

## **BERRY+ scoping note**

### **Regional contribution**

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## Centro

### Overview

**Centro** region of Portugal has an area of close to 28.000 km<sup>2</sup> (more than 31% of the country) and a population of 2 217 000 inhabitants (2019, EUROSTAT) (21,6% of the total population of the country). The regional economy is rather diversified encompassing both low technology level industrial sectors (e.g. ceramics, glass, cement, forest industries - wood, pulp, paper -, agro-food), and some medium and high-tech sectors such as health services, biotechnology and pharmaceutical related industries, telecommunications, new materials (particularly the moulds industry), ICT and renewable energies. It is worth mentioning the strong regional potential for the production of renewable energy using endogenous resources such as water, wind, solar, geothermal, biomass, biogas and biofuels<sup>1</sup>.

Centro joined BERRY+ in order to strengthen the internationalisation and competitiveness of regional value chains related to the valorisation of natural resources as well as to address some methodological challenges. More specifically, Centro Region intends to overcome challenges such as: the lack of scale of the agri-food sector companies to access new markets; difficulties in the uptake of technologies from the companies' side; low level of collaboration between companies, research and innovation entities; insufficient level of exploitation of new technologies, especially biotechnologies; the room for improvement in the food sector in terms of environmental performance. This effort should thus support the accomplishment of two of Centro S3's specific objectives: the development of sustainable industrial solutions and the valorisation of natural endogenous resources.

In what concerns the policy and governance structure of Centro, it is relevant to stress that in mainland Portugal there are no autonomous regions. For the five mainland regions there are organisations of the central government with responsibility for regional development, which are bodies of central government in the regions – the Regional Coordination and Development Commissions (CCDRs). CCDR Centro implements governmental policies regarding regional development (including innovation and transnational and inter-regional cooperation), environment, city and land management, and it provides technical support to local administration in NUTSII Centro (PT16).

As Centro does not have an independent regional budget, there are some constraints in the level of flexibility and the range of initiatives that may be promoted, implemented and funded at the regional level. Thus, the Regional Operational Programme of Centro (Centro 2020), for which CCDRC is the responsible managing authority, has a key role to play in the promotion of regional development. Apart from the Regional Operational Programmes, Centro receives a considerable and important amount of funding from the National Thematic Programmes, especially from the Operational Programme for Competitiveness and Internationalisation. Besides these programmes funded through ESIF, at regional or national level, there is not any significant initiative relevant in the context of this Partnership.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regional-innovation-monitor/base-profile/centro-region-portugal> .

## Statistical evidence-base and insights

In 2018 the region's gross domestic product (GDP), was €38.2bn, corresponding to 18.8% of the national GDP (Eurostat, 2020). Taking into account the GDP per capita expressed in purchasing power standards (PPS), the Centro region, with 21,500 (2019), is below the national average (24,764) and the EU average (31,217) (Eurostat, 2020).

According to the most updated data (2019), having 269.110 companies, Centro accommodates more than 20% of the total number of companies existing in Portugal. These enterprises employ 759.243 persons (which is almost 18% of the number of persons employed in enterprises in Portugal). Nevertheless, according to the number of employees, more than 99% of Centro's companies are SMEs. The economic activity "Agriculture, farming of animals, hunting and forestry" is the third one with more enterprises in Centro, comprising more than 11% of the existing companies, but only 6,4% of the employees. Similarly to what happens in the general business fabric of the region, this sector is characterised by a big number of SMEs.

