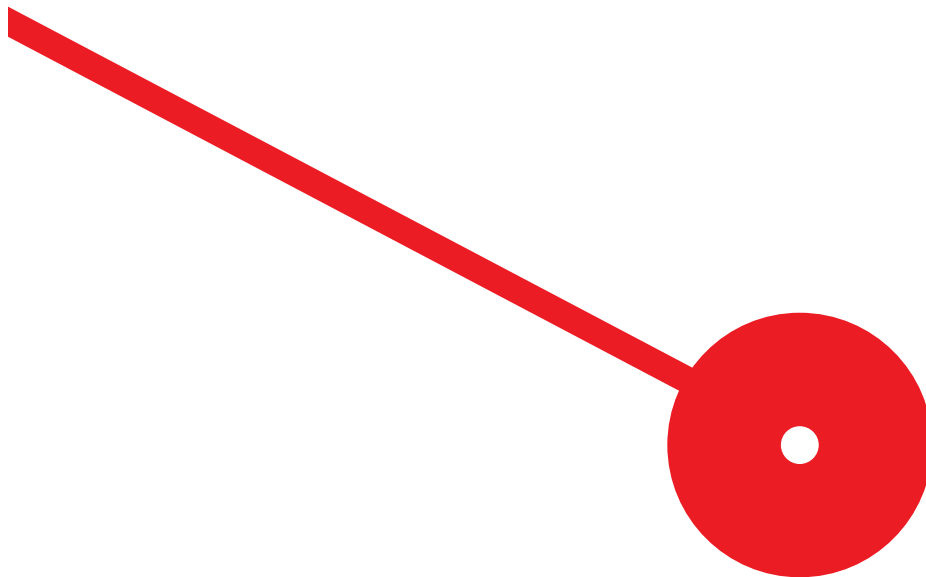




Proposal for an *Arts and Crafts*  
*Route* in Tâmega e Sousa  
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# Proposal of an *Arts and Crafts Route* in Tâmega e Sousa

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**Project Work presented to Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e  
Administração do Porto / Porto Accounting and Business School to  
obtain the Master's Degree in Intercultural Studies for Business  
under the supervision of Professor Laura Tallone and Professor Sara  
Pascoal.**

## **Dedication**

To my family and friends for believing in me even when I couldn't.

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The first and single most important acknowledgment goes to my parents for the unconditional love and support all these years as I know that without them by my side I wouldn't be where I am today. I promise you I'll continue to work on my dreams to make you proud and achieve everything you've always made sure to tell me I am capable of achieving.

I would also like to express how thankful I am to have people in my life who allowed me to see beside the fogginess and hardships that faced me in various moments throughout this process. Special thanks to my siblings Miguel and Jéssica for always pushing me forward, to Filipa for the constant encouragement, and to Bruno and Liliana for the continuous love and support.

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Thank you.

I couldn't have done this without your support.

## **Resumo:**

Este projeto investiga o potencial transformador das indústrias culturais e criativas (ICC) na configuração do desenvolvimento do turismo, com um enfoque específico na região do Tâmega e Sousa no norte de Portugal. Defende-se que a integração das ICC nas estratégias de turismo pode proporcionar oportunidades únicas de crescimento económico e preservação cultural, particularmente em regiões que foram historicamente negligenciadas pelos turistas. A pesquisa destaca como as ICC podem aumentar a atratividade do artesanato e do património locais, criando experiências autênticas que repercutem entre visitantes de diversas origens, tanto nacionais como internacionais.

No centro deste estudo está o conceito de rotas culturais, que atuam como mecanismos para descentralizar o turismo e redirecionar os fluxos de visitantes para além das atrações tradicionais. Focando nas rotas de artesanato, ao promover conexões entre os artesãos locais e os turistas, essas rotas não só destacam a rica herança cultural da região, mas também incentivam a participação da comunidade e fortalecem as economias locais. Este projeto aprofunda as implicações desta abordagem, examinando como pode estimular o interesse nas ofertas únicas da região do Tâmega e Sousa.

Além da exploração destes referenciais, a pesquisa abrange uma análise de mercado detalhada e uma avaliação por meio dos modelos PEST e SWOT, com o objetivo de avaliar o contexto macroeconómico e identificar os principais desafios e oportunidades no cenário turístico atual. O modelo de negócio proposto incorpora ferramentas digitais inovadoras projetadas para melhorar a acessibilidade e promover o envolvimento multilíngue, garantindo que um público diversificado possa vivenciar a riqueza cultural da região.

Em última análise, este projeto defende uma mudança de paradigma no desenvolvimento do turismo, sublinhando o papel vital das ICC na criação de experiências turísticas sustentáveis, inclusivas e enriquecedoras que beneficiam tanto as comunidades locais como os visitantes.

**Palavras chave:** Indústrias Culturais e Criativas; Artesanato; Rotas Culturais; Tâmega e Sousa.

**Abstract:**

This project investigates the transformative potential of cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in shaping tourism development, with a specific lens on the Tâmega e Sousa region of northern Portugal. It posits that the integration of CCIs into tourism strategies can provide unique opportunities for economic growth and cultural preservation, particularly in regions that have been historically overlooked by tourists. The research highlights how CCIs can enhance the appeal of local crafts and heritage, creating authentic experiences that resonate with visitors from both national and international backgrounds.

Central to this study is the concept of cultural routes, which serve as vehicles for decentralizing tourism and redistributing visitor flows away from mainstream attractions. In the case of craft routes, while fostering connections between local artisans and tourists these routes not only showcase the region's rich cultural tapestry but also encourage community engagement and support for local economies. This project delves into the implications of this approach, examining how it can stimulate interest in the Tâmega e Sousa region's unique offerings.

In addition to exploring the theoretical frameworks, the research includes a detailed market assessment and an evaluation using the PEST and SWOT models, aimed at analyzing the macroeconomic context and identifying the key challenges and opportunities in the current tourism landscape. The proposed business model incorporates innovative digital tools designed to enhance accessibility and promote multilingual engagement, ensuring that a diverse audience can experience the region's cultural wealth.

Ultimately, this project advocates for a paradigm shift in tourism development, underscoring the vital role of CCIs in crafting sustainable, inclusive, and enriching tourism experiences that benefit both local communities and visitors alike.

**Key words:** Cultural and Creative industries; Crafts; Cultural Routes; Tâmega e Sousa.

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## Abbreviations list

- ADER-SOUSA — Associação de Desenvolvimento Rural das Terras do Sousa
- AEP — Associação Empresarial de Portugal
- AMP — Área Metropolitana do Porto
- CCDR-N — Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte
- CCIS — Cultural and Creative Industries
- CEARTE — Centro de Formação Profissional para o Artesanato e Património
- CIM Tâmega e Sousa — Comunidade Intermunicipal do Tâmega e Sousa
- DCMS — Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
- EEC PROVERE — Estratégia de Eficiência Coletiva Programa de Valorização Económica de Recursos Endógenos
- EICR — Energy Infrastructure Compliance Report
- EU — European Union
- GDP — Gross Domestic Product
- GEE — Gabinete de estratégia e estudos
- GPS — Global Positioning System
- ICOMOS — International Council on Monuments and Sites
- ILO — International Labour Organization
- INE — Instituto Nacional de Estatística
- ITC — International Trade Centre
- NUTS — Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
- OECD — Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- PEST — Political, Economic, Social, and Technological
- SMEs — Small and Medium Enterprises
- SWOT — Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
- UNCTAD — United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- UNESCO — United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- UNWTO — United Nations World Tourism Organization
- WTO — World Trade Organization

## **INTRODUCTION**

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The landscape of tourism in Europe has undergone profound shifts over recent decades, with cultural and creative industries (CCIs) playing an increasingly central role in shaping this dynamic sector. These industries are essential in enhancing tourism by intertwining the preservation of local traditions with innovative approaches to tourism. Through the focus on heritage and crafts, CCIs help safeguard valuable cultural practices and artisanal skills that might otherwise be lost, fostering a sense of identity and belonging within communities. This preservation attracts tourists seeking authentic experiences rooted in local culture. Simultaneously, the development of innovative cultural routes expands the scope of tourism, allowing visitors to engage with these traditions in dynamic ways. Such routes create opportunities for immersive experiences, encouraging tourists to explore various aspects of a region's cultural landscape. By linking diverse cultural offerings, innovative cultural routes not only enrich the tourist experience but also stimulate local economies by promoting cross-regional visits and encouraging spending in areas that may not typically attract large tourist crowds. This thesis explores the intersection of cultural and creative industries and tourism, focusing specifically on the Tâmega e Sousa region in northern Portugal, which is rich in tangible and intangible heritage, namely crafts, and untapped potential for decentralized tourism. Through also an in-depth examination of the role of cultural routes, this research seeks to establish a theoretical framework for understanding how the crafts sector can serve as a vehicle for creative tourism, ultimately proposing the development of an *Arts and Crafts Route* in Tâmega e Sousa.

The section titled "From Cultural to Creative Industries" establishes a foundation for understanding the evolution and significance of these sectors in contemporary society. It leads into a discussion on "Cultural and Creative Industries: Scope and Definitions," which characterizes these sectors using insights from academics and organizations. This exploration highlights how cultural and creative industries foster innovation and enhance regional identity, emphasizing their essential role in shaping economic landscapes and influencing community dynamics. Moreover, this chapter identifies these industries as key drivers of economic development, illustrating how they generate growth through job creation, innovation, and the promotion of regional heritage. This analysis sets the stage for a closer examination of the crafts sector, which, as a vital component of the cultural and creative industries, contributes to the broader landscape and offers unique opportunities for creative tourism.

In the subsequent section, the thesis narrows its focus to the crafts sector, particularly within the context of creative tourism. This sector is of particular interest due to its potential to bridge the gap between traditional cultural expressions and modern tourist expectations. By exploring the connection between crafts and tourism, this chapter aims to establish a theoretical foundation for the proposed *Arts and Crafts Route* in Tâmega e Sousa. As the cultural and creative industries increasingly emphasize experiential and immersive forms of tourism, crafts offer a unique proposition. Craft-related experiences enable tourists to engage with local traditions, participate in hands-on workshops, and gain a deeper understanding of regional cultures. The last section of the chapter, “Crafts and Creative Tourism” will discuss how this form of tourism not only supports local artisans but also enhances the cultural value of the region, making it a viable and sustainable avenue for economic and social development. The chapter will also investigate the broader scope of the crafts sector within the global creative tourism movement, linking these insights to the specific context of Tâmega e Sousa.

Building on the theoretical foundation laid in Chapter I, the second chapter focuses on the concept of cultural routes, with inputs from organizations like the Council of Europe and UNESCO, which have defined and promoted these routes as tools for preserving cultural heritage and fostering sustainable tourism. Then, a particular emphasis is given on their development within the European framework in the section titled “Cultural routes definition and scope within European framework”, which will provide an overview of the origins and evolution of cultural routes, illustrating their significance as innovative tools for creative tourism. By examining examples from across Europe, the chapter will highlight how these routes have successfully revitalized regions, attracting both domestic and international tourists. Both these sections will discuss on the unique characteristics that define cultural routes, such as their thematic coherence and ability to integrate multiple regions and sites into a single, cohesive tourist experience.

The second chapter continues by examining the role of cultural routes as innovative tools for creative tourism. In the section “Cultural routes development: the Portuguese context”, Portugal's involvement in both European and national cultural route initiatives is explored. As part of the European Union, Portugal has been active in promoting cultural routes that enhance tourism, foster cross-border cooperation, and preserve shared heritage. Nationally, cultural routes have become central to the country's tourism strategy. These initiatives demonstrate how cultural heritage can diversify

tourism beyond the typical city destinations and create deeper connections between visitors and local traditions. The following section “Northern Portugal: a key hub for Cultural Routes” explores the emergence of Porto and its surrounding areas in tourism landscape and the role of this region as a focal point for cultural routes development, drawing visitors to discover its historical, artistic, and natural richness. In the final section, “Decentralization of tourism in northern Portugal: Cultural Routes development in the Tâmega e Sousa region”, the discussion turns to how the Tâmega e Sousa region has, in comparison, attracted fewer tourists than other parts of northern Portugal. Despite its abundance of cultural heritage, this region has not yet fully capitalized on its tourism potential. The implementation of cultural routes in Tâmega e Sousa presents a strategic solution for redistributing tourism flows, helping to decentralize tourism from the more saturated areas like Porto, while simultaneously offering visitors unique experiences rooted in the local culture.

Chapter III marks the transition from the theoretical and contextual groundwork to the practical proposal for a crafts route in the Tâmega e Sousa region. This chapter, titled “Proposal for an *Arts and Crafts Route* in Tâmega e Sousa”, will outline the conceptualization and design of a route that highlights the rich tradition of crafts in the region. By integrating the various municipalities and their unique contributions to the arts and crafts sector, this route aims to provide an immersive cultural experience for tourists. This proposal is particularly relevant given the current gap in the region’s tourism offerings, where no comprehensive route specifically dedicated to crafts currently exists. The chapter will detail the key features of the proposed route, including its potential to attract both national and international tourists, and its alignment with broader regional development strategies. Drawing on the success of other cultural routes in northern Portugal, this chapter will argue that the proposed arts and crafts route offers a valuable addition to the region’s tourism infrastructure, with the potential to contribute to the decentralization of tourism while promoting the sustainability of traditional crafts and economic revitalization of the region.

Finally, Chapter IV delves into the business model of the arts and crafts route, utilizing the widely recognized *Business Model Canvas* framework. This chapter will present a comprehensive analysis of the key components necessary for the successful implementation and operation of the route, from value proposition and customer segments to revenue streams and cost structures. Special attention will be given to the role of digital

tools, such as a website and mobile app, in promoting the route and facilitating tourist engagement. Additionally, the chapter will address the importance of partnerships with local artisans, municipalities, and tourism agencies, ensuring that the route is both economically viable and culturally enriching. This business model is designed to harmonize the commercial elements of the route with its cultural objectives. The primary aim is not to maximize profits but rather to support the local crafts sector and promote the cultural identity of Tâmega e Sousa. By prioritizing sustainability over revenue generation, the model focuses on fostering a vibrant local artisan community and preserving traditional crafts. This approach ensures that the economic benefits derived from the route directly contribute to the well-being of local artisans and their cultural heritage.

This project aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the role of cultural and creative industries in tourism development, with a specific focus on the crafts sector as a driver of creative tourism. By proposing an *Arts and crafts Route* in Tâmega e Sousa, this research not only seeks to fill a gap in the region's tourism offerings but also to highlight the broader potential of cultural routes as tools for creative and sustainable tourism practices.

## **CHAPTER I – THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**

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The late 20th century marked a significant turning point in the discourse surrounding culture and its economic implications, particularly with the emergence of cultural and creative industries (CCIs) as a prominent field of study and policy. This era, often traced back to 1997, catalyzed a convergence of various approaches to culture, igniting an urgent recognition of a new reality that encapsulated change, renewal, and revitalization within the economy. Innovation and creativity are now integral to development strategies worldwide, reflected in policy documents from major international organizations such as the UNDP, OECD, WTO, UNESCO, and the World Bank. These institutions recognize the potential of CCIs to drive economic growth, social inclusion, and cultural enrichment, demonstrating their importance in the global economy.

As Terry Flew, professor of Digital Communication and Culture at The University of Sydney, aptly articulates, “one of the challenges of researching the cultural and creative industries is recognizing the relative newness of the fields of inquiry, while avoiding the traps of advocacy without rigor on the one hand, and critique without policy guidance on the other” (Flew, n.d., in Wesner, 2024). His statement highlights the difficulty of maintaining academic rigor while addressing the policy needs surrounding CCIs, given their novelty and complexity as fields of study. This balancing act necessitates a multifaceted approach that combines theoretical exploration with practical applications to better inform policymaking and industry practices.

At the heart of CCIs is a broad and diverse landscape encompassing numerous sectors, from visual and performing arts to design, media, and technology. These industries are vital for fueling innovation and economic development, reflecting a complex network of cultural expressions that engage with economic frameworks in unique ways (Bilton, 2007). Unlike traditional industries that emphasize production scales and efficiency, CCIs focus on the symbolic nature of cultural products as a key aspect of their competitiveness. This emphasis on symbolism highlights the intrinsic value of creativity and cultural heritage, positioning CCIs as crucial players in fostering societal progress and individual expression.

Following early contributions on creative cities and the creative class (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002), CCIs have increasingly become a topic of independent focus, transitioning from cultural industries to cultural and creative industries (Cunningham, 2002). This shift has sparked new trends in education, urban regeneration, and the

emergence of creative tourism (Richards, 2014). Additionally, entrepreneurship within CCIs has gained prominence as a significant area of research, with studies investigating creative entrepreneurship (Henry, 2007; Shalley et al., 2015) and the impact of CCIs on innovation and regional development (Mellander & Florida, 2021). These developments underscore the growing recognition of CCIs as a vital component of modern economies.

Despite their increasing importance, confusion persists regarding the role and potential of CCIs, exacerbated by imprecision about the core concepts that underpin them. This ambiguity can hinder effective policy formulation and implementation, leading to a gap between theoretical understanding and practical application.

By delving into the theoretical foundations and practical implications of cultural and creative industries, this chapter aims to enhance understanding and provide an insightful analysis of the current landscape of CCIs. It will specifically explore the crafts sector within CCIs, examining its role in preserving cultural heritage and fostering local identity. Additionally, the chapter will highlight the significance of creative tourism, illustrating how the fusion of creativity and tourism can enhance visitor experiences while supporting local economies. Through this exploration, the chapter seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on CCIs.

## 1.1. From Cultural to Creative Industries

The concept of the culture industry was first introduced by the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, rooted in Marxist ideology and social criticism (Barker, 2004a, p. 46). The term was employed by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their essay *Dialectic of Enlightenment (Dialektik der Aufklärung)* (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944), where they describe the culture industry as a system producing cultural products in a standardized manner for economic gain (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1989, pp. 120–121). According to their critique, industries such as film, music, and magazines generate uniform products, prioritizing profit over uniqueness and originality. They condemned this commercialization of culture as a process that reinforces societal structures while diminishing culture's capacity for critique and transformation (Witkin, 2003, p. 2; Barker, 2004b, p. 3).

Pierre Bourdieu expanded on these critiques, examining how cultural producers navigate market forces and social hierarchies. In his 1999 discourse *Maîtres du monde, savez-vous ce que vous faites?*, Bourdieu argued that such entanglements compromise artistic authenticity and dilute culture's transformative potential. This perspective complements Adorno and Horkheimer's views, underscoring the tensions between culture, commodification, and societal impact.

While these critiques highlight the challenges posed by the commercialization of culture, later theorists, such as Walter Benjamin and Bernard Miège, offered more optimistic perspectives. They argued that capitalism's resources and technologies could enhance creative processes, framing cultural production as a site of both conflict and potential advancement (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 25). Over time, the term "culture industry" evolved into "cultural industries," reflecting the growing diversity and interconnectedness of cultural sectors. This shift ultimately gave rise to the term "creative industries," emphasizing innovation in policy and practice.

The term "creative industries" gained prominence in 1994 with the Australian government's publication of *Creative Nation: Commonwealth Cultural Policy Study*, which linked cultural industries to creativity and economic adaptability (Glow & Johanson, 2006, pp. 259–266). It received global attention in 1997 when the UK government adopted it as a policy classification, broadening the scope to include sectors such as entertainment and leisure (Mommaas, 2009, pp. 45–59). The UK's Department

for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) played a pivotal role with its 1998 report defining creative industries as sectors rooted in individual creativity, skill, and talent, with the potential for economic growth and intellectual property generation (Bendassolli et al., 2009, pp. 10–18).

From 1967 to 1999, UNESCO contributed to broadening the cultural framework to include innovation and technical progress. This shift influenced academic discussions, with terms like "cultural economy" giving way to "creative economy." The latter focuses on industries where creativity serves as a key input, producing intellectual property as output (Potts & Cunningham, 2008, p. 233).

