



## Speech

### In action

#### Theme II: Learning cities for equity and inclusion

**Learning Cities 2017, Cork, 19th September, between 2:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.**

First of all, I would like to say that it is a pleasure and honor for me and the county of Câmara de Lobos to participate in the Third International Conference of Learning Cities. I am privileged to share with you the work that is being developed by the county of Câmara de Lobos in a partnership with the educational community and other institutions in favor of a more equitable and inclusive municipality.

Having said this, I begin my speech with its geographic location in the Autonomous Region of Madeira:

The Madeira Archipelago, an integral part of the Portuguese territory, is in the Atlantic Ocean and it is worldwide known as “the Atlantic Pearl” due to its mild climate, combined with its exotic vegetation, which are important and attractive factors for tourism, the main activity in the region.

Câmara de Lobos, one of the eleven counties of Madeira, is made up of five parishes, two of them urban: Câmara de Lobos and Estreito de Câmara de Lobos and Three Rural ones: Curral das Freiras, Jardim da Serra and Quinta Grande.

The town, known as a fishing town, has been recognized throughout history for its natural beauty, gastronomy and traditions, and currently is far from the stereotyped image of the past that identified it with the poverty of its people. This land of fishermen, whose main activity is fishing, especially the black scabbard fish, owns its fame to fishermen who paint the bay with their picturesque and characteristic boats - the Xavelhas.

The county has one of the highest birth rates in the Region (the third largest), the highest average size of the classic families (3,4) and the highest proportion of families with children (78.1%).

In the 1990s, the population of Câmara de Lobos had low levels of schooling, as well as a high illiteracy rate (18.6%), and a high drop-out rate (24.5%). In recent years, there has been a strong commitment to the adoption of educational policies to solve these

problems, with a marked reduction in the illiteracy rate to 9.8% and the drop-out rate to 1.92% in 2011.

Notwithstanding this positive evolution, the population living in this area still has low levels of schooling, mostly the primary school, where only 5.7% of the population has higher education. The levels of schooling in secondary education are lower than the previous levels of education, showing higher rates of retention and drop-out in the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of basic education.

In this context, it should be noted that, regarding the training offer, the gradual increase of Education and Training Courses, Professional Courses, Adult Education and Training Courses and Short Learning Units, promoting the integration of young people and adults into the labor market through the acquisition of general knowledge and academic and professional skills.

On this assumption,

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Câmara de Lobos, through the implementation of Local Agenda 21, with the main objective of promoting sustainable development

at a local level, defined five strategic vectors of governance: the Sea, Agriculture, Local Economy, Tourism and People. Specifically, in this last vector, the current municipal executive has set as objectives to strengthen the policies and the supports in the areas of education and culture and contribute to the creation of new synergies through the promotion of networking, promoting concerted action in the social area, and facilitating the communication and sharing of information, in order to optimize resources and social responses.

Therefore, according to the UNESCO World Declaration on Education for All, education is a fundamental asset in the life of all people, arguing that, and I quote, "every person - child, youth and adult - shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs "as well as" basic education should be provided to all children, youth and adults ", end of quote. In order to fulfill this principle, the region of Câmara de Lobos, as a member of the International Association of Educating Cities (IAEC) and the UNESCO Learning Cities Network, has become part of this line of social commitment to the

education and quality of life of its inhabitants, so it has being consolidated in the areas of education and social intervention, especially with the preparation of the "Education Charter" and the launch of the pilot project called "Participated Social Intervention", both developed during the year 2015.

Thus, besides the regular support in school transports, minor repairs in the primary schools and the provision of monetary support and teaching materials to schools, including the private ones, the town council created the School Achievement Award "Joaquim Pestana", whose main purpose is to distinguish, every year, the best students from all school levels of our local public schools, (from 1<sup>st</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, Professional Courses, Courses of Education and Training and Alternative Curricular Courses).

Still regarding the valorization of the school merit, the council assigns scholarships to the best students of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle and secondary education (9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades) giving them the opportunity to participate in the Summer Universities, projects promoted by the Universities of Porto and Coimbra, giving young people the opportunity to experience several pedagogical and

scientific activities in different areas of knowledge and in a university environment.

