

FORMAT for CASE COLLECTION (WP2)

SECTION 1 (cover page): Introduction (in English)

Name of the Case

SPEAK



Abstract

SPEAK is a social tech startup that promotes social inclusion of migrants and refugees by connecting them with locals through a language and culture exchange program where everyone can apply to share their language and learn a new one.

SPEAK implements groups of language and culture exchange where participants can learn and explore common interests. During the 12 weeks of the program, participants make friends and break not only the language barrier but also prejudices, misunderstandings, thus promoting comprehension as well as cooperation. Participants help solve each other's problems, such as finding a guarantor to lease an apartment, help access the national health system or make a résumé.

This way, SPEAK contributes to more inclusive societies where diversity is cheered and valued.

SPEAK helps to build societies that accept, value and empower cultural diversity.

Started in 2014 by Hugo Menino Aguiar and a group of friends who were part of the non-profit organization «Associação Fazer Avançar». SPEAK is now a social enterprise present in seven Portuguese cities and in Italy (Turin), Germany (Berlin) and Spain (Madrid).

Website

<https://www.speak.social>

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SECTION 2: Case description

SPEAK

Objectives

The main objectives of SPEAK are:

1. Break the language barrier
2. Create informal networks of support between newcomers and locals
3. Create inclusive societies that value and celebrate diversity

Mission

SPEAK's mission is to value and empower cultural diversity and promote equality and social integration. SPEAK tackles the social exclusion of migrants and helps them integrate in the cities where they live through a language and culture exchange program that breaks the language barrier and brings people together.

Vision

Societies that integrate, value and promote cultural diversity. A world that recognizes that there are social problems that are global and don't respect boundaries, for which solutions require the engagement of all humanity in its full diversity.

Values and Causes

Values:

- Inspiration & Fun: inspiring people and wanting to be inspired through events, games and having a lot of people around.
- Excellence: aim to be the best it's possible to be.
- Leadership: being innovative and wanting to keep leading the way on how to solve the social integration challenge.
- Purpose: working for people, believing in diversity, in the best of people and in the ability to change the world.
- Accountability: never forget the individual roles combined with SPEAK's objectives.

Causes:

- Equality.
- Freedom of speech and thought.
- Equal rights to migrants.
- Gender equality.
- Equal rights to LGBT community.
- Liberty.
- We position ourselves on liberty. If something helps someone to be more free, we are all for it (except prison breaking).

Clients, audience

Newcomers, such as refugees, expats, foreign participants and guest workers who arrive in a new country. People who need to: 1) break the language barrier and 2) meet new people and build a support network.



Image: <https://www.speak.social>

Position along the SI Spiral

- Growing & scaling

SPEAK was first tested in 2012 in a Portuguese city called Leiria from an existing program in «Associação Fazer Avançar», a Youth Association.

By 2014, SPEAK had successfully validated its methodology with 870 participants from 27 different nationalities in 3 cities. After it's validation, SPEAK was built for scale on an Online2Offline model in which all processes are managed online, through a platform developed in-house, while the learning and sharing experience happens offline, allowing participants to establish a close relationship with one another.

SPEAK has also developed the program "Take SPEAK to your city" which allows anyone, anywhere to open a SPEAK Chapter and contribute to creating an inclusive community.

SPEAK has already started to scale its impact and is now present in 10 cities in 4 countries -- Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain, reaching around 2.000 in 2017.

Relationship with HEI(s) (High Education Institutions)

SPEAK has established partnerships with several universities in Portugal, among them: Nova School of Business and Economics (Nova SBE), the Higher Institute of Social and Human Sciences (ISPA) in Lisbon, the Polytechnic Institute of Leiria and the Polytechnic Institute of Gaia. These partnerships work in the following areas:

- **Sharing of knowledge** regarding social entrepreneurship and social innovation, by giving talks at the university explaining SPEAK model, assisting students doing their thesis and final papers about SPEAK and it's innovation factors and impact for social integration;
- **Students integration** through the groups of language and culture exchange that are formed at the universities with participants from different backgrounds;
- **Spreading the word about SPEAK** by being part of the process of replication through the program "Take SPEAK to your city" and implementing the program in new cities;
- The **dissemination** of the program inside and outside the HEI and the mobilization of students, teachers and others members of the community.

