



The Centre Region

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Presentation

The Centre Region is the living area for 17% of the population, and is the territory that forms the articulation of Continental Portugal: due to the long routes crossing through it linking the north to the south and the coast to Spain (on the way to the heart of Europe), but also for to its productive complementarities with the two metropolitan areas (Lisbon and Oporto) and owing the human capital it generates and builds.

Marked by the diversity of its natural landscape – from the golden coastal sands to the rocky harshness of the mountains of the interior, from the fertile green of its valleys to the tranquillising calm of the borderline plains, from the sparkling waters of its reservoirs to the noise of its many streams and brooks – it is also in the multiplicity of its productive lands and of its basins of employment that this Region finds cohesion, identity and paths towards sustained development and improvement in the living conditions for all those who inhabit it.

The Centre Region is a territory organised by a set of urban systems anchored in middle-size cities, on a human scale, with a pleasant environment and nowadays provided with the basic social services indispensable to the quality of life that its population legitimately requests. Over the last decade the region has inverted a historical tendency towards de-populating, thus showing a reinforcing of its attractiveness.

The region is rich in built heritage, – archaeological sites, castles and forts, hundreds of years old urban nuclei and little villages that have fallen asleep in time, churches and monasteries, the ancient University of Coimbra – but also in natural and landscape heritage, the Centre Region stands out due to its men and women who were (and are) protagonists in the construction of Portugal and of its Identity. Names like Pedro Álvares Cabral – the discoverer of Brazil; Nuno Álvares Pereira – hero of Portuguese independence; Ribeiro Sanches – a man of erudition of a European stature; King Dom Dinis – the poet king, providing order in his territory, and his wife Isabel – charitable and a saint; and many men of letters – Aquilino Ribeiro, Virgílio Ferreira, Miguel Torga, Carlos Oliveira... are only a few examples.

Nowadays, it is still in its traditionally frank, courageous and active people that the region finds vitality for the initiative, innovation and welcoming to others that provide nurture for its future.

With this book, the CRCC intends to make a contribution towards revealing the wealth of diversity of a region that, from the Atlantic periphery, fully participates in the challenges and opportunities of the building of Europe.

Professor Jorge Gaspar, the author of many reflections that have helped to mobilise the Centre Region towards development, provides us, over the following pages, with a good portrait of this region which we are. It is indeed worth reading them.



João Vasco Ribeiro

(President of the Centre Region Coordination Committee)



THE CENTRE REGION, AS ITS NAME INDICATES, fills a central position in the context of the Portuguese space. This centrality is due not only to its location, between the North and the South, but also to its characteristics as a connecting and articulating area in physical, economic, social and cultural terms.

The emergence of the two main urban agglomerations in Portugal, the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and of Oporto, far from emptying and weakening the intermediate space, reinforces the linking role of a vast territory that had affirmed itself throughout the centuries from a peripheral situation, as the traditional designation of the area suggests: Province of the Beiras (Edges). The Beiras grew from the border to the



Coast, expanding towards the North and South to meet spaces that had either already taken on an identity (the region between the Douro and Minho rivers), or were acquiring one (Estremadura and the Alentejo).

The Centre Region is thus the heir of the Beiras, and, as a result of its genetic process, is characterized by a diversity made up of the joining together of territorial units of different sizes, which have been able to cement their unity throughout history.

This “intermediation” between the North and the South, between Lisbon and Oporto, has contributed not only to its building of an identity but also to its affirming of an articulating role, carried out above all by the major urban centres: Coimbra, on the Lisbon-Oporto axis, supported by a road infrastructure since Roman times, but also with access through river navigation to the Ocean and to the Interior, carrying on along the mythical Beira Road to the frontier; Viseu, occupying a central position in the

interior of the region, organizing a vast territory with good local accessibility and establishing connections to Oporto, to the Coast, to the frontier and to Coimbra; Aveiro, the ocean port that from very early on allowed access to the Beiras and to the North Atlantic fisheries and trade, which granted it great autonomy, the diversity of which enriched and provided greater cohesion to the transitional space between the North and South – the ocean roads granted Aveiro and its surrounding areas an economic and cultural opening that has always been at the basis of its continued keeping up with the times; Guarda and Castelo Branco, sentinels of the frontier with Castile, but also organizing poles for the whole territory going from the Douro to the Tagus, perform decisive roles in the reinforcing of the cohesion of the Beiras and of Portugal itself, articulating the North and the South, and at the same time carrying the Interior to the coast; further south, Leiria, the city and territory, heading into the Beiras and into Estremadura, with the modern transportation infrastructures (highways and railway), would end up becoming a part of the Centre Region, as it has an identical linking role, and may be considered to be the “north of the south” and the “south of the centre”. However, the traditional capital, not in the sense of hegemonic centrality but in the physical and cultural convergence of this wider area of *Central Portugal* is Coimbra, which for centuries has been the point for an intercepting of the major access routes and which was the home of the University of Portugal from the Middle Ages until 1911, which contributed not only towards the material infrastructuring of the country, but also towards a strengthening of the coherence of the Beiras and of their central role for the whole nation.



However, in the European context, the Centre Region is a peripheral region, both in the geographical and economic sense. If the tyranny of distance places the Centre Region far away from the major European centres, the lack of good accessibility accentuates this peripheral character: even with the arrival of the railway in the XIX century and with motorways in the XX century (which haven't been completed yet), the Centre Region is further away than is shown by distance alone.

On the other hand, in relation to the economy, despite the remarkable progress that has taken place over the last fifteen years, the Centre Region remains one of the poorest regions of the European Union, and its GNP per capita, in 1998, was only 65% of the EU average, although it showed a clear capacity for recovery: in 1988 the equivalent value was 46.3%.



The Urban and the Rural

IN RELATION TO A CERTAIN NUMBER OF IMPORTANT INDICATORS emphasising those which statistically define urban and rural population in the context of the European Union, the Centre Region (NUTS II) is a rural region. However, this statistical reality refers to a distinct and diversified cultural, economic and social reality.

The Centre Region has a strong rural and farming heritage that has in the meantime undergone deep transformations over the last twenty years, transformations that are not immediately obvious in a simple statistical-demographical-economic analysis. Indeed, the process of urbanization that has taken place in the Region is not exclusively that of a concentration in the

main urban centres, but has also taken place in the smaller-scale nuclei, which is the case of most of the county capitals, towns or cities, and even in some small hamlets which, although they do not have administrative functions, have been successful in attracting a certain number of industrial activities or services that have profoundly altered the way of life of their populations. On the other hand, in the coastal area, from Leiria to Aveiro and around the major inland urban centres (Viseu, Guarda, Covilhã and Castelo Branco), there has been the development of that which we have called *in situ* urbanization, which corresponds to the integration of rural populations, whether dispersed or living in villages and hamlets, into the urban way of life, resulting in alterations in the capacities of the younger population and in the supply of correlating employment close to their areas of residence. This

	Area (km ²)	Parishes (2001)	RESIDENT POPULATION			POPULATION GROWTH		POPULATION DENSITY Inhab/Km ² (2001)
			1981	1991	2001	1981-1991	1991-2001	
Centre Region	23668,2	1109	1763119	1721650	1779672	-2,4	3,4	75,2
Baixo Vouga	1807	114	336637	350424	385434	4,1	10,0	213,3
Baixo Mondego	2062,4	119	329957	328858	339666	-0,3	3,3	164,7
Pinhal Litoral	1740,8	65	215816	223025	248931	3,3	11,6	143,0
Pinhal Interior Norte	2617,5	114	152056	139413	138652	-8,3	-0,5	53,0
Dão-Lafões	3483,3	223	295094	282462	285680	-4,3	1,1	82,0
Pinhal Interior Sul	1906	43	60527	50801	44833	-16,1	-11,7	23,5
Serra da Estrela	871,6	67	56991	54042	49902	-5,2	-7,7	57,3
Beira Interior Norte	4068,8	239	130104	118513	114872	-8,9	-3,1	28,2
Beira Interior Sul	3738,1	58	86138	81015	78248	-5,9	-3,4	20,9
Cova da Beira	1372,6	67	99799	93097	93454	-6,7	0,4	68,1

process has given rise to a new landscape and new lifestyles within the multiple combinations of the urban and the rural.

One of the relevant aspects results in the viability of many small farms, integrated in a traditional family economy in which the work in the field is carried out by the older members or by the adults and young people in part time.

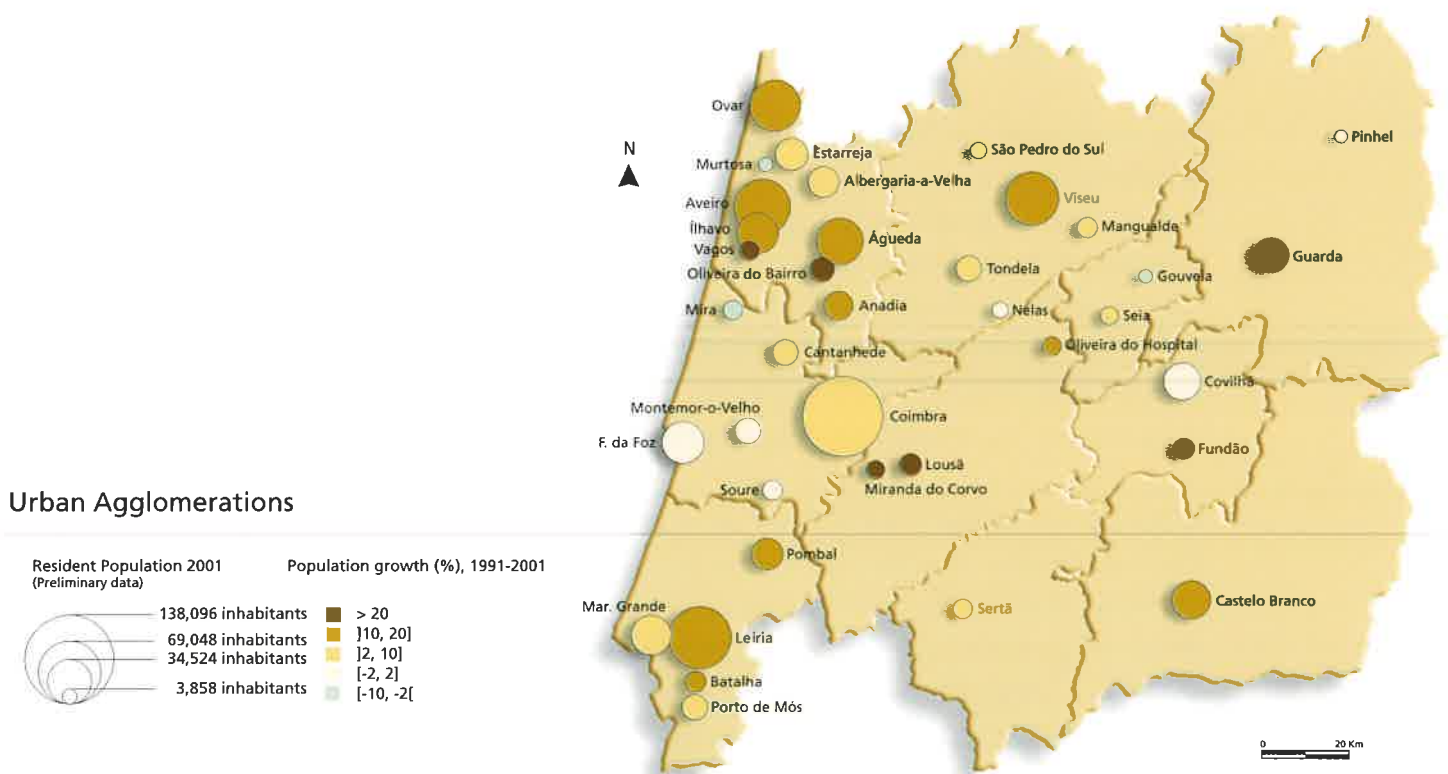
These different facets of the urbanization process have given way to new urban forms, resulting in the configuration of urban territorial systems, generally with polycentric characteristics and sometimes forming axes. Thus, Leiria-Marinha Grande, Coimbra, Aveiro-Águeda-Ovar, Viseu and Castelo Branco-Covilhã-Guarda cover urban spaces with populations that vary between 100,000 and 200,000 inhabitants. These new urban facts allow the drawing up of a vision for future development in the region, in the sense that they represent adequate thresholds for holding down structuring investments, both in infrastructures and in the business area. The interstitial space of these urban territorial systems is either organized

Middle-sized Cities and Intermediation

The density of the urban network, headed by a well-distributed set of middle-sized cities, forms one of the Centre Region's main trumps.

Geographical distribution, drawing out axes that are well supported by road and rail networks, grants an intermediating role to these cities, which are simultaneously stages en route between Lisbon and Oporto and between the Coastal areas and those bordering Spain. Many of the productive investments carried out over the last decades have been made in accordance with this spatial logic.

On the other hand, these middle-size cities also carry out intermediation between urban and rural life, forming nowadays, on the local and sub-regional level, instruments of economic valorisation and demographic and social revitalization of the rural areas with which they articulate, being the most dynamic agents of the new countryside-city partnership.



organically with the urban poles that define them or shows an evident lack of urban nuclei with an organizational capacity. Meanwhile, some secondary polarizations are emerging, which are well defined in the Oliveira do Hospital-Seia-Gouveia axis and less consolidated in the cases of Sertão, Arganil or Trancoso and Pinhel. It should be noted, however, that in general, all of the county towns, even in the areas with lower demographical density, offer a good basic infrastructure and a reasonable supply of social support structures, in sufficient quantity as to hold down private investment as long as the lack of human resources are overcome.

A Mosaic of Landscape in Transformation

THE CLIMATE, THE GEOLOGY AND THE GEOMORPHOLOGY are contrasting enough to define a rich and diversified natural setting upon which Man's action over thousands of years has at times stressed the contrasts and at other times established an approximation.

The climate is generically Mediterranean, in transition to maritime Atlantic, with aspects of continental climate in the interior, increased by the influence of the mountain ranges.

The geology has two main units: the Ceno-Mesozoic Rim, which stretches along the coastal area, made up of sedimentary rocks, in which limestone marks out a strong presence on the landscape; and the Ancient Mass Meseta, mainly made up of slate and granite.

Tectonics marks out the major geomorphologic units, namely the peripheral depression (along the contact between the Sedimentary Rim and the Ancient Mass), the mountainous range stretching to the west, from Montemuro to the Estremadura Limestone Mass, the Central Range running northeast-southwest across a large part of the Iberian Peninsula and which culminates in the Serra da Estrela range in Portugal. A set of mountainous blocks also emerges in the north separating the Douro and Vouga basins (the Leomil and Lapa ranges).

In the interior of the Ancient Mass, along several different lines of fracture, a certain number of subsidence basins have been formed since the Mesozoic Period, filled in by sedimentary rocks and which have allowed the development of agriculture and demographic densification: the basins of Lousã, of Arganil, of Idanha-a-Nova and of Cova da Beira...

The most recent tectonic movements acted upon the whole territory and have given rise to erosion. The coming together of these two processes

have produced very irregular forms, cut through by countless water lines running from the border plains to the coast and which led to great difficulties in the movement of people and goods.

The continuous interaction between these multiple forming agents produced a rich and diversified range of landscapes which has been structured, altered and restructured by the action of Man, but which has retained its main outlines resulting from the marriage of nature and civilization.

This multifaceted mosaic forms three main units: the plains and hills of the coastal sedimentary rim, the mountains and the inland high plains.



On the western strip, generically termed the Beira Litoral, despite the intensity of urbanization and industrialization, the sub-regional identities of the rural space remain, especially, from North to South, the Ria de Aveiro and the Ribeira do Vouga, Gafanha, Gândara, Bairrada, the Lower Mondego (Plain and Hillside), and the Pinhal Litoral (Coastal Pine Forest).

This is, over a short distance of a little more than a hundred kilometres, a wealth of varied landscapes, from the salt-pits to the green meadows surrounding the Ria, from the red sandstone hills of the Ribeira do Vouga, with its renovated industries centred around Águeda, to the small and carefully looked-after vineyards of Bairrada, which on their seaward end meet the pine forests and intensively farmed fields in the Gafanhas and Gândaras.

To the south, the now channelled River Mondego runs through its plain, over which hang rosaries of small towns on the slopes of its North and South banks, progressively touched by urbanization due to the impulse

given by Coimbra and, to a lesser extent, by the city of Figueira da Foz. The rice fields go from the Mondego alluvial plain to the leas of the southern tributaries, bordered by pine forests, in which industry and urbanization also emerge, thus making the transition to the extensive pine forests revealing the hand of King Dom Dinis.

From Montemuro to Sicó, the mountain bars the way to the coastal area, which penetrates through the corridors of the great rivers – the Vouga and the Mondego, the traditional axes of penetration and of articulation with the Interior, where the vineyards that were established in the lands of Lafões and in the Dão Basin form the most distinctive mark. But the rural and agrarian landscape of this upland interior that runs to the Vouga and to the Mondego



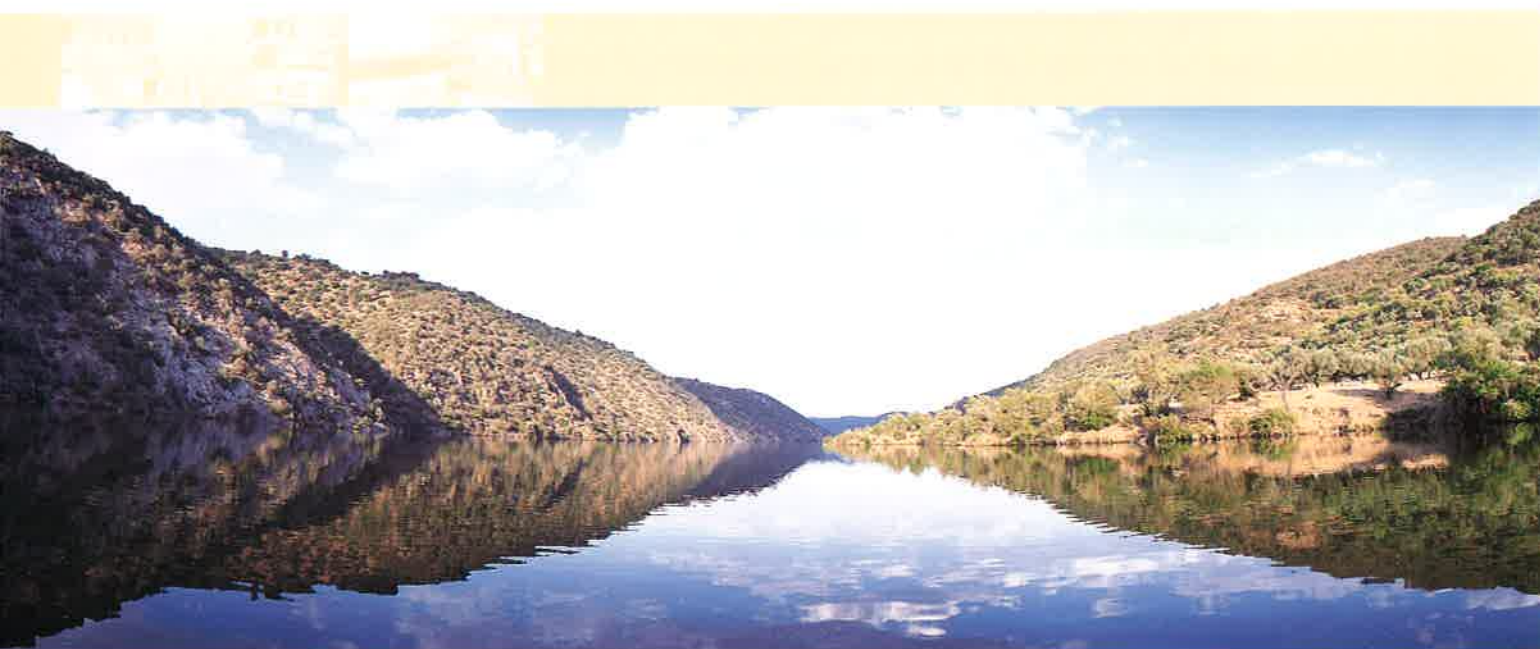
is more diversified in its diffusion of towns, villages and hamlets, in its mixing of the vine with the olive tree and with the most varied orchards of tasty fruits in which the local apple rules: the Bravo de Esmolfe.

Beyond the Mondego, now at the headlands of the Douro and Tagus basins, one can make out the rugged uplands of Ribacoa, the borderlands, marked out by the castles that for centuries were the sentinels of Portugal and today are landmarks on attractive tourist routes. They are also lands of the wine and of olive oil, but where the landscape is more marked out by large-size trees, in isolation or in small woods: the chestnut, the oak and the ash.

From the headlands of the Côa one easily moves to the headlands of the Zêzere, and for this reason hydraulic engineering has linked the two basins through the Sabugal and Capinha reservoirs, respectively on the River Côa and on the Ribeira da Meimoa. We are now in the mythical Cova da Beira, which, as the name (cova/hole) indicates, is a depression between mountain

ranges – Gardunha and Estrela – and is thus valorised by the richness of its soils and the amenity of its climate; lands of bread, of olive oil and wine, lands of shepherds and cheese-makers also, and also of industrious and innovative people who for millennia have known how to take advantage of the opportunities arising: in textiles, in fruit selling and in commerce.

Leaving the Gardunha range going southwards, the Castelo Branco plain, the grain-producing and livestock-rearing Meseta, making the transition to Spanish Estremadura and to the Alentejo, also being linked to the rough slate lands that move on the rugged terrain, in which the climax forest has given way to poor quality pastures for sheep and goats which, in turn, would end in a continuous covering of pine trees, today



devastated by fires that have been facilitated by the abandonment of its populations seeking in emigration the fortune that this poverty of bare soils could not provide: this is the Inland Pine Forest, searching for a new manner of affirming itself and finding an identity.

In the middle, between the South and the North, from the Serra da Lousã range to the Serra da Estrela range, carrying on over the border, the Mountain, the Central Range, the backbone, of the country and of the Iberian Peninsula. A unity that is shared with other unities of life and of landscape. But with a connecting link that brings together all the mountain landscapes and which is translated into the austerity of its peoples, of its places and of its economies. An austerity that drives away many of those of who are born there, but which at the same time attracts those who see it from afar, tourists and friends of Nature. The Central Range, with its shepherds and spaces of discoveries, is another major reference of the Centre Region.

