



SHERPA  
Rural Science-Society-Policy  
Interfaces

## GOVERNANCE IN RURAL AREAS



### MAP ALQUEVA, PORTUGAL

The Alqueva MAP covers the Alqueva region in the Alentejo province of Portugal and is composed of 21 members: nine from society, six from science, and six from policy-related backgrounds.

The Alqueva region has recently undergone significant changes in terms of governance and rural development, due to the construction of the Alqueva dam and its irrigation perimeter, making a once arid-region with a sparse population is now more attractive for investment and development. Another change in the region is the increasing focus on multi-level governance processes, which has led to greater collaboration between local, regional, and national actors, as well as a more participatory approach to governance.



### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Future rural policy

- The need in the region to increase citizen engagement in governance, such as involving representative associations in decision-making, the use of participatory democracy instruments, and restructuring local power.
- Better connections and understandings between public, sectoral, private, and other stakeholder groups.
- Streamline, decentralise, and simplify processes, while strengthening the role of LDAs/LAGs.

#### Future rural research

- There are various types of missing knowledge and information regarding the involvement of rural actors in multi-level governance in Alqueva, such as models, public policies, and innovation.
- The identification and dissemination of models and best practices relevant to the region.
- There is an excess of irrelevant information, with a need to improve the interconnections and interdependencies between the rural and urban areas.

## KEY STRENGTHS

- Entites/programmes as rural actors and involvement in local level governance include: Farmers and Irrigators Associations, the Leader Programme, Local and Regional Development Association, Regional Agricultural Directorates, EDIA, and NGOs.
- Geographical proximity is one of the factors that can facilitate the connection to regional institutions.
- Farmers and other local stakeholders of high importance to the region have been involved in discussions about multi-level governance in the region, demonstrating the importance such actors are giving their role and contributions to the multi-level governance approach.

## KEY NEEDS

- To increase the perception of rural actors' involvement and role within regional, national, and European governance.
- Within the region, there is the need to improve the perception of involvement in the multi-level governance process, to encourage buy-in and active participation of local actors.
- Debates and the public consultation process should be conducted in a more bottom-up approach.
- The decision-making processes should be decentralised, by the creation of citizen participation instruments within public policies and strengthening the participation of representative associations of the sector.



## EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

### The Circular Economy Forum of Alentejo

Forums such as this, are promoted by the Regional Coordination and Development Commission of Alentejo, with this forum serving as a platform created to promote and disseminate the principles and practices of circular economy in the Alentejo region of Portugal. It aims to foster the transition towards a more sustainable and circular economy in the region by bringing together a broad range of stakeholders.