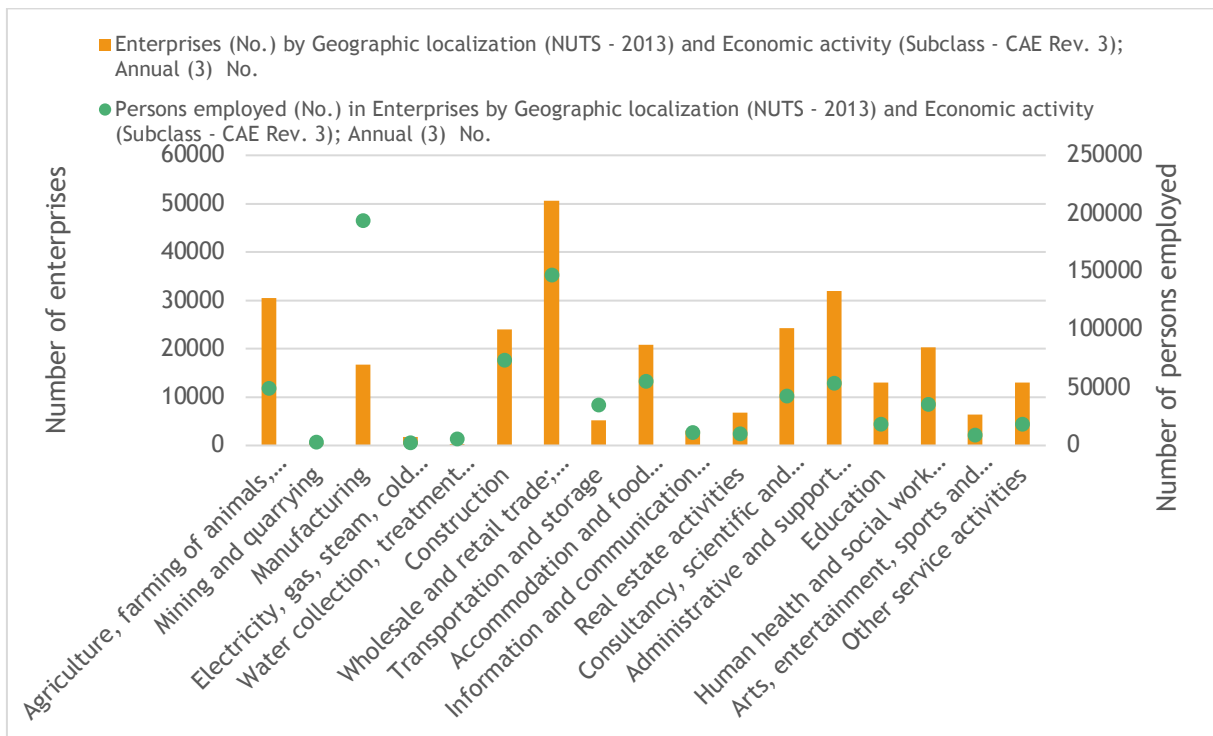


Figure 1 – Total number of enterprises and persons employed by economic activity in Centro, 2019

39% of the territory is covered by forest area. The desertification of the interior, composed mainly by rural areas, is leading to an abandonment of activities related to agriculture, that are seen as less and less attractive and less and less profitable.

Moreover, considering the focus of this Partnership, it is important to highlight that: i) Centro is the region with the largest production of fresh fruits in Portugal, ii) berries are an important lever for some of the rural areas, iii) the agricultural sector, as a whole, is one of the sectors with the higher number of enterprises in the region.

An analysis was performed to identify the most relevant economic sectors in the following indicators (using Location Quotient calculations):

- Employment: the economic sectors that achieved a higher LQ in Centro of Portugal were 'B - Mining and quarrying', 'C - Manufacturing', and 'A - Agriculture, forestry and fishing', with a result of 1.51, 1.42 and 1.3, respectively.
- Gross Value Added: the economic sectors that achieved a higher LQ in Centro of Portugal were 'A - Agriculture, forestry and fishing' and 'C - Manufacturing', with a result of 1.82 and 1.66, respectively. 'B - Mining and quarrying' achieved a lower result of 1.22.

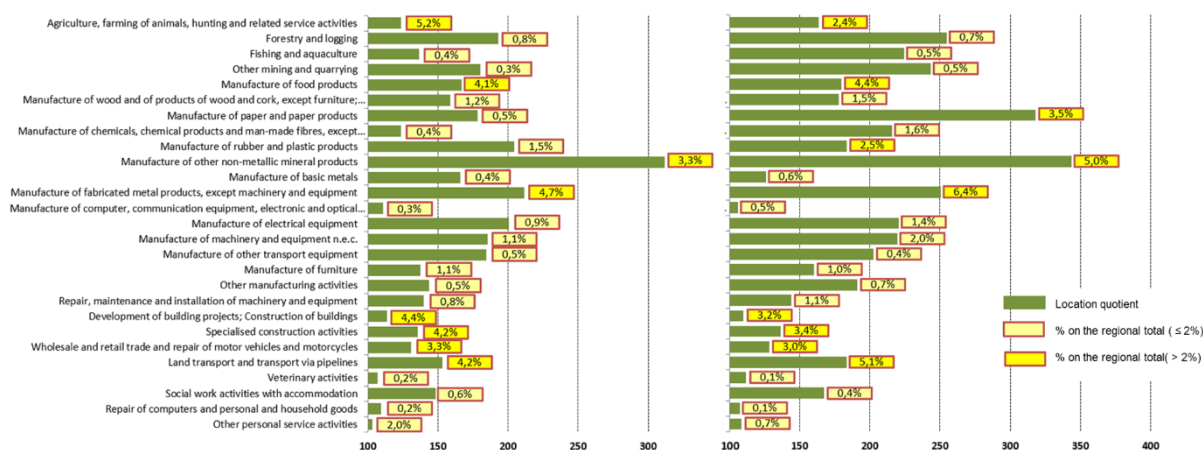


Figure 2 – Centro Location Quotient, 2018

At a more detailed and disaggregated level, the Location Quotient analysis highlighted the regional importance of economic sectors such as 'Agriculture, farming of animals, hunting and related service activities', 'Forestry and logging', 'Manufacture of food products', 'Manufacture of paper and paper products', 'Manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products', or the 'Manufacture of rubber and plastic products'.