### **1.1.1. Cultural and Creative Industries: scope and definitions**

The cultural and creative industries cover a diverse array of industries that make significant contributions to both cultural expression and economic advancement. However, defining these industries has proven challenging due to their distinct characteristics.

While the terms cultural industry and creative industry are often used interchangeably, they can have distinct meanings. The cultural industry encompasses sectors that focus on traditional, artistic expressions and produce goods and services rooted in cultural knowledge. These products, often not created primarily for commercial gain, include items such as museum artifacts, arts and crafts, which hold significant aesthetic, informational, or entertainment value. In contrast, the creative industry as a broader concept, emphasizes creativity as a foundation for developing products and services. This industry is more market-driven, producing functional, innovative, and often technology-intensive goods, such as digital products. It relies on various intellectual property protections, like copyrights and patents, and while it may incorporate cultural elements, it is not solely based on them (GIZ, 2024, p.24).

The borders of sectors within the cultural and creative industries are flexible and frequently intersect, resulting in a lack of rigid definitions. Many products in these fields incorporate cultural and creative elements, producing inventive hybrids that defy easy categorization. This demonstrates the fluid and progressive characteristics of the CCIs. According to Peris-Ortiz, Cabrera-Flores, and Serrano Santoyo (2019), the CCIs represent the intersection of culture and creativity, with many modern industries

relying on both cultural content and creative innovation. The authors emphasize that these industries demonstrate humanity's inherent capacity to think, create, and innovate, transforming these abilities into significant economic value (p. 3).

The absence of a universally accepted definition for Cultural and Creative Industries can be attributed to some main reasons. The CCIs encompass a vast range of activities and sub-sectors, each with unique characteristics, making it difficult to establish a single definition that applies to all contexts. Furthermore, the CCIs are continually changing, driven by technological advancements, shifting consumer preferences, and socio-cultural transformations, needing flexible and adaptable definitions. Regional variances also play a role, as the components of the CCIs can vary greatly based on cultural, economic, and policy considerations in different places. Additionally, the employment of varied methodology and criteria by researchers and organizations, combined with varying policy goals, complicates the job of developing a clear definition for the Cultural and Creative industries.

The 1998 *Creative Industries Mapping Document* maintained the initial definition of creative industries. It was the first ever attempt to measure the economic contribution of these industries to the UK, identifying the opportunities and threats they faced. In this document, creative industries are defined as:

Those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill, and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2001, p. 5).

The UK'S *Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport* proceeded to identify industries such as advertising, architecture, art and antiques, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, performing arts, publishing, software and computer services, and television and radio as creative. But it went further to also recognize the significant economic connections of these industries with other sectors, such as tourism, hospitality, museums, galleries, heritage, and sports.

On a global scale, *the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO), as a key international organization dedicated to the promotion of culture, science, and education, has had a crucial influence in establishing a comprehensive framework for understanding and supporting the Cultural and Creative

Industries (CCI). The organization underscores the importance of cultural and artistic origins in the framework of CCI defining them as:

activities whose principal purpose is production or reproduction, promotion, distribution or commercialization of goods, services and activities of a cultural, artistic or heritage-related nature (UNESCO, 2015, p.11)

The *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development* (UNCTAD) positions creative industries at the heart of the creative economy, stressing their economic importance. UNCTAD's focus on the economic processes and outputs of these industries underscores the role of CCIs as engines of economic development.

Lawrence and Philips (2002, p. 431) argue that a comprehensive understanding of the cultural and creative industries requires analyzing them through three key lenses: symbol-intensity, capital-intensity, and knowledge-intensity. Symbol-intensive industries are those in which products or services carry significant cultural or symbolic value, such as visual arts and film, which often convey rich cultural narratives and messages. Capital-intensive industries demand substantial financial investment for production, as seen in cinema production or large-scale museum operations. Lastly, knowledge-intensive industries rely on specialized expertise and advanced skills, exemplified by the technological innovation in software development or the expertise in professional design practices. Many industries within the CCIs, however, incorporate all three dimensions. For example, the film industry produces content rich in cultural meaning (symbol-intensive), necessitates significant financial backing for production and distribution (capital-intensive), and depends on highly specialized technical and creative expertise (knowledge-intensive). This combination of attributes allows industries such as this to generate products that are both culturally meaningful and economically viable, highlighting the hybrid and multifaceted nature of the CCIs (Lawrence & Philips, 2002, p.431).

Given the complexity of the cultural and creative industries, various frameworks offer insightful perspectives on how to approach and understand them. These frameworks collectively underscore the need to balance cultural integrity with economic viability within CCIs and as these industries continue to evolve in response to technological advancements and socio-cultural shifts, it is crucial to recognize their multidimensional nature and the opportunities they offer for both cultural expression and economic growth.

### **1.1.2. Cultural and creative industries: drivers of economic development**

In the last twenty years, various scholars (e.g., Florida, 2002; Pratt, 2004, 2011; Hesmondhalgh, 2013; Hartley, 2005; Flew, 2012) and international organizations (such as the European Commission, 2010, 2012; UNCTAD, 2008, 2010; UNESCO, 2013) have progressively promoted a development strategy centered on culture and creativity. This perspective has achieved considerable acclaim for its ability to stimulate innovation and promote economic development. Consequently, an increasing volume of research highlights the cultural and creative industries as important catalysts for economic expansion, frequently surpassing traditional sectors. The acknowledgment of the potential of CCIs has resulted in their incorporation into comprehensive development strategies, underscoring their significance in influencing the future of economies in a globalized and digital age.

Since the late 2000s, the European Union has progressively incorporated cultural and creative industries into its economic policy frameworks. Documents including the *Innovation Union* (European Commission, 2010a), *A Digital Agenda for Europe* (European Commission, 2010b), the *Europe 2020 Strategy* (European Commission, 2010c), the *Communication for a European Industrial Renaissance* (European Commission, 2014) underscore the transition from conventional production to services and innovation, with the objective of enhancing the prominence and influence of CCIs.

*The Creative Europe Program*, initially established under *Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013* for the period 2014-2020, has played a pivotal role in reinforcing the competitiveness of Europe's cultural and creative sectors. At its core is the objective to promote smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth, with a significant impact on both regional and local levels. The most recent iteration of the program, *Creative Europe 2021-2027*, builds on these achievements with an expanded mandate and increased funding of 2.44 billion euros (European Parliament, 2021), demonstrating a strong commitment to tackling these sectors' distinct difficulties and demands.

As of today, cultural and creative industries play a crucial role in Europe's economy, employing approximately 7.1 million people, which equates to 3.3% of the total workforce, according to Eurostat (2022). This broad sector encompasses not only traditional creative roles such as artists and designers, but also a diverse range of technical, administrative, and support positions that sustain the industry. Additionally,

CCIs have emerged as key drivers of foreign direct investment. Cities designated as *European Capitals of Culture*, for instance, have experienced notable boosts in tourism and external investment, underscoring the capacity of the cultural sector to elevate regional appeal and competitiveness. Beyond the impact on cultural capitals alone, regions with thriving creative industries frequently attract investment across multiple sectors. This is a dynamic that allows areas with a strong creative economy to become hubs of wider economic growth, fostering a ripple effect that draws in businesses, resources, and talent from various industries (Horizon Europe, 2023).

CCIs have emerged as one of the most rapidly expanding sectors also at a global scale. At present, they constitute 3.1% of global GDP and 6.2% of total employment and by 2030, the sector is projected to constitute 10% of global GDP (UNESCO, 2022). In the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD) member nations, employment in the cultural and creative industries increased by 13.4%, in contrast to only 9.1% rise in the overall employment (OECD, 2022). However, the economic influence of culture and creativity transcends mere direct contributions to GDP. CCIs stimulate regional innovation and productivity through innovative goods, business strategies, and changes in consumption patterns. Their significant contribution fosters creativity in other industries via supply-chain processes (Dellisanti, 2023, p. 189).

Empirical research by De-Miguel-Molina et al. (2012) found that creative industries are key contributors to regional growth, particularly in knowledge-based economies. Their study, covering 250 European regions, demonstrated that regional economic growth is not only linked to high-tech manufacturing but also to the density and diversity of creative enterprises. These industries foster cross-sectoral innovation by integrating cultural and technological resources, creating spillover effects that benefit other sectors, including tourism, retail, and education. For instance, regions with a high concentration of creative firms often see stronger job creation and enhanced local identity, contributing to both economic and social cohesion (De-Miguel-Molina et al., 2012, p. 195).

Considering this, an increasing number of European regions have incorporated cultural and creative industries (CCIs) into their smart specialization strategies and regional development plans, acknowledging their essential role in promoting innovation and diversification in regional economies. CCIs enhance regional innovation systems by fostering technological progress, facilitating intersectoral collaboration, and boosting the

cultural attractiveness of local enterprises (Lazaretou, 2014, p. 16). These industries produce substantial spillover benefits in areas like tourism, digital media, and education, where creativity acts as a catalyst for innovative products, services, and experiences. Practical examples include cities such as Barcelona and Berlin, which have turned to CCIs to revitalize their urban environments, transforming them into centers of creative tourism and digital innovation (Kalfas et al., 2024, p. 4).

The transformation of Bilbao through the construction of the Guggenheim Museum represents another compelling example of how cultural investments can drive urban regeneration. Once an industrial city in decline, Bilbao underwent a dramatic revitalization in the late 1990s following the museum's opening, a phenomenon commonly referred to as the "Bilbao Effect". The Guggenheim not only became an iconic cultural landmark but also served as a catalyst for the city's broader redevelopment. It attracted international attention, increased tourism exponentially, and spurred investment in infrastructure and public spaces (Kalfas et al., 2024, pp. 4-6). The museum's success contributed to the creation of new jobs across various sectors, including hospitality, retail, and the arts, helping to reposition Bilbao as a vibrant cultural destination. This urban regeneration model illustrates how cultural institutions can play a pivotal role in economic recovery and city branding<sup>1</sup>, sparking long-term social and economic benefits for a region.

Cultural and creative industries (CCIs) also play a crucial role in mitigating regional disparities across Europe as regions with a strong CCI presence tend to experience accelerated economic growth and increased resilience (Lazaretou, 2014, p. 16). Recognizing this potential, the European Commission has allocated structural funding to bolster CCIs in less developed areas, aiming to promote more balanced regional development. For instance, the *European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)* has supported initiatives like the *Creative Estonia* program, which fosters innovation in Estonia's CCI sector by providing funding and resources to local creative businesses, thereby enhancing economic growth and cultural vitality in a previously underdeveloped region (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2017, pp. 15-17). This support helps to enhance local innovation capacities, foster entrepreneurship, and create new employment

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<sup>1</sup> City branding refers to the efforts of place marketers in establishing the city as a recognizable brand. The aim is to promote the city to existing and potential target audiences while differentiating it from other cities to assert its unique identity. This process is often pursued to achieve various economic, political, or socio-cultural goals (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005, p. 183).

opportunities, contributing to a more equitable and sustainable growth across the continent.

There is general consensus that knowledge acts as a catalyst for economic progress by driving innovation and enhancing regional competitiveness. It boosts productivity, which is crucial for businesses, and enriches consumer experiences, thereby increasing demand for high-value products and services. Capello (2019) underscores the importance of the knowledge generation — which encompasses the creation, sharing, and application of new ideas, research, and innovation — in regional development. Understanding this process is essential for assessing local impacts, including increased investment in infrastructure, education, and technological advancement.

Recent research at global, European, national, and regional levels has consistently shown that the cultural and creative sectors are significant contributors to business volume, added value, and employment opportunities. The employment prospects generated by CCIs are future-oriented, cultivating capabilities in domains such as digital content creation, cultural heritage administration, and creative entrepreneurship, which are essential for adjusting to the requirements of a changing global economy. These aspects are crucial for the economic regeneration and strategic reorientation of cities and regions, ensuring their resilience and long-term competitiveness (Lazaretou, 2014). Certain sectors within the CCIs are expanding at rates that surpass the general economy (European Commission et al., 2016, p. 9). Beyond these quantitative measures, the wider effects of CCIs are increasingly being acknowledged, particularly their role in societal and cultural advancement. By integrating Europe's cultural wealth and creative capacities into economic activities, CCIs not only enhance economic performance but also drive job creation. Furthermore, their spillover effects across various industries position them as key catalysts for innovation and long-term economic growth.

## 1.2. The crafts sector within the cultural and creative industries

The crafts sector holds a distinctive place within the broader framework of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), blending traditional skills with modern innovation. As a key component of the creative economy, craftsmanship not only preserves cultural heritage but also adapts to contemporary demands through the integration of new techniques, materials, and technologies.

Creative craftsmanship represents one of the earliest indicators of human existence. The crafted object, emerging before other forms of evolution, organization, or production, was the initial sign of human presence. Artistic handicrafts are able to play a crucial role in shaping the identity of a community by reflecting their collective traditions, knowledge, and distinctive characteristics that make them recognizable and unique. Artistic handicraft creations should therefore be viewed as expressions of material culture, closely tied to the environment in which these artistic phenomena and objects are created or exhibited (Fondazione Cologni dei Mestieri d'Arte, n.d.).

Historically, the concept of craft has also represented a form of education. The term "artisan" derives from the Latin *artitus*, meaning "to instruct in the arts," highlighting its roots in a learning process distinct from formal schooling. Craftsmanship involves observation, imitation, innovation, and experimentation, with master craftsmen transmitting their skills to apprentices (European Training Foundation, 2024, p. 5). However, definitions of craft vary across cultural contexts, ranging from activities focused on creating artistic items for decorative or consumer purposes (Ukraine Law on Folk Arts and Crafts, 2001) to economic activities involving handcrafted or serially produced goods (Albania Law on Craftsmanship, 2016).

The UNESCO and International Trade Center (ITC) Symposium on *Crafts and the International Market: Trade and Customs Codification* in Manila, October 1997, established and adopted the following definition:

Artisanal products are those produced by artisans, either completely by hand, or with the help of hand tools or even mechanical means, as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product. These are produced without restriction in terms of quantity and using raw materials from sustainable resources. The special nature of artisanal products derives from their distinctive features, which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative,

culturally attached, decorative, functional, traditional, religiously and socially symbolic and significant (UNESCO & ITC, 1997).

When referring specifically to craftsmanship, UNESCO mentions that it encompasses a wide range of forms, including tools, clothing and jewelry, costumes and items for festivals and performing arts, storage containers, objects used for transport and shelter, decorative art and ritual objects, musical instruments, household utensils, and educational or recreational toys. While some items are designed for temporary use, such as those for festivals, others become treasured heirlooms passed down through generations (UNESCO, n.d). This duality underscores their crucial role in safeguarding cultural identity.

When considering the position of crafts within the CCIs broader context, it's important to acknowledge that the terms *craft* and *craftsman* only gained widespread usage in the late nineteenth century, primarily in response to debates within the visual arts community. This occurred during the era of the *Arts and Crafts Movement*, which aimed to elevate the value of craftsmanship as a response to the increasing industrialization of production. The movement emphasized the importance of handmade objects and the aesthetic and moral value of skilled workmanship. This era also marked a broader cultural shift, recognizing crafts not merely as functional activities but as integral to the preservation and transmission of societal knowledge, skills, and traditions. For instance, crafts started here to be viewed as vital repositories of intangible heritage, reflecting cultural identity, social history, and collective memory across generations (Stankiewicz, 1992, pp.165-173).

In 2003, the recognition of crafts as part of cultural heritage advanced significantly with UNESCO's adoption of the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. This is because, until this time, cultural heritage was primarily viewed in terms of tangible objects — monuments, artifacts, and collections (Etienne-Nugue, 2009, p. 33). The convention was, therefore, crucial in broadening the concept of heritage to encompass intangible cultural elements, including traditions, skills, and knowledge transmitted across generations. Heritage crafts started to hold a distinctive place within this framework, as they blend the tangible and intangible: while the crafted objects—such as pottery, textiles, or woodwork—are physical, the skills and techniques used to create them are intangible, often representing centuries of knowledge passed down orally through generations.

Since then, crafts have been recognized for their singularity and the deep embedment in the cultural identity of their regions of origin, carrying not only creative value but also significant symbolic meaning (Brandão et al., 2013, p. 199). In this sense, crafts generate diverse types of value (cultural, social, economic). They connect people to places through materials, sensory experiences, communication, and storytelling. They also instill a sense of authenticity by linking objects and skills to their origins and the maker's personal identity. Furthermore, crafts facilitate the transmission of skills from one person to another, preserving traditional knowledge. Additionally, they provide an alternative to mass production and consumption, aligning with more sustainable, environmentally conscious lifestyles (Richards, 2021, pp. 3-22). Despite the cultural and symbolic importance of crafts, they may often be seen as secondary to the fine arts, especially in advanced economies where the fine arts receive greater recognition.

Some efforts to strengthen the crafts sector have taken place on both local and international scales. One such initiative was the *Ten-Year Plan of Action (1990-1999) for Craft Development*, which sought to create a cohesive framework for future developments. The plan aimed to foster collaboration between governments and non-governmental organizations, with a focus on data collection, training, craft promotion, funding regional projects, and improving marketing strategies. Research from successful craft industries has shown that investment in design, marketing, and management training yields positive outcomes for the sector (Richard, 2007, p. 14). In this context, UNESCO, in collaboration with the *International Labour Organization (ILO)*, has worked to raise awareness, conduct studies, and recognize the economic, social, and cultural contributions of artisans. The advent of the digital age has also opened new venues for craft producers, allowing small-scale artisans to reach global markets through online platforms. This technological shift makes it possible to overcome geographic barriers and creates new opportunities for collaboration and exchange with the digitization of the craft industry not only enhancing its economic potential but also helping preserve and disseminate traditional crafts, supporting intangible cultural heritage in an increasingly globalized world.

For instance, in an era defined by technological advancement and mass production, craftsmanship holds a distinctive and growing appeal where understanding the broader significance of crafted objects is essential to fully appreciating their value.

### 1.2.1. Crafts and creative tourism

In recent years, the traditionally marginal position of crafts within the creative industries has undergone significant transformations, largely driven by the sector's increasing integration with the tourism industry. This shift mirrors a broader evolution within cultural tourism, where travelers are no longer satisfied with passive observation but are instead seeking authentic, immersive experiences that allow for deeper engagement with local cultures. This emerging type of tourist has prompted a reevaluation of the role that crafts and craftsmanship may play in shaping the tourism experience.

Cultural tourism, as described by Richards (2014a, pp. 25-38), has undergone significant transformation, evolving from an exclusive pursuit primarily enjoyed by the affluent, who sought to visit prominent cultural landmarks, to a more democratized form of travel accessible to a wider audience. This shift was largely driven by the rise of mass tourism, which expanded access to cultural heritage. Nevertheless, this increased accessibility often came at the expense of quality, as the focus turned towards traditional heritage sites such as museums and monuments while neglecting the essential deeper engagement with local cultures. As a result, many tourists became mere spectators, passively consuming culture rather than actively participating in it.

It was in the 1990s that cultural tourism began to evolve by incorporating more contemporary and popular cultural elements, reflecting a shift towards recognizing the dynamic nature of culture. Campaigns like the *Cool Britannia*<sup>2</sup> transformed the United Kingdom's image, highlighting its vibrant, creative scene through modern cultural expressions such as music, film, and lifestyle. This transformative paved the way for the emergence of creative tourism in the early 2000s as a new form of tourism catered to travelers' growing desire for interactive and immersive cultural experiences (OECD, 2014, p. 53).

