

News

## Andanças festival: building community and sustainability through dance



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At the 2016 edition there were 35.000 participants during the whole festival. Photo by Jose Manuel Costa.

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They have more than 900 volunteers/organization members. Photo by Jose Manuel Costa.



People dancing at Andanças festival. Photo by Jose Manuel Costa.





600 artists participate in the festival. Photo by Jose Manuel Costa.

The festival, organised by the PédeXumbo association and where volunteering plays an important role, has been articulating cultural and generational exchanges through folk dances for two decades now.

There is nothing to argue against dances. This could be the phrase that summarises the philosophy behind the Portuguese association [PédeXumbo](#). The association, created in 1998, aims at promoting traditional music and dance, not only from Portugal, but from around the world. It does this by means of artistic creations, doing research and organising dance festivals and courses for all age groups and audiences, among other activities.

Even if today its activities are varied, the association was created to organise the [Andanças festival](#), which continues to be its largest event. [Paulo Pereira's experience](#), (Paulo is one of the first organisers of the festival) during his stay in Barcelona as an Erasmus student, was the seed that then germinated into the project. The capital of Catalonia was, like many other European cities, immersed in a powerful comeback of folk music. This experience had a huge impact on him and a group of friends, with whom he travelled to France to take part in a folk dance festival. After that, there was no stopping him, and not long after, the first Andanças festival took place, a small event that, however, went far beyond the organisers' expectations.

Now, after 21 editions, and with more than 30,000 participants each year in recent editions, Andanças has become a consolidated festival that is long awaited by its loyal public. The main purpose of the festival today is to recover the experiences behind folk dances as a festive form of **social cohesion**. So, with dance workshops, social dances and concerts taking the stage for a week, there are over 600 activities of all sorts and for all ages, from composting workshops or yoga, and visits to different places.

**Volunteering, community and sustainability are the three pillars supporting the festival.** Over **900 volunteers** make sure that, year after year, this festival can continue free of any political, economic and commercial interests. This year there were more than 1,000 requests to volunteer. In some cases, from people who had been at the festival and fallen in love with it, and decided to actively engage in helping to organise the next edition and, in their words, "experiencing and enjoying it in a different way". **Artists and teachers also volunteer** and many of them go back to the festival again and again.

The determination to make the festival sustainable and with the lowest possible environmental impact has led PédeXumbo to [search for strategies](#) to make this possible. At the same time, they do their utmost to collaborate with the community where the festival will take place; in recent years the venues have been Póvoas e Meadas reservoir, close to Castelo de Vide, Alto Alentejo, but for many years the festival was held at São Pedro do Sul.

The 2016 edition, which PédeXumbo named “**The Challenge**” (o desafio), really did live up to its name. A fire broke out in the car park and burnt 444 cars and, indeed, was challenging for the organisers and visitors. While they wait to hear if the insurance companies will cover for this, the organisers were glad that the festival went on, and **were especially pleased to see the solidarity and resilience shown by all participants.**

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