

REPORT

FULBRIGHT COMMISSION

D&I ACTIVITIES

2022



Fulbright Portugal Team, Lisbon

Context and Goals

Fulbright Portugal's main goal is to have a more diverse pool of candidates and, therefore, to select excellent and diversified cohorts of grantees. Our aim is to be a **community of different voices**, and the Commission has been working purposely on this since 2019. The work developed thus far is influenced by the recommendations of the [European Fulbright Diversity Initiative](#) (EFDI - established in May 2018).

Since then we have adopted our own **Diversity Statement (DS)** – "[Towards Diversity and Inclusion](#)" –, written in Portuguese and in English, easily seen and accessible on the Commission's website. Its purpose is to encourage the participation and involvement of all people regardless of their skin color, sex, gender identity, age, religion, geographic location, socioeconomic status, disability, and sexual orientation. The DS was the first step to create the aforementioned "community of different voices," that is, a **receptive environment** for all participants since **inclusion** is a key aspect of diversity.

Following that, it is essential to get rid of the imposter syndrome that some applicants may feel of "you don't belong here; Fulbright is not the place for you." Applicants and participants alike must know that **Fulbright is a place for everyone**, and it provides successful and rewarding exchange experiences to all. Thus, Fulbright Portugal actively included its DS in all outreach efforts in person and online for AY 22/23.

Still, strengthening Fulbright's attractiveness to people from diverse backgrounds involves **all procedures at the Fulbright Program**, not just outreach, such as:

- **Advise and inform key stakeholders and partners** on the interrelatedness of diversity, inclusion, and equity as it relates to studying abroad (ex: Review and Selection Panels, and Board members).
- Foster **networking activities** from which knowledge and dialogue can happen such as: Meet & Greet PT and US cohorts; or our Newsletter which continues to reach over 500 readers every week.

Enhancing diversity milestones in the first half of 2022 are:

1.

December 2021- January 2022 (Fulbright PT application cycle)

Diversity Essay (DE): This year we have implemented for the first time a Diversity Essay as an optional addition to the applications for all Portuguese candidates. After some reflection internally and together with our [work group of “Conhecimento Científico” from APPDI](#), it became clear that aspects like:

- overcoming hardship and adversity,
- access to resources,
- participation in projects or social initiatives,
- and the overall applicant’s journey leading up to applying for a Fulbright grant are fundamental elements for defining merit.

Moreover, the DE provided applicants with an opportunity to discuss the way in which a particular identity of their own and/or adversity they encountered have shaped their academic/career trajectories:

«Considering our Diversity Statement, as part of your application to the Fulbright Program, the Fulbright Commission in Portugal invites you to write a 300-word personal diversity essay, explaining the impact of your identity, your family and community circumstances and your life experience in your personal, academic, and professional path. Note: Although this is not a mandatory requirement, your diversity essay will contribute to and enrich your application.».

In fact, whether applicants were members of underrepresented groups or not, most were able to reflect and point to challenges they had to overcome in the process of pursuing their academic goals. Whereas traditional measures of accomplishment, for example a cover letter, would fail to adequately represent candidates' background and qualifications such as persistence, resilience, flexibility, adaptability, toughness, strength of character, etc., the DE informed us about those qualities, and helped us to realize that some candidates face far more obstacles than others.

But to assess a DE is not about choosing less qualified candidates to fill quotas – that would mean operating on the assumption that candidates from overrepresented groups are inherently more qualified than candidates who are members of underrepresented groups. Rather, it is about:

- Realizing the degree to which **structural inequity** saturates every stage of a selection process, not to mention the pipeline leading to it.
- Recognizing how **traditional measures of success** can fall short in identifying qualified candidates.

- Understanding how standard measures of assessing applications perpetuate systems of inequity and prevent highly **qualified candidates** from receiving the acknowledgement that they deserve.

Finally, it should also be underlined that most Portuguese candidates, when interviewed, showed a clear perception of understanding Fulbright Program commitment to Diversity & Inclusion (D&I), showing knowledge of the Commission's Diversity Statement, its principles and core values.

2.

