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SMART MINHO

# RIVER MIÑO 2030 CROSS-BORDER STRATEGY

 **DEPUTACIÓN**  
PONTEVEDRA



**cim alto minho**  
Comunidade Inter-municipal do Alto Minho



CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS ENVIEN  
CURSO DE COORDINACIÓN  
VALS, NOROCCIDENTAL

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CROSS-BORDER STRATEGY

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# CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD BY UXÍO BENÍTEZ AND FERNANDO BRITO NOGUEIRA .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>FOREWORD BY CARMELA SILVA REGO.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>FOREWORD BY MANUEL JOAQUÍN REIGOSA .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>FOREWORD BY JOSÉ MARIA COSTA .....</b>	<b>13</b>
1. INTRODUCTION .....	15
2. STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS.....	16
2.1 INITIAL PHASE.....	16
2.2 ANALYTICAL PHASE.....	17
2.3 CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PHASE.....	18
2.4 REVISION PHASE.....	19
2.5 SUMMARY OF THE FINAL TEXT .....	20
3. TERRITORIAL CONTEXT .....	20
3.1 THE EUROPEAN UNION .....	22
3.2 THE GALICIA-NORTH PORTUGAL EUROREGION .....	23
4. TERRITORIAL ANALYSIS .....	26
4.1 POPULATION.....	26
4.2 ECONOMIC STRUCTURE AND LABOUR MARKET.....	32
4.3 MOBILITY .....	36
4.4 CROSS-BORDER PROGRAMMES OF EXISTING JOINT PUBLIC SERVICES AND EQUIPMENT .....	38
4.5 NATURAL RESOURCES.....	39
5. TERRITORIAL DIAGNOSIS .....	44
6. ACTION PLAN .....	46
REFERENCES .....	51
ANALYSED STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS AND CITED COMMUNITY LEGISLATION.....	53
CONSULTED STATISTICAL INSTITUTIONS.....	55



## Opportunities and challenges of a common territory

The River Miño cross-border area has a rich common linguistic, archaeological, architectonical, cultural, and environmental heritage and a history of its own shared by Galicia and Portugal. However, for centuries its role as a border left it far from the countries' centres of power left it far from the countries' centres of power and decision for centuries, pushing it into the background and diminishing its socioeconomic development.

The Europe without borders opened a new window for opportunities. Today, the River Miño cross-border area is a territory with an enormous potential and a strategic location, halfway between the big metropolitan areas of Vigo and Porto. It is the most populated border between Spain and Portugal and the busiest within the Iberian Peninsula. Moreover, it offers multiple possibilities of economic output via the sea fishery, agricultural, and tourism sectors.

However, there are still many challenges left to be faced. The persistence of legal and administrative barriers regarding cross-border mobility, the lack of a defined strategy for sustainable tourism, the difficulty to meet the high demand for skilled professionals, the depopulation of inland areas, population ageing or emigration, among other issues, pose major challenges for public institutions.

The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Rio Minho (EGTC Rio Minho) was founded on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2018 with the aim of promoting development and strengthening social and economic cohesion in the area. It is formed by the Deputación de Pontevedra and the Comunidade Intermunicipal do Alto Minho, both comprising 26 municipalities from Galicia and Portugal. The EGTC Rio Minho carries out different actions aimed at articulating this common area, encouraging institutional and cooperative relations, and highlighting the importance of this territory.

As the main action within the European cooperation project Smart Minho, the River Miño 2030 Cross-Border Strategy is a milestone regarding Galician-Portuguese cooperation in many senses. Despite a long tradition of cooperation between both sides of the river and even though strategic studies about each of them have been carried out separately. It is the first time that a deep, economic, social, and political analysis of the area, in which the river is understood as the element that binds this area together and not just as a border, is carried out.

The River Miño 2030 Cross-Border Strategy is an essential step towards future cross-border cooperation between the south of the province of Pontevedra and North Portugal, where joint efforts have been made for years with very positive results. Having a document like this, with a real study of the territory recognising its strengths and weaknesses, will help design a joint action plan in the future.

Moreover, this work will open the door to the possibility of having social and institutional agents in the area to draft an innovative initiative: the design and implementation of a cross-border Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI), a fundamental tool to bring success for an intelligent, sustainable, and integrative Europe that guarantees the effective management of European funds for the territory. The River Miño area currently meets all necessary requirements to launch it: an integrated development strategy, an action package, and government agreements to manage that tool.

We would also like to thank the team of the Fundación Centro de Estudos Eurorrexionais Galicia-Norte de Portugal, the CIM Alto Minho, the Deputación de Pontevedra, and the EGTC Rio Minho for their joint collaboration and efforts to keep this process alive and moving forward, as well as all the entities and people who have participated in this journey.

Uxío Benítez Fernández

Director of the EGTC Rio Minho and  
Chief representative of Cross-Border Cooperation  
of the Deputación de Pontevedra

Fernando Brito Nogueira

Deputy Director of the AECT Rio Minho

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## **River Miño, a border that brings us together**

The River Miño is the natural border between Galicia and North Portugal. Far from separating us, it constitutes the backbone of a common territory located on both sides of the river, with strong historical ties, sister languages, a highly valuable cultural heritage, and an enormous economical and tourism potential to be developed.

The border is a dynamic space in which the south of the province of Pontevedra and North Portugal collaborate intensely. This area has the highest labour mobility along the Spanish-Portuguese border, and its inhabitants, regardless of their country of residence, live a shared reality. There is a clear and permanent willingness to cooperate. That is the reason why it is crucial to lead a coherent and comprehensive development through joint work.

The River Minho 2030 Cross-Border Strategy was created with this goal. It is an instrument included in the SmartMinho project that resulted from the involvement of the most relevant actors of the territory, such as administrations and universities, experts, and also citizens, who participated actively with their contributions and suggestions.

The Deputación de Pontevedra, the Comunidade Intermunicipal do Alto Minho (CIM), and the Fundación Centro de Estudos Eurorrexionais (CEER), and later the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Rio Minho (EGTC Rio Minho), promoted a cooperation initiative aimed at defining the agenda for the next decade to improve territorial integration and boost cross-border area in the mid-term.

The 26 municipalities integrating the project (16 from Galicia and 10 from Portugal) will face new opportunities and challenges in the upcoming years. The thorough research work behind the 2030 Strategy and its excellent diagnosis served as a basis to establish actions in different fields which will doubtlessly contribute to a coordinated planning. It is essential to take into account the conclusions and suggestions in this document, which cover different areas, including shared local services, joint tourism promotion, mobility, and land conservation.

Administrations are responsible for leading this collaborative process and introducing a sustainable growth model in the River Miño area consolidating it as a benchmark for European cross-border cooperation. We have great potential and must work hard to turn our words into actions.

We share a common past since Roman times; in the Middle Ages, the Way of St. James was a link between the two peoples, and the communication infrastructures became the backbone of the territory. The River Miño was a natural generator of wealth and an omnipresent witness of historical events and our progress. Now, let us write our future together. The 2030 Strategy is the ideal roadmap to achieve this goal.

Carmela Silva Rego

President of the Deputación de Pontevedra



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## Foreword by the president of the CEER

The CEER constitutes a more than fifteen-year-old partnership among the six public universities of Galicia and North Portugal. From its inception, it has served as a stable platform promoting collaborative work among its member universities, and for which obtaining European territorial cooperation interuniversity projects (INTERREG) was vital. This book summarises the results of one of those INTERREG projects, Smart Minho, which was active between 2017 and 2019. With this project, the CEER helped draft an integrated territorial strategy for the year 2030 in the River Miño, an emerging cooperative space between both sides of the river.

The CEER and its member universities believe that it is not just our privilege, but also our duty, to participate in active social processes in which the present and the future of the territories making up the Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion, as well as their economy, their environment, their population, etc., are being discussed. Indeed, it has allowed us to lay the foundations of a joint strategy to provide this area with a tool specially designed to maximise its potential for the years 2021-2027. The other partners of the project (originally the Deputación de Pontevedra and the CIM Alto Minho, and later the EGTC Rio Minho) requested the universities to lead the process. We would like to thank all of them for their trust and hope that whoever reads this book is satisfied with the obtained results.

Manuel Joaquín Reigosa Roger

Vice-chancellor of the University of Vigo and president of the CEER in 2018-2019



## River Miño 2030 Strategy

The Alto Minho has a local market that can be reached by 3.5 million people in less than 60 minutes. It covers the metropolitan areas of Porto and Vigo, as well as the urban axis of Braga-Guimarães.

In turn, the border of Alto Minho is not just clearly the most densely populated area in the border between Spain and Portugal, but also the busiest, with 47 % of all light vehicle trips between both countries.

It is important to mention that today Galicia is Portugal's main client in Spain, representing an increasing cross-border integration phenomenon in the Iberian Peninsula. In 2016 (latest year with available data), imports of goods from Galicia into Portugal reached 2.5 billion euros in current prices, while exports from Portugal into Galicia came to almost 2 billion euros.

The importance of the Spanish market for the economy of Alto Minho does not just affect commercial exchanges, but also Galician tourism in the region. According to data from the Galician Institute of Tourism Studies (IET), in 2009, approximately 30 % of all Spaniards who stayed in Portuguese hotels were Galician. Data regarding the use of Porto Airport by Galician people are also impressive, mostly due to geographic proximity and thanks to the promotion of this destination along with the neighbouring region: "Portugal is offered as a destination by 10 tour operators in Galicia, seven of which are located in the province of Pontevedra" (cf. Alto Minho 2020 Strategy).

It should also be noted that the 60-minute area of influence of the territory of Alto Minho hosts a regional network of technological innovation, research, and development (Porto, the Braga-Guimarães axis, and the south of Galicia). It includes, for example, INEGI, INESC, CEEIA (car industry), INL (nanotechnology), Fraunhofer, I3S (healthcare), PIEP (polymers), CETMAR (Vigo-Galicia), CTAG (car industry, O Porriño-Galicia) or CETNAGA (naval industry, Vigo-Galicia).

On the European Union level, the Alto Minho area can benefit from its geographic location, with the consolidation of the Atlantic Arc, Area, and Axis and the Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion, promoting integration and social and economic cohesion in fields related to regional and local joint initiatives (cross-border initiatives) or European priorities (cross-national initiatives), especially those regarding rail connections of the Porto-Valença-Viana do Castelo-Vigo-Santiago de Compostela cross-regional axis.

Thus, the Alto Minho is in a good position to intervene in a process of opening and close interaction between Portugal and Spain, via North Portugal-Galicia, which revises the economic activity and stronger links in (already existing, yet relatively spontaneous) traditions, customs, and cultural habits interpretation processes that are being carried out in the territories on both sides of the River Miño by Portuguese municipalities and Galician provinces.

In this context, future cross-border cooperation programmes for Portugal and Spain must strengthen their exclusive focus on cross-border NUTS III, refocusing on the regions for which they were conceived. Thus, the River Miño 2030 Cross-Border Strategy, promoted by the CIM Alto Minho with the collaboration of the Deputación de Pontevedra and the Fundación Centro de Estudos Eurorrexionais Galicia-Norte de Portugal, constitutes an important contribution to revitalise local cross-border relations between neighbouring areas in the Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion, particularly for basic investments mobilisation during the next programming period for Community funds

José Maria Costa

President of the Conselho Intermunicipal of the CIM Alto Minho



# 1 / INTRODUCTION

This document offers a summary of the Strategy for the River Miño cross-border area for Horizon 2030. The strategy was drafted between 2017 and 2019 taking into account strategic, budgetary, and other types of Community frameworks for the period 2014-2020 and the prospects for the upcoming 2021-2027 period, as well as the long strategic reflection process carried out in Galicia and North Portugal (from now on, the Euroregion). The River Miño 2030 Cross-Border Strategy is pioneering both because of its reach and its territorial scope: within an intermediate, local, supramunicipal scale, but not including the whole Euroregion.

Primarily, the Strategy 2030 aims at improving the level of territorial integration, the appeal, and the promotion of the River Miño cross-border area seeking territorial development and welfare and improving quality of life for its population, as well as promoting employment and social inclusion. In a specific and systematic way, this document also aims at:

- Having an integrated cross-border strategy in order to sustainably use endogenous resources, namely those related to the River Miño, so that it becomes the driving force of territorial development.
- Getting multilevel public and private agents involved in the strategic process.
- Promoting citizens' participation with the goal of obtaining their territorial diagnosis and proposals.
- Identifying strategic goals for the area.
- Giving the territory a stable framework which allows for planning and investments in the upcoming years.
- Providing a coherent framework that makes it possible to support the drafting of specific projects for different founding instruments aimed at cross-border cooperation in the new period for Community funding.

The 2030 Strategy is the main output of the SmartMinho project, which has been 50 % co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) via the Spain-Portugal Cross-Border Cooperation Operational Programme 2014-2020 (POCTEP 2014-2020), to be more precise, by axis 4, aimed at improving institutional capacity and efficiency of public administrations through cross-border cooperation. At the beginning of 2018, during the implementation of the project, the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC Rio Minho), promoted by the Deputación de Pontevedra (the provincial council of Pontevedra, the main beneficiary institution), the Comunidade Intermunicipal (CIM) do Alto Minho (Municipal Association of Alto Minho), and the Fundación Centro de Estudos Eurorrexionais (CEER, the Euroregional Studies Foundation), was created and participated in the project too. For this organism, the 2030 Strategy serves as an action agenda for the upcoming years.

This document includes the most relevant contents of the 2030 Strategy. After revising the chronological phases and methods used, a territorial context section that locates River Miño cross-border area in the European framework, focusing especially on cross-border contexts and the core of the Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion, is included. Next, the analysis of key theme issues of the covered area is provided and followed by the summary of the strategic diagnoses resulting from all the work carried out. The last section shows the agreed action plan, including strategic axes, lines of action and objectives.

In conclusion, the River Miño 2030 Cross-Border Strategy is not completed with the two-year-long drafting work by the public universities in the Euroregion and the involved public administrations. Instead, it is meant to be the doorway to a continuous strategic process in the medium-term which enables to activate the cross-border area in a unitary and coherent way. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to make other agents, besides the promoting institutions, feel like they are responsible for the drafting of this document, not just participants. That was achieved through an intense parallel participatory process including plenty of feedback.

The 2030 Strategy constitutes, therefore, a dynamic tool that seeks to plan future actions in the River Miño cross-border area and its success is linked to civil society involvement.

