

From Portugal with love

Good afternoon dear colleagues and teachers,

Our country, Portugal, has been both a nice place to work for foreigners and a terrible place to build a life for its citizens! There's no doubt that the Portuguese emigration has always been very common in the world, but in my speech I'll focus on the post-2008. So, as everyone knows, our nation got into a deep financial crunch in 2008. The unemployment rate got higher and higher, big companies closed, millions were fired and these millions had their families to feed, leaving them with no choice but to emigrate. According to the Cambridge English dictionary, the verb emigrate means "to leave a country permanently and go to live in another one" and this was what a lot of Portuguese people did, they packed their belongings and left, leaving their relatives crying and hoping he/she/they would get back soon. That's why the name of my speech is "From Portugal with love" I will be talking about the ones that left their home country looking for a better job and a better life.

Now, as our people go and live abroad does this mean that they forget their traditions? The answer is no! Most of them keep having their religion beliefs and celebrate our holidays even though they can't really skip work one day just because it's a holiday in their home country when it's not in the country where they are living, they are forced to celebrate it in their hearts, but sometimes that's even more powerful. Also, for example, some Portuguese emigrants open a restaurant with traditional Portuguese cuisine which means that they are spreading our fantastic gastronomy and culture abroad and that they did not forget at all what we eat around here. This way, the natives of the country are able to have a taste of this beautiful Mediterranean country without even leaving their nation. This is what I call a true multicultural interaction!

Emigration allows people from different parts of the world to interact with each other, but what is supposed to be an enriching experience for both parts sometimes ends up with insults and people injured. For example, some Portuguese emigrants were insulted in the home country of the English language, England, by its speakers. A woman was even attacked by a group of teenagers aged between 18 and 20 with an English flag. The truth is racism and xenophobia are still a reality these days and some of our people have to deal with it very often because the people of their host countries think that they shouldn't be there, they think that they are stealing their jobs, but this happens with more emigrants, not only with the Portuguese ones.

Let me ask you now, have you ever heard about brain drain? If not, I'll explain. The brain drain is when a lot of educated and professional people leave their home country in order to find one that gives them better pay or living conditions. Actually, Portugal was one of the countries where this phenomenon was felt the most, for example, between 2012 and 2014, around 40 thousand highly qualified people left the country. Most of them were nurses, engineers of all areas and doctors. The first ones mainly go to the UK, the second ones to countries like Germany and The Netherlands and the third ones go to Denmark. All with the same purpose, to build a better life. However, not only educated and professional people leave the country, some go abroad to work as carpenters, other work as a mason and of course, as I have referred earlier, some open restaurants. In 2013 there were around 2,3 million Portuguese people emigrated and they mainly chose countries like France, Switzerland, the USA, Canada and Brasil.

Unlike what happened in the 60's, nowadays most of the Portuguese emigrants (mainly the youngest ones) don't want to get back to their home country, they want to have kids and continue their lives in the country that gave them better conditions than ours.

I conclude my speech with a quote from Thomas Malthus, " A great emigration necessary implies unhappiness of some kind or other in the country that is deserted". I bring you this quote, so you can all remember that this is a true multicultural interaction but sometimes it costs too much for the country that is left, in our case, Portugal.

Thank you

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