January (January 31-February 1, 2022)

Online Training Program on Unconscious Bias by [APPDI](#) (total of 6 hours): for Staff, Review/Selection panels, Board members. There were 15 attendees. This training was especially important:

- To foster debate and acquaintance between stakeholders.
- To better understand our Unconscious Bias (UB), i.e., social stereotypes about certain groups of people that we form without conscious awareness but that tend to influence **how we view others and how we make decisions**, including decisions about candidates' selection.
- To prevent **giving preference to applicants similar to ourselves**: we may give preference to applicants whose advisors or mentors are known, or who hold a degree from our own *alma mater* or from a small number of elite institutions.
- To **not hold women, minorities, and candidates from institutions other than traditional to higher standards**: we may scrutinize their records in an unconsciously dismissive way, evaluate the same achievements as others to be less important, or fail to notice unexpected achievements.

3.

February

A **five-page document on D&I+UB** was produced with the compiled information from the training above and handed to the Selection Committee's 18 members. The purpose of this new document was to ensure **equal treatment of all candidates** during the selection process, and to ensure that all reviewers had the same information. Understanding UB and evaluation best practices are tools that will make certain that studying abroad is not only open to few but to all. It will aid in creating a most diverse pool of candidates to select from.

Feedback was positive: review members recalled the topics' complexities and nuances during the evaluation meetings, and emphasis was placed on candidates' gender, age, and

geographical origin, as well as to their cultural ambassadorial skills. Equally important was the discussion around **merit** and how it can be defined to include aspects such as overcoming hardship and adversity, access to resources, and the applicant's journey prior to applying for a Fulbright grant.

Some best practices for reviewers:

- **Read the DE as a framework that contextualizes other documents:** what can we learn from reading it that informs our understanding of other achievements?
- **Read the DE first:** this practice tends to maintain a more inclusive pool of candidates at each stage of the selection process. The applicant's challenges normally have shaped their academic and professional trajectories and influenced their worldviews.
- **Consider not only the applicant's documented achievements but also the obstacles** that they have faced in the process of accomplishing those achievements. Though not easily transposed onto a CV, the knowledge that a person gains when confronting great difficulty can be a powerful asset and a significant career tool.
- **Read horizontally** (instead of reading one application at a time): reviewing how a pool of applicants all respond to a single question before moving on to the next question is a method that discourages evaluators from making overarching assumptions about the profile of each applicant. The reviewer hence does not read "vertically" or through a single application at once, but instead reads "across" or "horizontally" by evaluating how all applicants respond to the same question.

Lastly, this year for the first time, **fixed review panels** were formed to evaluate all eligible candidates for each grant category regardless of field of study. Since our PT candidates are self-placed, it was essential that we do not assess academic records and achievements anymore as the host universities had already done this, but that we evaluate the candidate's capacity to live up to the **spirit of the Fulbright Program**. We evaluated their potential to, while reflecting on the diversity of Portuguese society, be cultural ambassadors for Portugal and for the Fulbright Program during their stay in the US.

At the same time, the Commission intentionally tried to **diversify selection panels**, considering gender, scientific areas, and institutional affiliations.

February – March

Selection of the US Scholar Program, 2022/2023

The Fulbright Commission in Portugal received 28 recommended applications for the general competition (All Disciplines) of the US Scholar Program, for a total of 5 grants to award.

This is a highly competitive award and, while open to all fields of study and career levels, offers the opportunity to put into practice during the selection process the principles to which the Fulbright Commission strives to achieve: a more inclusive and diverse program.

Therefore, this year, the Commission decided to incorporate into the candidate's ranking the Commission's priorities, namely which concerns disciplines/fields of study, gender and ethnic diversity, geographical location. However significant stands our commitment to diversity, it doesn't mean compromising the integrity and quality of the Program.

All 28 candidates for the All Disciplines Award were ranked according to the following criteria:

- **Priority:** Disciplines/Specializations or Projects related to Priority Areas defined by the Commission, which are:
 - Climate Change and Sustainability
 - Technological Interactions (Cybersecurity, Data Science, Artificial Intelligence)
 - Ocean, Space and Energy
 - Economic Growth and Resilience
 - Migrations and Refugees
 - Public Health and Life Sciences
- **Diversity:** Preference was given to Gender (Female, Non-Binary) and/or Ethnically (Asian, Black, Hispanic) diverse candidates.
- **Location:** Candidates hosted by geographically diverse host locations (Aveiro, Coimbra, Porto, Braga, Ponta Delgada) ranked higher than candidates affiliated with institutions in Lisbon. Additionally, institutions that have hosted Fulbright Scholars in recent years ranked below.
- **Rating and Criteria:** Based on the Commission's review criteria, national screening committee (composed of alumni of the Program) rate and recommend for selection candidates based on the quality and feasibility of their research proposals and impact both on the academic field and candidates' academic career and host institution. Aspects such as the candidate's cultural awareness and ability to adjust to life in host country were also taken into account. Lastly, second or third-time recipients of Fulbright grants were not considered as priority for selection.