The 2030 Strategy is an action agenda to improve the integration, development, sustainability, appeal, cohesion, and promotion of the River Miño cross-border area

## 2 / STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Between the autumn of 2017 and the winter of 2019, different work phases took place, always following the premise shared by the three promoting entities (Deputación de Pontevedra, CIM Alto Minho, and CEER) and the EGTC Rio Minho, when it was created in February 2018, which determined that all territorial agents and social society in general should be involved in the whole process. Thus, the project started with a round of interviews with municipal authorities that allowed for getting to know the territory first-hand at a local level. Subsequently, other participative mechanisms have been progressively incorporated, including different social, cultural, political, and economic institutions in the area.

The work programme, implementation schedule, and participation phases were decided in the autumn of 2017 by agreement of the three beneficiaries of the Smart Minho project. The drafting team was responsible for implementing the schedule with support from the technical teams of the three partners. To ensure the scientific and academic quality of the process, the CEER contacted experts from the euroregional public universities who made

up the Scientific Advisory Committee, whose role will be later discussed. Ever since its creation, the Coordinating Council of the EGTC Rio Minho assumed the political leadership of the project.

## 2.1 INITIAL PHASE

### First round of meetings with mayors

In late autumn 2017, the technical staff assigned to the project paid five joint visits to adjacent local entities, on both sides of the river, with experience in territorial cooperation or, in some cases, even in provision of joint services. During those visits, in-depth interviews and baseline information collection (documents, statistics, etc.) were carried out. The interviews were conducted following a guide consisting of a list of questions with the aim of getting to know the problems and suggestions for each cross-border reality. The specific dates and participants of those meetings were the following:

- 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017: Cerveira-Tomiño
- 11<sup>th</sup> December 2017: Valença-Tui
- 12<sup>th</sup> December 2017: Monção-Salvaterra de Miño-As Neves
- 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017: A Guarda-Caminha-O Rosal
- 21<sup>st</sup> December 2017: Melgaço-Arbo

It was deemed necessary to start from different local realities to lay the foundations of a supramunicipal reading in a bottom-up participatory process. This way, the River Miño 2030 Strategy aimed at combining the general conditions of the whole territory with the specific characteristics of each of the parts comprising the area.

### Contributions from the Scientific Advisory Committee

At the same time, work sessions with four experts of the Scientific Advisory Committee were conducted to obtain useful contributions for successive phases. They tackled the following topics:

- Innovative and sustainable economy (Dr Anxo Calvo, University of A Coruña)

- Mobility, shared services, and tourism (Dr Rubén Camilo Lois, University of Santiago de Compostela)
- Traditional trade, markets, and culture (Dr José Alberto Rio Fernandes, University of Porto)
- Territorial diagnosis based on productive activities (Dr Francisco Carballo, University of Minho)

### First draft of the action plan

As a result of the work carried out in the first phase, the drafting team wrote an initial draft for the action plan organised in strategic axes, lines of action, goals, and projects. The action plan was later reformulated, but it served to frame the subsequent citizen participation phase.

## 2.2 ANALYTICAL PHASE

### Strategic documents analysis

In spring 2018, the CEER analysed documents considered to be strategic to properly support this document<sup>1</sup>. They belong to four different scales:

- **European Union** documents, both Community regulations and indicative framework documents. A special mention should be made to the proposed regulations for the 2021-2027 period, which were presented in May 2018, for different Community funds, territorial cooperation, and the new mechanism designed for overcoming the legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context, which were incorporated during the strategic process.
- **Spain-Portugal cross-border cooperation documents**
- **Documents from the Euroregion**
- **Parts of the River Miño cross-border area** with comprehensive or sectoral (tourism, rural development, etc.) strategic plans. After the analysis, it was concluded that the territorial scope of the River Miño cross-border area was relevant in order to convey the differences found in the way that similar issues are tackled on

both sides of the border regarding tourism, for example

In this sense, the Strategy starts from an assessment of the strategic precedents of the 2014-2020 period and is being planned, in a pioneering way, for the 2021-2027 period. Taking these documents into account makes it possible to include the agreements and participatory processes of different nature carried out during its corresponding drafting. The results of the document analysis have not been included in this summary, despite being one of the main foundations of the final action plan.

### Statistical and document analysis

In order to support the 2030 Strategy, the CEER carried out a thorough analytical work using available comparable statistical sources (namely from Eurostat, the Spanish and Portuguese national institutes of statistics, and the Galician Institute of Statistics), as well as a summary of the relevant bibliography for the strategic process, especially those related to the River Miño and its heritage. In this publication, sections 3 and 4 briefly summarise research carried out in this regard.

This analysis and a text about European territorial cooperation dynamics written *ad hoc* (not included in this summary) allowed for reformulating both the diagnosis and the action plan proposed in the previous phase. The resulting document became the draft of the 2030 Strategy presented in the 1st River Miño Cross-Border Area Forum.

The 2030 Strategy starts from an assessment of the strategic precedents of the 2014-2020 period and is being planned, in a pioneering way, for the 2021-2027 period

<sup>1</sup> They can be found in the final section about the analysed strategic documents and in the mentioned Community legislation.

## 2.3 CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PHASE

### 1<sup>st</sup> River Miño Cross-Border Area Forum

The Forum took place on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018 in Valença with the aim of presenting the first draft of the 2030 Strategy. A total of 82 participants attended the event, which hosted four round-table discussions divided into sectors, depending on the structure of the diagnosis and the action plan drafts, coordinated by the aforementioned members of the Scientific Advisory Committee and Dr Sandrina Ferreira Antunes (University of Minho). Summaries and videos containing the results of the round-table meetings were uploaded to [www.smartminho.eu](http://www.smartminho.eu) by the end of June 2018 to start online participation.



### Meetings with the sectoral committees

The four sectoral committees gathered again after the summer of 2018 with the goal of continuing the work started during the 1<sup>st</sup> River Minho Cross-Border Area Forum. Different debates were once again enlivened by the aforementioned members of the Scientific Advisory Committee, as well as by Dr Carmen Villarino and Dr Valerià Paül (both from the University of Santiago de Compostela)

- 24<sup>th</sup> September 2018 (Tui): governance
- 27<sup>th</sup> September 2018 (Valença): culture and traditional trade
- 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2018 (Valença): mobility, shared services, and tourism
- 8<sup>th</sup> October 2018 (Tui): productive sectors

There were 94 attendees. Several specific proposals were brought forward and were later included in the action plan.



### Second round of meetings with the mayors

One year after the first round of meetings, after the 2030 Strategy draft and the contributions of the participatory process had been launched, a new meeting was held. Essentially, ideas discussed during the 2017 interviews were revised and different kinds of new ideas were incorporated. The intention was to negotiate with local representatives directly involved in cross-border cooperation dynamics to attain a high level of political legitimisation of the strategic process. The specific dates and participants of the meetings were the following:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2018: Valença-Tui
- 10<sup>th</sup> October 2018: Monção-Salvaterra de Miño-As Neves
- 11<sup>th</sup> October 2018: Melgaço-Arbo-Crecente
- 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018: A Guarda-Caminha-O Rosal
- 25<sup>th</sup> October 2018: Cerveira-Tomiño

### Participation on the website

In summer 2018, the citizens' participation process was launched on [www.smartminho.eu](http://www.smartminho.eu). There were over 1,000 visits up until October 2018, when the phase was brought to a conclusion. Significant communicative efforts were made to encourage citizens to use this participation channel and express their opinion about the 2030 Strategy. Three simultaneous participation mechanisms were designed:

- A mechanism about the conclusions of the sectoral round-table meetings held during the 1<sup>st</sup> Forum (texts and video) which encouraged citizens to send their contributions to qualify, change, modify, and confirm its contents. These documents also served as a basis for the debate of the sectoral roundtables that took place at the same time.

- A mechanism about the draft, fully available on the website, which also served to receive feedback. Some comments regarding omissions, errors, and aspects to be improved were received.
- An online survey which aimed at detecting social involvement with the strategic axes, the lines of action, and the projects and goals on the 2030 Strategy draft through specific questions. The results allowed for calibrating the corresponding levels of public consensus.

### **Meetings with other territorial agents and institutions**

In autumn 2018, other meetings with relevant territorial agents or agents with a direct influence on the area were held to obtain pertinent territorial ideas regarding the final configuration of the 2030 Strategy. Some of them were the following:

- 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018: Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy; European Committee of the Regions; Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), and Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO)
- 9<sup>th</sup> November 2018: namely Grupo de Desenvolvimento Rural O Condado-A Paradanta, Associação de Desenvolvimento Galiza Suroeste (Eu Rural), and Associação de Desenvolvimento Rural do Minho (ADRMINHO)
- 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018: EGTC Galicia-North Portugal and the Directorate-General for International and EU Affairs of the Xunta de Galicia (the regional government of Galicia)
- 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2018: Caminha's harbour master's office
- 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2018: Miño's harbour master's office in Tui

Ideas from some local interest groups could not be included due to a lack of time. However, the 2030 Strategy is an open process, so new perspectives and suggestions can be added after issuing this publication.

## **2.4 REVISION PHASE**

### **Incorporation of proposed suggestions and final draft**

In late October 2018, the drafting team revised the draft document adding the contributions obtained during the participatory phase. To that effect, in particular, the diagnosis and action plan sections were modified to adapt them to the discussions and received suggestions. That involved redesigning the general structure of the phase of proposals by, for example, putting more emphasis on tourism, strengthening the cross-border cultural agenda and the issue of sustainability, and explicitly state the need to manage cross-border costs (in terms of education, healthcare, emergencies, etc.) regardless of the jurisdiction they belong to.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> River Miño Cross-Border Area Forum in November 2018 brought an end to an intense five-month-long period of participation through different mechanisms

### **2<sup>nd</sup> River Miño Cross-Border Area Forum**

The event was held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2018 in Goián (Tomiño) with the aim of presenting the revised strategic document in talks that stressed the final contents and the introduced changes, as well as the specific results from the sectoral round-table meetings with the Scientific Advisory Committee that took place throughout the autumn. This was the last change to obtain feedback from citizens. A total of 70 people attended the event.

## 2.5 SUMMARY OF THE FINAL TEXT



After summarising the conclusions of the debates held during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Forum, in early 2019 the drafting team finished the final text, which was discussed at several meetings with the Coordinating Council of the EGTC Rio Minho in January and February 2019. The text was sent to all the municipalities involved in the project in March 2019 and debated at the Advisory Council of the EGTC Rio Minho on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2019. There was a period of 15 days for closing arguments. This publication, in Portuguese, Spanish, Galician, and English, summarises the final document so that it can be operative and easy to use.

It must be noted that it was agreed to remove from this version the list with 40 specific proposals included in the action plan of the entire document. It is a set of measures open to immediate changes in 2019 and throughout 2020 when the political and budgetary frameworks for 2021-2027, still uncertain at the moment, are determined. For that reason, and with a view to attaining stability in the upcoming decade, we have opted to publish only the strategic axes, the lines of action, and the goals of the 2030 Strategy as they are definitely set.

## 3 TERRITORIAL CONTEXT

The River Miño cross-border area is organised around the final section of the most important river in the north-east of the Iberian Peninsula, which runs along the western border between Galicia and Portugal. From the point where the River Troncoso flows into the River Miño, in the east, to the mouth of the Miño,

which meets the Atlantic Ocean in the west, its waters run through a little over 75 km. The final 35 km, from Valença to Tui, are considered to be the estuary, a waterway with tidal variations. Thus, the river and the border, the border and the river, constitute the main driving force in the area. The 2030 Strategy has been specifically developed for the River Miño cross-border area, but it cannot ignore the wider frameworks in which the area is included and that, precisely, explain to a great extent its current dynamics:

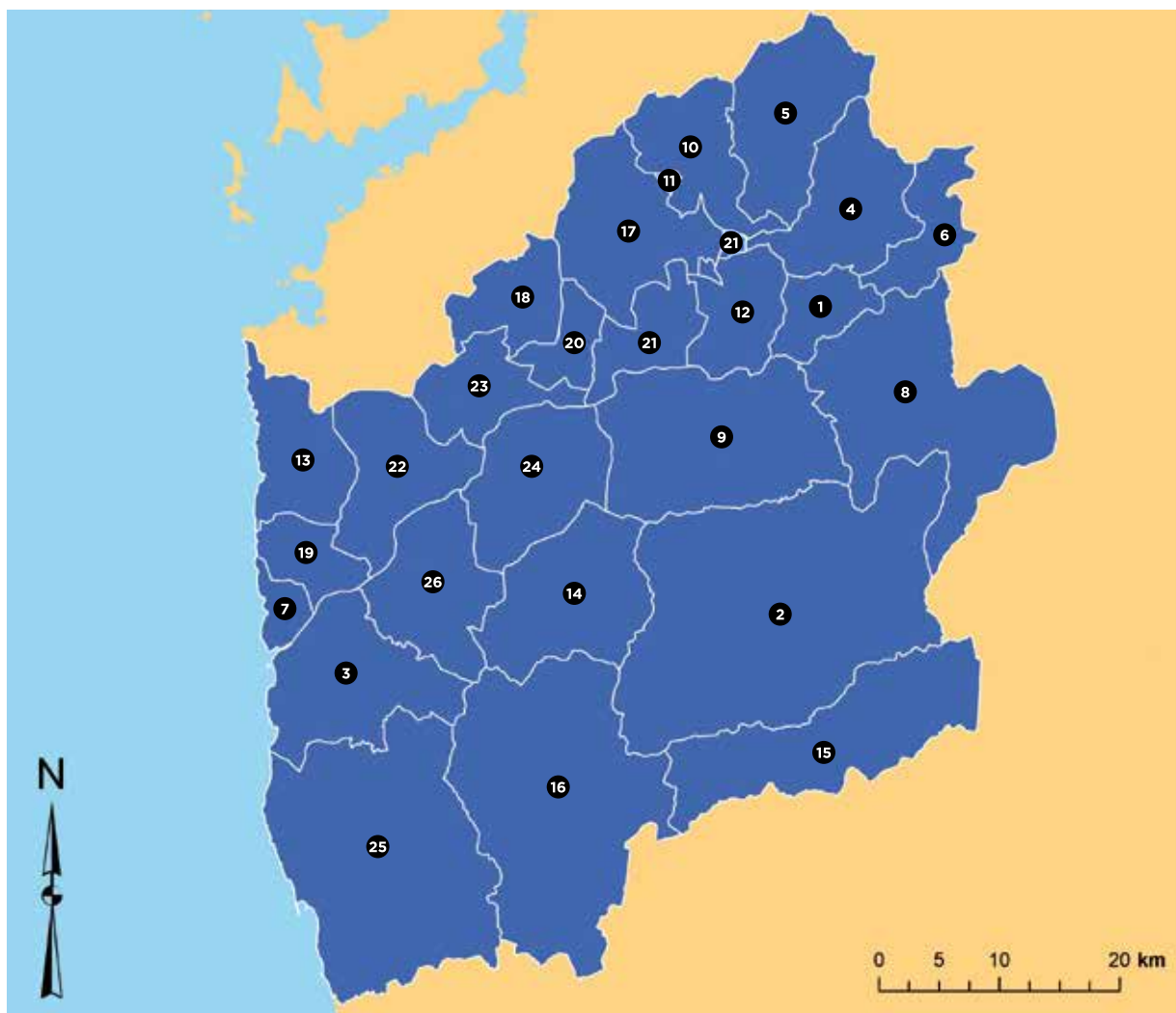
- The **European Union**, which, ever since this territory was directly included in it (in 1986, both Spain and Portugal became members of the former European Community), has promoted the overcoming of the border and the creation of a continental cooperation framework that manifests itself as an emergence of local cooperation around the border
- **Galicia-North Portugal**, popularly known as the **Euroregion**, is a reflection of a shared past (Roman and Early Medieval Gallaecia). However, nowadays, after institutionalised borders were overcome by late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century border demarcation treaties, it is characterised by an integrated territorial performance. This goes beyond formalised political-administrative cooperation and includes fields like economy, mobility or employment.