Richards and Raymond initially defined creative tourism as:

Tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in learning experiences which are characteristic of

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<sup>2</sup> *Cool Britannia* refers to a cultural and political campaign promoted by British Prime Minister Tony Blair during the late 1990s. It symbolized a forward-looking vision of the UK, blending economic reform with a celebration of contemporary British creativity, culture, and innovation, fostering an image of Britain as modern and vibrant (Lange, 2006, pp.146-147).

the holiday destination where they are undertaken (Richards & Raymond, 2000, p. 19)

Unlike conventional cultural tourism, which often involves passive consumption of heritage, creative tourism encourages tourists to immerse themselves in local traditions and creative processes. This was an important shift and the one that brought crafts into the spotlight as vibrant, evolving expressions of culture. With creative tourism, crafts are no longer confined to museum displays. Instead, they are celebrated as living, breathing embodiments of cultural identity, creativity, and heritage, actively shaping the present while preserving the wisdom of generations.

With cultural tourism already comprising nearly 40% of global travel and expected to grow further (UNWTO, 2018), integrating crafts into tourism experiences presents a unique opportunity to promote sustainable development. By emphasizing creativity and active participation, creative tourism not only supports the preservation of traditional crafts but also provides artisans with new markets and opportunities. This approach enriches the tourist experience by fostering a meaningful connection to the culture being explored, while simultaneously enhancing the visibility of crafters and viability of local craft traditions.

The rise of creative tourism has therefore created new opportunities for craft producers, offering them platforms to showcase their skills and cultural narratives to a global audience. Workshops, demonstrations, and interactive experiences are able to provide tourists with a deeper appreciation of the craftsmanship involved and strengthen the economic value of these crafts. This is an interaction that fosters a stronger emotional connection between tourists and local communities, enhancing the overall travel experience (Onderwater et al., 2000, pp. 39-48).

In creative tourism, artisans have a unique opportunity to transform their traditional practices from simple commercial transactions into immersive cultural experiences. While it has been common for artisans to create products specifically tailored for tourists, this represents a practice that carries the risk of reducing the craft to mere souvenirs that lack important cultural depth and significance. Creative tourism aims to shift this dynamic by encouraging artisans to engage tourists in the craft production process, allowing visitors to connect more authentically with the cultural heritage and artistry behind each piece (Richards, 2021, pp. 3-22).

One of the current main challenges in the interaction between crafts and creative tourism is the preservation of cultural authenticity. According to Wang (1999), authenticity can be evaluated objectively, where authentic experiences are considered those that accurately reflect original cultural artifacts or traditions (Wang, 1999, p. 352). Creative tourism seeks to offer visitors authentic experiences through local crafts and traditions, aiming to immerse tourists in the genuine cultural practices of a region. However, this ideal may often conflict with the pressures of the tourism industry. Artisans may find themselves in a difficult position, as they navigate the need to preserve their cultural heritage while also adapting to the commercial realities of tourism. This can result in a dilution of traditional practices or the creation of craft products that prioritize tourist appeal over cultural accuracy. The challenge here is to balance these competing demands — ensuring that tourism activities enhance rather than exploit cultural heritage, and that artisans are supported in ways that respect and sustain their traditions (Wang, 1999). Achieving this balance requires thoughtful approaches that prioritize both the preservation of authentic cultural expressions and the economic viability of tourism, fostering a relationship where both crafts and creative tourism can thrive harmoniously.

Regarding the European crafts market, a study commissioned by the *World Crafts Council Europe* revealed that, in the year of 2022, the average annual expenditure per buyer was around €346, with spending increasing with age — ranging from €279 for younger consumers (20-35 years old) to €389 for those aged 56-70. Occupation also influenced spending patterns: freelancers and the self-employed led with an average of €440 per year, followed by retirees at €415. This data not only illustrates the financial impact of the sector today but also reveals key demographic and occupational trends. The significant increase in expenditure with age suggests that older generations tend to value craftsmanship more, possibly due to greater disposable income or a stronger appreciation for traditional, handmade goods. Moreover, higher spending by freelancers and the self-employed may reflect a lifestyle that supports artisanal products, emphasizing personal expression and quality over mass-produced alternatives. These factors indicate how cultural and economic forces shape consumer behavior in the crafts market.

## CHAPTER II – CULTURAL ROUTES

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“I can’t say; but one’s emotions are more strongly aroused by seeing the places that tradition records to have been the favourite resort of men of note in former days, than by hearing about their deeds or reading their writings.”

— Cicero

## 2.1 Distribution and scope of cultural routes

The notion of cultural routes has been a subject of discourse since the 1960s, primarily due to the collaborative initiatives of organizations like the *International Council on Monuments and Sites* (ICOMOS), UNESCO, and the Council of Europe. These discussions often took the form of studies aimed at deepening the understanding of Europe's significant cultural sites and integrating them into leisure activities through cultural tourism. Since 2010, numerous voluntary activities, encompassing individual or group walks, projects, workshops, conferences, and their corresponding websites, have advanced the notion on both national and international levels. The increasing importance of cultural routes in recent years has led to the emergence of many definitions, descriptions, and methodologies to inform decision-making in this domain.

The first internationally acknowledged definition of cultural routes, referred to as heritage routes, was established in 1994 during the UNESCO and ICOMOS conference entitled *Routes as a Part of Our Cultural Heritage*. According to the document:

A heritage route is composed of tangible elements of which the cultural significance comes from exchanges and a multi-dimensional dialogue across countries or regions, and that illustrate the interaction of movement, along the route, in space and time (UNESCO, 1994, p.3).

This initial definition laid the foundational framework for understanding heritage routes, emphasizing their role in illustrating the interaction of movement and exchange across space and time. Building on this foundational understanding, the 2008 *ICOMOS Charter on Cultural Routes* provided a more detailed and expanded definition.

Any route of communication, be it land, water, or some other type, which is physically delimited and is also characterized by having its own specific dynamic and historic functionality to serve a specific and well determined purpose, which must fulfill the following conditions: a) It must arise from and reflect interactive movements of people as well as multi-dimensional, continuous, and reciprocal exchanges of goods, ideas, knowledge and values between peoples, countries, regions or continents over significant periods of time; b. It must have thereby promoted a cross-fertilization of the affected cultures in space and time, as reflected both in their tangible and intangible heritage; c) It must have integrated into a dynamic system the historic relations and cultural properties associated with its existence (ICOMOS, 2008, p.3)

This comprehensive definition of cultural routes covers their geographical context, spatial position, and various components, highlighting how these elements integrate to form a unified whole.

Besides the definitions found in institutional documents and charters, academics and intellectuals have also offered their own perspectives on the concept of cultural routes. Suárez-Inclan Ducassi (2005, pp. 1-8) defines cultural routes as unique pathways established or employed by individuals for a particular, deliberate aim. These paths, as the author asserts, are distinctive results of cultural processes that developed via historical encounters. Ducassi proceeds to elucidate that, cultural routes, as manifestations of these processes, must have been created or utilized within a specific historical time, leaving behind discernible signs of human activity.

Cultural routes usually encompass a range of essential elements: a wealth of cultural diversity, a multi-faceted structure, a continual evolution of shared traditions, historical depth, and an overarching sense of unity and purpose. Far from being static, these routes represent collaborative and dynamic processes, reflecting the shared histories and collective experiences of communities (Council of Europe, 2015). They serve as concrete manifestations of cultural exchanges that have shaped societies throughout time, revealing the complex interconnections — whether through trade, migration, religion, or art — that have contributed to the development of these regions. The concept of cultural routes extends beyond mere geographical connections, embracing the intangible links that symbolize centuries of interaction and mutual influence. As such, they become living narratives, offering a window into the collective memory and identity of communities (Council of Europe, 2015).

The expansion of cultural routes has assumed increasing importance in recent years, as these offer a strategic response to the challenge of mitigating tourism seasonality. Cultural routes align with emerging market trends, appealing to travelers who prioritize experiential tourism characterized by flexibility, exploration, cultural engagement, and meaningful connections with local traditions and communities. These routes provide an alternative to conventional tourist circuits, promoting more sustainable tourism practices by redistributing visitor traffic throughout the year and across lesser known and visited areas.

According to the *World Tourism Organization*, what has revealed critical to the successful development of cultural routes is a well-designed marketing strategy and promotion strategies, the establishment of a unified and recognizable brand identity, and the active participation of local communities. For accomplishing this, the involvement of local stakeholders not only ensures the authenticity and sustainability of the routes but

also fosters economic and social benefits at the community level. (World Tourism Organization, 2015, pp. 19-20).

### **2.1.1. Cultural routes definition and scope in European framework**

One of the earliest definitions of a European Cultural Route, introduced by the Council of Europe in the 1980s within the framework that led to the creation of the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR) and the establishment of the *Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme*, describes it as:

A route crossing one or two more countries or regions organized around themes, whose historical, artistic or social interest is patently European, either by virtue of the geographical route followed or because of the nature and/or scope of its range and significance. The application of the term 'European' to a route must imply a significance and cultural dimension which is more than merely local. The route must be based on a number of highlights, with places particularly rich in historical associations, which are also representative of European culture as a whole (Council of Europe, 1980, in Council of Europe, 2015, p. 15)

The *Cultural Routes Programme of the Council of Europe*, which initiated in 1987 with the *Declaration of Santiago de Compostela*, illustrates the contribution of European regions' heritage and different cultures to a collective cultural legacy. The program promotes the re-exploration of this heritage by European citizens, with the objective of conserving and augmenting Europe's natural and cultural assets. It fosters cultural tourism that stimulates sustainable development, facilitating cultural, social, and economic progress. The initiative receives substantial support from international partners, notably the European Commission and the UN World Tourism Organization, among others (InterregEurope, 2019).

Currently, there are 48 certified transnational *Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe*, spanning diverse themes such as architecture, religious influences, gastronomy, intangible heritage, and the lives of significant European figures in art, music, and literature. Notable examples include the *Route of Saint James*, which traces the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and reflects Europe's spiritual and historical heritage; the *Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route*, showcasing Roman influences and viticulture along the Danube; and the European Route of *Industrial Heritage*, which illustrates the transformative impacts of the Industrial Revolution. Other routes, such as

the *European Route of Jewish Heritage* and *Transromanica*, celebrate Jewish cultural contributions and Romanesque architecture, respectively, demonstrating the deep cultural connections that have shaped Europe (Council of Europe, n.d.).

These European cultural routes operate through networks comprising over 3,000 organizations, collaborating to benefit local communities, small businesses, and tourists alike. The *Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe*, established in 2010, ensures the program's implementation and strategic direction, with the support of 40 member states. The *European Institute of Cultural Routes*, located in Luxembourg, offers technical assistance to both candidate and certified routes, ensuring their sustainability and success (European Heritage Days, 2024).

The recognition of these routes goes beyond simple cultural promotion. These are seen as instruments for regional development, fostering cross-border cooperation and encouraging the sharing of best practices in heritage management. By connecting regions across Europe, cultural routes create opportunities for cultural diplomacy, enhancing mutual understanding and contributing to peaceful co-existence between the different nations and communities. Moreover, the involvement of local and regional authorities in these projects underscores the importance of decentralized governance in managing and promoting cultural heritage, a principle deeply embedded in the values of the Council of Europe.

Another key initiative in the promotion of European cultural heritage has been the *UNESCO World Heritage Journeys in the European Union*, a project that underscores the European Union's commitment to cultural tourism. Funded by the European Commission, the project seeks to develop distinctive and immersive cultural experiences through thematic trans-European itineraries. These routes highlight both iconic landmarks and lesser-known sites, encouraging travelers to explore beyond the traditional tourist hotspots. The initiative also addresses over-tourism in certain heavily visited areas by promoting routes to less frequented destinations, thereby contributing to a more balanced and sustainable approach to tourism across Europe (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2024).

In addition to promoting sustainable tourism, these routes emphasize the role of intangible cultural heritage, such as traditional craftsmanship, folklore, and culinary practices, in shaping European identity. Routes such as the *European Route of Historic*

*Thermal Towns* and the *Phoenicians' Route* not only highlight historical connections but also underscore the importance of preserving local practices, such as traditional healing methods and agricultural traditions, for future generations.

European Cultural Routes can be seen, overall, as multifaceted and flexible tools for promoting three main goals: cultural tourism, sustainable territorial development and European collaboration (Walda, 2014, p. 214). They offer a holistic vision of tourism that balances heritage conservation with local development, and their success depends on active collaboration between international, national, and local stakeholders. This collaborative spirit is critical to the routes' ability to adapt to evolving tourism demands, particularly as visitors increasingly seek authentic, experience-driven forms of travel that reflect the local flavor and contribute to the preservation of cultural landscapes and ecosystems.

The *Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe* play a vital role in shaping Europe's tourism strategy, providing a framework for sustainable, ethical, and culturally enriching travel experiences. They not only protect and promote Europe's diverse cultural heritage but also foster cross-border cooperation and innovation. As such, these routes will continue to serve as key pillars of Europe's cultural and tourism landscapes in the years to come.

## 2.2. Cultural routes development: the Portuguese context

Since joining the *Council of Europe's Cultural Routes Programme* in 2011, Portugal has significantly contributed to the preservation and promotion of European cultural heritage. Today, the country is an active participant in 17 international cultural routes that traverse its territory, reflecting its dedication to safeguarding its rich and diverse heritage while facilitating cross-border cultural exchanges (Council of Europe, 2021, p. 47). These transnational routes, which often span multiple countries, involve a diverse range of stakeholders — including public and private entities such as associations, municipalities, parish councils, and other state bodies — working collaboratively to promote and support these initiatives. Characterized by thematic diversity, wide geographic reach, and the representation of distinct cultural traditions, these routes form a vital network with significant potential for the expansion of cultural tourism in Portugal.

Among the most prominent transnational routes is the *Way of St. James*, an ancient pilgrimage trail leading to Santiago de Compostela. Portuguese variations of this route, such as *the Portuguese Way* and *the Portuguese Coastal Way*, are known for their religious, spiritual, and cultural significance. These routes traverse medieval towns, historic churches, and scenic landscapes, offering travelers a rich and immersive historical experience. Another notable key route is the *Route of the Olive Tree*, which celebrates the Mediterranean olive culture and integrates Portugal's centuries-old traditions of olive cultivation and olive oil production. This route highlights Portugal's agricultural heritage and connects it to the broader Mediterranean context (Council of Europe, n.d.).

Additionally, the *European Route of Historic Thermal Towns* features Portugal's historic spa towns, such as Caldas da Rainha and Chaves, which have been renowned centers for health and wellness since Roman times. Similarly, the *Phoenicians' Route* retraces the ancient maritime trade routes established by the Phoenicians, linking Portuguese coastal regions influenced by this ancient civilization and underscoring Portugal's deep-rooted maritime history (Council of Europe, n.d.).

Portugal is also featured in the *Historic Cafés Route*, which commemorates the rich cultural and social heritage of cafés throughout Europe. Portuguese cities such as Lisbon and Porto have iconic cafés that have acted as gathering places for intellectuals, artists, and the general public, contributing to the country's lively café culture. The

*Historic Cafés Route* highlights the architectural beauty and historical value of these establishments, as well as their impact on urban life (Council of Europe, 2021).

Also relevant is the *Historic Gardens and Cemeteries Route* which highlights Portugal's wonderfully constructed gardens and major cemeteries, such as the Jardim Botânico da Ajuda in Lisbon and the Prazeres Cemetery. These locations illustrate the country's horticultural traditions and the historical significance of gardens as places of meditation and beauty. According to the Council of Europe (n.d.), these routes help to deepen our understanding of Portugal's cultural legacy by integrating its agricultural, social, and historical tales within a larger European context (Council of Europe, n.d.).

But beyond its involvement in international cultural routes, Portugal has also developed a series of national routes that emphasize both its tangible and intangible heritage. Among these, the Wine Routes stand out as exemplary. These routes not only highlight Portugal's longstanding wine culture but also contribute to the preservation of the natural landscape's characteristic of its wine-producing regions, aligning with principles of sustainability.

Wine tourism has become a strategic priority for the Portuguese government, as outlined in the *2027 Tourism Strategy*, where wine is recognized as a key asset and a driver of sustainable development. Currently, the country boasts, at least, 13 recognized Wine Routes, with some of the most notable being the *Douro Wine Route*, which takes visitors through the UNESCO-listed *Douro Valley*, famous for its terraced vineyards, as well as the *Alentejo*, *Dão*, and *Vinho Verde Wine Routes* (Nascimento Santos, Vavdinos, & Martinez, 2020, pp. 159-170). These routes not only attract wine enthusiasts but also offer visitors an immersive experience in regional gastronomy, cultural traditions, and immersive landscapes.

The *Romanesque Route* in northern Portugal is another significant national initiative. It connects a collection of Romanesque churches, monasteries, and bridges from the 11th and 12th centuries, showcasing the architectural and artistic heritage of the region (Malheiro, 2017, pp. 539-548). Additionally, the *Historical Villages of Portugal Route* brings together 12 medieval villages in central Portugal, such as Sortelha, Monsanto, and Castelo Novo, which are renowned for their historical significance and defensive architecture. Other thematic routes include the Cheese Routes (Rotas dos Queijos), which focus on traditional cheese-making regions such as Serra da Estrela,

Azeitão, and Beira Baixa, offering visitors the opportunity to explore local dairies and witness traditional Portuguese cheese production.

In addition to promoting cultural heritage, these routes may also encourage sustainable tourism practices by supporting slower, eco-friendly travel modes such as walking and cycling. The *Rota Vicentina*, a coastal walking route in southern Portugal, exemplifies this approach. This route attracts tourists by promoting low-impact tourism while showcasing the natural landscapes of the Alentejo and Algarve regions, helping to protect the environment while fostering local economic development.

One of the most recent developments is the *Mediterranean Diet Route*, which highlights the country's traditional gastronomic traditions. This route is a part of *the Regional Plan for Safeguarding and Enhancing the Mediterranean Diet in the Algarve* and is supported by a wide-ranging partnership aimed at preserving and promoting the cultural and economic significance of the Mediterranean lifestyle, which has been recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2023). The route demonstrates how gastronomy can serve as both a cultural and economic driver for tourism and reflects broader trends within the *Council of Europe's Cultural Routes Programme*, where intangible cultural elements are increasingly gaining prominence alongside tangible heritage.

A crucial element in the success of all of these national cultural routes is the active involvement of local communities. Many routes depend on partnerships with municipalities, small businesses, and local artisans, all of whom contribute to maintaining the infrastructure and offering visitors culturally immersive experiences. This close collaboration helps ensure that tourism supports local economies, sustains traditional livelihoods, and preserves the unique cultural identity of each of these regions, all while preventing the over-commercialization or loss of heritage that can accompany increased tourism. As Portugal solidifies its status as a premier destination for cultural tourism, the ongoing development and promotion of cultural routes are becoming essential tools for diversifying its tourism offerings and ensuring the sustainability of its cultural assets. In 2024, Portugal ranked 12th in the *World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index*, which reflects the country's robust tourism infrastructure, abundant cultural assets, and growing initiatives in environmental sustainability (World Economic Forum, 2024, pp. 8-11). In 2023, Portugal's tourism sector reached unprecedented

heights, with non-resident visitor arrivals totaling 26.5 million, representing a 19.2% increase from 2022 (INE, 2023).

The growing demand for personalized and authentic experiences, particularly among cultural tourists, has led to a shift from quantitative growth to qualitative transformations in tourism. Tourists today, especially those seeking cultural experiences, tend to travel more frequently, have higher budgets, and seek more holistic, spiritual, and creative forms of tourism (Richards, 2011). Portuguese cultural routes, offering deeply immersive experiences, align with this new paradigm by allowing visitors to engage with the vast tangible and intangible heritage of the country in profound and memorable ways.

The development of cultural routes in Portugal reflects the nation's enduring commitment to heritage preservation, sustainable tourism, and the promotion of cultural diversity. As Portugal continues to expand its network of cultural routes, these initiatives will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of cultural tourism, ensuring that the country's rich historical and cultural assets remain vital for generations to come.

