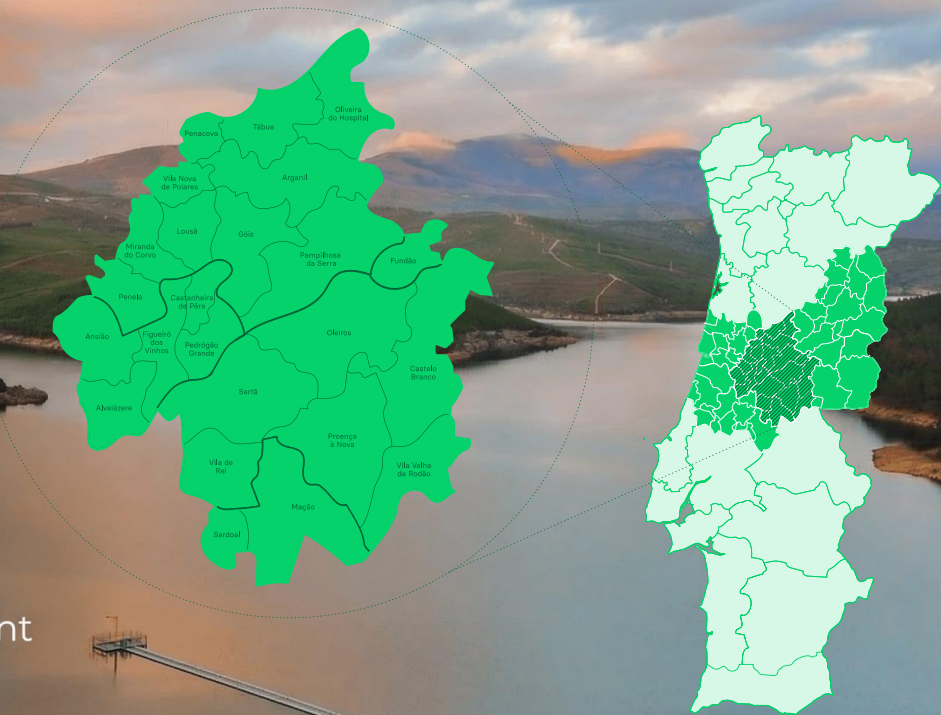


# A Multi-Fund ITI for Territorial Resilience

The Pinhal Interior Approach

Luís Matias | Pinhal Interior Territorial Development  
Agency



# 24 Municipalities, One Functional Territory.



Area:

**~5,500 km<sup>2</sup>**

Intermunicipal Communities:

**5**

Forest cover:

**75-90%**

Thermal springs:

**4**

Municipalities:

**24**

Population:

**~171,000**

River beaches:

**51**

ITI investment:

**€45 million**

This is not an administrative region but a functional territorial partnership — defined by shared challenges, complementary assets and collaborative governance.

# A Territory Rich in Natural Capital



## Forests

17% of Portugal's total forest area. 75–90% of each municipality is forested.



## Water

7 rivers, 6 reservoirs, 4 thermal spa resorts.  
51 river beaches (highest concentration in Europe).



## Biodiversity

A mosaic of habitats (forests, rivers, mountains, farmland).  
Refuge for rare species and ancient woodlands.



# Living Heritage: Schist Villages, Crafts and Community.

The Pinhal Interior's cultural identity is rooted in the fusion of mountain and river traditions. Schist architecture, historic villages, traditional crafts and a deep sense of community define a way of life that is both authentic and resilient.

- 🌿 Historic villages built in local schist stone
- 🌿 Traditional crafts and artisan networks
- 🌿 Thematic village initiatives (Smart Villages, Aldeias do Xisto)
- 🌿 Gastronomic heritage: game, mushrooms, olive oil, local wines
- 🌿 Living traditions: festivals, oral history, communal practices.

# From Forest Fires to a Territorial Strategy: Crisis as Catalyst

**2017–2018:**

Devastating forest fires trigger national response and a window of opportunity.



**2019–2020:**

Participatory strategy development engages municipalities and stakeholders.



**2021:**

ITI formally established, transforming crisis response into long-term development.



**2022–present:**

Implementation underway with €20M+ approved investment.



**Place-based approaches transform reactive crisis management into proactive territorial development.**

# Private Coordination, Multi-Level Governance: Built for Agility

**National & Regional Government**  
(Political monitoring & programme articulation)



**General Board / Conselho Geral**  
(Strategic guidance — 24 municipalities)



**Executive Commission**  
(Day-to-day oversight — 5 Intermunicipal Communities)



**Territorial Development Agency / IIBT**  
(Private non-profit — operational coordination)



**Local Action Groups & Municipalities**  
(Territorial ecosystem & LEADER/CLLD co-funding)

**Delegating operational coordination to a private non-profit agency — rather than a public authority — increases agility, reduces bureaucratic friction and enables faster decision-making.**



# Four Strategic Axes for Territorial Transformation

## Eixo 1 — RESILIENCE

Strengthening the territory's capacity to face structural challenges: forest fires, climate change and depopulation. Integrated natural resource management and sustainable practices.

## Eixo 2 — COHESION

Promoting territorial cohesion through new proximity service models, active ageing networks and innovative population attraction and retention policies.

