



**Good Practice Story Title:** HÁ FEST! HÁ youth involvement

**Destination:** Amarante

**Country:** Portugal

**Submitting Organization:** Municipality of Amarante

**Category:**

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

**Destination description:**

Amarante, a charming city situated on the banks of the Tâmega River in the district of Porto, Portugal, is a destination that combines history, natural beauty and a vibrant local community. With a geographical area of 301.33 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of around 56,264 inhabitants, Amarante is known for its historic bridges and traditional architecture, which date back centuries of history.

One of the most emblematic points of Amarante is its Roman bridge, an ancient masterpiece that crosses the Tâmega River. This bridge is not only an architectural marvel, but also a place of gathering and celebration, where local residents gather for cultural events and festivities throughout the year.

In addition to its rich cultural heritage, Amarante also has stunning natural beauty. Serra do Marão provides a spectacular setting for outdoor activities such as hiking, cycling and nature observation.



Amarante is also known for its vibrant local community, which plays an active role in the municipality, from participating in cultural events to initiatives such as efficient waste management, encouraging public transport and supporting local agriculture demonstrate the city's commitment to the sustainability and well-being of its inhabitants, and is also an integral part of participation in reforestation projects and the organization of ecological events.

In short, Amarante is a charming destination that combines history, natural beauty and a welcoming community. Visitors to Amarante, whether enjoying the landscape or participating in local festivities, are always welcomed with open arms and invited to discover everything it has to offer.

### **Summary of Good Practice Story:**

Despite its captivating qualities and cultural richness, Amarante faced a gap in cultural offerings mainly aimed at young people, as it often lacked events and activities that actively involved local youth.

It was in this context that the pressing need to create HÁ FEST arose. This festival was conceived in 2015, and not only filled this gap in programming aimed at young people, but was also designed to offer an inclusive and diverse platform, where young people could participate as spectators, but also as artists showcasing their talents and organizers to the extent that partnerships were established with art schools, community organizations and local artists, thus giving new energy to the city.

Each edition of HÁ FEST responds to a theme, for example, some of the themes of recent editions: animal causes, bullying, mental health, healthy eating, in other words, there is always a cause behind the event to be worked on as tool to raise awareness.

Amarante, with HÁ FEST managed to fill a gap in the city's cultural offer, but also became an inspiration for its youth and the community in general.





## Issues faced:

HÁ FEST emerged from the perceived need to create an event that involved the youth of Amarante, a previously neglected segment in the city's cultural programming. The festival is managed entirely by the municipality, ensuring a cohesive organization focused on the well-being of the community.

One problem to face was the size of the event, as the objective was not to overload any specific area of the territory, so the logistics had to be very well thought out, to avoid these constraints.

Therefore, some of the challenges faced are:

- ➔ **Inclusion of Diverse Cultural Expressions:** In addition to promoting physical inclusion, the festival also faced the challenge of ensuring the representation and participation of diverse cultural expressions, ensuring that all groups in the community felt represented and celebrated at the event.
- ➔ **Environmental Sustainability:** HÁ FEST also sought to address concerns about environmental sustainability, including reducing waste, using eco-friendly materials and minimizing the environmental impact of the event as a whole.

## Solution:

Faced with the challenges faced to create an inclusive and comprehensive cultural event that involved the youth of Amarante, the municipal management took on the responsibility of leading the organization of HÁ FEST. Aware of the importance of ensuring the festival was accessible to everyone, regardless of their physical abilities, and recognizing the need to address the logistical challenges of an event of such magnitude, the council took a comprehensive and proactive approach to addressing these issues.

The solution found began by encouraging young people to actively participate, not only as spectators, but also as artists and organizers. This engagement is facilitated through dance and music schools, ensuring that they have a platform to showcase their talents whilst also providing an economic return, however modest.



Another strategy has to do with the commitment to sustainability, through the use of reusable cups, distributed in a standardized way to all participants. This practice not only reduces the waste produced during the event, but also raises awareness among young people about the importance of environmental sustainability.

To deal with the logistical challenges of organizing an event in multiple locations in the municipality, the municipal government chose to concentrate activities in the municipality's urban hub. This strategy made it possible to evenly distribute activities over the 18 days of the event, to avoid overcrowding in any specific area of the city. In addition to facilitating the logistics of the event, this approach also promoted knowledge and appreciation of the different areas of Amarante, highlighting the diversity and richness of the city.

