

BOOK OF
ABSTRACTS

5TH MEETING
OF YOUNG RESEARCHERS
OF UNIVERSITY OF PORTO

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Characterization of school food service of Portuguese Municipalities

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In Portugal, the responsibility of school meals was transferred from the Ministry of Education to the municipalities. This work aims to identify the measures that local authorities are taking to ensure healthy and safe meals, the food policies developed, as well as examine the framework of the nutritionist in the municipality. An on-line questionnaire was developed for collecting data. 109 municipalities responded to the questionnaire, corresponding to 39,2% of the total municipalities from mainland Portugal.

It was observed that the school food service is mostly leased and in large part to private catering companies. The number of schools receiving transported meals is higher than schools with cooking units. Most municipalities do not have a nutritionist in charge of the school food service, or it is involved in the development of the contract catering in 58,7% of local authorities. Nevertheless, in 48,5% of the municipalities inquired there is a nutritionist. It was observed that in the academic year of 2010/2011, 48,6% had a Nutritional Education Program in course and 37,6% of municipalities have already developed an assessment of nutritional status of the school population.

This work reveals that the majority of Portuguese municipality assume the responsibility of school food service without formal technical support, pointing out to the need for assistance and intervention of specialized technicians and skilled in this area.

This finding assumes even more importance given the growing demand of municipal interventions in meeting the needs of health and well-being of local populations, as well as the number of children using the school canteens.