

## PORTUGAL

### Technical Assistance

#### Location

Northern Portugal

#### Programming period

2007 - 2013

#### Axis / Priority

Social inclusion and local development

#### Measure

M511 – Technical Assistance

#### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 134 964

EAFRD 67 482

National/regional 67 482

#### Project duration

2012 – 2013

#### Project promoter

Associação do Turismo de Aldeia

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Identifying village tourism experiences that have resulted in successful practices to share and replicate them in other territories.

### Summary

This project sought to identify a set of village tourism experiences that have resulted in successful practices and hence can be shared and replicated in other territories. In tracking these experiences, attention was not only paid to the final results of the initiatives, but also to the path that led to success.



In parallel, the project elaborated a specific methodology for the identification of good practices, which allows the continuous examination of the drivers for rural and village tourism taking a longer-term perspective. Other than the knowledge gained within the project, capacities were also built by strengthening networks between relevant actors and their promotion activities.

### Results

- ☐ 83 Villages joined the network of villages and several institutions (public and private ones) were involved in the activities;
- ☐ Private investment in the villages could be mobilised;
- ☐ A significant number of traditional buildings were recovered;
- ☐ A “Villages of Portugal” Booking Centre was established;
- ☐ Established and promoted an annual calendar of events.

### Lessons & Recommendations

- ☐ The project revealed that a systematic review of past experiences can add value to future initiatives as it allows for more strategically designed investments.
- ☐ Long-term investments are essential for the development of villages in Northern Portugal.
- ☐ The presence of a population with a strong cultural identity, a spirit of cooperation and mutual support that ensures continuity in the protection of local heritage values, appears to be an important success factor.

## Context

Facing poverty and a lack of investment or economic development, villages in the North of Portugal invested in initiatives to develop tourism. In parallel, they promoted actions to rejuvenate the population, the development and promotion of local heritage, and to strengthen the territorial identity.

Several projects partnerships got created at local, regional, national and transnational level. A core network evolved of local partnerships involving municipalities, NGO's and LAG's among others, which are currently made up of 83 villages located in the territories of 15 LAGs in the northern part of the country. Yet to further address the development challenges identified by the LAGs, there was a need to consolidate networking activities and to follow a more strategic approach to invest in the establishment of tourism infrastructure.

## Objectives

The main objective of the project was to develop and spread a methodology that identifies good practices of investment in rural tourism.

Supplementary to this, initiatives in the field of village tourism would also be strengthened through the exchange of experience and good practice between actors from different territories.

## Activities

The project was led by the Associação do Turismo de Aldeia (ATA) network, which consists of 15 local development associations which cover the entire northern region of Portugal. This network aims to jointly promote integrated and sustainable development of the covered territories. The ATA association also functioned as marketing manager and was strongly supported by the LAGs involved in the project. Overall, the following activities were carried out:

- Identification of good practices and analysis of factors for success by examining projects pre-selected by the participating LAGs;
- Development of a methodological manual to identify good practices and critical factors for successful village development;
- Dissemination of the methodological manual and promotion of its application, e.g. through workshops;
- Elaboration of a communication strategy;
- Joint participation in fairs, trade shows and exhibitions;

- Establishment of a web-portal and a guide on how to apply the principles of "Villages of Portugal";
- Recovery and enhancement of heritage and landscape.

The "Villages of Portugal" is a new concept in rural Tourism, which offers visitors "experiences of the countryside", through a unique and inimitable product, delivered in a more personalised way that values hospitality, leisure and local customs.

The project promotes cultural heritage, especially the collective memory of the population, traditional buildings, the cultivation of the landscape in balance with the natural countryside, and other customs and traditions of "everyday life".

Overall, the project not only strengthened regional capacities and networks, but the experiences gained within the project and especially through the study on evaluating investment projects, allowed local actors to follow a more strategic approach to village and tourism development.

## Main results

- 83 Villages joined the network of villages and several institutions (public and private ones) were involved in the activities;
- Private investment in the villages could be mobilised;
- A significant number of traditional buildings were recovered;
- A "Villages of Portugal" Booking Centre was established;
- Established and promoted an annual calendar of events.

## Key lesson

Although village development and rural tourism activities are not a novelty, this project revealed that a systematic review of projects undertaken can add value to future initiatives as it allows for more strategically designed investments.

In this case, it was revealed that long-term investments are essential for the development of villages in Northern Portugal.

Also the presence of a population with a strong cultural identity, a spirit of cooperation and mutual support, which ensures continuity in the protection of local heritage values, appears to be an important success factor.

## Additional sources of information

n/a