To conclude, in what regards the overall regional performance in innovation, in the Regional Innovation Scoreboard (RIS) of 2019, Centro Region was classified as "strong - innovator"<sup>2</sup>. The regional innovation performance has increased over time (the regional innovation index increased 8,9% from 2011 to 2019 when it reached 0,445). The region performed best in terms of: non-R&D innovation expenditures; SMEs innovating in-house; SMEs introducing product/process innovations; and marketing/organisational innovations. The region's worst performances included: employment in medium-high technology manufacturing and knowledge-intensive services; PCT patent applications; and R&D expenditures in the business sector (even though the business sector is the one that most invests in R&D).

<sup>2</sup> Portugal is a moderate innovator.

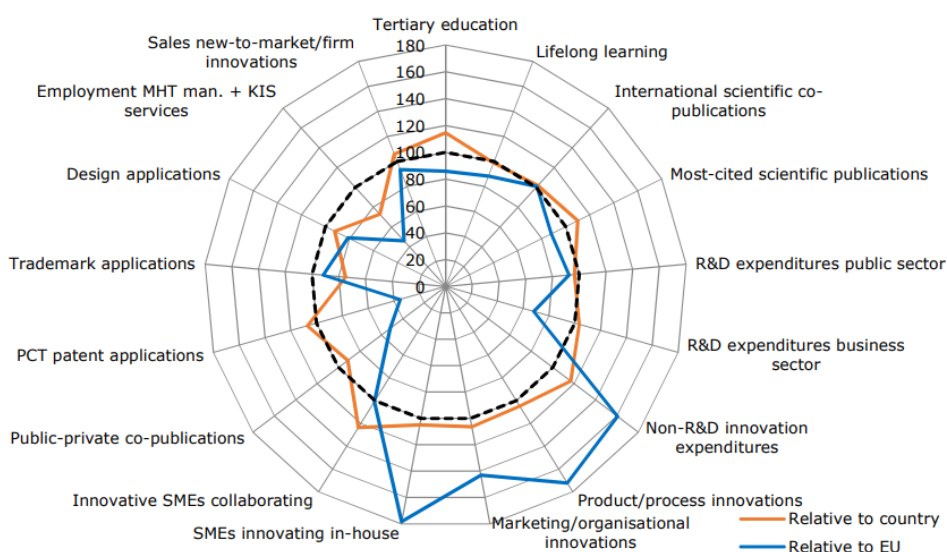


Figure 3 – Centro Regional Innovation Scoreboard, 2019

### RIS3 concept and key priorities

For the period 2014-2020, the Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) for Centro region of Portugal encompassed four priority innovation platforms: Sustainable industrial solutions; Valorisation and efficient use of natural endogenous resources; Technologies for the quality of life; and Territorial innovation.

Centro’s Smart Specialisation Strategy also encompassed four cross cutting priorities (Sustainable resources, Energy efficiency, Territorial cohesion, and Internationalisation) as well as 8 thematic differentiating domains (Forest; Tourism; Agriculture; Sea; Materials; Information, Communication, Technology and Electronics; Health; and Biotechnology).

In Centro of Portugal, CCDRC is the responsible body for the design, implementation and monitoring of the regional Smart Specialisation Strategy (Centro RIS3), doing it in close collaboration with all (regional and national) relevant stakeholders. The revision process of Centro RIS3, for the 2021-2027 period, proposed new domains as well as some other updates, as the following Figure demonstrates.