### **2.2.1. Northern Portugal: a key hub for cultural routes**

The strategic focus on the development of cultural routes has become particularly prominent in Northern Portugal, a region distinguished by its vast geographical diversity and profound cultural heritage. In recent years, this area has emerged as a focal point for cultural tourism, experiencing considerable growth in both visitor numbers and international recognition. In 2023 alone, Northern Portugal attracted 6.9 million visitors, reflecting a substantial 15.05% increase compared to the previous year, and recorded 13.2 million overnight stays (INE, 2023). This remarkable growth not only underscores the region's rising prominence within Portugal's broader tourism landscape but also highlights its appeal to international tourists seeking authentic, immersive cultural experiences.

Northern Portugal is one of the most extensive regions in the country, comprising eight distinct sub-regions: Alto Minho, Cávado, Ave, the Porto Metropolitan Area, Alto Tâmega, Tâmega e Sousa, Douro, and Terras de Trás-os-Montes. Collectively, these areas encompass 86 municipalities and 2,028 parishes (CCDR Norte, n.d.), representing an impressive diversity of landscapes that span from mountainous terrains to coastal

stretches. This geographical heterogeneity offers a broad range of resources and activities tailored to diverse tourist profiles, catering to nature enthusiasts, adventure seekers, and those with a keen interest in cultural heritage, regional folklore, and gastronomy.

Historically, Portugal's tourism marketing efforts used to be primarily focused on promoting its coastal attractions under the "sun, sea, and sand" model, with the Algarve emerging as the flagship destination of this strategy. For many years, Portugal's global image as a tourist destination was closely tied to its beaches and resort culture. However, over the past few decades, and through various efforts to diversify its offerings, the country has increasingly positioned itself as a cultural destination, attracting more tourists mainly to the cities of Lisbon and Porto (Fernandes, Monte, & Castro, 2003, pp. 57-73).

The influx of visitors to urban centres, drawn by their historical, architectural, and cultural richness, has laid the groundwork for a broader shift in the country's tourism strategy. Recent trends in global tourism with the growing demand for authentic and immersive cultural experiences, prompted the expansion of tourism influx to other inland regions and, specifically, those within Northern Portugal. These areas, renowned for their ethnographic heritage, traditional customs, and distinctive gastronomy, have shown to offer a compelling alternative to the conventional coastal tourism model (Fernandes, Monte, & Castro, 2003, pp. 57-73).

Tourism in Northern Portugal is strongly linked to the region's unique natural landscapes and vibrant rural culture. The area is home to four *UNESCO World Heritage Sites* that serve as significant drivers of tourism and strong symbols of its historical and cultural importance: *the Alto Douro Wine Region*, *the Historic Centre of Guimarães*, *the Historic Centre of Porto*, and *the Prehistoric Rock Art Sites* in the Côa Valley (UNESCO, n.d.). These sites not only celebrate Northern Portugal's rich historical legacy but also attract a growing number of visitors eager to explore both the region's cultural past and its contemporary expressions of heritage. Furthermore, Northern regions' celebrated gastronomy and viticulture, particularly the world-renowned wines of the *Douro Valley*, have become integral components of the tourist experience, amplifying the region's cultural appeal. As a result, numerous studies have highlighted Northern Portugal's domestic and international growth potential as a premier tourism destination, driven by its unique blend of historical, cultural, and culinary offerings (Lopes & Soares, 2017; Oliveira, 2014). (Lopes & Soares, 2017; Oliveira, 2014).

Porto, situated in the heart of Northern Portugal, has positioned itself as a key global destination. Its cultural and historical significance, coupled with a vibrant urban scene, has garnered international recognition, as evidenced by its recent recognition as *Europe's Leading City Break Destination 2023* at the *World Travel Awards*, following its designation as *Europe's Leading City Destination* in 2022 (Câmara Municipal do Porto, 2024). Porto's rapid growth can be traced back to a comprehensive urban rehabilitation process initiated in 1974 with the establishment of CRUARB — *Comission for the Urban Renovation of Ribeira/Barredo*, particularly targeting the historic city center. An important effort that was further strengthened by the UNESCO designation, as a *World Heritage Site* in 1996, recognizing the cultural and architectural significance of the area. Today, rehabilitation efforts are managed by *Porto Vivo, SRU — Urban Rehabilitation society*, overseeing the continued revitalization of the city's historic center (de Freitas et al., 2021, pp. 2-3).

This visible surge in international visitors, driven by Porto's historical significance, dynamic arts scene, and renowned wine culture, underscores the need for sustainable tourism development strategies that not only promote the region's cultural assets but also ensure the protection of its unique heritage. As UNESCO (2011) cautions, urban and landscape projects must be meticulously planned and managed to prevent uncontrolled development, which may fragment and deteriorate urban heritage, with profound impacts on community values globally. In this context, the creation of cultural routes has emerged as a critical tool. As previously discussed, cultural routes not only cater to tourists seeking authentic and immersive experiences but also represent a new form of tourism activity that is more sustainable, and community based. Thus, the implementation of cultural routes has offered a vital solution to the challenges faced by Northern Portugal, ensuring that tourism growth is balanced with the preservation of cultural and natural heritage.

The Rotas do Norte program, established in 2024, marks a pivotal development in this regard. Spearheaded by the *Regional Tourism Entity of Porto and Northern Portugal (ER-TPNP)* and the *Regional Coordination and Development Commission of the North (CCDR Norte)*, this comprehensive initiative seeks to promote the region's cultural heritage, contemporary art, and architecture through a diverse array of cultural routes. Among the most significant are the *Contemporary Art and Architecture Route*, the *Rock Art Route*, and the *Castles and Fortresses Route*. These routes aim to address a structural

gap in the region's management and promotion of its extensive heritage and artistic assets while simultaneously fostering the growth of cultural tourism. The overarching goal is to enhance the visitor experience and boost the region's competitiveness in the increasingly dynamic tourism market (CCDR Norte, 2024, pp. 1-4).

Further enhancing these efforts, the *Visit Porto* website serves as an essential platform for curating and promoting cultural routes, regularly updating its offerings with new itineraries and thematic experiences that focus on areas such as wine, art, and history. One notable municipal initiative is the *Curated Porto* project, which promotes local businesses and creative tourism through innovative cultural itineraries. Featuring the work of 13 artisans and creators from diverse fields, including ceramics, jewellery, textiles, and painting, the project encourages visitors to explore lesser-known areas of central Porto. By emphasizing community engagement and supporting the local economy, *Curated Porto* aims to decentralize tourism, promote sustainable travel, and foster international cultural exchanges. It reflects Porto's unique modern creative identity while maintaining strong ties to tradition.

This approach aligns with broader global tourism trends with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) having identified cultural routes enriched by local traditions and the arts as key drivers in shaping the future of tourism worldwide (UNWTO, 2015). In this context, Northern Portugal's focus on cultural routes, combined with its wealth of authentic local experiences, positions the region as a central player in the global cultural tourism landscape. By integrating these principles, Northern Portugal not only provides visitors with a journey through both time and tradition but also contributes to the region's sustainable development. This ensures that tourism growth aligns with the preservation of its rich cultural and natural heritage, fostering a balanced and resilient future for the region.

### **2.2.2. Decentralization of tourism in northern Portugal: Cultural Routes development in the Tâmega e Sousa region**

As it has been seen, tourism in Porto and Northern Portugal has witnessed substantial growth over the past decade, driven by significant investments in infrastructure and the implementation of targeted sectoral strategies. These efforts, supported by both public and private stakeholders, have resulted in a marked increase in

the region's capacity to attract a diverse array of visitors, consolidating its reputation as a premier cultural tourism destination. However, despite the positive trajectory in overall visitor numbers, recent data indicates a stark concentration of tourism activity in the Greater Porto area, which accounts for approximately 61% of the region's total overnight stays (Porto e Norte, 2020). This uneven distribution of tourism flows presents challenges for Northern Portugal, particularly in terms of fostering a more balanced and inclusive tourism landscape that extends the benefits of increased visitor interest beyond the metropolitan core.

While Porto has flourished as a central tourism hub, the adverse consequences of excessive tourism have become increasingly apparent, raising concerns about the sustainability of its rapid growth. Issues such as environmental degradation, overcrowding, and the erosion of cultural authenticity have been documented, particularly in areas subject to higher tourist influx (de Freitas et al., 2021, pp. 291-313). These challenges have sparked broader discussions within the region and beyond, as European cities grappling with similar pressures have begun exploring strategies to manage and mitigate the negative impacts of excessive tourism. One such approach involves redirecting visitor flows to lesser-known and underappreciated regions, thus relieving pressure on saturated urban centers while fostering a more equitable distribution of tourism-related benefits across a wider geographic area (Hospers, 2019, p. 20). In this context, the Tâmega e Sousa region in Northern Portugal may emerge as a key area of interest, offering a viable solution for the decentralization of tourism activity.

The Tâmega e Sousa region, located within the NUTS III<sup>3</sup> sub-region of the broader NUTS II Northern region of Portugal, occupies approximately 8.6% of the Northern territory. It comprises 11 municipalities—Amarante, Baião, Castelo de Paiva, Celorico de Basto, Cinfães, Felgueiras, Lousada, Marco de Canaveses, Paços de Ferreira, Penafiel, and Resende—collectively and individually known for their rich cultural heritage and natural landscapes. The *Intermunicipal Community of Tâmega e Sousa* (CIM do Tâmega e Sousa) is the public legal entity responsible for promoting and coordinating the common interests of these municipalities (CIM Tâmega e Sousa, n.d.).

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<sup>3</sup>The NUTS system (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) is a hierarchical classification used by the European Union to divide its territory for statistical, economic, and policy purposes. It divides countries into three levels: NUTS I for major socio-economic regions, NUTS II for basic regions used in regional policies, and NUTS III for smaller regions focused on specific diagnostics (European Commission, n.d)

Despite its wealth of cultural and natural assets, Tâmega e Sousa has historically attracted fewer international visitors compared to other regions of Northern Portugal, specifically the ones that delimit the Porto area. As noted by Castro et al. (2024, p. 115), only 18.2% of tourists in the Tâmega e Sousa region originate from abroad, a figure significantly lower than the 39.5% observed across Northern Portugal and the national average of 55.5%. This disparity highlights the untapped potential of Tâmega e Sousa as a cultural tourism destination, positioning it as a prime candidate for initiatives aimed at decentralizing tourism activity within the region.

To address this imbalance, the region has implemented a number of strategic initiatives, with the development and promotion of cultural routes emerging as a central pillar. Among these initiatives, the *Rota do Românico* stands out as the most prominent and far-reaching project. Initially launched in 2010 and later expanded to encompass the entirety of the Tâmega e Sousa region, the *Rota do Românico* serves as a curated journey through the region's medieval heritage. It offers visitors access to a carefully selected array of Romanesque cathedrals, monasteries, and bridges that traverse the picturesque valleys of the Tâmega, Sousa, and Douro rivers (Pinheiro, 2024, pp. 15-19). Unlike the more commercialized attractions typically found in urban and coastal areas, the Romanesque Route provides an immersive cultural experience that speaks to the growing demand for heritage-based tourism prioritizing authenticity and also historical depth. By highlighting the architectural and historical significance of these sites, the Romanesque Route has played a key role in raising the profile of Tâmega e Sousa while simultaneously contributing to the preservation of its cultural patrimony.

In addition to the *Rota do Românico*, the region has capitalized on its unique status as a key area of *Vinho Verde* wine production to further diversify its tourism offerings. The *Vinho Verde Routes* have become a vital platform for showcasing the region's viticultural heritage, blending wine tourism with cultural and culinary experiences. Through these routes, visitors are invited to embark on a journey that intertwines the agricultural traditions of *Vinho Verde* with the broader cultural and historical narrative of Tâmega e Sousa. This immersive approach, which connects wine production with local customs, enhances the overall tourism appeal of the region and encourages longer visitor stays, thereby fostering deeper engagement with the local culture. Such initiatives not only boost the economic prospects of the region but also contribute to the sustainable

development of its rural communities, many of which remain reliant on traditional agricultural and viticultural livelihoods (Brás et al., 2023, pp. 711-722).

The decentralization of tourism through the development of cultural routes aligns with broader socio-economic objectives for the region. Concentrated tourism activity in specific areas exacerbates regional disparities, making it essential to develop strategies that promote tourism in less economically developed areas such as the region of Tâmega e Sousa. As a predominantly rural and historically underserved region, Tâmega e Sousa stands to benefit significantly from increased tourism activity. The creation of cultural routes can act as a catalyst for economic development by generating employment opportunities, supporting small businesses, and attracting investments in infrastructure. Furthermore, the growth of tourism fosters the preservation of local crafts, customs, and intangible heritage, which are vital elements of the region's cultural identity and might otherwise be at risk of erosion due to the pressures of urbanization and modernization. By integrating tourism development with these broader socio-economic goals, Tâmega e Sousa has the potential to achieve a balance between cultural preservation and economic sustainability.

**CHAPTER III - PROPOSAL FOR AN *ARTS AND CRAFTS ROUTE* IN  
TÂMEGA E SOUSA**

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In an increasingly interconnected world, influenced by globalization and cultural exchange, every sector of the economy, including tourism, faces both significant opportunities and pressing challenges. The tourism industry, in particular, must innovate to address issues such as regional inequality and the overconcentration of visitors in popular urban centers. In Europe, mass tourism has long been a challenge, but lately it has captured even more attention given the large protests that took place in cities like Barcelona and Palma de Mallorca, in 2024, where residents voiced concerns about the impact of excessive visitor numbers. In these areas, tourists often account for over 80% of total arrivals, leading to demands for a more sustainable tourism model as local communities expressed frustration over rising housing costs and overcrowding, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach to tourism management (Statista Research Department, 2024).

This centralization in urban areas also often leads to the neglect of less-visited regions, limiting their potential for cultural and economic development. In Northern Portugal, tourism has become largely centralized, as seen in the pages leading to this chapter, with cities like Porto attracting the majority of visitors, which leaves the more inland regions, such as Tâmega e Sousa, underexplored and in an unfavorable position both culturally and economically. This centralization limits the distribution of tourism benefits and overlooks the rich tangible and intangible heritage that smaller regions can offer. Tâmega e Sousa, with its unique traditions and craftsmanship, possesses untapped potential to attract a different type of tourist — those seeking authentic, immersive experiences — deeply rooted in local culture and tradition, far from the standardized tourist attractions of larger cities.

The rise of heritage and experiential tourism, as already explored, underscores the urgency of repositioning regions like Tâmega e Sousa to fully integrate into the broader tourism landscape. To achieve this, innovative strategies must be implemented to decentralize tourism flows and spotlight the region's unique attributes, particularly its rich artisanal traditions. In accordance with this, it is proposed the development of a dedicated *Arts and Crafts Route*, which not only seeks to elevate the visibility of Tâmega e Sousa but also aims to promote the preservation of its cultural heritage and ensure the economic sustainability of local artisans. This route has the potential to transform the region into a hub of authentic cultural tourism, offering visitors an immersive experience that connects them directly with the region's craftsmanship, traditions, and history.

### 3.1. The Tâmega e Sousa region

The Tâmega e Sousa is a sub-region (NUTS III) situated within the Northern region (NUTS II) of Portugal. It is bordered to the north by the sub-regions of Ave and Alto Tâmega, to the south by Viseu Dão Lafões, to the east by Douro, and to the west by the Porto Metropolitan Area. Covering an area of 1,831 km<sup>2</sup> and representing 8.6% of the Northern region, it encompasses 11 municipalities: Amarante, Baião, Castelo de Paiva, Celorico de Basto, Cinfães, Felgueiras, Lousada, Marco de Canaveses, Paços de Ferreira, Penafiel, and Resende (CIM Tâmega e Sousa, n.d.).



*Figure 1*  
*Source: CIM Tâmega e Sousa*

Geographically, Tâmega e Sousa occupies a transitional position between the more urbanized and industrially developed coastal regions of Portugal and the rural, economically disadvantaged inland areas. This dynamic is reflected in the increasing urbanization of population centers and municipal hubs, coupled with the depopulation of rural and peripheral areas which is a trend consistent with broader national patterns. However, the sub-region's proximity to the Porto Metropolitan Area grants it a strategic advantage in terms of accessibility. It is integrated into a bimodal transportation corridor,

oriented east-west, comprising the A4/IP4 highway and the Marco and Douro railway lines, which together afford the region considerable accessibility and centrality within the national transport network (ADER-SOUSA, n.d.).

Demographically, the Tâmega e Sousa sub-region is home to approximately 410,000 inhabitants, with a population density of 223 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. This represents 4% of Portugal's total population and 11.4% of the Northern region's population. Most municipalities within the sub-region exhibit population densities exceeding the national average, and the region as a whole is noted as one of the youngest regions in the country (CIM Tâmega e Sousa, n.d.).

Culturally and naturally diverse, each municipality within the Tâmega e Sousa contributes with distinctive characteristics to the sub-region's identity. For instance,

- Amarante is renowned for the São Gonçalo Monastery, a key pilgrimage site, and the Tâmega River, which runs through the town, offering scenic views. The region is also known for its historic bridge, rich artistic heritage, and as the birthplace of prominent artists like Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso (Amarante Municipality, n.d.).
- Baião features rural landscapes dominated by the Serra do Marão mountain range, offering hiking trails and panoramic views (Baião Municipality, n.d.).
- Castelo de Paiva is distinguished by its vineyards and scenic beauty. The area is known for its production of *Vinho Verde* and sparkling wines, as well as the Paiva Walkways (Passadiços do Paiva), a highly popular eco-tourism attraction (Castelo de Paiva Municipality, n.d.).
- Celorico de Basto is home to ancient castles like the Castelo de Arnóia, which dates back to the 10th century, as well as extensive nature trails that allow visitors to explore the area's valleys and vineyards. The region is also known for its *Camellia Festival*, which celebrates the area's botanical richness (Celorico de Basto Municipality, n.d.).
- Cinfães, serving as a gateway to the Douro Valley, boasts various natural parks, including the Montemuro Mountain Range and the Serra de Montemuro (Cinfães Municipality, n.d.).
- Felgueiras combines its strong tradition of shoe manufacturing, with over 1,200 shoe factories contributing to the local economy, and religious tourism (Felgueiras Municipality, n.d.).

- Lousada offers both historical sites, including several Romanesque churches and manor houses, and rural tourism opportunities (Lousada Municipality, n.d.).
- Marco de Canaveses is notable for its Roman ruins, including the ancient Tongobriga settlement, which features a well-preserved Roman bathhouse and forum (Marco de Canaveses Municipality, n.d.).
- Paços de Ferreira is recognized for its thriving furniture industry, earning the title of Portugal’s “Capital of Furniture”. It is also home to the Citânia de Sanfins, an important archaeological site that showcases the remains of a prehistoric fortified settlement (Paços de Ferreira Municipality, n.d.).
- Penafiel combines its rich historical heritage with vibrant agricultural traditions. Key landmarks include the renowned Quinta da Aveleda, celebrated for its award-winning wines. It is also home to the São Martinho Fair, one of the oldest and largest fairs in Portugal (Penafiel Municipality, n.d.).
- Resende is known for its cherry orchards, which provide the basis for the popular annual Cherry Festival, and its proximity to the Douro River, making it an important center for agricultural production (Resende Municipality, n.d.).

Institutionally, the *Intermunicipal Community of Tâmega e Sousa* (CIM Tâmega e Sousa) was established in 2008 as a public, collective body with an associative nature and territorial scope, aimed at addressing the common interests of all these municipalities. CIM operates under the framework of *Law No. 45/2008*, dated August 27, alongside its Statutes and other pertinent legal provisions. Its core functions include promoting and managing the economic, social, and environmental development strategy of the sub-region. Moreover, CIM coordinates municipal investments with intermunicipal relevance and plays a crucial role in administering regional development programs, particularly those aligned with European Union funding frameworks. CIM oversees the planning and coordination of public entities operating beyond the municipal scale, ensuring a collaborative and integrated approach to regional development. This governance model supports the alignment of local initiatives with broader intermunicipal and supramunicipal objectives, thereby fostering sustainable growth across the Tâmega e Sousa sub-region (CIM Tâmega e Sousa, n.d.).