Finally, and in order to meet the theme of inclusion that is also evident in the event, concrete measures were implemented to guarantee the festival's accessibility to everyone. This included the installation of elevators and other accessibility facilities at event venues, allowing individuals with reduced mobility to fully participate in activities. Furthermore, the central theme of this year's 2024 edition is inclusion, thus highlighting the importance of creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all participants.

The municipality, by adopting a comprehensive and proactive vision, managed to create a festival that not only celebrates the culture and youth of Amarante, but also promotes inclusion, accessibility and appreciation of the community.

### **Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:**

HÁ FEST, held annually in Amarante, is an event that stands out for the diversity of methods and activities it uses to involve the community and promote local culture. The festival is managed entirely by the municipality, which guarantees a cohesive organization focused on the well-being of the community.

Some of the methods used that make HÁ FEST a unique and inclusive event are: the active participation of youth; inclusion and accessibility; sustainability; the decentralization of activities and various activities.

In this sense, it is important to list the activities that are provided to participants throughout the event and that comply with the outlined methods, these being:



- ➔ Active youth participation through involvement of local schools: Partnerships with dance and music schools allow young people to not only watch, but also perform as artists.
- ➔ Workshops and Workshops: Workshops are held in various artistic areas, such as music, dance, theater and visual arts, encouraging the active participation of young people and providing them with new skills and knowledge.
- ➔ Accessible Infrastructure: Specific measures were taken to ensure the mobility of all participants, including the installation of elevators and access ramps in strategic locations.
- ➔ Inclusive Programming: The theme of inclusion permeates all festival activities, with events and presentations designed to be accessible to people with different abilities and needs.
- ➔ Use of Reusable Cups: To reduce environmental impact, the festival distributes reusable cups in a standardized way to all participants. This practice not only reduces the amount of waste generated, but also educates young people about the importance of sustainability.
- ➔ Waste Management: Efficient waste collection and recycling systems are implemented during the festival, promoting environmental awareness among participants.
- ➔ Decentralization of activities / Geographical distribution: HÁ FEST activities are distributed across different areas of the urban center of Amarante, avoiding overcrowding and highlighting different parts of the city. This approach not only facilitates logistics, but also promotes the appreciation of various urban areas.
- ➔ Concerts and Musical Shows: Local artists and guests perform on various stages set up around the city, offering a variety of musical genres that please all tastes.
- ➔ Dance Performances: Local and regional dance groups perform, demonstrating styles ranging from traditional to contemporary.
- ➔ Craft Fairs: Local artisans display and sell their creations, promoting culture and the local economy.
- ➔ Gastronomic Festivals: Traditional food and drink are offered on stands
- ➔ Street Entertainment: Performances by street artists, including jugglers, magicians and musicians, attracting varied audiences
- ➔ Games and Entertainment: Spaces dedicated to games and fun activities for children and families, ensuring fun for all ages.





- ➔ Walks and Night Runs: Routes through the historic center and lesser-known areas of the city are organized, promoting physical exercise and raising awareness about heritage preservation.
- ➔ Wellness Workshops: Sessions of yoga, meditation and other wellness practices are offered to promote the physical and mental health of participants.

In short, HÁ FEST is a multifaceted festival that not only celebrates the youth and culture of Amarante, but also promotes inclusion, sustainability and the appreciation of local traditions. Through a combination of innovative methods and a rich program of activities, HÁ FEST continues to be a landmark event that strengthens community ties and enriches the city's cultural life.

### **Achievements and Results:**

Since its creation, HÁ FEST has consolidated itself as an event of great impact in Amarante, achieving several achievements that reflect its success and importance for the community. Some of the festival's key achievements include:

- ➔ Active Participation: HÁ FEST managed to involve a significant number of young people in its activities, not only as spectators, but also as active participants, artists and organizers.
- ➔ Inclusive Programming: The theme of inclusion has been a highlight, with activities and events designed to be accessible to everyone, regardless of their physical abilities.
- ➔ Promotion of Local Traditions: The festival has actively promoted the culture and traditions of Amarante, including performances by Amarantina viola groups, bass drums and other local cultural elements.
- ➔ Boosting the Historic Center: The distribution of activities across different areas of the city has encouraged residents and visitors to explore and value the historic center and other lesser-known points of Amarante.
- ➔ Waste Reduction: The introduction of reusable cups and other sustainable practices during the festival has contributed significantly to the reduction of waste, raising awareness in the community about the importance of environmental sustainability.