From Mother Nature to Natural Heritage

THE LONGEST COMPLETELY PORTUGUESE RIVER (THE MONDEGO), the highest point in peninsular Portugal (the Serra da Estrela), the Ocean along many tens of kilometres of empty white sands, the rugged mountains landscapes, the sanctuaries of the old climax forest... The Centre Region is also a great nature reserve, with which not only the local populations but also all the Portuguese identify.

For this reason there is respect for these values and for many others that have been classified and are now a part of the common heritage of a Europe that is also gaining identity in this way. This reality is expressed in a set of protected landscape areas, particularly of note being the Serra da Estrela Natural Park, the International Tagus, the Serra da Malcata Natural Reserve, the Natural Reserves of the São Jacinto Dunes, of the Paul de Arzila and the Serra do Açor Area of Protected Landscape, as well as a significant part of the Natural Parks of the Serra de Aire, the Serra de Candeeiros and the International Douro.

All this heritage possesses not only symbolic, scientific and social value, but also, within the limits of the good ordering of the territory, a potential that may be mobilized as an economic resource in the context of tourist activities, in which all of these dimensions may come together and stand out. Indeed, nature tourism is becoming a valuable source of tourist revenue in the Region.



Protected Areas-Biotopes Corine



The Centre Region



The People, History and Culture

THE POPULATIONS OF THE AREAS that today form to the Centre Region have progressively cemented their identification with this territory that corresponds to a great extent to the old Province of the Beiras, which throughout time, and particularly over the last two centuries, has been divided up often according to somewhat strange criteria and with extravagant names: Upper Beira, Lower Beira, Coastal Beira, Interior Beira, Mountain Range Beira, Beira Transmontana, Maritime Beira, Western Beira, Meridian Beira, Central Beira and even the Minho Beira!...



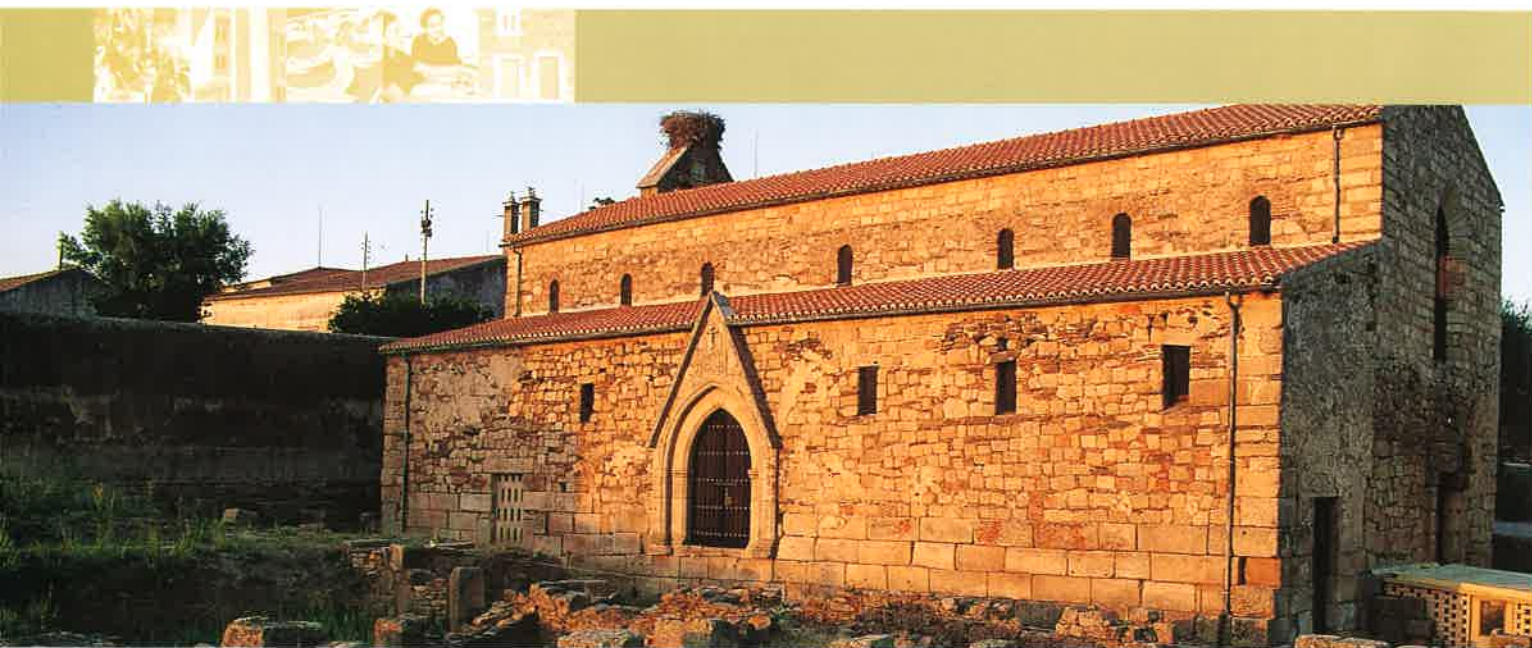
The Centre Region is the “heir” to a vast set of spaces lived in according to variable geometries at different times in history. From the historical *lands* to the secluded *farmhouses*, it is in successive identifications with the territory that there is the manifestation and strengthening of social cohesion. Throughout centuries the populations have built up and appropriated the territory, often finding energy for its continued valorisation and maintenance outside Portugal’s borders.

The Beirans are people in continuous movement, within the regional space itself, inside Portugal, and, at certain periods, above all in foreign countries, and have never ceased to enrich their native lands through economic innovation, the building of heritage and the search for a better upbringing for their children. The surroundings (on a regional, national and world level) have not always been the best suited to these aims, but marks of the people and of the territory remain in History as testimonies to their ambitions and efforts. The populations of the Centre Region have also known how to guard the

inheritances of different times and civilizations, and today their historico-cultural heritage is a precious resource. In this process, the University of Coimbra has carried out a relevant role, today shared and reinforced by other higher education institutes, universities and polytechnics, poles of attraction and valorisation of human resources.

Until the beginning of the XX century, Coimbra was the only university in Portugal, and contributed decisively to the educating of the Portuguese elite. Its role was also relevant as a school that educated the dominant professional classes in Brazil, both before and after the independence of that great South American nation.

The Centre Region is a space that is open, on both the sea and land side, to all civilisational contacts, and despite its peripheral location in relation to the major



centres of the civilizations of Antiquity it received important and decisive stimuli even before its occupation by the Romans, who, it might be said, undertook the work of laying the strongest and most lasting basis for the organization of the territory and which essentially remains today: the major transportation axes, the urban network and the cultural substratum.

The Roman inheritance is also marked in a large number of archaeological sites and monuments, with the most important being Conimbriga, a few kilometres south of Coimbra, located on the important Roman road that connected Olisipo (Lisbon) to Cale (Gaia), and which represented the main integrating infrastructure on the western face of the Iberian Peninsula. In the opinion of one of the most illustrious Portuguese historians, also a man from the Beiras, Jaime Cortesão, this “littoralising” of the Roman influence was determining for the future make-up of Portugal.

There are also abundant vestiges of human occupation before the Romans, who indeed faced great opposition from the peoples who occupied the inland

plateaus and mountains. Most notable among these were the Lusitanians, a chief of whose, Viriato, had support bases in this territory, centred – physically and symbolically – on the place where today stands the city of Viseu.

In the long period going from the fall of the Roman Empire (the fifth century) to the *formation of Portugal* (the twelfth century), the territory of the Centre Region, despite this decline, always maintained an effective human occupation and major centres of political, social, cultural and economic life. One should firstly highlight the organizing role of the church, which effectively succeeds the Romans – from the many parishes and small monasteries for hermit monks to the major organizations of religious orders and, above all, the Episcopal metropolises (Lamego, Viseu, Egitania and Coimbra).



If it was Egitania (Idanha-a-Velha) that had a fundamental role in the Visigoth period for the continuation of the occupation and organization of the territory, in the period of Muslim occupation, despite the fragmentation following on from the *wars* of the Christian Re-conquest, the role of Coimbra is of prime importance. Coimbra was a major centre of Mozarab culture, and allowed, in that troubled period, “illumination” of minds and of economic life in an area with a shifting frontier due to the struggle between Christians and Muslims. This fact will explain why Coimbra emerges as a possible “capital” in the early times of the Portuguese monarchy.

The material vestiges of the Late Middle Ages are few. In reality it is only with the consolidation of the Kingdom of Portugal, marked out by the conquest and defence of the line of the Tagus, that there begin to emerge the cities that will end up defining the urban network of the Centre Region: Coimbra, Viseu, Aveiro, Leiria and the *ex-novo* foundations of Guarda and Castelo Branco, where, alongside social and economic development, there is

the building of a valuable architectural heritage.

The population grows at the same time, and from very early on it provides an important contribution for the projection of Portugal, first in the re-conquest of the south of the country and in the growth of Lisbon, which was emerging as the *capital* of the Kingdom, and then in its very often decisive support in the maritime discoveries, in trade, in shipping and in the populating of the new overseas territories.

From the golden age of the maritime discoveries there remain names that are also a heritage of other parts of the world, when not of Humanity itself, such as Pedro Álvares Cabral (who commanded the fleet that led us to Brazil for the first time) and other less well known names who, from Aveiro, explored new sea routes, like João Afonso de Aveiro.



But the name of Portugal is also projected through scholars from the University of Coimbra who left for other destinations, where they made their names in their fields of knowledge, like André de Gouveia, Amato Lusitano, António Ribeiro Sanches and, more recently, the Medicine *Nobel Prize* winner Egas Moniz.

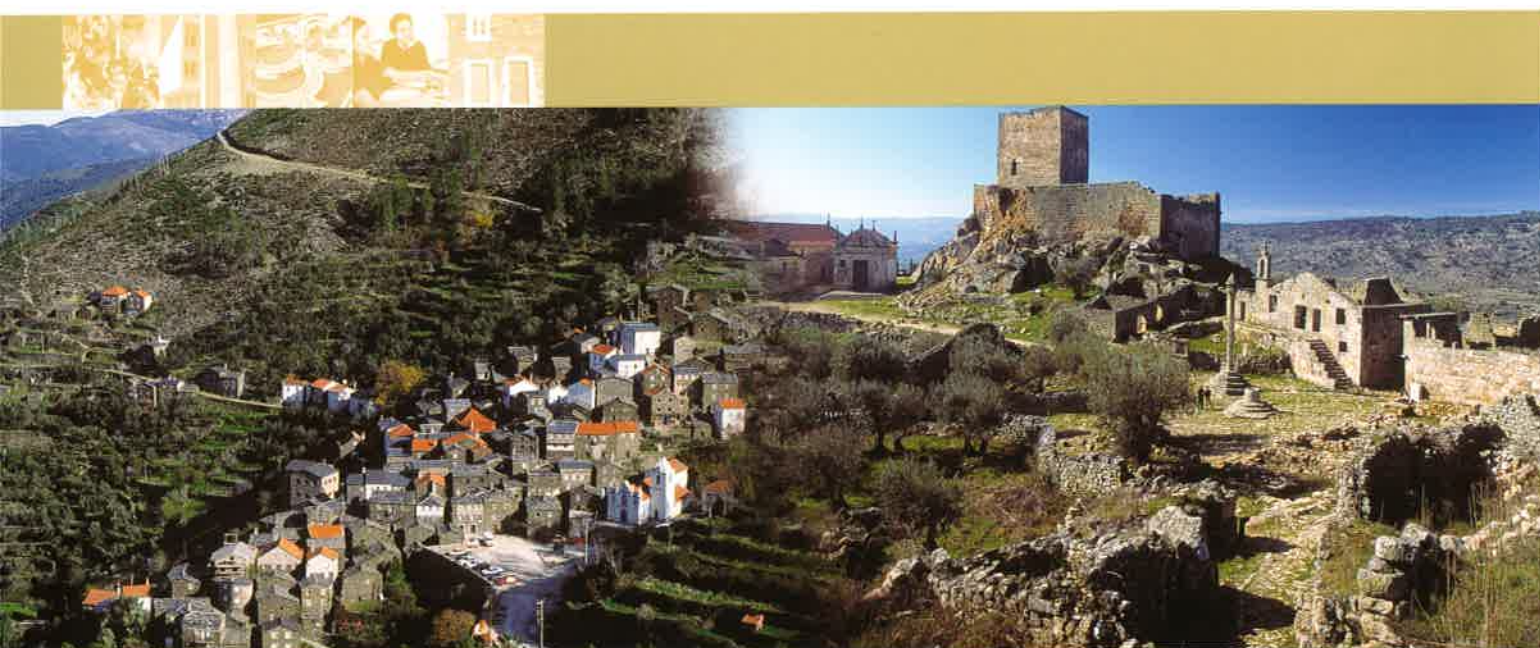
At the same time great scholars from Europe come to Coimbra and from here spread to other areas of Portugal, contributing to Portugal's accompanying of the scientific and philosophical advances of Europe.

This long and rich historical process gave rise to a valuable historico-architectural heritage of monumental proportions, which has in general survived until this day, forming the most identifying marks of the cultural landscape.

There are numerous examples in *military architecture*, organized according to lines of defence: of the coastline (Buarcos-Figueira da Foz); of the Mondego

(Montemor-o-Velho, Penela, Soure, Pombal, Coimbra); of the “pre-Treaty of Alcanices” Beira (Guarda, Celorico, Pinhel, Trancoso, Marialva, Belmonte, Monsanto, Segura, Penamacor, Castelo Branco); and of Riba-Côa (Sabugal, Almeida, Castelo Rodrigo, Castelo Bom and Alfaiates...).

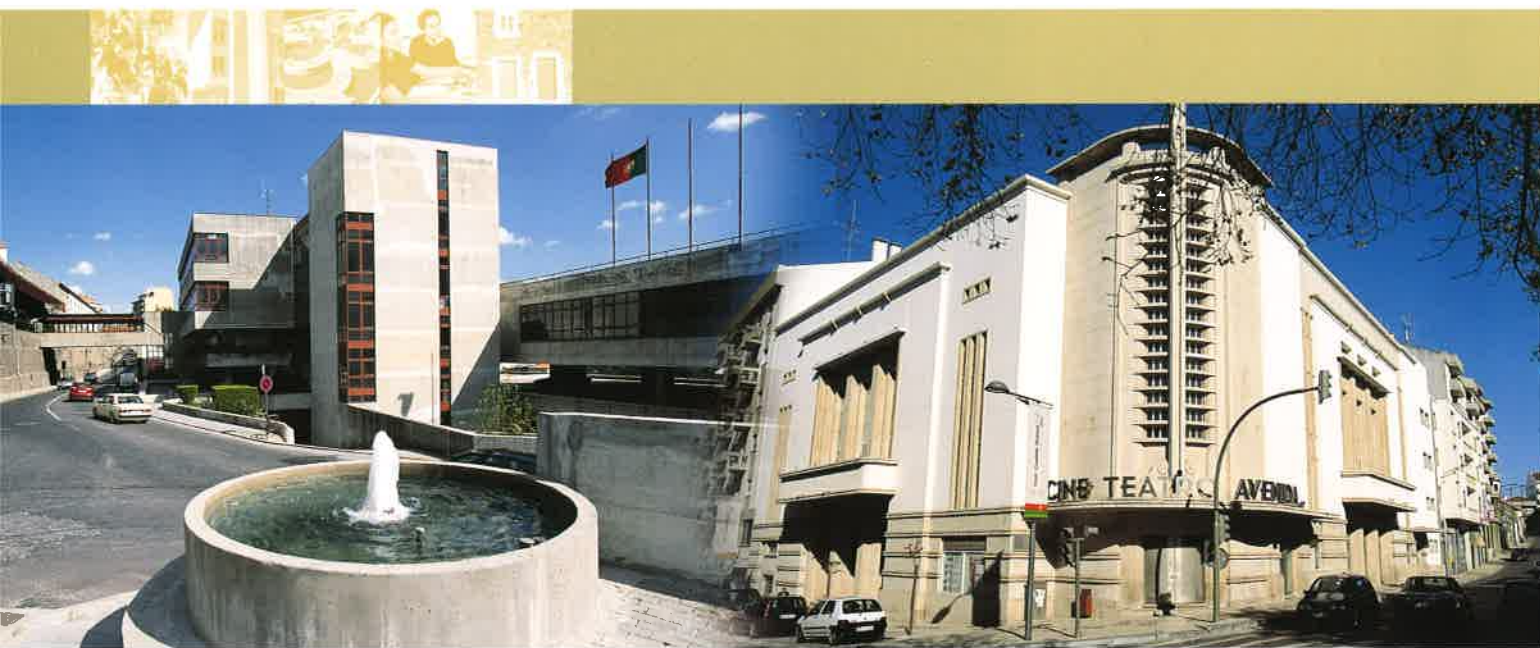
In *religious architecture*, remarkable examples are the cathedrals of Coimbra (Old Cathedral and New Cathedral), Viseu, Guarda, Castelo Branco and Leiria, the monasteries of Batalha (classified by UNESCO as Heritage of Humanity), of Santa Cruz and Santa Clara in Coimbra, of Jesus in Aveiro and of Lorvão. Related to religious architecture, one should stress the existence of a vast and remarkable heritage of statuary works and sculpture in general, which exalts the value of the architecture.



In *civil architecture*, besides the natural high point that is the Cloisters of the University of Coimbra, there are a considerable number of palaces and mansions in almost all of the cities and in many towns, some of which are public buildings today. These merely exemplifying references should also include a great many examples of late XIX century and early XX century architecture: such as the Korodi “inheritance” of Leiria and of other nuclei, *the arte nova and art deco* houses that have been preserved in cities like Aveiro, Ílhavo, Ovar, Águeda, Figueira da Foz and Coimbra, not forgetting the Buçaco Palace Hotel, one of the region’s splendours.

In addition to the many classified archaeological sites, there are also good examples of industrial archaeology, places and complexes that are part of the history of Portuguese urbanism, from the historical nuclei of the main cities to the (growing) network of *historical villages*.

A great deal of the works in this vast monumental heritage is permanently or regularly exhibited in the national museum network, where important works of modernization and cultural activities have taken place, as in the cases of the Machado Castro Museum (Coimbra), Grão Vasco Museum (Viseu) and the Tavares Proença Júnior Museum (Castelo Branco). Three particular mentions: for the valuable and internationally recognized heritage of the University of Coimbra Physics Museum, for the rigour and modernity that characterize the Conimbriga Archaeological Museum and the Ílhavo Maritime and Regional Museum. It is also worth mentioning the great number of museums, both thematic and general, that exist in the region due to initiatives carried out by Municipal Councils, by private companies and by associations and clubs.



The Identities of a Multifaceted Region

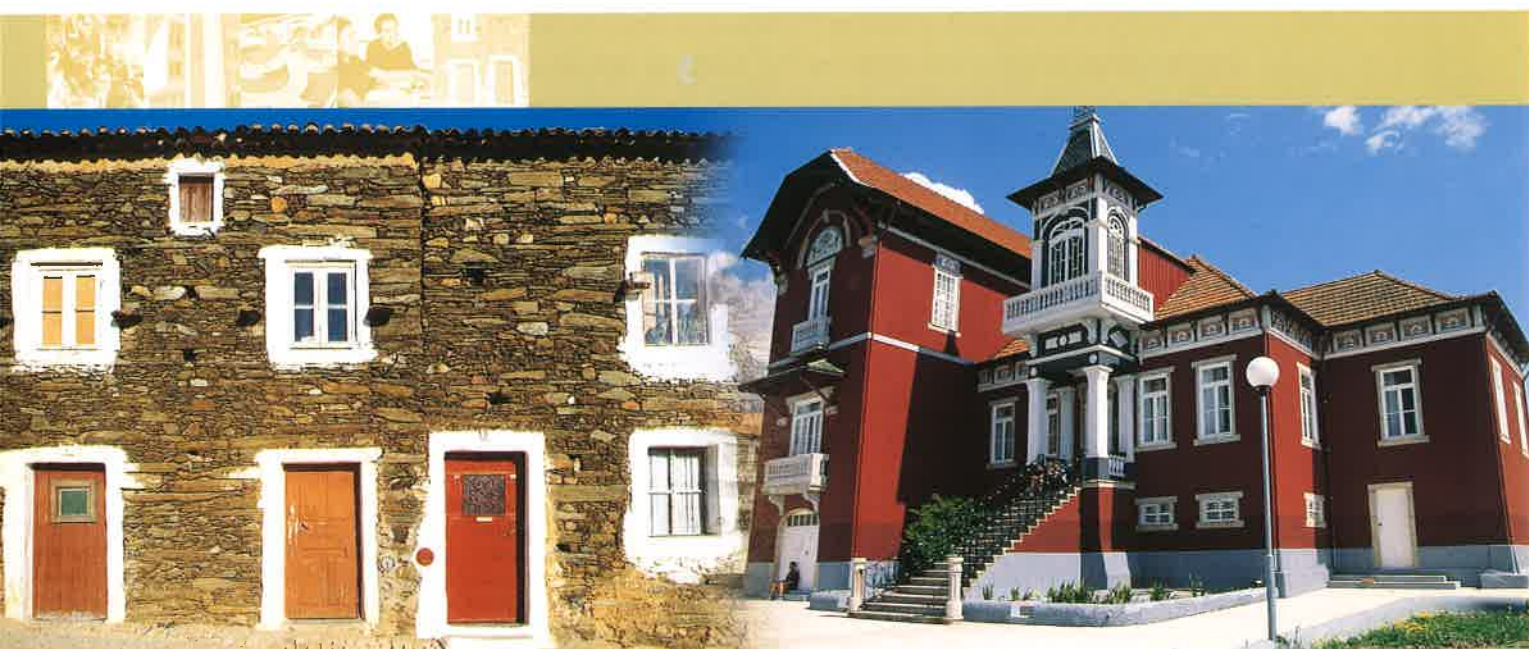
THE HERITAGE NOWADAYS SHARED BY THE POPULATIONS OF THE CENTRE REGION IS THUS VAST AND MULTIFACETED ONE, and is both national and local, in the sense that we identify it with the country as a whole and it is also claimed by many villages, towns and cities, in which those people were born, lived and worked, or where the Church, the Nobility and the local People raised up valuable works that are also references as to their identity.

