



# WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AT UNIVERSITY OF PORTO

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This paper describes several initiatives of the University of Porto in Portugal and of its Faculty of Engineering, whose common goal is to attract young people to higher education in general, and to science and technology in particular. Many countries are actively seeking to attract more youngsters to a professional career in the fields of science and technology. Portugal is no exception to this trend. But in complement to this particular emphasis in science and technology, a national effort is also being made to bring more young people to higher education (HE) in general. Portugal has reached a level of achievement in HE in line with that of other OECD countries:

- About 35% of 20-year-olds are enrolled in HE.
- The number of students in public HE institutions has risen from 277,000 to 288,000, new 1<sup>st</sup> year students from 84,000 to 115,000 and graduates from 51,000 to 66,000 per year, in the period 2005-2009.

Nevertheless a mere 15% of the active population has HE qualifications (well below the 27% OECD average). Among other policies this has led to the signing in January 2010 of an important 4-year agreement, a "Contract of Confidence for HE", between the Minister of Science, Technology and HE and all 35 public HE institutions, involving an increase of their budget by 100 million Euros per year, against the accomplishment of the strategic goal of an additional 100,000 graduates until 2014.

After providing some background data about the city of Porto and its University (U.Porto) this paper first describes a number of very successful and original initiatives launched by U. Porto, targeted to youngsters aged from 11 to 17 and their families:

- "Mostra da U.Porto" (U.Porto Annual Exhibition).
- "Universidade Júnior" (Junior University).

Then the focus moves to activities promoted within the Faculty of Engineering aimed at motivating teenagers to pursue their studies in one of the ten engineering areas on offer: Engineering Open Days. "Portal EMPE" (Exploration of Multidisciplinary Problems in Engineering Portal).