It should be noted that the River Miño cross-border area comprises the following 26 municipalities:

- In **Galicia**, 16 municipalities in the southern part of the province of Pontevedra (a NUTS III territory according to EU statistical nomenclature): A Cañiza, A Guarda, Arbo, As Neves, Covelo, Crecente, Mondariz, Mondariz-Balneario, O Porriño, O Rosal, Oia, Pontearreas, Salceda de Caselas, Salvaterra de Miño, Tomiño, and Tui.
- In **North Portugal**, 10 municipalities that make up the district of Viana do Castelo (the NUTS III of Alto Minho): Arcos de Valdevez, Caminha, Melgaço, Monção, Paredes de Coura, Ponte da Barca, Ponte de Lima, Valença, Viana do Castelo, and Vila Nova de Cerveira.

The River Miño cross-border area comprises 16 municipalities in south-east Galicia and Alto Minho

## RIVER MIÑO CROSS-BORDER AREA



- |                     |                       |                       |                          |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Arbo              | 8 Melgaço             | 15 Ponte da Barca     | 22 Tomiño                |
| 2 Arcos de Valdevez | 9 Monção              | 16 Ponte de Lima      | 23 Tui                   |
| 3 Caminha           | 10 Mondariz           | 17 Pontearreas        | 24 Valença               |
| 4 A Cañiza          | 11 Mondariz-Balneario | 18 O Porriño          | 25 Viana do Castelo      |
| 5 Covelo            | 12 As Neves           | 19 O Rosal            | 26 Vila Nova de Cerveira |
| 6 Crecente          | 13 Oia                | 20 Salceda de Caselas |                          |
| 7 A Guarda          | 14 Paredes de Coura   | 21 Salvaterra de Miño |                          |

### 3.1 THE EUROPEAN UNION<sup>2</sup>

The **population** of the **27 countries of the European Union** (EU-27), excluding the United Kingdom, is 446 million people (2018), 6 % of the world's population. However, its **gross domestic product** represents a much higher rate: 19.5 %, also excluding the United Kingdom. It is the **second biggest economy in the world**, after the United States, and it is considered to be the largest political and economic union of countries in the world.

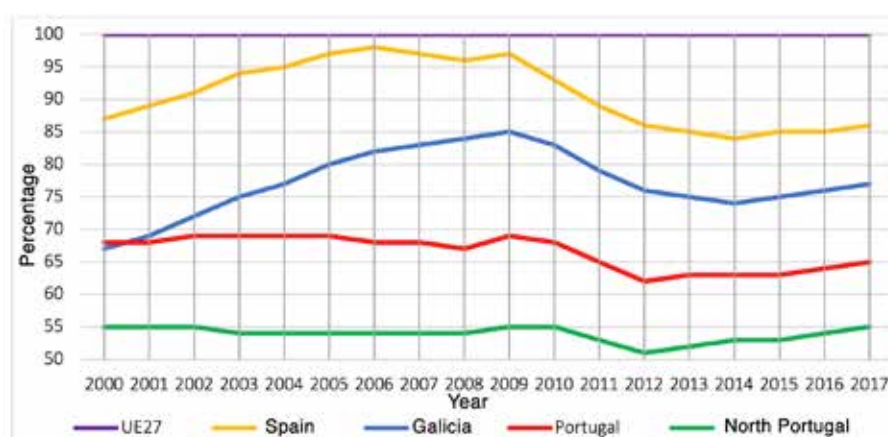
Within the European Union (EU), the Euroregion accounted for 1.4 % of the EU-27's population in 2018. Nonetheless, it covers 1.2 % of the EU's territory, meaning that its population density is comparatively higher than the EU average. It provides 0.9 % of the EU-27's GDP (according to data from 2017), which demonstrates that its economic importance in EU is lower than its demographic importance.

In the EU, **convergence of regional and national economies over time** is expressed in a standard way by calculating the percentage of their GDP per capita in relation to the EU's average. The data for each year is provided so that cohesion funds can be allocated depending on the situation of the territories belonging to the EU. As displayed in the graph below, which shows the percentage in relation to the EU-27 (excluding the United Kingdom), the Euroregion displays a different behaviour on both sides of the border:

- **Galicia's economy** converged towards the EU average faster than the Spanish one as a whole in the 2000s and managed to reach 85 % in 2009. However, the effects of the post-2007 financial crisis caused it to drop below 75 % (the key percentage for calculating the distribution of Community regional funds) in 2014. In recent years, it has risen again slightly above 75 %, compromising future reception of part of the funds.
- **North Portugal**, just like Portugal as a whole, has shown a steady behaviour in the past two decades, even though the impact of the post-2017 financial crisis has been also clear. It has always stayed far from the EU average and below the 75 % limit, guaranteeing the receipt of European regional development funds.

The EU has devoted a sustained effort to eliminate border barriers within its territory, which directly affect 38 % of the EU population. Besides some precedents, this policy became institutionalised in the 1990s, under the **Interreg programme**, aimed at bordering regions. It is estimated that the programme received 18,177 million euros between 1990 and 2013, while global forecasts for 2014-2020 near almost half of that figure. Originally, only NUTS III territories located near the border (for example, Alto Minho, in Portugal, and the province of Pontevedra, in Galicia) could benefit from these funds, but in the last programming period all the Euroregion has benefited from Interreg.

GDP per capita percentage variation for Spain, Galicia, North Portugal, and Portugal in relation to the EU average, 2000-2017



Source: personal compilation based on Eurostat (2018)

<sup>2</sup> In order to facilitate the reading of this type of text, references have been avoided. This section is based on Wasenberg and Reitel (2015), Paül et al. (2017), and Strandell and Wolf (2018), as well as on data obtained from Eurostat (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>), the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (<http://www.ine.es/>), the Portuguese National Institute of Statistics (<https://www.ine.pt/>), and the website of the EGTC of the Committee of the Regions (<https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/>).

Thus, a significant amount of Community funds aimed at improving cross-border cooperation tend to be diverted from bordering territories per se.

Initially, Interreg funds benefited only bordering regions, but nowadays they are distributed in a wider territorial scope, and that tends to divert them from bordering areas per se

Since the second Interreg period, in the late 1990s, the EU invited the participating bordering regions to become institutionalised and operational to ensure the continuation of cooperation projects. The legal formula designed to allow this were the European groupings of territorial cooperation (EGTC), established by specific Community legislation: Regulation 1082/2006, amended by Regulation 1302/2013. In fact, EGTCs are a new manifestation of a process that started in the 1960s with the creation of the first cross-border regions (some of them originally called euroregions).

There are currently 70 EGTC, including:

- In the Galicia-North Portugal area, there is a EGTC for the whole Euroregion. It started working in 2010, but comes from an almost twenty-year-old collaboration experience, the Working Community, created in 1991
- Since 2013, there is a EGTC involving two inland municipalities (Chaves and Verín), named Eurocity
- Since 2018, the territory included in the 2030 Strategy has its own EGTC called Rio Minho

### 3.2 THE GALICIA-NORTH PORTUGAL EURORREGION<sup>3</sup>

According to 2018 data, the Euroregion currently has almost **6.3 million inhabitants**, 11 % of the population of the Iberian Peninsula in 8.5 % of its surface area. In general terms, this shows a higher demographic density than that of the peninsula as a whole, which goes in line with the coastalisation of the Iberian population. Coastalisation is a generalised territorial phenomena referring to the trend of the population to move from inland areas of the Peninsula to coastal areas over the years.

In 2018, **57 % of the Euroregion's population lived in North Portugal and 43 % in Galicia**. However, as regards surface area, rates are the opposite: **58 % of the Euroregion's area is in Galicia, while 42 % belongs to North Portugal**. This means that, generally speaking, population density is significantly higher on the Portuguese side of the border. As shown in the chart below, figures have remained steady on both sides of the border in the last three decades.

Both this chart and maps demonstrate the aforementioned coastalisation on a Euroregional level: inland areas (Douro, Lugo, Ourense, Terras de Trás-os-Montes, etc.) tend to lose population, while coastal areas (Porto Metropolitan Area, Ave, A Coruña, Pontevedra, etc.) have experienced an increase. The only exception in that sense is Alto Minho, which, despite being on the coast, is losing population both on absolute and relative terms. Therefore, it shows an exceptional demographic behaviour in the western part of the Euroregion.

<sup>3</sup> This section is based on Instituto Lawrence R. Klein (1999), Alonso and Lois (2003), Lois (2004), Nordregio (2005), Florida (2008), Paül and Pazos (2009), Rio Fernandes (2014), Marull and Boix (2016), Pardellas and Padín (2017), Paül et al. (2017), and Vives and Paül (2018), as well as on data from Eurostat (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>), the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (<http://www.ine.es/>), and the Portuguese National Institute of Statistics (<https://www.ine.pt>)

Demographic variation of Galicia and North Portugal, by NUTS II and NUTS III, 2000-2017

NUTS III e NUTS II	1991		2001		2011		2018	
A Coruña	1,097,942	17.69	1,095,881	17.18	1,140,071	17.63	1,121,417	17.86
Lugo	385,194	6.20	359,818	5.64	349,523	5.40	331,492	5.28
Ourense	355,065	5.72	339,681	5.33	330,017	5.10	309,314	4.93
Pontevedra	897,356	14.45	902,645	14.15	953,800	14.75	940,926	14.98
<b>GALICIA</b>	<b>2,735,557</b>	<b>44.06</b>	<b>2,698,025</b>	<b>42.30</b>	<b>2,773,411</b>	<b>42.89</b>	<b>2,703,149</b>	<b>43.05</b>
Alto Minho	250,059	4.03	249,667	3.91	245,306	3.79	232,178	3.70
Cávado	353,267	5.69	391,936	6.15	410,383	6.35	403,953	6.43
Ave	389,367	6.27	425,433	6.67	425,720	6.58	413,854	6.59
Porto M. A.	1,595,762	25.70	1,727,529	27.09	1,761,075	27.23	1,719,702	27.39
Alto Tâmega	112,511	1.81	104,580	1.64	94,391	1.46	87,157	1.39
Tâmega e Sousa	401,820	6.47	433,252	6.79	433,340	6.70	418,768	6.67
Douro	237,238	3.82	220,375	3.46	205,574	3.18	192,046	3.06
T. Trás-os-Montes	132,691	2.14	126,969	1.99	117,796	1.82	108,547	1.73
<b>NORTH PORTUGAL</b>	<b>3,472,715</b>	<b>55.94</b>	<b>3,679,41</b>	<b>57.70</b>	<b>3,693,585</b>	<b>57.11</b>	<b>3,576,205</b>	<b>56.95</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,208,272</b>		<b>6,377,766</b>		<b>6,466,996</b>		<b>6,279,354</b>	

Source: personal compilation based on Eurostat and the Spanish and Portuguese national institutes of statistics (2018)

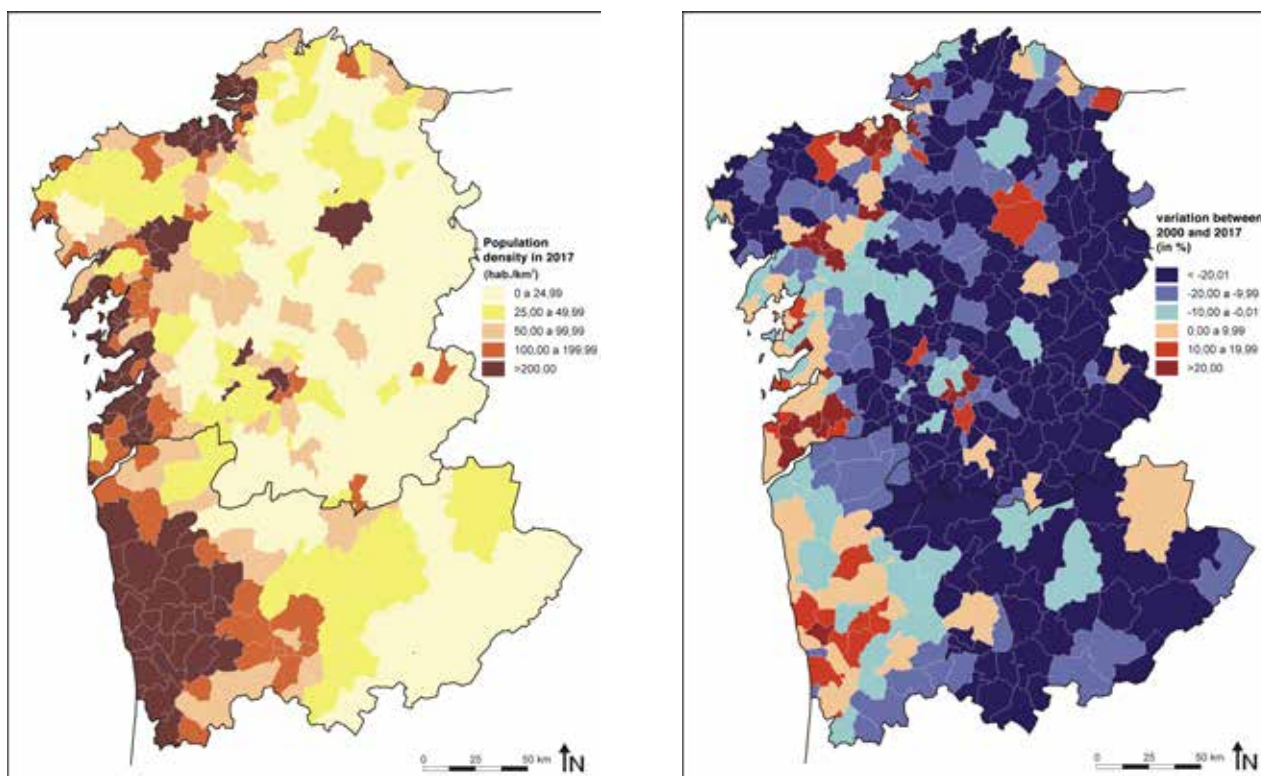
Demographic coastalisation in the Euroregion coincides with the configuration of the **Galician-Portuguese Atlantic urban axis**, which comprises the great metropolitan areas in the north-west of the Iberian Peninsula (Porto, Vigo, and A Coruña), the urban area of other cities located at a moderate distance from the great metropolitan areas and very linked to those (Braga, Ferrol, Pontevedra, etc.), cities that work more autonomously within the axis (Santiago de Compostela, Viana do Castelo, Vilagarcía de Arousa, etc.), and highly urbanised areas, like O Salnés or the low valleys of Ave and Cávado. The axis comprises the AP9 motorway in Galicia and the A3 in North Portugal, which are part of the European route E01 (from Larne/Latharna, Northern Ireland, to Seville, Spain). Regarding railways, in practice the only high performance connections available are between A Coruña and Vigo, so the border prevented development in this field.