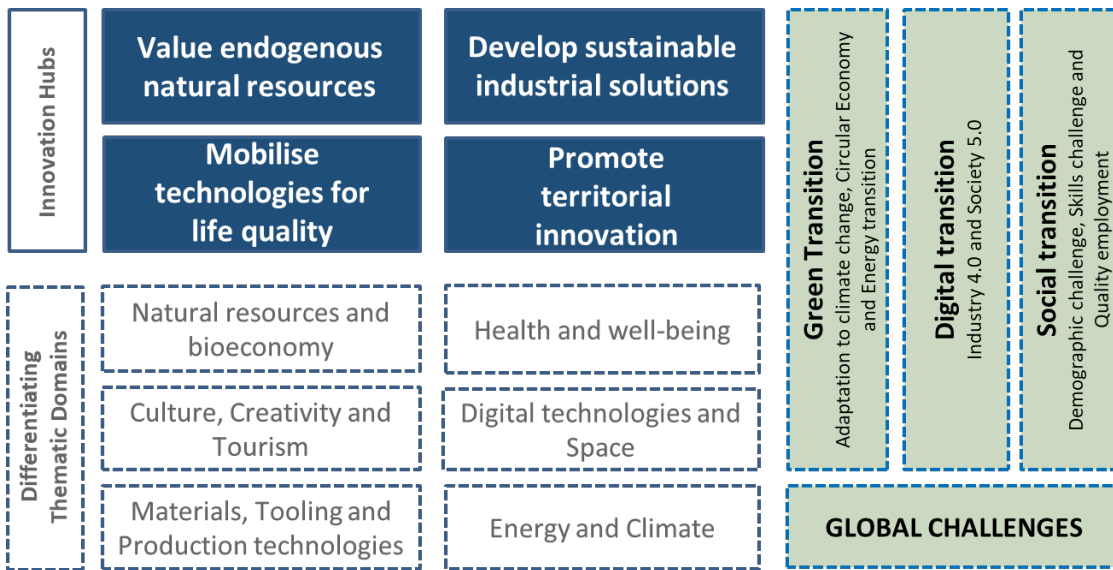


Figure 4 – Centro S3 for 2021-2027

As illustrated, the Centro S3 proposes four different Innovation Hubs, according to the following formulation and contemplating the following lines of action:

**Value endogenous natural resources:** Innovation in the knowledge on endogenous natural resources; Innovation in the conservation, protection and recovery of endogenous natural resources; Innovation in sustainable use and recirculation of natural endogenous resources.

**Develop sustainable industrial solutions:** development of sustainable processes, materials and systems with higher added value for Centro region; Efficient use of resources, and reduction of the environmental impact of production processes and throughout the life cycle of products and systems; Industrial modernisation through Circular Economy; Industrial modernisation through “Human-centered production”; Valorisation of advanced and/or emerging technologies and materials in processes, products and systems.

**Mobilise technologies for life quality:** Development of innovative health and well-being promotion and prevention actions and systems; Development of innovative actions and systems that facilitate early diagnosis in health; Development of new treatments and therapies (e.g. cellular, genetic, biological, pharmacological, regenerative, psychological intervention, among others); Development of innovative actions and systems that promote active and healthy aging, inducing independent living, crossing the different care networks (health care, social support and community); Adoption of platforms to promote interoperability between systems, enhancing citizen-centered solutions.

**Promote territorial innovation:** Development of innovation projects anchored in the territory; Promotion of innovation projects aimed at the digital and/or green transition of territories; Promotion of social innovation initiatives; Development of innovative proposals for the valorisation of environmental and cultural resources and the creative potential of the territory.

Within the Natural resources and bioeconomy differentiating domain it's worth mentioning that the Forest and its resources, services and ecosystem functions are to be used and managed in a prudent and intelligent way, creating the necessary conditions for them to be used sustainably and to be socially and economically valued, increasing the biodiversity and productive and regenerative capacity, contributing to its recovery and protection. The development of scientific and technological knowledge in this area should be supported and transferred in order to facilitate the sustainable management of the territory. It is also important to promote symbiosis and industrial ecosystems that allow for the creation of new products, processes and services, in order to improve the existing value chains and to create new value chains for forest products and services, based on new technologies and innovative practices, in line with the principles of Circular Economy.

In what concerns the Agro-food subdomain (still within the previously mentioned differentiating domain), Centro S3 takes on the ambition to push for the promotion of sustainable, robust and resilient food systems, with net neutral or positive environmental impact, thus contributing to the mitigation and adaptation to climate change, the protection of biodiversity and the economic and social development of the region, through the promotion of new methods of production, preservation, processing, distribution, commercialisation and consumption of food and the creation of new products and more efficient, regenerative and sustainable value chains – through the use of by-products and residues from the primary sector and the food industry. Furthermore, it intends to support food security in the region, which is defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as the situation in which people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, which meet the food needs and preferences and thus ensure the means for an active and healthy life.

## Strengths of the economic and research base in the region

Overall, the regional economy is rather diversified, encompassing both low technology level industrial sectors (such as most companies in ceramics, glass, cement, forest industries), and some medium and high-tech sectors (such as health services, biotechnology, space technologies, new materials and ICT).

