



SHERPA  
Rural Science-Society-Policy  
Interfaces

# A VISION FOR RURAL AREAS

MAP Position Paper



## LONG-TERM VISION FOR RURAL AREAS: CONTRIBUTION FROM 20 SCIENCE- SOCIETY-POLICY PLATFORMS

MAP POSITION PAPER

MAP RURAL CENTRO REGION

PORTUGAL

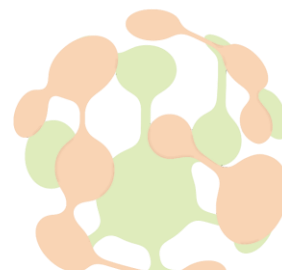
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## 1. Centro – a privileged location

“Centro” region is geographically central in the national context, ensuring the articulation of the Portuguese territory and also Portugal's access to the north and centre of Europe, through the continental transport corridors; and, being a region with a large Atlantic coast, also ensures articulation with Europe and the rest of the world, through maritime transport.

The settlement model and the urban network of the Centro Region are strongly determined by the morphological characteristics of its territory, crossed by the “Central Cordillera” (where “Serra da Estrela” stands out). The population model has asymmetric characteristics in the region: bigger population concentration on the coast and low density in the interior. A polynucleated urban network, composed with medium-sized cities, promotes the territorial balance of the region.

The Centro Region is also a space that integrates a vast and diversified natural heritage of recognised landscape and environmental quality and, in addition, it is one of the regions of Portugal best served by surface and underground water resources.

Tourist resources are relevant in the centre of Portugal region. We find buildings and natural areas classified as World Heritage by UNESCO and the proximity of the most important tourist / religious site in the country (Fátima). In addition, tourism in rural areas, with products that are very identifiable, such as river beaches or historic villages.

The Centro Region is characterised by a very diversified and territorially heterogeneous productive structure, integrating a variety of traditional productive specialisations, some of which have a strong international importance (examples: ceramics and glass, machinery and equipment manufacturing industries, plastics, etc.).

In addition, the region has conditions for the development of scientific research activities, namely in the areas of health, materials engineering, electronics, biotechnology and information and communication technologies. There is also a good network of universities, technology centres and institutions dedicated to scientific research and technology transfer.

The presence of excellent services in the area of education or health, the existence of equipment and activities in the area of culture and leisure, as well as the presence of urban centres of adequate size and attractive urban and rural landscapes, are attributes that make the Centro Region a privileged place to live and work.

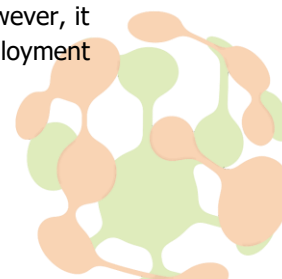
**Keywords:** *Diversity, coastal vs. inland, knowledge, innovation, valorisation of endogenous resources.*

## 2. Key scientific evidence

“Centro” Region of Portugal, incorporates 100 municipalities, covers an area of 28.199 km<sup>2</sup> (the second largest in terms of NUTS II in Portugal), has an international land border of 270 km (with Spain), and an Atlantic coast line with 279 km long.

With 2,3 million inhabitants, it concentrates 22% of the Portuguese population, having lost importance in terms of population in the last decade. It is a region with a low population concentration, with an aging population and negative natural population growth, due to the existence of mortality rates higher than those of birth rates, with no compensatory migratory movement.

The region has a productive “ecosystem” with some weaknesses, being mostly made up of small units and with low technological indexes, despite the high capacity of knowledge and technology production existing in the “academic” centres of the region. “Centro” is the Portuguese region with the lowest labour productivity, representing close to 80% of the national total and about half of the productivity of the EU27. However, it is important to underline that the Centro Region has systematically been able to guarantee unemployment



rates below the national average; “Centro” is the region of Portugal having the lowest unemployment rate and the lowest youth unemployment rate.

For the future, a more developed region is sought, with more well-being, more cultured, more scientifically and technologically qualified, with more and better employment, more equitable and more just, through competitiveness and innovation and social and territorial cohesion. It will be necessary to develop solutions aimed at rural innovation, through the development of digitalised, intelligent and creative territories in rural areas, the development of integrated solutions for the production, valorisation and commercialisation of products and services based on endogenous resources accompanied by the introduction of technologies, which allow to reinforce the attractiveness and quality of life in these territories.