The River Miño cross-border area is located in the centre of the Galician-Portuguese urban axis

The urban axis can be followed continuously from Ferrol southwards on the population density map below. **Porto Metropolitan Area** stands out clearly. From an administrative point of view, the homonymous NUTS III (managed by an institutionalised metropolitan area) has a population of over **1.7 million people**. However, from a broader perspective, the NUTS III regions of Ave and O Cávado —that is, Braga, Guimarães, and nearby towns (Barcelos, Famalicão, etc.)—, as well as Aveiro (which administratively is not part of North Portugal) are also considered to be part of the metropolitan area of Porto, so the total population is over **3 million people**. In fact, Porto Metropolitan Area is one of the main metropolis in the EU. For instance, Porto was classified as one of the 76 Metropolitan European Growth Areas according to the ESPON European programme.

Some agents consider that the territorial dynamics of the Galician-Portuguese Atlantic urban axis are not interrupted in Aveiro in the south. Instead, they continue downwards to the urban region of Lisbon. In his controversial map of twelve European megalopoli, Richard Florida considers all the Galician-Portuguese coastal urban axis as a whole of more than **9 million people**.

Population density in 2017 and population variation between 2000 and 2017 in the municipalities of Galicia and North Portugal



Source: personal compilation based on the Spanish and Portuguese national institutes of statistics (2018)

According to the author, there are only two more equivalent urban spaces in the Iberian Peninsula: the Mediterranean urban axis (with more than 27 million inhabitants, including several cities in South-East France) and Madrid (with more than 5 million people).

The contrast between the inland and coastal areas of the Euroregion is also evident in the demographic dynamics of the past two decades: population **in inland** municipalities have experienced a decrease and ageing, except for some exceptional cases in urban areas, whereas in coastal municipalities population has **grown** and is **younger**, in particular in the **metropolitan rings of Porto, Vigo, A Coruña, Santiago de Compostela, etc.** Thus, the municipalities that are growing the most are not the main ones in their respective metropolitan areas, but the surrounding ones, as the case of Vigo, where very significant demographical growth can be observed in municipalities of O Baixo Miño and O Condado regions, located on the border between Spain and Portugal or very close to it.

In demographical terms, the dynamics of Vigo did not cross the River Miño southwards, although the area is obviously influenced by it. Thus, since the late 1990s it has been noted that the municipalities of Alto Minho region have moved towards Vigo from a commercial point of view. Nonetheless, the consolidation of Braga's commercial role and the improvement of communications with Porto in recent years —the A3 motorway was finished in 1998 and the current route of the A28 in the early 21st century— might have changed the commercial geography in a good part of those municipalities, as well as in Galician municipalities located in the River Miño cross-border area, which have swung towards the south. In any case, delimiting **Vigo's metropolitan phenomenon** is a complex task, both for political reasons (the administrative metropolitan area laid down by laws 4/2012 and 14/2016 does not match the area's functional scope) and due to its seamless inclusion in the Atlantic urban axis. Most authors consider that its population is more than **half a million** people, but others think that it is over one million.

Also regarding manufacturing, **industries** from the central sector of the Metropolitan Area of Vigo have been **relocated** in the Alto Minho region in the last few years, similarly to what occurred in the municipality of O Porriño in the past (its industrial park, As Gándaras de Budiño, was opened in 1967). This has been also planned for the Salvaterra-As Neves Industrial Complex (PLISAN) (the first phase of the construction works started in 2015). It seems obvious that the epicentre of the strong industrial, social, cultural, and economic relations in the Euroregion is the **River Miño cross-border area**.

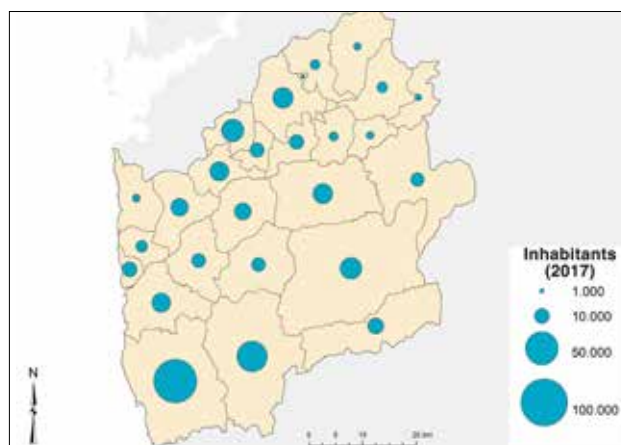
For that reason, within the scope of the **River Miño cross-border area a will for territorial cooperation** has existed for decades. Before the EGTC Rio Minho, which, as previously mentioned, was set up in 2018, there were other similar initiatives which constitute the precedent of how the Euroregion is more tightly constructed in purely cross-border territories:

- **Unimiño:** in 2005, a collaboration agreement was signed by two supramunicipal bodies which included the municipalities located in the lower course of the river: the Comunidade Intermunicipal do Vale do Minho (which includes five Portuguese municipalities: Melgaço, Monção, Paredes de Coura, Valença, and Vila Nova de Cerveira) and the Deputación de Pontevedra (which represents the municipalities of Arbo, A Cañiza, Covelo, Crecente, A Guarda, As Neves, Mondariz, Mondariz-Balneario, Oia, Pontearreas, O Porriño, O Rosal, Salceda de Caselas, Salvaterra de Miño, Tomiño, and Tui).
- **Eurocities:** in a bilateral sense, between neighbouring municipalities. The Eurocities of Valença-Tui (2012), Monção-Salaterra (2017), and Tomiño-Cerveira (2018) were established following the example of Chaves-Verín. However, as opposed to their inland precedent, these new eurocities opted not to institutionalise new bilateral EGTCs. That way, the EGTC is only established at a global level. Eurocities are aimed at sharing resources through joint planning and management of common services and equipments in bordering municipalities.

## 4 TERRITORIAL ANALYSIS<sup>4</sup>

The performed analysis meets the strategic needs of the cooperation project it belongs to. Thus, the analysed elements are aimed at characterising the situation of the territory through a summary of quantifiable analytic elements focused on the following thematic areas: **population, economic structure, existing joint services, mobility**, and, finally, **natural resources**, in which the River Miño is highlighted as the backbone characteristic of the area.

Total population by municipality, 2017



Source: personal compilation based on data from the Galician Institute of Statistics (2017) and the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2017)

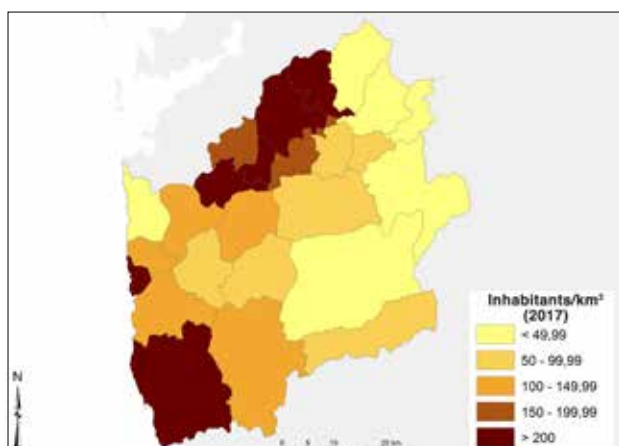
### 4.1 POPULATION

#### Total population and population density

The River Miño cross-border area covers a surface of 3,313 km<sup>2</sup> and has a total population of 366,482 people (population data recorded in 2017). Within the area surface, significant differences among municipalities, both in terms of municipal surface and population, can be observed, as shown on the maps and charts in this section. As for municipal surface area, it is important to note the differences in size on both sides of the river: Portuguese municipalities tend to be bigger than

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all statistical data comes from the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (<http://www.ine.es/>), the Portuguese National Institute of Statistics (<https://www.ine.pt/>), and the Galician Institute of Statistics (<http://www.ige.eu/>).

Population density by municipality, 2017



Source: personal compilation based on data from the Galician Institute of Statistics (2017) and the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2017)

Galician ones. As a consequence, total population is generally lower in the latter than in the former.

On the other hand, population density in the River Miño cross-border area (110.6 people/km<sup>2</sup>) is comparatively higher than the Galician and

Spanish averages (91.6 and 92, respectively), but inferior to North Portugal's (168.5) and very similar to Portugal's (111.8). Regarding this index, the great differences between western coastal municipalities and eastern inland municipalities stand out the most.

### Population trends during the 1991-2017 period

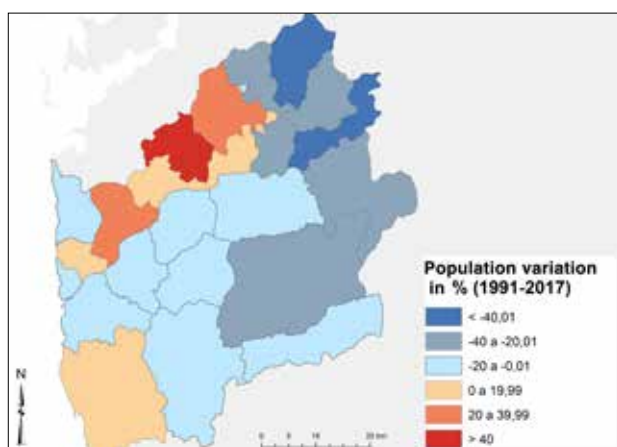
Total population in the area experienced a slight decline of 2.1 % between 1991 and 2017. The striking population drops in the inland eastern area, reaching almost 50 % in three decades, stand out. Additionally, there have been significant increases in the municipalities located on the second ring of the Metropolitan Area of Vigo, such as Salceda de Caselas, Pontearreas, Tomiño or O Porriño. Finally, a group of municipalities have lost or maintained their population with less significant percentage variations.

Area, population and population density by municipality, 2017

MUNICIPALITIES	AREA	TOTAL POPULATION	POPULATION DENSITY	MUNICIPALITIES	AREA	TOTAL POPULATION	POPULATION DENSITY
Arbo	42.9	2,711	63.2	Arcos de Valdevez	447.6	21,324	47.6
A Cañiza	105.0	5,233	49.8	Caminha	136.5	15,971	117.0
Covelo	127.9	2,505	19.6	Melgaço	238.3	8,400	35.3
Crecente	57.5	2,082	36.2	Monção	211.3	18,192	86.1
A Guarda	20.5	10,051	490.3	Paredes de Coura	138.2	8,712	63.0
Mondariz	85.1	4,548	53.4	Ponte da Barca	182.1	11,392	62.6
Mondariz-B.	2.3	627	272.6	Ponte de Lima	320.3	42,060	131.3
As Neves	65.5	3,968	60.6	Valença	117.1	13,437	114.7
Oia	83.3	3,004	36.1	Viana do Castelo	319.0	85,445	267.8
Pontearreas	125.6	22,893	182.3	Vila Nova de Cerveira	108.5	8,880	81.9
O Porriño	61.2	19,600	320.3	RÍO MIÑO CROSS-BORDER AREA	3,313.1	366,482	110.6
O Rosal	44.1	6,328	143.5	SPAIN	505,944.0	46,572.132	92.0
S. Caselas	35.9	9,017	251.2	GALICIA	29,574.0	2,708.339	91.6
Salvaterra M.	62.5	9,657	154.5	PORTUGAL	92,226.0	10,309.573	111.8
Tomiño	106.6	13,585	127.4	NORTH PORTUGAL	21,278.0	3,584.575	168.5
Tui	68.3	16,860	246.9				

Source: personal compilation based on data from the Galician Institute of Statistics (2017)

Population variation by municipality, 1991-2017



Source: personal compilation based on data from the Galician Institute of Statistics (2017) and the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2017)

Municipalities that have experienced the greatest increases in population are located on the second ring of the Metropolitan Area of Vigo

## Population by sex

As it usually occurs in human populations, the rate of women (52.6 %) in the River Miño cross-border area is higher than that of men (47.4 %). In the Portuguese territory, there is not any municipality where the percentage of men is higher than that of women, unlike Galicia, where some show a similar or slightly higher rate.

## Total population by age groups, average age, and ageing index

The age group including those between 0 and 15 years of age in the River Miño cross-border area is similar in number to Galicia's, but lower than those of Spain, Portugal, and North Portugal, which indicates a lack of young population in the studied territory. In contrast, the group comprising those who are 65 or older is more numerous than those in Spain, Portugal, and North Portugal, just like in Galicia. The implication is, therefore, that this area shows a higher rate of population ageing in comparative terms.