It is worth mentioning that services and industry play a very important role in the region. The tertiary sector is actually the most important contributor to the regional Gross Value Added (GVA), having a weight of 66,9% (being the national average 75,5%). The secondary sector represents 29,6% of the regional GVA, which is a value only exceeded by Norte Region (31,9%) and it is well above the national average (22%). The primary sector only accounts for 3,5%<sup>3</sup> of the regional GVA, but it is still above the national average (2,4%).

With three public universities, six polytechnic institutes, around 70 Research and Development (R&D) units, nine interface centres, four collaborative labs, 12 research infrastructures, 48 technological infrastructures, 4 clusters, and 39 business incubators, it is safe to say that Centro has a strong and quite balanced scientific and technological system. Furthermore, all these organisations are well spread over the territory contributing to the consolidation and strengthening of the regional R&I Ecosystem.

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<sup>3</sup> INE, 2020. Data updated on January 2020.

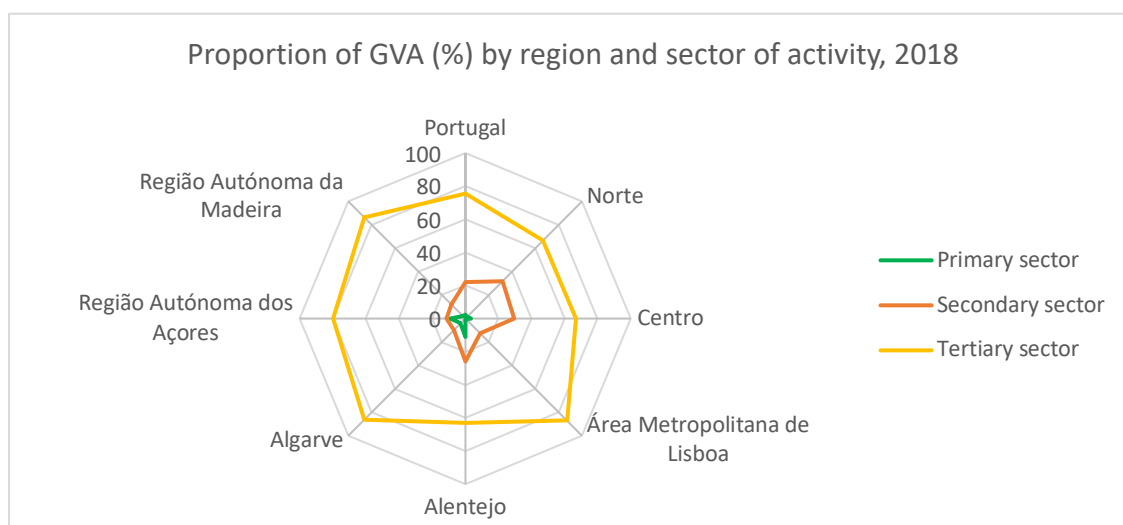


Chart 1 – Proportion of GVA (%) by region and sector of activity

Although all these organisations are fundamental for the success of the regional R&I System, we must not forget the very important role played by the companies, whose performance indicators contributed significantly for Centro to be ranked as “strong - innovator” in the last Regional Innovation Scoreboard. In Centro, in 2018, companies were responsible for more than 52% of all the regional Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD). They were closely followed by the Higher Education Institutions that accounted for more than 45% of the regional GERD .

As for the percentage of gross expenditure on research and development in GDP (at market prices), in 2018, the value for Centro was 1,30% . This number matched the national average (1,35%) below the national and European targets for 2020 (2,7% and 3%, respectively). However, the two subregions with the best performance in this indicator, at national level, were from Centro Region: Coimbra, 2,37%; and Aveiro 2,11%.

From the abovementioned network of stakeholders, approaches were made in order to assess their availability in supporting Centro region participation in Berry+ S3 Partnership. All the feedback received was very positive and encouraging. As innovation, knowledge and technology providers, stakeholders from Centro region have demonstrated their availability to take part in the potential development and/or adaptation of products, processes, services and technologies for other partners in BERRY+, as well as to participate in joint research-to-business programmes (e.g. deployment of solutions and market uptake). From a joint scientific development point of view, there is potential for cooperation in several areas such as Agrifood, Biofuel, Biotechnology, Biocoatings, Polymer engineering & new materials, biological assays, nanotechnology, functional foods, cosmetics, new therapeutic systems, natural bioactive compounds (antioxidants, antimicrobials, colorants, biocides, etc.) for replacing synthetic compounds. There is also interest in cooperating in the development of innovative food products using food preservation processes that maintain nutritional characteristics and bioactive compounds (in collaboration with companies in the region). Other potential ideas include the mapping of forest biomass and carbon storage using GIS and remote sensing as well as the industrial capacitation on collaborative innovation.



