



International Workshop

“A Dog Loving Society: Best Practices and Perspectives”

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A small country which is improving a new relation between its society and the dog

Maria Amélia Taborda, Portugal

An international dog judge **Maria Amélia Taborda** presented an overview of challenges faced by a small country – Portugal – in pursue of improving relation between the society and the dog.

Though Portugal is a small country, it has eleven internationally accepted Portuguese dog breeds originating from different geographical and cultural regions of the country. These breeds should obviously be preserved not only for their functionality, but also for being a national heritage. However, as little as 3% of all dogs in Portugal are purebred, and the dog here is often treated as a working tool. The existence of national dog breeds has been compromised at the moment, and due to this the Portuguese Kennel Club (CPC) started vigorous actions at the political and society level. First of all, CPC was concerned about establishing partnerships with Portuguese government and initiating new laws that would be more respectful to dogs. Also, a group of professionals (veterinarians, biologists and dog breeders) represented themselves and their determination to save the dog breeds at the Portuguese Parliament. Besides, it was concluded at the CPC that young people would play a fundamental role in making changes. The course for young breeders was developed and run, covering basic information about cynology, CPC, FCI, groups of dog breeds and national dog breeds, as well as specific topics about breeding the dogs from progeny selection to weaning the puppies, socialising and keeping them healthy. As a practical part of the course, a visit to the premises of an accredited breeder is organised the aim of which is to demonstrate the minimal environmental conditions and examples of good breeding practice. Some printed materials have been officially approved and recommended by the Portuguese government and distributed via different channels. They positively complemented the main goals of the CPC: preserving the Portuguese dog breeds, promoting dog welfare and utility, and presenting cynology at the service of society.

Apart from much having been done already, the biggest challenge for the future remains entering the dialogue and finding ways to interact with organizations that still promote dogs as a social surplus.