But the identity of this region is still very strongly defined in its cultural variety – in its food and drink, in its closeness to the earth and to its local identity, always renewed in an effort to valorise the territory, in its multiple cultural manifestations, which are its strongest cement of social and cultural cohesion.

Although it does not have great visibility – because it doesn't have the focus of a major city – over the last fifteen years the Centre Region has undergone profound transformations, *diluted* throughout its dense network of hamlets, villages, towns and small and middle-sized cities. The process of urbanization has been accelerated and intense, resulting in the affirmation of citizenship and urbanity.

Such an evolution has corresponded to a strengthening not only of the Local and Central Government, but also to civilian society, the actions of which came together in the valorisation of endogenous resources and in the attracting of people, project and capital.

There are many cases of sub-regional or local territories in which that much-needed coming together of public and private forces took place, involving



politicians, businessmen and workers, in order to develop networks of cooperation and sharing (of problems and successes) that have led to the wealth of *social capital* that in some situations, such as in the industrial areas of Ovar, Aveiro, Águeda, Marinha Grande and Leiria, represents their most valuable inheritance.

These practices and the thus woven social fabric have already been studied and interpreted, and today are references for other territories in the region, where cooperation between the various agents is no longer a rhetorical device, which thus explains, on the one hand, the great number of cases of success, seen in the creation of wealth and the raising of social welfare, and on the other hand the capacity to overcome the crises and difficulties that have also marked out a path that, in the case of the Centre Region, has developed in an apparently linear manner.

Great industrial dynamism spread over many different territorial units is one of the demonstrations of the construction of renewed identities in the Centre Region.

The region's industrial areas have shown considerable dynamism in the context of Portuguese industry, although with some inequalities in relation to the business network, to productive specialization and to exporting dynamism. According to José Reis (1998), it is possible to identify four dominant industrial areas in the Centre Region: the Coastal Area – North (the main administrative counties in the district of Aveiro), the Coastal Area – South (the Figueira da Foz strip – Porto de Mós with an outer nucleus in Coimbra), the Centre – North (Arganil – Mangualde axis) and the Interior (Guarda – Castelo Branco axis).

The Coastal Area – North shows a strong industrial specialization in the metalworking field and has a great exporting activity, based in areas like Águeda and Oliveira de Azeméis (in the Northern Region), characterized by a high density of small and middle-sized companies with a local tradition and by the sharing of a common technical culture in an “atmosphere” of competition/cooperation between the business agents. Specialization in the field of ceramics (porcelain, faience, sandstone and pottery) is of prime importance in the counties of Aveiro and Ílhavo, marked out by a complex population density and by forms of diffuse urbanization and industrialization, where there is the development of strategies of agriculture-industry multi-activity.

The Coastal Area – South shows a less dense industrial specialization and a greater geographical discontinuity. However, the Leiria – Marinha Grande axis stands out on the industrial map of this area due to its specialization in the mould industry. The forms of inter-business relations resemble those of an “industrial district” in a context of the great importance of technological innovation.

The Centre – North industrial area has benefited from the increase in the levels of accessibility and from its position as a link between the coast and the interior of the Region. The recent expansion in the industry, although it still does not make up a local system of production due to the modest forms of division of local work, has strengthened the network of connections and interdependencies between the several social agents, showing the signs of the affirming of an economic personality with a territorial base.

Finally, the Interior industrial area also shows a considerable industrial capacity on the regional scale, arising from specializations in the textile field in older areas of industrialization and of new dynamisms such as that of Castelo Branco. The affirmation of the Castelo Branco-Covilhã-Guarda urban-industrial axis, despite traditional rivalries, is gaining coherence and cohesion, both on the company level and on the work market. The identification of the economic agents with that growing reality is today a process approaching consolidation.

Valorisation of the Human Capital

THE YOUTH OF THE POPULATION, AS WELL AS THE INCREASING search for valorisation through the established education system, with special mention for the universities and polytechnic institutes, which are well distributed throughout the area, is a source of hope for the region.

At the beginning of the XXI century, 75,876 students (38% of the population between the ages of 18 and 25) attend higher education establishments. This number represents the main available resource, and provides great hope in the future.



In this context one should also mention the diversification and balance in the distribution of the students throughout a vast array of scientific, technological and artistic fields, which will allow a reply to the demands inherent to an integrated and sustained process of development.

Of that total, the great majority of students (89%) attend state establishments (universities and polytechnics). The areas of education with greater expression in terms of numbers are: *Engineering and Related Fields* (16% of the total), *Business and Administration* (15.8%), *Teacher Training and Educational Sciences* (15%), *Health* (8.8%), *Architecture and Construction* (7.1%), *Social Sciences* (6.2%), *Letters* (4.8%) and *Law* (4.6%). There is also a significant representation for the *Arts*, the *Exact Sciences*, *Agriculture and Forestry*.

The decrease in demand, which is beginning to be felt as a result in the demographic decline in the student-age population, is tending to be compensated by the increase in post-graduate courses, as well as the supply of

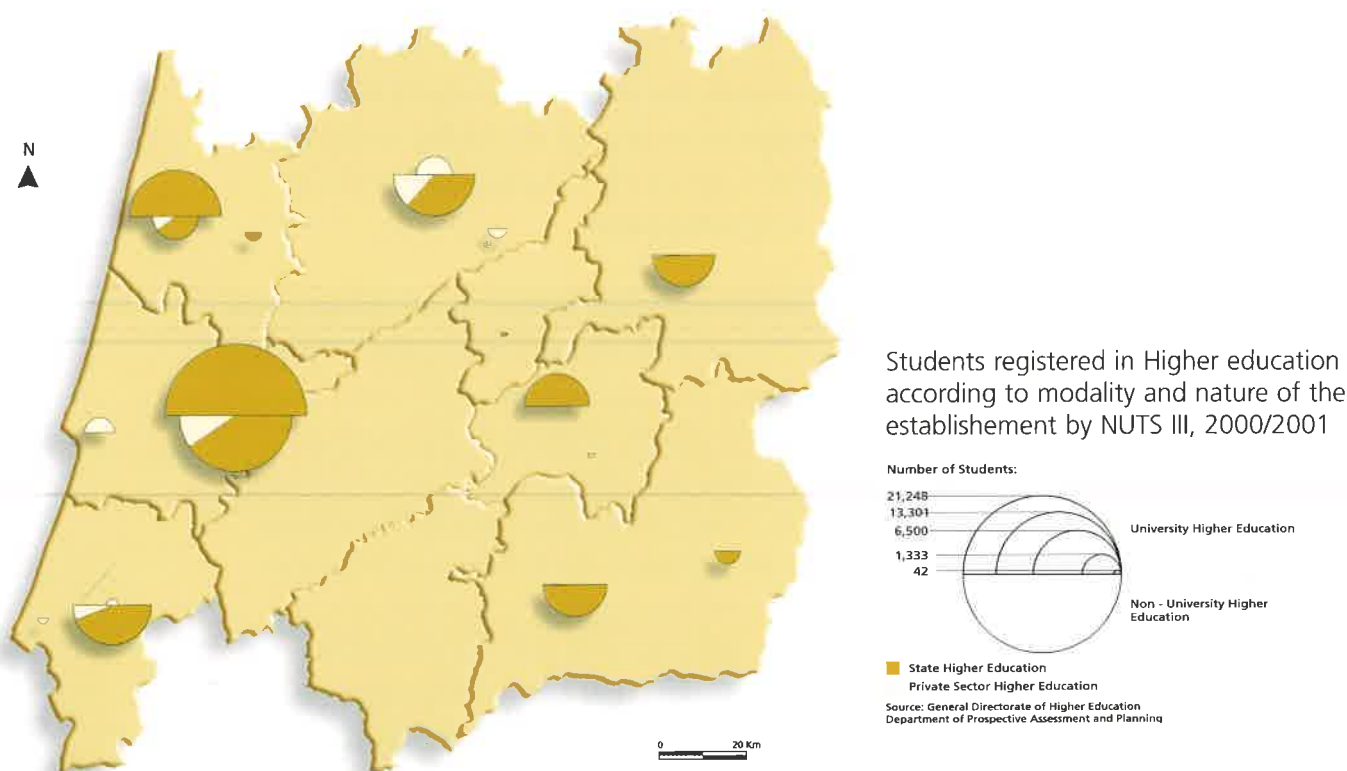
new forms of teaching responding to the needs of the new times in which a life-long learning process is desirable.

The great diversification in the higher education supply may act as an adequate response to the needs of the regional economic base, precisely characterized by its diversity and with prospects for affirmation not only in the sectors with strong roots in the Region, but also in the newly-emerging fields.

However, there are areas of learning and application that, due to tradition, due to accumulated knowledge and practice, as well as due to the overall tendency for evolution in society, deserve to be highlighted, both as observed realities and as possible future developments. In this context, the areas of life science and health take on special importance, and are present in the universities of Coimbra, of the Beira Interior and of Aveiro, as well as in several polytechnic institutes.

The several areas of engineering have also been growing in the number of degree students, post-graduate students and Ph. Ds, as well as in their opening up to innovating fields of intervention, among which one should highlight the environment and media and communication technologies.

These progresses naturally correspond to a growth in scientific research, both pure and applied, expressed in the creation of new research centres and in the valorisation of the existing ones. The increase in the number of research projects, whether exclusively or in partnership with foreign and Portuguese research units, is the best indicator of the advances that have taken place.



The Pedro Nunes Institute

The Pedro Nunes Institute (IPN) – Association for Innovation and Development in Science and Technology is an excellent example of an institution with a convergence of many partners having the common aim of promoting research and development.

The IPN was founded in 1991 through an initiative undertaken by the University of Coimbra and was formed as a private non profit-making entity based in Coimbra. Its around forty members include, besides the University and Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, several state laboratories, business associations, companies (local, regional, national and international), the Caixa Geral de Depósitos Bank, the Luso-American Foundation, the National Association of Young Businessmen and the Coimbra City Council.

The IPN has prioritised the transference of technology from the research system to companies, both through its own technological resources and functioning as an “interface between laboratories and researchers who are its members connected to the scientific and technological system and the system of production”.

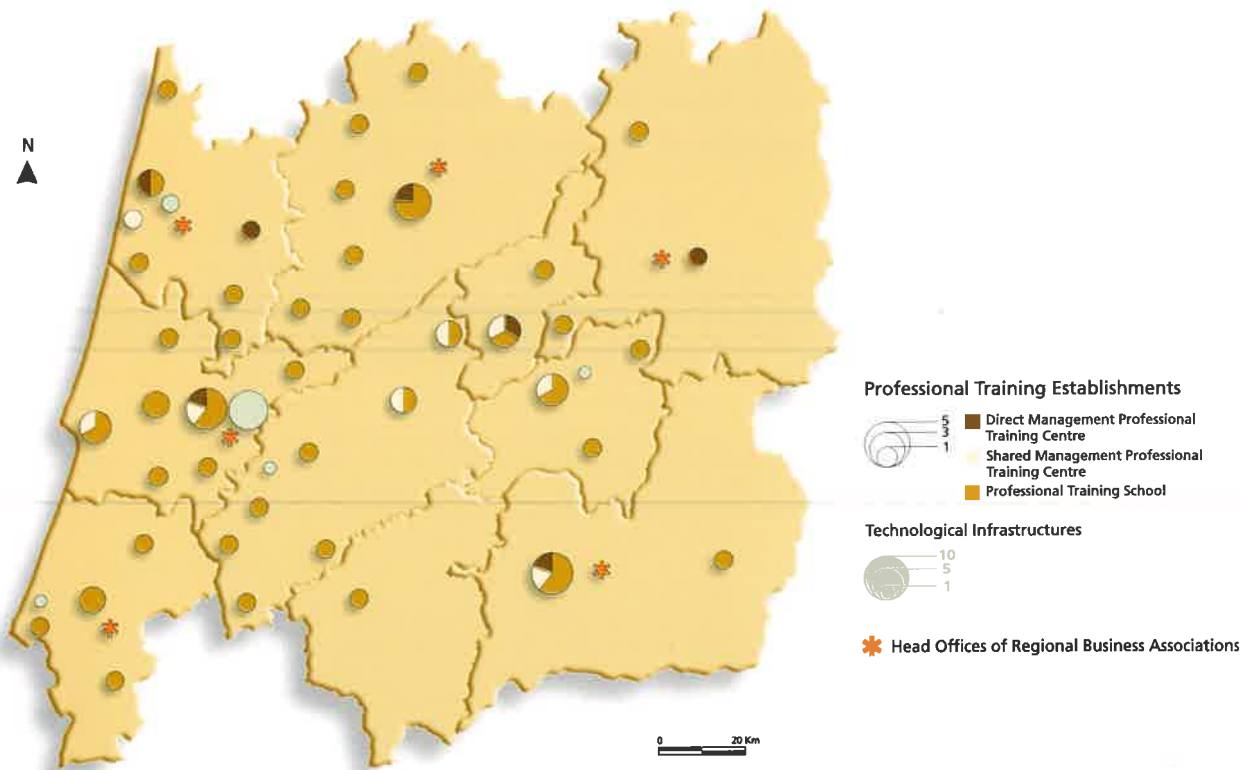
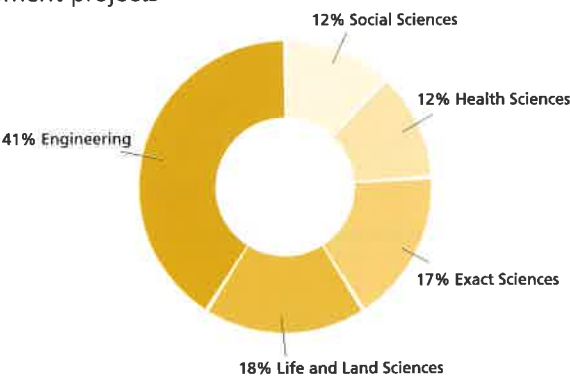
Besides a set of support services (Financial, Communication and Marketing, Quality, Intellectual and Industrial Property), the IPN has five laboratories, a Business Incubator and a Training Department. The laboratories carry out research and provide services in the following fields: characterisation and certification of granular materials, automatics and telecommunications, electro-analysis and corrosion, testing and wear of materials, computer science and systems.

The aim of the incubator is to create and strengthen companies, which is carried out through support for innovative technological ideas. About twenty firms from various fields are currently installed, from anthropology to biotechnology and computer science. Some of these firms already have international visibility and are cases of great success, representing the trademark of the Pedro Nunes Institute.

About five hundred research projects are being carried out in the Centre Region with financial support from the Ministry of Science and Technology. The universities of Coimbra and Aveiro are the centres for the great majority of these research projects, which is in keeping with their greater capacity for research, and which covers a very wide range of scientific fields. However, there are also a number of ongoing research projects at the University of the Beira Interior and in other higher education establishments in the Region.

By areas, the most represented fields are those of *Sciences and Engineering of Materials, Health Sciences and Electro-technical Engineering and Computer Sciences*, each with over forty projects. There are also a significant number of projects in *Social Sciences, Physics, Mathematics, Earth and Space Sciences, Chemistry, Biology and Agrarian and Forestry Sciences*.

Research and technological development projects by scientific area



AVEIRO

a city in the digital age

The Centre Region has several cities in the digital cities network, but it is in Aveiro that the initiative has had greatest success, which is doubtlessly due to the “tradition” it possesses, and which has been based on two poles: the University of Aveiro and Portugal Telecom Innovation, through its research and innovation centre, generally with the support of the City Council.

Among the many projects carried out by Aveiro-Digital, we have chosen the SICATE – Information and Communication Support System for the Business Network, promoted by the Aveiro District Industrial Association, with the support of the City Council, PT Innovation and the University of Aveiro. It should be mentioned that the conception of the SICATE was due to NETUAL, a typical case of an innovating company, and a product of the University-PT Innovation interface.

SICATE’s aim is to “provide companies with information and communication technologies that will allow them to adopt a business strategy based on a global perspective”.

Of its five fields, the following are of special note: Aveiro Invest, which possesses information relative to the district and its nineteen counties; information referring to the location of companies and investment incentives; Aveiro Expo, where companies are presented, according to the CAE classification; and Business Opportunities, which provides news of contacts requested or possible forthcoming business deals.



The Rebirth of Cultural Activities

THE CULTURAL COMPONENT of the process of development has not been overlooked, and the lack of atmosphere that most major cities possess has been overcome through a multiplication of initiatives in the cultural fields.

In relation to the world of the arts, the creating of higher education institutes in this field has been decisive for the impulse that has taken place. But there are also a certain number of localised initiatives that began with the work of individuals and institutions and have acquired national or even international visibility. The Academic Association of Coimbra has functioned as a veritable

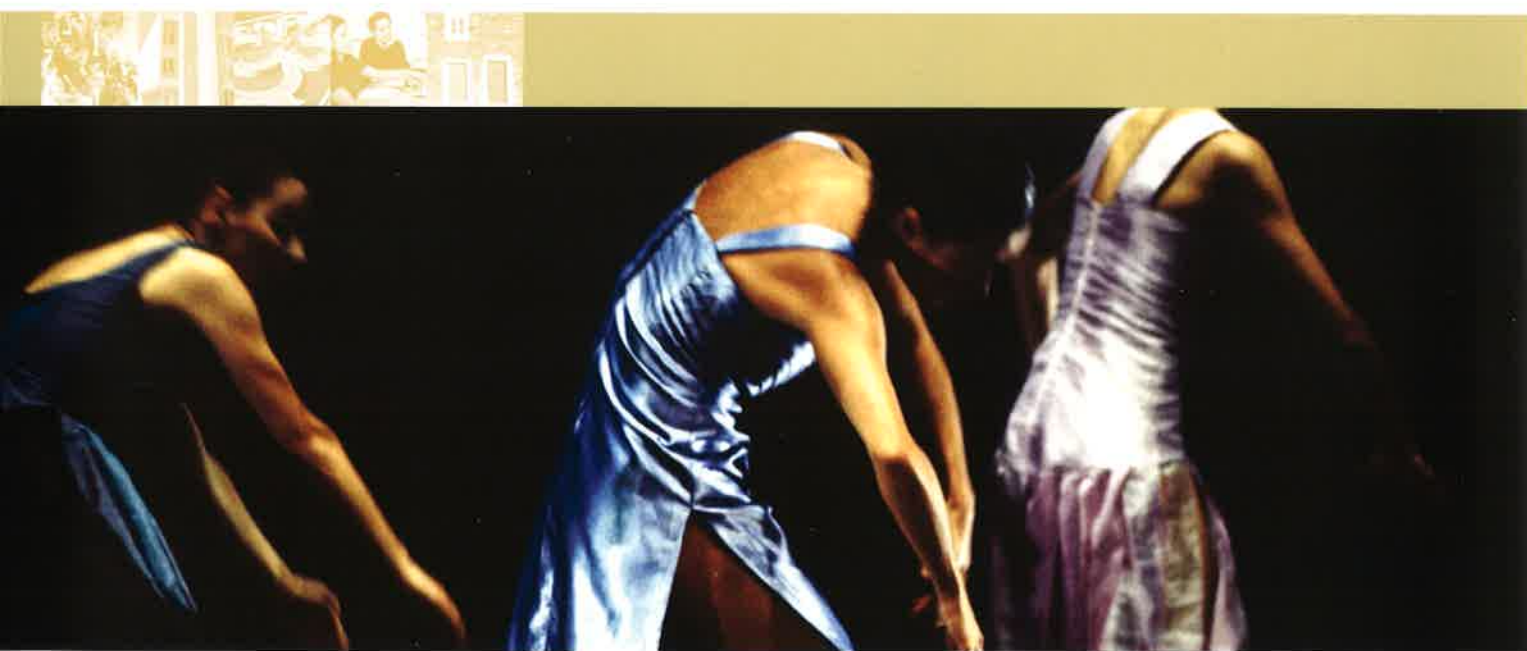


incubator for quality structures and projects, such as the Plastic Arts Circle, with many activities, from teaching to exhibition production. Also in the field of the plastic arts, a special mention should be given to the Coimbra Photography Encounters, which have not only brought to Coimbra the greatest names in world photography with exhibitions of their respective works, but have also allowed the building up of a precious heritage that, it is hoped, will come to acquire an institutional setting that is in keeping with its value.

Painting, sculpture and photography are also present in many other initiatives throughout the Region, both through public and private initiatives. Leiria, Figueira da Foz, Cantanhede, Aveiro, Águeda, Viseu, Coimbra, Guarda, Castelo Branco, Covilhã, Idanha-a-Nova and Marinha Grande are some examples of local councils that are active in their support for exhibitions. In some of them there is already a gallery activity that consolidates the market supported by local collectors.

Also a reference to two film festivals: that of Seia, centred on the theme of the environment, and that of Figueira da Foz, a classic among the film festivals held in Portugal.

In music one should highlight the existence of a symphonic group, the Beiras Philharmonic, from which a pedagogical action is expected, besides its being the basis for inter-regional and international exchanges, something which is lacking in the Centre Region, which has, or will soon have, several infrastructures for adequate reception in the main cities. One should stress the contribution that qualified teaching in the field of music provides, not only for the formation of a qualified audience but for the forming of musical groups. The following are some important examples, of different statuses:



the Music Conservatories of Coimbra, Aveiro, Leiria, Viseu and Castelo Branco, the Papagueno Association in Coimbra and the Music and Dance Academy of Fundão. One should also mention the recent bold initiative undertaken by the Coimbra Chamber Orchestra.

A particular mention for the innovating initiative taken by the pianist Maria João Pires, the Belgais Centre, in which there is the promoting of performance and teaching, from infant classes to the highest international level.

There is thus a natural tendency for an increase in music festival initiatives, added to those that are already classics and are held in Coimbra, Aveiro, Leiria and Castelo Branco. It should also be noted that some of the most successful popular artists or musical groups in Portugal come from the Centre Region, such as, for example: Né Ladeiras, the Brigada Vitor Jara, the Belle Chase Hotel and Silence Four...