### 3. Summary of the outcomes of the Delphi

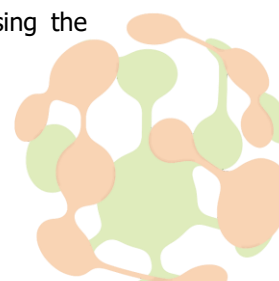
The MAP RURAL.PT activities related with the “Long-term vision for rural areas” has begun in mid-July and ended with the consensus meeting at the beginning of November.

Based on the activities described in the annex 1, a synthesis of the position of the MAP on the future Portuguese “Centro” rural areas has been drafted in the following paragraphs.

#### 3.1. Challenges and opportunities in the next 20 years

Three main challenges for the “Centro” region were identified as most relevant by the MAP members:

- Demographic revitalisation:
  - Improving the quality of life of rural areas in the Centre region in order to try to bring living in rural areas closer to urban areas;
  - Strengthening the development dynamics of medium-sized towns and sub-regional urban systems;
  - Stimulation of an Agriculture that creates value and qualified employment in the rural environment, that allows people to settle down and take care of the landscape of the Centre Region in a sustainable way;
  - Strengthening the pillar of social sustainability in rural areas.
- Relationship of demographic, climate and consumption changes with agroforestry activities
  - Promote a progressive change in the consumption patterns of goods and services to ensure consistency and sustainability of resource use;
  - Research and innovation to address global change;
  - Universalisation of agricultural digitalisation, contributing decisively to the green and circular economy;
  - Fairer distribution of value along the agri-food chain;
  - Plan for the management and valorisation of inland waters.
- Robustness and stability of territorial governance processes
  - Define public policies to enhance the value to its specificity and territorial diversity;
  - Build up a set of principles and valorisation mechanisms for the opportunities that contemporary society opens up for the development of rural regions, recognising the general features of the diversity of situations and the specificity of constraints;



- Define a consistent long-term strategy of occupation/use of territory with social and environmental objectives;
- Reconcile the role of agriculture in the production of goods and services with environmental services, often generating positive externalities.

### 3.2. Desirable future for 2040

A diverse, young and innovative region, with the capacity to attract investment and talent that leads in the evolution towards a more sustainable society, capable of attracting new inhabitants as active agents for the revitalisation of the territory and being recognised as competitive at European level in terms of quality of life.

"Centro", through fiscal attractiveness, digitalisation and infrastructures, is a vibrant and attractive region, capable of attracting talent and investment, centred on dynamic and competitive productive activities, tourist and sporting activities, based on biocultural diversity.

A region with food sovereignty and which is recognised for its heritage and ability to generate knowledge and innovation at internationally recognised universities and innovation institutions.

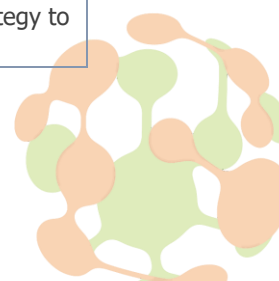
A resilient, empowered and collaborative region, which stands out for its rural/urban diversity and dichotomy, explored in an innovative, sustainable and complementary way. Short circuits thrive in the region, where demand catalyses local supply.

### 3.3. Enablers to achieve the vision

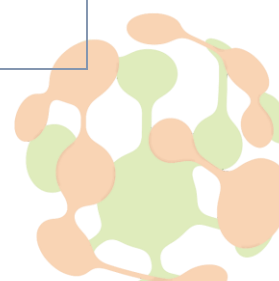
MAP MEMBERS voted on different policy measures to achieve medium-long-term objectives in each of the priorities. In order to reflect the importance attributed to each of these measures, we indicate as "Vital" those that received the 5 highest number of votes and as "Important" the next 5 most voted measures.

