

	<p>Among the association’s activities, we highlight the following: projects and actions oriented to the infrastructures and district’s urban qualification; the district has a Nursery (60 children), a Family Nursery (80 children), a Kindergarten (84 children) and free time activities for over 180 children, oriented to animation and support children’s homework, organizing holiday camps, and have a set of activities directed to the animation of younger population in areas like sports, culture and to their professional qualification; in the cultural area, they encourage the preservation and valorisation of the inhabitants culture, in the health area, they develop awareness and preventive actions. The Association has been developing projects oriented to the district’s elements with more problems in employability (women and youngsters) and social inclusion (Ex-convicts).</p> <p>Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0NY3--wZ6s</p> <p>The Association seeks the improvement of district’s life conditions, through bigger knowledge and recognition of the inhabitants and their knowledge, to increase their academic and vocal qualifications, to improve the economy and the district’s image to the outside. An example of its intervention is Project Sabura.</p> <p>The Moinho da Juventude Cultural Association is composed by a large team, 56 collaborators with labor agreement, and 26 in provision of services, a set of scholarships and trainees and a group of two dozen volunteers.</p>
<p>Project “Recognition and validation of competences of educational assistants”</p> <p>Objective</p> <p>Partners</p>	<p>The case study is centred in the characterization and analyses of the dynamic of the Project of Recognition and Validation of Competences of educational assistants and baby-sitters. This Project, conducted by Moinho da Juventude Cultural Association was born in 1993/1994, within a European Project, sponsored by the Program NOW (New Opportunities for Women) and took place on level 3 – Educational Assistants, current designation, Educational Technical Assistant.</p> <p>The Project was directed to Educational Assistants (Educational Technical Assistant) that worked in the Association’s kindergarten and in the Free Time Activities Centre (CATL) and in other entities of the closest neighborhoods and for women that perform their occupation as baby-sitters (took care of children at home). They were, mainly, immigrant women from Cape Verde. The project aimed to recognize and validate the competences that those women had acquired throughout their life, through non formal and informal education, which revealed fundamental to perform their occupation. It was a group of 25 women, between 18 and 40 years, with very low educational levels but with high professional experience. The projects responsible, in the Moinho da Juventude Cultural Association, realized the importance of the formalization, recognition and validation of competences of Educational Assistants (Educational Technical Assistant), as a way to value this occupation, promotion of mobility and (re)employability, but also to identify and go beyond the blanks in these women’ training.</p> <p>The Project had a set of partners from France, Belgium and the Netherlands.</p>

<p>Methodology</p> <p>Instrument</p> <p>Portfolio</p> <p>Monitoring</p> <p>Recognition and validation</p> <p>Interchange</p>	<p>In 1997/1998, the Moinho da Juventude Cultural Association collaborated in the Project “CREDIT”, promoted by the University of Amsterdam and several European partners, from which we highlight “The Financial Times”. Within this project, it was conceived a prototype of an instrument of Recognition and Validation of competences. Based on this experience, in 2000, within a European project, the Association elaborated an instrument of validation of competences for Educational Assistants. The modules contemplated in the instrument of Recognition and Validation of Competences for Educational Assistants (Educational Technical Assistant), comprehend several areas related to the child’s development, with team work between colleagues and parents; resource’s organization and management. The instruments developed were based on the competences frame for Educational Assistants of the UK. The instruments served as orientation and guide to develop the portfolio, and became a fundamental part in the process of recognition and validation of acquired experiential. Women had access to the instrument of Recognition and Validation of Competences by three ways: a) Internet; b) digital support (CD Rom); c) paper support. The diversity of modes to access the instrument of Recognition and Validation of Competences aimed to facilitate the access of the candidates to the project’s information and achievement.</p> <p>The educational Assistants involved in the Project created a portfolio about their occupation, where they explained their professional experience and their knowledge. In this portfolio they put elements that would allow proving that their writings were true (photographs and documents). In portfolio’s construction they were guided by the modes contemplated in the instrument of Recognition and Validation of Competences of Educational Assistants, created within the project.</p> <p>Women were monitored throughout the project, namely, in portfolio’s creation. It was intended that this process was lived in a pleasant and motivational way by the candidates and also constitute an opportunity, not only to value previously acquired knowledge, but also as a strategy of reflexion on professional practices, of sharing and learning. Women discussed, reflected and explained their professional activities, in order to place their competences in evidence.</p> <p>The instrument of Recognition and Validation of Competences conceived within the project worked as an evaluation frame, from where, women themselves, elaborated a self-recognition and was processed the hetero-recognition, following the feedback provided by the consultant. The portfolio was analyzed by the project’s consultant in the validation phase, which was based in the previously mentioned instrument. In the process of Validation, it was taken into account the candidates’ life and professional experience, their educational background and training.</p> <p>Throughout the project they shared experiences with educators and other educational assistants, first, through interchange periods, in entities that intervene in close districts (6 de Maio, Santa Filomena) and after in foreign partner entities</p>
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	<p>(Netherlands and France). About the first type of interchange, the responsible for Moinho da Juventude Cultural Association, referred in the interview: “from here, a person would go to work in 6 de Maio district, and a person from that district came to work here, register what he/she saw, evaluate what he/she saw, what he/she had learned, then those reflections were made with trades, they realize that they had learned from the other, they would criticize the other, it was always very lively.” During the mobility period in external entities, national or foreign, and the admission period of other educational assistants and professionals, the professional practices were observed and analyzed, which led to moments of explanation and reflection about the knowledge used in the occupation and, simultaneously, worked as training and sharing between the various actors involved. The reflection about their professional practice and the observation of practices from district colleagues or from distant countries, were the structuring axis of this project’s methodology. The writing process was important to explicit and to formalize, through instruments, the knowledge inherent to the professional practices of educational assistants.</p>
<p>Effects in partners and actors involved</p>	<p>The foreign interchange was organized by educational assistants that were monitored by the projects responsible. The educational assistants defined the practical and organizational aspects of the trip (travel agency contacts, reserves and plane ticket purchase, hotel reservations, goals’ definition, activities, indicators, the observational frame, and the evaluation parameters during the interchange). The interchange organized in such way turn out to be an undertaking and learning process with very positive effects, as perceived by the interviewee’s words: “it was grate and I think it was a mark in the life of all people who participated. In a work level it was a very strong experience, the evaluation process was very important, each one had its own task to perform.”</p>
	<p>The explanation and knowledge formalization process for educational assistants, resulting from non formal and informal educational modes, proved very important to the recognition and validation of their competences for a suitable professional performance. The group was mainly a feminine group, with low school levels but with high professional experience, and whose competences weren’t formally recognized, although in their everyday life, they perform responsibility tasks in a complementary record and teamwork with the educators with higher education qualification levels.</p>
<p>Project’s impact</p>	<p>The Netherlands partners realized that, trough recognition and validation of competences of educational assistants of Moinho da Juventude Cultural Association, it was possible to perfect the training frames of educational assistant’s courses for immigrant women. This was an unexpected effect, as enhanced by the interviewee: “the Project was conceived in order for us to go learning in Northern Countries, they realize they could learn here, with Cape Verdean women that were working with us as educational assistants and their capacity of intervention, in a decision level.”</p> <p>This project, beyond the very positive results in an individual level in educational assistants of Moinho da Juventude Cultural Association, whose professional competences were recognized and validated, also had effects in an organizational level, because it was focused on a process of analysis, reflection and evaluation of the professional practices and involved all educational agents. Now, in Moinho da Juventude Cultural Association, the educators and educational assistants constitute a</p>