Dance, namely contemporary dance, is present in the Region through the Paulo Ribeiro Company, in Viseu, the Dance Company of Aveiro and the Northern Contemporary Ballet, in Estarreja, to which other initiatives may be added, such as that of the Music and Dance Academy of Fundão.

Also in relation to the performing arts, Theatre shows a regular distribution, both due to the activity of the professional and amateur companies and to the reasonable number of festivals. This fact is associated to the tradition of theatre and the divulging role carried out for a great many years by Coimbra and its University, with a reference being due here to the now deceased great master Professor Paulo Quintela and the TEUC and CITAC university theatres.



There are currently seven professional theatre festivals held in the Centre Region, in Montemor-o-Velho, Covilhã, Guarda, Montemuro, Tondela, Pombal and Estarreja. Around ten professional companies are based here, in Coimbra, Aveiro, Covilhã, Leiria, Estarreja, Tondela and Castro Daire (Campo Benfeito). A special word for the last of this group, perhaps the only high quality professional theatre company, which has already been shown on the most demanding stages, set up in one of the most isolated villages in the interior.

If this dispersion has advantages, namely those of “balancing out” the regional spaces, on the other hand it generates problems of affirmation and keeping faith on the part of the audience, both for the exterior and the interior of the region, and, above all, some difficulty in interaction between the several different companies. Initiatives such as that of the creation of the Regional Performing Arts Centre in Viseu may also contribute towards the integration, coordination and promotion of the region’s cultural spaces.

But it is in the universe of the visual arts that the urban scale can be most decisive. This is why many plastic artists who were born and studied in the Region end up having remarkable careers in the two major cities in Portugal and abroad.

At the same time, the appearance of public modern art collections, as well as the founding of commercial art galleries are signs that the situation is improving, which is not only due to the social and economic development of the region, but also to the increasing networking integration of the several urban centres.

Until now, many initiatives in the field of the valorisation of human and social capital have only been possible through the application of public capital (Town Halls, the State and the European Union). But the signs of change are growing



daily, and civil society has many ongoing initiatives in partnership with the state (both on the local and the national level). In this field one should highlight the linking role, as a facilitator and also as an impulse provider, which has been carried out by the higher education institutions, with a special mention, naturally, for the Universities of Coimbra, of Aveiro and of the Beira Interior.

In the three cases there are institutions that interface between the university and the business world, allowing not only a better suiting of the performance of the university to the needs of business, but also a generation of synergies in the fields of research and application.

This articulation is often mediated by business associations, which, on the sub-regional level, have played an interesting role in the sense of modernising the economic fabric. In other cases the collaboration is carried out directly with the companies, for which there are a significant number of university-business protocols, the results of which are already evident.



The Centre Region



THE CENTRE REGION HAS A STRONG AND DIVERSIFIED ECONOMIC BASE, representing, in 1999, 13.4% of the Portuguese GNP and 16.4% of national employment. Manufacturing industry, with 27% of the regional gross added value and 22% of employment, is the main economic activity. Using the same indicators, there follow, in order of relative importance, trade (13.4% and 14.4%, respectively), real estate and services to business (10.3% and 2.5%) and education (9.2% and 6.3%). As a whole, the tertiary sector represents about 60% of the regional gross added value.

As has happened over the rest of the country as a whole, agriculture has been in decline, both in its added value as, although at a slower rate, in its active population. Agriculture has functioned as a “cushion” in the process of the restructuring of the national and regional economy, maintaining very



great importance in employment when compared to other sectors of activity: in the Centre Region it represents about 18% of the employment, for only 5% of the gross added value.

Over the last decades the Centre Region has established itself as an area of innovation and development, particularly in the field of manufacturing. Thus, the growth of industrial activity in the region has been quantitative and qualitative.

If the introduction of new areas is obvious, with telecommunications, the new information technologies and, to some extent, components for the motor vehicle industry standing out in particular, it has been in sectors with a more or less long tradition in the region that there have been the greatest qualitative leaps in the area of innovation, both in the products and in the processes. In this aspect, special mention should be made of the ceramics and mould industries, fields in which, through the activities established in the region, Portugal has clear competitive capacity on the European and world level.

Although represented by one single company, *Labesfal*, in Campo de Besteiros (Tondela), the pharmaceutical industry here possesses a mark of quality in the region. *Labesfal* is also one of the companies with significant investments abroad.

Other traditional industries, such as textiles, plastics, wood and clothes, have also established themselves on the national and international level, as a corollary of the investments that have brought about remarkable innovations, both in technology and in terms of organization.

One should also not forget the effort for modernisation that has been carried out by other industries, which have only remained active on the market, often in a very strong position, due to this action. This is the case of wood



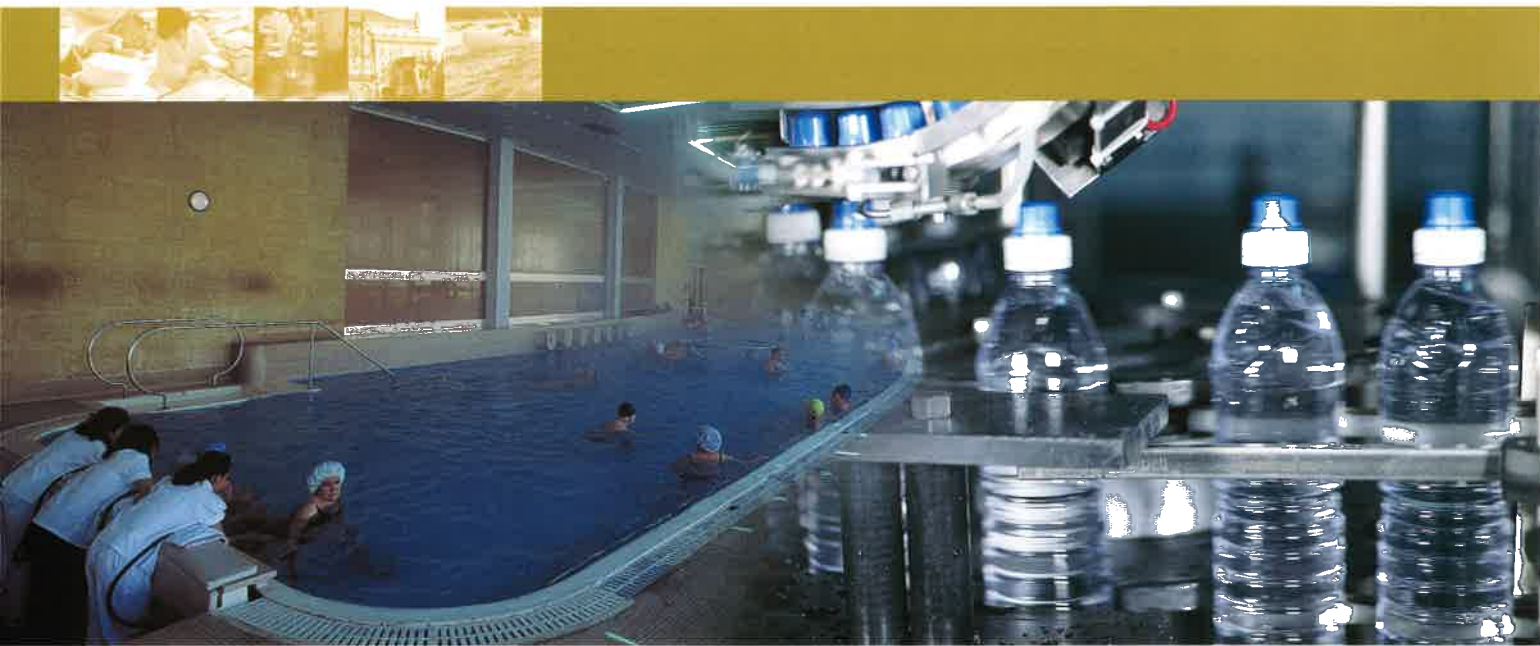
by-products, both agglomerates and pulp for paper, in which international capital continues to be relevant.

A similar situation, although more diversified and complex, is that of the food industries, which have a long and solid regional tradition and which, despite great difficulties throughout the economic restructuring process that has taken place over the last twenty-five years, still has a set of factories with major visibility on the regional economy in fields as diverse as milling and the production of cereal derivatives, dairy products, wine, fish and frozen foods, with and without pre-preparation.

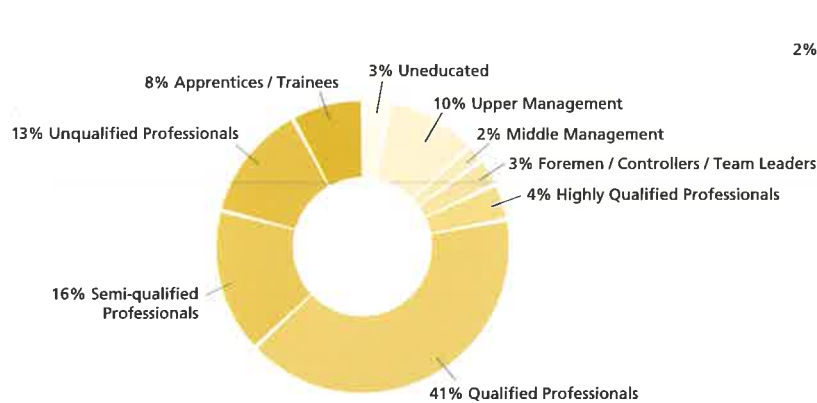
In the “prospective diagnostic” drawn up by the CRCC in 1999, the region’s economy is dynamically described according to four groups of activities: 1) those set up within global competitive dynamics; 2) traditional activities undergoing crisis or at risk; 3) “the promises” or emerging activities; 4) agriculture, forestry and arable farming and cattle breeding.

In the first group there are the traditional activities that have continually kept their competitive potential up to date, taking advantage of the opportunities provided by globalisation and “Europeanising” (ceramics, wood and paper, clothing), and the activities that appeared or have been consolidated with the process of restructuring carried out over the last quarter century (moulds, components for cars, electric material and metal products).

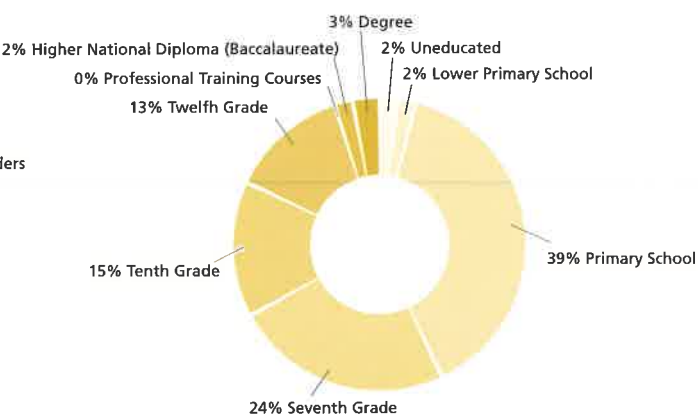
Among the traditional activities undergoing crisis, one may highlight wool and glass, with cyclical problems and with a great differentiation inside each sector. Thus, some units within the glass industry (packaging and decorative glass) are solid and have good prospects while others remain very sensitive to the slightest changes in the market. Among the activities “at risk”, besides the “wood line” and the “industrial chemicals” mentioned in the study quoted,



People working in the Centre Region according to professional training



People working in the Centre Region according to academic degree



one should also include metal products, clothing and food products.

The emerging industries are to be found in all of the sectors, although the greatest number comes from the service area, mirroring the sector's diversity:

- Teaching, research and development and health are fields that are well established and which have excellent conditions to set themselves up as exporting industries, to the rest of the country and abroad. On the other hand, these two major sets of service activities, with a great public component, have shown a great inductive capacity to other areas of services and also to the manufacturing industry. Articulation with the business market, anchored in the university cities, is growing;
- Tourism, in its multiplicity of market segments, is a field of the regional economy with excellent prospects, the qualitative and quantitative emergence of which is now evident, both on the coastal area and inland, both in supply and in demand;

Critical Software – an emblem of the Pedro Nunes Institute

Critical Software is a spin-off company founded inside the IPN's incubator unit in Coimbra in 1998. The target market is companies needing "critical information systems", demanding high precision and reliability, in fields such as defence, the aerospace industry, transportation, banking, insurance, public administration and the continuous labour industry.

Critical Software's reference product is Xception, software for "advanced testing and validation of critical systems with applications in various sectors", and with users such as the NASA Jet Propulsion Lab and Cisco. Other consecrated products include WMPI – Middleware, for high performance computing, and IMOGEO – Inventory and Third Generation Equipment Management.

Critical Software now has over fifty collaborators and a California office, and is a part of international networks of high quality R&D. Its partners include such important companies and research centres as Microsoft, British Aerospace, NASA, Oracle, Siemens, the CNRS and the universities of Coimbra, Chalmers, Técnica de Valência and Friedrich-Alexander.

- The location and the recent progress in the transportation and communication infrastructures, associated to the internationalisation of the productive base, grant the activities of logistics an interesting potential, which indeed is already being explored to the fullest extent by companies in the Region.

Among other companies that have emerged or have made an effort for modernization, a special reference for Patinter, a transportation company based in Mangualde, with a fleet of over a thousand heavy goods vehicles, which grants it an important position in the logistics of the Iberian Peninsula.

There are also good prospects in the Centre Region for mining and extracting activities, with a highlight for ornamental stone (granites) and for

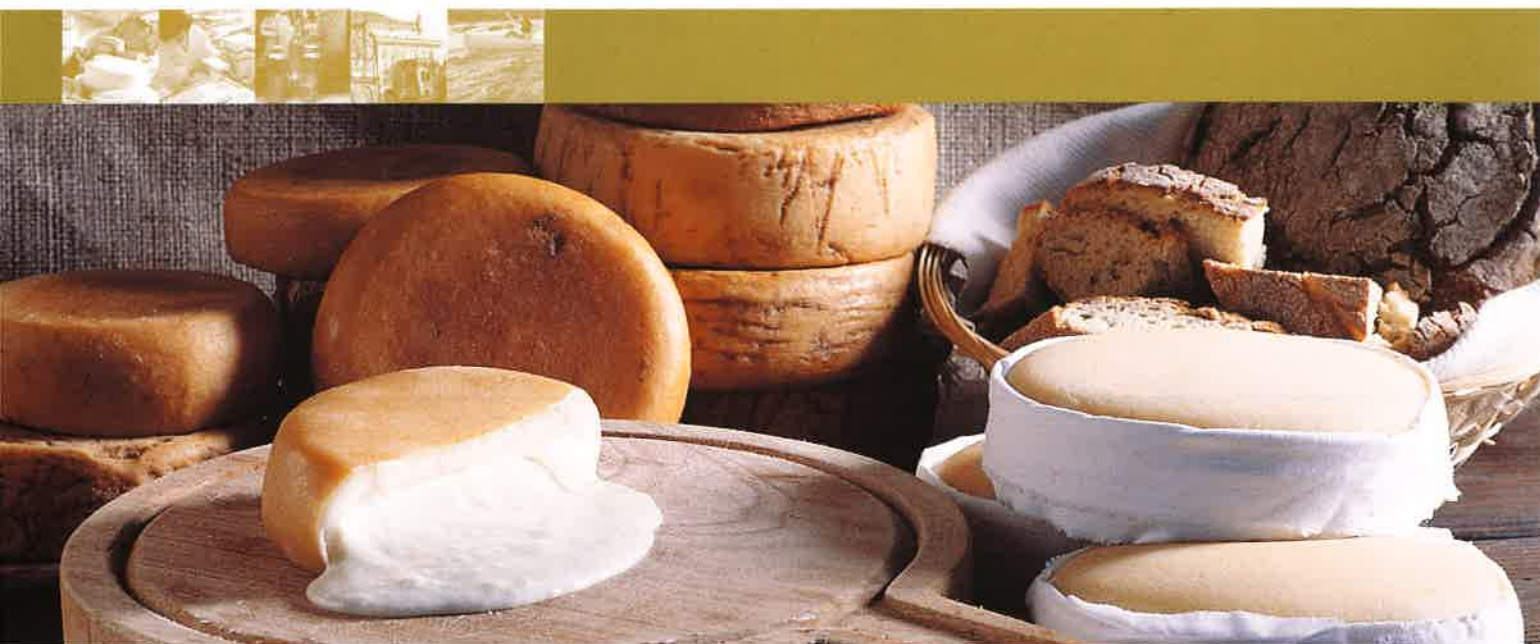


table waters, a field in expansion and which might generate synergies with thermal activities.

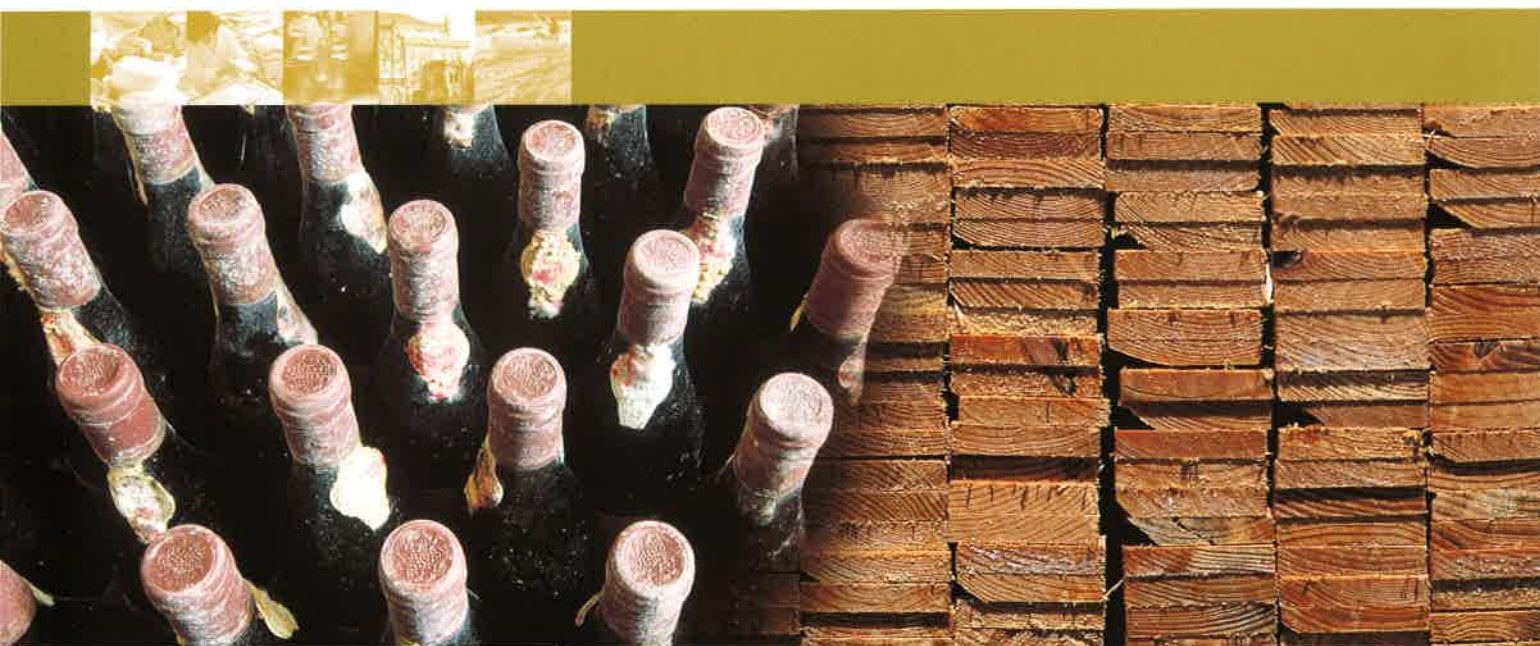
Water is, on all levels and on all latitudes, a strategic element for development. Due to its abundance and multivalency in the Centre Region, water is a key factor for regional development and a decisive contribution by the Centre towards the well being of the country.

The plurality of water reserves in the Centre Region can be seen in its important reservoirs, which are essential for the growth of the region's agriculture, industry and tourism, as well as for consumption by the population of the Region and the surrounding regions.

Bottled water has considerable importance in the regional economy, which exploits more than 50% of the mineral waters and about 75% of the spring waters bottled in Portugal.

Although in decline, in employment and in their relative importance in the region's gross added value, the activities of agriculture, arable farming and cattle breeding and forestry have a relevant expression on the national context. On the other hand, their economic and social dimension and the synergies that it might generate grant them a fundamental strategic value.

Despite needing a thorough re-conversion, the forest has great importance on the economy of the Region and of its families, providing the possibility for the competitiveness of correlating industries. Quality and quantity arable and cattle farming supports the dairy sector, both in the industrial aspect (cow's milk) and in small farm production (sheep's and goat's cheese). Wine, olive oil and fruit are highly valorised complements, the high standards of quality of which provide the best prospects for the future.



An important aspect of the economy of the Centre Region lies in its growing internationalisation, which has been taking on different forms and intensities, stretching practically to all of the sectors of the Region's economic life.

If, on the one hand, there has been an expressive process of internationalisation, through the penetration of foreign investment, namely in the manufacturing industries, on the other hand, there has been a growth in the investment by regional businessmen in other countries, both in the European Union and in other countries. Companies in fields such as ceramic, moulds, motor vehicle components and wood today have considerable investments abroad.

In keeping with this, commercial exchanges with the exterior have been increasing, proving the competitiveness of the regional economy, chiefly in the above-mentioned manufacturing industries.

For various reasons, but which converge around the idea that there are economic activities with good prospects in the regional development, we here highlight some groups – for their tradition and know-how connected to innovation, for their available resources, for their advanced technologies, for their integrating power and for their high level of competitiveness on international markets.



Ceramics

THE CENTRE REGION, WITH A LONG TRADITION in this field going back to prehistoric times and which underwent great progress during the Roman Empire, nowadays has a ceramic industry that is not only one of its main sources of wealth, but is also an industrial activity undergoing great technological development.