Table 1 Overview of policy measures

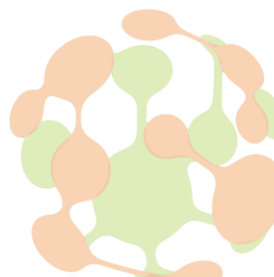
Priority	Enablers – Vital	Enablers - Important
<b>Demographic change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different fiscal attractiveness policies oriented towards dynamic and attractive productive activities</li> <li>• Create attractive support instruments to secure new residents and promote investment in rural territories, namely qualified young people</li> <li>• Strength public services with quality and adjusted to the territorial and demographic reality</li> <li>• Create co-responsibility mechanisms between R&amp;D entities and companies, providing incentives for them to interact with local agents</li> <li>• Implement living labs focused to the demographic issue and the design of community's solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure policies at community proximity levels (less determined by administrative configuration)</li> <li>• Create regional R&amp;D clusters</li> <li>• Implement a comprehensive and integrated view of the results of scientific research in the design of public policies</li> <li>• Alignment of housing and social support policies with the strategic goals for development</li> <li>• Include subjects in elementary and high education programs at schools to disseminate and value the rural activities</li> </ul>
<b>Production and diversification of the rural economy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies focused on the development of differentiating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional and national strategy to support research and</li> </ul>



	<p>value chains in the territories of the Centro region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create sufficiently attractive mechanisms to establish young university students in their home territories, focused on their importance for their change and evolution</li> <li>• Coordination between levels of government to adapt policies to territorial diversities</li> <li>• Society's involvement in the selection of strategic development projects and the implementation of initiatives in the territory</li> <li>• Create of networks that allow to scale different local products short commercial circuits, allowing the adoption of collective mechanisms for quality certification</li> </ul>	<p>development of new uses of existing natural resources in the region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement of a private investment fund to invest in initiatives in the rural world, with the possibility of creating tax benefits for these projects</li> <li>• Implement the R&amp;D agenda for biodiversity, agriculture and forests</li> <li>• Create of a <i>Simplex</i> for small agriculture, with simple and quick procedures and exceptions, for example for sales in local commerce or for small food-industries licensing</li> <li>• Create of a resources and competences centre that values the specificity of local economies and promote the articulation between, internal and external, agents to the territories</li> </ul>
<b>Climate change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote a culture of environmental responsibility and local "seed" initiatives of a circular economy (promotion of municipalities as champions of "Green Policy")</li> <li>• Positive discrimination of business context costs for "green activities"</li> <li>• Development of awareness actions by companies and society on the issue of climate change and a more responsible consumption</li> <li>• Value ecosystem services and climate mitigation and adaptation solutions</li> <li>• Attribution of public supports to producers whose investments promote the mitigation of climate change, directly or indirectly (eg, sustainable agricultural practices, land and forest cleaning, extensive animal exploitation, agroforestry systems)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and development linked to genetic improvement as a way of combating climate change, mainly linked to water stress</li> <li>• Stablish of incentives for the conversion and / or micro production of renewable energies across the entire value chain</li> <li>• Overhaul of forest management policy</li> <li>• Observatory of the impact of climate change of the various activities in the region</li> <li>• R&amp;D and dissemination of energy application efficiency technologies throughout the entire chain (eg: biomass, wind, solar, water)</li> </ul>
<b>Digitalisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring Internet access / connectivity as an essential asset</li> <li>• Study and creation of support mechanisms for large companies and R&amp;D entities towards agents of the small local economy (digital patrons)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application of intelligent precision farming tools</li> <li>• Develop technological and digital solutions for better risk perception and prevention</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Development of digital literacy solutions adjusted to the territorial reality</li><li>• Development focused on the use of digital tools to balance negotiating power in value chains</li><li>• Promote the creation of regional e-commerce platforms to shorten food chains</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote the digital integration of the most "advanced" age and different social groups</li><li>• Create a digital agenda and proximity governance</li><li>• Involvement of communities in the implementation of the digital agenda</li></ul>
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## Annex 1. Methodology used in the MAP

### Review of key trends

In order to evaluate the key region trends we shared a questionnaire that was sent (mid of July) to all members of the MAP, asking for contributions on the topics identified in the SHERPA Discussion Paper. The members were asked to give a value from 1 to 7, being 1 "irrelevant" and 7 "very relevant", to rank the topics in terms of importance to the MAP region. We received a total of 11 validated answers.

