

## SEM FRONTEIRAS - SUPPORT OFFICES FOR MIGRANTS IN RURAL AREAS

When the **Sem Fronteiras** (Without Borders) DP started in the Region of Alentejo, there were very few structures able to provide specific services to immigrants or to direct them to the competent institutions. Since 1999, this area had experienced a significant influx of migrants, especially from Eastern Europe, and so the DP decided to establish a regional network that could provide such services.

A total of eight support offices have been set up – one in the Terras Dentro Development Association that is the Managing Organisation for the project, and one in each of the seven municipalities that are the other partners in the DP. This has involved training the 13 staff members of the Association and also one person from each of the local authorities in issues such as teamwork, intercultural skills, legal issues related to immigration and contact with other service providers. The training is relatively flexible in order to allow specific requests from the staff members to be incorporated, and has amounted to a total of 60 hours spread over the first two years of the project.

Some of the most innovative or successful aspects of the project include:

- The flexibility of the network and its functioning have enabled outreach work to be undertaken and staff can make initial, informal, contact with migrants in their workplaces or during their leisure time;
- This dispersed, light support structure associated with the outreach work of the staff is proving to be a solution that is well adapted to the features of this sub-region of Alentejo: low population density, small clusters of migrants spread throughout the region, limited financial and human resources to set up fully functioning one-stop-shops across the region;
- The fact that the Support Offices are based in several small towns increases the availability of the service, because there is no need to travel long distances using the limited public transport services. The offices are also open beyond the normal working hours and they are easy to find because seven of them are located in town halls;
- The mediation role of staff in the Support Offices ensures that there is continuing support for migrants in their contacts with other institutions such as health centres or social security departments;
- Because of its proximity to migrants, the network is able to gain their trust and can better identify their needs and the deficiencies in the public services that should meet these needs. The DP tries to alert these services and to bridge the gaps in their provision.

The Network has directly or indirectly provided an answer to all the questions and problems that have been presented with the most frequent being on immigration procedures, jobs, housing, children's education and training opportunities. All of the partners are interested in maintaining the Support Offices and the cooperative links that they have established after the end of the EQUAL project.

### Contact

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Link to [EQUAL database description](#)

Transnational Partnership

[FACETS](#)

[TIM - Transnational Promotion of integration of migrants](#)