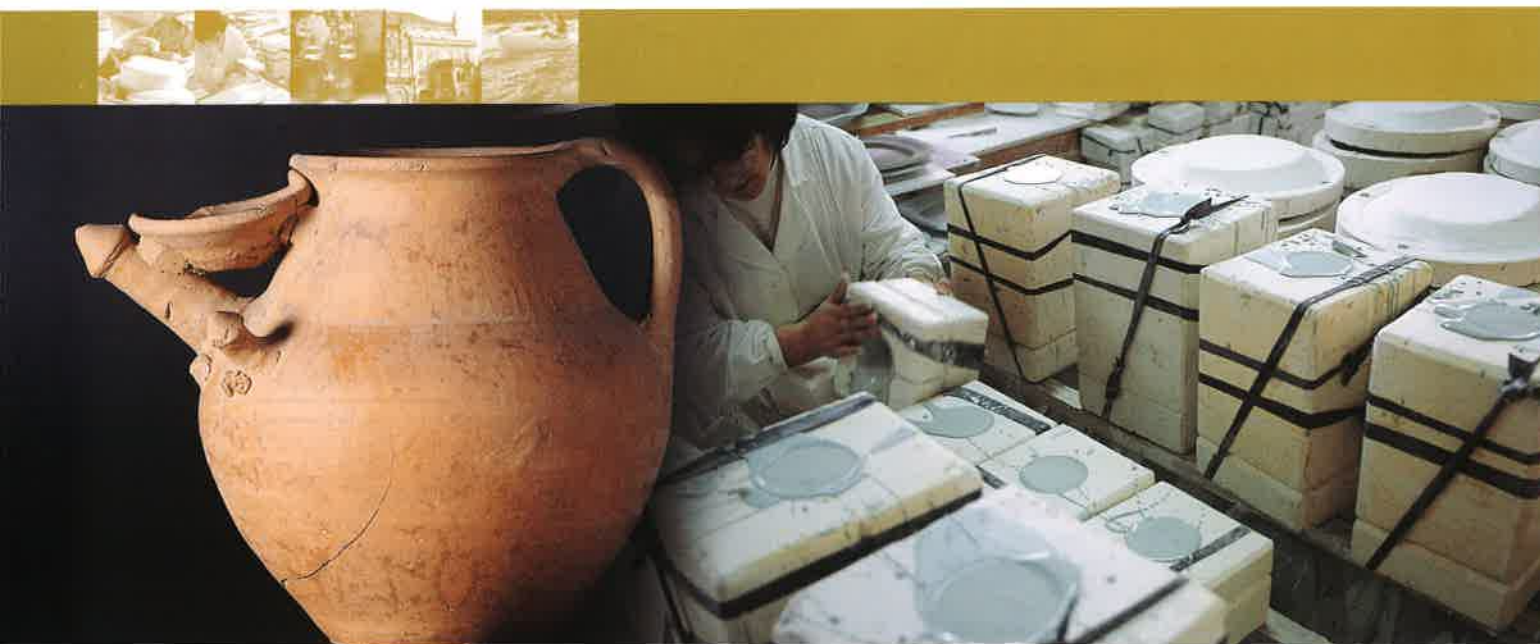
Any one of the major areas into which the ceramic area may be divided, crockery and decorative ceramics, structural ceramics, paving ceramics and sanitary ceramics, is considerably represented in the Centre Region, both in quantity and in quality. Technical ceramics, the cutting edge area in this field, is going through an experimental phase in the region.

The great boom affecting civil construction in Portugal over the last two decades is a powerful lever for the modernization of the companies

producing structural ceramics, which has meant the increase in production, variety and quality of their products. However, there is strong competition from Spanish companies, which, however, are not a threat to the companies that invested in technological modernisation and have improved their organizational performance.

Regional distribution of production is concentrated in the sedimentary rim, from Leiria to Aveiro, although there are also plants in the interior, some of considerable size and with good performance, in spaces corresponding to small sedimentary basins in which the raw material was at the origin of the establishing, the cases of Mortágua, Coja or Cova da Beira.

In crockery and decorative ceramics, the Centre Region has a leading position



in Portugal and has international visibility, due to its quality, variety and continuous updating of its supply. Despite strong international competition, namely from Asian producers, both porcelain and faience have remained competitive, thanks to the quality and international prestige they have achieved.

In the case of the porcelains there is a reasonable number of technologically advanced companies, bringing together tradition and modernity in their product, which allows them to maintain and stimulate demand. The *Vista Alegre Porcelain Factory*, founded in 1876, is an emblematic reference; also in the Aveiro area, the *Costa Verde Porcelains company*, in Vagos, founded in 1992, and the *Quinta Nova Porcelains*, in Ílhavo, founded in 1979, are examples of the continuity and updating of the industry, which in each of these cases has already captured an interesting share on the international market. Further south, in the county of Batalha, in an area stretching to the county of Alcobaça, a special mention for *Faiart – Faiences and Porcelains*, founded in 1991.

Faience, although its centre of gravity and main tradition are in the counties of Alcobaça and of Caldas da Rainha, is also represented in the Centre Region through several plants found along the coastal strip, from Batalha to Águeda and to Aveiro. The largest plants are in Aradas, close to Aveiro: *Faianças de Capôa* and *Faianças Primagera*.

The production of sandstone pottery underwent an interesting increase in the nineties, with strong export activity that, in several companies, was over 90% of the total product. Aveiro-Oliveira do Bairro-Águeda is the axis in which some of the main factories are located, such as, for example, *Barbotina* (Oliveira do Bairro), *Cerexport* (Aveiro) or *Gresval* (Águeda). There was also a “diffusion” to the interior, and one should highlight two factories that are almost exclusively export-orientated: *Cerinal* (Mortágua) and *Cerutil* (Sátão).



The production of crockery and decorative ceramics in terracotta also has a significant presence in the region, with the best plants managing to establish a good position on the external markets. Porto de Mós, Batalha and Águeda are the counties in which this activity is of greatest importance, with *Val do Sol Cerâmicas* (Juncal, Porto de Mós) being of special note due to its size.

Paving ceramics is not only one of the industries with a great exporting potential but also one of the most technologically advanced. In a highly competitive market, some companies have achieved excellent results on the most demanding external markets.

Novigrés, *Cinca* (with several factories), *Lanigrés*, *Grespor*, *Cerev*, *Apolo*, *Revigrés* and *Recer*, project strong images of Portuguese industry and the Centre Region, where the greatest concentration is in the counties of Anadia, Oliveira do Bairro, Ílhavo and Águeda.

Finally, one should mention sanitary porcelain, which has also witnessed a process of re-conversion/modernisation over recent years, resulting in an internationalisation of its capital, technological updating and the expanding of its markets. *Roca* (Leiria), *Sanitana* (Anadia), *Sanindusa* (Oliveira do Bairro and Cantanhede) and *Aquatis* (Santa Comba Dão), are the regional references in this field.

The high level of competition and internationalisation has not prevented an efficient collaboration between the industry chiefs, namely through the *Portuguese Ceramics Industry Association* (APICER) and the *Technological Ceramics and Glass Centre*, located in Coimbra and with continuous action throughout the Country. With 65 collaborators, 35 of whom have a degree or higher qualification, the CTCV is today a fundamental instrument for the continuous updating of the ceramics industry.

Technical Coatings – Cutting Edge Technology

During the development of two productions with a history in the region – that of ceramics and that of metal products – a highly specialised and technologically advanced field emerged: technical coatings for industrial equipment components.

The market is global and the fields for application can be found in several industries: cement, energy, mining, chemicals and petrochemicals, shipbuilding, foodstuffs, textiles, glass, paper and cellulose.

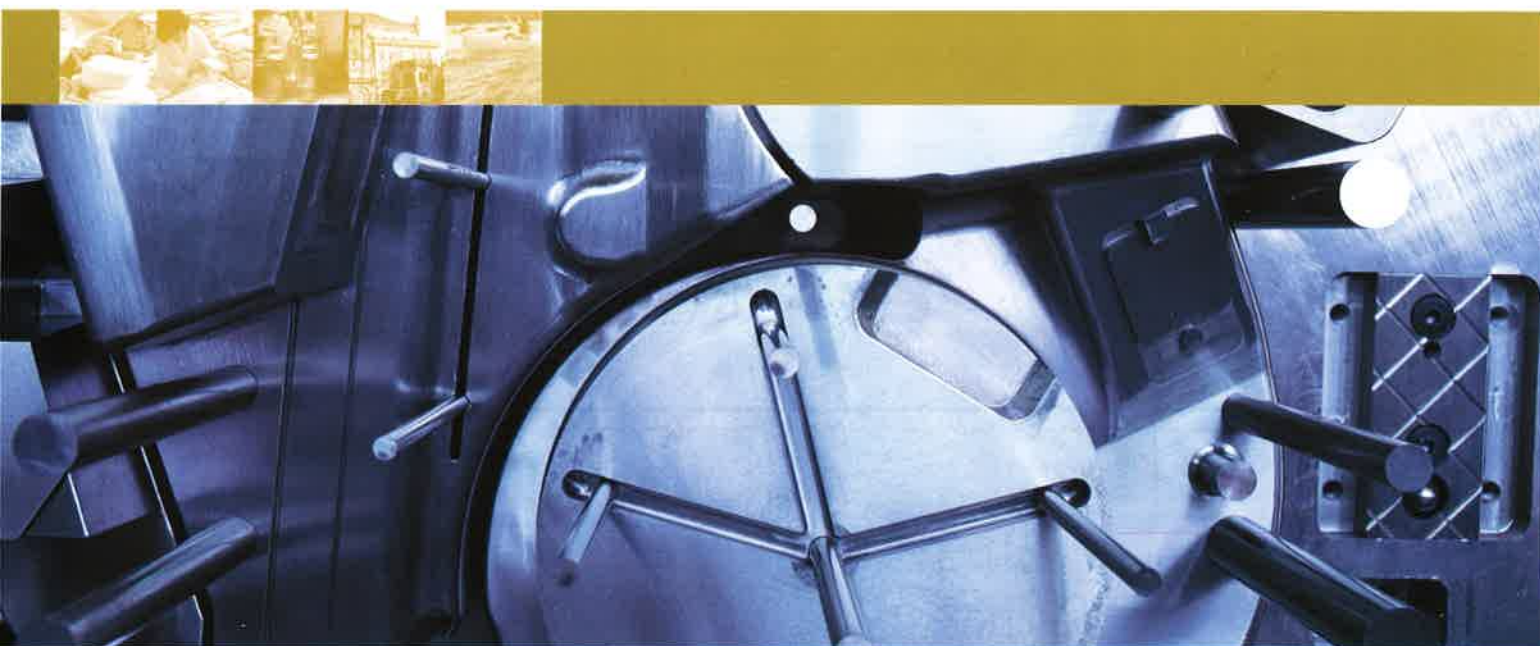
The company leading this process is TEandM – Tecnologia e Engenharia de Manutenção, SA, located in Taveiro, in the county of Coimbra, and is associated to the DURIT – Portuguese Tungsten Metallurgy group, with its head office in Albergaria-a-Velha, but which today is an international group, with an important plant in Brazil and commercial representation in Germany, Spain and Brazil.

The DURIT group, which is strongly established in the Centre Region, is considerably diversified and is aimed towards generating synergies: moulds for plastics, metallurgical foundering, manufacturing plastic tubing, ceramic glass, tools and equipment for mines, quarries and public works.

Moulds

THE MOULDS FOR PLASTICS INDUSTRY has roots going back to the eighties, when the introduction of the glass moulds industry takes place. One name emerges very early as connected to this process of innovation: Aníbal H. Abrantes, who was at the origin of glass moulds (1929) and was then involved in the first factory for plastic moulds (1944).

The production of the moulds is fundamentally orientated towards exporting, and their markets have expanded from an initial almost exclusive dependence on the US market. The technological development of the Portuguese plastics industry, namely for motor vehicle components, has extended the national share of the market.



Internationalisation, which began in 1957, has taken place not only through trade, but also through strategies of investment in other countries by some industrialists.

In both situations the new information and communication technologies have been decisive, since the eighties, in order to maintain the central role of Marinha Grande in the overall space.

The *Iberomoldes SA group*, employing over six hundred people, today has international visibility due to the quality of its products and services, the exporting of which represents 95% of its production.

Iberomoldes SA is the holding company that brings together production, trade and service companies, in which the research and development component is very important. Marinha Grande is the main pole for the group, and where the main product development unit is located (*SET SA – Simultaneous*

Engineering Technology) along with the group of mould producing plants, among which there are two that may be considered “historic”, A. H. Abrantes SA (I and II) and Edilásio C. Silva, Lda. The group has mould factories in Tunisia and Mexico, and engineering firms in Sweden and the United Kingdom. It holds shares in or participates in several specialised companies, ranging from professional training to medical instruments, located both in Portugal and abroad.

SET SA was created a little over ten years ago by *Iberomoldes* as an engineering firm in the area of product development, with recourse to the most advanced *Computer Assisted Engineering Techniques*. “SET SA’s central philosophy is that of total integration of different databases in one coherent system that deals with all information for the developing of new plastic products”. SET SA participates in several R&D projects in partnership with research laboratories, universities, companies and technological centres.

The Marinha Grande moulds industry possesses two important support structures based in the county: CEFAMOL – National Mould Industry Association and CENTIMFE – Mould, Special Tools and Plastics Industry Technological Centre. The former provides a diversified range of services to its members, as well as to professionals in the sector, and also participates in several projects and actions in the field of industry development and its market visibility. The latter supports the sector’s technological development within the perspective of product integration.

Glass – Tradition, Art and Innovation

THE EXISTENCE OF GOOD SANDS AND THE ABUNDANCE of firewood were the determining factors for the locating of the glass industry in Marinha Grande in the XVIII century, due to the initiative of the Stephens brothers, British subjects who were merchants on the Lisbon marketplace. Another experiment, going back to the XVI century, had taken place in the Beira area, in the county of Oliveira de Azeméis, but it was in Marinha Grande that the glass industry would be developed in a process of diversification and continued updating in its processes and products.

Glass production is divided into two major groups, packaging and crystal ware, employing around five thousand workers. While crystal ware is concentrated in Marinha Grande and in Alcobaça (in the Region of Lisbon and the Tagus Valley), glass for packaging, besides factories in that county, has an important plant in Vila Verde, in the county of Figueira da Foz.

Over two and a half centuries of existence, crystal ware has gone through several crises, corresponding to the “exits” and “entrances” of new players, as a result of new processes of productive and management restructuring. The most emblematic name from the past is precisely that of the Stephens Factory, nowadays partially transformed into a museum, in which there is the showing of a synthesis of a part of the memory of the town. The companies *Ivima* and *Crisal* are other important names, with a history that reflects the life of the crystal ware industry of Marinha Grande.

The principal thrust today is in the modernization of the production techniques, maintaining the importance of the artistic and handicraft component, which has been granted new prospects for a very competitive



presence on the European and world markets through the application of modern *design*. Among the new generation of glass plants, one should mention, among others, *Dâmaso – Vidros de Portugal, SA*.

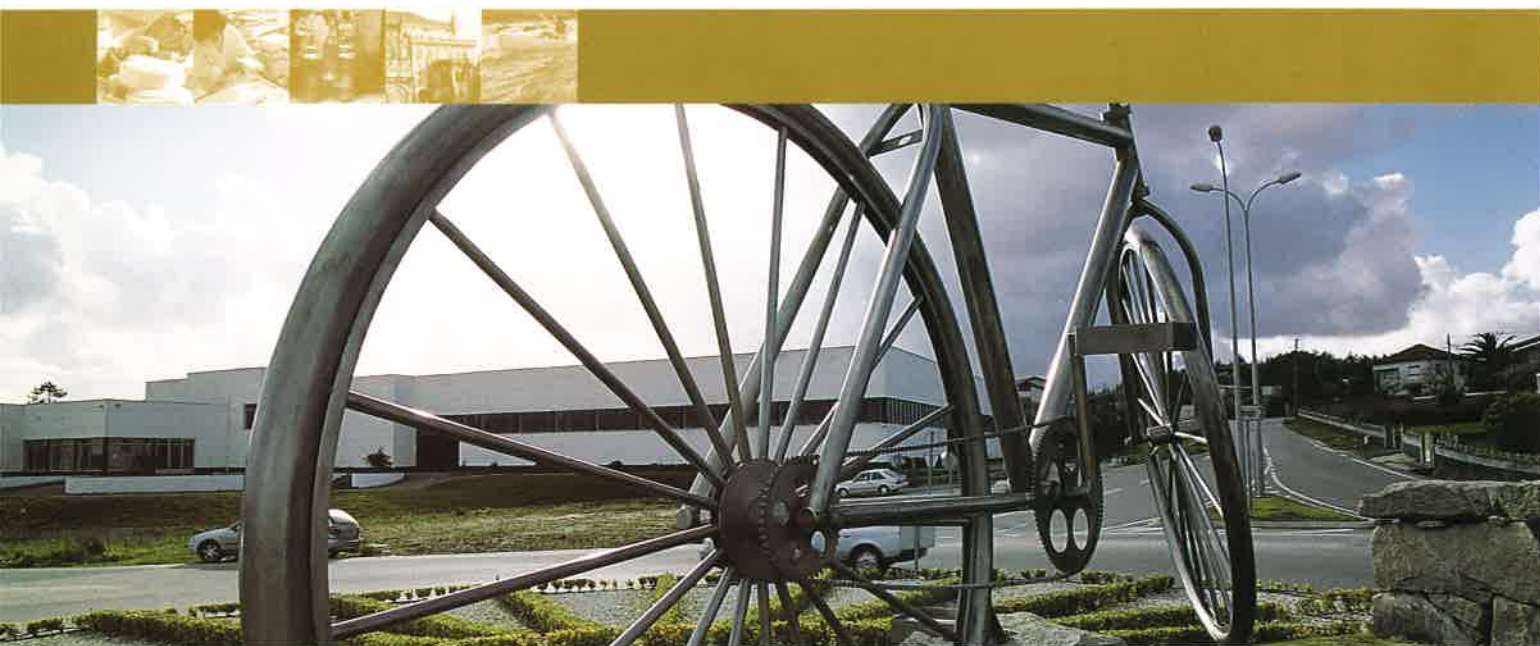
In glass for packaging three companies stand out: besides the *Vila Verde factory* (Vidreira do Mondego), *Ricardo Gallo* and *Santos Barosa & Cia.*, both in Marinha Grande.

The “Two Wheel” Industry

PORTUGAL HAS AN INTERESTING TRADITION in the industry of two-wheeled vehicles – bicycles and motor-bicycles – with its centre of gravity in the city of Águeda and a greater profusion of firms in the area around it.

Over the last years there has been a profound restructuring in the two-wheeled industry in the sense of specialisation in component production.

Thus, although there is still the production of bicycles and of some motorised vehicles, which also has some export activity, most of the factories are dedicated to component production, not only for two-wheeled vehicles,



but also for the automobile industry.

The range of components and accessories covers about fifty products that are as different as motors, pistons, brakes, reflectors, speedometers and a variety of metal and plastic components.

The greater part of production is aimed at the external market, reaching about fifty importing countries.

Despite an unequal distribution of technology and oscillations in business performance, this field has excellent prospects, at present in the area of components and accessories and possibly in the future in the production of vehicles, which will largely take place in accordance with the European and Iberian markets.

Metallurgy and Metalwork

THE METALLURGY AND METALWORK INDUSTRIES have a great tradition in specific areas of the Centre Region, and there has been some diffusion from the coastal to the inland areas. It is within this tradition that the moulds and the “two wheel” industries have been established, and which are dealt with individually elsewhere in this present text.

These types of industries are dispersed throughout the region, generating some local conglomerations, which may or may not correspond to specialisations. In some cases we are dealing with “historic” industries that have adapted to the circumstances, taking advantage of opportunities; in others they are recent developments as a result of the response to market demand – on both the national and international level.

The main productive units represent the following fields: metal furniture; ironmongery, faucet and tools; large metal structures; automobile components and consumer goods and fittings for companies or homes.

In metal furniture there are sizeable companies with a considerable exporting capacity, both in products and in processes. *Levira* metallurgy plant (Oliveira do Bairro), *Cortal, Rodrigues e Almeida – RALL* and *Guialmi* (all in Águeda), are four references not only in the region, but also in Portugal itself. One should also mention the “historic” companies *Janeves* and *ADICO*, in Estarreja. A note for the successful internationalisation strategy carried out by *Levira*, now the major Portuguese exporter of office furniture.

In the field of ironmongery and related products, there are some modern plants aimed at wider markets in the Centre Region. *URFIC*, in Tondela, *Tupai*, *Pecol* and *Mascruz*, in Águeda.

In a related field, one should mention the *Gröhe faucet factory*, located in Albergaria-a-Velha, as well as *P.J. Ferramentas*, in Aveiro, whose process of internationalisation is continuing with the building of a metal components plant in Brazil.

Linked to the most important sector in manufacturing, ceramics, one should highlight *Metalcértima*, in Oliveira do Bairro, which projects and builds special machines and equipment for the ceramics industry.

The production of large metallic structures also has a great tradition, with important names in the region, such as *Soima* and *Marcovil*, in Viseu, *Martifer* in Oliveira de Frades, *A. Silva Matos* in Sever do Vouga, and *Citergaz* (Albergaria-a-Velha) among others.

In relation to automobile components, at the end of the XX century the region possessed twenty accredited companies, with those of metalworking being the most in terms of numbers (14), followed by those producing plastic products (6). Most of the metalworking plants are located in the Aveiro – Águeda – Viseu / Tondela / Mangualde – Guarda axis, with a slight concentration in the Lower Vouga area.

Although the vehicle-producing companies in the Region (*Citroën*, in Mangualde and *Salvador Caetano* in Ovar) are clients of these component-producing plants, *Autoeuropa* is the Portuguese company that has given the sector its major impulse in Portugal, and today has a strong exporting activity. According to the latest information from ICEP (Institute of Portuguese Foreign Trade), there are ten companies exporting automobile components in the Centre Region.

In the last group, despite its dispersion by types of products, two plants producing household goods stand out: *Vulcano Termotécnica S.A.*, in Aveiro, a member of the *Bosch Group*, which is classified as a World Competence Centre for the production of water heaters and boilers, and *Teka Portuguesa*, in Ílhavo, producing kitchen fittings.

The area around Aveiro is also the home for a large number of companies producing fittings for commerce, the hotel trade and housing (furniture, heating, cooling, ventilation, ...). In the field of the cooling industry one should highlight one of the groups of emblematic companies of the Beira Interior, *Centauro Internacional*, in Castelo Branco, which sends a good deal of its production to foreign markets, in Europe, South America, Africa and the Middle East.

