



# Atlantic Social Lab

Cooperation for the promotion of Social Innovation

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## ATLANTIC SOCIAL LAB STUDY VISIT REPORT - STUDY VISITS HELD IN GUIMARÃES

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EUROPEAN UNION

<b>A. GENERAL INFORMATION</b>	
<b>Date</b>	16-03-2023
<b>Location:</b>	Guimarães
<b>Name</b>	Creative Workshop on Straw Braiding - GPS4G   CLDS – Fafe
<b>Legal Status</b>	Non-profit private association
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<b>B. SHORT DESCRIPTION</b>	
<p><b>Objectives</b> (<i>identify the main goals of the project and target groups addressed</i>)</p>	<p>The <i>Oficina Criativa da Trança da Palha</i> (Creative Straw Braiding Workshop) is a space dedicated to learning and producing handicrafts with a view to combining tradition and innovation. It is based on one of the most significant elements of Fafense's ethnographic heritage - the art of straw.</p> <p>This workshop is considered a new phase of a wider project (GPS 4G), promoted by the Sol do Ave CLDS team (programme of local development contracts). In 1992, the Association of Municipalities of Vale do Ave (AMAVE) presented the 1st Strategic Plan of Vale do Ave, which influenced the constitution of Sol do Ave, a non-profit private association working in the field of regional development, its geographical area of intervention encompassing the entire NUT III - Ave.</p> <p>This initiative brings together unemployed people, particularly women and older adults (aged 50-65), with the aim of connecting them and stimulating their independence, so that they can benefit from an extra income while practicing their leisure hobbies and socialising with other people, as well as capturing the interest of people, particularly the younger generation, in this art, to ensure its continuity for future generations.</p> <p>The importance of straw art in the Fafe community and the fact that the economic value of this art has been lost over time led to the creation of the first straw museum in Portugal, located in the old school building of the parish of Golães, in the municipality of Fafe. The traditional and the modern were reconciled in the construction of this space. To preserve the architectural features and characteristics of the old school, its frame, tiles, and layout were preserved.</p> <p>Articulated with the Creative Straw Braiding Workshop, this museum is known as the Centro de Etnotecnologia e Design and promotes straw art in the surrounding areas. It consists of two parts: an outdoor workshop and an indoor exhibition space.</p> <p>As a place of training for students of Higher Education in the area of design, the workshop has been used to develop projects centered around the straw. Various panels are in the handicraft exhibition room, in which one may observe various traditions, products, articles, habits, and ways of making straw art. Visitors can also plait repique braid at the "Entrança tu" (You braid) space.</p>

<p><b>Methodology</b> <i>(identify the methodological principles, mode of operation and level of intervention)</i></p>	<p>A first step in the creation of the Creative Straw Braiding Workshop was to conduct a "state of the art survey" held between November and December 2021. The goal of this survey was to determine which parishes still have artisans, what kinds of braids and products they make, whether they sell them directly or through intermediaries, and whether they sow rye for raw materials.</p> <p>There are two creative workshops: one located in Travassós that integrates 14 participants and the other one in Golães with 9 participants. Occasionally, retired people over 65 participate in creating products of this art for pleasure but are not involved in the project.</p> <p>These creative workshops started at the beginning of February 2022, taking place on Wednesday afternoons at Travassós, and on Friday afternoons at Golães. According to the coordinator of this project, several people have been willing and available to learn to work with straws, which was a very positive sign.</p> <p>Through the workshops, a circular economy logic is encouraged, with surplus textiles being ceded by companies and utilitarian production that is marketable.</p> <p>To foster interest and knowledge of straw products at a younger age, the project tries to integrate the artisans in events at pre-public and public schools, taking students to visit the straw museum and sowing a seed to learn about the history and process of making straw products.</p>
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<b>C. MAIN FINDINGS</b>	
<p><b>Social Needs</b> <i>(identify the social needs the organisation intends to fill)</i></p>	<p>Straw Art was passed down from generation to generation, especially among families. As its value diminished, artisans became demotivated, mainly due to its low commercial value and social recognition, especially among the younger generation.</p> <p>The importance of creating strategies and initiatives that allow older people to be included in society, as well as to make them feel useful, has also increasingly been recognised in Portugal as a result of the increasing number of older people in the country since loneliness and depression are common in later life.</p> <p>In addition, many people are unemployed before retirement, making it even more crucial to find ways to help them earn extra income and stay active.</p>
<p><b>Social Innovative Practices</b> <i>(identify the main social innovative practices developed and the extent to which the work developed responds to those needs)</i></p>	<p>Through these workshops, Sol do Ave seeks to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- revitalise the art of straw, in an attempt to recover its socio-cultural value;</li> <li>- encourage young people, through learning events of straw braiding, in schools;</li> <li>- teach innovative ways of creating products through straw, articulating the traditional with innovation (besides the creation of hats and baskets, which were the main traditional products), using new materials. The artisans work with a designer to revitalise the products and art, making them more attractive and modern. This increases their economic value</li> </ul>