These recommendations, that were followed by the Board during the selection process, had the effect of producing a more diverse group of grantees, both in terms of gender (3 women, 2 men), areas of study (Energy, Bioengineering, Public Health, Environmental

Sciences) and host location (Porto, Coimbra). Additionally, we were able to select younger, mid-career academics, with longer stays in Portugal and travelling with their families.

4.

May-June

Celebration & Activities



Because our purpose is to find opportunities for reflection, learning, and development of best practices, the Commission acknowledged and celebrated these events again since 2020:

- *EU Diversity Month in May*
- *The World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development*
- *Pride Month*

The first two events are especially important for Fulbright as they take us back to the post-war context in which the Program and its mission were born. Annually we acknowledge that since its creation in 1946, Fulbright Program has continued to expand internationally with the aim of supporting peace and **dialogue through educational exchange**. These events also highlight that Fulbright Portugal supports and continues that legacy of building a culture of inclusion.

Throughout May 2022, as a signatory to the [Portuguese Charter for Diversity](#), Fulbright Portugal has once again highlighted diversity and equal opportunities at work, and in society by remembering, via social media posts and our Newsletter, that our objectives are aligned to those of the [European Commission](#).

[The month of May marks the European Diversity Month across the EU](#): companies, institutions, and organizations from across Europe join forces to emphasize the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace and in society by organizing events and activities throughout May. This year the month's theme was "building bridges."

With the same lens, we tried:

FULBRIGHT COMMISSION PORTUGAL

COMISSÃO PARA O INTERCÁMBIO EDUCACIONAL ENTRE OS ESTADOS UNIDOS DA AMÉRICA E PORTUGAL
Avenida D. Carlos I, n.º126 1249-074 Lisboa, Portugal | +351 217 996 390 | fulbright@fulbright.pt | www.fulbright.pt

- **Inclusive Communication** through written and visual languages: not only did our **professional signatures** acknowledged important diversity events by illuminating our commitment to inclusion (see above), but we have also adopted a written language (present in emails and our Newsletter) that would not exclude, discriminate, or make people and/or groups feel invisible. Adopting this written language is especially challenging for the non-gender neutral nor pronoun-inclusive **Portuguese language** (different from the more flexible English language). Still, we strongly believe that language (written and oral) can build relationships and forge connections, while it's equally liable for creating barriers and impacting someone's **sense of belonging**.

Language is nuanced and thus changes we should consider making to how we talk and write are often subtle: using 'x'; '@' (although these may pose difficulties to people with visual impairments who rely on screen readers); 'os/as'; or 'estudantes/ Fulbrighters' instead of 'Bolsseiros'; or 'pessoas' instead of 'todos'; 'cientistas' instead of 'investigadores'; 'quem' instead of 'aqueles, etc., have proved that our language has additional meaning hidden between the lines – words can imply a certain age, gender, educational background, social class, and so much more. Our Portuguese grantees are diverse, and it's important that when addressing them we reflect and support that diversity too.

At the same time, instilling a [human voice in product content](#) – empathy, accessibility, friendliness – as opposed to jargon, tech-savvy, and tone-deaf (*idem*), is another way to say what we need to say without indicating anything that might be exclusive. From this point of view, our **flyers** provided real images of our diverse grantees and *alumni* photographs, giving more accurate depictions of, and less stereotyped and standardized versions of society.



- **Forum 2022 Fulbright Portugal**: this annual event is targeted to welcome US grantees' presentations on their experiences and work while participating in their Programs in Portugal. However, this year we ended up by having an expressive group of Portuguese grantees who presented, which allowed for interesting **dialogue** between PT and US participants that perhaps was lacking in previous forums. Debating cultural diversity and how Fulbright experiences can impact work and life goals was the motive that brought together incredibly unique reflections from both sides of the Atlantic. Via topics like, "Can Portuguese museums encourage cultural diversity?", to "My Fulbright experience in the deep south of the United States," or "Traces of the Portuguese Identity in Rhode Island," and "Lisbon: locus mundi," we witnessed that **cultural diversity** is a driving force of personal, professional, and academic development, and that it is also a **means of leading more fulfilling intellectual, emotional, and social lives**. In fact, all participants recognized the role **culture** plays in everyday grant activities and how it can help develop strategies to overcome societal and economic obstacles.



