

EUROPEAN RURAL PARLIAMENT 2015

SYNTHESIS REPORT - PORTUGAL

DRAFT VERSION - 2015.07.13

INTRODUCTION

MINHA TERRA - Federação Portuguesa de Associações de Desenvolvimento Local [Portuguese Federation of Local Development Associations], a member of ELARD - European LEADER Association for Rural Development, one of the three European network organising the European Rural Parliament in 2015, assumed the animation of the process in Portugal.

MINHA TERRA Federation is a private non-profit organisation of public interest, founded in February 2000 on the initiative of a large group of Local Development Associations (LDA), which sought to institutionalize a network around common principles and objectives of promotion local development in rural areas.

During the last 15 years, MINHA TERRA Federation:

- streamlines broad cooperation platform between agents and local development organizations;
- empowers and represents local development organizations;
- promotes and participates in studies, publications and initiatives on local development in rural areas;
- advocates and defends the interests of the citizens and communities of rural areas;
- integrates various advisory and monitoring committees of public policies, particularly the Economic and Social Council in Portugal.

The 53 Local Development Associations (LDA), associated in MINHA TERRA Federation work in over 90% of the country (mainland and islands), mainly in rural areas inhabited by over 4 million citizens. European LEADER programs (and approach) played a key role in the structuring of this movement.

These LDA involve, among its members, more than 2,000 legal entities and individuals, with a representation based on diversity and nature of its membership, which takes in consideration the specificities of each territory, expressing the dynamism of local people and organizations as actors of their own development.

Considering a lack of tradition of rural social movements with participatory character (whose justification and analysis should not be addressed in this report), the MINHA TERRA Federation

chose to develop the process of consultation / participation to the European Rural Parliament, through the activities of the LDA in preparation of the Local Development Strategies, to operate under the CLLD instrument (Community-Led Local Development), whose preparatory works began last year and are now in the final stage.

This ERP2015 process, in Portugal, was a pioneering and innovative initiative which has become quite demanding, as a result of timing and coordination with local initiatives streamlined by LDA (in preparing the 2014 - 2020 programming cycle), the main source of information systematized in this report.

With over 3800 participants in over 170 events organized locally, it was possible to achieve the bottom up "cascade of ideas", proposed as the methodology for the European Rural Parliament and ensure the involvement of rural communities.

Assembling a summary document with the vision of rural communities / populations has become a major challenge, making the necessary aggregations and highlighting, wherever possible, specific regional / local issues and testimonies of participants.

However, we did not have the intention nor the possibility of getting the "final version" within the period required to contribute to the European process. but rather to make it open and accessible to all, so that it becomes a national rural visibility tool and that it can help to strengthen the voice of rural communities, contributing to better national and European policies, taking in consideration the interests and the welfare of these communities..

METHODOLOGY

how the ideas were collected and summarized?

what people were involved?

The national process of European Rural Parliament in Portugal, led by MINHA TERRA Federation, was mainly developed by its associated members the Local Development Associations (LDA), while leading entities of diverse local partnerships and with a strong territorial presence in rural areas.

This process consists in to capitalize, enhance and systematise the results of the work done and in progress - meetings and local workshops, territorial diagnosis, etc. - in the context of the design of Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) Strategies, for each of the local partnerships streamlined by LDA. These LDS will be the basis for the recognition of these local partnerships as Local Action Groups.

It was requested by MINHA TERRA Federation to each one of the 53 LDA (members), access to territorial diagnostics, macro-strategies and evidences of the consultation of community initiatives (participation record forms and photos).

Contributions from 24 Local Development Associations (territorial diagnosis and SWOT analysis), distributed by five NUTS II of Portugal's mainland(22) and the Azores (1) and Madeira (1), were analyzed.

In total, in the date of this report, **168 local meetings and workshops** adding together the participation of over **3800 people and/or organizations** were identified (XX people and YY representing institutions - these, x% from the social economy, x% from enterprises and x% from the public sector). Among the individual participants XX% are women. Taking into account the diversity of participation record form used, it is not possible to segregate the participants by age group.

