

PROFILES AND PATHWAYS OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE AZORES

PROFILES PATHWAYS



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PRESENTATION

Several factors caused the Azores, a few decades ago a place of departure of thousands of people to overseas, to be transformed into host islands to about 5,000 individuals from 86 different nationalities. Underlying this change was (1) April 25th with the country's democratization process; (2) the integration of Portugal in the European Union and the consequent modernization and better quality of life; (3) the free and less bureaucratic access to education; and (4) the creation of jobs which not only stanch ed emigration, but also allured individuals of other nationalities.

The arrival of individuals from different races and creeds, has come to undoubtedly change the social fabric of the Azores, which for centuries was characterized by a certain homogeneity of its people in terms of origin, religion, culture, economic activities, leisure, etc..

From the 1980s, groups of immigrants, who came in search of better quality of life, began to arrive in a more significant manner. As a result of successive migration processes, especially from Africa, Brazil and Eastern Europe, the Azores and Azoreans became exposed to new languages, new accents, different ways of being and doing, new religions, new music, new ways of dancing, and new gastronomical influences. Cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue were developed gradually, and today we can say that the archipelago's wealth can

only be put together with particular reference to immigrants who have chosen the Azores for personal and professional fulfillment. Here they acquire residence, marry, have children and educate them, practice their religion and their culture and eat their traditional dishes in perfect harmony with the locals.

Aware of the need to study this phenomenon in its full scope, in terms of its social, economic and cultural implications, the Regional Department for the Communities requested the Centre for Social Studies at the University of the Azores to conduct a study to thoroughly understand this social phenomenon in order to be able to apply on the field public policies consistent with the needs and expectations of this target population.

The Portuguese version of this study experienced a first edition in 2010. A year later we propose a translation into English due to the growing interest of scholars, emigrants, immigrant associations and the general population in accessing this report.

Our wish, as the Government of the Azores' Regional Director for the Communities, is that this study contributes to a larger and better integration of immigrant populations in the Azores.

We also want to note that this publication aims at a fair and heartfelt tribute to the courage, tenacity, and capacity to adjust and to work which men and women immigrants demonstrate in their day-to-day life. In this sense, the immigrant populations represent a gain to the Azores. The islands are now more pluralistic, tolerant of differences, and respectful of other forms of being in the world, features that make us all citizens fully aware of our rights and obligations in the global world.

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