This contributed to identify 4 topics from the 7 in the Discussion Paper, considered by the MAP RURAL.PT members as the most relevant key trends for the Centre Region, to be discussed by our MAP.

In the questionnaire we also added two questions to get the views of MAP members on their expectations towards this platform:

- What are the current and likely challenges and opportunities for our MAP, with a time horizon of 2040?

A relevant role for our MAP RURAL.PT will be to contribute to a strategic (and therefore medium/long term) view of the issues facing the rural regions of the Centre Region of Portugal, by the various relevant agents in the region (public, private, associative, civil society,...) and identify, in view of this strategy, critical investments and instruments that may favour transition processes in favour of a healthier and territorially balanced development.

- What are the current and likely opportunities for your MAP, with a time horizon of 2040?

The great opportunity is that the MAP RURAL.PT can function as a "neutral" and external ignition factor of a mobilisation process, listening to each other and promoting a debate that leads to the presentation of concrete proposals and the clear identification of the conditions for the implementation of these proposals, rather than only the definition of desirable principles, priorities and types of actions.

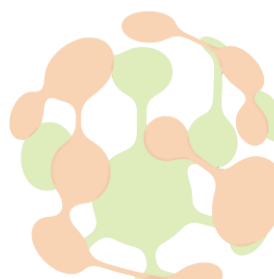




Figure 1 – Form and results from the questionnaire



## First MAP meeting

The first meeting of the MAP RURAL.PT was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July through the Zoom platform, to discuss the long-term vision for rural areas in the Centre region of Portugal.

A total of 16 people participated in the meeting: 5 members from policy, 7 from science and 4 from society. There was a good balance between the three communities and a reasonably good gender balance (6 females and 10 males).

The meeting started with the presentation of the SHERPA project and the MAP, its objective and cycle. Then the long-term vision for rural areas was presented, followed by a round of presentation from all members.

During the meeting, two dynamics were organised.

The first aimed at answering the question *What are the opportunities and challenges for rural areas in the next 20 years?* This was done using a SWOT analysis, in which the group was divided in two rooms and the SWOT was performed in two rounds: one group identifying weaknesses and then opportunities, and the other group identifying strengths and then threats. In the second round both groups had access to what was written by the previous group.

The Pinup app (<https://pinup.com/>) was used to collect and summarise all the members contributions.

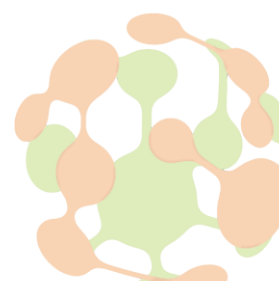
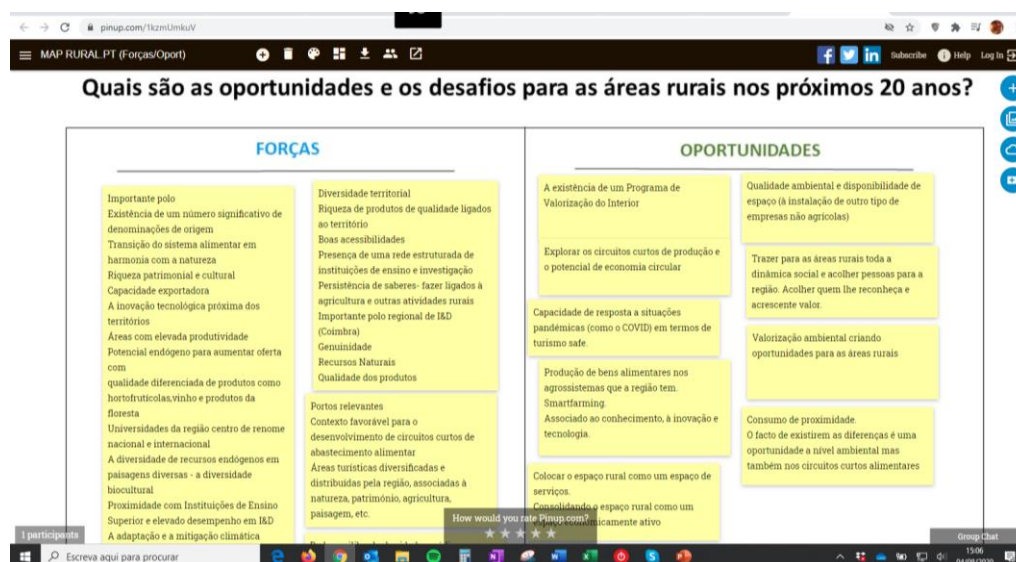