Finally, a reference to the fact that the region has been chosen as the home for metallurgy companies with a vocation for supporting other economic activities with a strong presence

in the region, as is the case of the plants producing machines or tools for the dairy industry, for the production of wine, for lumbering and for a set of industries producing metal products.



Wool and Clothing

THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY HAS A LONG TRADITION in the region, marked out by processes of re-conversion and adjustment to alterations in technology, in organisation of production and in market dynamics. Historically, the first major transformation took place in the XVIII century, with the Marquis of Pombal's establishing of the Real Fábrica de Lanifícios, in Covilhã, which was a determining moment for the restructuring of production in the region.

Over the last decades, the modernisation of the textile industry has been accompanied by the development of the clothing industry, which has played an important role in the absorbing of available manpower.



In relation to woollen textiles and similar products, Covilhã is the main pole, although there are still active plants in secondary poles with a certain tradition: Seia, Gouveia, Guarda, Cebolais/Retaxo (Castelo Branco), Avelar/Ansião, Castanheira de Pêra and Mira D'Aire (Porto de Mós).

Although it is desirable and has had some progress recently, the articulation between the wool industry and the clothing industry is not very well developed, despite the relative proximity of some of the producing centres, as in the cases of Castelo Branco and Belmonte, but in other clothing production centres, such as Oliveira do Hospital, Leiria and Viseu, not even their proximity is significant.

It should be noted that both in the process of vertical integration of the textile (carding, spinning, weaving, dyeing and finishing) and in clothing there are companies with a high level of technology, the most modern standards of organisation of the production process, quality design and good

promoting and commercialising strategies. These companies have proven to be competitive and sustainable.

In the wool industry, *Paulo de Oliveira SA*, located in Covilhã, is a modern unit of note, with well-sized vertical integration – the largest wool company in the Iberian Peninsula.

Among the support structures for the sector, a special mention should be made for *ANIL*, the *Wool Industrialists' Association*, and *CITEVE*, the *Textile and Clothing Technological Centre*. The *University of the Beira Interior* also has courses in textile engineering and research aimed at this sector.

The Forest – from the Poor People's Bank to the Wealth of the Future

THE CENTRE REGION IS THE HOME to one of the largest forested areas in Europe, which has been drastically reduced over recent years by forest fires. The wild forest pine is the main species, and is used in production for the cellulose and wood agglomerates industries, which, in some counties, has led to the rise of the furniture industry.

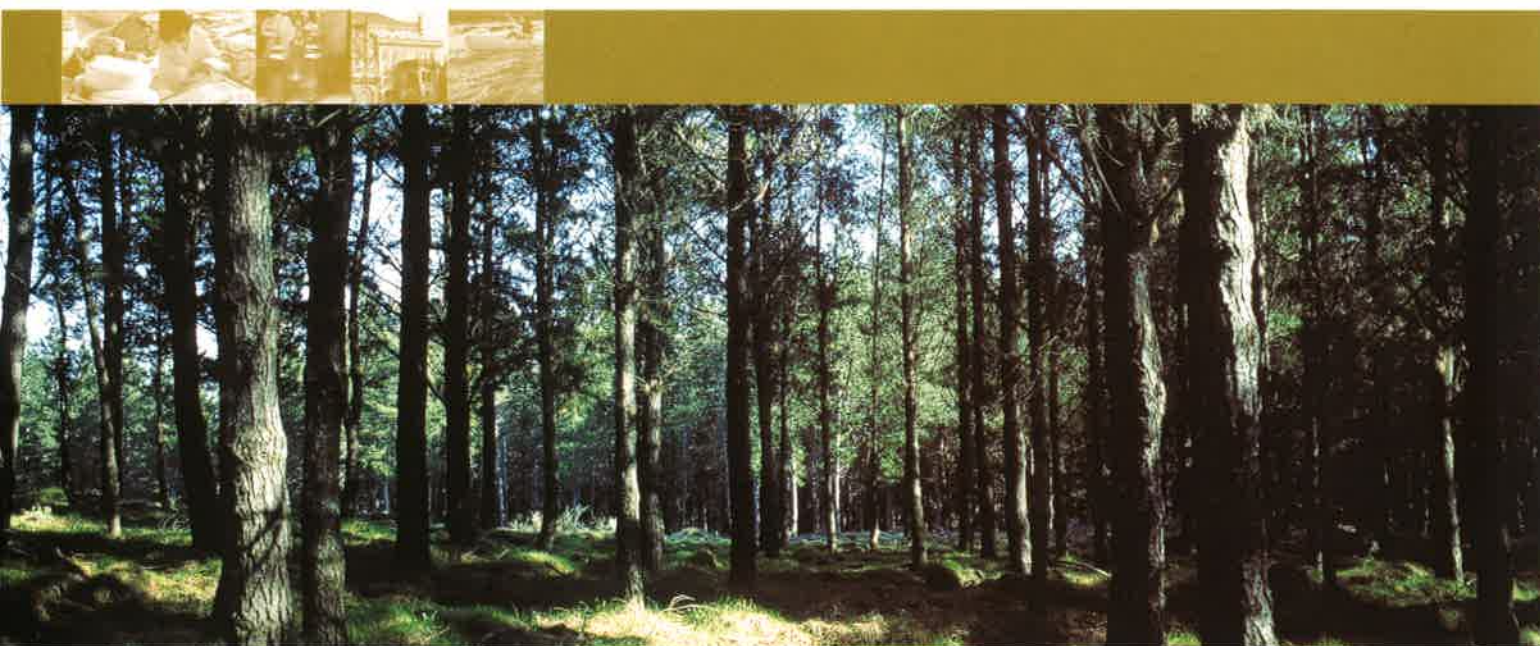
As small-holdings are the dominant form of land-owning, the pine forest functioned in the past as a capital reserve for the country folk, and was thus known as the *poor people's bank*.

The landed system and its greatest occurrence in mountain areas has made it difficult to govern the ordering of the forested area, the production of which is today insufficient to respond to the needs of the main wood-processing industries.

Initiatives have been carried out in this field in the region in order to promote owners' associations, so as to make the lumbering activities economically viable, particularly in the Interior Pine Forest sub-region.

There are conditions and means to guarantee a process of re-conversion and re-ordering of the forest, even leading to its expansion and reintroducing of species from the climax flora, not only with a greater commercial value, but also with a potential for the regeneration of the landscape, with significant effects on the tourist industry. The forest is no longer the poor people's bank, but it continues to be a great potential for regional wealth.

The forest has an important technological infrastructure in the Centre Region, the *CBE – Centre of Biomass for Energy*, with its head offices in Miranda do Corvo. The *CBE* has the collaboration of the *University of Coimbra* and of other Higher Education institutions, and develops projects for the State, for local companies and councils, often with the support of the European Union. The main project undertaken is the Mortágua Thermoelectric Power Station, which works with forestry waste, producing 63 GW/h of electric energy annually.



Products of the Earth – Wealth to be exploited

The excellent *Dão* and *Bairrada* wines, the *Serra da Estrela* cheese, *Cova da Beira* cherries, *Bravo de Esmolfe* apples and *Lafões* veal are some of the most well-known products with the denomination of protected origin (DOP). Besides the fact that they are far from being exploited and promoted in conformity with their market potential, these are certainly not all the good things that the lands of the centre provide and which must not be left out in the development process.

Let us consider some examples, separated into the two “Agrarian Regions” into which the de-concentrated administration of the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture is organized in the Centre Region: the Coastal Beira and the Beira Interior.

In the Coastal Beira the wines stand out, in particular those of the “Denomination of Controlled Origin” (DOC) from Bairrada and the Dão, but also the “Regulated Indication of Provenance” (IPR) wines from the areas of Leiria and Lafões, not forgetting some “gems” lost within the designation of “Regional”, like the excellent *Foz de Arouce*. Meat is also superb and suits many different tastes: beef, the *Arouquesa*, the *Marinhão* and the *Lafões*, goat, the *Serra da Gralheira* and lamb, those of the *Serra da Estrela*.

Apples are most noteworthy in the case of fruit, among which the already-mentioned *Bravo de Esmolfe* stands out above all others, but the Alcobaça/Leiria varieties and those from the many Upper Beira orchards are also greatly appreciated.



As for cheeses, the king is the *Serra da Estrela*, but others are also of high quality, such as the *Rabaçal*, and the conditions are excellent for the consolidating of experiences or for recovering traditional practices.

Lousã honey and *Soutos da Lapa* chestnuts also have their own Denomination of Protected Origin.

Other fruit products deserve to be mentioned and given incentives: strawberries from the areas of Coimbra and Leiria, blueberries and raspberries from Sever do Vouga, pears from Leiria/Batalha/Porto de Mós, hazelnuts from Viseu and Vila Nova de Paiva, and walnuts from Penela, Condeixa-a-Nova and Miranda do Corvo.

Our tables would also be better supplied if there was a greater promoting, safeguarding quality, of other products from the lands of the “Coastal Beira”: rice from the Lower Baixo Mondego, fresh vegetables from the sands of the

coastal counties, from Marinha Grande to Ovar. And the *potatoes*! The delicious potatoes that could be “all year round”, adequating the varieties to the soils, to the climate and to the calendar, from the sand plains of the Gândara to the mountain plateaus.

There is also a need to recover the tradition of picking mushrooms, which grow wild in abundance and which, although they are present in the gastronomy, should be extended to less well-known species. The conditions of the climate and the soils are excellent: from the sands close to the coast to the thickets and oak woods of the interior.

Many of these productions, now consolidated or with good prospects for success, are common to the Beira Interior Agrarian Region: this is the case



of mushrooms, potatoes and honey. Others are specific, in their nature or simply in their variety.

So, if top marks go for wine in the *Dão* and in *Bairrada* areas, in the Beira Interior the olive oils are excellent, from the Tagus to the Douro.

Quality beef is also abundant, but first choice goes to young goat (from the Beira), lamb (Serra da Estrela, Beira or Terrincho) and for pork (of the Alentejan breed).

As for fruit, the Cova da Beira orchard produce stands out, with its cherries, apples, pears and peaches; further to the north there is also production of the *Bravo de Esmolfe* and other varieties of quality apples.

The cheeses are wonderful: the *Serra da Estrela*, the *Amarelo* and the *Picante da Beira Baixa*, and a small production of *Terrincho*, in the Douro

Valley. And the Beira Interior wines (Castelo-Rodrigo, Meda, Covilhã, Fundão, Pinhel...) are good companions, improving by the year, not forgetting that in the north the region also produces *Dão* (DOC), *Port* (DOC) and *Douro* (DOC).

In dried fruits, one should enjoy the hazelnuts from Guarda and from Covilhã, the almonds (Meda and Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo) and the walnuts from the feet of the mountains of Serra da Estrela and the Cova da Beira.

One final note for *the product of the earth, wheat, cornbread!* From the plain of Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo to the plain of Castelo Branco and of Idanha-a-Nova, the wheat is excellent and the conditions for producing it could not be better. For this reason incentives should be granted for its production, transformation and promotion, in order not to lose one of the region's most important heritages.

Many of these products are already known to the average consumer; others appear at certain shows, some of them recovering the tradition of the old fairs and religious festivals. A special note for some specialized fairs, the example of which should be appreciated, improved and spread: starting with the cheese fairs which rival with each other for supremacy in the main producing centres; the *Walnut Fair* and the *Honey Fair*, both in Penela; the *Chestnut and Honey Fair* in Lousã; the *Dão Wine Fair and Fete*, in Nelas; *NeRURAL* and *EXPORURAL*, fairs of gastronomy, tourism, the rural world and game, in Guarda; *BEIRALIMENTAR* – countryside foodstuffs fair in Castelo Branco; the *Vila de Rei* Sausage, Cheese and Honey Fair.

It is important to define a consequent strategy in the sense of promoting the products of the earth, in order to increase the visibility of quality products, granting incentives to the certification and creation of local quality brands, and to expand the production and strengthen the competitiveness of these unique products. Thus, through the technical qualification of the producers and of the promoting agents, we will achieve the *valorisation of the image of the rural areas*.

Handiwork

IF MUCH OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CRAFTWORK HAS PASSED on into modern production, in industry and in agriculture, there are still a large number of pre-modern practices that result in quality craft products. We have already referred to some of them in relation to what the earth provides or may provide, but here it is important to leave a brief note about what is given the overall term of handicrafts.

These activities and the most relevant people among those who carry them out are included in an excellent study made and published by the Institute of Employment and Professional Training, with the collaboration of the Coordination Committee of the Centre Region. This contains information in a



written and photographic form about the several different arts: about glass and ceramics, about weaving and embroidery, about metals, about stone, about wood and related elements.

Because of the economy of this text, we are presenting only a few of the most important examples.

The Castelo Branco embroideries, which have an oriental origin, with their specific needlepoint, which work with linen and silk, producing the famous highly decorated bedspreads. Among other places of learning which keep this art alive and up to date, here present since the XVII century, there is a workshop-school for Castelo Branco Embroidery set up in the Francisco Tavares Proença Júnior Museum.

The embroideries from Tibaldinho, in the county of Mangualde, are also famous and valuable, and they continue to be made strictly adhering to the

traditional patterns of English origin going back to the XVIII century. One should also mention similar products from Torredeita (Viseu), the villages of Montemuro (Castro Daire), and Alvaiázere, among others.

Craft weaving can be found throughout the region and choice depends on taste, but there are consecrated names such as those of Almalaguês (Coimbra), with its bedspreads, rugs and tablecloths, or the sometimes-surprising works made in the counties of Viseu, Sabugal, Porto de Mós, Idanha-a-Nova and Castro Daire.

Glass and ceramics craftworks are geographically superimposed over industrialised production (Marinha Grande, Leiria, Batalha, Porto de Mós, Coimbra, Aveiro and Águeda), but one should also praise the work of the



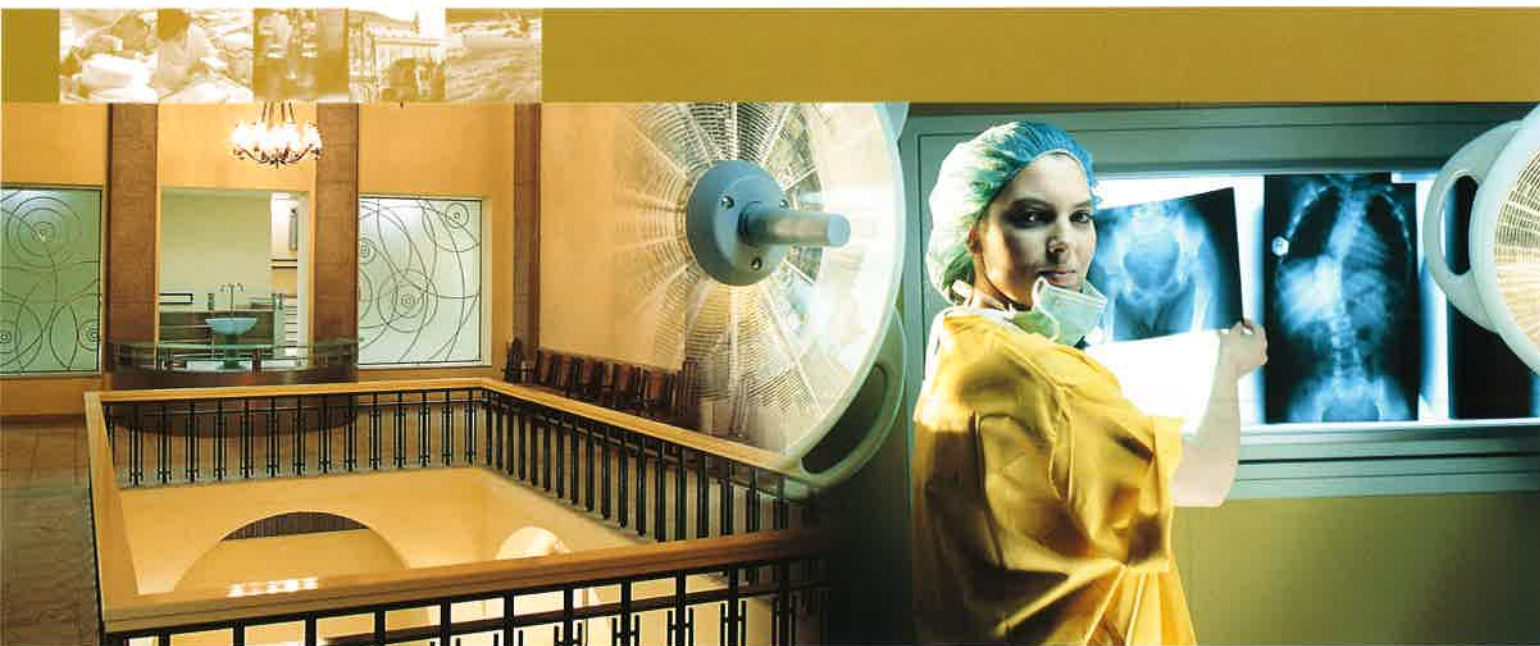
artisans who remain active and thus prolong traditions: in Miranda do Corvo, Tondela (Molelos), Mortágua, Fornos de Algodres, Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo and Idanha-a-Nova.

In stone crafts there is a good tradition in statue-making, associated to the art of stonecutters and stonemasons, as in Batalha, in Cantanhede, in Oliveira do Hospital and in the county of Castelo Branco.

As for metalwork, there are the tin crafts from Mealhada and Bodiosa (Viseu), the cowbells from Castro Daire (Cabril) and knives and other cutting instruments (Verdugal/Guarda and Mougueira/Sertã).

Wicker, wood and rush products are having greater difficulty in relation to competition from Oriental production, but they still remain active from the coast to the interior: Gonçalo (Guarda), Roussão (Castro Daire), Fundão, Vila Nova de Poiares, Carapinheira (Montemor-o-Velho) and Ílhavo, among so many others, are places where craftsmen survive, more and more working for the tourist trade and less for daily needs.

Finally, a mention for the culinary art, which is rich and varied, and is often in a phase of transition to gastronomy, making its name in individual restaurant situations. Beyond careful preparation and refinement, which are so often achieved, there is a large number of dishes that are original, if not unique: the goat hotpot from the limestone hills of the Beira Litoral, the stews from the slate ranges of the Beira Interior, the stuffed stomach skins of Folques, the eels of Murtosa, the suckling pigs of Bairrada, the cod and its innards from the Figueira da Foz area, the black puddings of the Beira Alta and so many other delicacies that deserve a study and a raising of profile that might put them definitively on the tourist maps of the Region.



Health – Service Providing in a Healthy Region

HEALTH IS, IN MANY ASPECTS, a recurring issue when dealing with development in the region. The mountains, the clean air and the waters from its many natural springs have attracted convalescent people to *Central Portugal* since time immemorial. The spas of *Luso*, *Curia*, *São Pedro do Sul*, (the most popular in Portugal), *Monte Real*, *Monfortinho*, *Felgueira*, *Carvalhal* and *Cavaca*, among others, represent the regenerating power of water and, in some cases, nowadays are excellent tourist attractions. More recent, until the second half of the last century, where the curing powers of the mountains remained active in the fight against tuberculosis, with several sanatoriums being established in the mountain ranges of *Caramulo* and *Estrela*. On the coast, lepers (gafos) sought refuge for centuries in the deserted sand-flats south of the Aveiro lagoon, in the area that became known as *Gafanha*. In the XX century,

when it was decided to build a modern leprosy shelter, the borough of *Tocha* was chosen, where the *Rovisco Pais* establishment was built, today adapted as a tourist and leisure infrastructure.

In this context, one should also refer to thalassic therapy, which also has some tradition arising from the characteristics of the coastline, which possesses a virtuous combination of the elements of sea, pine-groves, sand-flats and the atmosphere.

This “renewed” vocation was joined centuries ago by the providing of services emanating principally from people trained and qualified at the University of Coimbra. Recently, with the founding of the *Medical Faculty at the University of the Beira Interior*, in Covilhã, the potential for the supply of health services and medical training has been reinforced. In this field, one should also mention the several higher health schools in the region’s polytechnic institutes and the new University Pole at the *University of Aveiro*, in Viseu.

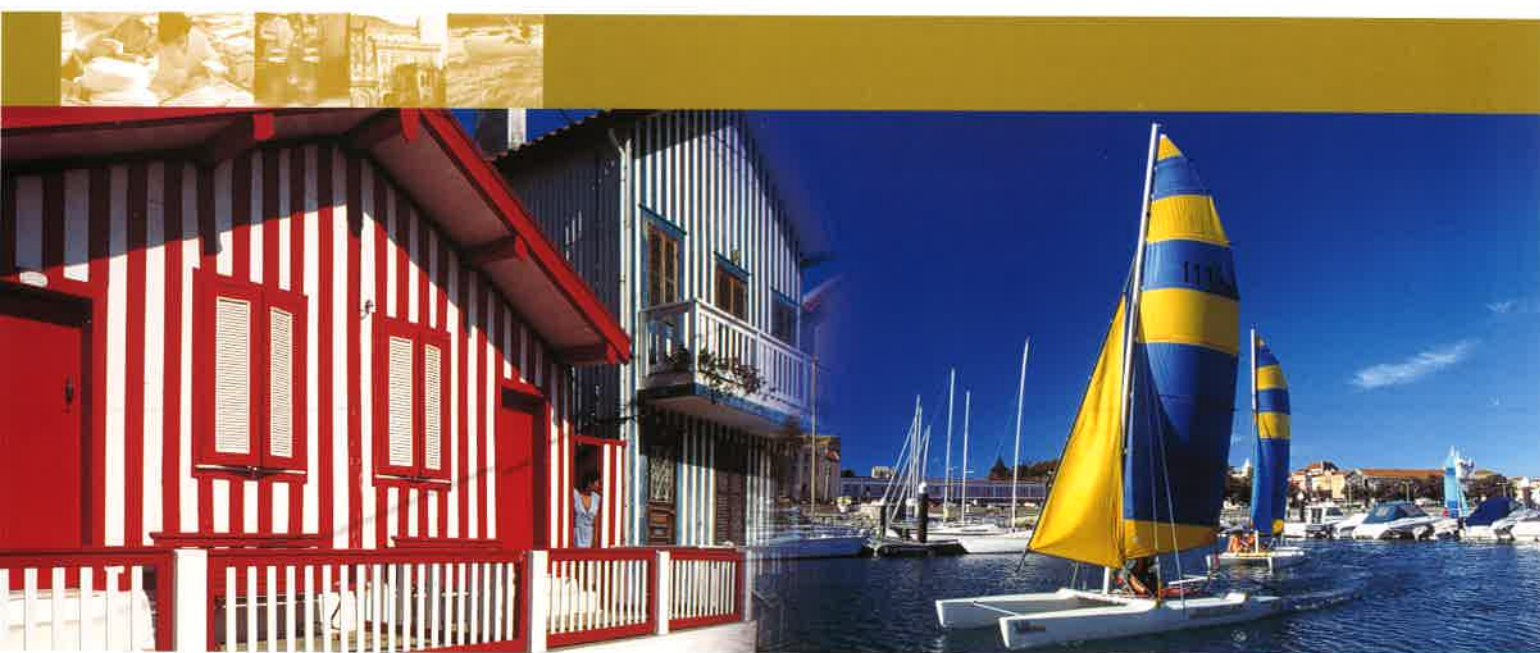
In this field one must highlight the role of the *Bissaya Barreto Foundation*, whose multiplicity of activities has its core in the area of Health, including nursing schools and other teaching establishments, hospitals, sanatoriums and other organisms dedicated to health care.