Population variation by municipality, 1991-2017

MUNICIPALITIES	VARIATION (%) 1991-2017	MUNICIPALITIES	VARIATION (%) 1991-2017
Arbo	-46.3	Arcos de Valdevez	-21.0
A Cañiza	-34.8	Caminha	-1.5
Covelo	-43.6	Melgaço	-23.8
Crecente	-49.0	Monção	-16.5
A Guarda	-0.4	Paredes de Coura	-16.6
Mondariz	-32.4	Ponte da Barca	-13.3
Mondariz-Balneario	-0.3	Ponte de Lima	-3.1
As Neves	-26.1	Valença	-9.3
Oia	-4.9	Viana do Castelo	2.8
Ponteareas	45.5	Vila Nova de Cerveira	-2.9
O Porriño	29.2	RIVER MIÑO CROSS-BORDER AREA	-2.1
O Rosal	9.5	SPAIN	19.8
Salceda de Caselas	57.8	GALICIA	-1.0
Salvaterra de Miño	8.3	PORTUGAL	4.5
Tomiño	32.9	NORTH PORTUGAL	3.2
Tui	10.6		

Source: personal compilation based on data from the Galician Institute of Statistics (2017) and the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2017)

Male and female population by municipality, 2017

MUNICIPALITIES	MEN (%)	WOMEN (%)	MUNICIPALITIES	MEN (%)	WOMEN (%)
Arbo	51.1	48.9	Arcos de Valdevez	45.4	54.6
A Cañiza	48.7	51.3	Caminha	45.8	54.2
Covelo	49.7	50.3	Melgaço	43.9	56.1
Crecente	47.9	52.1	Monção	45.2	54.8
A Guarda	48.6	51.4	Paredes de Coura	47.4	52.6
Mondariz	49.0	51.0	Ponte da Barca	45.7	54.3
Mondariz-Balneario	52.0	48.0	Ponte de Lima	46.8	53.2
As Neves	48.3	51.7	Valença	46.4	53.6
Oia	49.9	50.1	Viana do Castelo	47.0	53.0
Ponteareas	48.7	51.3	Vila Nova de Cerveira	47.6	52.4
O Porriño	49.2	50.8	RIVER MIÑO CROSS-BORDER AREA	47.4	52.6
O Rosal	49.1	50.9	SPAIN	49.0	51.0
Salceda de Caselas	49.9	50.1	GALICIA	48.2	51.8
Salvaterra de Miño	49.8	50.2	PORTUGAL	47.4	52.6
Tomiño	50.3	49.7	NORTH PORTUGAL	47.4	52.6
Tui	48.2	51.8			

Source: personal compilation based on data from the Galician Institute of Statistics (2017) and the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2017)

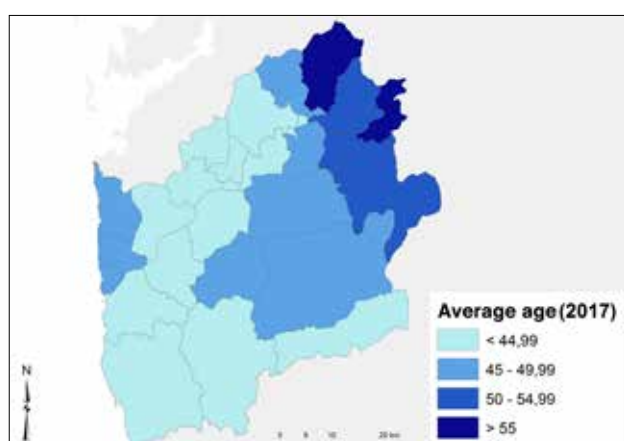
Population by age and municipality, 2017

MUNICIPALITIES	0-15	16-64	65 o +	MUNICIPALITIES	0-15	16-64	65 o +
Arbo	9.1	56.4	34.5	Arcos de Valdevez	10.2	57.4	32.3
A Cañiza	11.6	58.1	30.3	Caminha	11.2	63.8	25.0
Covelo	7.7	52.6	39.7	Melgaço	8.6	54.4	37.0
Crecente	5.4	55.8	38.8	Monção	9.8	61.0	29.2
A Guarda	12.8	65.6	21.6	Paredes de Coura	11.8	60.2	28.1
Mondariz	9.9	59.5	30.6	Ponte da Barca	11.1	64.4	24.5
Mondariz-Balneario	10.8	64.6	24.6	Ponte de Lima	13.3	65.6	21.2
As Neves	10.8	60.4	28.8	Valença	11.7	63.9	24.4
Oia	12.9	63.0	24.1	Viana do Castelo	12.5	65.7	21.7
Ponteareas	16.8	65.9	17.3	Vila Nova de Cerveira	12.1	64.6	23.3
O Porriño	16.0	68.3	15.7	RIVER MIÑO CROSS-BORDER AREA	12.8	63.9	23.3
O Rosal	12.9	64.3	22.9	SPAIN	15.9	65.3	18.8
Salceda de Caselas	18.7	67.1	14.3	GALICIA	12.7	62.7	24.6
Salvaterra de Miño	14.1	64.0	21.9	PORTUGAL	14.0	64.9	21.1
Tomiño	14.0	64.9	21.1	NORTH PORTUGAL	13.3	67.2	19.5
Tui	15.1	64.0	20.9				

Source: personal compilation based on data from the Galician Institute of Statistics (2017) and the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2017)

Relevant differences among municipalities are recorded. Indeed, in some municipalities old population nears 40 %, to be more precise, in the easternmost inland part (Covelo, Crecente, Melgaço, etc.). On the contrary, in other municipalities, the young population rate is higher than the Spanish and Portuguese average, which are in turn higher than the euroregional average. These instances of municipalities with high levels of young population (Salceda de Caselas, Pontearreas, O Porriño, etc.) are again caused by their inclusion in the dynamics of the Metropolitan Area of Vigo, which has shown significant population variation in the last decades.

Average age by municipality, 2017



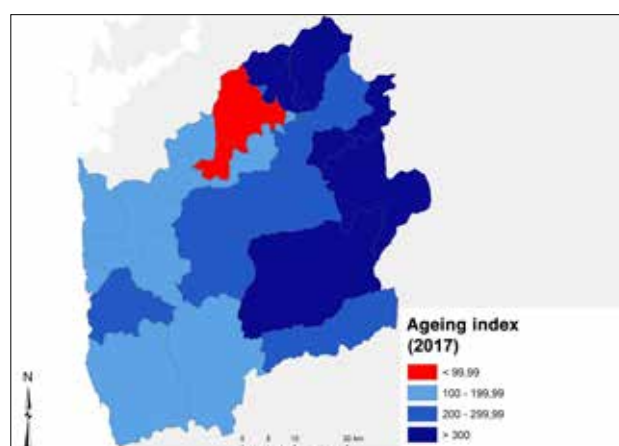
Source: personal compilation based on data from the Galician Institute of Statistics (2017) and the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2017)

Regarding the average age of the population in the River Minho cross-border area (46.4 years old), it is worth noting that it is superior to Spain's, North Portugal's, and Portugal's average (43.1, 41, and 41.8 years old, respectively) and similar to Galicia's average (46.8). Galicia shows heterogeneous results depending on the municipalities; the average age in many of them surpasses 50 or even 55 years old, while others stay below 45. These data imply that the average age is very superior in the eastern inland area, as opposed to municipalities directly influenced by Vigo's metropolitan dynamics. In Portugal, the differences are not as significant, since all municipalities, except for Melgaço, have an average age of less than 50 years old.

The ageing index (number of people over 65 years old in relation to the amount of people between 0 and

15) in the analysed area is very superior to the ageing index in Spain, Portugal, and North Portugal and slightly inferior to Galicia's. This index confirms once again the existence of two opposing demographical realities in the coastal and inland areas. Only three municipalities (Salceda de Caselas, Pontearreas, and O Porriño) have a statistically non-ageing population, which can be once again correlated to Vigo's metropolitan dynamics. The rest of municipalities show various degrees of population ageing, Covelo and Crecente being the most extreme cases.

Ageing index by municipality, 2017



Source: personal compilation based on data from the Galician Institute of Statistics (2017) and the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2017)

### Conclusions about the population of the River Miño cross-border area

Two main demographical realities can be observed within the River Miño cross-border area:

- An **eastern inland area**, represented especially by the region of A Paradanta and Melgaço, which is characterised by low population density, depopulation in the last 25 years, and a clear ageing population with a high average age and an equally high ageing index. The mountainous eastern area, with strongly rural economic structures that have not offered an alternative to the crisis-ridden traditional agriculture and fishing sector, does not currently guarantee demographic sustainability.

- A **western coastal area**, characterised by high levels of population density, population loss in the last 25 years, a lower average age, and a more moderate aging index. The municipalities located on the second ring of the metropolitan area of Vigo and belonging to the River Miño cross-border area are a special case, as they do not register ageing population due to the positive net migration rate due to the recent arrival of young population.

It is clear from the previous data that population dynamics similar to those occurring in the Iberian Peninsula and the Euroregion are happening within the River Miño cross-border area. Coastalisation causes inland areas to lose population that moves to coastal areas, where the majority of jobs and services are concentrated.

The eastern inland area, which shows low population density, depopulation and population ageing, contrasts with the western coastal area, with high density, demographic growth and a more moderate ageing index

Gross value added by sectors, 2014/2018

REGIONS/ MUNICIPALITIES	SECTORS IN GAV (%)		
	AGRICULTURE AND FISHING	INDUSTRY AND CONSTRUCTION	SERVICES
O BAIXO MIÑO	9.2	20.0	70.8
O CONDADO	3.7	25.0	71.3
A PARADANTA	8.9	29.5	61.6
Arcos de Valdevez	1.3	63.4	34.7
Caminha	8.4	41.9	49.6
Melgaço	2.4	11.2	14.2
Monção	4.3	41.7	49.3
Paredes de Coura	2.8	70.0	26.9
Ponte da Barca	5.6	35.4	58.7
Ponte de Lima	2.8	49.3	47.9
Valença	1.4	34.6	63.2
Viana do Castelo	1.5	65.2	33.3
Vila Nova de Cerveira	0.5	72.3	25.2
RIVER MIÑO CROSS- BORDER AREA	4.4	41.3	52.1
SPAIN	2.7	23.2	74.1
GALICIA	5.3	25.6	69.1
PORTUGAL	1.9	37.2	60.8
NORTH PORTUGAL	1.4	50.5	48.1

Source: personal compilation based on data from the Galician Institute of Statistics (2014), the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2014), and the Portuguese National Institute of Statistics (2018)



## 4.2 ECONOMIC STRUCTURE AND LABOUR MARKET

### Gross added value

Total gross added value (GAV) in the River Miño cross-border area is slightly higher in Portugal than in Galicia. When comparing sectors, agriculture and fishing have a greater importance in the analysed area than in the rest of the territories (except in Galicia, where the primary sector is more important). Industry and construction are very prominent in the area, again more than in the rest of territories used for comparison (in this case, only North Portugal, where these sectors make up half of the GAV, is ahead). Finally, services account for more than 50 % of the GAV in the cross-border area, well below the rest of the geographical areas used for comparison, which is only barely surpassed by North Portugal.

This reveals the importance of the service sector for the economy, followed by the secondary sector (industry and construction). However, in comparison with the Spanish, Portuguese, and Galician average, GAV in the River Miño cross-border area is characterised by a greater relative relevance of the industrial sector and a lower prevalence of the service

sector. In any case, the primary sector (agriculture and fishing) carries a moderate weight

### Industrial land

The River Miño cross-border area has 9,808,075 m<sup>2</sup> of industrial land. All its Portuguese municipalities and the Galician municipalities of Arbo, A Cañiza, O Porriño, Salvaterra de Miño, and Tui, as well as the Industrial Complex of Salvaterra-As Neves (PLISAN), which is still under construction, have endowments of that industrial land. It is important to highlight that 33.7 % of the existing industrial land belongs to O Porriño, whose industrial parks play a crucial role in the Metropolitan Area of Vigo and in the south of Galicia. The remaining municipalities show more modest percentages, except for the future PLISAN<sup>5</sup>, which would make up 16 % of the total area (1,568,790 m<sup>2</sup>). In any case, the dynamics of the industrial land in the area affect the whole Metropolitan Area of Vigo, so data considered separately can be misleading.

Thus, it should be stressed that almost 50 % of the total industrial land in the River Miño cross-border area is concentrated in just two specific locations, to be precise, in Galicia: O Porriño and PLISAN. In Portugal, industrial land is more evenly distributed.

5 Located in the municipalities of Salvaterra de Miño and As Neves, 35 km away from Vigo, connected by the A52 highway with the Port of Vigo, the AP9 motorway, and North Portugal (A55 highway), and well connected with the Madrid-Ourense-Vigo railway.

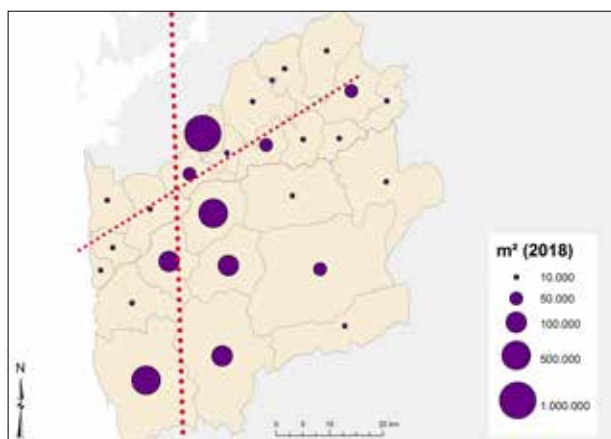
Industrial land by municipality

MUNICIPALITIES	INDUSTRIAL LAND (m <sup>2</sup> )	%
Arbo	52,379	0.5
A Cañiza	301,765	3.1
O Porriño	3,309,363	33.7
Salvaterra de Miño (excluding PLISAN)	276,192	2.8
Tui	216,535	2.2
PLISAN	1,568,790	16.0
Arcos de Valdevez	354,377	3.6
Melgaço	50,000	0.5
Monção	99,000	1.0
Paredes de Coura	549,880	5.6
Ponte de Lima	505,922	5.2
Valença	1,010,368	10.3
Viana do Castelo	963,504	9.8
Vila Nova de Cerveira	550,000	5.6
RIVER MIÑO CROSS-BORDER AREA	9,808,075	100.0

Source: personal compilation based on [http://servergis.cesga.es/website/poligono\\_nuevo/viewer.htm](http://servergis.cesga.es/website/poligono_nuevo/viewer.htm) (accessed on 16/4/2018)

Finally, a territorial geographical analysis based on industrial location makes it possible to observe that the main industrial centres in the River Miño cross-border area are very close to the main motorways and roads, namely in the Vigo-Porto axis (AP9, A55, and A3) and in the Vigo-Ourense axis (A52). In contrast, the coastal strip and the inland area possess a lower concentration of industrial land, especially in the inland areas of Portugal and the coast of Galicia. However, the inland municipality of Arcos de Valdevez, in Portugal, stands out.

