

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT



In Portugal, the immigrant population has doubled in just three years. Different flows of migration have been identified and these immigrants from Brazil, former Portuguese colonies, Eastern European countries or from Romany communities present different integration problems that require different forms of support. DiverCidade, an EQUAL Development Partnership, is working in five different neighbourhoods of Lisbon and in nearby Amadora, to create an effective overarching response.

“DiverCidade helps policy-makers, administrations and the civic society respond to these challenge of immigration by developing a new integrated approach to diversity management”, says Carla Benites from Secretariado Diocesano de Lisboa ONPC (The Lisbon Diocesan Secretariat of the National Institution for Care of Gypsies). “It has put together a really interesting partnership that is capable of responding to most of the needs of Gypsies and immigrants from the PALOP’s, which are the African Countries in which Portuguese is spoken, and their descendants!”

The activities of this Development Partnership are very much in line with the emphasis in the European Employment Guidelines on attracting more people to the labour market and making work a real option for all. In addition, they relate closely to the Council’s specific recommendation to Portugal contained in its Recommendations ([2004/741/EC](#)) on the implementation of Member States’ employment policies, which state that there is a need to strengthen active labour market measures for the unemployed and the inactive and ensure their efficiency and also to strengthen efforts to integrate immigrants.

LINKING THE STRANDS TOGETHER

DiverCidade was helped by the fact that it was able to build its work on the achievements of the former EQUAL Development Partners (DP) called [Emprego Apoiado](#) (Supported Employment) that had involved its lead organisation Secretariado Diocesano de Lisboa ONPC and two other of its partners. This DP had actively promoted Supported Employment as an innovative approach to the vocational training of disadvantaged target groups in contrast to the unsuccessful methods used by public national training provision. The new training took account of the characteristics of individuals and promoted their self-determination and empowerment. The fact that employers and trade unions were directly associated with its activities, helped the DP to spread its message very widely. More information about Emprego Apoiado can be found on [its web site](#), in Portuguese and English.

Having considered what aspects of Emprego Apoiado’s work could be further developed and also the gaps that required to be filled, DiverCidade decided to adopt four main priority strands of action:

- Developing a system of diversity management;
- Enhancing the autonomy and organisational capacity of ethnic minorities and immigrants;
- Promoting the status of immigrant, immigrant descendant and gipsy women;
- Developing the profile of the Life Experience Expert.

DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Diversity management involves a combination of activities that promote non-discriminatory practices and affirmative action and capitalise on the diverse backgrounds, knowledge and linguistic and other skills of individuals or groups or people as a powerful resource for development. DiverCidade carried out research to ensure that it was up to date with the

principles and practices of Diversity Management in Europe and further abroad and has also identified European and International legislation or policies that promote or support such an approach. The DP believes that the two most important aspects for promoting diversity management in the greater Lisbon area, are quality standards that can be used to measure the degree to which diversity has been incorporated into an organisation and the development of a training package for human resources and other staff to make them more aware of, and to give them the skills to manage, diversity. The DP has also interviewed a range of key actors in the public sector in the fields of social policy, education and employment services so that it is well-positioned to understand what quality standards might be seen to be appropriate and in what areas or aspects there is a need for skills development

The DP is currently developing these quality standards to be applied in human resources management and in the delivery of services for immigrants, their descendants and gypsies. The main goals for these standards, and also for the training package are to:

- Provide a systematic framework for the development of practices based on equality and non-discrimination;
- Help public and private organisations meet their obligations under the law and encourage the development of anti-discrimination practices appropriate to local and cultural circumstances and aspects;
- Offer a basis for tackling forms of institutionalised discrimination against gypsies and immigrants;
- Give a framework for improving the performance/quality of the organisation's services.

The training that is available from the DP includes topics such as:

- Culture and governance awareness (awareness about the aspects related to gypsy culture, for example: aspects related to language, to gypsy laws, to taboos, to the way they dress, and so on);
- Access, customer care and service user involvement;
- People Management versus Human Resources Management;
- Compatibility at the work place i.e. job matching;
- Anti-discrimination legislation and obligations under the law.