The modernisation of the hospital network, with particular note for the new regional hospitals and for the new hospital units of the *University of Coimbra*, now places the region’s capacity for health service providing on a high level. Research has also accompanied this movement, with the setting up of high-tech units, such as the *Biomedical Light and Image Research Institute – IBILI*, a scientific unit for interdisciplinary research associated to the *University of Coimbra Faculty of Medicine*, which produces base research on interaction between light and life, having to do with areas of ophthalmology, dermatology and pharmacology.

Tourism with all Types of Attractions

AS IS SHOWN BY RECENT STUDIES and in the positive development of the sector, the Centre Region has great potential for the developing of its tourist economy. Its diversity of tourist resources, from its cultural to its natural heritage, constitutes the Region's greatest strength in this field, and is a fundamental lever for the desired process of tourist development.

A coastal strip stretching along approximately 140 Km, with many wide and long beaches, some of which with a great tradition as tourist resorts (S.



Pedro de Moel, Vieira de Leiria, Pedrógão, Figueira da Foz, Quiaios, Tocha, Mira, Vagueira, Costa Nova, Barra, Torreira, Furadouro...). An extensive territory, from the Coastal Area to the Interior, with a great variety of unique scenery (Aveiro Lagoon with its entanglement of canals, creeks and marshes for salt production; Bairrada with the rhythmic layout of its vineyards; the Lower Mondego with the reticulate pattern of its rice-fields; the Interior Pineland with the immensity of its forest; the mountain ranges of Sicó, Aire and Candeeiros with their typical limestone formations; the meadows of Idanha with their wide horizons of grain, olive-trees and flocks of sheep; Cova da Beira with its orchards and kitchen-gardens and the spattering of homes; the Serra da Estrela range with its imposing granite mass and Nature; the lands of the Dão and Lafões with their succession of valleys and mountains and small villages half way up the slopes; ...).

A region with centuries of heritage enrichment and of the maturing of traditions: the traces of ancient Roman occupations in Conímbriga and

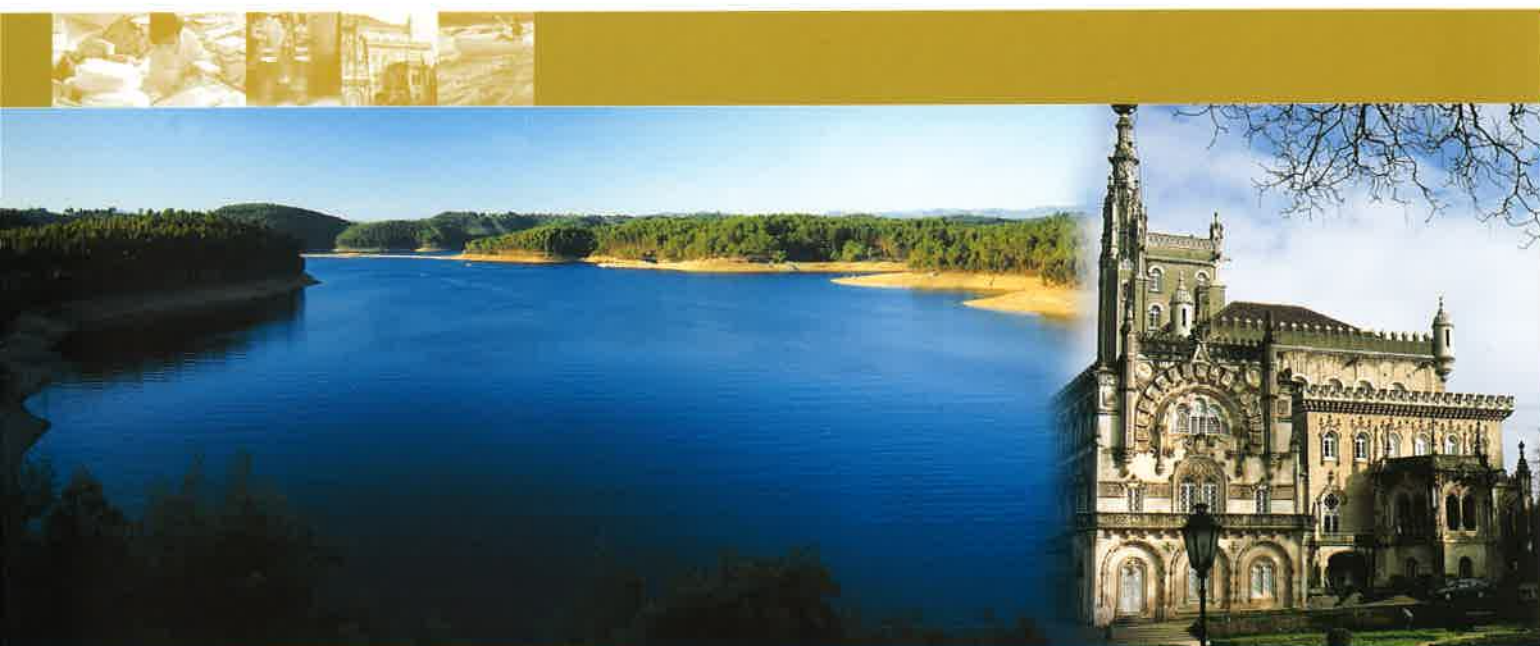
Egitânea; the historic villages of Monsanto, Sortelha, Piódão, Linhares and Castelo Novo; the heritage towns of Almeida, Belmonte, Sabugal, Trancoso, Gouveia, Pedrógão Grande and Montemor-o-Velho; the monumental cities of Coimbra, Aveiro, Leiria, Viseu, Castelo Branco, Guarda and Covilhã; the monasteries of Batalha and Lorvão; the churches and convents of Coimbra, Aveiro, Viseu, Castelo Branco and Guarda; the castles of Leiria, Pombal, Montemor-o-Velho, Sabugal, Sortelha, Marialva, Monsanto and Lousã; the art nouveau chalets of Ílhavo; the pyjama-striped houses of the Costa Nova; the mansions and estates of Nelas, Mangualde and Sátão; the Palace of Buçaco; the ancient University of Coimbra; the Portugal dos Pequenitos; the water-mills of Penha Garcia, Redinha and Sever do Vouga; the windmills of Penacova; the embroideries of Castelo Branco and of Tibaldinho; the weavings of Almalaguês, Montemuro and the Serra da Estrela; the black clay pottery of Molelos; the decorative ceramics of Condeixa-a-Nova, Coimbra, Aveiro and Ílhavo; the basket-work of Castro D'Aire and Gonçalo; the copperworks of Viseu; the stone arts of Cantanhede; the seaweed boats and the seaside crafts of the Ria area; the music and songs of Manhous and of Monsanto; the tambourines of the Lower Beira; the Christmas logs of the border region; the alms feasts of Salvaterra do Extremo and of Monfortinho; the pilgrimages of Our Lady of Almortão, Our Lady of Mércules and of St. Macário; the feasts of the Ria and of the Rainha Santa; the carnival of Mealhada and of Ovar; the fairs of S. Mateus, Cantanhede, Fundão and Pombal; the Border Fair, the Cinema Festival, the Gala of the Little Singers and the Beach Football Mini World Cup at Figueira da Foz; the Burning of the Ribbons and the Photography Encounters of Coimbra; the Music Festivals of Leiria and Coimbra; CITEMOR and the theatres of Covilhã, Coimbra, Viseu and Montemor; the suckling pig and the goat-stews of the Bairrada area; the hotpots and stews of the Interior Pine Forest; the smoked sausages of Viseu and Guarda; the fish stews of Figueira da Foz, Mira and Aveiro; the eels of Murtosa; the lampreys of Penacova and Montemor-o-Velho; the roast kid of the border region; the veal of Lafões; the brisa cakes of the Lis; the tarts and cheese pastries of Tentúgal and of Lorvão; the egg pastries of Aveiro; the tarts of Santa Clara; the viriato cakes of Viseu; the cheeses of the Serra da Estrela, of the Lower Beira and of Rabaçal; the wines of Bairrada, Dão, Cova da Beira, Pinhel and Castelo Rodrigo;...

In short, it is in the conjugation of history and nature, translated into culture, in many forms, that there is certainly the best raw material for the establishing of a quality tourism industry.

Strategically, it is important not only to valorise these attractions, but also to internalise them into chains of tourist products, articulating resources, the supply of tourist products and services and their complimentary activities with tourist demand. Thus there is the need to dynamise investment in the sector, both public and private, in order to create the conditions for establishing and sustaining tourist activity and making the Centre Region viable on an

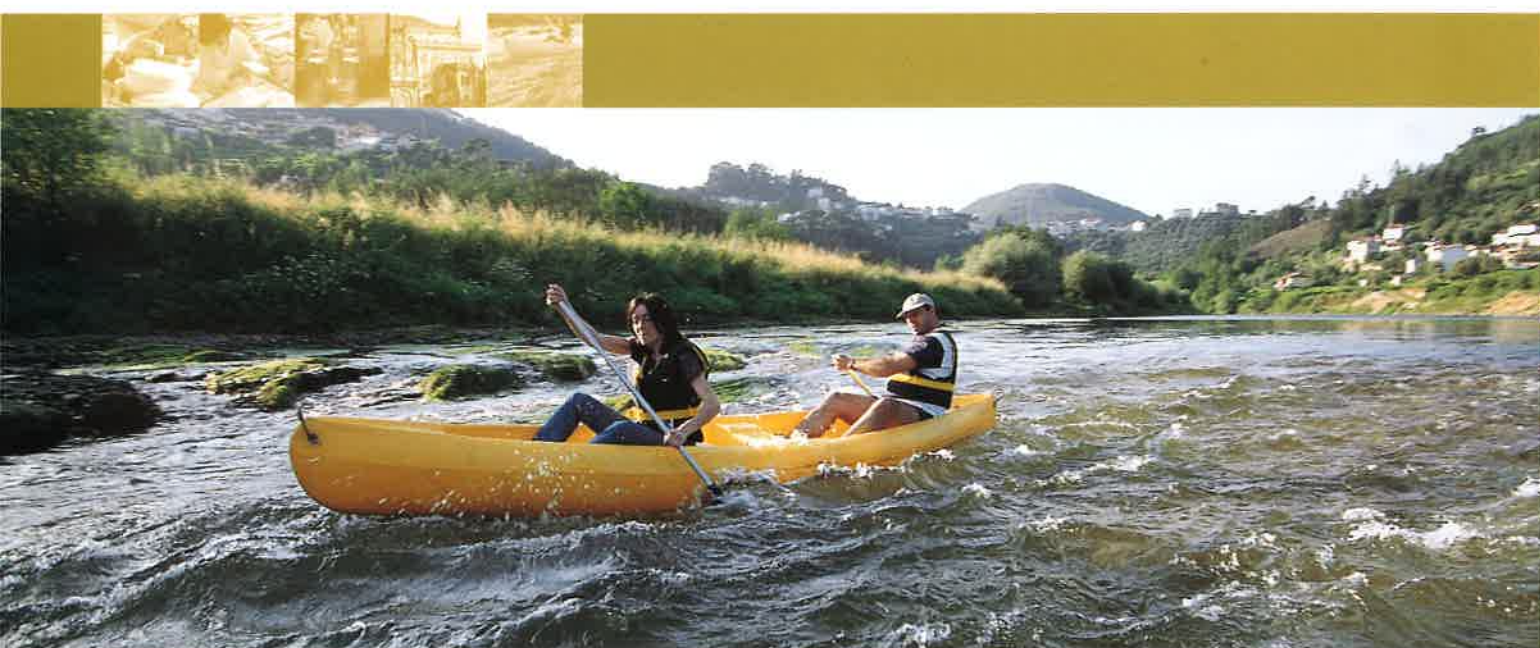
international and national level as an attractive and competitive tourist destination. A competitiveness that may immediately be achieved in the short term in a significant range of tourist products: the touring and excursion market, along with urban-cultural tourism, sun and sea tourism, rural tourism, nature and countryside tourism, multi-activity tourism, event tourism, business and meeting tourism, spa and health tourism and wine and gastronomy tourism.

It is also important to carry out a good organisation of the space, in order to bring together and integrate action taken in this field. The starting point should be a territorial dividing that highlights the sub-regional identities and guarantees the appropriate dimension for the anchoring of strategies. In this context we may identify the following territories for tourist development: the Coastal Strip,



with extensive clean beaches, sun and a unique atmosphere (the smell and the sea air...); Coimbra and the Lower Mondego, both urban and agrarian at the same time, enriched by the history and culture of over twenty centuries; Aveiro, Ria and the Lower Vouga, the excellent salt-pans, the recovered natural and urban environment, the water-plain and the mountain, the hard-working people who reveal the production of wealth; the Mountain Ranges of Freita and of Arada, the scorched but densely populated mountain with its own individual culture, in a transition into the North; the Lands of Viseu and of the Dão, the material and spiritual culture, the all-season landscapes, the rebirth of villages that once were municipal towns, the Lands of Caramulo and of São Pedro do Sul, the airs and waters that purify, cure and reinvigorate bodies and souls, the nature that invites you to take a stroll, to become adventurous and to wish to discover new things; the Borderlands, the dominion of the granite, the castles that once were medieval frontiers, the beginning of the Beira, the typical landscapes of the Meseta; the Plateaus of the Beira, from Montemuro to Trancoso, going through the “Lands of the Devil”, through the headlands of the

Paiva and of the Vouga, the purity of the waters and of the air, landscapes rich in literary memories; the Serra da Estrela range uniting the North and the South, a composite system of resources – energy, pastures, water! – that generated industries and craftwork that are updated and perpetuated; the Plain of Castelo Branco and the Meadows of Idanha, or simply the bread lands of the Lower Beira, where a new urban situation is being born alongside tradition, in one of the most promising articulations in the Iberian region; the Lands of the Interior Pine Forest, where slate dominates, covered by pine groves or by heather and rock-rose heaths, with its flowering mantles in early spring and, to the North, the Central Mountain Range, represented by the rugged mountain ranges of Açor and Lousã, where alternative tourism can be maximized, guided by nature and adventure; and the Lands of Upper Estremadura, marked out by intense



urban-industrial dynamisms, increasingly encroaching upon the rural areas, but where the immense and valuable Pinhal do Rei (the King's Pinewood), the rugged and unique limestone ranges and the monumental Monastery of Batalha and the castles of Leiria and Pombal invite the tourist into discovery.

The Centre Region, which has for a long time possessed unique places that are clearly marked out in the imaginary of the Portuguese tourist, doubtlessly has attractions that can make it a destination for demanding tourists. Over the last years considerable investments have been made in hotels and in the valorisation of the built cultural heritage, which open up the way for this success. Today, besides the historic spa hotels and beaches, all its cities, even those in the Interior, have an excellent supply of hotels, and the State Inn network has been both qualified and extended. Another important improvement has taken place in the supply of rural tourism, with several different products being added: historic villages, rural-agrarian environments and unique natural landscapes.



The Centre Region



SINCE THE FOUNDING OF PORTUGAL this territory has been the object of wilful and efficient actions on the part of different authorities in power.

The first city built from scratch in Portugal was Guarda, on King Dom Sancho I's initiative, in 1200, thus recreating the bishopric of Egítania and at the same time granting the Beira an ordering pole and a centre of defence for the vast frontier strip.

It should also be remembered that, among many actions from the early days of Portugal's history, the struggle against sea erosion and the advancing of the coastal dunes with the planting of vast pine groves, begun in the XIII century by King Dom Dinis, and the continued and obstinate effort to



“tame” the Lower Mondego, with successive works of hydraulics and measures to stimulate agriculture and forestry.

According to modern paradigms of regional planning, it was in the nineteen-sixties that the first decisive steps were taken in order to establish, on the ground, a structure dedicated to promoting and accompanying the integrated development of the Centre Region, which, besides, receives this designation at that time. The Regional Planning Committees, and that of the Centre, with its head office in Coimbra, are created in 1969, following the guidance of the III Foment Plan. The current Regional Coordination Committee is the reinforced and enriched heir, from the point of view of available means, to that original structure that essentially had the aim of obtaining and treating pertinent information gathered from the economic agents in the territory and, from these data, presenting proposals to the Portuguese Government.

Since its first reformulation, in 1976, the Coordination/Planning Committee has produced a valuable record of studies and analyses that have formed the base for the defining of the strategic lines for regional development. Despite some lack of success and even frustration, the fact is that these strategic orientations have been fundamental in order to guide the decisions of the economic agents, both local and regional, and public and private.

This fact is valid for the many aspects of the planning for the occupation and organization of the territory over the last quarter century: outline and characteristics of the major infrastructure networks, configuration of an original and more and more robust urban network, defence and valorisation of the natural heritage, qualification of the urban environment and of the conditions of access to education and to learning.

Besides the permanently updated aim of developing the region as a whole, promoting the improvement in the living conditions of its inhabitants, the Regional Coordination Committee (and the entities preceding it) has sought, in strict cooperation with municipal authorities, to define the best guidelines in order to reduce asymmetries in intra-regional development and, at the same time, to promote the harmonious development of the territory,

Integrated Actions with a Territorial Base

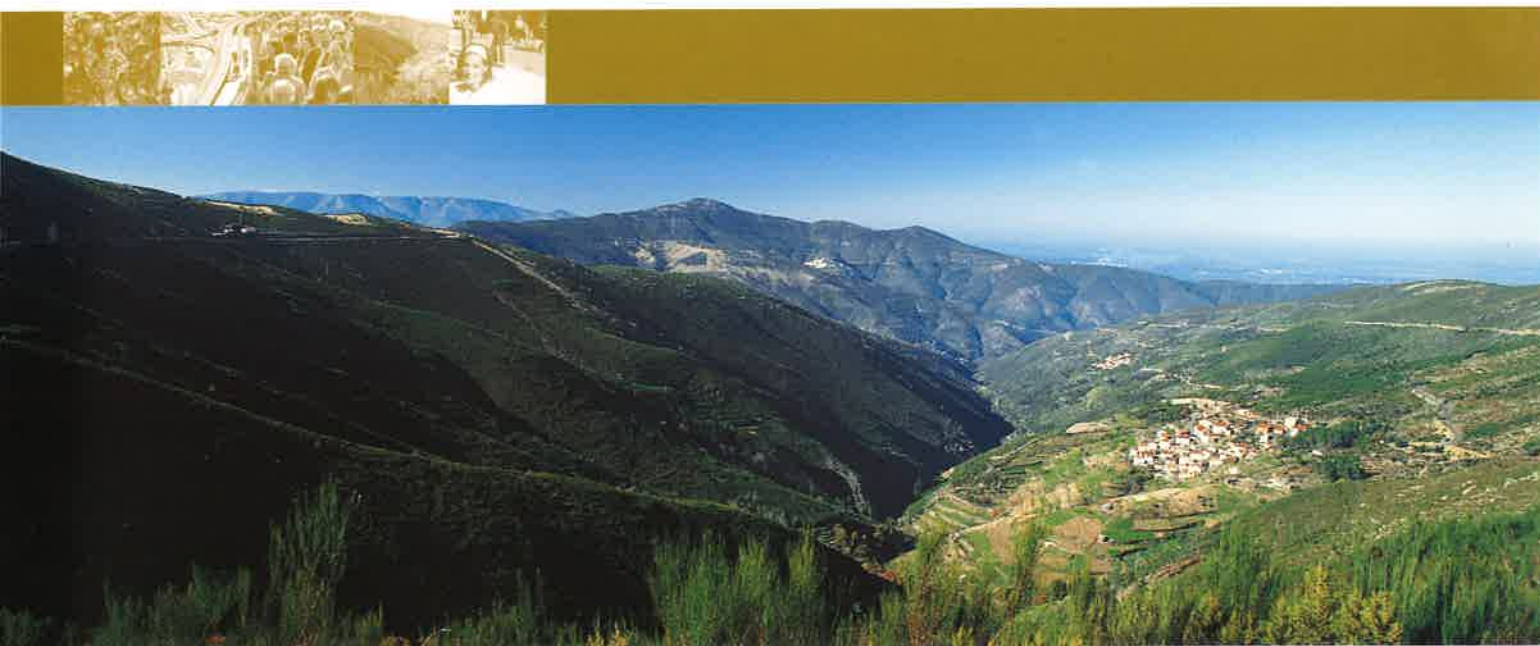
Aimed at the recuperation and dynamising of rural areas starting from specific anchors in each territory, these integrated actions, which are part of the Regional Operational Programmes of the CSF III, contemplate a large part of the Centre Region, through three initiatives: the IATBs of the Vale do Côa, of the Serra da Estrela and of the Interior Pine Forest. The rural space of the Interior South Beira NUTS III will be the object of a set of integrated actions, starting from a “Territorial Pact”, which will also contemplate an urban dimension.

In each of these four initiatives there is an implicit articulation between the renewing of the traditional economic base and strong promoting in the tourist field, which here finds a diversity of quality products that are alternatives to the mass tourism of the coast.

