

# Dealing with the Plague in Oporto, 1899

## Building a European Health Diplomacy: A Comprehensive Approach

*An InsSciDE Case Study*

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In July 1899, the plague raged in the Atlantic city of Oporto. From the very start, the crisis was global. The plague had been appearing for several years in various world regions. An outbreak three years earlier in Mumbai had caused international concern, suggesting that Europe could be affected next and leading to an International Sanitary Conference held in Venice in 1897. Oporto was the first European port to be hit by the plague at epidemic scale. Portugal was criticized for failing to apply preventive measures in the spirit of the Venice Convention. But this international and diplomatic outcry did not prevent scientific cooperation to combat the plague on the ground.

Oporto is an emblematic local case of the control of epidemics, unfolding during the first contemporary globalization that took off during the 1870s. Can one speak of the existence of European health diplomacy at that time? In this perspective, does the compartmentalization of approaches by "scientific" and "diplomatic" actors, interests, or communities make any sense?

The story of Oporto reveals, at different spatial and temporal scales of epidemic risk management, the various advantages of diplomatic policies and practices to strengthen European health diplomacy in a globalized world.



**Keywords:**

Plague, Europe, global health diplomacy, stakeholders, governance

*Image credit: Pasteur Institute Nha Trang*



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