Additionally, in order to broaden participation to other entities and persons, strengthening national vision on the reality of rural communities / territories in Portugal, it was built and published an online questionnaire¹.

Five national organizations / networks [Animar - Portuguese Association for Local Development, CNA - National Confederation of Farmers, Confagri - National Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives and Agricultural Credit in Portugal; FC & T - Citizenship and Territory Forum and Portugal's National Rural Network] were invited to respond and disseminate the questionnaire, resulting in **50 responses to the questionnaire**.

This report was produced by the information gathered in the territorial diagnosis of DLA and incorporated in their CLLD Strategies and based on the responses to the online questionnaire and following this structure:

- Concerns - information collected at the diagnostic level (weaknesses and threats) of the situation of rural areas and by question 3 of the questionnaire and then aggregated. According to the information collected, eleven large groups of concerns have been organized;
- Aspirations / Expectations - information collected at the level of challenges and strategic objectives of territorial strategies and through question 4 of the questionnaire and subsequently aggregated;
- Achievements of Rural Communities - from the 5 question of the questionnaire and knowledge of the activities of DLA;
- Policy and Action - information collected through questions 7 to10 of the questionnaire.

¹ <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1D6Cw1PACTudfz9wYwHG4iR1O0rZMUdP1UJGNqDdt7Po/viewform>

CONCERNS AND ASPIRATIONS

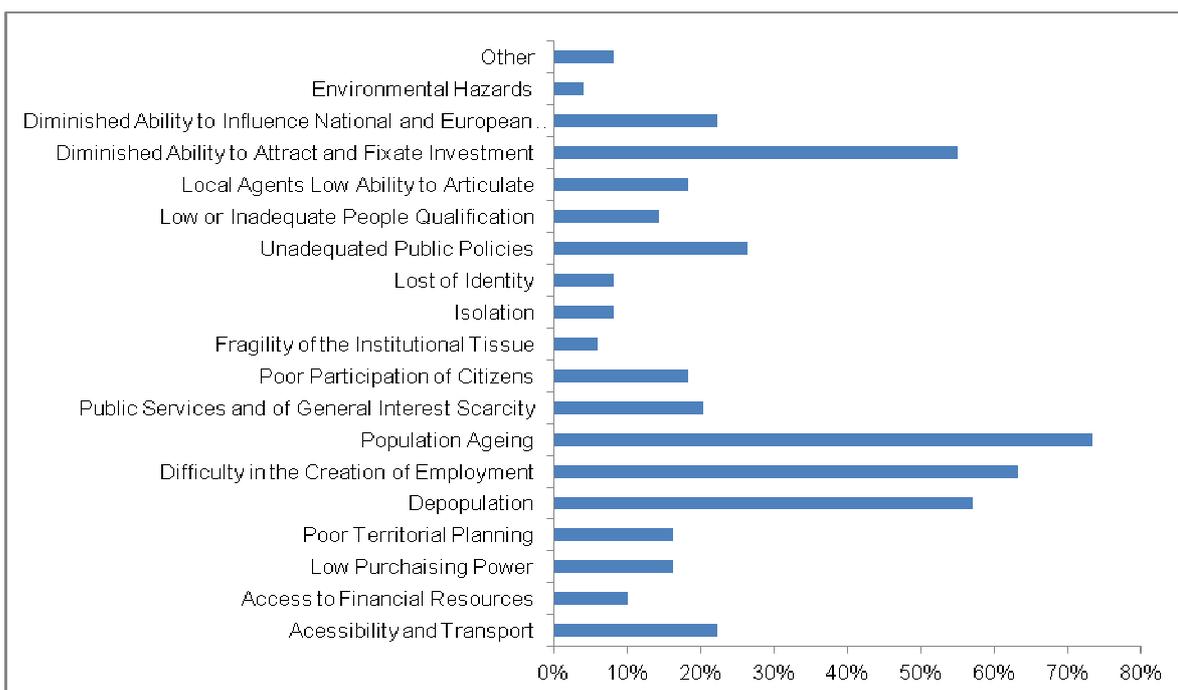
concerns expressed by rural people and their aspirations for the future of their communities

