

# Bussaco Digital

## Reforestation Bussaco National Forest

The 'Bussaco Digital' concept/idea came up after Bussaco National Forest being partly destroyed by the Gong windstorm (19-01-2013). The managing foundation lacks resources to carry out the complete recovery of the damaged areas, thus it was decided to engage the general public with this task, while at the same time promoting environmental education and raising awareness towards the importance of forests, and Bussaco in particular, using its uniqueness as a vehicle to deliver a general sustainability message.

Currently, through the platform, any user, anywhere in the world, through a simple online registration, can plant new trees or dedicate a notable one to someone special, while contributing with a donation.

The planted trees are located using GPS coordinates and the donor is awarded with a certificate, making it possible for the user to accompany their tree's growth. The contributions made, also allow for additional conservation actions and to raise awareness about sustainable forest management.



BUSSACO NATIONAL FOREST,  
PORTUGAL

Mata do Bussaco,  
Portugal

LOCATION

*Bussaco Digital is an environmental awareness project implemented through a digital platform which seeks to foster social interaction, encouraging the community to participate in the reforestation of Bussaco National Forest.*

## OUTCOMES/RESULTS

- 1 Creation of an online platform.
- 2 Engagement of a vast diversity of audiences, from general public to science experts and online gamers.
- 3 Fund raising, which allowed reinvesting in conservation actions, and the development of the platform per se.

REFORESTATION  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
BUSSACO NATIONAL FOREST

KEY WORDS

4 Development of further partnerships.

5 Large marketing and promotion of Bussaco both nationally and internationally (please see next box).

6 Contribution to the recovery of Bussaco National Forest after Gong windstorm (19-01-2013) having destroyed a substantial number of trees.

7 Plantation of 57 trees by individual citizens (including Portuguese emigrants who would not be able to go personally visit Bussaco and plant a tree), and of around 2500 trees by corporations or schools (the online platform only displays the results for individual citizens). These numbers are constantly rising.

## MORE INFORMATION

### Policy

The project is 100% original and there was nothing similar in Portugal or elsewhere, to our knowledge. It was carefully thought through, in collaboration of teams of experts from different fields: biology, forestry, natural areas managers, designers and media developers. Even this collaboration was innovative and rare, and it was one of the factors of success.

The project's concepts were aligned with Portuguese and European conservation strategies and policies.

We wanted to contribute to the immediate recovery of Bussaco Forest after the windstorm, but also develop a project with long lasting effects and that effectively could contribute to changing all stakeholders' perspective on Bussaco and the general value of forests in Portugal, which are mainly regarded from the industrial production perspective.

The sense of caring and belonging produced by the project permitted attaining those goals. Online users often wish to visit their tree or personally plant them. Groups, from schools or corporations, frequently re-visit the forest through volunteering actions. General public is perceivably more aware of Bussaco natural values and uniqueness, which translates in visitation numbers and touristic income.

### Evidence

The project was conceptually thought by the Bussaco Forest Foundation and developed in partnership with the University of Aveiro, SAPO labs and funded by PT Foundation.

The PT Foundation (Fundação Portugal Telecom) is a private, non-profit, public service institution whose goal is to realize Portugal Telecom's



commitment to social intervention and developmental support, within the purview of their responsibilities as a major social agent, [see their website](#).

## Delivery and Outreach

The project was disseminated through the national communication agency and through the communication channels of all partners: PT Foundation, University of Aveiro, SAPO labs and Bussaco Forest Foundation.

It was widespread, as the target audience was the general public, schools and corporations with social and environmental policies.

**The project received a lot of attention from the media, including regional and national newspapers and magazines, and national TV.**

The project ended up being presented at Sapo CodeBits, a hackathon held in Portugal annually, organized and sponsored by SAPO, where computer programmers and others involved in software development and hardware development, including graphic designers, interface designers and project managers, collaborate intensively on software projects. It was mentioned as a case study during the key note that opened the event.

Bussaco Digital was also selected and mapped as a case study by the CASI Project (Public Participation in Developing a Common Framework for Assessment and Management of Sustainable Innovation), which investigates the scope of sustainable innovation as a societal phenomenon and enables the elaboration of an assessment framework of sustainable innovation practices, whose application can be successfully integrated into public policy developments.

Bussaco Digital was nominated to the Green Project Awards Portugal, within the category "Mobilization Initiative".

## Factors of success

• **Technological** - The main component of the project is web based, thus strongly relying upon robust Information and communications technology.

• **Environmental** - The environmental component of the project presupposes that the planted trees as well as the old growth trees that are to be dedicated, are maintained in ideal environmental conditions as to ensure their survival and longevity. Afforestation of mixed forests creates a number of environmental benefits (carbon sink, water quality and quantity, air quality, prevention of soil erosion, etc.)

• **Social** - The project depends on the public's engagement and participation. Awareness has continuously to be risen in order to ensure the maintenance of the life-cycle of the project. Involvement in the project fosters interaction and appreciation of natural values.

## Explicit Objectives

- Contribute to the recovery of Bussaco National Forest, after Gong windstorm (19-01-2013) having destroyed a substantial number of trees.
- Promote public awareness towards the importance of forests.
- Engage general local and far publics with Bussaco's unique natural and cultural heritage.
- Develop innovative digital-based ways to reach audiences in the scope of environmental education and education for sustainability.
- Stimulate the public feeling of belonging, connecting people, environment, and local heritage.

## Other Objectives

- Marketing and Promoting Bussaco National Forest as a touristic hotspot.
- Promote the unique natural values of Bussaco National Forest and include public participation in its management.
- Create a novel green business model.

## Link to H2020 Priorities

- Biodiversity examination and understanding
- Solutions for cultural heritage assets
- Strategic intelligence and citizens' participation
- Eco-innovation and green economy transition

• **Spatial / Urban** - Afforestation project depends on adequate land use planning, affecting suitable areas that are available. Spatial aims are to re-qualify Bussaco National Forest and to promote compatible territorial and social uses. Aesthetic framing of the landscape in accordance to Bussaco's historic legacy.

## Main type of innovation

• **Social (incl. behavioural)** - Social engagement towards the environment, raising awareness towards natural heritage: transmuting the immaterial technological component (web) into a physical embodiment (reforestation). In nowadays cyberspace-centered techno-societies, the project aims at fostering public participation, promoting the reconnection to the management / recovery of nature.

• **Marketing** - Environmental marketing, targeting non-environmentalist audience. User acquires simultaneously a material and immaterial product. Its tree(s), and the corresponding sense of belonging foster the dissemination of the natural values of Bussaco National Forest and the services available there.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

**Project's website - <http://bussacodigital.sapo.pt/>**

### Organizations:

Fundação Mata do Bussaco  
University of Aveiro  
SAPO Labs

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## LESSONS LEARNED

1 Collaboration between several fields of knowledge was a key asset to the success of the project.

2 Communication must be clear and action-oriented. For instance, conceptual framework and further objectives, such as alignment with European conservation strategies should not be presented in the immediate communication pieces, but reserved to people interested to know more.

3 We should not overlook audiences not immediately associated with the communication strategy. For instance, elder people were fascinated with our project, despite their low use of technology.

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