Figure 2 – Division of work for the SWOT analysis



Figure 3 – Example from a Pinup map filled by Map Members during 1st MAP Meeting



In the second dynamic, the members were divided in smaller groups (5 in total) and asked to discuss the statement - *Rural areas in 2040” – a long-term vision and how to get there*. More specifically, the members were asked to debate and write a sentence on the vision for the Centre region of Portugal.

After this initial stage, the sentences were supposed to be shared and criticised by the other groups. However, there was no time to do this second part, and the decision was to do this exercise in September, in the Consensus meeting.

## MAP Survey

The survey has been created on Microsoft Form and has been remained open from 6<sup>th</sup> October to 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and it was sent to the MAP members to allow that they send to the community in the “Centro” region. In addition, we shared with some customers that we have in the region.

It has obtained a total of 49 responses, mainly with respondents with age between 40 and 60 years, almost all of them with a degree or higher and a majority of respondents from public services or institutions.

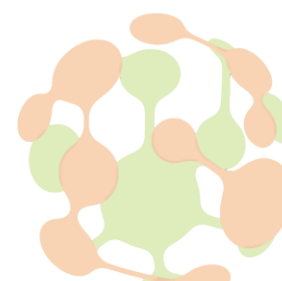


Figure 4 - Survey respondents age

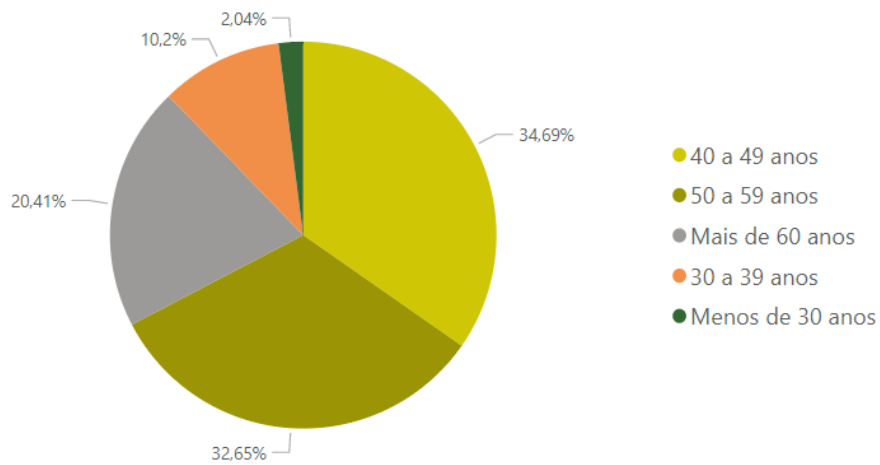


Figure 5 - Survey respondents' education

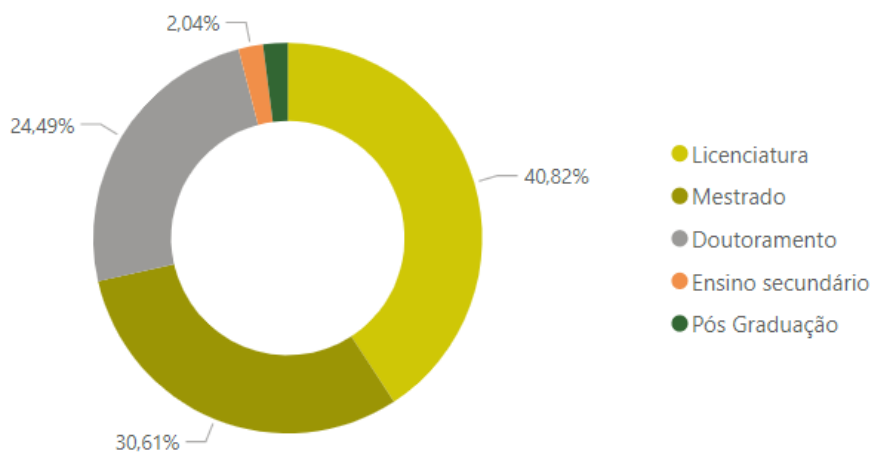
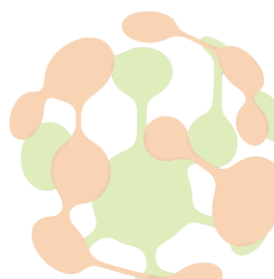
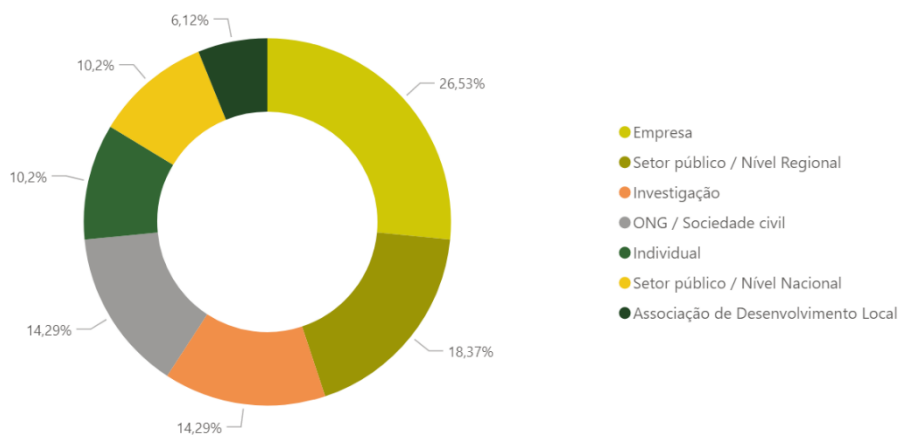


Figure 6 - Survey respondents' experience



The survey results were placed in a “Power BI” dynamic report which can be consulted on this [link](#) or through the following QR Code:



### Consensus meeting

The consensus meeting of MAP RURAL.PT took place at 4<sup>th</sup> November, in an exclusively online format, through the ZOOM platform. The aim of this session was to collect contributions for a common long-term vision for “Centro” Region of Portugal and also define the actions necessary to achieve it, in the 4 priorities identified at the 1<sup>st</sup> MAP meeting, namely: i) demographic change; ii) production and diversification of the rural economy; iii) climate change; iv) digitalisation.

Figure 7 - Programme of the consensus meeting of MAP RURAL.PT



This meeting had a total of 13 members of MAP RURAL.PT, including 6 members of science, 5 members of society and 2 members of policy. The session was facilitated by 4 members of CONSULAI. There was a reasonably gender balance.

The meeting has begun with a Follow Up of the MAP activities presented by the facilitator, namely regarding the discussion paper (asking for a final approval), the short schedule to finish the Position Paper and a brief presentation of the results obtained (so far) from the survey carried out.

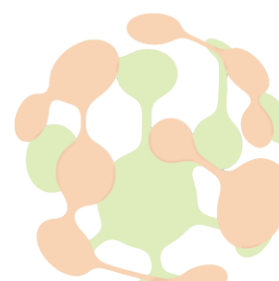


Figure 8 - Participants of the MAP RURAL.PT consensus meeting



Subsequently, we focused on trying to agree on a MAP proposal for a future vision for the region “Centro”. We presented 3 different “visions”, which incorporated the contributions received from the survey. Initially, an individual reflection was held, where each participant had to establish a ratio for each of the “visions”, after which a discussion was opened in plenary to discuss the various ideas. After the meeting, an email was sent to the participants in order to try to receive some more inputs.

Then, the MAP members were invited to define actions needed to achieve the medium-long term vision for the “Centro” region, in the previously identified priorities: i) demographic change; ii) production and diversification of the rural economy; iii) climate change; iv) digitisation. This dynamic was structured in three distinct parts: 1) brainstorming, 2) group and 3) vote.