	<p>by finding new markets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- promote active ageing through intergenerational, conviviality among participants and the feeling of usefulness and contribution to society.</li> </ul> <p>About three months after the start of the creative straw braiding workshop, one of the first innovative products was created: the skirt. It was possible to demonstrate straw's artistic potential by creating this piece, a collaborative process that relied on IDEGUT's collaboration.</p> <p>Sol do Ave realised that it is possible to innovate with a traditionally handmade product, give it a new purpose, and start conquering new markets. Additionally, the skirt produced was used in the shows of the Dance School Arte Total in Braga.</p>
<p><b>Collaboration and Networks</b> (<i>identify the main connections of the organisation</i>)</p>	<p>This project, promoted by Sol do Ave, has as main partners: the Travassós-Fafe parish, the Golães parish, the Fornelos parish, the Revelhe parish, Unir Fafe, the Revelhe Social Centre and the Guimarães Institute of Design, which together seek to give more visibility to the products that may result from the workshop and support the dissemination of products produced.</p> <p>Furthermore, it is important to reinforce the contribution of the Intermunicipal Community of Guimarães in creating a legal way for artisans to get together to create and sell their products in person and online, which is precisely the pilot action that this partner has been implementing in the Atlantic Social Lab Project.</p>

#### D. MAIN CONSTRAINTS TO SUCCESS

<p><b>Challenges and Barriers</b> (<i>identify the main problems that the organisation faces: financial resources, human resources, networks, innovative environment...</i>)</p>	<p>The main barriers and challenges are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to develop the interest of young people in this art;</li> <li>- to encourage young people to learn and practice it;</li> <li>- to retain the current participants and maintain their sense of usefulness and recognition in the long run;</li> <li>- to make participants independent in the creation and sale of their innovative products;</li> <li>- to change and increase the worth and market prices of the artisans' pieces.</li> </ul>
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## E. CONCLUSIONS

<p><b>Key Concluding Lines</b></p>	<p>Over the years, the Art of Straw has been disappearing. Recognizing that this was a very typical art in Fafe, Sol do Ave took action and tried to reactivate this art enabling unemployed people to learn braiding and, with the help of a designer, introduce factors of innovation, to create a range of new features for the braiding of straw, to invent other innovative ways of braiding and to design products that could be sold to be a source of extra income for them.</p> <p>Two creative workshops have been established (one in Travassós and another in Galões), in order to bring together unemployed people, mainly older women, to give them new ways of braiding straw, articulating new materials with straw, and producing new products, such as carpets, skirts, dolls, etc.</p> <p>The participants have found this project to be an asset, giving them a sense of belonging and usefulness, while expanding and revitalising an art they've been practicing since childhood.</p>
<p><b>Other information considered relevant</b></p>	<p>Nothing relevant to add.</p>

## Study Visit Photos



*Figure 1. Atlantic Social Lab Partnership and members of the Oficina Criativa da Trança da Palha*



*Figure 2. An artisan of the art of straw, a participant in the project*



*Figure 3. Exhibition of some of the products produced in the creative workshop in Golães*





Figure 4. Indoor exhibition at the Straw Museum

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**Review:** Hugo Pinto and Atlantic Social Lab Partners