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## **Paper for Workshop II: Organisations for European Citizenship Education (public)**

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### **“Singing the Janeiras”**

With this presentation we aim at getting you acquainted to the project *Singing the Janeiras*. This project was awarded on a portuguese Adults Education contest and is mentioned as an example of good practice on the European Civil Society internet site, supported by the European Economic and Social Committee, [www.eucis.net](http://www.eucis.net). The *Singing the Janeiras* project achieved Education and Training level goals within an informal context, through the promotion of an event related to local folklore. Paying attention to local folklore was the first step that led to discover other regions, countries and cultures, to achieve the respect and appreciation of the differences, basis of multicultural education and an european citizenship.

The project took place in the little village of Fajão, the parish headquarter village, in the municipality of Pampilhosa da Serra, district of Coimbra, located at the portuguese Central Mountain range.

This region has deep social and economical lacks, due in part to strong geographical conditioning – mountains zone with some dispersed small localities and with very sinuous roads.

Fajão is 21 km far from the municipality headquarter village and presents an aged population. There are schools in Fajão where the few children living in the parish can study for the first six years of the nine's compulsory.

A large part of the about 80 inhabitants of Fajão has no formal professional training. Many of them, mainly women, did not finish compulsory school level, so illiteracy has strong implantation.

The every day life in this rural context does not stimulate the communication, calculation or reflection skills. People, in general, do not feel the need for Education and have low expectations about it.

The portuguese law demands a minimum of ten people to organise basic recurrent education groups. It is not easy to reach these numbers in such small villages. This problem imposed an alternative way to deal with Education and Training. More than to restore tradition *Entre-Serras Association* aimed to reach educational goals in a non-formal context.

Singing the *Janeiras* is a tradition that passed from generation to generation, from grandparents to parents and from parents to children. The folklore related to the night of January the fifth, prevails in an unwritten collective memory. People used to go, organised in groups, along the streets singing Christmas songs at the houses' doors. In the small village of Fajão this tradition was almost forgotten.

*Entre-Serras, Association for the Development of the Pampilhosa da Serra Municipality*, with head-office in Fajão, met the challenge – Shall we join efforts to restore the Singing the *Janeiras* tradition?

To stimulate people's participation was an arduous task. However, the idea was very well accepted by the parish's authority and by schools' teachers. A team work was starting. This project aimed at: contributing to the improvement of participants' self-esteem, the improvement of lifelong learning expectations, promoting the use of new technologies,

developing participants citizenship, communication capacities, verbal skills - reading and writing capacities.

Schools' pupils and teachers, parish' authority and Entre-Serras' association members caught the population engagement through a very direct and personalised door to door way. This task started by mid September of the year 2000 and, two weeks later, a group of about twenty persons was willing to work together.

The *singing the Janeiras* event was built step by step, through different activities: schools teachers constituted the working groups and their cohesive activities. The assignments distribution was made on a basis of self-examination, recognising individual capacities and seeking the improvement of self-esteem. The written record of the selected traditional songs worked out as motivation to learn how to write on a computer. To contact several entities, in order to get their support, and the several ways of advertising this event worked out as an improvement of communication capacities. The organisation of the event it self, improved their management and mathematical techniques.

Teachers developed the main lines of the educational work with adults with the support of *Extensão Educativa de Pampilhosa da Serra*, a Department of the portuguese Ministry of Education, with responsibilities on Adults Education.

Four months later, on the night of January the fourth, a party took place: the old folkloric songs were sung. The old and traditional community firewood oven was at work again, to bake and share the traditional corn bread.

This party resulted from several meetings, led by the teachers, that usually took place by the end of the day: songs were collected; the selected songs were typed on the computer and sang; discussions to decide whom to invite and why took place; invitations were made; Mathematics were learned to find out the quantity and cost of the necessary stuff to organise the event.

There were eight main partners involved in this project: Entre-Serras (local development association and project co-ordinator); Extensão Educativa de Pampilhosa da Serra (public local Adult Education authority, responsible for technical supervising); Câmara Municipal de Pampilhosa da Serra (municipal authority, gave logistical support); Fajão's schools - until level 6 (made the population sensitisation); Junta de Freguesia de Fajão (parish authority, gave logistical support and helped in advertising); Associação Casa Humana (national level sociological association, did funding); Instituto de Promoção Ambiental (national environmental authority, did funding).

It was a successful initiative but there were several difficulties, obstacles and problems to overcome. The first steps to involve the population were not easy. The co-operation of schools teachers was essential to reach at all the people. Once the project was running the people themselves were able to involve the local authorities and once they were involved it was not very hard to get support from other entities.

After the *Singing the Janeiras* project some new ideas emerged. One interesting outcome of the project was the sensibility developed about preserving the local tradition. They are planning to settle a museum, in Fajão, dedicated to mountain schools.

The biggest contribution of this project to multicultural education was the arousing of a will for knowledge about different ways of thinking and living – a basis for european citizenship. Entre-Serras association is now running a project concerning study visits to several regions of Portugal and abroad, in order to get better acquainted to traditions of other regions and countries.

Since the year 2002 more than 600 people participated in this project. Seven travels were made and during these travels was possible to see several folklore activities.

We think there are two innovative aspects in the *Singing the Janeiras* project. One has to do with the possibility of working on Education and Training with excellent results, out of school. The other one has to do with the reflection on local culture as a starting point to know better other people habits and cultures, aiming at mutual respect.

Public institutions and non-public institutions should join efforts, creating efficient partnerships, to reach common aims.

One advantage of this project was the partnership formed to support it. Once created it can be useful to solve other problems in the community. When several entities are involved, costs are better divided and better results can be obtained.

With this project we found out two important aspects to take in account in the future. The knowledge about other cultures is very important in order to accept difference and diversity. People who work on european citizenship should have the capacity to understand and to promote the understanding of difference and diversity and should be able to develop strategies to stress common points and use them as a basis to promote mutual respect.