Regarding the support to households in order to reduce the costs with the education of children and young people, the council acquires schoolbooks for students in the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of basic education, and with no social benefits provided by school and grants Scholarships, with the objective of supporting young people who attend higher education institutions, contributing to the continuation of the studies of students who belong to more economically disadvantaged households, with the presentation of 400 applications for the present school year.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In addition to the previously stated, Câmara de Lobos has an active partnership in the revitalization of projects such as the "Eco-schools", an environmental program, in a partnership with the Blue Flag Association of Europe (ABAE), through the payment of enrollment of all schools of the area and support in didactic material for its dynamization in each school year; the "Heroes of

Fruit" project, which aims to develop initiatives on the importance of healthy eating, and the project "Dream catchers", developed with 4<sup>th</sup> grade students, in order to promote skills, emotions and values of entrepreneurs, involving an intensive training of teachers and library technicians, as well as the distribution of handbooks by the council.

We have also implemented measures to improve energy efficiency in schools by providing support in didactic material to primary schools that reduce the electricity bill by at least 5% in each school year.

Along with the partnership with schools and institutions in the development of projects, it is worth mentioning the annual Seminar on Education, an event of great relevance at regional level, which was attended by notorious people from the national and international scene. This initiative is extremely important since it promotes a critical and constructive reflection on the current state of the education system and on the challenges of the teaching-learning process today, with a view to the future, as well as the

search for structuring solutions that improve the schooling and education levels of the population.

Therefore, the childhood and youth areas have had the attention of the local authority, through the promotion of projects whose main objectives are to develop personal and social skills, to prevent risk behavior, to reeducate and to promote a healthy, autonomous and responsible social development of its participants, through actions that enhance and reinforce the bonds of friendship, the knowledge of the environment, the importance of practicing physical activity and values, such as cooperation, teamwork and respect for the other. Seasonal leisure time projects are intended to occupy children and young people in a healthy way, specifically during the summer holidays. Focusing specifically on the topic under discussion, and recognizing that the whole society must be inclusive, where everyone can share the condition of citizenship and that it must promote tolerance and understanding of differences through opportunities for social participation, the local authority supports the Center for Specialized Educational Resources (CREE), the Center for Occupational Activities (CAO) and the



municipal schools that carry out the primary work in developing the capacities of people with special needs in a perspective of integration and inclusion. In this sense, the local authority acquired an adapted van for the transportation of people with reduced mobility, in order to respond to the requests of schools and other institutions that face this difficulty.

Another concern of the municipality in terms of education, also referenced by the Municipal Council of Education, is the lack of parental competencies, since it has consequences on the education, supervision and basic needs of children and young people. Thus, in 2015, the City Council promoted a parental education course and in the last School year developed a new project in the parishes of the municipality, in order to improve parents' skills.

Regardless,

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the investment on the youth, the city also considers crucial to implement initiatives for the adult and elderly population that, as a result of their life experience, can develop projects and actions of

added value for the Local Community. In this sense, considering that lifelong learning asserts itself as a factor to promote active citizenship and foster employability, the council has invested in reinforcing social responses to promote the active aging of the senior population, developing projects that promote the intergenerational activities and the fight against social isolation.

Thus, the protocol with the “Community Center” in Câmara de Lobos enabled and granted financial support for the promotion of the Senior University project, aimed at those over the age of 50, with the objective of improving their quality of life, providing them with a space for personal and social appreciation, reinforcing their role in society, but also lifelong learning.

Throughout the year, several activities are also carried out that allow moments of leisure and socializing among adults and the elderly, participation in several activities such as hikings, physical exercise and training in different areas, including literacy and computer workshops.

Consequently, joining the network of Learning Cities and the recognition of the work developed by the council of Câmara de

Lobos through the Learning City Award 2017 is a stimulus for local representatives and the educational community to continue and improve social and educational policies and initiatives.

Thus, considering UNESCO's guidelines for learning cities, Câmara de Lobos intends to value and make the best use of its potential, and in return to improve and overcome some obstacles.

The county has strong potential at the population level, characterized by its youth, the size of families, good educational infrastructure and strong tourism potential. On the other hand, Câmara de Lobos presents some constraints in terms of low levels of schooling and low qualifications. There are also high illiteracy levels in the rural areas, unemployment, emigration and the need to improve the access to the more rural areas.

Indeed, building a Learning City really poses some challenges, particularly about changing attitudes, mentalities, working in partnership and sharing responsibilities. It is a gradual and continuous process, which implies a strong political leadership and determination and participation of all.

To conclude, in the development of the teaching / learning process, the Câmara de Lobos council has been improving the articulation between municipal services and schools and institutions, to guarantee adequate responses to the students' needs, the educational community and educational institutions, supporting them in their demanding task of promoting a more inclusive education, valuing the potential of students and maximizing lifelong learning.

Pedro Coelho