

Update about activities in Roda Viva, 2022

In 2022, the Roda Viva project had a staff of 18 adults, with 3 pre-school educators, 6 education assistants, a social worker, a psychologist, a speech therapist, two psychomotor therapists, a teacher for after-school classes, a teacher for the youth movement, and freelancers who come to teach capoeira, music and dance.

The extra professional therapies (psychologist, speech therapist, psychomotor therapists) and special activities, are offered for free, all part of the special care given, especially for those of the children who have special needs. It is part of the 'home in the community' aspect of the social work which Roda Viva/ASS embodies, helping the parents and the children.

A recent visitor to Roda Viva described the school as follows:

There was so much joy and unity, focus and togetherness. In the two nursery rooms the little ones were crawling and climbing on cushions, toddling about in small safe spaces filled with colour, and behind them one could see a sleeping room with cots. When the older children had finished their snack, they went back to their three classrooms, marked by coloured doorways and hanging artwork, and in twos and threes divided into play groups at tables to draw, paint and do puzzles. They were at home, busy, happily involved with each other, and there was a buzz of concentration and positive energy.



There are 144 children at present, 86 in the two nurseries and 48 sharing the several preschool rooms. Almost all the children at Roda Viva come from refugee and immigrant families, many from Portugal's former colonies, Angola, Timor, Mozambique, and Cap Verde, and there are also now four refugee children from the Ukraine. The nursery is free for the parents, and although the government does continue to pay some monthly fees for the pre-school children, this is not enough to cover the basics of maintaining the building, school supplies, or, most importantly, the salaries of the staff.

On some afternoons as many as 30 youth between the ages of 12-18 also come to take classes (mostly in dance and music) or to meet, play football or other sports. Many of those who keep coming, as teenagers, and later as assistants, were

at one time the young ones who had spent their early lives growing up at the school.



In December 2022 the Director of Social Services in Lisbon visited Roda Viva and offered to adapt the school's legal description with a new agreement which would include the special therapies offered and so expand the project's current outreach into the community to include other groups, as well as older people who would be able to attend classes and access the therapies in the 'new' community centre.

In these past years Roda Viva has earned three good practices awards related to mental health care for children and parents and workers (through the free therapies it offers); for its bylaws which accord with childhood protection laws and train workers to see signs of child abuse; and for its quality standards of care