The DP intends to work with public services, organisation and enterprises on its diversity management activities. In terms of public services, it is targeting the Social and Educational Services of the Municipalities of Amadora and Lisbon, the High Commissioner for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities, the Commission Against Racial Discrimination and for Equality Political Groups, the General Inspectorate of Labour, the Frontiers and Foreigners Service, Schools, Public Social Services and Political Groups. It has reached an agreement with most of these bodies but discussions are still continuing with others. The private organisations that wish to cooperate include Trade Unions, Entrepreneurial Associations like the National Association for the Entrepreneurial Ethic, Training Centres and several NGO's who work with immigrants, their descendants and gypsies. The DP is currently in negotiations with some large or multinational enterprises like OTIS, FNAC, Modelo e Continente (a Chain of Supermarkets in Portugal), Vodafone, DHL, IKEA, Microsoft, ADECCO, and others and is awaiting their final answers.

The Institute for Employment and Professional Training has also expressed an interest in the work of the project. DiverCidade is hoping to sign a protocol with this national Institute because then, the DP's training package and quality standards would be promoted by the Institute and tested initially with some staff members. Afterwards, the training could be mainstreamed to several employment and training centres under the Institute's influence during the Action 3 phase of the DP.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Work on two of the strands, enhancing the autonomy and organisational capacity of ethnic minorities and immigrants and also promoting the status of immigrant, immigrant descendant and gypsy women, has been brought together by the DP under the heading of Community Empowerment. This involves strategies for personal empowerment, self representation and determination, as well as enhancing other skills that can help these target groups to enter the labour market. One of the methods used is called Forum Theatre, which is animated by a team of professionals from several partners. However, one or more of the project's beneficiaries involved

in the session are invited to play an improvised role within scenario that is based on trying to resolve imaginary situations of tension or conflict. For example, a clash between neighbours where one family is annoyed about the noise being generated by the other, or perhaps, an argument between an adviser in a local authority service and a member of the general public who is unhappy about the quality of service or advice that she or he is being offered. After the short scenario finishes, the rest of the audience is given the opportunity to comment on the performance and the solutions that have been tried and anyone who feels that he or she has a better solution is invited to act it out on stage. The scene can be re-enacted several times, and the process provokes great interest and becomes a real participative form of learning. *“I never realised that it might be possible for us to change things”* says Cipriana Ramos who is now working for the project, *“but these sessions have really made me think about what needs to be done around here.”* As it also works to promote local development, all of the DP’s empowerment activities are closely articulated with organisations that already work in this field. The DP discusses problems with local organisations and local communities, listens to their views and then basically facilitates the process of finding an appropriate solution.

THE LIFE EXPERIENCE EXPERT

The concept of the Life Experience Expert in poverty and social exclusion originated in Belgium. It was a response to the missing link between the policy makers and the service providers and the poor themselves. The key element is the fundamental difference in position between a poor person, who is forced to live in constant poverty, and the organisations and participants in policy making who are not familiar with this reality and impose their own solutions in order to solve the problems of the poor. As a result, the poor lose control of their own lives and social decision-making, despite the numerous actions and policy measures that are supposed to help them. So, the idea of the Life Experience Experts emerged which was to provide the missing link by placing people who had had first hand experience of living in poverty into those organisations that were responsible for policies and services for the poor.

