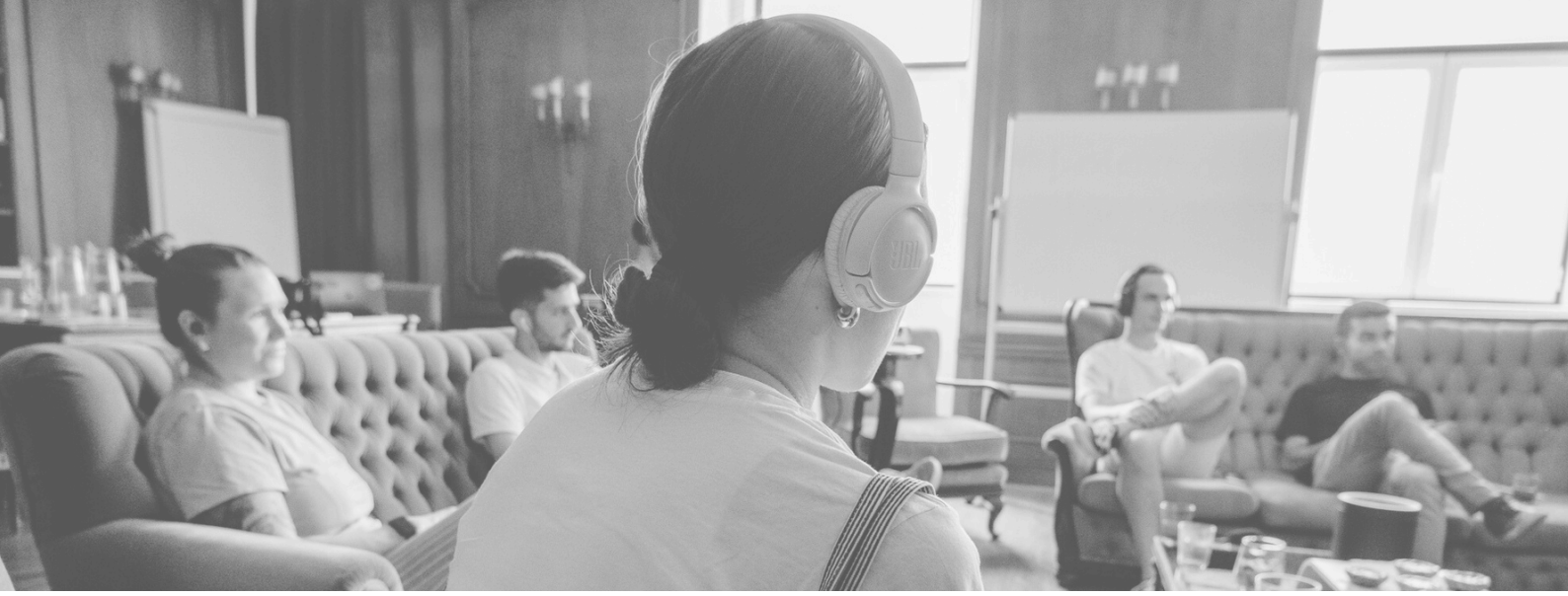

CASE STUDY

SHIFTER GEN

‘Listening to the City’: Connecting with Audiences through Podcasting

IN SHORT

“Listening To The City” is a narrative podcast series launched by Lisboa Para Pessoas (LPP), part of Shifter Gen. The podcast amplifies the voices of communities across Lisbon’s 18 municipalities through first-person stories about urban life, challenges, and sustainable change.

ABOUT THE NEWS OUTLET

Lisboa Para Pessoas (LPP) is a civic journalism platform that promotes participatory citizenship and sustainability in Lisbon and its metropolitan area. It combines journalism, events, and digital tools to foster urban dialogue and public engagement. LPP operates under Shifter Gen, a media company that also publishes Shifter, a magazine dedicated to critical thought and social innovation.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

To expand LPP’s storytelling into audio by producing a four-episode podcast series, fostering a deeper emotional connection with audiences, and engaging citizens who prefer to listen rather than read — all while building a foundation for long-term podcast production.

IMPLEMENTED SOLUTIONS

LPP created a pilot episode and shared it with subscribers for feedback before public release. They organized a co-creation meeting with their community, integrated insights from listeners, and iteratively refined the concept.

Transitions

WHY THIS PROJECT?

This project was LPP's first step into podcasting, a medium the team saw as a chance to enrich their storytelling and connect with audiences in a more intimate and engaging way. It also allowed them to reach a new audience — those who may not have time to read but still want to stay connected to the city — helping build loyalty through an audio format. The theme, "Listening to the City," reflects their mission to tune into diverse urban voices and issues.

HOW DID APPLYING DESIGN THINKING PRINCIPLES HELP?

The workshop helped LPP revisit key concepts and apply them, while mentoring sessions provided valuable external insights. Early on, team members met in person with subscribers to gather ideas and expectations for the podcast, fostering meaningful co-creation. They also regularly shared informal ideas with friends, collaborators, and colleagues, which helped shape the podcast in an organic, iterative way. One meaningful outcome of the grant was the start of building a wider team: while still small and largely freelance, their expanding network of trusted collaborators has become a valuable asset.

DID LISBOA PARA PESSOAS' APPROACH CHANGE ENGAGEMENT WITH ITS AUDIENCE IN ANY WAY?

Yes. The co-creation meeting with subscribers fostered a sense of ownership and involvement. Sharing the pilot for feedback before public release deepened trust and engagement with LPP's core audience.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID LISBOA PARA PESSOAS ENCOUNTER AND HOW DID IT ADDRESS THEM?

Time constraints and a small team were major hurdles. Initially aiming to produce all episodes at once, LPP pivoted to focus on crafting a strong pilot. Also, after a planned partnership with national radio fell through, the group found an alternative recording studio and purchased equipment themselves.

HOW WAS LISBOA PARA PESSOAS' PROJECT RECEIVED BY ITS AUDIENCE?

Though full public release is pending, early feedback from subscribers on the pilot episode has been constructive and encouraging. This iterative approach strengthened the connection with the community.

WHAT INSIGHTS OR LESSONS DID LISBOA PARA PESSOAS GAIN FROM THIS PROJECT?

Key takeaways include the importance of clear priorities, building a reliable team, seeking external input, and embracing iterative workflows. Most importantly, LPP learned not to overcomplicate things — a simple and focused approach proved more effective. Time pressure, instead of being a stressor, became a helpful tool for maintaining momentum.

WHAT DOES LISBOA PARA PESSOAS PLAN ON DOING NEXT?

LPP plans to refine the pilot, complete the remaining episodes, and launch the podcast by summer. The group is already exploring themes for a second season, aiming to establish podcasting as a regular feature of its media work.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD LISBOA PARA PESSOAS GIVE TO OTHER JOURNALISTS OR ORGANISATIONS CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PATH?

Stay in close dialogue with the grant program team — they're there to help and are flexible when it comes to deadlines, paperwork, and other logistics. The goal isn't to deliver a finished project, but to build a solid prototype that can act as a launch pad for future development. Focus your energy on that first step, and use the opportunity to lay strong foundations rather than trying to complete everything at once.