In what regards the regional performance in terms of agro-food production, it should be highlighted that at national level, Centro is the largest producer of potatoes and fresh fruits (mainly apple, pear, peach and cherry) and one of the largest producers of crops like cereals, dried pulses and wine and table grapes. Moreover, berries and olive trees are extremely important for the economic and social development of its rural territories.

### **The most important challenges, quantitative and qualitative**

In line with other challenges presented by the effects of climate change, Centro region has been suffering impacts particularly regarding soil erosion and water scarcity, which serve to highlight the importance of innovation and the development of industrialisation strategies for the future of agroforestry and productive sector, namely through Industry 4.0 principles and digitalisation approaches.

Furthermore, there needs to be a push for the diversification of the regional productive systems, both in terms of production (co-cultures, e.g. legumes with vines and pastures with olive trees), but also in terms of new uses and products with added value (functional foods, nutritional supplements, etc.).

Building on the abovementioned room for improvement in what concerns the level of collaboration between enterprises and knowledge producers, some challenges can be mentioned considering their relevance for the focus of this partnership, and namely for interregional cooperation, such as:

1. Limited and recent entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector;
2. Lack of scale of the agri-food sector companies to access new markets;
3. Difficult uptake of technologies from the enterprises' side;
4. Little collaboration between companies and between companies and research and innovation entities;
5. Low level of exploitation of new technologies, especially biotechnologies;
6. Room for improvement of the food sector in terms of environmental performance;
7. Low profitability of forest-based resources across stages and value chains.

Regarding challenge 1, we need to keep in mind that desertification of the interior of the region, particularly in remote areas, has led to an abandonment of agriculture-related activities, which are now seen as less attractive and where start-ups do not pop up very often. Nevertheless, we are starting to see some new entrepreneurs emerging. These new entrepreneurs are more likely to take risks and to experiment new methods and technologies and more willing to cooperate, not only with other producers but also with research and innovation entities. They are also key to help to boost this sector and to create a new regional dynamism. However, for that to happen they need to be provided with tools and capacities, which could be further explored through interregional collaboration.

Challenge 2 regards the existing constraints for local SMEs, especially due to the lack of scale, as they face many challenges in accessing new and international markets. Interregional cooperation can have an important role in overcoming this challenge, enabling SMEs from different regions to collaborate, create scale and join efforts to enter more competitive markets. Gaining scale can also allow companies to have access to new technologies and to collaborate in more innovative approaches, having an opportunity to update the traditional production and transformation methods, into ones with higher benefit and added value. Even at a national

level, the market still has potential to grow, namely, within sectors that privilege quality and certified origin. This is considered particularly relevant for forest products (considering the benefits of wood products in carbon and energy flows during the production cycle) and food products (as there is a recognised high level of food diversity in the region).

Overall, one of the main challenges faced by Centro Region regarding the valorisation of natural resources and their side flows towards high added value applications is the uptake of technologies (developed by the research and innovation system) by the enterprises that work with natural resources (in their transformation, exploitation and valorisation). On the one hand, there are not enough start-ups and, on the other hand, as the big majority of companies working on this sector are SMEs, struggling with daily problems, and not having any type of relationship with research and innovation entities, the technology transfer is a difficult task.

Thus, challenges 3 and 4 (difficult uptake of technologies from the enterprises side and little collaboration between companies and between companies and research and innovation entities) are definitely connected with the 5<sup>th</sup> challenge identified (low exploitation of new technologies, especially biotechnologies). Being the uptake of technologies a difficult process to SMEs, there are many technologies, regionally developed, that are not being exploited.

For instance, there is already technological capacity in wine, olive and fruit processing in general, such as high-pressure cold pasteurisation with industrial pressure machines. Centro also has high-level technologies in the wood value chain and for wood-based residues, having specially a high variability in sawmills (depending mainly on its market volume and collaboration initiatives with innovation centres). Moreover, regional stakeholders also noted that there is a big potential in: exploiting mobile robots and tailor-made solutions for precision agriculture; processes for using bio-waste in panels – applying the circular economy principles; the development of transversal biotechnologies that can be further applied to a number of niches (such as bio-based products for soil and plant health). This last point, about biotechnologies, becomes even more relevant knowing that the only Portuguese Scientific Park completely dedicated to biotechnology is based in Centro. Furthermore, the region also shows capabilities in the deployment of the therapeutic potential of endogenous resources.