CONCERNS

According to the presented methodology, and taking into account the information collected, the concerns of rural areas were classified into 11 groups:

- 1 - Environment and Planning
- 2 - Cultural and Natural Heritage
- 3 - Tourism - sustainable economy
- 4 - Accessibility and transport
- 5 - Demographic dynamics
- 6 - Social issues
- 7 - Human Capital
- 8 - Agriculture and Primary Sector
- 9 - Business Dynamics, R & D and Local Entrepreneurship
- 10 - Cooperation, networking and animating the territory
- 11 - Governance, Policies and Citizenship.

Among the questionnaire responses, the four main "Concerns" identified were: Ageing Population; Difficulty on jobs creation; Depopulation; and Reduced attractiveness and investment setting.



The major concerns are corroborated when analyzing the territorial diagnostics conducted by the 24 Local Development Associations.

Overall, **demographic dynamics** and **social issues** bring together the main concerns in most of the country, particularly in the **aging population** and **depopulation** aspects with regard to the demographic dynamics and **unemployment**, difficulty in job creation, **poverty** and **social exclusion**, in what regards the social issue.

Among the 24 contributions of LDA, 19 refer explicitly to **population aging** as a major concern. Issues in terms of demographics as the **low birth rate**, **rural exodus** and consequently **loss of population** and **depopulation** are also dominant in most rural areas.

Unemployment, as well as the **difficulty on job creation** - referred in the questionnaire analysis, is also a major concern for rural areas (aspect identified in 16 of the 24 territorial diagnoses analyzed).

Associated with the problem of unemployment, also appear, highlighting the problems of **poverty and social exclusion**, particularly in young people, elderly people and families where both members of the couple lost their jobs. The **inadequacy of social responses**, particularly in the areas of mental health and addictions, exacerbated by the economic crisis, were issues also systematically identified in different rural areas.

Several territorial diagnostics in the Centro region (NUT II) realize, in particular, young women unemployment as a concern.

The other two major themes highlighted in terms of concerns were **Human Capital** and **Business Dynamics, R & D and Local Entrepreneurship**.

Human capital was seen as a major concern, at two major levels. The level of **vocational training**, with inadequate qualifications of people over demand (employment), and the level of basic school training, where prevailing high levels of **illiteracy** due to **early school leaving** and the fact that the most qualified young people leave the rural areas.

In the group of business dynamics has identified the **weakness of the local economic tissue**, based predominantly on **low added value activities** and **low incorporation of innovation and knowledge** (family farming and local produce are examples of activities where these problems are accentuated) aggravated by the difficulty in accessing bank financing, and lack of mechanisms for the launch of new business on an experimental basis (entrepreneur status) which contributes to the difficulty in attracting and retaining new investments.

At the regional level, in rural areas of the **Azores** (Atlantic Archipelago with an Autonomic Status), stand out specific concerns in terms of **double periphery, small size and fragmentation of the regional market, costs associated with the mobility of people and goods** and, recently, the major concern with the **dismantling of the milk quota system**, taking into consideration the high share of this sector in the regional economy.

In **Madeira** (also an Autonomic Region), beyond the difficulties of the **double periphery**, as to be considered the impact of the **financial crisis and the reduction of regional public investments** required under the Financial Adjustment Plan that the Madeira Region is obliged to follow. This large reduction in investment in rural areas **sharply decreased its competitiveness** in the increasingly global markets.

ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

The ideas of rural communities, which are most prominent in terms of aspirations and expectations and represent challenges and objectives in the strategies being developed by 2020, according to the contributions of 24 ADL, are:

- The Demographic Challenge - **attract and retain people**, especially young and active;
- The Social Challenge - foster population's access to **basic local services** and developing initiatives **promoting cohesion and social inclusion**;
- In the area of Entrepreneurship - **investment attraction**, particularly to add value to **local resources and / local products** (with differentiation, clustering / networking strategies) and **job creation**;
- At the level of Human Capital - **increase and consolidate local expertise**, promoting **knowledge and local innovation**.