At the brainstorming session, based on individual reflection, the members pointed suggestions of actions suggested for each of the priorities. Then, the facilitator team will group the ideas, in order to avoid repetition or overlapping and, at the final step, the MAP members were invited to vote in the different proposals. However, it was impossible to conclude the grouping and the voting on the day of the meeting. Thus, after the meeting, CONSULAI team grouped the proposals and have send, by email, the link to allow to recollect the votes from the MAP members.

All the dynamics held in this consensus meeting of MAP RURAL.PT were through the online platform GroupMAP (<https://www.groupmap.com/>).

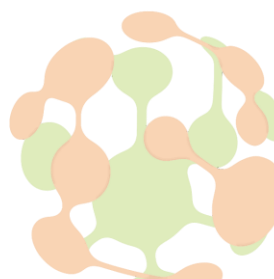


Figure 9 – Example of the brainstorming of the "Demographic change" priority

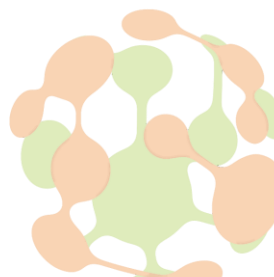
The screenshot shows a Miro board titled "MUDANÇA DEMOGRÁFICA" with three main columns: POLÍTICAS, INVESTIGAÇÃO & DESENVOLVIMENTO, and SOCIEDADE. The board is divided into three sections, each with a list of ideas.

- POLÍTICAS:**
  - Robustecer os incentivos à deslocação de funcionários públicos de elevada qualificação
  - Políticas que de fato tenham em conta as fragilidades ecológicas e sociais dos agro-sistemas existentes na região centro e promovam soluções verdadeiramente adequadas às caraterísticas endógenas
  - Sistema diferenciado de apoios à agricultura das zonas de montanha e de zonas agroflorestais com risco elevado de incêndios. Conjugar a este respeito os financiamentos da PAC e do Fundo Ambiental
  - Reforçar a visão Leader na aplicação das políticas
  - Financiamento aliciente de uma rede de centrais de aproveitamento da biomassa florestal para aproveitamento energético
  - Lançar um grande programa de florestação, em que as espécies de crescimento rápido sejam aproveitadas mas bem integradas em mosaicos de biodiversidade com espécies folhosas
  - Descentralizar a capacidade de decisão e aplicação de políticas e programas de desenvolvimento
  - assegurar processos de governança territorial
  - acesso a banda larga em toda a região
  - integração territorial das políticas de incentivo público
- INVESTIGAÇÃO & DESENVOLVIMENTO:**
  - Ter em conta uma visão integral e integrada dos resultados da investigação científica na concepção das políticas públicas
  - Observatório regional do clima e da transição climática
  - estudar o sentimento e expectativas de segurança dos cidadãos
  - operacionalizar a valorização de recursos naturais e ambientais
  - Desenvolvimento de soluções interdisciplinares para o desenho de novas cooperativas de apoio ao desenvolvimento da economia local
  - Investigação e soluções que utilizem os dados acerca da resiliência das espécies autóctones ou que provaram ser resilientes às mudanças no clima verificadas nos últimos milénios
  - Equacionar living labs orientados para a questão demográfica e para o desenho das soluções que colocam as comunidades no centro das preocupações
  - Desenvolver investigação baseada na comunidade para se encontrarem soluções adaptadas
  - Investigação em soluções de produção agrícola e florestal sustentáveis no quadro das alterações no clima, combatendo a exploração intensiva em curso
  - criar mecanismos de co-responsabilização entre entidades de I&D e
- SOCIEDADE:**
  - Incentivar novos modelos de governança - mais participados
  - aliviar o espartilho administrativo relativamente a medidas a tomar, focando-as essencialmente nos visados
  - Estruturar as políticas políticas em níveis de proximidade comunitária (menos determinada pela configuração administrativa)
  - Aproveitar e valorizar a diversidade das iniciativas locais
  - valorizar a imagem de é bom viver no mundo rural realçando os seus aspectos positivos e de qualidade. potenciar o Afecto Territorial, criar dinâmicas de valorização e sentido de pertença
  - criar soluções de suporte ao acolhimento de movimentos pendulares de jovens qualificados
  - Estimular a diversificação dos agentes que interferem nas atividades económicas, sociais e culturais
  - Incluir temáticas/disciplinas nas escolas básicas e secundárias que divulguem e valorizem as atividades locais, aumentando a auto-estima dos residentes
  - criar instrumentos de acolhimento e integração de novos residentes

