

9th DISTINCTION BEST PRACTICE IN CITIZEN PARTICIPATION



The city of Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo, located in the northeast quadrant of the District of Guarda, part of the Central Region, of Portugal, with a population of 6,162 inhabitants in an area of 508.57 km².

Despite its low population density, 12.2 h / km², and the progressive loss of population suffering from the inner region of the country, is in charge of a large territory, which adds the area of the municipalities of Lisbon, Oporto Coimbra and bound, in which its inhabitants live in great difficulty. Being a peripheral region with few state investments, the average income is quite modest. The GDP per capita has, which is only 60% of the national average, have lower average when it's compared to the GDP per capita of EU (European Union) 28 countries.



Depopulation, which occurs in these regions, is a serious problem that should not go unnoticed by the authorities of Portugal and the European Union. These territories should have the same rights and the same duties, cannot admit the existence of "first class territories" and "second-class territories" opportunities.

This sentiment was mostly political, gradually began to move into the daily lives of all the inhabitants of the Portuguese Interior, often nicknamed Deep Portugal, is today one of the major factors disrepute among government and administered undermining the existing trust relationship should be solid and firm.

The city of Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo, one of 308 Portuguese municipalities, has identified this disbelief and decided to act to reverse, using the "**Municipality open doors**" experience in an attempt to unlock the power of attorney to their representatives, an phenomenon of decision-making power back to the people.

Actually there is, especially in deep Portugal, an increasing distance between people and power structures, discover new ways to reverse this gap is crucial to enhance and improve the relationship between citizens and representatives.

Consequently, in these rural, sparsely populated areas where the socioeconomic and sociopolitical indicators are well below the national average, are necessary investment measures to break this gap. This need is urgent to avoid disrepute to state authorities are irreparable. Currently there is a real feeling of abandonment (closure of public services such as schools, hospitals, tax offices, courts, police, among many others).

The experience "open Municipality" is precisely to approximate decision making than those normally voiceless, bringing decision-making to citizens.

The main objective of this measure is to empower and trust established between the administration and citizens, or rather bodies democratically elected representative and his constituents.

With the implementation of the "Municipality Open Doors" experience realized through three micro-projects, namely, "Participatory Budgeting", "office of citizen services" and "citizen encounter" was intended to approximate the increasingly distant population, recipients of public policy.

Without partisan intent, this experience can be labeled purely political, since it is the policy of governance, because it is, to give voice to the voiceless!

The experience "Municipality Open Doors" was developed in three micro projects, namely, "Participatory Budgeting", "office of citizen services" and "meet people in the villages":

- "Participatory Budgeting" means the preparation of the municipal budget for 2015, it was channeled through participation open to all, with the creation of an email address where people could submit their contributions, hopes and aspirations they wanted to see materialized 2015.

This measure resulted in many contributions that deserve reflection and found place in the text of the draft budget, including personal aspirations in a document that is of all phenomena.

- "Office Citizen Attention": still in progress in the city, involves centralizing in a single area of customer service, from which you can perform all the procedures that are currently decentralized in various services offline. It is a measure of approximation of citizens to the administration because of the filing of any administrative proceeding to their response will go through the same channel with the same language and form, and this will strengthen the bonds and bond with the administration.

- "Encontro nas aldeias" Throughout the year various visits of the city government were made to the various villages of the municipality (the municipality consists of several separate population areas, the "aldeias") where City Council members personally attend complaints from neighbors. Often the villagers are not related to management regularly; however they do with these custom views.

These three projects were the start of a new way of doing politics, certainly will be deployed in the near future elsewhere, because the balance is positive.