Through the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire, it is seen that a large set of aspiration and expectations of rural communities contribute to the idea of "**well-being**" - "*improving the quality of life*", "*better life*", "*quiet life*" and "*hope for a decent future*" are examples of answers to the question "*What are the expectations of the rural people / communities?*"

On how to achieve the "well-being", the answers to the questionnaire also have clues that point mainly to solving the concerns previously identified: the need for **job creation**, particularly for **young people**; the **establishment of companies**, mainly through increased **value of local products and local resources**; and policies that promote the increase of the **rural population**, especially the **establishment of youth** and to **increase the birth rate**.

There is an agreement on the results obtained through local territorial diagnostics with the responses to the online questionnaire.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

what is changing in rural areas

the work of community organizations - some examples

Even with a complex picture in terms of problems and concerns, rural communities also identify positive changes that have happened in recent years. The main group of improvements includes the **facilities and infrastructure** (roads, water supply, sanitation, ICT). It is also identified the rise of small entrepreneurs investing in **business based on the products and resources of territories** (including tourism and differentiated agriculture), the increase in **social responses targeted at the elderly** and finally a **growing awareness and involvement of the population** in the processes of community development (rurality, environment, etc.).

"Increased capacity of resilience of local populations to overcome the difficulties inherent in these territories."

"Experiences of cooperation between rural territories potentiated new approaches and local interventions"

"Investment in increased academic and professional qualifications of the resident population"

There is a great diversity of experiences and developed initiatives in favor of rural areas and engaging rural communities. For its durability, persistence, extent and impacts, it is considered appropriate to highlight the work of **Local Development Associations** that in the last 25 years have implemented **Local Development Strategies** structured by place-based partnerships.

The intervention of the LDA has been largely structured by programmatic and methodological framework of LEADER (territory, partnership, participation, integration, autonomy, innovation and cooperation) and covers several areas:

- Promotion of local economies (investment support);
- Qualification, education and professional training;
- Promoting equality, active citizenship and territorial cohesion;
- Territorial cooperation and sharing of best practices;
- Promotion of proximity services and local associations;
- Enhancement of the rural heritage.

For example, three initiatives promoted by ADL who have contributed to finding new solutions for rural areas, are presented, particularly in terms of: i) creating new businesses and creation of self-employment; ii) small agriculture promotion, short supply chains and adding value to local products and; iii) promoting social and territorial cohesion, through the enhancement of tourism accessible to all.

CRER – Criação de Empresas em Espaço Rural [Creating enterprises in Rural Areas]

CRER [BELIEVE] is an integrated methodology to support the entrepreneur that ADRIMAG - Associação de Desenvolvimento Rural Integrado das Serras do Montemuro, Arada e Gralheira, implements since 2006, with three distinct areas: Information and Awareness for Entrepreneurship and the Creation of Companies; Maturation and Completion of Business Creation Projects (support the preparation and drafting of business plans); Test and Experimentation Business Ideas (support for testing a business idea, without the need of entrepreneur to set up a company).

Since 2006, were made business check-ups with 87 entrepreneurs. Over 30% of these entrepreneurs were followed in the preparation of the Business Plan of their projects, leading to the creation of nine companies employing on average 2 people. The methodology also contributes to a higher success rate of companies created, since it induces the entrepreneur to become aware of the importance of a business plan with realistic indicators.

The initiative received an honorable mention in the European Enterprise Awards 2010 in the category "Responsible and Inclusive Enterprise " and was honored by the European Commission as Good Practice inserted in the SBA database - Small Business Act - European initiative to improve the overall policy approach to entrepreneurship and promote the growth of SMEs.

<http://www.crer.pt/en/>

PROVE – Promover e Vender [Promote and Sell]

The PROVE is an initiative designed and developed with the support of the Equal program, between 2006 and 2009 by a partnership led by ADREPES - Associação para o Desenvolvimento Regional da Península de Setúbal, in order to contribute to the marketing of horticultural products, fostering close relationships through short distribution channels between small farmers and consumers, with the support of ICT.

