

# FLAD no longer funds Citizenship

LISBOA (LUSA) - The Luso-American Development Foundation (FLAD in Portuguese) will stop financing a project to foster political and civic participation of the Portuguese community in the United States because of a lack of funds, said Rui Machete, FLAD's president.

Machete said the foundation has at this time "a real difficulty because of the crisis," and that, "even because of a matter of principal," the project cannot continue to be 99 percent funded by FLAD.

"Dramatizing things a bit, helps because if not people would not pay attention, it's good to explain that this could not be maintained the way it was," said FLAD's President, offering that the Portuguese-American community should assume the costs of the 10 year old "Portuguese American Citizenship Project."

"If they give \$10 or \$15 it's perfectly possible that the project has the means to sustain itself," he said.

According to Machete, the 10 years of the project cost the foundation, "between 7.5 and 8 million euros (\$10.27 to \$10.95 million dollars), which is a considerable amount."

Since its inception, the project tallied the participation of 49 cultural, fraternal and religious organizations in 21 Portuguese communities in the United States, including various in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Twenty-five catholic churches also participated in the project.

To FLAD's president, the success of the project, which encourages immigrants of the benefits of becoming American citizens and of voting, has shown itself in a higher political participation and in advantages, special in highly dense Portuguese zones - California, Newark, N.J., Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

"If they have the means of their voice being heard in political context in those states, they could be important agents in the inter-

national relations between the Portuguese civil society and the American civil society, helping in cultural and economic aspects and in the way that the United States sees Portugal," added Machete.

The project coordinator, James McGlinchey, son of an Irish father and an Azorean mother, said that he has plans to change his life and leave his post.

"Even if there wasn't a question about the money, it needs to change because you can't do these things forever," said McGlinchey.

However, he considered that, "even if you can't fundraise the necessary funds, there are parts of this project that will survive and the local coordinators will continue to do the work."

While analyzing the decade long project, he admitted that he failed in the current issue at hand: "I have never been good at fundraising."

According to McGlinchey, the project enabled the percentage of voter in the Portuguese community to grow 10 to 15 percent.

The president of the commission that manages the project, Elmano Costa, an Azorean from Terceira, who emigrated to the United States when he was 10 years, said with conviction that the "project will not die."

"We already changed the idea in many communities that the Portuguese don't vote, but that they participate in equal percentages with Americans in elections," said Costa.

The consul of Portuguese communities in California had doubts about the possible contribution of Luso-Americans to finance the project.

"To gather funds in California saying that the money will also be used in New Jersey, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, people will say 'Why do I care about what's going on in Massachusetts? I'm Californian and I want the benefits to go to California,'" said the consul.