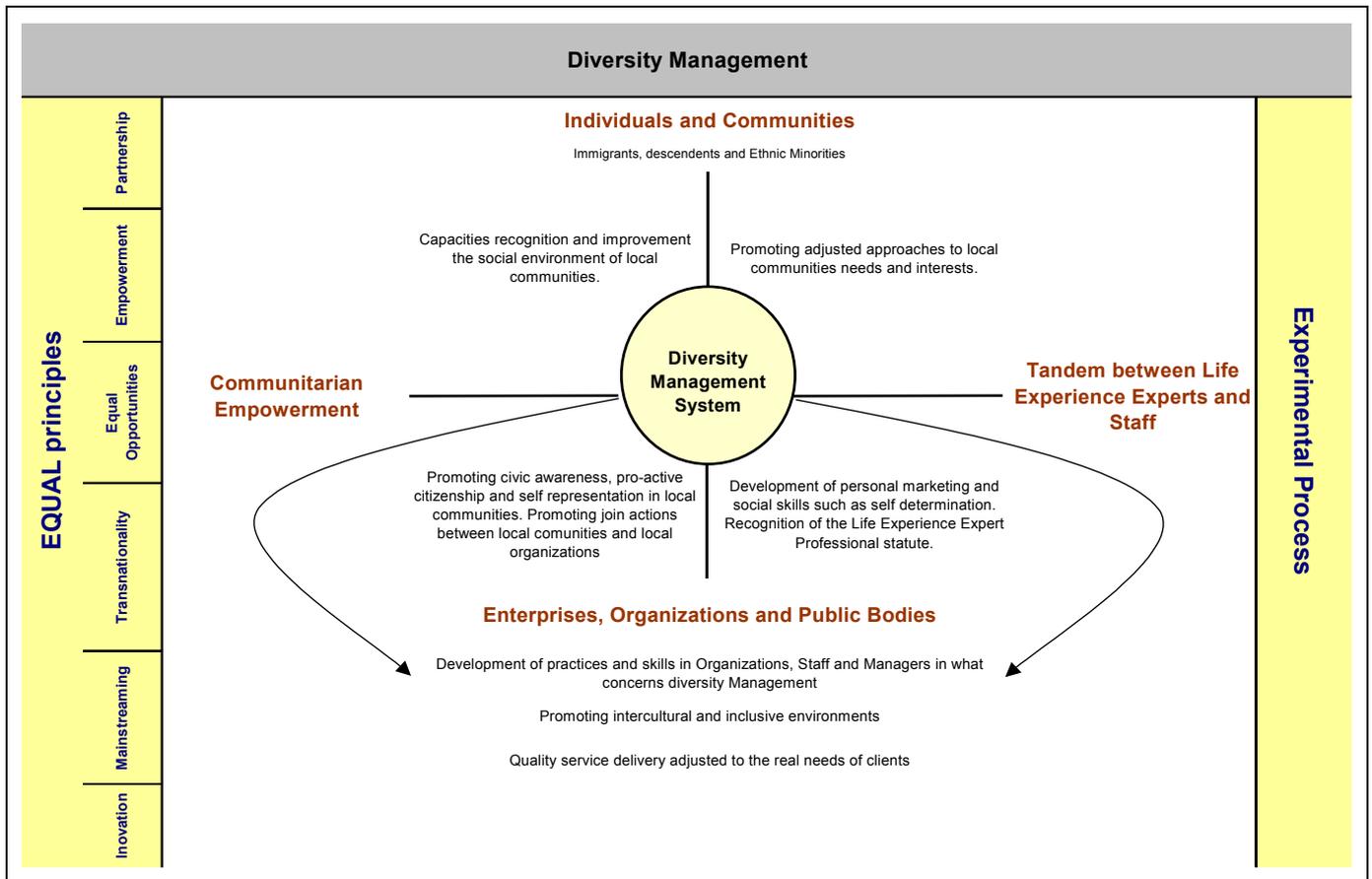


Training Life Experience Experts

DiverCidade has interpreted this concept and is now training two Life Experience Experts. These young people have coped with living as a descendant of immigrants or in an ethnic minority community (gypsy community) and are now being helped to acquire the attitudes, skills and methods to work along side the members of staff in the project. They play an important role in that they make an input to all the other activities of the project, as they can feed in their experience and this helps the project to adopt realistic and appropriate methods.

Cipriana Ramos is one of these Life Experience Experts, who came to the project after she had trained to become a socio-cultural mediator, and then worked for four years in a school. She believes that *“because I’m a woman, I can show other gipsy women that being in a job doesn’t stop you being a gipsy!”* Tchino’s parents came from Cape Verde. He has been coaching local youngsters in indoor football for several years. He feels that he was selected as a Life Experience Expert because *“I have some experience with the teenagers in the neighbourhood. I know, more or less, the way teenagers think and can explain why they will do certain things or refuse to do others.”* The DP is experimenting with this new method of having a qualified member of staff and a Life Experience Expert working in “Tandem.” Its overall objective is to create a new professional profile of a Life Experience Expert and to promote new legislation through which this profile and the related training can be validated.

So, there are lots of different things happening in DiverCidade, in different arenas and in different locations and to help to interpret these activities and the links and inter-relationships between them, the DP has produced the following diagram.



PARTNERSHIP IS THE SOLUTION BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD

The DiverCidade project emerged from a Round 1 EQUAL project entitled [Emprego Apoiado](#) (Supported Employment). The partners involved in that DP were:

- The Secretariado Diocesano de Lisboa da Obra Nacional da Pastoral dos Ciganos (The Lisbon Diocesan Secretariat of the National Institution for Care of Gypsies), that has vast experience in creating integration pathways for Gypsies;
- The Associação Cultural Moinho da Juventude (The Moinho Cultural Association for Young People) that is skilled in working with disadvantaged immigrant young people and their families;
- The Municipio Da Amadora (The Local Authority of Amadora) that has a number of responsibilities that are relevant to the DP's beneficiaries such as health, housing, education and leisure and recreation.