In recent years, through a LEADER cooperation project. PROVE was disseminated by 16 ADL, creating 74 groups of farmers spread from north to south of Portugal, involving more than 130 farmers and 5,000 consumers by promoting the weekly sale of 35 tons of fruit and vegetables in 120 existing delivery locations. Turnover now reached the 2.6 million euros per year.

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-in-action/rdp_view/promoting-local-sales-fresh-produce-prove-promote-and-sell

<http://www.prove.com.pt/www/english.T9.php>

Rota sem Barreiras [Routes without Barriers]

Considering that tourism is a social good and should be available to all citizens, including persons with disabilities, and that the regions of Alentejo (Portugal) and Extremadura (Spain) for its culture, heritage and climate, have an important tourism potential, four Local Development Associations led to the implementation of a transnational project they called Routes Without Barriers. The Terras Dentro and ESDIME associations in Portugal, CEDECO Tentudía and ADERCO in Spain, took a step forward with regard to non-discrimination in access to tourism, pointing an added value to existing tourism, contributing in parallel to sustainable development and the wealth and progress of its territories.

Altogether there are 164 accessible tourist sites in the four territories (2 Portuguese and Spanish 2), which have not been forgotten access ramps, handrails, lowered balconies and tables, adapted toilet facilities and reserved parking spaces.

<http://rotassembarreiras.com/>

POLICIES AND ACTION

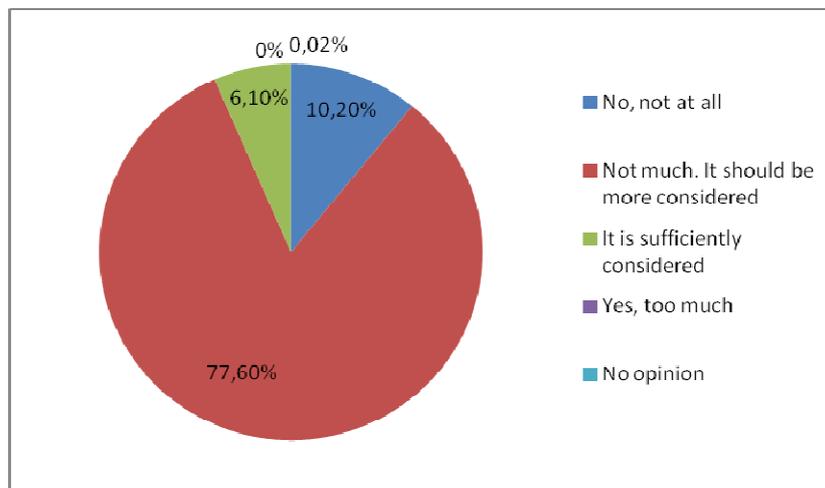
the voice of rural communities addressed to local, national and European authorities

A general idea is that most of the national public policy is inadequate in relation to the realities and needs of the population and rural,

When analyzing whether *"the rural communities concerns and expectations are considered in the definition of national policies"*, the general perception is that they are "not much" considered (77.6%) or are "not at all" considered (10.2%).

"It is important to involve rural communities in the definition of public policies, but not just engage / listen to them it is necessary to respond to their concerns / needs."

"The definition of local and rural development policies is too marked out, not allowing tailor policies and funds to the real needs of the territories."



When asked "how people and organizations of rural communities have contributed and / or can contribute to improving their quality of life", there is a large set of responses calling for the promotion of forums, participatory budgets, hearings and increased networking and partnership and recognizing positive developments promoted by civil society organizations and local authorities. The promotion of intergenerational dynamics, resource sharing and awareness through the dissemination of projects, experience and good practices were also mentioned, as well as strategies for job creation and wealth.

"We can improve our quality of life by joining ourselves and committing ourselves around common objectives; seeking and finding support and training. We can improve our quality of life by creating wealth, focusing on diversification of products to offer."

"Increasing the participation [of people and organizations] in local dynamics, contributing with their ideas and actions. Exercising civic and associative actions. Criticizing constructively. The organization of local forums, participatory budgets, auscultation of the population to support the common building of strategies and initiatives can be attractive actions and contribute to this purpose (essentially co-responsibility ...)"

