city centre, but do not circulate between neighbourhoods (radial system). In that sense, inter-neighbourhoods’ activities are complex and unusual in the city. Most of the local events take place in the city centre, so interaction between neighbourhoods is a challenge to be solved. Public transportation is a complex policy that requires long-term planning and resources. In the meanwhile, some other options should be explored to facilitate activities in different neighbourhoods open to all citizens to promote interaction (sponsored electrical bikes; special buses to events, etc.).

In Santa Maria, there are few enclaves inhabited by Roma population, where the lack of public transportation is even more demanding, especially because most of these residents have neither cars nor license to move around.

7. Civil society and culture

Diversity is already present in most of the Santa Maria’s events. The intercultural mix is seen also at cultural events (the international street art festival, theatre groups come from abroad and have trained local artists who are now performing, and also organise art workshops in schools). Local events promote the participation of all citizens and encourage mixing between them. The

municipality also invite local stakeholders to participate in these events to strengthen local identity and plurality.

The Santa Maria's football club is pointed out by the city as an example of team building in a diverse context. Currently, there are 6 nationalities in the team and most of the players have some kind of migrant experience, being played around. Football players are actively engaged in different local activities (visits to hospitals, chats in schools, Medieval event, etc.), and the club organises different sportive holidays camps along the year to promote interaction, love to sports, participation, etc. The municipality helps vulnerable kids with grants (partial or complete) to give them the opportunity to participate in them. There is a lack of participation of Roma children in these activities, which should be resolved with grants and transportation to allow them to interact with other local youngsters.

Football Club's entourage could be a good opportunity to design a set of activities to schools and youth clubs, to promote the values of sport along with the advantages of diversity and team work. Grants should be considered to allow all children and youth living in Santa Maria to be involved in these activities. Players could be also invited to participate in the mentorship programme pointed out before, as a positive model.

In Santa Maria, several NGOs work in different topics. One of them is a NGO for development that works with volunteers in Angola, in the framework of the European voluntary service (Youth in action, Erasmus+, etc.). They organize seminars, youth and schools events to work on development education (now called global citizenship education), and to talk and discuss about the opportunities and challenges of globalisation and promote critical thinking. Interculturality is part of the set of core values of the NGO. To strengthen it in other local NGOs or associations, interculturality could be promoted as a criterion to allocate grants and helps from the municipality.

8. Roma minority

In Santa Maria, there is a Roma minority conformed by around 200 people who largely live in three specific enclaves. Although the Roma population is diverse in Santa Maria⁴, the inhabitants of these enclaves affront daily difficulties. Although their own the land, houses are very basic, self-made wooden houses. Most of the improvements on roads, water and sanitation have been done via projects to reduce social exclusion. There is a lack of public transportation and public equipment nearby, and although most of children are in schools, their attendance is low in average. There is an important number of youngster who early-leave schools (in some cases due to pregnancy) and do not work. There are high levels of illiteracy in the community, as well as a high level of unemployment. Youth's expectations are to have a house, food and a car. Parents' expectations are for their children to change their live and have a job.

In the visited enclave (around 18 households), the municipality has design different projects to promote labour integration, and social workers work there in permanent basis. The on-going project is funded by ACM for 8 months. It aims to facilitate self-employment and economic sustainability through 4 workshops (basketry; weaving; sewing and urban vegetable garden). The attendance to the workshops is in voluntary basis, and there are volunteers and paid trainers for

⁴ See the first report on Roma population in Portugal (Estudo Nacional sobre as comunidades ciganas) edited by ACM in 2014 at http://www.poaifse.qren.pt/upload/docs/Documentos/estudo_ennic.pdf

the workshops. Participants do not receive money for attendance, but from the profits of selling products. The goal of bringing products into shops is complex and difficult, because there is competence in basketry and sewing.

This project has positive effects such as the recuperation of the traditional basketry work and the teaching of other skills and abilities. But it does not seem to be a long-term project, and there is no business plan related to it, so the chances to guarantee economic sustainability by selling baskets, bags or vegetables is unknown. In that sense, projects should be defined according to their success, in social but also economic terms, and it could be interesting to involve the local community in planning and decision-making, to ensure their commitment to the project's success. Schooling has been one of the main objectives for social workers there. Currently, young people go to school in more permanent basis than before, but they do not have role models to help them to finish school and get jobs. A next step to help them on that should be exploring the possibility of the mentorship programme, which provides young Roma guidance in life's expectations⁵. Furthermore, a trainee programme to engage Roma youngsters with local firms and business could be also a positive step to facilitate their social and labour integration.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

In Santa Maria, and regarding integration and diversity, an important number of topics have been raised and tackled by the municipality. Furthermore, interesting actions have been developed in the economic area (especially related to businesses), but also in the cultural area and in schools.