In the attempt to enhance the partnership for DiverCidade, four new partners were added so that through their expertise and contacts, the DP would be able to respond to more of the needs of its different target groups. Gebalis is a municipal company, that is responsible for managing social housing in Lisbon, and finding suitable accommodation is always an issue for Gypsies and immigrants. Another NGO, Cais, has a deep understanding of the eastern European gipsy community, as members of this community sell its magazine that is like the Big Issue in the UK or the Macadam magazine in France and Belgium. An NGO called GTO (the Oppressed Theatre Group) has “know how” in a participative theatre techniques. These have proved very effective in helping the Gipsy and immigrant populations to have a greater voice in their local communities and to take more control of their life situations. Finally, the National Association of Female Entrepreneurs (ANE) has brought its expertise especially related to Social Responsibility and Diversity Management in the business world and thereby helps to create more employment opportunities for the DP's target groups.

Carla Benites makes the point that “DiverCidade and its members really appreciate the focus on partnerships within EQUAL. EQUAL has given us the opportunity to build a strong local and a strong transnational partnership that are mutually reinforcing.”

TRANSNATIONAL ACTION



Discussion at a transnational Working Group meeting

In fact, DiverCidade and its transnational partnership (TP) [FEAP](#) (Fairness and Equality for All People) are organised in the same way. At both levels every attempt has been made to develop a common language and to share responsibilities and specific “know-how”. Whilst activities are open to all and all can make suggestions or proposals for developments, each is led by the partner with the most understanding and experience of the particular issue in question. For example, there are three Working Groups within the DiverCidade structure that all feed back to the DP Steering Group and these are:

- Diversity Management Programme led by Municipio Da Amadora and the Secretariado Diocesano de Lisboa da ONPC;
- Life Experience Expert led by Associação Cultural Moinho da Juventude ;
- Community Empowerment led by GTO.

At transnational level, there are two Working Groups that feed back to the TP Steering Group. The first concentrates on Impact Assessment and in its activities:

- DiverCidade leads on Quality Assessment;
- The French DP [Agir Contre Les Discriminations Raciales Dans Un Parcours D'integration Sociale](#) leads on the development of a Charter of Diversity Principles;
- [Open House](#) from England leads on the production of a Video Diary that will follow the lives of some beneficiaries in all of DPs.

The second Working Group on Staff Exchange and Thematic Activities is led by the DP's Secretary from Austria, [Interkultureller Kommunal Aktionsplan](#).

While DiverCidade has had very useful support from all of these partners during its initial research phase and is engaged in all of the above activities, it is particularly interested in the work on the Charter of Diversity Principles. This is because of the connection with its own work on quality standards. For example, if an enterprise or public agency meets the requisite quality standards, a Charter could be signed and awarded in recognition of their achievements in Diversity Management.

Within both partnerships, there is a constant review of what is going on and every effort is made to improve the skills and capacities of individuals and participating organisations and to demonstrate this evolution in performance. Both partnerships also use the same system for their web sites called [CommunityZero](#) that enables groups of any size to set up a private web community within minutes. These web sites ensure speedy communication between partners with all outputs in terms of agendas, minutes, proposals and draft products being posted on the sites for information and comment.

The final aspect in which partnership is important within DiverCidade is the “Tandem” in which a qualified member of staff i.e. someone with a relevant higher educational qualification, works side by side with a Life Experience Expert. These partnerships are also going well, at least if they are judged from Cipriana's viewpoint. “It's good. It's a good relationship. The staff help me to work, teach me how to do a report of a meeting, a timetable and other important things”, she explains and then goes on to add, “but being a gipsy, what means most to me now is feeling as equal as anyone else!”

The Three Most Important Lessons from DiverCidade

1. *The DP believes that in-service training of staff of public agencies and services, which promotes awareness of Gipsy culture, is an important element in combating institutionalised discrimination against Gipsies. The training it offers covers aspects related to language, to gypsy laws, to taboos, and even to the way in which Gipsies dress.*
2. *The DP is convinced that to play an active role in society, immigrants and Gipsies need to acquire certain additional skills. Thus, its work on Community Empowerment involves strategies for personal empowerment, self representation and self-determination, as well as enhancing other social skills that can help these target groups to enter the labour market.*
3. *The DP has found that having professional members of its team working in “tandem” with “life experience experts” who are chosen from immigrant and Gipsy communities to work within the DP, helps it to provide services that realistic and relevant to the needs of both of these communities.*

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[Link to EQUAL database description](#)