"Outlining effective strategies for the attractiveness of foreign investment thereby creating jobs through improving the quality of life would be a reality."

"Rural communities will always be the repositories of regional identity and thus affirm their presence and importance in their brands and local traditions as well as the strength of its products and practices. These demonstrations have emerged with greater force in recent years almost counter-cyclical with globalization and can be claimed as examples of perseverance and continuity of local history. "

"In the context of public service closure and decrease the capacity of local authorities and the central state to invest and stimulate animation activities and social support, as a result of budget cuts, organizations of rural communities play a key role in community revitalization in social support through proximity and knowledge they have of local realities, as interlocutors with the local authorities. "

But for historical and societal reasons, this idea of co-responsibility for the future of rural communities is still weak and requires more work and investment ...

"Rural communities have little tendency toward cooperation and association for the fight for common causes (...) most people find it difficult to expose the community concerns, they prefer to expose their individual concerns (...). This" education "is also required."

"Rural populations are little involved in the process of making national and European decision, motivated by discrediting the political class and national policies. Still, they are quite active from local bodies. The change of mindset of both parties, the increase the proximity between the institutions and the people and the incentive for private companies to engage with national policies is essential. "

The question *"How to transport the concerns and expectations [of rural communities] to the national public agenda?"* identified a set of ideas centered on the involvement of the media, academia and notable people, strengthening networks of civil society organizations, the role of local authorities and development and a "white paper" with policy lines proposed (from working groups with involvement of local actors) to spread by policy makers at local and national level.

"Creating territorial working groups involving several local and national actors - public, private, academia, etc. producing a document with policy proposals to be delivered at the political level of local and national level. The working groups should be set up according to territorial specificities, in particular rural areas peri-urban and rural areas of low population density. "

"There are agents and institutions working in rural areas, such as local development associations that may have a role of coordination and liaison with national public agenda. Local authorities (municipalities and parish councils) should be asked to have an opinion on issues impacting on rural areas. "

"To transport these concerns and expectations for the national public agenda is essential to promote consultation and dialogue with local communities, and promote political lobby in a concerted manner by representative organizations at national level."

On *"the relevance of this debate was also taken at European level"*, the agreement was nearly unanimous. Some explanations point to the weight of the Union's decisions on national policy-making, particularly as regards the financing of public policies by EU funds, and also by the fact that different countries have similar problems and there are advantages in sharing solutions and / or find synergies around common actions.

"It is appropriate that this debate takes place at European level, either in the Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Committee or raised to debate in the European Parliament. At this level, again, citizens should be represented by local associations to be actors closer and knowledgeable of the issues. "

"Without doubt. Of course we are not alone and other regions with similar problems may serve as an example in terms of methodologies. To promote actions in cooperation in these areas, can be interesting. (...), Also at European level should be increased collective awareness of the importance of rural areas for the harmonious development and cohesion. "

Absolutely! Rural communities should see their best players invited to participate in this debate, almost as ambassadors of the "rural cause". These people should be considered by the relevance of their observations and possible solutions, and not for their role in rural society (eg .: President of this or that ...).

"Being a national concern, also has a common matrix with many European territories. So is at European level, that we can say these concerns influencing public policy and member states to strengthen the mechanisms to support these territories."

A few respondents considered that the problem should be resolved exclusively in the national context ...

We are talking about a national / regional level, that only depends on a coherent and consistent national project. Portugal or discover what is its potential and stated through its human and natural resources and with them organizes the development axes, organizes its scientific, productive, institutional structure, to create, process and market their own products, or else remain a subsidy-dependent country and intended to be a place of "sun and beach" with a vast area of forest, in the middle of which there will be dozens of cities that resist depopulation.

Regarding the need to give voice to rural communities at national and European level to condition the political action, many responses and contributions highlight the role of associations and civil society organizations. This is probably related with the fact that the questionnaire is being applied in the context of the European Rural Parliament, organized by networks of civil society organizations.