

## PORTUGAL

### Technical assistance

#### Location

Lisbon

#### Programming period

2014 – 2020

#### Measure

M20 – Technical assistance

#### Funding (EUR)

RDP support 79 289.95

#### Project duration

2020 – 2021

#### Project promoter

cE3c- FCIências-  
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The technical assistance project JOBtoc aims to investigate the profile of ‘Young Rural Entrepreneurs’ across mainland Portugal and thus contribute to adapting development strategies and policies to the needs and potential of regionalised rural development.

### Summary

The project aims to investigate the profile of those designated ‘Young Rural Entrepreneurs’ across mainland Portugal and to assess how the implementation of Family Farming and Young Farmer statutes can be aligned with the values and expectations of young people.



It will provide reliable and substantiated information about young people in the rural areas and their needs. It will focus on identifying needs relating to climate change, bio-economy and circular economy, the competitiveness of territories and diversification of their activities and innovation. It will also aim to identify the critical factors for their sustainability.

### Results

The project intends to gather valuable audience insight which can help to ‘fine-tune’ the implementation strategies of local policies for young people in various territories through:

- The Rural Investor Guide;
- A book of rules, standards, or records, known as the ‘White Book’ of the ‘Young Rural Entrepreneur’, on policies and support for settling young people in rural areas, including recommendations for political and institutional action, nationally and regionally; and
- A national debate focused on young people in rural areas (still to be carried out).

### Lessons & Recommendations

- Frequent analysis of the results of agriculture and rural area incentives and policies should incorporate socio-economic conditions and regional specificities;
- Good relationship management between academic and practitioner partners should clearly identify the rights and obligations of each side. These terms need to be continuously reviewed and adapted as the project evolves; and
- The effective execution of projects requires a thorough risk assessment and mitigation plan.

## Context

‘Young Rural Entrepreneur’ is a relatively recent initiative in Portugal (2019), which was created to boost entrepreneurship in rural areas, to reduce depopulation, land abandonment and to increase cultural and natural heritage. It is open for application by people between 18 and 40 years and to constituted micro or small companies intending to start economic activity in rural areas. The designated ‘Young Rural Entrepreneurs’ benefit from positive discrimination when it comes to calls for tenders and specific support, including lines of credit and tax benefits. As part of the scheme they also have priority access to support initiatives such as support networks for entrepreneurship, incubation and business acceleration centres, as well as specific vocational training.

However, little is known about the sustainability of what it hopes to achieve: namely the creation of new companies; the establishment of young entrepreneurs in rural areas; whether it will contribute to the economic dynamism of the Portuguese regions; and create jobs. Thus, the JOBtoc project was devised as a result of discussions amongst four institutions, to bridge this knowledge gap about ‘Young Rural Entrepreneurs’ and rural areas. The Centre for Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Changes – (cE3c), a large R&D unit based at the Science Faculty of Lisbon University, took on the role of project coordination, working together with its partners, the Portuguese State Laboratory of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (INIAV, IP.), the Centre for Functional Ecology - Science for People & the Planet based at the Universidade de Coimbra and Animar and the Portuguese Association for Local Development.

JOBtoc is intended to be an essential step in the evaluation of the Portuguese ‘Young Rural Entrepreneur’ statute implementation. The initiative will collect information from young people and entities from several Portuguese regions and municipalities. These were chosen, with the following criteria in mind:

- Being representative of the most important rural areas in Portugal;
- Being spread across most of the country, and
- Being part of regions susceptible to desertification and depopulation that have, or have not, developed measures to combat them.

The major difficulty in executing this project was the very short time frame (1 year that was extended to 18 months) for the collection and analysis of the data. Inevitably, the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on project implementation.

## Objectives

JOBtoc aims to:

- Promote the recent Portuguese statute of ‘Young Rural Entrepreneur’;
- Analyse policies and examples of settling young people in regions effected by depopulated and desertification (through Family Farming and Young Farmers statutes);
- Contribute to deepening the knowledge of agriculture and rural areas;
- Increase the interaction between the various actors involved in rural development (delivered through two thematic focus groups: one on policies and investment and the other on business models/expectations);
- Inform society (young people in particular) about the rural development policy and the possibilities it can create for professional activities.

## Activities

The JOBtoc project is implementing various activities to identify the profile of the ‘Young Rural Entrepreneur’ and its suitability to the economic, environmental, and social development of different types of rural areas.

Most of the activities scheduled for the 2020 period were carried out whenever possible, through virtual meetings, specifically the interaction with young entrepreneurs, young farmers, and corporate bodies (public and private).

In addition, JOBtoc has promoted interaction and knowledge sharing with international entities with regard to young people in depopulated and desertified regions. Through virtual meetings with entities from Spain and Italy, the project shared successful case studies about young entrepreneurs in rural areas and job creation (e.g. knowledge transfer, advisory services, incubators, cooperation between peers and with other development agents).

JOBtoc also developed activities related to surveying local actors and public entities, labour unions and associations and existing legal programs etc.

Surveys aimed at corporate bodies (public and private) and individuals were prepared and disseminated. These surveys aimed at understanding the socio-economic situation of young farmers and rural entrepreneurs in Portugal and analysed perceptions regarding measures about settling young people in regions susceptible to depopulation and desertification. They also looked to better understand the impacts of the statutes of ‘Family Farming’, ‘Young Farmer’, and ‘Young Rural Entrepreneur’ in Portugal. Interviews were conducted with individuals as well as entities.

Finally, the JOBtoc team participated in workshops and events at national and international level related to agriculture and rural development, where they promoted the work they had developed and fostered the debate on the project's theme.

## Main Results

The project intends to result in the fine-tuning of the implementation of local policies for supporting young people in various territories through:

- The Rural Investor Guide (in process);
- The 'White Book ' of the 'Young Rural Entrepreneur', on policies and support for settling young people in rural areas, including recommendations for political and institutional action, nationally and regionally (under process);
- Review and dissemination of written contributions from specific meetings;
- Focused discussions on the implementation of the 'Young Farmer' and the 'Young Rural Entrepreneur' Portuguese statute;
- National debate focused on young people in rural areas (to be carried out soon).

## Key lessons

Some lessons for future research:

a) For the effective execution of projects:

- There is a need to have a risk assessment plan (even

for small projects like this one) designed to mitigate real difficulties, e.g. related to field visits, human resources;

- Need to have light and adapted administrative skills and strategies, in related state departments, promoting information and resources flow (even on the partners' side) that facilitate the completion of the project in due time and with the expected results. This could mean differentiated rules to allow more flexibility.

b) Related to agriculture and rural areas:

- Need to promote frequent and in depth analysis of the results regarding incentives and policies, keeping in mind the realistic socio-economic conditions and regional specificities.
- Need to allocate resources (technical, financial, organisational) to accomplish the work and research in the field, flexible enough to be adapted to changeable conditions.

c) The relationship between academia and practitioners:

- Continue to promote healthy professional relations, keeping in mind the rights and obligations allocated to each side. This may frequently mean having multi-level approaches, even in small projects. The relationships between different academic institutions, as well as between academic institutions and other organisations, needs to be continuously reviewed and adapted.

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### Additional sources of information

<https://inovacao.rederural.gov.pt/projetos/projetos-rrn/37-projetos-rrn/1148-jobtoc-jovens-nos-territorios-rurais-opportunidades-e-constrangimentos>