### 3.1.1. Economic context: overview

The economic profile of Tâmega e Sousa differs markedly from that of the broader Portuguese economy and, to a lesser extent, from the Northern Region. According to the latest data from the National Institute of Statistics (INE) on employment by sector, the sub-region shows a markedly higher concentration in the secondary sector, with 61.78% of its workforce employed in industry and manufacturing, compared to 41.83% in the Northern Region. Conversely, the region's level of tertiarization is significantly lower, with only 37.27% of employment in the tertiary sector, trailing behind the Northern Region's 57.19%, highlighting a slower shift towards service-based economic activities (INE, 2021).

The first socioeconomic *report of the Eixo Atlântico del Noroeste Peninsular* (2021), which examines both the Portuguese North and Galicia, underscores these trends by revealing stark contrasts in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between different areas. The Porto Metropolitan Area (AMP), with a GDP per capita of €18,719, the Cávado sub-region at €17,300, and Ave at €16,534 occupy the top three positions in Northern Portugal. In contrast, Douro registers a GDP per capita of €14,601, Alto Tâmega at €12,688, and Tâmega e Sousa with the lowest figure at €12,310. This data reflects the prevailing pattern of economic polarization, with the most productive areas concentrated along the coast. Of the €60.3 billion produced in the North in 2020, 54% came from the Porto Metropolitan Area, further underscoring the region's economic disparities.

At the municipal level, there are pronounced intra-regional disparities in economic activity. The municipalities of Felgueiras, Lousada, Paços de Ferreira, and Penafiel exhibit a strong industrial base, particularly in the manufacturing industry, where they hold substantial economic weight. These areas are marked by a high concentration of manufacturing activities, contributing significantly to the regional economy. In contrast, the municipalities of Celorico de Basto and the so-called “Douro Verde” group — comprising Baião, Castelo de Paiva, Cinfães and Resende — show less economic dynamism, with lower levels of industrialization and economic relevance. The municipality of Amarante and Marco de Canaveses occupy an intermediate position in terms of both industrial activity and overall economic significance (Interreg, 2021).

While small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) dominate the business landscape, large industrial units are also present, often tied to substantial foreign

investments. The textile industry, particularly footwear manufacturing, serves as a critical driver of industrial growth, securing Tâmega e Sousa's prominent role at both regional and national levels. The region is also home to Portugal's leading wood and furniture cluster, which has garnered success both domestically and internationally (Interreg, 2021).

In addition to the strong emphasis on the secondary sector, a defining feature of the Tâmega e Sousa economy is its robust integration into international trade, specifically in tradable goods. The region demonstrates a highly concentrated pattern of product specialization, focusing on key sectors such as footwear, textiles and apparel, furniture, metalworking, construction materials, and the production of young wine (*vinho verde*). These industries not only shape the regional economy but also bolster its export profile, ensuring a significant presence in global markets (Interreg, 2021).

Luís Ribeiro, president of the AEP (Portuguese Business Association) has highlighted the critical need for substantial investment in infrastructure to attract more companies to the Tâmega e Sousa region. While recognizing the region's cultural and natural assets, Ribeiro stresses that these factors alone are insufficient to attract entrepreneurs, as the tourism sector still contributes minimally in terms of economic resources. He characterizes Tâmega e Sousa as a paradox — a region with immense potential, driven by key exporting sectors, strategic geographic positioning and significant territorial size as one of the largest NUTS III in Portugal, also youngest in population age which, despite these advantages, still records Portugal's lowest GDP per capital and among the lowest in Europe (Teixeira, 2020). This emphasizes underlying structural challenges that need to be addressed in order to fully unlock the region's economic potential.

More recently, the *Territorial Base Incentive System (SIBT)* for Tâmega e Sousa, launched as part of the *NORTE 2030* Regional Program, represents a key initiative to stimulate the region's economic development. Targeting micro and small enterprises in these municipalities, the program focuses on two strategic sectors: industry and tourism. By offering financial support for small-scale investments aimed at business expansion or modernization, the initiative seeks to enhance the competitiveness of local companies, foster job creation, and strengthen the resilience of the region's economy (Andrade, 2024).

### 3.1.2. Tourism scenario

Although still not highly significant in terms of overall tourism revenue, the Tâmega e Sousa region exhibits substantial potential for future growth. Located within the *Vinho Verde* Demarcated Region, the area offers a unique combination of enotourism experiences, where visitors can enjoy one of Portugal's most famous wines. Established in 1908, this wine region is divided into nine sub-regions, five of which — Basto, Sousa, Amarante, Paiva, and Baião — overlap with the Tâmega e Sousa territory. This enological attraction is further enhanced by the region's rich cultural and historical legacy, which spans centuries, along with its stunning natural landscapes that invite exploration and discovery.

Tourism is becoming increasingly relevant in the area and is poised to play a key role in promoting and invigorating the region, particularly through collaborative initiatives between national and regional tourism entities such as *Turismo de Portugal* and *Porto e Norte*. Several strategic projects demonstrate the region's tourism potential, including the *Guided by Nature*<sup>4</sup> initiative, developed by the *Associação de Municípios do Douro e Tâmega*, which encompasses 13 municipalities across the Douro, Tâmega, and Sousa regions. This initiative has successfully attracted visitors through its website and app since its launch in February 2024, providing immersive experiences tied to the region's natural and cultural heritage. Equally noteworthy is the *Rota do Românico*<sup>5</sup>, the region's most successful tourism initiative since its public presentation in 2008, which has welcomed in total more than 130,000 visitors, primarily domestic tourists, to its historic monuments and sites (*Rota do Românico*, n.d.). This success underscores the importance of heritage-driven tourism in Tâmega e Sousa.

Additionally, some municipalities within the Tâmega e Sousa region have their own local routes, designed to showcase unique cultural, historical, and artistic assets. Examples include the *Rota dos Artistas*<sup>6</sup> in Amarante, which highlights the city's renowned artists and is an initiative of the project *Stay to Talk – Instituto de Imersão Cultural*, based in Amarante, which is a social impact institution aligned with the *United Nations Agenda 2030*, fostering connections between education, tourism, and research,

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<sup>4</sup> For further information, consult the official website: <https://guidedbynature.pt/pt/>

<sup>5</sup> For further information, check the official website: <https://www.rotadoromanico.com/pt/>

<sup>6</sup> To see full the information on the route visit: <https://www.staytotalk.pt/en/na-rota-dos-artistas-a-procurado-belo-en/>

enriching cultural immersion in the region. Also, the *Rota das Igrejas da Cidade de Penafiel*<sup>7</sup>, focusing on the architectural and religious history of the area. These routes are concentrated in municipalities that tend to attract more tourists and have made a bigger investment in the tourism sector to enhance the region’s appeal. These local initiatives are complemented by other cultural routes on a broader level that traverse through the region. For instance, some municipalities within Tâmega e Sousa are part of larger, well-established routes such as the *Caminho de Torres*<sup>8</sup>, an historic pilgrimage trail linking Salamanca to Santiago de Compostela, crossing the Tâmega e Sousa region and offering pilgrims a journey steeped in history and spirituality. Also, as part of the *Rota dos Vinhos Verdes*<sup>9</sup>, this integration not only boosts the region’s tourism value but also enriches the cultural and sensory experiences available to visitors.

The following table (1 ) presents tourism data for the Tâmega e Sousa region from 2017 to 2023, highlighting key indicators such as accommodation capacity, overnight stays, and occupancy rates:

*Table 1 - Tourism Data: Tâmega e Sousa (2017-2023)*

Source: GEE – Gabinete de Estratégia e Estudos, originally based on INE – Instituto Nacional de Estatística (RSYB)

Indicators	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Lodging capacity accommodation establishments	3 397	3 438	3 789	3 439	3 882	4 268	4 289
Nights (No.) in accommodation establishments	291 477	338 937	376 289	225 480	317 748	443 278	—
Guests (No.) in accommodation establishments	163 802,0	192 648	216 341	123 283	171 650	243 035	254 991
Total incomes (€) in accommodation establishments	19 191	21 533	26 078	16 015	22 723	35 131	36 940
Bed occupancy net rate (%) in accommodation establishments	286, 5	301, 4	315, 1	241, 2	28, 6	32,7	32,0

<sup>7</sup> Visit the municipal website for further information: <https://www.cm-penafiel.pt/visitar-penafiel/a-visitar/rota-das-igrejas/>

<sup>8</sup> For further information see: <https://www.caminhodetorres.pt/>

<sup>9</sup> Check the official website: <https://rota.vinhoverde.pt/pt/rota-dos-vinhos-verdes>

The additional table (2) compares the tourism indicators for NUTS III: Tâmega e Sousa with those of broader geographical aggregations:

*Table 2 - Tourism Comparison: Tâmega e Sousa vs. Other Regions (2022-2023)*

*Source: GEE – Gabinete de Estratégia e Estudos, originally based on INE – Instituto Nacional de Estatística (RSYB)*

Indicators	Year	NUTS III (Tâmega e Sousa)	NUTS II (Norte)	Portugal
Lodging capacity in tourist accommodation establishments (No.)	2023	4 289	87 252	478 552
Nights in tourist accommodation establishments (No.)	2022	443 278	11 556 645	69 694 791
Guests (No.) in tourist accommodation establishments	2023	254 991	6 941 647	30 028 890
Total incomes (€) in tourist accommodation establishments	2023	36 940	952 275	6 015 323
Bed occupancy rate (%) in tourist accommodation establishments	2023	32,0	44,2	48,0

As shown in the first table above, the Tâmega e Sousa region has experienced steady growth in key tourism indicators over the years with the number of lodging units rising from 3,397 in 2017 to 4,289 in 2023, a clear indicator of the region’s increasing attractiveness to tourists. This growth was particularly significant in 2022, when lodging capacity reached 4,268 units, reflecting a 9.9% increase from the previous year. Although the pandemic caused a temporary decline in 2020, the region demonstrated resilience and bounced back with strong growth in subsequent years. Between 2017 and 2019, the number of overnight stays followed a similar upward trend, with notable increases in 2021 and 2022, signaling a robust recovery from the pandemic's impact. By 2022, the number of overnight stays reached 443,278, surpassing pre-pandemic levels and indicating the region’s growing prominence as a tourist destination. Despite this progress, table 2 indicates that the Tâmega e Sousa still represents a small share of the national tourism market, accounting for only 3.8% of the total overnight stays in Northern Portugal and a mere 0.64% of the total in Portugal. This highlights both the potential for future growth and the challenges the region faces in expanding its share of the broader tourism landscape.

While the current growth in tourism indicators highlights the region's potential, relevant initiatives such as *EEC PROVERE*, financed by the European Union with *CIM Tâmega e Sousa* as the beneficiary, are crucial for driving further progress. These projects, aimed at enhancing, dynamizing, and promoting tourism in Tâmega e Sousa, Arouca, and Vale de Cambra, focus on increasing territorial identity, attracting more visitors, and fostering regional events and festivals. By leveraging local resources, these initiatives are essential to boost sustainable tourism development and elevate the region's profile on a broader scale.

### **3.1.3. Identifying traditional crafts and craftsmanship**

The Tâmega e Sousa region is renowned for its diversity of traditional crafts that have been passed down through generations and are deeply intertwined with the region's cultural identity. Therefore, preserving these ancient techniques has shown vital to safeguarding the cultural legacy and art of craftsmanship. But the survival of these practices is posed to significant challenges, particularly in attracting younger generations who are interested in maintaining the traditions alive. Based on this, a strategic approach that combines traditional craftsmanship with modern innovations and technologies is crucial to securing their future, not only by helping to preserve the region's crafters but also for breathing new life into them, making them relevant in today's evolving landscape.

Traditional crafts are widely distributed across the region's municipalities, each showcasing unique traditions that reflect the area's diverse cultural history. From pottery and weaving to wood carving and metalwork, these crafts are essential to the identity of local communities. In many villages and towns, artisans continue to uphold time-honored methods, ensuring that these practices endure, while the distribution of these crafts throughout the region highlights the richness of the local cultural landscape, with each municipality contributing with its own artistic legacy. In the following paragraphs we'll take a look into the main traditions and arts of crafts in the region to try and fully capture the nature and relevance of the *Arts and Crafts route* to be proposed for the region.

Starting by one of the most prominent and traditional forms of craft, the production of the *barro negro de Gondar* (black pottery from Gondar), an historically significant craft within the municipality of Amarante. Gondar's pottery dates back to the 14th century, and its unique pieces, characterized by their dark hue, were historically used

for cooking and storage. The pottery was shaped using rudimentary tools, such as a simple low-wheel, and baked in open kilns fueled by pine and oak wood. This distinctive technique allowed the clay to blacken, giving it its signature color. Once a thriving tradition, this craft faced near extinction in the mid-20th century, especially by the 1980s when industrial methods and changing lifestyles led to its decline. Today, César Teixeira is the last artisan in Europe practicing this ancient method, exemplifying the critical need for preservation efforts. His work, showcased in local workshops and fairs, not only preserves a centuries-old tradition but also serves as a cultural touchstone for the community (Associação Empresarial de Vila Meã, 2023).

Another unique craft is the *viola amarantina* (amarante guitar), also known as the “guitar of two hearts” due to the heart-shaped cutouts on its body. This stringed instrument was traditionally used in folk music and remains a cultural emblem of the region’s musical heritage. The method of constructing the *viola amarantina* dates back more than one hundred years, having been pioneered by master craftsman Joaquim José Machado. Crafted from indigenous woods such as pine, oak, and walnut, its distinctive tone is cherished until this day by local musicians. Currently, only two master artisans continue to create the instrument in the traditional way, highlighting both its cultural significance and the pressing need to safeguard this artisanal product from extinction (Associação Empresarial de Vila Meã, 2023). The *National Institute of Industrial Property* (INPI) has registered the *viola amarantina* under its designation of origin and geographical indication. With Amarante being recognized in 2017 as a *UNESCO City of Music*<sup>10</sup>, it reveals crucial to preserve this element of cultural heritage. Today, local schools and enthusiasts are teaching children, young people, and adults how to play the instrument. Additionally, the municipality has provided *violas amarantinas* to all folk groups to incorporate them into performances in a way to promote the craft and ensure its relevance for future generations (Mendes, 2024).

The production of *bengalas de gestação* (Gestação walking canes), originating from Baião, represents another centuries-old craft that has evolved over time. Traditionally, these canes were crafted from chestnut wood, with their intricate carvings reflecting the skills of local artisans. The first workshops producing these canes date back to the late

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<sup>10</sup> The UNESCO Creative Cities Network was established in 2004 to foster international cooperation among cities that recognize creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable development. The network aims to promote and strengthen local cultural industries while encouraging active international collaboration. (Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, n.d.)

19th century, with the master craftsman of this trade, Alexandre Pinto Ribeiro, establishing his workshop in 1902. In the times when canes were part of traditional Portuguese men's attire, these symbolized status and authority among men of wealth. More recently, with the loss of this relevance, these canes have found a new life owing to academic students and their tradition to wield these canes during special academic ceremonies. The continued production of these canes, coupled with the establishment of the *Casa das Bengalas de Gestação*, a museum dedicated to this art, underscores the cultural and economic significance of this heritage craft. The museum not only highlights the artistic skill involved in making these canes but also serves as a tourist attraction, drawing visitors interested in learning about the region's craft history (Associação Empresarial de Vila Meã, 2023).

*Basket weaving* is another form of traditional craftsmanship, a very widespread one in the Tâmega e Sousa region, serving both practical and artistic purposes. Basketry is particularly strong in the municipalities of Cinfães, Baião, and Marco de Canaveses, where artisans employ local materials such as straw, gorse, and split wood. In the village of Frende, for example, the abundance of broom plants from the Montemuro mountains has enabled basket-weaving traditions to flourish, giving raise to the well-known *cestas de frende* (Frende baskets) (Ferreira, Vaz, & Machado, 2014, pp. 53-61). Historically, these crafted baskets used to serve as tools for the region's agricultural and pastoral economy, served for transporting crops, fruits, and even small animals. But due to the loss of the traditional market, which no longer uses basketry for its diverse essential functions, the basket artisans who have persisted have reinvented forms and uses for their craft. This has been driven both by their awareness of change and by customer suggestions, as clients now seek baskets that serve domestic purposes and have more decorative and symbolic value, particularly smaller items (Ferreira, Vaz, & Machado, 2014, pp. 63-65).

The *bordado de Terras do Sousa* (embroidery from the Sousa regions), distinctive to the Felgueiras region, stands out for its intricate patterns and unique stitching techniques. Dating back to the 18th century, this craft combines elements of gold and silk thread with traditional linen and cotton fabrics, producing items of clothing and household textiles that reflect the local cultural identity. In 2011 the *National Institute of Industrial Property* granted the designation of origin and geographical indication registration to *Bordado das Terras de Sousa*, recognizing its cultural and economic value

for the region. The embroidery is made domestically in neighboring parishes with these including Figueiró in the municipality of Amarante, Airões, Aião, Vila Verde, Lixa, and Santão in Felgueiras, and Torno, Meinedo, and Caíde de Rei in Lousada. The demand for *Terra de Sousa* embroidered pieces primarily focuses on home textiles, such as tablecloths, hand towels, bed linens, bedroom sets, napkins, towels, and tea towels. These items are typically embroidered in white-on-white, but in line with contemporary trends, other desired colors are also now being used (Ferreira, Vaz, & Machado, 2014, pp. 25-27).

In Marco de Canaveses, the creation of *chapéus de palha* (straw hats) has been a longstanding family tradition, passed down through generations. These finely woven hats, made from intertwined straw and thread, are emblematic of the region's artisanal expertise and highlight the close connection between craft production and the local community. Historically, the straw was harvested from local fields, and the hats served as practical accessories for protection against the sun during harvest season. Today, these hats are produced primarily for festivals, fairs, and tourist markets, showcasing the craftsmanship of the artisans while adapting to contemporary consumer demands (Associação Empresarial de Vila Meã, 2023). In 2023, the brand *Umbelina's Hat* was established as the new artisanal label of the municipality of Marco de Canaveses being created with the objective of certifying and promoting local craftsmanship as a genuine product of the region, reinforcing its identity and making it a distinctive element. The brand was named after Umbelina, a skilled artisan woman known for her unique straw hats (Câmara Municipal de Marco de Canaveses, n.d.).

In Resende, the region's artisans have specialized in both basketry and the production of traditional clothing items such as *croças* and *capelos*, garments used by farmers and shepherds to protect against harsh weather. Made from the same materials as baskets, such as gorse and broom, these items exemplify the sustainable and multifunctional nature of traditional crafts. Full-sized *croças* are actually rarely made today, mainly because there are fewer shepherds, and those that remain prefer waterproof jackets. However, it is crucial to preserve the knowledge and craftsmanship behind *croça* making, so that this traditional skill is not lost (Associação Empresarial de Vila Meã, 2023). This type of traditional and unique garment can be seen, for instance, at the Municipal Museum of Resende.

The *weaving* tradition in Penafiel has roots tracing back to Roman times, with archaeological evidence and classical accounts highlighting the use of wool and linen in clothing production. Throughout the Middle Ages, linen was still a key material for domestic fabric-making. But with the advent of industrial cotton production in the 19th century, linen weaving began to decline as it couldn't adapt easily to mechanization. By 1988, there were 44 weavers in Penafiel, 26 of whom specialized in linen. However, the number of artisans has steadily decreased, as aging weavers and health issues have contributed to the gradual disappearance of these craftswomen (Associação Empresarial de Vila Meã, 2023). This makes the preservation and transmission of their skills critical to ensure that this valuable cultural heritage does not vanish entirely.

