

The Lisbon Project  
Portugal  
International House NY  
Daniel Mansour (Israel, Columbia University, Pearson College UWC)

## **I: Summary**

The primary goal of this project was to provide disadvantaged foreign nationals settling in Lisbon with well-written and updated CVs in both Portuguese and English. Furthermore, we would be teaching them how to build a successful resume, highlighting their skills according to the job market.

## **II: Project Description**

We were a bootstrapped initiative, relying solely on the generous funding granted to us by Kathryn W. Davis' Projects for Peace fund. As such, we tailored this project's design and goals accordingly.

The city of Lisbon is near and dear to my heart. During my childhood, I lived in Lisbon and have ever since kept in touch with the friends I've made here. After learning about the economic struggles the city has been going through in recent years, I have been in contact with fellow Portuguese UWC alums who have shared with me their growing concerns. One formulation of the problem is as follows:

As of 2019, Portugal had 590,000 immigrants out of 10,300,000 inhabitants, an increase of almost 23% from 2018. While roughly a quarter of legal immigrants are Brazilian, the majority of the other seventy-five percent consists of groups that do not speak Portuguese or English. The lack of proficiency in Portuguese is the most significant obstacle for immigrants in Lisbon hoping to find employment opportunities. These numbers show that the issue my project is responding to exists. `

Possessing fluency in either Portuguese or English is paramount for immigrants to make money and sustain themselves. As a result, people coming to Lisbon for a better life find themselves unable to enter the job market. With the COVID-19 pandemic consuming the world, these past years have not been without their unique and novel challenges. The pandemic has only aggravated the vulnerability of immigrants in Lisbon due to social isolation and growing unemployment.

I did not necessarily feel at any point that the project would not work, per se. However, we did set ourselves an additional secondary goal to assist Ukrainian refugees in light of the conflict that had broken out after submitting our proposal. I was worried that the original channels of communication I had in mind to reach beneficiaries would not be effective with Ukrainian refugees. However, through the same means of outreach, namely speaking with local connections and advertising in co-working spaces, I connected with dozens of Ukrainians in Lisbon who later reached out to enroll in our program.

In establishing communication channels for the project, I did not encounter any unanticipated challenges. Slack, WhatsApp, and Email were our primary channels of communication. One of the CV Editing team members moderated between our team and the beneficiaries. Each team member had different areas of expertise; I helped mediate between CV Editors and beneficiaries who spoke only Arabic. Team members that spoke fluent Portuguese would see to delivering Portuguese CVs when needed.

## **III: Reflection**

Peace is a frame of mind. It is when one is in tranquility with oneself and the world. Peace is the moment we understand that our neighbor is not our enemy but someone who can help us and whom we can help. That is to say, immigrants flee their beloved home country to build a better future for their families rather

than to impact job prospects for the local population. One aspect of peace is recognizing parts of oneself in others. People tend to forget that every adult was once a little kid with a mother and a father.

My initiative will contribute to short- and long-term peace because tensions rise when unemployment rates among newly arrived immigrants grow. Newcomers will face less animosity if we manage to accelerate their integration into local society. Although this project focused on North African and Middle Eastern migrants due to the current landscape, if new migration trends surface in the future, we will adjust just as we did during the Ukrainian Crisis.

The project did not change how I think about the world; however, it reminded me of how resilient people are in the face of life-changing events. I have met individuals that have truly withstood extraordinary challenges. Meeting these individuals was humbling and evoked a deep sense of admiration.