At the same time, and as it has been said before, in Santa Maria the challenge of integration is less stressing than in other ICC cities. This situation could be a good opportunity to further advance towards an integral intercultural approach, in which develop innovative instruments and actions. The commitment of the municipality should be pointed out as one of the most valued resource to do that. Key local actors such as the firms located in Santa Maria, the Football Club or schools and high schools could also play a further role in strengthening social cohesion, and in the definition and promotion of innovative actions to improve the 'living together' approach in Santa Maria.

As a city recently involved in the Intercultural Cities project, Santa Maria could further use the ICC tools, mainly the "Step by Step Guide" and the ICC Index to assess and identify areas of strengthen and room for improvement in its public policies.

The below recommendations are only suggestions to impulse discussion and debate in Santa Maria, and undoubtedly, they should be understood as food for thought, not a compelling set of duties.

Commitment and public governance:

- It could be useful to use the ICC Index as a tool of evaluation to identify areas of strengthening and room for improvement;
- It could be useful to implement the "Step by Step Guide" to further develop the transversal approach in managing diversity and integration;

⁵ It could be also interesting to check the Council of Europe's "Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers"
https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c5a1d#_ftn2

- To promote the intercultural approach, it should be valuable to promote interculturalism as a criterion to allocate grants from the municipality to local associations and entities;
- To improve the data collection crossing nationality with other elements (gender, age, formation, etc.) at local level will be worth it. Special attention should be paid to data collection on diversity in the firms and business at local level;
- In collaboration with the CLAIM office, it could be interesting to develop a welcome pack for newcomers (in different languages and related to local life);
- It could be interesting to improve the public offer of language learning, with the collaboration of local NGOs or associations;
- Although public and political discourse on diversity is strong and clear, it could also have added value to promote public discussions and raising awareness campaigns/activities on diversity.

Employment and business:

- As local authorities have done it, links with the diaspora should be intensified. Diaspora could play a key role in local development alongside with emphasizing the advantage of diversity;
- It could be interesting to improve collaboration with local enterprises to create trainee programmes (social responsibility), specially focused on vulnerable youth;
- Bizfeira was awarded in 2014. Link this initiative with projects or actions that underline the advantage of diversity could be worth it.

Education and training:

- “Janela Aberta” could be identified as a best practice: with little resources it has clear impact in children. It should be interesting to implement the practice in other kindergartens in Santa Maria. It could be also interesting to open the initiative to other European cities and to spread the word about “Janela Aberta” at European level;
- Parents should be further involved in schools’ activities, specially those ones with ethnic minority or migrant background;
- It should be interesting to develop –in coordination with the National plan on education– innovative tools to help professors to teach on diversity and in diverse classrooms;
- It should benefit local development to offer a trainee programme for youth, especially from vulnerable groups, working in collaboration with local enterprises and firms, which may provide work temporal offers for trainees;
- A mentorship programme could be also set as a tool to encourage students to don’t early leave schools and to help them to strengthen their own skills and abilities.

Housing and neighbourhoods:

- To improve public transportation among neighbourhoods could facilitate interaction and communication between citizens;
- It should be interesting to include special public transportation during local events to promote mixing between neighbourhoods, and especially to reach specific enclaves with difficult access.

Civil society and culture:

- As it is already been done, football team could be an asset in schools to promote diversity and team working;
- To include Roma children in activities organised by the football club (holiday camps, etc.) is necessary, and municipality should pay attention to their needs (grants and free transportation) in order to facilitate their involvement;
- Specific programmes to help students with difficulties to do their homework should be interesting, and could be done by volunteers or in the framework of cooperation with the football club (see the example of the Charlton Club at Greenwich)⁶

Roma minority:

- It could be interesting to focus the mentoring programme with young Roma population, especially those who early-leave school and do not work;
- Social intervention projects with Roma community should consider the economic viability of their intervention, to avoid short-term actions that do not impact in the long-term economic sustainability and employment opportunities.

Finally, it should be said that Santa Maria is an active member of the RPCI and is actively involved in the organization of activities and events. This commitment should be also inspirational for other Portuguese cities.

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⁶ As it could be read in the Intercultural Cities handbook, the CARE partnership between the city and the Charlton Athletic football club provides literacy classes at the stadium in specially equipped premises. These classes are very attractive to white working class boys (and girls) who have dropped out of school.