Therefore, it is fair to say that there is still a lot to be done and improved regarding the promotion of cooperation, not only between enterprises, but also between enterprises and the research and innovation system. From the technological side, interregional cooperation will allow technology providers to test and further develop their technologies in collaboration with other regions and countries, making them more competitive. This will also allow agri-food companies from other countries to access technologies that maybe they need but still do not have. Thus, we will be able to avoid the duplication of funding – avoiding the funding of a project for the development of a technology already existing in another region/country. On the contrary, complementarities can happen, between technological providers, allowing the creation of more robust innovative systems.

In what regards environmental performance, there is a huge potential for improvement, namely in the agri-food sector, in terms of wastes, wastewater and smart packaging. This is a problem not only faced in the production of resources, but also in its transformation, exploitation and commercialisation. Furthermore, this is not just a regional challenge, this is a global challenge that must be treated like one, which requires interregional cooperation.

Finally, regarding the final challenge, compared to other alternatives available on the market, forest-based products have a reduced environmental impact on global warming indicators, mainly due to carbon captured during tree growth by photosynthesis processes. For this reason, it is important that forest-based products, especially wood-based products, are designed to increase their lifespan and improve their reuse through eco-design practices. Currently, incineration is one of the most commonly used end-of-life practices for forest-based products and co-products from agricultural production. According to European rules for the cascading use of wood, this should be one of the last alternatives to be used for agro-forestry products. Therefore, new alternatives should be studied and validated with industry in order to increase the added value of agro-forestry products and co-products (e.g. production of office supplies from tree branches resulting from pruning).

### Interregional, cross border and national collaboration experiences

In the context of Centro region's work to foster the transition to a Circular Economy, CCDRC has been performing regional analysis and mapping exercises to properly identify pilot actions and stakeholders that are committed to this process. In the document of the National Research Agenda for the Circular Economy, it is said that "in Portugal, research dedicated to the design and development of new products, processes and services has focused on the incorporation of waste into manufacturing processes (e.g. RES2ARGILA project<sup>4</sup>), on the production of biofuels and bio products from biological waste (e.g. project SMIBIO<sup>5</sup>), in the development of circular design implementation methodologies, tools and projects (e.g. project KATCH\_e<sup>6</sup>, project DEGREN<sup>7</sup>), life cycle assessment and sustainability assessment methodologies (e.g. project SABIOS<sup>8</sup>) and the development of indicators for the green economy (e.g. project NETGREEN<sup>9</sup>)". More information about these projects can be found in their respective footnotes.

From the interactions with regional stakeholders, other projects were mentioned as being in line with the principles of Circular Economy, and the valorisation of resources in particular, namely focusing on the valorisation of forest biomass as a tool for the management of forest fires (e.g. project Value2Prevent<sup>10</sup>), the valorisation of wastewater products and the translation of biomedical systems composed of sericin (e.g. project

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<sup>4</sup> More information about the RES2ARGILA project here: <http://projetos.ani.pt/actions/project?id=C12/2006/0438&search=global&actionbean=actions/project>.

<sup>5</sup> More information about the SMIBIO project (funded through FCT) here: <https://www.smibio.net/>.

<sup>6</sup> More information about the Katch\_e project (funded through Erasmus+) here: <http://www.katche.eu/pt/>.

<sup>7</sup> More information about the DEGREN project (funded through Interreg España-Portugal) here: [http://www.degren.eu/?page\\_id=1687&lang=pt](http://www.degren.eu/?page_id=1687&lang=pt).

<sup>8</sup> More information about the SABIOS project (funded through national funds via FCT and co-funded through structural funds via COMPETE) here: <http://www.cesam.ua.pt/?menu=&language=pt&tabela=projectosdetail&projectid=761>.

<sup>9</sup> More information about the NETGREEN project (funded through H2020) here: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/603877>.

<sup>10</sup> More information about the Value2Prevent project (funded through FCT) here: <https://www.serg.pt/atividades/investigacao/projetos-em-curso/value2prevent/>.

WasteSilk<sup>11</sup>), as well as the valorisation of byproducts from agricultural production and the agri-food industry (e.g. project Waste2Value<sup>12</sup>).

Moreover, from the perspective of engagement in R&D funded projects from Horizon 2020 calls that tackle the specific subject of Circular Economy, stakeholders from Centro region have been demonstrating a relevant level of participation. Among many others, these could be presented as examples: BIORECOVER (Grant agreement ID: 821096), that aimed at developing a sustainable and safe process based on biotechnology for the selective extraction of a range of critical raw materials from primary and unexplored secondary sources; FUNGUSCHAIN (Grant agreement ID: 720720), focused on the valorisation of mushroom agrowastes to obtain high value products; or PAPERCHAIN (Grant agreement ID: 730305), focused on the deployment of novel circular economy models centred in the valorisation of the waste streams generated by the Pulp and Paper industry.

