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Interfaces

PRACTICE ABSTRACT

Social dimension in the (most) Southwestern Region of Europe



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The territory of SHERPA MAP Southwest Alentejo, Portugal, has for many years attracted many foreign citizens of various nationalities. The extension of land near the coast, the microclimate, and the existing irrigation system, have favoured the establishment of agricultural companies. These companies have found in this territory the ideal requirements to produce quality and high added value, making agriculture, particularly horticulture and small fruit production, one of the main economic activities of the municipality. Southwest Alentejo also attracts migrant labour considering the local workforce is not appropriate to meet the needs of the companies based in the municipality, due to the amount of labour required and the demanding nature of the work.

Since the 1980s, this territory has been welcoming foreign citizens. In this decade, it was mainly sought after by citizens from Northern Europe, who settled there. The good reception by the local population, the climate and the nature were the main factors for this community to settle, seeking a quality of life that they did not have in their countries of origin.

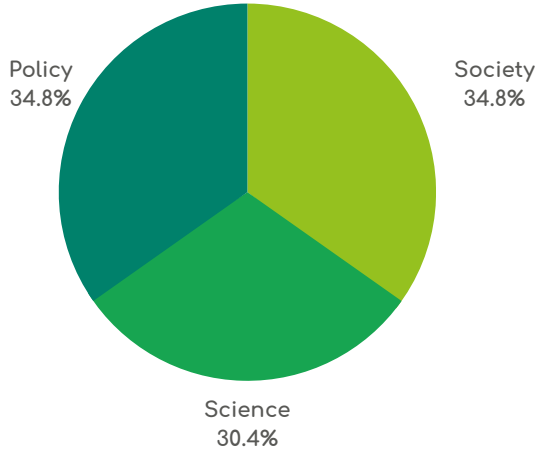
Unlike most rural areas in Portugal, which have seen a huge loss of population, in Odemira there has been a stabilization of the resident population, mainly due to the flow of migrant citizens who arrive in the territory, essentially through economic migration, as labour for the large agricultural companies dedicated, essentially, to the production of vegetables and red fruits, which distinguish the Odemira municipality as an exporting production pole to Europe. However, as this migration is concentrated in some areas of the territory, there is a high asymmetry within the municipality itself.

The agricultural compatibility of the companies implemented in the Mira Irrigation Perimeter and, simultaneously, in the Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Natural Park poses challenges at environmental, housing and social levels. This framework makes the Southwest Alentejo region an excellent territory to analyse issues related to the social dimension of rural areas and thus contribute to influence future European policies.

MAP Southwest Alentejo	
Location	Odemira, Portugal
MAP contacts	Facilitator: Pedro Santos Monitor: Pompeu Dias
More info	SHERPA Regional Multi-Actor Platform Southwest Alentejo - SHERPA (rural-interfaces.eu)



MAP membership:





ABOUT THE MAP

The MAP Southwest Alentejo operates in the Odemira municipality, which is the largest municipality in Portugal, and it is coordinated by Consulai. This territory is located on the coast, in the southwest of the Alentejo region, in southern Portugal. It is surrounded to the west by the Atlantic Ocean, to the south by the Algarve, and to the north and west by the municipalities of Sines, Santiago do Cacém (Alentejo Litoral) and Ourique (Baixo Alentejo). Administratively, the municipality belongs to the district of Beja and is integrated in the Alentejo region (NUTS II), in the sub-region of Alentejo Litoral (NUTS III). This MAP focused on the social issues associated with Alentejo's development, in particular social disadvantage and social exclusion.



OBJECTIVES

The MAP Southwest Alentejo has the following objectives:

- “Construct” a platform that is seen by the actors as meaningful and useful tool to discuss rural policies, in order to identify concrete policies with influence into the Southwest Alentejo region and solutions for their implementation and influence policy makers and society;
- Improve the well-being of the rural population;
- Identify best practices for promoting social inclusion of migrants.



MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

The MAP Southwest Alentejo succeeded in establishing a constructive discussion, enriched by different visions, about the current situation of the territory, its future and the priority measures that should be implemented. The regional importance of the topic addressed allows the MAP Southwest Alentejo to make an important contribution to the construction of possible policies related to the Social Dimension of rural territories.

Regarding the well-being of the rural population, it was possible to identify the need to intervene at the level of public responses to services to the population and the need to make the desired economic development with the preservation of the natural values of the territory.

Regarding the social inclusion of migrants, a theme on which the actors of the territory have a set of initiatives with strong impact, it mainly highlighted the importance of working in a concerted manner at the national and European levels, and of seeking an articulation with the migrants' countries of origin, to ensure an adequate response to their expectations and to the territory.

This MAP published a MAP Position Paper on the social dimension of rural areas, and a MAP Position Note and a MAP Fiche on governance in rural areas.



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