- Environmental Awareness: Through educational activities and sustainable practices implemented during the festival, HÁ FEST has promoted environmental awareness among young people and the community in general.
- Collaborative Initiatives: The festival has facilitated collaboration between different segments of the community, including schools, cultural and sports associations, and local traders, strengthening community ties.
- Economic Impact: By attracting visitors and tourists, HÁ FEST has contributed to the local economy, benefiting traders and small business owners.
- Variety of Activities: The wide range of activities offered, from workshops and artistic presentations to sporting events and gastronomic fairs, demonstrates the festival's ability to innovate and cater to diverse interests.
- Pioneering Events: Initiatives such as concerts on the historic bridge of Amarante have become iconic, highlighting creativity in the use of urban spaces for cultural events.
- Growing Reputation: HÁ FEST has gained recognition beyond the borders of Amarante, being seen as an inclusive and sustainable festival model that can inspire other cities and communities.

HÁ FEST has established itself as a fundamental event for Amarante, providing a series of cultural, social, economic and environmental benefits.

### **Lessons Learned and Advice:**

The experience accumulated over the years with HA FEST has brought several valuable lessons that can serve as a guide for other similar events. Some of the main lessons learned and advice derived from the festival journey are:

- Develop Adequate Infrastructure: The implementation of facilities such as elevators and access ramps demonstrated that inclusion is essential for the success of an event. It is crucial to ensure that all participants, regardless of their abilities, can fully enjoy the festival.





- ➔ **Inclusive Programming:** Planning activities that meet a wide range of needs and interests helps create a welcoming and diverse environment. Including workshops, presentations and events that are accessible to everyone strengthens the feeling of community.
- ➔ **Empowerment through Participation:** Involving young people in festival organization and presentations is an effective way to empower them and develop their skills. Providing platforms for them to showcase their talents creates a sense of belonging and responsibility.
- ➔ **Education and Training:** Offering workshops and workshops not only during the festival, but also throughout the year, can better prepare young people to play active roles in the event.
- ➔ **Sustainable Practices:** The introduction of reusable cups and efficient waste management have shown that ecological practices are essential. Reducing the environmental impact of the event is not only beneficial to the environment, but also educates the community about the importance of sustainability.
- ➔ **Environmental Awareness:** Integrating environmental education into festival activities helps build a culture of sustainability among participants.
- ➔ **Distribution of Activities:** Organizing events in multiple locations within the municipality helped to avoid overloading a single area and highlight different parts of the city. This approach can be replicated to optimize logistics and promote local tourism.
- ➔ **Preparation and Flexibility:** Detailed planning, combined with the ability to adapt to unforeseen events, is fundamental to the success of large events.
- ➔ **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Working together with schools, cultural and sports associations and local businesses strengthens community ties and increases the positive impact of the event. These partnerships are essential to the successful organization and execution of the festival.
- ➔ **Inclusion of Local Traditions:** Incorporating cultural traditions and community events helps preserve local identity and engage the community in a more meaningful way.
- ➔ **Marketing and Publicity:** The use of various communication platforms, including social networks, local media and marketing campaigns, is essential to attract a broad and diverse audience.
- ➔ **Recognition and Prestige:** Gaining recognition beyond local borders can help attract visitors and talent from other regions, further enriching the festival.







- ➔ **Community Feedback:** Collecting feedback from participants and organizers after each edition of the festival is crucial to identifying strengths and areas for improvement. This feedback should be used to adjust and improve future editions.
- ➔ **Innovation and Adaptation:** Being open to new ideas and innovations allows the festival to remain relevant and attractive, reflecting the changing needs and desires of the community.

It can be concluded that HÁ FEST transcends the concept of a simple youth festival, positioning itself as a platform for inclusion, sustainability and cultural promotion that benefits the entire Amarante community. Each year, with a new theme, the festival continues to grow and adapt, reflecting the needs and desires of the community, while celebrating the diversity and cultural richness of its youth. The lessons learned along this journey and the advice derived can serve as a valuable guide for other communities looking to create impactful events.

## Recognitions and Additional References