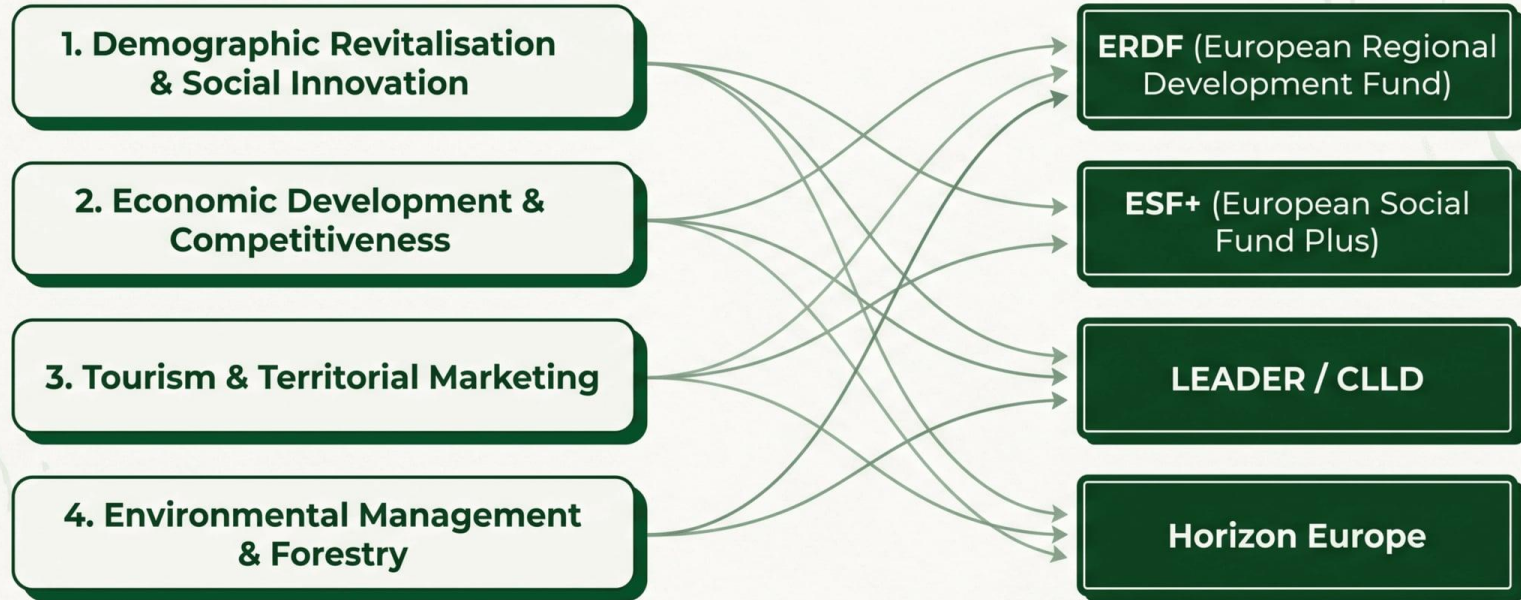
## Eixo 3 — COMPETITIVENESS

Increasing the competitiveness of local businesses through entrepreneurship support, high-value new ventures, lifelong learning and talent promotion.

## Eixo 4 — ATTRACTIVENESS

Sustainable valorisation of villages and natural, cultural and creative resources — making the territory attractive to live, study, research, invest and visit.

# Multi-Fund Integration: Coherence by Design, Not Afterthought



Embedding multi-fund complementarity from strategy design — not as an afterthought — is critical for coherence and impact.

# Complexity Is the Price of Integration: Key Challenges

## **Administrative & Technical Capacity**

Capacity at local level has been a persistent constraint. Multi-fund instruments demand significant coordination and expertise.

## **Citizen Participation**

Ensuring meaningful engagement beyond formal consultation processes remains a challenge in sparsely populated areas.

## **Multi-Level Coordination**

Aligning national, regional, intermunicipal and local actors around shared priorities is inherently demanding.

## **Time to Implementation**

Translating strategic objectives into concrete projects takes longer than anticipated, creating gaps between strategy approval and visible results.

# What Works and Why: Five Lessons from Pinhal Interior

## 01 — Functional Territory Focus:

Design the ITI around a functional partnership rather than an administrative region.

## 02 — Multi-Fund Integration by Design:

Embed complementarity across funding instruments in the strategy design.

## 03 — Private-Law Coordination Body:

Delegate operational coordination to a non-profit agency rather than a public authority.

## 04 — Participatory Strategy:

Rapid but inclusive strategy development creates shared ownership.

## 05 — Flexibility as Design Principle:

Build adaptability into the action plan structure.

# Towards Territorial Resilience.



- 01** — The Pinhal Interior ITI shows that crisis can be a catalyst for structural transformation — if local actors are empowered and supported to act collectively.
- 02** — Governance innovation — combining private-law coordination, multi-level accountability and participatory strategy — is as important as financial architecture.
- 03** — Multi-fund integration is not just a technical exercise: it requires political will, coordination capacity and a shared territorial vision.
- 04** — The experience confirms that place-based approaches work best when grounded in functional territorial realities, not administrative convenience.
- 05** — The journey is ongoing: implementation, learning and adaptation are continuous processes, not a one-off project cycle.

An aerial photograph of a river winding through a lush, green forest. The river is dark and calm, reflecting the surrounding trees. The forest is dense and vibrant, with various shades of green. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

# Thank You

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[www.pinhall-interior.pt](http://www.pinhall-interior.pt)