From the CCDRC perspective, it is also relevant to highlight the participation in the S3 partnerships (namely, in the S3 High Tech Farming and, more recently, BERRY+), as well as in Horizon 2020 (InRoad and SCREEN) and Interreg Europe (IMPROVE and REPLACE) projects.

Finally, in what regards the scientific and innovative potential of the region, essential for the R&D and innovation based interregional, cross border and national collaboration experiences with entities from Centro of Portugal, some dynamism has already been identified. Some of the most relevant institutions with relevance to this issue include the following: **BIOCANT** – Portugal Science & Technology Park for Biotech and Life Science<sup>13</sup>; **BLC3** – Technology and Innovation Campus<sup>14</sup>; **CATAA** – The Agrifood Technological Center of Castelo Branco<sup>15</sup>; **CERNAS** – Research Centre for Natural Resources, Environment and Society<sup>16</sup>; **CTCV** – Technological Center for Ceramics and Glass<sup>17</sup>; **COTHN** – National Horticultural and Technological Centre; **CVB** – Bairrada Wine Commission<sup>18</sup>; **CECOLab** – Collaborative Laboratory Towards Circular Economy<sup>19</sup>; **InovCluster** – AgroFood Cluster Association of Centro Region of Portugal<sup>20</sup>; **IPN** – Instituto Pedro Nunes<sup>21</sup>; but also **IPC** – Polytechnic Insitute of Coimbra<sup>22</sup>; **IPCB** – Polytechnic Insitute of Castelo Branco<sup>23</sup>; **IPG** – Polytechnic Insitute of Guarda<sup>24</sup>;

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<sup>11</sup> More information about the WasteSilk project (funded through FCT) here: [http://www.ipg.pt/website/fct\\_projeto.aspx?idprojeto=1&titulo=WasteSilk](http://www.ipg.pt/website/fct_projeto.aspx?idprojeto=1&titulo=WasteSilk).

<sup>12</sup> More information about Waste2Value (funded through the Rural Development Programme) here: <http://waste2value.pt/index.php>.

<sup>13</sup> More information about BIOCANT here: <https://www.biocant.pt/>.

<sup>14</sup> More information about BLC3 here: <http://www.blc3.pt/?lang=en>.

<sup>15</sup> More information about CATAA here: <https://www.cataa.pt/>.

<sup>16</sup> More information about CERNAS here: <http://www.cernas.org/>.

<sup>17</sup> More information about CTCV here: [https://www.ctcv.pt/index\\_eng.html](https://www.ctcv.pt/index_eng.html).

<sup>18</sup> More information about CVB here: <http://www.cvbairrada.pt/>.

<sup>19</sup> More information about CECOLab here: <http://www.cecolab.pt/>.

<sup>20</sup> More information about InovCluster here: <https://www.inovcluster.pt/>.

<sup>21</sup> More information about IPN here: <https://www.ipn.pt/>.

<sup>22</sup> More information about IPC here: <https://www.ipc.pt/ipc/>.

<sup>23</sup> More information about IPCB here: <https://www.ipcb.pt/>.

<sup>24</sup> More information about IPG here: <http://www.ipg.pt/website/>.

**IPL** – Polytechnic Insitute of Leiria<sup>25</sup>; **IPT** – Polytechnic Insitute of Tomar<sup>26</sup>; **IPV** – Polytechnic Insitute of Viseu<sup>27</sup>; **serQ** – Forestry Innovation and Competence Centre<sup>28</sup>; **UA** – University of Aveiro<sup>29</sup>; **UBI** – University of Beira Interior<sup>30</sup>; and **UC** – University of Coimbra<sup>31</sup>.

Thus, considering the network of regional stakeholders to be mobilised in the context of this partnership we should at i) allowing them to create new relationships and collaborations, outside the territory, ii) giving them access to new technologies and new ideas about how to better produce, exploit and commercialise regional products, iii) as well as provide them with the chance to enter European or even Global Value Chains. Hence, interregional collaboration will be a unique opportunity for them to grow, bringing more value to the region and transforming this sector.

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<sup>25</sup> More information about IPL here: <https://www.ipleiria.pt/>.

<sup>26</sup> More information about IPT here: <http://www.ipt.pt/>.

<sup>27</sup> More information about IPV here: <https://www.ipv.pt/>.

<sup>28</sup> More information about serQ here: <https://www.serg.pt/>.

<sup>29</sup> More information about UA here: <https://www.ua.pt/>.

<sup>30</sup> More information about UBI here: <https://www.ubi.pt/>.

<sup>31</sup> More information about UC here: <https://www.uc.pt/>.