

Dear Elizabeth Johnston,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to thank you very much for your invitation. It is a pleasure to share the experiences of Setúbal with you.

As you might know, Portugal has always been a country of emigration but over the last decades it has also become the residence for immigrants from several countries.

During the 60s and the 70s Setúbal became an important destination for internal migration and for immigrants from the former Portuguese colonies, especially due to the strong industrial development in the areas of fish canning, mechanics, shipbuilding and transformation of paper pulp. People from Alentejo (a region south of Setúbal) and the ex-colonies Cape Verde, Angola and East Timor settled down in Setúbal. The Cape-Verdians are until now one of the most significant immigrant communities in our city.

In the beginning of the 21st century Setúbal started to become a destination for immigrants from other countries, mainly from South America/Brazil and from Eastern Europe.

Currently, Setúbal has approximately 121200 inhabitants, 5% of which are foreigners. It is important to stress that these numbers do not include immigrants who acquired Portuguese nationality in the meantime or who are in an illegal situation.

Most of the immigrants in Setúbal are from Brazil, Cape Verde, Angola, Romania, Ukraine and Moldavia.

It is important to mention the high number of gypsies in our city. Although there is no official data on the dimension of these communities (which is the main ethnic minority in Portugal), several studies estimate that Setúbal is the third or fourth city with the highest gypsy population.

We believe that proximity is the key for crime prevention and safety.

We consider the management of diversity as a challenge and are committed to build an inclusive, tolerant and cohesive society that develops a feeling of belonging to the citizens of Setúbal, regardless of their origin. We also feel that this will contribute to the development of the municipality regarding economic, social and cultural aspects.

That is why we created the **Office for Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities**. The main objective was to create a network with all entities that relate to the immigrant communities such as the Police, the Foreigners and Border Service, the Authority for Working Conditions, the job and the health centers.

Main functions of the Office include the provision of information regarding legislation and formal procedure, human rights, employment, health, education, housing, associations, culture and leisure, granting the immigrants access to these basic needs.

We would like to point out that the office team consists of people of different origins which enhances the trust of the immigrant population and avoids language and cultural code barriers.

Another policy we promote is the social participation of immigrants and ethnic minorities.

Most important for us is **positive interaction**. What we do is promote, support and organize activities that strengthen (reinforce) intercultural relations and social cohesion.

We provide spaces such as our Multicultural Center where associations and informal groups can get together and develop cultural, religious, sports and educational activities.

During all year, lots of events are organized in collaboration with the immigrants' associations, where people – immigrants and local population - get together, such as fairs, exhibitions, gastronomy shows, concerts, debates etc.

We believe these are effective mechanisms to combat stereotypes and racism which are usually based on a lack of knowledge of the other.

Another very important tool is intercultural mediation. We have been working on several projects with the High-Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue, as for example:

- **Intercultural Mediation in Public Services.** This project allowed us to build up a team of municipal intercultural mediators, originally from Moldavia, Ukraine and Cape Verde. The recent integration and training of a gypsy mediator was particularly successful.

These mediators are a focal contact point, they provide easier access to public services and public or private resources, support the citizens in matters of individual qualification, they prevent, mediate and resolve conflicts.

I would like to finish by presenting you another very successful project called “Our neighborhood, our city”. This program is carried out in 5 social housing quarters and aims at the improvement of the living conditions of the residents.

We think that more than spending municipal budget on interventions in social quarters it is fundamental to change the way the residents feel for the space they live in and what they can do for it, how they can take care of it, how they can watch over its good use and safety. Residents should be the key players who take decisions, thus promoting autonomy and responsibility.

That is why we encouraged the residents to actively participate and cooperate in a number of actions and tasks in a joint endeavor to solve their common problems.

We have already elected 222 interlocutors from five quarters who represent the almost 7.000 residents that live in more than 2.000 housing complexes. They are the bridge between the municipality, residents and other institutions working in that area.

Together, they have already done conservation work and painting of facades and inner courtyards, rehabilitation of pavements and stairs as well as maintenance and cleaning of common spaces.

Other actions include: youth intervention; education, training and employment; image and visibility of the quarters; life in the community and the promotion of the active participation of the residents.

This is the first time in the history of these quarters that a concerted action between municipality, residents and local institutions was carried out. There has never been such an intense participation of the tenants.

It is this kind of popular movement that we consider to be the basis for the improvement of living conditions and which has strengthened the social network, valued interculturality and contributed to the decrease of the feeling of unsafety.

Thank you very much for your attention!