Other traditional crafts in the Tâmega e Sousa region involve materials such as tin, wood, iron, and the age-old practice of barrel-making. While these crafts may not be tied to a singular emblematic product like the region's famed embroidery, they remain culturally significant. Barrel-making, in particular, supports the region's wine industry, while tin and iron are used in various utilitarian and decorative objects. These crafts exemplify the region's adaptability, with artisans preserving skills that have been refined over centuries, even as modern production methods and consumer demands evolve.

The traditional crafts of the Tâmega e Sousa region are deeply intertwined with its cultural heritage and have potential for economic revitalization through cultural and creative tourism. Existing artisanal fairs such as the *Feira do Vinho Verde*, *Gastronomia e Atividades in Castelo de Paiva* have proven important to increase the visibility of traditional products. Crafts are central to the region's identity and despite evolving with modern times, these are increasingly facing challenges in maintaining relevance due to shifts in demand and production methods. Efforts to support both craft and craftsmanship include developing certification for authenticity and supporting the few artisans that are left, while also boosting the region's creative tourism offerings. In an increasingly globalized world, preserving traditional crafts becomes essential for both safeguarding cultural identity and ensure sustainable economic growth, allowing the art of craftsmanship to remain viable for future generations.

### 3.2. Problem

As discussed in the previous sections, the Tâmega e Sousa region is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, particularly its diverse traditional crafts, which have been passed down through generations. In recent years, significant efforts have been made to promote the region's cultural and natural assets to broader audiences, through the development of cultural routes and initiatives aimed at raising awareness of the region's cultural identity among local communities and enhancing its tourism appeal to external visitors. Notable examples of these initiatives include the creation of the *Rota do Românico* in 2008 and, more recently, the *Guided by Nature* project launched in 2024. These projects represent distinct approaches to engaging with the region's cultural landscape—the *Rota do Românico* emphasizes the exploration of Romanesque architectural heritage, while the *Guided by Nature* project focuses on ecotourism and nature-based experiences.

Despite these commendable efforts to promote the region's cultural and natural assets through well-structured and successful routes, there remains a significant gap in the representation and promotion of Tâmega e Sousa's heritage crafts. To date, no route has been developed that encompasses the various municipalities and their traditional crafts, leaving a vital aspect of the region's intangible cultural heritage underrepresented in the tourism landscape.

While there have been some important contributions to the preservation and recognition of crafts, such as the research conducted by the *Rota do Românico*, which culminated in the publication of two volumes on intangible heritage, including traditional crafts, and the supramunicipal initiative *Made In Tâmega e Sousa* which promotes the region's endogenous products, including crafts and gastronomy, these efforts remain fragmented and lack the cohesive structure of a dedicated crafts route. This situation highlights the need for a comprehensive solution to address the current void in the promotion of heritage crafts. Despite the efforts already undertaken, there is a clear opportunity to further develop and elevate these crafts through the creation of a cultural route specifically dedicated to the artisans and their craftsmanship. Such a route would not only celebrate and preserve these traditional skills but also provide a platform for artisans to reach wider audiences, foster sustainable economic opportunities, and enhance the region's cultural tourism offerings by integrating a unique, immersive experience into the tourism landscape of Tâmega e Sousa.

### **3.3. Solution: Creation of a dedicated crafts route in Tâmega e Sousa**

The solution to the identified problem lies in the creation of a comprehensive crafts route for the Tâmega e Sousa region, a project that aims to fill the existing gap in the promotion and visibility of the region's rich heritage crafts. This route will encompass all the municipalities of Tâmega e Sousa, integrating them into a cohesive, well-structured network that offers visitors an immersive and authentic cultural experience focused on traditional craftsmanship. By doing so, it will elevate the status of heritage crafts to the same level of prominence already enjoyed by other cultural assets in the region, such as the Romanesque architecture and natural landscapes.

In my correspondence with the Intermunicipal Community (CIM) of Tâmega e Sousa — serving as a collaborative organization for intermunicipal governance and tourism initiatives — I inquired about their perspective on this project and their response was very favorable, as they underscored the significance of creating an *Arts and Crafts Route* for the region. They acknowledged that this initiative represents added value for the region's tourism promotion while reinforcing the identity, culture, and traditions of Tâmega e Sousa. Furthermore, CIM Tâmega e Sousa emphasized their commitment to promoting and modernizing the region's crafts through their *Integrated Territorial Development Strategy* (EIDT), which includes efforts to map, dynamize, and support training initiatives in collaboration with local development associations and municipalities. For further details on CIM's position regarding this project, please refer to Appendix III.

The proposed route aims to bring both cultural and economic benefits to the Tâmega e Sousa region, providing local artisans with greater visibility and direct access to niche markets like cultural tourists and craft enthusiasts who seek authentic, hands-on experiences. To achieve this, a series of workshops and guided visits to artisan ateliers would be organized and promoted through a dedicated website, where visitors could sign up, view schedules, and access detailed information about each activity. Workshops would allow visitors to engage directly with local crafts, scheduled to align with peak tourism periods to ensure maximum availability during high-interest times. Each workshop would feature essential details on the website, such as duration, skill level, and group size, allowing visitors to browse and book according to their preferences. Key partners, including the previously mentioned in section 3.1.2, *Instituto de Imersão Social*,

the *CEARTE* (*Center for Professional Training in Crafts and Heritage*<sup>11</sup>) and *Made in Tâmega e Sousa*<sup>12</sup>, would collaborate to provide training for artisans in instructional techniques and visitor interaction, enhancing workshop experiences and coordinating certifications to maintain quality. *CEARTE*, in particular, would support artisans in developing workshops suited to both beginners and advanced enthusiasts, ensuring that the route caters to a diverse audience. Guided visits would complement the workshops by providing visitors with a deeper insight into traditional techniques through small-group tours of ateliers, led either by the artisans themselves or trained guides capable of sharing the crafts' cultural and historical significance. In this case, *Instituto de Imersão Social* could support the artisans in creating guided tours. To make these experiences accessible, particularly for visitors without personal transportation, scheduled transport options would be available for more remote atelier locations.

In the long term, the route has the potential to transform the tourism landscape of Tâmega e Sousa by broadening its appeal beyond the established historical and nature-based attractions, creating a more diversified tourism offering. This route is designed to attract a growing segment of tourists who prioritize slow, experiential travel, where authentic connections with local culture and communities are central to their experience. By providing a structured, accessible showcase of the region's intangible heritage, the route will highlight traditional crafts that embody Tâmega e Sousa's unique cultural identity. The dedicated crafts route can also contribute significantly to the decentralization of tourism in Northern Portugal, acting as a distinctive and complementary attraction that draws visitors away from the more saturated urban and coastal destinations. In doing so, it channels visitors toward the lesser-known municipalities of Tâmega e Sousa, thereby distributing tourism flows more evenly across the region. Through this approach, the route not only promotes sustainable tourism practices but also encourages economic development and cultural preservation within these local communities.

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<sup>11</sup> *CEARTE*, as a public center dedicated to the crafts sector, delivers certified professional training across the country by partnering with industry organizations, local authorities, associations, municipalities, and businesses, ensuring training opportunities are widely distributed (ADRAT, 2024)

<sup>12</sup> *Made in Tâmega e Sousa* is a regional initiative by the *Associação Empresarial de Vila Meã* aimed at promoting local endogenous products, including traditional crafts, gastronomy, and other cultural goods unique to the Tâmega e Sousa region (*Made in Tâmega e Sousa*, n.d.)

### **3.4. The route: description and mapping**

The *Arts and Crafts Route* of Tâmega e Sousa begins with twenty-four thoughtfully chosen sites, each offering a glimpse into the region's rich craft and craftsmanship traditions, rooted in a historical context that highlights the significance of these practices within Portuguese culture. These initial locations, spread across several municipalities, form the foundation of the route, with ongoing research aimed at incorporating even more undiscovered treasures that define the cultural heritage of Tâmega e Sousa. The primary objective of the route is to showcase a variety of locations and artisans engaged in traditional crafts, providing visitors with detailed and accessible information on the significance of exploring these sites. Each traveler is encouraged to craft their unique journey, as there is no fixed starting or endpoint but rather a cohesive narrative that links all experiences together.

Besides the main map of the route, which will be made available digitally through an interactive website and mobile app, as well as in printed form at local tourist information centers, accommodations, and key craft sites along the route, this project will focus on creating a dynamic and immersive experience for visitors. The digital platforms will feature interactive tools, such as GPS navigation, customizable itineraries, and detailed descriptions of each craft site, along with historical and cultural insights. Visitors will be able to filter locations based on their interests, such as pottery, textiles, or woodworking, ensuring a personalized and enriched experience.

Moreover, the project will actively promote the region's artisan fairs and festivals, showcasing key events where visitors can experience live demonstrations, purchase handmade products, and interact with local artisans. In addition to promoting existing fairs, the project will organize its own workshops and special events, offering live demonstrations of traditional crafts along the route. The website and app will provide an updated calendar of these activities, with opportunities for visitors to register for exclusive workshops, where they can learn crafting techniques directly from skilled artisans. These events will be strategically integrated into the route, allowing participants to plan their visits around these enriching cultural experiences. To secure the involvement of artisans in the *Arts and Crafts Route* project, it is essential to articulate clear benefits that highlight the advantages they will gain, such as increased visibility, access to new markets, opportunities for direct sales, and the chance to share their skills with a broader

audience. Actively including artisans in the planning process through meetings and discussion groups ensures that their input shapes the offerings, making them relevant and appealing to both artisans and visitors. Offering training courses in collaboration with *CEARTE* can help artisans further develop their skills and obtain certification, which some artisans still lack. This not only empowers them to effectively showcase their crafts and connect with visitors but also incentivizes their collaboration with the route. Additionally, implementing feedback mechanisms allows artisans to share their experiences, suggestions, and concerns regarding the project, fostering a collaborative environment that values their contributions.

In addition to these core features, the project will offer curated recommendations for dining, accommodations, and nearby attractions to complement the visitor experience. This includes highlighting local restaurants known for traditional cuisine, nearby vineyards for wine-tasting, and cultural landmarks such as historical churches and nature trails, all easily accessible from the craft sites. Furthermore, both website and app will include real-time updates, visitor reviews, and social sharing features to encourage community engagement.

The selected artisans and crafts-related sites to integrate the route were chosen based on criteria such as their cultural and historical significance, the diversity of traditional crafts represented, and their accessibility for visitors. Priority was given to locations that showcase authentic craftsmanship, preserving ancient techniques passed down through generations, while also allowing for interactive experiences. Additionally, the geographical distribution of the sites was carefully planned to ensure that all municipalities within the Tâmega e Sousa region are represented. By including every municipality, the route promotes a more inclusive exploration of the region, providing a comprehensive understanding of its artisanal diversity and fostering greater tourism decentralization.

The distribution of the selected route's artisan shops and crafts-related sites is showcased in a map in the figure (2) bellow:

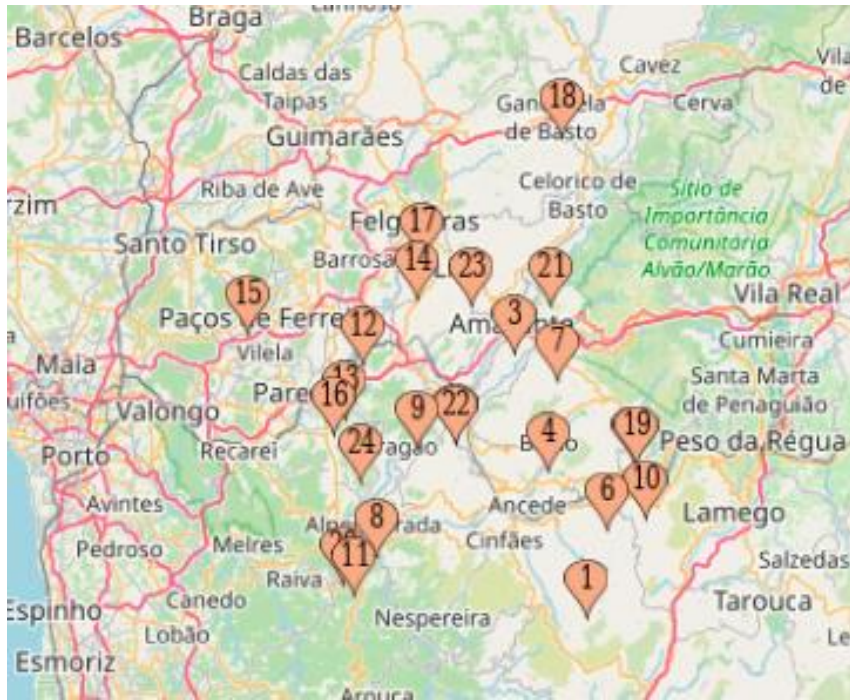


Figure 2 – Arts and Crafts route map

Source: original

Full map available at: <https://www.mapcustomizer.com/map/Arts%20and%20Crafts%20Route>

To deepen the understanding of each selected site, a table (5) was created, featuring both subtitles and detailed descriptions for each location on the map. Given the table's length, it has been placed in Appendix 1 to provide additional context and insight into the storytelling associated with these significant stops along the route.

The narration for each site presented is the result of a meticulous work constructed using a diverse array of sources which are all included in the references' list. Municipal online databases provided foundational information, the *Rota do Românico* website offered valuable insights and many written articles and video interviews featured in local newspapers, namely *A Verdade*, *Tâmega e Sousa* and *O Louzadense*, added depth to the artisans' stories by capturing their personal journeys and craft techniques. Additionally, social media platforms served as vital resources for some artisan ateliers that shared their updated information there. The long-term objective of this route is to be able to incorporate additional, relevant, sites, promoting even more craftspeople. However, this requires a comprehensive research process, involving the identification and evaluation of potential locations to assess the ongoing viability of their cultural practices. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis of the historical and cultural significance of each site will be necessary to ensure their relevance and contribution to the route. The sites currently integrated have already undergone this thorough analysis process, ensuring that only

those with enduring cultural and historical value are included. Future expansions will follow the same rigorous approach to maintain the route's integrity and authenticity.

In addition to its focus on permanent sites, the route actively promotes several seasonal festivals that highlight the region's rich artisanal heritage. These festivals are vital for preserving and showcasing traditional crafts while simultaneously enhancing local economies by attracting visitors and promoting local artisans. The route's promoted events are in the following table (3):

*Table 3 – Arts and Crafts Route festivals*

Festival	Municipality	Date
<i>FAGA - Feira de Artesanato e Gastronomia de Amarante</i>	Amarante	23rd of August - 1st of September
<i>Feira de Artesanato, Gastronomia e Vinhos de Celorico</i>	Celorico de Basto	14th – 18th of August
<i>ExpoLixa</i>	Felgueiras	21st – 23rd of July
<i>Festival Raízes</i>	Marco de Canaveses	24th – 26th of May
<i>Feira do Vinho Verde, Gastronomia e Artesanato</i>	Castelo de Paiva	5th – 7th of July
<i>Feira de Artesanato de Baião</i>	Baião	20th – 24th of August
<i>ExpoMontemuro</i>	Cinfães	17th – 21st July
<i>Feira de artesanato de Lousada</i>	Lousada	21 st of July
<i>Flores e sabores</i>	Penafiel	3rd – 5h of May
<i>Agrival</i>	Penafiel	23rd of August -1st of September
<i>Feira de artesanato de Modelos</i>	Paços de Ferreira	5th – 6st of August

### **3.5. Positioning**

The Arts and Crafts Route positions itself as a unique cultural tourism experience in the Tâmega e Sousa region, distinctively dedicated to showcasing and preserving the region's rich artisanal heritage. Unlike existing routes that focus on architectural, natural, or enogastronomic tourism, this route centers on hands-on interaction with local artisans, offering visitors the opportunity to engage directly with traditional crafts passed down through generations. By covering all municipalities in the region and encompassing a diverse array of artisanal practices, the route provides a comprehensive and immersive journey into the cultural identity of Tâmega e Sousa. It caters to cultural tourists, craft enthusiasts, and experiential travelers who seek authentic and interactive experiences, making it a differentiated offering within the broader regional tourism landscape.

By emphasizing the region's unique artistic traditions and fostering a deeper connection between visitors and the local community, the route addresses the growing demand for immersive and meaningful travel experiences. The distinctiveness of the arts and crafts route lies in its commitment to preserving and celebrating the local culture, making it a valuable addition to the existing tourism landscape. This project prioritizes community engagement, ensuring that artisans and local residents play an active role in shaping the visitor experience. By creating a platform for cultural exchange, the arts and crafts route not only promotes tourism but also enhances the visibility of the region's heritage, thereby contributing to its economic and social vitality.

#### **3.5.1. Mission**

The mission of the Arts and Crafts Route is to preserve and promote the rich artisanal heritage of the Tâmega e Sousa region by creating a dynamic, immersive cultural tourism experience. The main aim is to showcase the diverse craftsmanship that has shaped the region's identity, offering visitors unique opportunities to engage directly with local artisans, learn about their ancient skills, and understand the cultural significance behind their work. Through this route, the desire is not only to enhance the visibility of traditional crafts but also to drive sustainable tourism, creating economic opportunities for artisans and strengthening the local economy. The goal is to shift the focus of tourism in Northern Portugal, offering a unique alternative to conventional attractions and redirect visitors from more saturated areas while enhancing and diversifying the region's cultural offerings. The idea is to foster cultural exchange, support local craftsmanship, and ensure

that these traditions are preserved for future generations, contributing to a thriving, culturally vibrant Tâmega e Sousa.

### **3.5.2. Objectives**

The objectives of the Arts and Crafts Route of Tâmega e Sousa are designed to create a culturally enriching experience that not only highlights the region's artisanal heritage but also fosters sustainable tourism and intercultural engagement among visitors and local communities. The core objectives are:

- **Preserve and Promote Traditional Craftsmanship:** Safeguard the intangible cultural heritage of Tâmega e Sousa by highlighting and supporting local artisans and their traditional techniques, ensuring their skills and cultural narratives are preserved and appreciated across generations.
- **Enhance Cultural Tourism Offerings:** Establish the *Arts and Crafts Route* as a distinctive cultural attraction that provides immersive, hands-on experiences with local crafts, appealing to both national and international tourists interested in authentic intercultural exchanges.
- **Support Sustainable Economic Development:** Foster economic opportunities for local artisans by increasing their visibility and creating new revenue streams through tourism, craft sales, and workshops, thus contributing to the sustainability of their small businesses.
- **Decentralize Tourism in Northern Portugal:** Redirect visitors from more saturated tourist areas by creating a unique route that encourages exploration of the lesser-known cultural treasures of Tâmega e Sousa, promoting balanced tourism development across all municipalities.
- **Promote Regional Identity and Community Engagement:** Strengthen local pride in the region's artisanal heritage and foster community involvement by encouraging residents to actively participate in the preservation and promotion of their cultural traditions.
- **Promote Intercultural Dialogue:** Use the *Arts and Crafts Route* as a platform for intercultural dialogue, fostering connections between local artisans and visitors, and encouraging the exchange of ideas, practices, and traditions that enrich the cultural experience for all.

### 3.6. Branding

The branding for the Arts and Crafts Route of Tâmega e Sousa will focus on highlighting the region's rich cultural heritage and the skilled artisans who preserve traditional crafts. The branding strategy will encompass a compelling visual identity and engaging storytelling that resonates with both local and international audiences.

#### 3.6.1. Logo

The logo for the *Tâmega e Sousa Arts and Crafts Route* visually captures the essence of the region's rich artisanal heritage. The outline of hands crafting pottery symbolizes the intricate craftsmanship central to the route, emphasizing the importance of handmade traditions passed down through generations. The map pins, subtly incorporated into the design, represents the journey and discovery aspect of the cultural route, connecting visitors to various artisan workshops and craft-related sites across the Tâmega e Sousa region.