The partnerships formed with Universities are fundamental as they are a two way street: on one hand, SPEAK contributes to the inclusion and involvement of the faculty and students, and, on the other hand, Universities contribute with studies and research about the impact of the project as well as a more hands on approach of implementation of the program.

Finance model and resources

The principle of SPEAK is that anyone can learn languages in an informal and effective way while meeting other people. SPEAK uses an online-to-offline model where all the processes are managed online while the learning and sharing experience happens offline. This increases efficiency and minimizes fixed costs, allowing SPEAK to be sustainable at scale while charging only a symbolic fee for its program. This symbolic fee is only possible thanks to the support of institutional partners and social investors such as Gulbenkian Foundation and Fundo Bem Comum (Portugal) or Fondazione CRT (Italia). Scholarships are also available so that no one who can benefit from the program is excluded due to financial reasons.

The courses are given in an offline environment and can take place in free spaces like cafes or other places at the lowest possible cost.

In Portugal, the participation in the program has a cost of €25 and gives access to an 18-hour course and to cultural events. For those who participate as Buddies, sharing their language and culture and also want to learn a language, the SPEAK courses are free.

SPEAK was designed not just to be more effective than other alternatives at helping migrants to integrate, but also to be a commercial product with potential for sustainability. The revenue streams includes:

- A typical B2C revenue stream from applications from participants in each city - access through SPEAK technology to data about applications and revenue in real-time.
- A B2B revenue stream that consists in selling packs of applications to different organizations.

Methodology

The SPEAK methodology offers two types of experiences to the participants: language courses, where people of different origins learn a common language and integration events such as speed dating, quizzes and picnics open to the community and where people interact and make friends.

To participate in the program, each person has to register on the SPEAK website and can choose to learn and/or teach a language or to share its culture. This registration gives access to various support materials, allowing also the communication with the other users.

Events are free for all participants and for the learning groups a fee is charged. If the person is a volunteer teacher or faces financial difficulties, participation in the courses is free.



Image: <https://www.speak.social>

The volunteer teachers are the SPEAK Buddies. They are selected based on their motivations, responsibilities and levels of commitment. Linguistic or pedagogical skills are not assessed. They are usually native speakers or at least proficient in the language they are teaching.

To be a SPEAK Buddy people won't need any teaching education, only a willingness to learn and share. Any language can be teach, whether it's the mother tongue, or any other as long as it's fluent. The volunteers must give an 18 hour course (12 weeks) and will spend around 3 hours per week teaching and planning it. The materials to use in sessions are given by SPEAK as well as techniques to help create a fun, informal and relevant course. Through the portal they have access to relevant information and direct contact with the SPEAK team in each city.

