

Twenty years of Portuguese public investment in global education



The Lasting Impact of Development Education in Portugal

Development Education

is transformative learning focused on social justice, global citizenship, and sustainability. Twenty years of funding have helped promote learning about the world and our place in it, putting this at the heart of education and community action, with teachers and students exploring the world in a more critical and interdependent manner.

"Without this funding, much of the awareness-raising and training work would not have happened." - recalls an NGO

Within schools

New opportunities were created, enabling teachers to more actively encourage participation and promote dialogue, critical reflection, and collaborative learning across curricula.

"We realised that students do not only learn content but learn to question the world and their role in it." - summarises an elementary school teacher

Empowered to address global issues such as climate change, responsible consumption, human rights, and global inequalities, learners engage actively with society.

"Development Education gave us the courage to open the school to the world and to bring the world into the school." - testifies another teacher

With a strong foundation in classroom-based work, Development Education also contributes to the education of future teachers, benefiting from the support of multiple educational resources developed through the projects supported by public funding.

Within other educational spaces outside school

Development Education projects support learning that is open to everyone. Development Education interventions in spaces such as cultural associations, youth organisations, and community centres, encourage and support creativity, participation, and critical thinking. Portuguese young people have discovered new ways of interacting with the world and working towards real change.

"The project has changed the way I see consumption and the environment. Today I know that my choices count." - shares a young participant

These projects help counter prejudices, create new bonds, and transform local spaces into places of dialogue and action. The impact is greatest in peripheral locations, encompassing training, public campaigns, resource development, exhibitions, radio programmes, and more.

"We learned to work with — and not just — for the communities." - underlines a project worker

In the public space

The organisations gained greater prominence, contributing to the exchange of ideas and to policy debate. Through campaigns, studies, documentaries, and work with the media, they brought key societal issues into the public eye.

"Over the past 20 years, we have come to be recognised by policymakers and by the media." - summarises a project coordinator

This evolution has driven greater professionalisation across the sector. Organisations strengthened their technical competencies, improved their communications, and made their work more coordinated and strategic. Today, they are more innovative, with a stronger presence in national and international fora and in shaping public policy.

In the institutions

Today, there is a genuine focus on dialogue and collaborative work, as well as on sharing resources and producing collective knowledge. The funding encouraged the creation of spaces for experimentation and for innovation in methodologies and processes of global learning. Networks have been fostered that enable active cooperation to be sustained and a body of knowledge to be built on. Development Education action is now embedded within institutions, no longer an add-on.

"More than projects, we have created relationships of trust and networks that continue after funding." - says an NGO representative

Development Education

is now a public policy area recognised nationally and admired internationally. The investment generated knowledge, transformed relationships, and delivered lasting multiplier effects.

"What we have done in these twenty years is to build a culture of global citizenship in Portugal." - summarises one of the interviewees

An active citizenship committed to global values has been consolidated, strengthening the link between Portugal and the world.

The ambition is to continue inspiring new generations conscious of Portugal's important role in the world.

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