

The founding of Portuguese social work training (1935): a communion of national and transnational efforts

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In Portugal, the founding of social work training took place in 1935, with the opening of the Lisbon Social Work Institute, whose technical direction was taken until 1944 by a French social worker: Marie-Thérèse Lévêque. This period of Portuguese history leads us to the New State's (Estado Novo) construction phase, during a new national conjuncture in relations between Catholic Church, State and intellectual movements, and across an historical context defined by a political authoritarianism and a strong closure of Portugal to the international influences. This communication results from a doctoral research, and focuses the complex processes that cross the opening of the first Portuguese social work school, distinguishing, by its relevance, the influence of hygienist current, catholic social movement, and some feminine elites. Curiously, given the Portuguese "closure" imposed by political reasons from the 1930's, transnational connections took here a significant role, more precisely, the relations between some national catholic groups and two "foreign" organizations: the French "Union Catholique des Services de Santé et des Services Sociaux"; and the "Union Catholique Internationale de Service Social", seated in Brussels during that time. The primary historical sources that support the doctoral research (and, respectively, this presentation) have been collected in Portuguese and foreign archives (mainly in Paris and Brussels); and through oral testimonies (biographical-narrative interviews with social workers graduated at the Lisbon Social Work Institute between 1935 and 1944).