- **Empower and Inspire:** All women *alumni* and grantees were invited by Executive Director Otilia Macedo Reis to share testimony about the impact of their exchange experiences, and to reflect on how their stories can forge women's equality and empower current and future Fulbrighters. Testimonies from **32 women in fields of science, art, and education**, allowed us to think again about our commitment to promote and incorporate DEI into all procedures at the Fulbright Program – **gender balance** being a priority of this effort.

The stories of these diverse women, all coming from different generations and walks of life, were put into one [booklet](#) and shared during May European Diversity Month 2022.

June – July

Funding for Dependents Pilot Program – Balance and Trends

In FY2018 and FY2019, the Fulbright Commission received End-of-Year funds in a total amount of \$160,000 (\$80,000+\$80,000) from ECA, intended to kick-start a US Scholars' **dependent allowance program**.

Commissions were free to determine the amounts and structure of the dependent allowance offered and the Fulbright Commission in Portugal planned to use the funding on a rolling basis (starting in FY20, AY 2020/2021) by offering the following support to all US scholars with dependents:

- **Dependents allowance** of €250 for spouses and per child;

- **Tuition allowance** of €500 per month / per child (when attending a private school);
- **Travel allowance** of €1,100 per dependent, who remain with the scholar for the full duration of the stay (same amount as for scholars);
- **Portuguese language and culture classes** for dependents in a total of €300.

The funds were disbursed, as follows:

- Funding awarded in FY20 (AY 2020/2021): \$38.132,77
- Funding awarded in FY21 (AY2021/2022): \$21.869,45
- Funding awarded in FY22 (AY 2022/2023): **\$57.726,47**

After 2 years of the program, Commissions were required to provide feedback on the results of this pilot program, namely, which concerns the impact that such program has had in the number of applications and trends in terms of candidate's profile.

We compared application figures of FY19 cycle (pre-funding program) with following years and current FY22 cycle:

	CANDIDATES						GRANTEES					
	#	# w/ dep.	%	# women	%	average age	#	# w/ dep.	%	# women	%	average age
FY19 - AY 2019/2020	19	15	78,9%	7	36,8%	56	14	9	64,3%	6	42,9%	56
FY20 - AY 2020/2021	16	10	62,5%	6	37,5%	50	11	6	54,5%	5	45,5%	53
FY21 - AY 2021/2022	21	13	61,9%	10	47,6%	55	9	3	33,3%	5	55,6%	59
FY22 - AY 2022/2023	32	21	65,6%	17	53,1%	53	9	8	88,9%	5	55,6%	46

Given that FY20 (AY 2020/2021) and FY21 (AY 2021/2022) are somewhat atypical cycles, heavily impacted by the covid-19 pandemic and its consequences - Fulbright Program consecutive delays and ultimate deferral of AY2020/2021 to the following year, decreased number of applications – only in FY22 (AY 2022/2023) we can start to see the results of the Funding for Dependents Pilot Program and draw a picture in terms of number and type of applicants.

Here are some findings:

- a very significant **increase in the number of applicants** (19 to 32) and in the number of applicants with dependents (15 to 21);
- a larger number of **applications from women** (7 to 17); more than half of the total of applications are from women;
- the **average age of the applicants has been decreasing** (56 to 53).

Additionally, we can also see a trend in terms of **grantee profile**, which is not foreign to the Commission's efforts towards a more diverse US Scholar Program. This can be seen in which relates to:

- more **grantees travelling with their families** (64% to 89%);
- the **majority of selected grantees are women** (43% to 56%);
- the average **age of grantees is significantly lower** (56 to 46);

The balance of this extra support for U.S. Scholars' dependents is extremely positive and goes hand in hand with the Commission's selection efforts towards diversity.

The results are promising and we expect that our ability to offer additional support for dependents can contribute to a rise in the number of academics that choose Portugal to develop their research projects and, being Fulbright a cultural exchange program, are able to have a more meaningful experience with their families.

5.