Figure 10 – Example of the "Vote" dashboard on the "Demographic change" priority

The screenshot shows a Miro board titled "MUDANÇA DEMOGRÁFICA" with three main columns: POLÍTICAS, INVESTIGAÇÃO & DESENVOLVIMENTO, and SOCIEDADE. The board is divided into three sections, each with a list of ideas and green circular icons indicating the number of votes received.

- POLÍTICAS:**
  - Políticas de atratividade fiscal diferenciadoras orientadas para atividades produtivas dinâmicas e atrativas (6 votes)
  - Políticas que permitam um acesso plural aos recursos naturais (água, terra, etc.), contrariando a atual tendência para a concentração à exploração e usufruto dos mesmos (1 vote)
  - Reforçar serviços públicos com qualidade e ajustados à realidade territorial e demográfica (educação, saúde...) (5 votes)
  - Políticas adequadas aos territórios, não os formatando a orientações e normativos nacionais que não se compadeçam com a sua diversidade: criar instrumentos de apoio às pessoas e às famílias que sejam atractivas para fixar novos residentes e criar elos de ligação com a diáspora que permita o seu regresso, fixação e investimento nos territórios rurais (6 votes)
  - Políticas que de fato tenham em conta as fragilidades ecológicas e sociais dos agro-sistemas existentes na região centro e promovam soluções verdadeiramente adequadas às caraterísticas endógenas (2 votes)
- INVESTIGAÇÃO & DESENVOLVIMENTO:**
  - Criação de clusters I&D regionais (5 votes)
  - Criar mecanismos de co-responsabilização entre entidades de I&D e grandes empresas relativamente aos territórios rurais, dando incentivos para que interajam com os agentes locais (5 votes)
  - Equacionar living labs orientados para a questão demográfica e para o desenho das soluções que colocam as comunidades no centro das preocupações (4 votes)
  - Ter em conta uma visão integral e integrada dos resultados da investigação científica na concepção das políticas públicas (3 votes)
  - Observatório regional do clima e da transição climática (0 votes)
  - Desenvolver investigação baseada na comunidade para se encontrarem soluções adaptadas (5 votes)
  - estudar o sentimento e expectativas de segurança dos cidadãos (1 vote)
  - estudar as dinâmicas dos novos "povoadores" (1 vote)
  - Investigação e soluções que utilizem os dados acerca da resiliência das espécies autóctones ou que provaram ser resilientes às mudanças no clima verificadas nos últimos milénios (0 votes)
- SOCIEDADE:**
  - Aposta na disseminação de competências que antecipamos como centrais à competitividade (digitais, bio) (3 votes)
  - Valorizar a imagem de é bom viver no mundo rural realçando os seus aspectos positivos e de qualidade. Potenciar o Afecto Territorial, criar dinâmicas de valorização e sentido de pertença (2 votes)
  - Dar ênfase à governança local, dando voz às comunidades e às entidades que as representam localmente. Proporcionar animação/dinamização territorial criando instrumentos que permitam a valorização do associativismo e da sua actividade, enquanto agentes fundamentais para acesso à cultura e bem estar (1 vote)
  - Estruturar as políticas em níveis de proximidade comunitária (menos determinada pela configuração administrativa) (4 votes)
  - criar instrumentos de acolhimento e integração de novos residentes (4 votes)
  - criar soluções de suporte ao acolhimento de movimentos pendulares de jovens qualificados (0 votes)



## Annex 2. References

Programa Operacional Regional do Centro 2014-2020 (versão de outubro de 2020)  
(<http://www.centro.portugal2020.pt/index.php/component/edocman/programa-operacional-regional-do-centro-centro-2020-outubro-2020/download>)