Industrial land by municipality and industrial axis, 2018



Source: personal compilation based on [http://servergis.cesga.es/website/poligono\\_nuevo/viewer.htm](http://servergis.cesga.es/website/poligono_nuevo/viewer.htm)

(Project Consolida-Vigo Free Trade Zone Consortium)

Industry is concentrated  
in the Galician-Portuguese  
Atlantic urban axis and the  
Vigo-Ourense axis

#### Tourism: number of accommodation establishments and capacity

The total number of tourist accommodations in the River Miño cross-border area is 331. However, substantial differences by municipality can be noted. A group of municipalities with 22 to 45 establishments in different locations (Viana do Castelo on the coast, Ponte de Lima and Arcos de Valdevez, hosting mainly rural tourist accommodations, and Tui) stand out; besides, there is an intermediate group, the largest, with a number ranging from 5 to 16 establishments, and, finally, the group including the lowest number of municipalities, with 2 or 3 establishments. Furthermore, establishments in the area can accommodate up to 13,510 people. The municipalities with more than 1,000 and even 2,000 beds (A Guarda, Oia, and Viana do Castelo), followed by a group with an intermediate accommodation capacity (between 400 and 900 available beds),

Number of accommodation establishments and capacity by municipality, 2016/2017

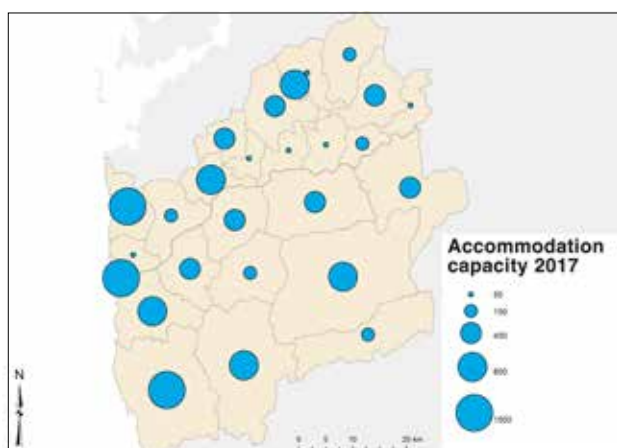
MUNICIPALITIES	NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS	CAPACITY	MUNICIPALITIES	NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS	CAPACITY
Arbo	7	149	Arcos de Valdevez	35	767
A Cañiza	7	346	Caminha	14	800
Covelo	5	175	Melgaço	14	406
Crecente	4	54	Monção	12	480
A Guarda	13	2,070	Paredes de Coura	12	199
Mondariz	6	96	Ponte da Barca	16	218
Mondariz-B.	2	883	Ponte de Lima	46	811
As Neves	4	36	Valença	10	486
Oia	13	1,392	Viana do Castelo	41	1,719
Ponteareas	8	393	Vila Nova de Cerveira	10	579
O Porriño	12	427	RIVER MIÑO CROSS-BORDER AREA	331	13,510
O Rosal	3	52			
Salceda de Caselas	3	47			
Salvaterra de Miño	3	36			
Tomiño	9	142			
Tui	22	747			

Source: personal compilation based on data from the Galician Institute of Statistics (2017) and the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2016)

stand out. The remaining municipalities have a comparatively lower capacity, although the importance of the coastal strip can be highlighted.

In conclusion, the territory of Galicia has more beds than the Portuguese area, but less establishments. Beds and establishments are in general more evenly distributed in Portugal, whereas in the whole River Miño cross-border area coastal municipalities concentrate the most part of accommodations.

Accommodation capacity by municipality, 2016/2017

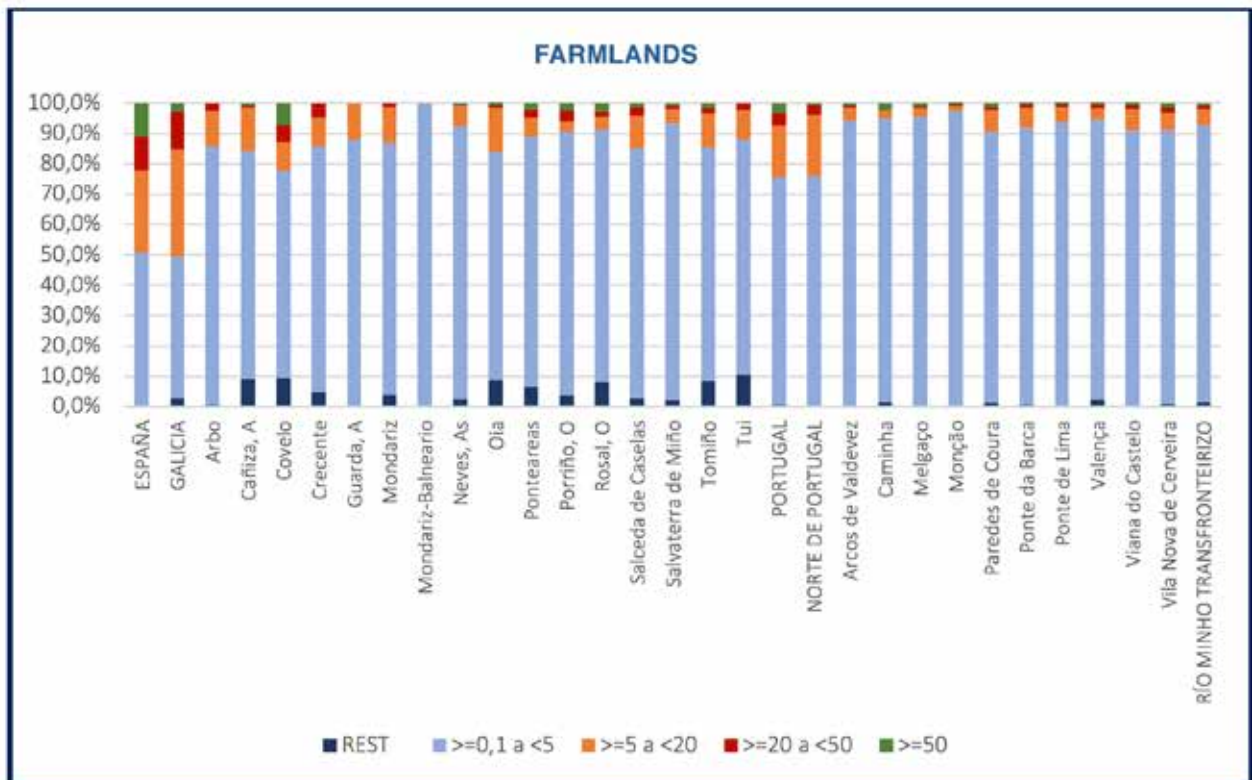


Source: personal compilation based on data from the Galician Institute of Statistics (2017) and the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2016)

### Size of farmlands

Farmlands in the River Miño cross-border area can be distributed in three groups depending on size. The vast majority of them, more than 90 %, cover an area between 0.1 and 5 hectares; a very small percentage of farms (5.5%) have between 5 and 20 hectares; lastly, an insignificant rate, nearing 1 %, have an area between 20 and 50 hectares or over 50 hectares.

In the area belonging to Galicia, farmlands are characterised by a clear trend towards smallholding, surpassing even the Galician average and obviously far below the average size of Spanish properties. The same occurs in the area corresponding to Portugal, which shows smallholding percentages surpassing those of the whole country and similar to those in North Portugal.

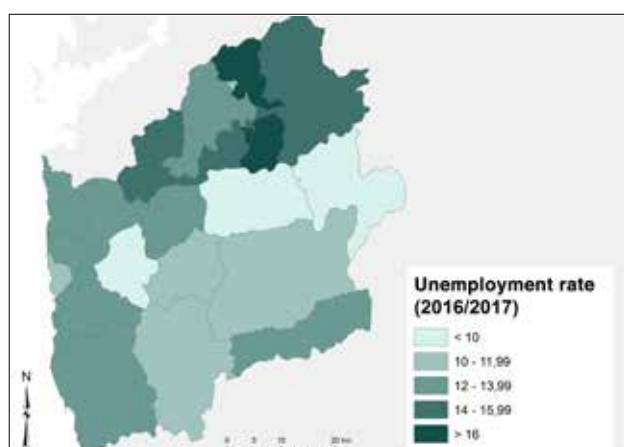


Source: personal compilation based on data from the Galician Institute of Statistics (2017) and the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2015)

## Unemployment

The unemployment rate for the whole cross-border area is 13 %. When looking at municipalities individually, it ranges from the lowest levels of Vila Nova de Cerveira to the highest of As Neves. While the unemployment rate is quite similar in the whole territory, it is worth noting that it tends to be higher in the Galician area in comparison to the Portuguese area.

Unemployment rate, 2016/2017



Source: personal compilation based on data from the Galician Institute of Statistics (2017), Spanish Employment Public Service (2017), and the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2016)

The motorway connecting Valença and Tui is the busiest border crossing between Spain and Portugal

## 4.3 MOBILITY<sup>6</sup>

### General aspects

Mobility in the River Miño cross-border area is significantly higher than in the rest of the Spain-Portugal border. Approximately half of all trips across the border occur between Galicia and North Portugal. However, mobility between borders in the

analysed area is still lower than in other European cross-border regions with close socioeconomic relations.

Data about average daily traffic (ADT) reveal that the border crossing in the motorway connecting Tui and Valença is the busiest between Spain and Portugal, with an average of 15,000 vehicles a day. In terms of labour mobility, between 5,000 and 10,000 workers cross the border between Galicia and North Portugal every year for work purposes; out of those, between 1,000 and 2,000 of them are commuters who cross the border daily. Therefore, the River Miño has become the most dynamic area of the border between Spain and Portugal regarding labour mobility.

The analysis of the traffic through several border crossings between Galicia and North Portugal shows that most travellers (95 % of them) enter and leave the country on the same day, by road, and using a private vehicle. Public transport provision is very limited. Most travellers cross the border for leisure or commercial purposes, but forced mobility for work or residential reasons has also been reported.

### Communication infrastructure, frequency, means, and motivations

Different population centres located on both sides of the River Miño are characterised by a high level of connexion. There are several bridges and a seasonal ferry between A Guarda and Caminha. These are some of the main cross-border communication infrastructures:

- **Roads:** the main cross-border land routes over the River Miño and their main characteristics are described in the chart below.

It must be highlighted that 50 % of vehicles driving through the River Miño border use the crossing between Tui and Valença (through the new bridge that connects the A55 motorway, in Galicia, with the A3 motorway in Portugal). This

<sup>6</sup> This section is based on Carballo (2014, 2015) and uses the works of the European Employment Services (1999, 2001, and 2003) and statistics of the Cross-Border Observatory Spain-Portugal (<https://www.fomento.gob.es/>). Data about the Celta train were obtained on the website of Comboios de Portugal (Trains of Portugal, <https://www.cp.pt/>).

Use of the road network over the River Miño, 2017

BORDER CROSSING	IDENTIFICATION	AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC (ADT)	PERCENTAGE OVER TOTAL ADT (%)
Goián-Vila Nova de Cerveira	PO-503	4,328	14.6
Tui-Valença (new bridge)	A55-IP1 (A3)	14,788	49.7
Tui-Valença (old bridge)	N550-EN13	3,196	10.7
Salvaterra-Monção	EN101	7,410	24.9
Arbo-Melgaço	PO405-EN202	[no data]	[no data]
TOTAL ADT	-	29,722	100.0

Source: personal compilation based on data from the Cross-Border Observatory Spain-Portugal (<https://www.fomento.gob.es/>)

is understandable, as motorways can carry more traffic and offer a faster alternative to conventional roads. The border crossing between Salvaterra de Miño and Monção (which connects roads PO510 and N101) also records a high rate, as it is used by 25 % of all vehicles that cross the border daily.

- **Railways:** Galicia and North Portugal share a single railway line that provides regular services between Porto (Campanhã) and Vigo (Guixar), currently known as Celta Train. It offers two daily trips from Porto to Vigo, calling at Nine, Viana do Castelo, and Valença (the latter two located within the River Miño cross-border area), as well as two trips from Vigo to Porto stopping at the same towns.

The journey takes approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes and the train crosses the border through the old Tui-Valença Bridge. There are more trains that cover the River Miño cross-border area, though without crossing the border: the Vigo-Ourense-Ponferrada medium-distance service operated by Renfe (calling at O Porriño, Guillarei, Salvaterra de Miño, As Neves, etc.) and the Linha do Minho line operated by Comboios de Portugal (regional services stop at 15 halts between Viana do Castelo and Valença).

- **Airports:** regarding the air transport cross-border context, the airports of Vigo (Peinador) and Porto (Francisco Sá Carneiro), located very close to the River Miño cross-border area, are worth mentioning.



Other influential airports include Lavacolla, in Santiago de Compostela, and, to a lesser extent, Alvedro, in A Coruña, located further away.

- **Ports:** the ports of Vigo and Leixões, in Porto, located near the River Miño cross-border area, stand out, but because of the amount of goods being shipped, not regarding cross-border passenger transport. In this sense, it is important to mention cross-border movements by ferry through the River Miño between the municipalities of A Guarda and Caminha, a service that offers several daily trips connecting both sides of the river on its estuary. The ports of Santa María de Oia and A Guarda, in Galicia, devoted mostly to fishing, should also be noted. In Portugal, the ports of Caminha and Viana do Castelo are also prominent. The latter is the port with the highest capacity in the River Miño cross-border area and hosts a remarkable amount of ship and cargo movements. In addition, ports and wharfs, used mainly for river fishing and sport activities, can be found along the River Miño.

