



International Association of Educating Cities  
Asociación Internacional de Ciudades Educadoras  
Association Internationale des Villes Éducatrices

## A New Training Experience in the Lisbon City Council: Adult Education and Training Project

Lifelong learning has acquired a special relevance in our Knowledge Society. The new social and employment demands have increased the pressure on everyone in terms of the continuous renovation of their knowledge and skills.

Thus, adult education is imperative in the promotion of democracy, justice, equality and socio-economic development. Everyone, irrespective of their age, must be able to develop their full potential, critically meeting new challenges and participating actively in the life of the city.

Adult training includes a broad range of initiatives: basic education, digital literacy, occupational training, higher education, etc. that can frame itself as part of both formal and non-formal education.



Lisbon's EFA Project (Adult Education and Training) is set in this context. The City Council of Lisbon, concerned about the skills of its employees (50% do not have their basic primary education diploma) set up this project in 2002 in order to respond to its training needs, while, at the same time recognising, validating and certifying the lifelong learning of individuals in different areas and in different contexts, such as, formal, non-formal and informal education. Learning in informal contexts comprises the unintentional experiences of daily life that are not always recognised as drivers of new knowledge and skills.

**Lisbon** is the largest city in Portugal and its capital. It is located on the mouth of the Tajo River and is also the centre of the Greater Metropolitan Area of Lisbon. The city has approximately 550,000 inhabitants (2001), but there are more than 2.9 million people living in its greater metropolitan area, one fourth of the population of the country. Its location on the mouth of the Tajo on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean has endowed its harbour with tremendous economic activity since antiquity. Today, the main industries are led by oil refining, and include textiles, ship-building, metallurgy and fishing. The tertiary sector is preponderant. Lisbon is the richest city in Portugal with a per capita GDP above the European average. The Portuguese have a low level of education compared to the average in the European Union: 51% of the active Portuguese population does not have a basic primary school diploma (9 years old). The City Council of Lisbon gives employment to more than 10,000 people and has a large structure with multiple areas of activity, which allows it to provide its own training activities.

The Lisbon City Council Training Services, after carrying out research on existing non-formal education available nationally came up with the idea of this training and skills certification project, integrated into the National Recognition, Validation and Skills Certification System (or the RVCC - original acronym) set up by the National Adult Education and Training Agency.



Currently, this National System of the RVCC is managed by the General Vocational Training Directorate of the Portuguese Ministry of Education, which is promoting a network of public and private centres that are organised along the following three axes: skills recognition, validation and certification, as well as offering various services, information, consulting, complementary training and local encouragement.

The main goal of the Adult Education and Training Project of the Lisbon City Council is to increase the skills of its workers and foster a greater match between the diplomas obtained and the skills of each employee. This process contributes, at the same time, to increasing the personal and social value of the adults, motivating the employees in their daily work and increasing the quality of services provided to the citizenry.

This initiative is addressed to all municipal employees that have not obtained their basic primary school diplomas. In general, this group comes from underprivileged social layers and has a low skilled vocational profile: workers, mechanics, cleaning personnel, gardeners, etc.



The workers who wish to participate in this process are called to a combined welcoming session and informational interview. At this first meeting, the RVCC professionals analyse the personal (professional and training-related) history of the candidate and make an initial exploration of their profile, identifying their skills and knowledge. The RVCC professionals propose a training programme in line with the needs of each person, with the goal of their obtaining equivalent certification, for all legal effects and purposes, to that obtained in the formal education system.

The diplomas that can be obtained are for the first, second and third cycles of primary education.

The process can have three different initial levels:

- 1.- Direct access to the Recognition, Validation and Certification process, in the event that the worker has acquired the skills and knowledge necessary to obtain this certification during his life.
- 2.- Training in specific areas, based on the particular needs of each candidate, before beginning the Recognition, Validation and Certification process of their skills.
- 3.- Long-term training, in the event that the training needs of the candidate are more acute.

The professionals of the RVCC inform, orientate and follow up the training program of each employee who begins this process. The success of this project is reflected in the number of individuals that want to participate (more than 900 registrations) and in the fact that many employees in addition to obtaining primary school certification then continue with secondary education studies.

Thanks to initiatives such as this, educating cities can move forward in satisfying the right of everyone to receive an education and in creating cities that show more solidarity with all generations. Undoubtedly, the education of adults must respond to new issues that are raised in this new century. And for this to be possible we need the commitment of local governments and also the collaboration of different administrations and civil society.

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