Figure 3 – Logo  
Source: original

### 3.6.2. Slogan and storytelling

*Crafting Connections: experience the art of local craftsmanship*

This slogan captures the essence of the *Arts and Crafts Route*, conveying the profound relationships forged between artisans, their crafts, and the visitors who come to appreciate them. It highlights not just the artistry involved in traditional craftsmanship but also the shared experiences that emerge when individuals engage with these unique expressions of culture. The term *crafting connections* evokes the idea of bridging gaps — between generations, between cultures, and between people — inviting participants to immerse themselves in a tapestry of stories, skills, and traditions.

Storytelling is an integral aspect of this route, serving to illuminate the rich narratives woven into each handcrafted piece. Every artisan possesses a unique story as the ones that are shared in table 5 of appendix 1, reflecting their connection, full dedication and passion for the craft. These stories provide context and depth, transforming mere objects into symbols of cultural identity and history. By employing diverse storytelling techniques — such as written accounts, engaging videos, and social media narratives — the *Arts and Crafts Route* invites visitors to delve into the lives of the artisans. This immersive approach fosters a deeper appreciation for the skills involved, the materials used, and the cultural significance that underpins each creation. Visitors are encouraged to not only observe but to engage with the craftspeople, learn about their techniques, and understand the inspirations behind their work.

Through this enriched storytelling experience, the *Arts and Crafts Route* aspires to cultivate emotional connections, allowing tourists to appreciate the artistry on a personal level. It transforms their journey from passive observation to active participation, enabling them to become part of the narrative that celebrates local craftsmanship. The combination of the slogan and storytelling creates a compelling and memorable identity for the *Arts and Crafts Route*.

### 3.7. Competitor analysis

In examining the competitive landscape surrounding the *Arts and Crafts Route* in the Tâmega e Sousa region, it is crucial to identify and analyze existing cultural routes and tourism initiatives that may impact its development and success. This analysis provides insights into market gaps that the new route can effectively fill. By understanding the unique features and challenges of these competitors, we can better position the *Arts and Crafts Route* to meet the needs and preferences of our target audience, ensuring a sustainable and attractive alternative within the broader tourism framework of the region.

One of the most significant national initiatives in the crafts sector is the *Saber Fazer*<sup>13</sup> program, created under the Portuguese government's efforts to preserve and promote traditional craftsmanship. Launched as part of the *National Strategy for Traditional Arts and Crafts (2021-2025)*, the program provides an organized platform that connects tourists with local artisans, documenting and promoting intangible heritage. *Saber Fazer* features specific routes dedicated to different traditional crafts across various regions of Portugal, offering visitors immersive experiences where they can observe and participate in the production of traditional goods, from pottery to textiles. While the program is a significant step in promoting Portugal's craftsmanship, it does not yet cover all regions or crafts comprehensively. For example, within the Tâmega e Sousa region, the *Saber Fazer* program currently focuses on only one or two crafts or craftspeople in just five municipalities: Penafiel, Felgueiras, Castelo de Paiva, Resende, and Amarante. This limited scope means that several municipalities rich in artisanal traditions are excluded from the program. The restricted coverage likely arises from a combination of factors, including the stronger presence of artisans and artisan-related sites in the included municipalities and the fact that the program appears to have adopted a selective, pilot approach by initially promoting a limited number of sites within each region. Given that other regions of Portugal could also benefit from increased craft activities, it is anticipated that the program will add more sites to its routes in the future. Municipalities that actively promote their artisans and collaborate with the program may have also received preference, highlighting the impact of local advocacy on participation. Additionally, the lack of representation from some areas, including Tâmega e Sousa, may stem from concerns about creating an overly extensive program due to its national coverage. In any

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<sup>13</sup> Official website here: <https://programasaberfazer.gov.pt/>

case, this is a gap presents a unique opportunity for the *Arts and Crafts Route* to expand beyond the existing framework by incorporating all ten municipalities of Tâmega e Sousa. This approach would offer a more holistic and complete experience, allowing the region to showcase its diverse artisanal heritage. Moreover, while *Saber Fazer* operates as a broader national initiative aimed at promoting craftsmanship across Portugal, it lacks the regional focus that the proposed Arts and Crafts Route in Tâmega e Sousa emphasizes. The *Saber Fazer* program covers individual craft routes scattered throughout the country rather than concentrating on building a cohesive tourism experience within a specific region. Although there may be opportunities for collaboration with *Saber Fazer* to boost the visibility and reach of the *Arts and Crafts Route*, the national program does not prioritize any single region, whereas the proposed route is specifically designed to showcase and preserve the cultural and artisanal heritage of Tâmega e Sousa.

Regarding the Tâmega e Sousa region, it offers some already well-established cultural routes, but none are specifically dedicated to traditional crafts. Therefore, the creation of a dedicated crafts route fills a gap in the market by focusing on local craftsmanship, something no existing route fully addresses or is exclusively dedicated to. For instance, the *Rota do Românico* highlights the architectural heritage of the region and has made significant advancements in researching and publishing materials on both tangible and intangible heritage, including crafts. However, while it provides valuable insights into the region's history, it lacks a hands-on visitor experience centered around traditional craftsmanship. This presents an opportunity for the *Arts and Crafts Route* to offer interactive experiences that engage tourists directly with local artisans and their craft, enhancing cultural appreciation. Similarly, the *Guided by Nature* project promotes the region's natural landscapes through outdoor activities, emphasizing ecotourism over cultural heritage. While it successfully attracts nature lovers, it does not cater to tourists interested in cultural experiences. The *Arts and Crafts Route* can fill this void by appealing to a different demographic — those seeking a deeper connection with the region's cultural practices and artisan traditions. The *Rota do Vinho Verde* focuses on wine tourism, which, although vital to the region, covers a broader territory and primarily targets wine enthusiasts. The Arts and Crafts Route can capitalize on this by providing a comprehensive exploration of craftsmanship, thereby catering for a different type of visitors, those interested in artisanal traditions. Lastly, the *Cultura Made in Tâmega e Sousa* initiative represents a significant regional effort to celebrate intangible local

heritage, including crafts. However, this project is not solely focused on traditional crafts, with a major focus also on regional gastronomy, and it has not yet developed a dedicated route for promoting local craftsmanship, leaving an opportunity for the *Arts and Crafts Route* to establish itself as the primary, structured route for exploring the region's artisanal traditions.

In addition to these established routes, there are various municipal routes that exist, such as the *Rota dos Artistas* (Writers Route) in Amarante, which focuses on the literary history of the region. While these smaller routes offer unique experiences, they tend to concentrate on specific themes or historical figures within individual municipalities, limiting the overall exposure to heritage assets. In contrast, the *Arts and Crafts Route* will present a cohesive and unified experience that showcases diverse artisanal practices across all municipalities, creating a more holistic understanding of the region's cultural heritage.

It is by identifying these gaps and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of existing routes that the *Arts and Crafts Route* can position itself as a unique offering that enhances the tourism landscape of the Tâmega e Sousa region.

### **3.8. PEST analysis**

PEST analysis is a strategic tool used to assess external environmental factors that can influence an organization or project. It focuses on four key categories: political, economic, social, and technological factors. Political factors involve government interventions, policies, and lobbying efforts that affect the broader economy. Economic factors examine macroeconomic conditions such as inflation, growth rates, and even seasonal or weather-related impacts. Social factors encompass societal, cultural, and demographic trends that can shape market behavior. Technological factors relate to technological advancements, infrastructure, incentives, and innovations that can influence the external landscape. This analysis allows businesses to gain insights into the broader environment and adapt their strategies accordingly (Ho, 2014, p. 6479). The *Arts and Crafts* PEST analysis is as follows.

#### **3.8.1. Political factors**

The political landscape is highly favorable for the development of the *Arts and Crafts Route* in Tâmega e Sousa, with strong support from both national and local government bodies.

At the national level, legislation such as the *Law for the Protection and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Law No. 107/2001)*, provides the basis of a legal framework that recognizes and preserves the cultural heritage of crafts, which is central to the route's mission. This, alongside newer government measures promoting rural and cultural tourism, ensures that projects like the *Arts and Crafts Route* can benefit from protection and recognition, further supporting their development. Additionally, national strategies such as the *Tourism Strategy 2027 (Estratégia Turismo 2027)* emphasize in its objectives the aim for a more balanced distribution of tourism across all regions of Portugal, promoting territorial and social cohesion by directing tourism flows toward less-visited areas. This also aligns seamlessly with the objectives of the route, which aims to decentralize tourism, bringing visibility and economic development to the Tâmega e Sousa region. The *Saber Fazer* Program, approved by the government in 2020, further strengthens the political support for the *Arts and Crafts Route*. The program's focus on preserving and revitalizing traditional crafts by recognizing their cultural and economic importance in contemporary society demonstrates a national strategy for arts and crafts covering the 2021-2025 timeline as it promotes the creation of sustainable, economically

viable, and environmentally responsible products, aligning closely with the route's vision. Funded through the *Recovery and Resilience Plan* (PRR), the *Saber Fazer* initiative offers opportunities for projects like the *Arts and Crafts Route* to thrive under the framework of cultural heritage protection and sustainable economic development.

At the regional level, political initiatives strongly align with the project's goals. The *PROVERE Collective Efficiency Strategy*, recognized in 2018 and integrated with the Norte 2020 framework is a project created with the main aim to increase the visibility and attractiveness of the Douro and Tâmega e Sousa regions, while enhancing and promoting its economic agents, particularly in the tourism scenario. The *Made in Tâmega e Sousa* presents an example of local government initiative to promote regional culture through a networked and intermunicipal cultural program, anchored in the high-value heritage that identifies the Tâmega e Sousa and its people. This initiative, which was financially backed by the EU's *European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)*, reflects broader EU policies like the *Green Deal* and *Cohesion Policy*, which emphasize sustainable development and local economic resilience. Moreover, *Portugal's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PRR)*, part of the EU's recovery efforts, further encourages investments in rural regions such as Tâmega e Sousa, supporting the integration of sustainability and innovation in tourism projects.

These varied efforts showcase the broader political commitments, ranging from local to both national and EU levels in promoting regional development, which is directly aligned with the *Arts and Crafts Route's* objectives, providing a solid foundation for its establishment. However, it is important to acknowledge that potential political challenges could arise. Changes in government priorities, bureaucratic delays, or conflicting regional interests could hinder progress. Additionally, dependence on EU funding and regulatory challenges may pose obstacles to the full realization of the project. Being mindful of these factors will ensure a more adaptable and resilient approach moving forward.

### **3.8.2. Economic factors**

When developing the *Arts and Crafts Route*, economic factors are crucial to determining the project's viability and potential for growth. As a cultural initiative within a niche tourism sector, the economic environment of both the Tâmega e Sousa region and Portugal as a whole must be carefully assessed to ensure stability and long-term success.

In a competitive and evolving tourism market, the route faces challenges tied to market uncertainty, particularly in the tourism industry, which can fluctuate due to global economic conditions, seasonality and external crises. For instance, Europe's tourism industry has shown that it continues to recover in the second quarter of 2024, with international tourists expected to spend €800 billion, representing a 37 per cent increase compared to 2019 (European Travel Commission, 2024), yet this is still very vulnerable to economic downturns and external factors such as geopolitical instability. In the case of Portugal, although tourism has significantly rebounded since 2019, with most accommodation establishments seeing a 12.5% rise in the number of guests over the past year (INE, 2023), challenges persist, particularly regarding the uneven distribution of tourism to less-visited areas like Tâmega e Sousa. The stability of the broader economic system and the performance of the tourism sector in Portugal will directly influence the number of visitors and, consequently, the success of the route. Moreover, changes in consumer spending patterns could affect demand, especially in periods of economic downturn when discretionary spending on leisure activities like cultural tourism tends to decrease. For instance, a 2023 survey by PwC found that 53% of global consumers had reduced discretionary spending in response to rising living costs, indicating a direct vulnerability for sectors like cultural tourism under economic pressure (PwC, 2023).

The project is also dependent on the economic health of the local market context and, concerning this, it was detailed in section 3.1.1. that the Tâmega e Sousa region is historically less developed compared to urban centers like Porto. This means that while this is a project aiming to decentralize tourism, it must be aware of how to navigate potential challenges tied to the region's lower infrastructure and investment levels. The availability of funding from national programs such as *Norte 2030* and European Union initiatives, including *FEDER*, is crucial to offset these limitations and ensure the route can establish itself without heavy financial burdens on local artisans and businesses. For instance, by December 2023, northern Portugal had secured around 9 billion euros in EU funds through approximately 39,000 approved applications under the *Portugal 2020* program. The Tâmega e Sousa subregion is one of the areas that continues to have a relatively high share of support from these EU funds (CCDR Norte, 2023). This highlights the region's significant reliance on external funding for economic development and infrastructure projects.

Additionally, labor costs for skilled artisans and specialized staff in workshops, as well as digital platform management, represent a significant portion of the budget. Infrastructure and technological costs, such as the development and maintenance of an app and website, are necessary to create a seamless visitor experience, but they also demand continuous investment. Economic growth through job creation is another important factor. The route has the potential to stimulate the local economy by promoting regional crafts and artisans, thereby creating new employment opportunities.

### **3.8.3. Social factors**

In the Portuguese context, the social and cultural landscape presents opportunities and challenges for the development of the arts and crafts route in the Tâmega e Sousa region.

One of the key social factors is the region's youthful demographic. As one of the youngest regions in Portugal, Tâmega e Sousa has a dynamic workforce, which is essential for maintaining and modernizing traditional crafts. Younger generations' involvement helps ensure the continuity of these practices, although rural depopulation trends could pose a challenge if economic opportunities tied to the route are insufficient to retain talent and knowledge within the region. In addition, the region's low crime rate, recorded at 21.3% in 2023, is notably below the national average of 35% (INE, 2023), which enhances its attractiveness as a tourist destination. Safety is a key consideration for tourists when choosing a destination and a secure environment provides a solid foundation for attracting visitors.

Culturally, there is strong national pride in preserving artisanal traditions, which are seen as integral to the Portuguese identity. However, rural crafts risk being perceived as outdated by younger populations, who may prioritize more modern career paths. The challenge for the *Arts and Crafts Route* here is to demonstrate how these traditions can offer sustainable, appealing livelihoods that integrate with contemporary trends and tourism demand. On another perspective, a growing interest in sustainability and locally produced goods also offers opportunities. As environmental awareness increases, consumers are showing a preference for handcrafted, eco-conscious products. The route's promotion of sustainable artisanal goods aligns with these consumer values, but it will need to clearly communicate the cultural and ecological benefits of supporting local crafts.

However, there are some challenges that pose with achieving visibility, as rural areas like Tâmega e Sousa remain less prominent in national tourism marketing, which traditionally focuses on the urban centers. To succeed, the route must integrate effectively with broader tourism strategies, for instance, *Turismo de Portugal*<sup>14</sup> and *Porto e Norte*<sup>15</sup>, and raise awareness through partnerships with local entities, such as *CIM Tâmega e Sousa* and targeted promotional efforts. Without these measures, the route risks limited social impact and recognition.

Overall, the sociocultural factors affecting the arts and crafts route are largely favorable. Nevertheless, challenges such as rural depopulation, limited visibility, and changing perceptions of traditional crafts will need to be carefully addressed to ensure the long-term success of the route.

#### **3.8.4. Technological factors**

Technological factors are pivotal in shaping the future of the arts and crafts route in the Tâmega e Sousa region. The rapid advancement of technology offers a wealth of opportunities for local artisans, enhancing their capacity to connect with broader markets and preserve cultural heritage. In Portugal, recent studies indicate that 76% of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) recognize digital transformation as essential for business growth (AICEP, 2023). This statistic highlights a significant trend that can be leveraged within the local artisan community. The technological landscape of Tâmega e Sousa has been in a mission for improvement as highlighted by the region's participation in the European *DigiBEST* project, an initiative that supports the digital transformation of small and medium enterprises, enhancing their capacity to adopt innovative technologies and improve competitiveness.

Incorporating technological advancements in digital marketing, particularly through social media platforms and content creation tools, significantly enhances the visibility and market reach of artisans along the proposed arts and crafts route in the Tâmega e Sousa region. With 75% of Portuguese businesses actively engaging on social media, as reported by the *Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2022*, artisans can leverage these platforms to showcase their unique crafts and connect directly with

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<sup>14</sup> See full information here: <https://www.turismodeportugal.pt/pt/Paginas/homepage.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> See full information here: <http://www.portoenorte.pt/pt/>

potential customers. For artisans along the route, social media not only serves as a promotional tool but also facilitates storytelling around their craft.

The potential for online workshops further expands the reach of Tâmega e Sousa's artisans. A survey conducted by the European Commission in 2021 indicated that 58% of consumers are open to participating in online learning experiences, particularly in areas related to crafts and arts (European Commission, 2021). By offering virtual workshops, artisans can engage with both local and international audiences, thus diversifying their revenue streams and fostering cross-cultural exchanges.

Despite the promising opportunities, there are still significant challenges to overcome as many artisans may lack the technical skills or resources to fully embrace digital tools and addressing these gaps is crucial. Initiatives that offer training in digital literacy, e-commerce, and online marketing will be essential in enabling artisans to thrive in a technology-driven marketplace.

### 3.9. SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis examines the internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external opportunities and threats present in an organization's environment. The internal evaluation focuses on identifying resources, capabilities, core competencies, and competitive advantages that the organization possesses. In contrast, the external analysis explores market opportunities and threats by assessing competitors' resources, the industry landscape, and the broader environment (Sammut-Bonnici & Galea, 2015, pp.1-8). The goal of conducting a SWOT analysis is to leverage an organization's understanding of both its internal and external contexts to develop effective strategies.

The following paragraphs will explore the SWOT analysis of the *Arts and Crafts Route*, starting with an evaluation of the internal strengths and weaknesses, followed by an examination of external opportunities and threats.

#### 3.9.1. Strengths

- Rich cultural and artisanal heritage: The arts and crafts route is deeply tied to the region's history, culture, and identity, offering an authentic experience for visitors seeking cultural immersion.
- Established tourism routes: The region has well-developed and successful tourism routes, for instance, the *Rota do Românico*, which the *Arts and Crafts route* can complement, creating synergies.
- Sustainable tourism and practices: The focus on handmade, locally sourced materials aligns with modern consumer values related to sustainability and ethical consumption.
- Hands-on experiences for tourists: The route provides unique, interactive experiences through craft workshops, enabling tourists to engage directly in traditional practices, which adds value to the tourism offer.
- Accessibility: The region's location near Porto and other major cities makes it easily accessible for both national and international tourists, offering a rural, artisanal escape without sacrificing proximity to urban conveniences and transportation hubs. The region is well-connected by major highways and is less than an hour's drive from key logistical hubs in Northern Portugal, such as *Francisco Sá Carneiro Airport*. Additionally, the

territory is served by the Marco railway line (urban service) and the Douro railway line (regional service).

- Supportive tourism infrastructure: The local municipalities, along with *CIM Tâmega e Sousa*, have been actively promoting tourism in the region through initiatives such as the *Made in Tâmega e Sousa*. Their collaborative efforts provide a solid foundation for the development and promotion of the route.

- Low criminality rate: Tâmega e Sousa enjoys a lower crime rate compared to both the national and regional averages, which enhances the region's appeal as a safe and welcoming destination for tourists.

- Untapped potential for cultural tourism: While the region has a rich cultural heritage, it remains relatively undiscovered by tourism, presenting an opportunity to attract visitors seeking authentic experiences away from more commercialized destinations. This untapped potential can be capitalized to create unique tourism offerings that highlight local traditions, artisanal crafts and promote the Tâmega e Sousa region as a hidden gem.

### **3.9.2. Weaknesses**

- Seasonality of tourism: Like many rural destinations, Tâmega e Sousa faces fluctuating tourist numbers throughout the year, particularly with lower visitation outside peak seasons which may impact the route's activities.