The following chart offers a summary of the key points regarding mobility in the analysed area:

Several sports and cultural experiences through cross-border shared public services and equipments were developed

#### 4.4 CROSS-BORDER PROGRAMMES OF EXISTING JOINT PUBLIC SERVICES AND EQUIPMENT<sup>7</sup>

Joint public services and/or equipments cross-border programmes are provided jointly, shared, or coordinated in some way by a Galician and a Portuguese public local administration. It is interesting to mention some previous experiences, because they constitute the basis that must be analysed in order to adequately lay the foundations for future collaboration. Among the various existing options, the following are worth mentioning:

- In the sports field, the swimming pools in Vila Nova de Cerveira and Valença, used by Galician citizens

Mobility in the River Miño cross-border area

FREQUENCY OF TRIPS	MEANS OF TRANSPORT	REASON FOR CROSSING THE BORDER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40,000 vehicles cross the border between Galicia and Portugal every day</li> <li>• 5,000-10,000 workers cross the border between Galicia and Portugal every year</li> <li>• High mobility in relation to the Iberian Peninsula</li> <li>• Irrelevant mobility in relation to Europe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cars are the most widely used means to cross the border (&gt;80 % of cases)</li> <li>• Lack of public transport alternatives</li> <li>• Ferry (10 %): Caminha-A Guarda</li> <li>• Walking (&lt;10 %): Valença-Tui</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work is not the main reason</li> <li>• Leisure and shopping are the main reasons (&gt;60 %)</li> <li>• Differences in fuel prices</li> <li>• Main motivation for Galician people: leisure</li> <li>• Main motivation for Portuguese people: shopping</li> </ul>

Source: personal compilation based on Carballo (2015), European Employment Services (EURO-EURES) (1999, 2001, 2003), and the Cross-Border Observatory Spain-Portugal (<https://www.fomento.gob.es/>)

<sup>7</sup> Data about the Cerveira-Tomiño Eurocity were obtained from the town councils of Vila Nova de Cerveira and Tomiño (2018).

- In the musical field, the music schools of Tui and Tomiño, used by Portuguese people

In Vila Nova de Cerveira and Tomiño, this kind of cross-border initiatives are highly regarded by citizens because they consider that they improve their quality of life. In this sense, local population is aware of the opportunities offered by a cross-border area. Thus, such initiatives foster a feeling of closeness between both sides of the river. In the case of the Cerveira-Tomiño Eurocity, besides the aforementioned swimming pool in Vila Nova de Cerveira, the following actions should be highlighted:

- Joint programmes for children and young people
- Elderly care programmes
- Use of different types of municipal equipments for citizens of both municipalities (play centres, libraries, day care centres, etc.)
- Shared sports facilities
- Joint cultural programmes
- The entrepreneurship support programme

The different joint sports activities developed in the past years within the cross-border context of the Valença-Tui Eurocity must be underlined as well. In that area, a very well-structured agenda including all sorts of sports competitions and events, ranging from hiking routes and tournaments of different categories (tennis, mountain biking, etc.) to evening and fluvial activities, among others, was implemented.

However, the possibility of sharing services and equipments on both sides of the border (mobility, healthcare, formal learning, etc.) is sometimes hindered by legal and administrative obstacles, and, in some cases, by differences regarding the competences of the managing authorities. In addition, a contrast in habits and procedures can also be noted. In general terms, decision-making centres responsible for managing potential cross-border joint services and equipments are located far from the border.

Moreover, it has been detected that some procedures are bound up with red tape, preventing progress in many fields. Such is the case of, for instance, the mobility of school-age population for participating in educational activities organised by primary and secondary schools on the opposite side of the river.

## 4.5 NATURAL RESOURCES<sup>8</sup>

### **The River Miño as the core element of the cross-border area**

The River Miño constitutes the main distinctive element in the cross-border area and it is significant, not just environmentally, but also from a cultural, social, and economic point of view. Thus, its contributions to the area are not only limited to extremely valuable ecosystem services (biodiversity, a stable presence of water, etc.); it also carries historical, patrimonial, and cultural connotations in all the municipalities located on the riverside border. Moreover, we must not forget the key role played by the river in terms of economy, which has led to the development of a series of idiosyncratic activities in the area: fishing, restaurants, etc.

From an environmental standpoint, the River Miño is an indisputable ecological and scenic element in the area. Two remarkable areas linked to the river are the estuary (a wetland shared by Galicia and North Portugal and an important ecosystem for birdlife) and the protected area of O Baixo Miño, included in the Natura 2000 (originally a site of Community importance, now a special area of conservation and a special protection area for birds according to Directive 92/43/ECC) and as an area of special protection of natural values by Galician Law 9/2001. The protected area covers 2,791.64 ha. It is also included in the catalogue of important waters needing protection in order to support fish life.

Furthermore, from a sociocultural point of view, the River Miño is part of the local imaginary due to its past and present history as a connecting and dividing element, as well as for its great significance as a bordering element between Galicia and Portugal.

<sup>8</sup> This section is based on Antunes (2012), Lobo (2012), Pacheco (2013), Water Confederation of the Miño-Sil (2016), and García Vázquez et al. (2018).



The fortified towns in this area, which used the river as a border, as well as some examples of popular architecture and elements or religious art raising interesting historical and patrimonial interpretations related to the river, are also remarkable.

It should be noted that fishing in the River Miño cross-border area is a very important activity that compliments its citizens' main occupations. Certain species, like lampreys, which concentrate in a 30 km stretch of the river, are highly appreciated. They have been caught since Roman times using artisanal methods and are still being fished these days, mainly non-professionally.

The importance and potentiality of the River Miño tourist activities, particularly those related to nature tourism, must also be remembered.

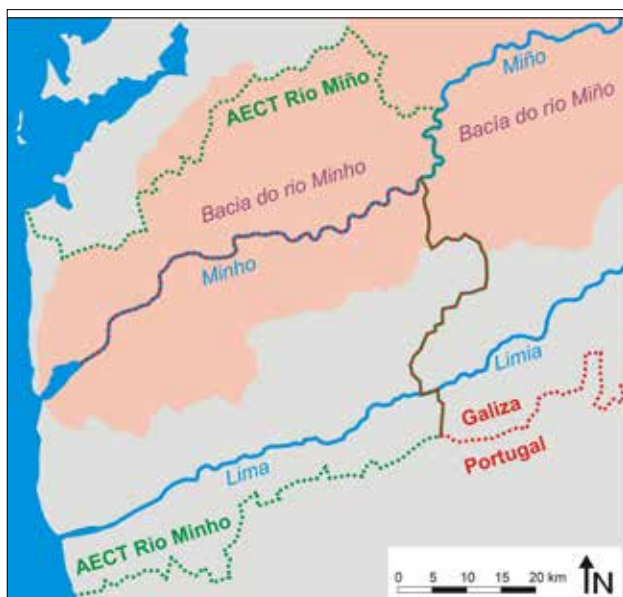
The River Miño is the main distinctive element in the cross-border area

### **The basin and the international stretch of the River Miño**

From its source to its mouth, which is located between the bordering towns of Caminha and A Guarda, the River Miño flows through 316.63 km<sup>2</sup>. Together with its main tributary, the River Sil, its basin covers an area of 7,619 km<sup>2</sup>. Only a small part of it is considered the international basin. Altitude in the international basin ranges from sea level in the coast and the Miño estuary to more than 1,000 m, especially in the eastern mountain ranges, which separate it from the inland sector of the basin: A Peneda and Castro Leboeiro, in Portugal, or O Faro de Avión, and O Suído, in Galicia. The highest point, at 1,314 m, is Outeiro Alvo Hill, located in A Peneda mountain range, in the border between the municipalities of Melgaço (parish of Lamas de Mouro) and Arcos de Valdevez (parish of Gavieira). However, the altimetric frequency curve reveals that 50 % of the basin area is between 0 m and 300 m high, while less than 20 % is over 600 m.

In the Spanish territory, the international basin is managed as the Water Demarcation of the Miño-Sil (DHMS) by the Water Confederation of the Miño-Sil (CH Miño-Sil). The Portuguese part belongs to the Water Region of the Minho and Lima (RH1), managed by the Administration of the Water Region of the North (ARH do Norte).

Western sector of the River Miño basin and territory of the EGTC  
Rio Minho



Since the River Miño basin is located in a cross-border area, joint management by both countries complies with the Water Framework Directive and is ruled by the agreements derived from the Albufeira Convention, signed in 1998 by Spain and Portugal in the Portuguese city of Albufeira with the aim of protecting waters and promoting the exploitation of cross-border water resources, which has been in force since 17<sup>th</sup> January 2000. According to the International coordination document of the 2016-2021 planning process in the international river basin districts shared by Spain and Portugal, the international stretch of the River Miño is divided into five sections: three of them are classified as river, and the remaining two, comprising the estuary, are considered transitional waters. Besides the River Miño itself and its estuary, the coast surrounding the mouth and the first tributary of the international stretch (River Troncoso) is also identified as international waters.

In any case, the cross-border nature of the River Miño and the usual costs related to cross-border areas have a negative impact for its joint planning and management.

The River Miño international basin is divided into two parts: a stretch of the river, and the mouth and the estuary

## Soil uses, landscapes and plant life in the River Miño international basin

Thanks to the complexity of its geography and the bioclimatic characteristics of the River Miño basin area, there is a high landscape diversity, resulting in a heterogeneous use of the soils in the area:

- Most of the basin (67.8 %) is vegetated and distributed as follows: 54 % is covered by forests, both coniferous woods and hardwoods; 40 % by shrubs, and the remaining 6 % by open spaces with sparse vegetation. Differences between vegetated areas on both sides of the River Miño can be observed. Thus, the Galician territory is mainly covered by forests, except in the north-eastern area (O Faro de Avión mountain range), while in Portugal shrubs are more abundant. Open areas without vegetation, in particular rocky areas, can be found in the south-eastern sector of the basin, especially at the highest points of A Peneda mountain range, where rocks, colder temperatures, and recurring wildfires hinder the growth of tree and shrub communities.
- 70 % of artificial land corresponds with discontinuous urban fabric, which shows that population groups in the area are dispersed.
- 29.1 % of the area is used for agricultural purposes. 90 % of those soils make up a mosaic of small, mostly annual, crops. Agriculture is, therefore, based on smallholding and tightly linked to the typical population structure of the area, formed by dispersed population centres, which is evidenced in the shape of the landscape.
- Bodies of water represent 1.5 % of the region's total area, while humid areas, in particular coastal wetlands, make up for 0.3 % of the territory.

As previously stated in the population analysis, the main urban areas are located on the coast, in the valleys of the rivers Miño and Louro. Regarding agricultural areas, most of them are located along the valleys of the Miño and its main tributaries, taking advantage of the fertile fluvial terraces and good weather conditions. The mountainous inland areas of the international basin are covered by forest stands and natural vegetation. As for wetlands, the two main ones can be found in the lower part



of the estuary, one on each side of the River Miño, where the mouth of the rivers Coura and Tamuxe are located.

Thus, the land cover map depicts two geographically and socially defined great areas in the River Miño international basin:

- The coastal and riverside area, with larger population, more population centres, and larger agricultural areas.
- The inland and mountainous area, with a lower population density distributed among disperse population centres and some small, isolated agricultural spots scattered among the dominating forest cover.

The native vegetation consists primarily of species typical of the Mediterranean climate, with a predominance of *Quercus robur* (common oak) forests, although it is difficult to find forests made up of this tree due to man-made environmental changes. In any case, it is also possible to find tree and bush species native to Mediterranean climate transition zones, such as *Quercus pyrenaica*.

Along the riverbanks with less intense man-made transformations, hygrophilous forests are largely composed of species like *Alnus glutinosa* (alder), *Salix* sp. (willow), *Fraxinus excelsior* (European ash), and *Betula alba* (silver birch). The latter can also be found in areas located at higher points,

where, thanks to its pioneering nature, it tends to form generally immature forests in which it can become the dominating species. Semi-natural areas are covered by different types of bush formations resulting from the degradation of tree stands caused by livestock farming and recurring wildfires. They are essentially made up of *Ulex europaeus* (gorse), the genus *Erica* sp. (heather), and the genera *Genista* and *Cytisus* (broom).

### **Main threats to the River Miño**

The River Miño faces a series of threats that put its conservation and sustainability at risk. Some of them are directly related to the natural dynamics of its ecosystems, while others are linked to anthropogenic factors. For example, the River Miño is being colonised by invasive aquatic plants, such as *Egeria densa* and *Elodea canadensis*, whose real impact on the river's living resources is still unknown. Additionally, siltation problems (due to sand, mud, etc.) which make navigation difficult, among others, have also been reported.

The negative impact caused by different actions taken on the sides of the river and reservoirs must also be mentioned. Overfishing has been occasionally one of them, as well as a concentration of pleasure boats on a seasonal basis.

## Wildfires

One of the main environmental problems affecting the River Miño cross-border area, as well as the whole Atlantic strip of the Iberian Peninsula, are wildfires. In order to analyse them, in the case of Galicia it is necessary to refer to existing data by forest districts. The studied territory belongs to forest district XVII (made up of the regions of A Paradanta and O Condado) and XVIII (regions of Vigo and O Baixo Miño), as shown on the map. Regarding Portugal, data correspond to the NUTS III subregion of Alto Minho.

During the 2010-2015 period, an average of 1,030.6 ha burned down yearly in Galician districts (474.2 in forest district XVII and 556.4 in forest district XVIII). In North Portugal, the annual average of burnt hectares in the municipalities belonging to the studied area during the same period was 9,363.7 ha. Thus, the annual average of burnt surface areas in the River Miño cross-border area through the analysed period adds up to a total of 10,394.3 ha every year, which is equivalent to the whole area of the municipality of A Cañiza.

However, it should be noted that data for Galicia may have been underestimated, as only wildfires which surpass a specific limit of burnt hectares are recorded.

