



Erasmus Student Network Portugal

Christmas with Portuguese Families

Guidelines

2024

Introduction

"Christmas with Portuguese Families" is a project that was introduced a few years ago by the local sections. The primary goal of this project is to connect local Portuguese families with international students during the Christmas holidays, providing a warm and festive experience for those who might otherwise spend the holidays alone.

This document provides comprehensive guidelines for the "Christmas with Portuguese Families" project, outlining the steps and best practices for successful implementation and maximum impact.

Christmas with Portuguese Families

Initially, "Christmas with Portuguese Families" took on an informal nature, with ESN members inviting international students they had bonded with to celebrate Christmas together in their homes on the 24th or 25th of December. This project emerged in response to the increasing number of international students remaining in Portugal over the holidays due to travel restrictions, offering a meaningful solution to the potential loneliness faced by these students.

Managed by ESN Portugal, this project supports local sections that may lack the resources to organize such activities independently and aims to reach international students in cities or Higher Education Institutions without a local ESN section. By centralizing the project, ESN Portugal ensures broader outreach, improved collaboration between sections, and a more significant overall impact.

ESN Portugal collaborates with local sections to promote the initiative among international students and extends its reach to Higher Education Institutions without local ESN sections, ensuring that all international students in Portugal have the opportunity to participate.

Objective: The main goal is to offer international students a warm and festive experience by inviting them to spend Christmas with local Portuguese families. This helps alleviate the loneliness that students might feel being away from their home countries and families during the holidays.



Key Aspects

- **Cultural Exchange:** The initiative promotes cultural exchange by allowing international students to immerse themselves in Portuguese customs, traditions, and family life during Christmas. Students get to experience traditional Portuguese Christmas foods, participate in family gatherings, and observe local customs.
- **Community Building:** It fosters a sense of community and belonging for international students, making them feel more integrated into the local society. It also allows Portuguese families to learn about different cultures and create international connections.
- **Memorable Experience:** For many students, this experience can be one of the highlights of their time abroad, creating lasting memories and friendships.

Project Implementation

1. **Official Project Guidelines:** Local sections to read the guidelines so they can implement this project to its fullest potential.
2. **Communication Package and Plan:** Local sections to implement the communication package and plan at their local level. To reach out to a wider audience of Portuguese families, please reach out to your Higher Education Institutions, high schools that you might have contacted for the Erasmus in Schools project, local youth associations, local non-governmental organizations (e.g. Banco Alimentar, Cruz Vermelha, etc.).
3. **Matching Process:** Given the need to centralise this project, ESN Portugal will facilitate the matching of international students with Portuguese families willing to host them for Christmas, using the Papaya app, which is also available by web browser.
4. **Matching Results and Communication:** The participants will be able to see their match on the Papaya app. However, ESN Portugal will still contact by email the matched participants, as well as the local sections with the information of matches in their district.
5. **Online Information Sessions:** The matched participants will be invited to one of two online information sessions hosted by ESN Portugal to clarify the project's next steps

and to provide a bonding moment to the matched Portuguese families and international students.

6. **The Celebration:** On Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, the international students join their host families for the celebrations. They participate in family traditions, share meals, and engage in various festive activities.

Timeline 2024

Timeline	
3rd of September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Boards have access to the Project's Implementation & Guidelines, Timeline, Communication Package & Plan, and Email Templates.
31st of October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESN Portugal website and LinkTree are updated with the project's information. Registrations for Portuguese families and international students are open on Papaya and are promoted on ESN Portugal's website and social media. Local boards have access to a Booklet about Portuguese Christmas Traditions that will be sent to matched international students.
After the 31st of October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We encourage Local Boards to promote this project in the following ways during this period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote it during your local ESN events and in your communication channels with international students. Do not forget to make good use of our new website page and booklet! Use the e-mail templates available to reach out to local organizations and institutional stakeholders active in the field of youth, volunteering, education or mobility, which would reach more Portuguese families.

1st of December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registrations are closed on Papaya and the matching process begins.
8th of December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announcement of the first round of matches. Communication of matches sent to Portuguese families, international students and Local Boards.
11th of December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Information Session: an online session where all matched participants are invited to join and learn more about the project's next steps. In this session, we will also promote a get-to-know-you activity between matched Portuguese families and international students.
15th of December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announcement of the second round of matches. Communication of matches sent to Portuguese families, international students and Local Boards.
18th of December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2nd Information Session: we will have two online sessions to accommodate the participants' availability.
24th and 25th of December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merry Christmas! If your family is taking part in this project do not forget to take lots of pictures!
26th of December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forms will be sent to project participants and Local Boards to collect feedback on it. Forms will be closed after two weeks on the 5th of January.
31st of January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final report on the project sent to Local Boards.

Benefits of the Project

To help you communicate the project, you can consider the following benefits.

Benefits for Portuguese Families

- They have the opportunity to share their traditions.
- Learn about other cultures.
- Build international friendships.

Benefits for International Students

- Deepen their understanding of Portuguese culture and traditions.
- Enjoy the warmth and hospitality of a local family.
- Avoid spending the holidays alone.

