



Understanding connections in ...

Portugal and cross-sectoral collaboration

In Portugal, the ECF4CLIM interventions helped to strengthen connections between schools, universities, municipalities and local communities. Collaboration between the Instituto Superior Técnico (IST) and EB Camarate created a two-way exchange of knowledge: university researchers and students provided technical and scientific support, while the school offered real contexts for collaborative sustainability learning.

One of the most successful examples of these connections was the Quinta do Charco project in Camarate. A team of researchers from IST worked closely with teachers, students, parents and school staff to redesign and reactivate the school's biological garden. Through classroom and outdoor sessions, participants shared ideas, discussed priorities and co-created the architectural plan for the new space. The process was iterative and dialogical,

combining technical design with collective reflection and decision making. The final plan represented not only a physical transformation, but also a shared vision of sustainability, belonging, and community empowerment.

At the higher education level, sustainability became a common theme connecting different departments and functions at IST. In the Communication and Community Involvement project, architecture students and professors co-designed new green areas on campus, integrating creativity, environmental design and participatory planning. The Technical + Green initiative linked researchers, technical staff and maintenance teams to jointly develop biodiversity and permaculture areas, while the Bio Técnico project extended this network to external companies promoting sustainable food systems and circular economy practices.

Together, these experiences demonstrate how cross-sectoral collaboration – between schools, universities, local authorities and private partners – can transform sustainability from a theoretical concept into a practical, relational and community-driven learning process.