<p>Problems/Difficulties</p>	<p>team that works complementarily, where mutual respect for other’s knowledge is appealed, regardless the origin of that knowledge (technical with higher education and experience expert, whose knowledge comes from his life experience). This logic is notorious in the interviewee’s words: “we have an educator working with an experience expert and I have to see that each one has a knowledge that is different and complementary and it is not about hierarchy.</p> <p>The teamwork, in a record of complementary and mutual respect of knowledge, is essential to overcome most difficult situations, as the interviewee refers: “we welcome a girl that had passed about by 10 institutions that support autism, said that the little girl was 85% suffer from autism. She came here (...) she throw all the food to the floor, she walked over tables. In the room there was a group of 20 children and with this child it wasn’t easy. There was synergy and complementary between the educator, the educational assistant and the Child Psychiatrist and only in this way we could overcome this situation. The educational assistant and the educator had an extremely important role. It was only possible to overcome the problem with this teamwork. They worked upon the acceptance of the other kids. In other places it wasn’t possible and here it was only possible because there is this working spirit.”</p> <p>This project initiated in the nineties had also a very positive impact in national terms because it worked as a process of awareness to the Ministry of Education on the importance of training and the legal definition of the occupation of educational assistants, in a period when those questions were not considered. As the interviewee says: “we manage to unblock the Ministry of Education, they began to see the importance of training for educational assistants.” Recently, the Ministry of Education defined the legal framing that sets training (Adult Training and Education Courses) and the access and professional progression in the educational assistants’ career. There is a competence frame defined for training in this domain and a professional profile that orients the processes of recognition, validation and certification of competences in a professional level.</p>
<p>The relationships/ interactions</p>	<p>In the beginning of the project, it was difficult to ensure funding to educational assistants’ interchange, it all pointed out that the interchange could only happen with educators. However, that initial concern was overcome.</p>
	<p>The interactions established between the various Project partners came out to be a determinant capital value to the Project’s success, stimulating: the permanent trade of information; analyses and reflection about distinct professional practices; the knowledge and acknowledge of different social and cultural realities; mutual learning. The project partners had the interest and capacity to spread their practices and to give visibility to this type of initiative, contributing, in a decisive way that a current project could multiply in other initiatives. This Project gave rise to new projects, Nationwide and European, allowing enhancing the learning previously achieved. An example of such dynamic was the invitation proposed by the University of Amsterdam to Moinho da Juventude Cultural Association to participate in the CREDIT Project, because they had previously participated in NOW Project. CREDIT Project, with three years duration (1998-2000), was initiated because of a group of Dutch women, educational assistants, that after a long experience in this occupation, were unemployed and didn’t have no formal professional qualification that allow to value their knowledge in their re-employability. In this Project there were partners</p>

	from Netherlands, Portugal, Germany and England. Throughout this Project, the instruments were constructed, in a prototype, using the internet.
	<p>In 2000, Moinho da Juventude Cultural Association, within the Horizon Project, elaborated the key-competence frame, level III, for Educational Technical Assistants, and in 2003-2004, within the EQUAL Project, elaborated the level III for baby-sitters.</p> <p>In 1994, in Portugal, there was neither training frame nor professional profile for educational assistants. Following the participation in this European projects, the Moinho da Juventude Cultural Association, in co-work with other partners, developed training frames for levels II and III. These frames are very important instruments because they can contribute to fulfill multiple objectives: 1. Recognition and validation of competences; 2. Definition of professional and training profiles in this activity domain; 3. Guides to select and recruit educational assistants. In Portugal, nowadays, there is already a set of entities that promote the process of recognition and validation of professional competences, within educational assistants. This occupation has been subject to governmental procedures, issued by the Ministry of Education, in order to clarify the access rules and career's progression, as well as training organization, that allow getting professional qualifications in this domain of activity. The projects developed by Moinho da Juventude Cultural Association certainly proved an asset in key developments that followed in this area.</p>