May 26 – PT online Pre-Departure (PD)

The PD was online again this year, making possible an attendance rate of close to 100%. In this meeting we included:

- Information and resources on **self-care, mental health, and wellness**.
- Procedures for dealing with sexual harassment in the section on **emergency procedures**.
- **Grantee/alumni testimonials**.
- Contact to *alumni* networks and program support organizations such as [Fulbrighter: A Global Community](#).

June 22 – US grantees Virtual Pre-Departure Meeting

The Commission gathered the 2022 cohort of US grantees (9 Scholars, 12 students) for a virtual pre-departure meeting, where we focused on aspects that grantees must consider before travelling to Portugal.

Topics that were highlighted during the meeting included services for US citizens and **support for grantees** travelling with their families, dealing with **cultural shock** and the unfamiliarity, keeping **physically and mentally safe** and ways to **engage with the Fulbright community** in Portugal and worldwide.

Fulbright Scholar Elba Serrano and English Teaching Assistant Brooke Barrera Sheldon reflected on their experience as women in academia, coming from ethnically diverse

backgrounds and offered valuable advice on how to navigate the very different academic environment of Portugal to recently selected grantees.

6.

September 29-30 - US grantees In-country Orientation

The Fulbright Commission in Portugal hosted its annual in-country orientation for grantees starting their programs during the Fall.

There were two full days of panel discussions presented by partner and host institutions, and Portuguese and US alumni, on topics such as:

- Diversity and Cultural Identity;
- Community engagement and volunteer opportunities;
- Welcoming strategies and managing the grantees' expectations;
- Mental Health & Wellness Abroad

Cultural and networking events offered the perfect opportunity for grantees to get to know the history and culture of Portugal and to develop connections with fellow Portuguese grantees and alumni, in an informal and friendly setting.

All year – “Fulbrighters in action” (in Program) & **“My Fulbright Experience”** (after Program)



As part of our diversity strategy, grantees and *alumni* are a great resource on both sides of the Atlantic¹. Those two rubrics allow grantees to speak about their own experiences in their own terms. The result is very rich in terms of academic/professional objectives and

¹ Doing excellent work with grantees is predicated on trust and openness, which comes from **intentional relationship-building**. Grantees feel comfortable in giving us feedback and coming to us when challenges /conflict arise.

activities (projects, home/host institutions), and in terms of personal strategies to cope with obstacles or conflict in their host communities during their Program.

Using these visual and written material on our media to promote D&I is a productive strategy that gives viewers an insight into the **Fulbright lifecycle** (during and post-Program), and how we see ourselves as a **Fulbright community** – wide, inclusive, and diverse.

Furthermore, as **millennials** continue to look online for safe spaces, Fulbright media has the potential to be a positive, real, and informative space for all.

After this brief presentation on our diversity milestones thus far into 2022, we note our next steps to continue striving towards our DEI goals.

Next Steps

Our next objective is to develop a **sustainable Diversity Strategy**, which takes time and human resources, both scarce.

For outreach and media visibility:

- Increase traction and engagement online by collaborating with **other Commissions** (mainly in Europe), and with **alumni/grantee initiatives** and their social media projects/platforms to highlight that fostering DEI are common goals for the larger community.
- To conduct research that explores local community groups, institutions, and associations that work with students from underrepresented and diverse backgrounds (resume contact with [Inmune: Instituto da Mulher Negra em Portugal](#); Erasmus; DGES, and new others) – as part of our **outreach strategy**.

For Program Managing:

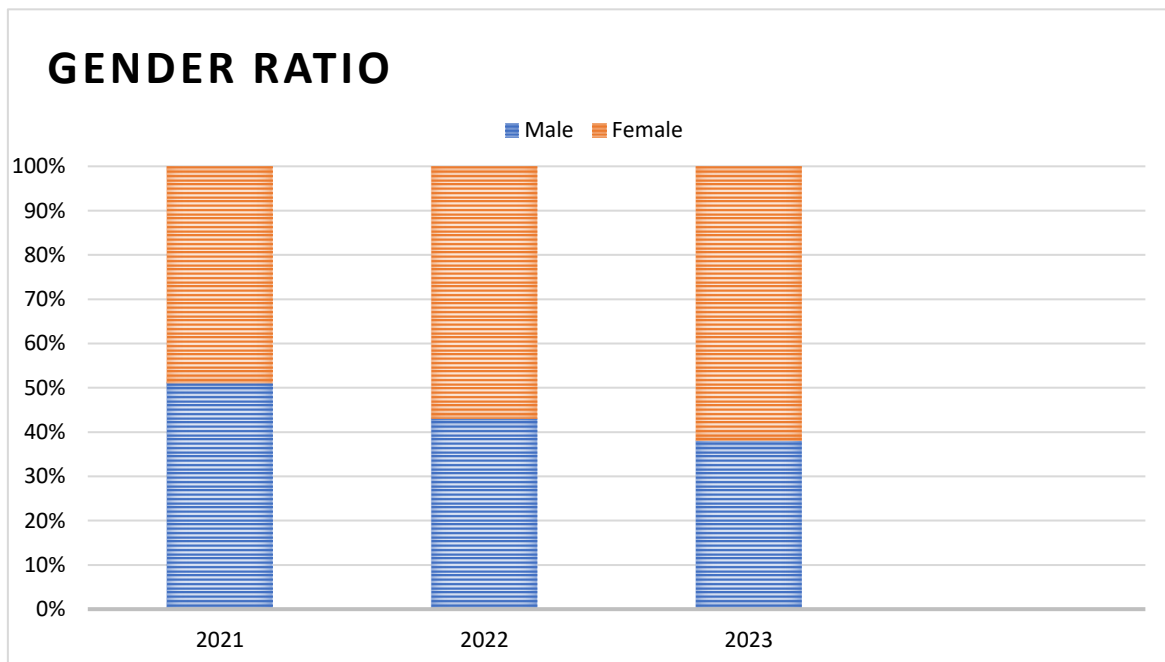
- To provide information on **D&I Fulbright platforms** for future grantees in our **Pre-Dep 2023**: [FulbrightLatinex](#) / [FulbrightNoir](#) / [FulbrightForward +](#) / [FulbrightPrism](#).
- To **increase Fulbright PT Grants**, closer aligned with the monthly maintenance rates (MMR) in the US. Only then are we able to: 1) keep going in the direction of **inclusion** and provide successful and rewarding exchange experiences for everyone; and 2) to be able to reach the Fulbright Program commitment of supporting the ambitions of people with families. Fulbright is a **family experience** too – which is not at all the case for Portuguese grantees, whether students or scholars.
- Resume contact with the [Fulbrighters Portugal Alumni Association](#): engage in other activities besides the annual cycle of conferences ([2021](#); [2022](#)).
- Form a **group of alumni returned to Portugal from the U.S.**: work together on restoring relationships and academic, professional, and social contacts in their country of origin (especially important for PhD. and MS students).

For a Sustainable Development:

- Strengthen relations with [Carta de Princípios BCSO Portugal](#) (*Business Council for Sustainable Development*) and, therefore, with the ethical, social, environmental and quality management standards and practices.
 - Learn how to create a [Sustainability Report](#): the communication of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals and the Commission's progress towards them.
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APPENDIX
GENDER RATIO: PORTUGUESE STUDENT APPLICANTS TO FULBRIGHT RESEARCH GRANTS

	2021		2022		2023	
Gender	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Female	20	49%	24	57%	21	62%
Male	21	51%	18	43%	13	38%
Total	41	100%	42	100%	34	100%



GEOGRAPHIC AREA RATIO: PORTUGUESE STUDENT APPLICANTS TO FULBRIGHT RESEARCH GRANTS

2023

Applicants		
Geographic area of residence	Number	%
Açores	2	6%
Aveiro	4	12%
Coimbra	3	9%
Lamego	1	3%
Lisboa	8	23%
Porto	9	26%
Santarém	1	3%
Setúbal	2	6%
Viana do Castelo	2	6%
Vila Franca de Xira	1	3%
Viseu	1	3%
Total	34	100%

2022

Applicants		
Geographic area of residence	Number	%
Açores	1	2%
Almada	2	5%
Aveiro	3	7%
Braga	5	12%
Faro	1	2%
Guarda	1	2%
Leiria	1	2%
Lisboa	9	21%
Porto	9	21%
Santarém	2	5%
Setúbal	5	12%
Viana do Castelo	1	2%
Vila Real	1	2%
UK	1	2%
Total	42	100%

2021

Applicants		
Geographic area of residence	Number	%
Lisboa	16	39%
Porto	8	20%
Coimbra	9	22%
Évora	1	2%
Aveiro	4	10%
Braga	1	2%
United Kingdom	1	2%
Spain	1	2%
Total	41	100%