



ABOUT ALTO TRÁS-OS-MONTES

Alto Trás-os-Montes is one of the 8 NUT III areas of Northern Portugal. It covers 14 local councils (municipalities), part of Bragança and Vila Real districts. With Douro, another NUT III, it integrates the traditional Trás os Montes and Alto Douro region, where the famous port wine is grown.

The 14 municipalities of Alto Trás-os-Montes are: Bragança, Macedo de Cavaleiros, Mirando do Douro, Mirandela, Mogadouro, Vimioso, Vinhais, Boticas, Chaves, Montalegre, Murça, Valpaços and Vila Pouca de Aguiar.

Alto Trás-os-Montes northern border are the spanish provinces of Pontevedra and Ourense (part of Galicia autonomous region) and the eastern border are the spanish provinces of Zamora and Salamanca (Castilla autonomous region). Alto Trás-os-Montes has a population of 223,000 people in an area of 8,171 km2. Population density is 27 persons per km2, against a national (Portuguese) average of 112 and a Northern Portugal average of 173. Sparsely densely populated, it has traditionally been a remote territory, far from the centre (Lisbon), but always very proud of its very rich identity. The triangle for the future, the three cities promoting the callTM project, are three of the main cities in Alto Trás-os-Montes and represent around 1/3 of the population (and 28% of the area). Bragança is the natural capital of Alto Trás-os-Montes, with around 35,000 people. Last census (2001) showed that during last decade the region has braked on the population bleeding to the litoral cities and for the first time in the last decades cities like Bragança and Mirandela show a positive growth in resident population. A new migration from the region villages to the new regional centralities (instead of the traditional Porto and Lisbon destinations of migration movements) is clearly shown by last census data.

A new transborder centrality is being created by Alto Trás-os-Montes and the close Spanish municipalities, based on two remote and peripheral regions.

New acessabilities, like the expected growth of airport facilities in Bragança, and a new Spanish TGV station in Pueblo de Sanabria (20 kms from Bragança by road) will reinforce Bragança as the Portuguese city closest to Madrid, Paris and Central and Northern Europe.

More than half of the 9000 students in Alto Trás-os-Montes colleges (polytechnics, universities, ...) are not from the region. This phenomena contributed dramatically to the changes occurred during the last decade in Alto Trás-os-Montes.



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INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

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ATTRACTING SOFTWARE AND CONTACT CENTERS SERVICES TO ALTO TRÁS-OS-MONTES PERIPHERIAL REGION (HIGH NORTHEASTERN PORTUGAL)

- NURTURING THE NEW WAVE OF REGIONAL SOCIAL CAPITAL

PROTOTUPING DISTRIBUTED CALL CENTERS IN ULTRA PERIPHERIAL REGIONS

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THE PROJECT



1. ORIGINS AND OBJECTIVES

callTM is a territorial marketing project to promote **Alto Trás-os-Montes (aTM)**, a peripheral region in North-eastern Portugal, close to the border with Spain (Zamora / ourense provinces).

The project is promoted by the local councils of the three main cities in the regions: Bragança, Macedo de Cavaleiros and Mirandela. The three cities are less than 30 minutes by road far from each other and constitute what is called "A Triangle for the future" in the project.

callTM is a (small) inter-municipal joint project, supported by the PON (Northern Portugal Operational Program) (national FEDER funds). The project began last March 2003, has a duration of 15 months and a budget around 150,000€. The main objective of the project is to promote the attractiveness of aTM, specially for new services around

information and communications technologies (ITC). This means mainly pilots of software production and multichannel contact centres (call centres included) that can demonstrate the feasibility of the concept in the region. Portuguese and foreign ITC companies are the targets. The region has available a qualified pool of manpower at a very competitive cost and without the high instability or volatility typical of large urban areas.

The origins of the project go back to 2001, when one of the new Telecom operators that won a 3G UMTS licensee (OniWay) committed itself to install and operate a

2. WHAT WE ARE DOING

CallTM began formally last March 2003. Operations were assigned to a consortium between Inovatec and Cap Gemini Ernest & Young as the result of a public bid process. The coordinator of the project is Eduardo Beira, a professor in University of Minho and a experienced professional, including activities for attraction of foreign investment in peripheral regions (he has been the first executive manager of AINP, the Northern Portugal Agency for foreign investment attraction). First versions of informational materials are being concluded. A web site is already online and the materials are also available there in digital formats. The marketing strategy and the marketing arguments are in the final stages. A survey of the local ITC companies is also running.

3. METHODOLOGY

Attraction strategy for national and international ITC operators and companies is based in the following central ideas:

- Good documentation and information support (sales arguments)
- Diffusion of a less well known reality, even in Portugal (Lisbon in special): the new face and capabilities of Alto Trás-os-Montes and the associated opportunities for ITC services.
- Direct contacts (sales calls) with top management of ITC companies and related companies (banks, insurance, utilities, call centers operators, ...) through a program of contacts to be made jointly with CGEY highly qualified professionals
- A program of visits to Alto Trás-os-Montes of important decision makers in ITC and related companies, in order to have a local experience of the local actors and leaderships (between next September and May).
- Create local and national awareness of the region capabilities and to reinforce the local social capital
- Promote the project and the region as an academic case in the technical and scientific communities related to regional development policies and (ultra) peripheral regions, including the cooperation of some leading international specialists (workshop, 1 October 2003) also contributing as consultants to the project.

The sales proposition to Contact Centres operators is based on the new opportunities created by decentralized multichannel IP architectures. Growth of operations can be feasible by adding remote satellites and agents in remote regions (Alto Trás-os-Montes) instead of growth in the high competitive and high turnover call centres urban markets (Lisbon, Porto, Madrid, ...). Local conditions of available and qualified manpower are a guarantee of the potential scalability of the concept in the near future.

distributed call center operation for UMTS service support based on a Lisbon node and three "remote" satellite nodes with 20 agent positions each one, based in Bragança, Macedo de Cavaleiros and Mirandela. This commitment was part of the social offset offered in the bidding process. Unfortunately OnyWay gave up the 3G licensee last December (the licensee was sold to the three remaining operators, that of course closed the operation) and the distributed call center commitment is now uncertain. Meanwhile the three local councils had made a PON proposal for a local support project for the OnyWay investment, that now has

been converted in a territorial marketing project searching for ITC pilot projects that can contribute as seeds of local clustering and demonstration actions for attraction of new investments. Although traditionally aTM is considered a remote and backward region, with an aging population, desertification problems, low tech agriculture and very weak industry, that scenario has been changing dramatically during last twenty years. Local Universities (both public and private) has now more than 9000 students mainly in engineering (with strong emphasis in computer science) and health sciences, accessibilities (both by road and by air) are now good and quality of life in a very rich natural environment has become attractive for young couples and professionals.