

## **New waves: immigration to small towns and rural areas in Portugal**

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In the last ten years, the geography of immigration to Portugal has undergone truly profound changes, from that which has to do with recruitment to the geographic patterns of immigrant's settlement in Portugal.

Given the tendency towards the diversification of sending countries, a migratory flow hailing from Eastern Europe, namely from the Ukraine, Moldova, Romania and Russia, has developed.

In terms of the places in which they settle, despite the fact that the majority resides in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, it is possible to find them throughout the country, spreading themselves out in relationship to the work opportunities available in each region.

This paper examines the recent trends of immigration to small towns and rural areas in Portugal. The study is based upon the analysis of official data sources and interviews carried out in municipalities located in Alentejo and Beira Interior. Both of the regions chosen as case study sites remain markedly rural with a significant elderly population that is in risk of entering into demographic decline.

The interviews implied contacting a wide range of people and both public and not-for-profit institutions and immigrant groups to better examine the distribution and nature of immigrant communities living in each place and the local responses developed in relation to them.

Following a demographic and socio-professional characterisation of the main immigrant groups working in the two regions, the dominant migratory processes are examined. Finally, some concluding remarks are made about the effects of immigration upon the development processes of Portuguese rural areas.