Territorial division for wildfire emergency management



Source: personal compilation based on data from the Galician Institute of Statistics (2018) and the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2017)



## 5 / TERRITORIAL DIAGNOSIS

SWOT (1)	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existence of shared networks and experiences of cross-border cooperation and European fund management for years (agreements, joint projects, eurocities, etc.)</li> <li>Visibility and acknowledgement of the River Miño at a local, euroregional, and peninsular level, hence encouraging the implementation of differentiation strategies with regard to other territories</li> <li>A common history, identity, and cultural heritage promoting internal and external recognition in terms of both tangible (architecture, churches, castles, etc.) and intangible (festivals, traditions, etc.) heritage</li> <li>Important natural resources (the River Miño, Peneda-Gerês National Park/Gerês-Xurés Biosphere Reserve) that allow for creating an image of a tourist destination based on nature, conservation and sustainability</li> <li>Atlantic coast with the potential and needed infrastructures and equipments for leisure activities and water sports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Persistence of legal and administrative obstacles that hinder the socioeconomic integration of the area concerning transport, healthcare, public services, administrative procedures, qualifications, etc.)</li> <li>Lack of organisation regarding the implementation of public policies on different administrative levels, both within a territory and between territories (i. e. in Galicia, in North Portugal, and between both territories)</li> <li>Very limited provision of cross-border public transport, obstructing mobility</li> <li>Lack of a defined strategy to promote sustainable tourism, which leaves the sector without clear guidance for the future</li> <li>Lack of awareness about the territory in the main international markets</li> <li>Lack of strategies for heritage promotion, risking its existence, recognition and potentialities</li> <li>Difficulties to meet the high demand for skilled professionals, especially in certain roles and professions</li> <li>Depopulation, strong population ageing and emigration, leading to labour deficit, in general, but mainly affecting youth employment</li> </ul>

<b>SWOT (2)</b>	
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate climate and natural resources available for economic use</li> <li>• Tourism potential in sectors with medium and high added value (for example, heritage, gastronomy, nature, etc.)</li> <li>• Comprehensive improvement of the railway system, so that the Vigo-Porto route can be used as an effective railway axis, place into service of existing halts, and implementation of a suburban train system.</li> <li>• Strategic location in the centre of the Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion, thus making the most of its role as a connecting element between both territories</li> <li>• It is the busiest border in the Iberian Peninsula, so it could serve to attract new services and as a tool to promote the area</li> <li>• Commitment of the Spanish and Portuguese governments to encouraging cross-border cooperation (agreements on the Iberian Summit in Vila Real in 2017 and of the Spanish-Portuguese Commission in Valladolid in 2018)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public disinvestment (both in terms of national and Community funds) in cross-border areas caused by the admission of new EU members, the effects of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom and changes in fund allocation criteria</li> <li>• The administrative division and the existence of multiple uncoordinated political-administrative agents make it difficult to define a joint development strategy</li> <li>• Competition with other tourist destinations, even within the Euroregion, in a context of constant innovation</li> <li>• Wildfires destroy nature and remove distinctive elements in its landscape, damaging the image of the territory as a space that promotes conservation and sustainability</li> <li>• In some sectors, there is a strong competition among companies coming from third countries, particularly from non-EU countries, making it difficult to channel efforts into qualifying companies' offers and increase capacity for activities with a higher added value</li> <li>• Climate changes imply adjustments in the production model and increase uncertainty regarding the territory's economic structure</li> </ul>

# 6 / ACTION PLAN

## VISION: the River Miño as a core vector for development in the area

STRATEGIC AXES	DESCRIPTION
<b>JOINT GOVERNANCE AND SERVICES PROGRAMMES</b>	Creating joint government instruments for the River Miño area that allow for supporting a catalogue of joint services
<b>SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM</b>	Developing a sustainable and responsible model of tourism based on the preservation and promotion of the natural heritage, in particular the international River Miño, the Atlantic coast, and biosphere reserves
<b>CROSS-BORDER CULTURE</b>	Highlighting the importance of culture as an integrating element for society in the cross-border area
<b>SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY</b>	Promoting cross-border mobility to reduce CO <sub>2</sub> emissions in the River Miño cross-border area
<b>INNOVATIVE ECONOMY AND SUSTAINABILITY</b>	Boosting sustainability and innovation of local productive activities to prevent depopulation

## STRATEGIC AXIS 1: JOINT GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC SERVICES PROGRAMMES

This axis aims at establishing a joint government instrument for the River Miño cross-border area to support a catalogue of joint public services. Promoting active bilateral or trilateral municipal initiatives, planning new ones (both public and private), and working towards the elimination of cross-border obstacles to maximise territorial development possibilities

<b>LINE OF ACTION 1.1</b>	<b>CONSOLIDATION OF THE EGTC RIO MINHO AS A MODEL OF COOPERATION IN THE CROSS-BORDER AREA</b>
<b>GOAL 1.1.1</b>	The EGTC Rio Minho must act as a territorial development agency for the River Miño, thus leading the implementation of the 2030 Strategy
<b>GOAL 1.1.2</b>	Creating instruments to centralise information in the River Miño area
<b>GOAL 1.1.3</b>	The EGTC Rio Minho must act as an instrument to obtain funds, in particular European funds
<b>GOAL 1.1.4</b>	The EGTC Rio Minho must lead territorial cooperation in its scope of action
<b>LINE OF ACTION 1.2</b>	<b>BILATERAL AND TRILATERAL MUNICIPAL INITIATIVES ABOUT JOINT SERVICES PROGRAMMES</b>
<b>GOAL 1.2.1</b>	Promoting shared coordination and management of municipal services between municipalities located on both banks of the river
<b>GOAL 1.2.2</b>	Facilitating access to public services provided by municipal administrations for citizens of the cross-border area
<b>LINE OF ACTION 1.3</b>	<b>PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES TO REMOVE THE LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE BARRIERS AND BORDER COSTS</b>
<b>GOAL 1.3.1</b>	Promoting agreements regarding healthcare (primary and hospital care, ambulances, etc.)
<b>GOAL 1.3.2</b>	Promoting agreements regarding education (recognition of professional qualifications, etc.)
<b>GOAL 1.3.3</b>	Promoting agreements regarding mobility (authorisation for public transports and children to cross the border, etc.)
<b>GOAL 1.3.4</b>	Promoting agreements regarding emergencies and risk prevention (action and coordination protocols, etc.)
<b>GOAL 1.3.5</b>	Helping existing cross-border management joint organisms in the strict scope of the river to achieve multilevel dialogue roles for effective decision making
<b>LINE OF ACTION 1.4</b>	<b>PROMOTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND ENTREPRENEUR NETWORKS IN THE RIVER MIÑO AREA</b>
<b>GOAL 1.4.1</b>	Promoting the creation of civil society and entrepreneur collaborative networks in the River Miño area
<b>GOAL 1.4.2</b>	Promoting equal opportunity regardless of gender, age, and physical and intellectual capacity

## STRATEGIC AXIS 2: SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

This axis intends to develop a sustainable and responsible model of tourism based on the preservation and promotion of natural heritage, in particular the international area of the River Miño, the Atlantic coast, and biosphere reserves. The creation of the Rio Minho brand aims at putting this territory on the local, eu-roregional, and international map. That implies positioning both the brand and joint cross-border tourism products. Proper governance is key in the tourism sector, as it plays a central role in the future strategy for the River Miño cross-border area.

LINE OF ACTION 2.1	POSITIONING OF THE RIO MINHO BRAND
<b>GOAL 2.1.1</b>	Introducing the Rio Minho brand as a model of joint tourism
<b>GOAL 2.1.2</b>	Undertaking its joint promotion with the motto “One river, two countries, great experiences”
LINE OF ACTION 2.2	PROMOTING JOINT TOURISM PRODUCTS
<b>GOAL 2.2.1</b>	Adding value to the greenbelt of tracks and bike paths around the River Miño to promote the creation of a network of walking tracks and complete the existing network of bike paths
<b>GOAL 2.2.2</b>	Developing the network of border fortresses (the fortresses tourist circuit)
<b>GOAL 2.2.3</b>	Developing nautical, fluvial, and maritime tourism products
<b>GOAL 2.2.4</b>	Developing culinary tourism products and wine tourism products based on Vinhos Verdes and Rías Baixas designations of origin
<b>GOAL 2.2.5</b>	Developing sports and nature tourism products
<b>GOAL 2.2.6</b>	Implementing the Portuguese Way of St James evenly in the River Miño area (signs, pilgrim hostels, etc.)
LINE OF ACTION 2.3	CROSS-BORDER TOURISM GOVERNANCE
<b>GOAL 2.3.1</b>	The EGTC must adopt a leading role within the tourism sector in the River Miño cross-border area
<b>GOAL 2.3.2</b>	Planning and managing tourism jointly: offers, promotion, information, initiatives, training cross-border tourist guides, etc.
<b>GOAL 2.3.3</b>	Promoting an inclusive model of tourism that responds to functional, age, gender, and sexual diversity

### STRATEGIC AXIS 3: CROSS-BORDER CULTURE

This axis consists on highlighting the importance of culture as an integrating element for society in the River Miño cross-border area. In order to achieve that, it is necessary to promote the common landscape and heritage and create a cultural agenda that makes it possible to expand the geographical scope of the main cultural events beyond the border. Moreover, it is necessary to establish mechanisms that allow for increasing the visibility of the tangible and intangible heritage of the River Miño cross-border area in order to promote local culture and aim at receiving the most prestigious international awards.

LINE OF ACTION 3.1	PROMOTION OF THE COMMON LANDSCAPE AND HERITAGE
<b>GOAL 3.1.1</b>	Raising awareness about the shared nature of the tangible and intangible heritage of the River Miño cross-border area
<b>GOAL 3.1.2</b>	Highlighting the importance of the cross-border landscape of the River Miño area
<b>GOAL 3.1.3</b>	Promoting the nomination of the river's estuary as a UNESCO World Heritage Site
LINE OF ACTION 3.2	JOINT CULTURAL AGENDA AND CROSS-BORDER CULTURAL EVENTS
<b>GOAL 3.2.1</b>	Promoting local culture, especially local artists, artisanal activities, and creative industries
<b>GOAL 3.2.2</b>	Developing a cross-border joint cultural agenda covered by the media
<b>GOAL 3.2.3</b>	Promoting media coverage of cross-border information about road traffic

### STRATEGIC AXIS 4: SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

This axis aims at promoting cross-border mobility to help reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the River Miño cross-border area. This strategic axis calls for local mobility tools and solutions that help reduce the effects of the border and, at the same time, make little or no impact on the area's natural heritage. Improving the territory's connectivity with other areas is also key or encourage competitiveness in different economic sectors. That way, this axis strives to strengthen the area both internally and externally in terms of mobility

LINE OF ACTION 4.1	CROSS-BORDER LOCAL MOBILITY SOLUTIONS
<b>GOAL 4.1.1</b>	Promoting sustainable cross-border local mobility solutions that cross the river
<b>GOAL 4.1.2</b>	Continuing the implementation of infrastructures that allow for border permeability
<b>GOAL 4.1.3</b>	Promoting a model of cross-border mobility that responds to functional diversity
LINE OF ACTION 4.2	EXTERNAL CONNECTIVITY TO STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS
<b>GOAL 4.2.1</b>	Introducing a cross-border suburban train route between Vigo and Viana do Castelo that operates frequent services and restoring existing halts
<b>GOAL 4.2.2</b>	Making connections between Porto, Vigo, and other Galician cities in the Atlantic Axis easier through a high-speed train operating frequent services and stopping at Valença and Viana do Castelo
<b>GOAL 4.2.3</b>	Encouraging the competent administrations to promote necessary road infrastructures in order to strengthen economic competitiveness and public transport

## STRATEGIC AXIS 5: INNOVATIVE ECONOMY AND SUSTAINABILITY

This axis seeks to boost sustainability and innovation of local productive activities to prevent depopulation in the region. It is important to stress the potential of agriculture, fisheries, industries, and trade and focusing the territorial development programme on sustainability and conservation. By doing that, it seeks to respond to the threats related to global warming and thus ensure the continuity, transformation, and resilience of the different productive activities in the River Miño cross-border area

LINE OF ACTION 5.1	SUSTAINABILITY AND PRESERVATION OF THE RIVER AND THE RIVER MIÑO AREA
<b>GOAL 5.1.1</b>	Looking for methods for exploiting the territory and its natural resources that are compatible with sustainable development
<b>GOAL 5.1.2</b>	Fighting the risks related to global warming
<b>GOAL 5.1.3</b>	Homogenising the levels of protection and environmental management criteria of the river and its area of influence
<b>GOAL 5.1.4</b>	Coordinating environmental recovery programmes for the river
<b>GOAL 5.1.5</b>	Preserving the natural environment of the Miño estuary
LINE OF ACTION 5.2	PRIMARY SECTOR
<b>GOAL 5.2.1</b>	Adding value to the fishing activities directly linked to the river
<b>GOAL 5.2.2</b>	Promoting innovation and viability of agricultural and forest products of the River Miño cross-border area (wines, kiwis, ornamental plants, fruit, etc.) to help maintain rural population
<b>GOAL 5.2.3</b>	Adding value to the fishing activities directly linked to the river
<b>GOAL 5.2.4</b>	Favouring the sustainability of maritime fishing activities in the sea
<b>GOAL 5.2.5</b>	Encouraging cooperation between food industry business projects from both banks of the river
<b>GOAL 5.2.6</b>	Promoting local production (km 0)
<b>GOAL 5.2.7</b>	Managing an effective system of production, control and clearing of agricultural and forest areas to eliminate or minimise the risk of wildfires
<b>GOAL 5.2.8</b>	Creating mechanisms to simplify abandoned land use to achieve economies of scale in farms
LINE OF ACTION 5.3	INDUSTRY
<b>GOAL 5.3.1</b>	Preventing depopulation by promoting industrial employment
<b>GOAL 5.3.2</b>	Increasing the usable area in the most industrially developed municipalities without damaging the environment of the cross-border area and the river
<b>GOAL 5.3.3</b>	Promoting cross-border job training which can be recognised in both countries
<b>GOAL 5.3.4</b>	Expediting the procedures to open a business and licenses for industrial activities in Galician municipalities
LINE OF ACTION 5.4	TRADITIONAL TRADE
<b>GOAL 5.4.1</b>	Promoting originality, tradition, modernization, and differentiation among businesses in the River Miño cross-border area to make them more appealing than other alternatives and allow them to maintain jobs
<b>GOAL 5.4.2</b>	Promoting the creation of associations and cross-border joint actions to draw attention to retail offerings

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## CONSULTED STATISTICAL INSTITUTES

EUROSTAT: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

Galician Institute of Statistics: <http://www.ige.eu/>

Spanish National Institute of Statistics: <http://www.ine.es/>

Portuguese National Institute of Statistics: <https://www.ine.pt/>

Cross-Border Observatory Spain-Portugal: <https://www.fomento.gob.es/informacion-para-el-ciudadano/observatorios/observatorios-de-transporte-internacional/observatorio-transfronterizo-espan%CC%83a-portugal>

Spanish Employment Public Service: <https://www.sepe.es/>