Each IATB, besides specific heritage, landscape and natural riches, has one or two poles with a great potential as an attraction: the Vale do Côa Archaeological Park, the Serra da Estrela mountain range (...), the reservoirs of the dams of the River Zêzere basin and of other tributaries of the Tagus.

respecting the values of natural heritage and cultural inheritance, two of the most powerful dimensions for the sustained development of the region.

One should highlight, among other planning instruments put into practice by the Regional Coordination Committee: the Regional Plans for Ordering of the Territory (of the Coastal Centre and of the area surrounding the Aguieira Dam reservoir); the Integrated Regional Development Plans and in particular that of Cova da Beira and of the Lower Mondego (a far-reaching plan in the period before Portugal's joining the European Community); and, in the scope of the Community Support Framework III, the Integrated Actions with Territorial Base (IATB), aimed at areas with greater difficulties in setting up a process of sustained development.



In the field of continuous planning on the level of the region as a whole, the most decisive instruments have been, since the end of the eighties, the Community Support Framework and, in particular, the Operational Programmes on a regional scale, managed through the Regional Coordination Committee.

All of these instruments have been applied following the strategic lines drawn up in the Region and that were accepted into the (national) Regional Development Plans (RDP), the bases for the negotiation of the Community Support Frameworks (CSF).

The Major Strategic Lines

WITH SOME VARIATIONS IN FORMULATION and in one or two cases with alterations in the degree of priority, the strategies defined over the last quarter of a century for the Centre Region have maintained their direction and coherence, and it is possible to talk of a process of continuous planning, aiming at physical, economic and social sustainability. This has thus been, both implicitly and explicitly, the main guiding line.

Protection and Valorisation of the Heritage

TO PROTECT AND VALORISE HERITAGE is a natural aim, which occupies a prominent place in the strategic guidelines for the Centre Region, translated in terms of operation through several areas of intervention, namely in the Regional Operational Programme, but converging with other instruments arising from the activities of local and central administration.

The heritage has been pondered in its dual aspect, nature and culture, moving progressively towards an approximation, which is shown in the valorisation of territories, landscapes and identities. Exalting and promoting the diversity of environments in the context of a process of economic and social development is one of the targets of the ongoing planning process.

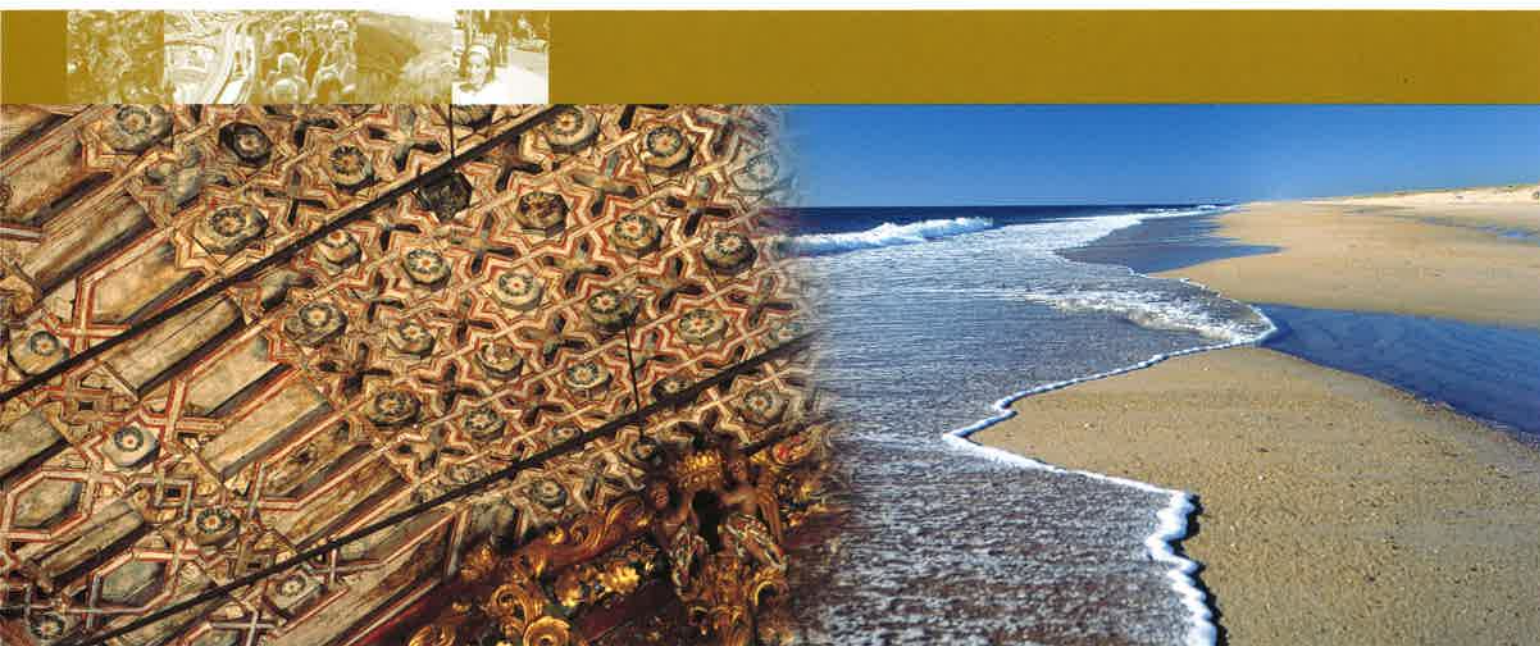
As for natural heritage, besides the priorities represented by water resources and the forest, as well as the areas considered to be protected countryside, continued efforts for environmental recovery have been evident in different settings: cities, towns and villages, the coastal strip, mountain areas and diffusedly industrialized areas.

In regard to cultural heritage, one should stress both the protection and valorisation of the received heritage and the building of new material and cultural heritage.

The restoration of monuments, archaeological sites, urban groups and rural nuclei – in which the *network of historic villages* stands out – has made the Region richer.

The inheritance left behind by recent times is so expressive in public and private constructions, often of great architectural quality, that it has also progressively become the attribute of the many residential areas.

We have already spoken of the cultural heritage. In the arts, in the sciences and in technology the enrichment of the Centre Region is obvious, and is shown in its greater national and international visibility, in a greater capacity to attract visitors, and in greater well being for its families and companies.



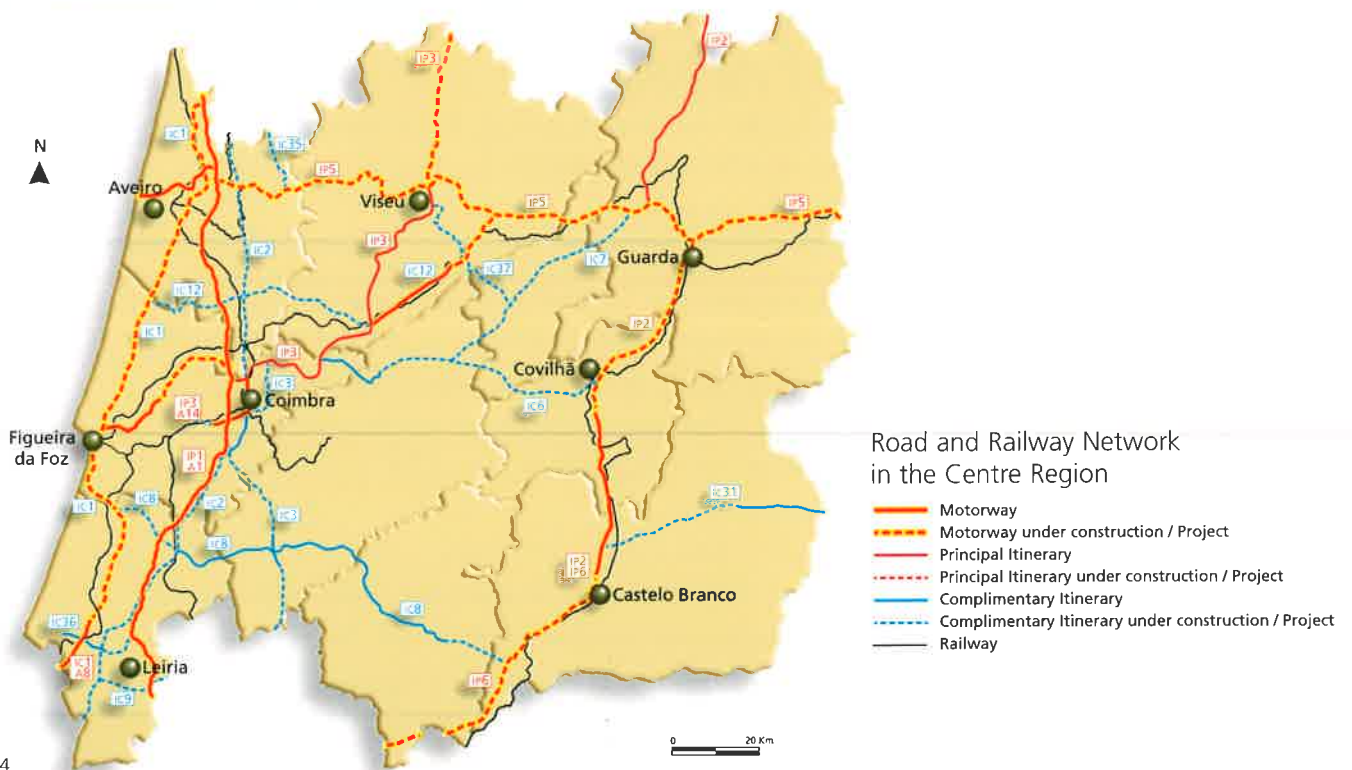
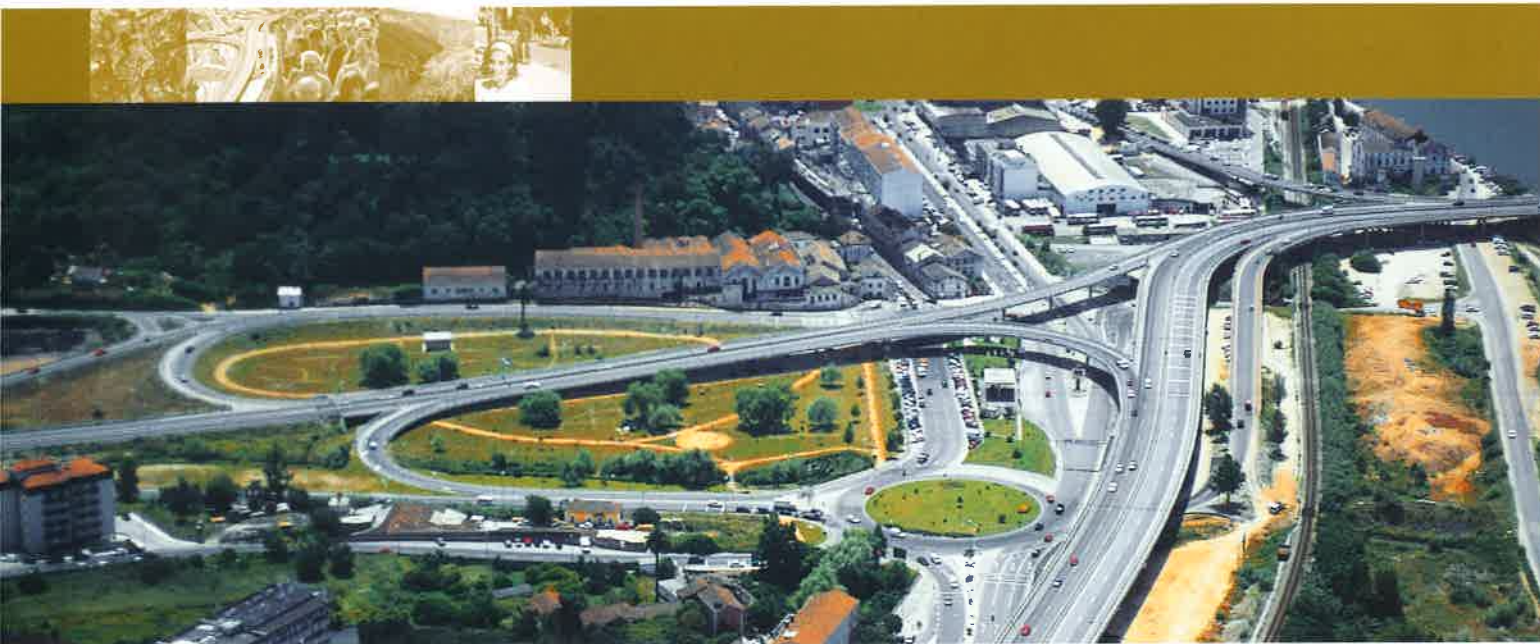
Promoting of Accesses

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACCESSES has been a priority in the process of the development of Portugal, and the Centre Region is a decisive space in this aspect of economic and social progress.

In regard to the physical accesses, the greatest advances have taken place in the areas of roads and telecommunications, although, in relative terms, in the Portuguese context, improvements in port and rail infrastructures have also been significant. Priority is now for integration of the services that may operate within these infrastructures. Logistics is one of the keys to progress in the Region.

But the physical accesses are only one means towards the major objective of the increasing in economic and social accesses. And, in fact, there has been a great advance in access to goods and basic services, to education, to health

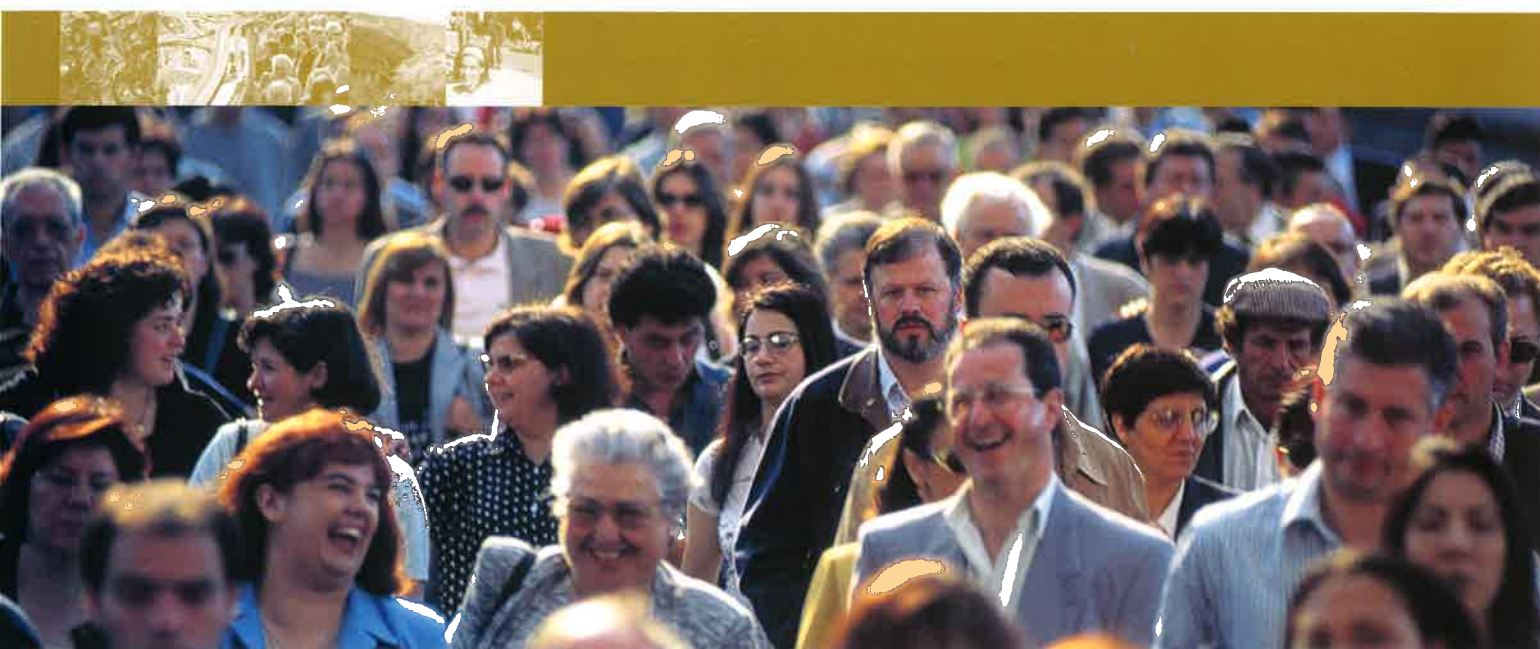
and to sanitation. Job prospects have also been extended on a local and sub-regional level through the expanding of the employment pools and the greater quality of supply. All of this has been possible because the economy is in a better state, the companies have more ready access to raw materials and to the markets, and information flows more rapidly and with increased quality. Innovations are more frequent and encounter fewer and fewer barriers. Resource to financing has also registered an improvement in accessibility.



Valorisation of Human Resources

THIS WILL ALWAYS HAVE TO BE AN ACTIVE LINE in the regional strategies. Education and professional training infrastructures are one of the region's greatest trumps, and the results of this investment are visible on many fronts, as we have tried to show in the preceding chapters. But this is a long-term field and one that implies a continued and constantly updated effort.

Universities, polytechnic institutes and technological centres of excellence are vital infrastructures, but one must not forget that valorisation of the human resource is a continuous process that lasts throughout the lifetime of each citizen. Thus there is an ongoing effort, particularly at local level, for



pre-primary education and the evident need to improve performance in all stages and fields of teaching and learning.

But one should not forget that the Region has a quantitative and qualitative demographic deficit, as the result of decades of emigration. A deficit that must be corrected in the long term by socio-cultural behaviour and in the short and middle term by attracting new populations, who may here find conditions for their human and social fulfilment. Today the Centre Region is also a destination for migrations, both within Portugal and internationally, which is also a path to be taken towards the valorisation of its human resources.

Modernisation of the Economic Base

DESPITE ASYMMETRIES BY SECTOR, THE ECONOMY OF THE CENTRE REGION has undergone an overall movement towards a modernising re-structuring, which can be seen in many aspects we have already mentioned and exemplified.

The strategic aim is towards making the economy more competitive, which is only possible by taking into account the dimensions of innovation and of the human element.

Perhaps the best performance in the area of the economic base lies in the qualification and consolidation of some traditional sectors, as we have stressed. This is a course to be followed, on the one hand maintaining the dynamism of the updating and, on the other hand, attracting other sectors that have roots in the region towards the same type of process. Some land and sea productions may easily follow this path, taking into account their great potential of quality and an area of knowledge that has not yet been lost.

But the Centre Region, in some of its strongest and most dynamic poles, has also shown a capacity to hold down productive activities and technologically-based services through its use of the most advanced technologies. It is a movement that, besides projecting the Region abroad, may have very positive effects on the regional economy as a whole, resulting in the construction of a modern society identified with its territory.

Modernisation of the economic base should also advance – as is, in fact, taking place – through the valorisation of the productive potential of more localised segments of the geographical space, small territories in which a set of quality productions based on traditional knowledge may be integrated in the sense of strengthening the local economic base, not only through tourism, but also through the conquering of market niches that it is important to prospect.

Good Ordering of the Territory

IN THE ABOVE-QUOTED PUBLICATION BY THE CRCC, including the contribution to the studies leading to the CSF III, in relation to “A view of the Centre Region (2000-2006)”, the authors attribute great importance to the development of *A Balanced, Qualified and Active Territorial Model*, which should be structured around four major issues: the organisation and qualification of the urban system; the affirming of centres of knowledge, learning and communication; the creation of logistical platforms and the modernization of the equipments and economic infrastructures;

the promoting of territorial cohesion, not forgetting the low density areas, for which reason the providing of public welfare should follow principles of equity.

These are, indeed, the major aims for the good ordering of the territory. Let us say that they have been followed with reasonable success, despite tensions over the use of the land that have taken place in areas of greater economic and social dynamism, such as the coastal area in general and the major urban centres of the interior. It is precisely within the scope of the III Community Support Programme that a set of initiatives is taking place with great impact on the urban areas, orientated towards the correcting of dysfunctions that have been revealed, in general, in the urban areas and in the most dynamic peri-urban areas.

The territorial model, based on a dense network of small and middle sized urban centres, favours relations of proximity, which facilitate the reinforcing of territorial identity and cohesion. Starting from this point there should naturally emerge a more vigorous and interested intervention by civil society in the sense of demanding good practices in the ordering of the territory.

Cities under the Polis Programme



Improving Quality of Life

THIS IS, INTRINSICALLY, THE ALL-ENCOMPASSING STRATEGIC LINE – without quality of life, as it is understood by the populations – there is no sustained development.

Multiple indicators show that, on the whole, the quality of life of the people of the Centre Region has improved, at least in line with the economic growth. However, there are still social problems that take on greater importance in more fragile groups, whether due to their age, to their living in marginalized areas or due to the negative consequences of some processes of restructuring of the producing sectors.

There is thus great need for continuity in social policies. But the strongest



tendency is that which results from the robustness of the economic fabric and of the social cohesion, which shape and support cohesive and attractive territories.

AT THE END OF THE PATH THROUGH THESE NOTES ON A VAST AND VARIED REGION, AS THESE PICTURES SHOWS, THE READER WILL HAVE CERTAINLY DISCOVERED THAT IN THE CENTRE OF PORTUGAL THERE ARE TERRITORIES INHABITED BY SKILLED AND HARD-WORKING POPULATIONS WHO, IN RESPECTING THEIR OWN IDENTITY, ARE CEASELESSLY BUILDING THE FUTURE, OF THE REGION AND OF THE COUNTRY. THE READER WILL ALSO HAVE COME TO THE CONCLUSION, AS WE HAVE, THAT THIS PUBLICATION, ALTHOUGH IT IS NO MORE THAN AN INTRODUCTION, IS A MUCH-DESIRED VISITING CARD. SO WE LEAVE YOU WITH THE FINAL CHALLENGE: VISIT THE CENTRE REGION, DISCOVER THE *GEOGRAPHY OF DIVERSITY*, ASSESS ITS POTENTIALITIES AND ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE CAPTIVATED BY THE FASCINATION OF THE LAND AND OF ITS PEOPLE, WHO WISH TO WELCOME YOU, PERHAPS, WHO KNOWS, FOR LIFE...

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