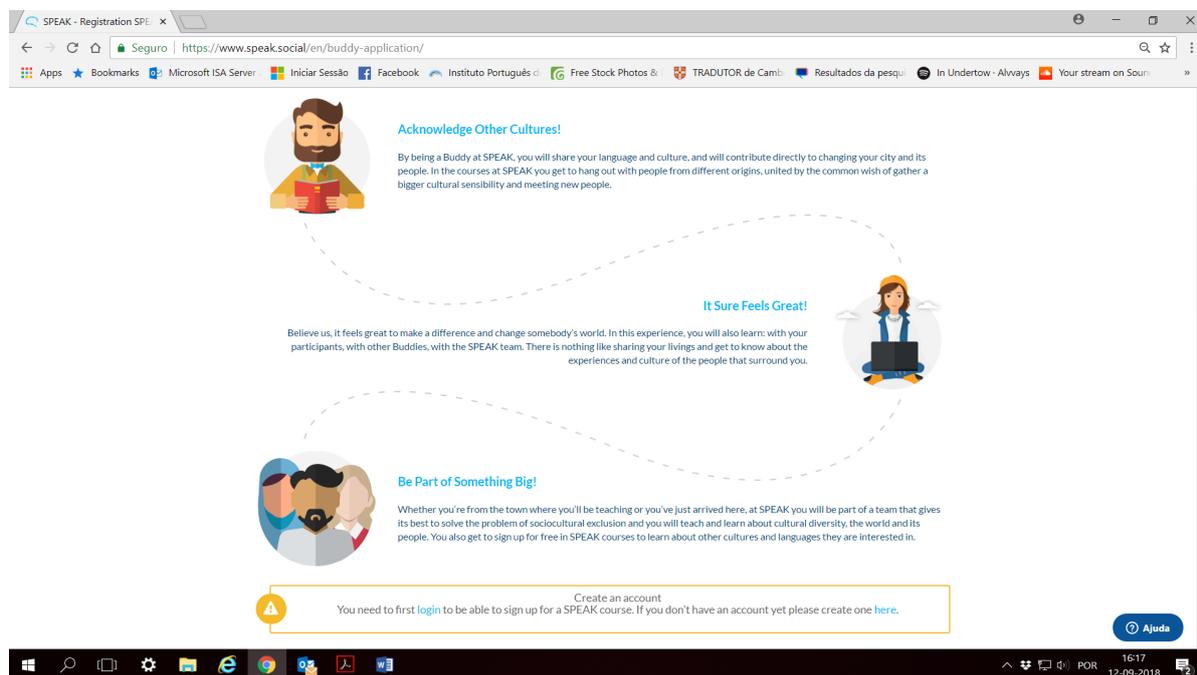


Image: <https://www.speak.social>

Besides the SPREAK Buddies there are the SPEAK Ambassadors. They are the main connector of the local community and the link between SPEAK team, buddies and participants. They organize inspirational cultural events once a month and interact with the community. The SPEAK Ambassadors foster genuine connections with and around their communities by getting people together and helping them make friends and integrate successfully.

There are also several partners at global and local level that support SPEAK pro bono in their corresponding areas of expertise.

Products, results

SPEAK's social impact measurement has three main outcomes that contribute to the social inclusion of migrants and refugees:

- 15% increase in the feeling of belonging to the city.
- 30% decrease in language as a barrier for social integration.
- 40% increase in the feeling of valorization of their culture by others.

The SPEAK products include:

- Courses of 12 weeks/ 90 minutes a week classes in 17 languages.
- A methodology for those who want to teach and learning materials.
- A model ready to replicate in any city – “Take SPEAK to your city”.

Impact and results

Since 2014, over 6,000 people have participated in SPEAK’s events and 6,100 have attended the courses (joined groups).

There are currently 15,600 members of 152 nationalities registered on the SPEAK website and 92 language and culture exchange groups working in 10 cities and 4 countries:

- Portugal: Amarante, Aveiro, Braga, Coimbra, Leiria, Lisboa and Porto.
- Spain: Madrid.
- Germany: Berlin.
- Italy: Turin.

SPEAK was distinguished with the European Label for the Languages, provided by the European Commission and in 2015 won 2 international awards: the «Scaling Award» in the Social Investment World Forum and the ECN Crowdcamp final, a crowdfunding event.

In 2018, SPEAK was one of the finalists of the Social Innovation Tournament.

Overall impact

SPEAK developed a Theory of Change with three main outcomes that contribute to the social inclusion of migrants and refugees. According to SPEAK's impact assessment, the average results for participants in these three outcomes were:

- 15% increase in the feeling of belonging to the city;
- 30% decrease in language as a barrier for social integration;
- 40% increase in the understanding of others of their language and culture.

On top of these results, there is also considerable anecdotal evidence of SPEAK's impact. Since participants become engaged in informal communities, there are numerous testimonials of newcomers, such as:

Fattema (Libyan) - moved to Portugal with her family; at SPEAK, she helped locals learn Arabic and learned Portuguese from them. She met a friend at SPEAK with whom she started a business with, and today she takes refugees to SPEAK courses to help them learn Portuguese. She has become a leader of the community.

Naki arrived to Portugal from Spain he didn't speak Portuguese and didn't know anyone. Naki taught French at SPEAK, learned Portuguese and even found a Portuguese girlfriend - a Buddy at SPEAK - Soraia.

Famakan left a difficult situation in his home, Mali. At SPEAK Torino he learned Italian and took an internship as a handyman in a hotel in Turin. Today Famakan is teaching his language bambara, an african dialect, as a Buddy in SPEAK.

These are just three of the many stories we encounter daily at SPEAK. Although people come to SPEAK for different reasons - be it to pass the language exam for citizenship, or just to find new friends- everyone finds bridges or points of connection with one another.

Images

<https://www.speak.social>



Other resources

- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCO4h4Z_NVQDOIdfV1Bn_rg/
- <https://www.facebook.com/wwwspeaksocial/>
- <https://www.instagram.com/speak.social/>
- Social Organization «Associação Fazer Avançar» : <http://www.fazeravancar.org/>