- Lack of Recognition as Artists: Many crafts makers are not recognized as artists, which excludes them from various funding opportunities. This lack of recognition perpetuates a bias toward fine arts in funding and education.

- Limited Production Capacity: Many artisans involved in the route are small-scale producers with limited capacity to meet larger demand. Due to the small size of their businesses, they often struggle to scale production, making it difficult to accommodate a higher influx of tourists or expand their market reach.

- Business fragmentation and vulnerability: The crafts sector is characterized by fragmentation and atomization, with many artisans operating as small, independent businesses. This fragmentation makes the craftspeople vulnerable to economic shifts, with little collective negotiating power or collaborative support.

- Lack of data on crafts tourism: The absence of concrete data on tourism, especially crafts tourism, in the region makes it harder to tailor the offer to the right audience and measure its success.

### **3.9.3. Opportunities**

- Growing interest in cultural and experiential tourism: The increasing demand for unique, culturally immersive experiences presents a significant opportunity for the route to attract both domestic and international tourists.

- Sustainability and craft revival: Trends towards sustainable consumption and the resurgence of interest in handcrafted, locally produced goods align with the route's mission, potentially broadening its appeal.

- Tourism diversification: By creating a niche route focused on crafts, the region can diversify its tourism offer, attracting visitors who may not be reached through other cultural routes.

- Integration with existing tourism routes and initiatives: The *Arts and Crafts Route* can benefit from cross-promotion with other routes like the *Rota do Românico* and the *Made in Tâmega e Sousa* project, expanding its reach and visibility.

Increased domestic tourism: With a rise in Portuguese tourists opting to explore local regions due to changing travel patterns, such as the preference for shorter, more accessible trips within the country, the arts and crafts route has the potential to tap into this growing domestic market.

- Collaborations with stakeholders: Engaging key stakeholders, such as local municipalities, tourism boards, cultural institutions, alongside leveraging European Union initiatives focused on cultural routes, creative industries, and sustainable tourism, can significantly enhance the visibility and impact of the arts and crafts route. By aligning the route with stakeholders' interests and broader EU goals, these partnerships not only boost local development but also increase the route's appeal and visibility both nationally and internationally, fostering long-term sustainability.

- Rise of cultural and creative industries: The increasing focus on cultural and creative industries in Portugal could provide funding and support to further develop and promote the route.

### 3.9.4. Threats

- Competition from established routes: The arts and crafts route may face competition from larger, well-established cultural routes in the region, such as the Rota do Românico, which already attract significant visitor numbers.
- Tourist preferences: There is a risk that preferences for urban or coastal tourism could overshadow interest in rural craft routes, especially among international visitors.
- Impact of economic downturns on tourism: Economic slowdowns, both in Portugal and globally, may result in fewer tourists, especially those from international markets, leading to reduced spending on cultural experiences.
- Environmental regulations and resource availability: Sustainable tourism initiatives need careful management of natural resources, and scarcity of raw materials could affect the production of crafts and authenticity of experiences.
- Dependence on local artisans: The route's success depends heavily on the participation and availability of artisans. Given the decreasing number of artisans in the region and the aging population of craftspeople, if they retire, relocate, or cease their activities, the route could face a substantial decline in both the variety and quality of offerings. This would make it challenging to sustain its appeal and long-term viability.

The SWOT analysis of the *Arts and Crafts Route* highlights a dynamic interplay of factors that shape its potential for success. The route's strengths, such as its rich cultural heritage and strong community support, provide a solid foundation for attracting visitors and fostering local craftsmanship. However, challenges related to visibility and competition from established routes must be addressed to enhance its appeal. The opportunities presented show a growing interest in experiential tourism and regional collaboration able to open paths for innovation and expansion. Conversely, external threats, including economic fluctuations and changing tourism trends, necessitate proactive strategies to ensure sustainability. Overall, a comprehensive understanding of these circumstances is crucial for the effective development and promotion of the route, positioning it as a vital contributor to the cultural and economic landscape of the region.

## CHAPTER IV – *BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS*

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A well-constructed business model plays a critical role in defining “the rationale of how an organization creates, delivers, and captures value” (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010, p.14), which is fundamental to shaping the strategic direction and operational functions of any enterprise. Such models provide formalized frameworks that serve as the blueprint for how organizations operate, allocate resources, and ultimately grow. In their influential publication, *Business Model Generation: A Handbook for Visionaries, Game Changers, and Challengers* (2010), Osterwalder and Pigneur introduced a comprehensive and unified framework, which consolidates various theoretical and practical approaches to business model design. This framework not only effectively captures the essential components of value creation, delivery, and capture, but also presents a flexible, highly adaptable tool that allows businesses to systematically map, refine, and innovate their strategies in response to fluctuating market conditions.

In the contemporary business environment, where rapid change and uncertainty are prevalent, the ability to both seize emerging opportunities and mitigate risks posed by external forces is essential for long-term viability and success. According to Murray and Scuotto (2015, pp. 94-100), organizations must balance this dual focus on opportunity and risk management to remain competitive. Osterwalder’s *Business Model Canvas* has emerged as a practical and highly effective tool for navigating the complexities of business model development, enabling businesses to visualize and streamline their core components in a cohesive and structured manner. The *business model canvas*, with its systematic and visually accessible format, facilitates businesses in evaluating key aspects such as how they generate value, identify their target customers, deploy resources, and establish clear channels for revenue generation and customer engagement.

Moreover, the *business model canvas* encourages both short and long-term strategic thinking, guiding organizations to align their value propositions with the evolving needs of their customer segments while also capitalizing on opportunities within the external environment. By identifying potential threats in advance, businesses can take proactive measures to safeguard their operations (Murray and Scuotto, 2015, pp. 94-100).

The *Business Model Canvas* comprises nine building blocks, which are interconnected components of a cohesive framework. These include:

3. value propositions
4. customer segments

5. customer relationships
6. distribution channels
7. key activities
8. key resources
9. key partners
10. revenue streams
11. cost structure.

This structured approach allows organizations to analyze and integrate each component effectively, enhancing overall strategic planning.

In the context of the proposed *Arts and Crafts Route* of Tâmega e Sousa, the decision was made to adopt the traditional structure of the *Business Model Canvas*, which is presented in summarized table format in appendix II, in order to evaluate the project's viability and future potential. This choice is particularly significant, as the original model offers a structured yet adaptable framework that can effectively accommodate the route's goals. By leveraging the methodical approach of the Business Model Canvas in this chapter, it can be clearly defined the value the route's project provides to both the concerned region and its visitors.

To address the unique financial considerations of this cultural initiative, two additional sections have been incorporated into the original model: an investment plan and a funding strategy. These additions highlight this project's reliance on funding and partnerships to support its objectives, recognizing that successful implementation will depend largely on the ability to secure financial resources and collaborative relationships in the future.

#### **4.1. Value proposition**

A Value Proposition is fundamentally designed to create value for a specific Customer Segment through a carefully curated mix of elements tailored to meet the unique needs and preferences of that segment. These value elements can encompass both quantitative aspects — such as pricing, speed of service, and efficiency — as well as qualitative dimensions, including design aesthetics and overall customer experience (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010, p. 23). The ability to create value is derived from various factors that directly address customer needs and enhance their overall experiences. In some cases, new value propositions emerge by identifying and fulfilling previously unrecognized needs, often driven by advancements in innovative technologies.

In the context of the proposed *Arts and Crafts Route* of Tâmega e Sousa, the value proposition presented is both compelling and rich, centering on the delivery of an immersive cultural experience that deeply connects visitors to the region's extensive and diverse heritage. By facilitating hands-on engagement opportunities, the route actively encourages visitors to participate in traditional crafts, thereby allowing them to experience the intricate creative processes firsthand. This interactive approach fosters a deeper appreciation for the artisans' skills, the cultural narratives embedded in their work, and the historical significance of the crafts themselves, ultimately enriching the overall visitor experience.

Each site along the route has been thoughtfully selected not only to showcase the crafts themselves but also to illuminate the cultural significance and historical context that underpin these artisanal practices. Furthermore, the *Arts and Crafts Route* serves as a vital platform for promoting sustainable tourism within the region, as it actively encourages visitors to explore local markets, workshops, and craft studios. In doing so, the route directly supports the economic viability of local artisans and small businesses, thereby creating new revenue streams for craftsmen and women while simultaneously strengthening the local economy. In addition to fostering economic sustainability, the route's design integrates contemporary tourism trends with traditional practices, aligning perfectly with the growing demand among cultural travelers for authentic experiences that resonate deeply with their interests and values.

## 4.2. Customer segments

The Customer Segments component defines the different groups of people or organizations an enterprise aims to reach and serve. Customers comprise the heart of any business model and without customers no company can survive for long. In order to better satisfy customers, a company may group them into distinct segments with common needs, common behaviors, or other attributes (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010, p. 21). A business model may define one or several large or small Customer Segments.

The *Arts and Crafts Route* targets several key customer segments, each characterized by distinct motivations, behaviors, and expectations, while attracting both national and international tourists from various niches who visit the Tâmega e Sousa region. These segments can be divided based on tourists' specific interests as well as age demographics, which influence their preferences and spending habits.

The route is appealing to the following types of tourists:

- Cultural Tourists, which encompasses individuals of all ages, typically well-educated and motivated by an interest in heritage and cultural preservation. These tourists are naturally inclined towards the Arts and Crafts Route due to its emphasis on intangible heritage and the safeguarding of traditional practices. The route offers a distinct opportunity for visitors to engage deeply with the cultural identity of the Tâmega e Sousa region, allowing them to interact with local artisans and observe crafts passed down through generations. For international tourists, the route serves as an authentic cultural experience, revealing lesser-known facets of Portuguese heritage.
- Creative Explorers, typically aged between 25 and 45. These are travelers who seek immersive and authentic experiences and are particularly drawn to hands-on opportunities, such as crafting workshops, where they can engage directly with artisans and actively contribute to the creative process. Their preference for travel experiences that stimulate personal creativity makes them an ideal audience for the *Arts and Crafts Route*.
- Eco-conscious and Sustainable Tourists represent a segment of environmentally aware travelers, both national and international, who prioritize sustainability in their travel choices. These individuals are particularly attracted to the route's commitment to supporting local artisans and preserving traditional, environmentally friendly production

methods. Their focus on responsible tourism aligns with the route's mission to promote sustainable cultural practices within the region.

- Craft Enthusiasts and Collectors, being people who share a deep appreciation for handmade goods and artisanal products. These tourists are likely to spend more on unique, high-quality crafts and are motivated by the opportunity to purchase directly from artisans. According to the *European Crafts Council's 2023 report*, the group of crafts buyers in Europe consists of well-educated, middle to upper-middle-class individuals who value authenticity and traditional craftsmanship. Their expenditure on crafts tends to increase with age: those aged 56-70 spend an average of €389, while younger consumers (20-35) spend €279. These people's commitment to supporting local artisans makes them a valuable target audience for the route.

The *Arts and Crafts* Route caters, therefore, to tourists with a strong interest in cultural heritage, with the specificity of crafts, creative engagement, and sustainability. The main age ranges include younger adults in their 20s to 30s, who seek hands-on, immersive experiences, as well as middle-aged to older travelers (40s to 70s) who value tradition, authenticity, and slower-paced, educational tourism. These visitors are typically well-educated and appreciate learning about local craftsmanship and supporting eco-conscious initiatives.

### 4.3. Customer relationship

Customer Relationship Building refers to the various types of interactions a business establishes with its distinct customer segments, ranging from personalized services to automated interactions. These relationships are crucial for achieving specific goals, such as customer acquisition, retention, and revenue growth through upselling (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010, p. 28). In the development of the *Arts and Crafts Route*, it is vital to create and sustain a diverse array of customer relationships tailored to engage different customer segments and ensure long-term satisfaction and success. The following types of customer relationships will be employed for the route:

- Personal Assistance: Direct interaction will play a fundamental role in the customer relationship strategy for the route. Visitors will have access to well-informed staff at visitor centers, local workshops, and through various customer service channels. These interactions, whether in-person or through digital communication methods such as email and phone support, will provide personalized assistance. This tailored communication will help create meaningful connections between visitors and the region, fostering a deeper appreciation for the local culture and crafts.
- Self-Service: A dedicated website and mobile app will serve as comprehensive self-service platforms, enabling visitors to independently navigate the route. These platforms will offer extensive resources, including workshop details, artisan profiles, and booking options. This approach empowers visitors to tailor their experiences based on personal preferences, while the ease of access to information and services encourages greater autonomy and flexibility throughout their journey.
- Automated Services: Automated systems will be integrated into the route's digital platforms, enhancing customer engagement through personalized recommendations and seamless interactions. Features such as itinerary suggestions based on user preferences, automated email reminders for upcoming activities, and personalized content will enrich the visitor experience while maintaining a balance of autonomy. These automated services will ensure that customers remain well-informed and can easily manage their journey without the need for constant human intervention.
- Communities: The creation of an online community, facilitated through social media and the route's website, will foster interaction among visitors, artisans, and local businesses. This digital space will encourage the exchange of experiences, insights, and

ideas, contributing to a sense of belonging among participants. Such community-building efforts not only enhance visitor engagement but also provide valuable feedback on customer preferences, contributing to the continuous improvement of the route. Moreover, creating a platform where artisans and tourists can share their experiences will lead to a more dynamic and interactive relationship between all stakeholders.

- Co-Creation: Visitors will be invited to actively participate in the ongoing development of the route through co-creation initiatives. This may involve submitting reviews, sharing personal experiences, and offering feedback on workshops or local crafts. By involving visitors in the process of refining the route's offerings, the route will remain responsive to customer needs and continuously evolve. Similarly, local artisans will be encouraged to propose new activities or themes for workshops, ensuring that the route stays innovative and relevant while reflecting the evolving craftsmanship of the region.

#### 4.4. Distribution channels

The distribution channels outline how a company interacts with its customer segments to deliver its value proposition. This encompasses communication, distribution, and sales channels that together form the company's interface with customers. Channels act as essential touchpoints in the customer journey, shaping perceptions and interactions with the brand. Additionally, channels can be classified as direct or indirect, as well as owned or partner channels, allowing for a customized approach to effectively reach and serve various customer segments (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010, p. 26).

The distribution channels for the *Arts and Crafts Route* of Tâmega e Sousa are, firstly, direct and owned channels with them being:

- Website: The primary direct and owned channel for the *Arts and Crafts Route* is its dedicated website, which serves as a comprehensive platform for information dissemination and access to the route's offerings. Visitors can create customized itineraries, access detailed information on crafts workshops and educational events, and book experiences directly through the website.
- Mobile App: A mobile app will complement the website by providing easy access to route information, itinerary customization, and real-time updates. The app will also allow users to receive personalized recommendations and notifications about upcoming events or workshops based on their preferences, enhancing their engagement with the route.
- Social Media: The route will establish a strong social media presence across platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Tiktok (for younger target audiences), which will be used to promote activities, share stories of artisans, and engage with a wider audience. These channels will enable direct communication with potential visitors, provide updates on events, and foster a community around the crafts and heritage of Tâmega e Sousa.

Secondly, other, also very important channels of distribution of the route are the indirect and partner channels, with them being:

- Partner Stores: Local craft shops, art galleries, and tourism-related businesses within the Tâmega e Sousa region will serve as key promotional points for the *Arts and Crafts Route*. These stores can display brochures, maps, and other informational materials about the route, encouraging customers to explore the

artisanal workshops and cultural experiences. Partner stores may also sell products made by artisans featured on the route, creating a natural synergy between local crafts and tourism promotion.

- Local Accommodations and Hotels: Hotels, guesthouses, and other local accommodations will play a crucial role in promoting the route. By featuring the route in their marketing materials, such as room guides, brochures, and on-site promotional posters, these establishments can offer their guests an enriched experience by encouraging them to explore the region's artisanal heritage.
- Municipal Websites and Tourism Platforms: Each municipality in the Tâmega e Sousa region may promote the *Arts and Crafts Route* through their respective tourism websites. By integrating the route into their online tourism platforms, the municipalities can target visitors who are seeking local cultural experiences, further enhancing the visibility of the route. This localized support will help boost tourism at the municipal level and engage community members in the promotion of local traditions and crafts.
- CIM Tâmega e Sousa can be very helpful in promoting the route through its platforms, events, and partnerships with local tourism boards, ensuring that information about the *Arts and Crafts Route* reaches a wider audience, including both residents and visitors. Additionally, CIM's support can enhance credibility and foster cooperation not only with the municipalities but also between the route and other regional initiatives, strengthening the overall impact of the project within Tâmega e Sousa's tourism framework.
- The *Made in Tâmega e Sousa* platforms: This is an initiative which promotes regional identity products, gastronomy, and crafts of the region that can also serve as an important promotional partner. By promoting the route through the initiative's existing platforms, such as its website and social media channels, the initiative can provide valuable online exposure to a broader audience.

Overall, the combination of direct and indirect channels creates a robust distribution strategy for the *Arts and Crafts Route* of Tâmega e Sousa, ensuring that it reaches diverse customer segments effectively.

#### 4.5. Key activities

The Key Activities outline the essential actions that a business must take to ensure its model functions effectively. These activities are crucial for delivering the value proposition, reaching target markets, maintaining customer relationships, and generating revenue. Key Activities differ based on the type of business and its specific business model. For instance, in a manufacturing firm, key activities may involve production, whereas a consultancy firm may focus on problem-solving (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010, pp. 36-37).

Understanding and defining these activities is essential to ensure that the route's goals are met, and the overall strategy is successfully implemented. For the *Arts and Crafts Route*, key activities include:

- Design and Curation of the Route: The creation of a well-structured itinerary that highlights various artisans and crafts throughout the region. This includes selecting the locations, types of crafts to showcase, and determining the best way to present them to visitors.
- Collaboration with Local Artisans: Building and maintaining strong relationships with local artisans is vital to ensuring the route has high-quality workshops and experiences. This includes coordinating schedules, ensuring artisans are prepared for tourists, and aligning expectations for the experiences they offer.
- Platform Management: This involves managing the website and app that provide information and create personalized itineraries for visitors. Maintaining an updated, user-friendly platform is essential to the success of the route and will help streamline the visitor experience.
- Marketing and Promotion: Marketing activities include promoting the route through social media, tourism websites, as well as through partnerships with local accommodations and hotels. Marketing also involves creating brochures, engaging with influencers, and ensuring the route is visible to both national and international tourists.
- Multilingual Support: Develop comprehensive multilingual resources, including translated materials for workshops, brochures, and signage along the route. This will ensure that international tourists can fully engage with the workshops and

activities, fostering an inclusive environment that accommodates diverse linguistic backgrounds.

- **Development of Experiences:** Designing and maintaining authentic, engaging experiences, such as hands-on workshops. These experiences must resonate with visitors' expectations while showcasing the cultural heritage of the region.
- **Customer Service and Support:** Providing responsive customer service for inquiries, bookings, and after-sales support is essential. This could be through the website, app, or customer support centers, ensuring that tourists receive assistance throughout their journey, from planning to post-visit follow-ups.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Continuous assessment of the route's effectiveness is needed. This includes gathering feedback from visitors, artisans, and partners, as well as analyzing tourism data to adjust and improve the route over time.

#### 4.6. Key resources

The Key Resources highlight the essential assets that are necessary for a business model to function effectively. These resources enable a company to create and deliver its Value Proposition, reach target markets, manage relationships with Customer Segments and generate revenue. The type of key resources required varies depending on the business model. For instance, a microchip manufacturer might need capital-heavy production facilities, while a microchip designer would rely more on human expertise (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010, p. 34). For *the Arts and Crafts Route* of Tâmega e Sousa, key resources include:

- Intellectual Resources: Culture is a primary intellectual and intangible resource for the route. The region's rich cultural heritage serves as the foundation of the entire route. This encompasses not only the deep knowledge and expertise surrounding traditional crafts but also the stories, practices, and historical significance that make these traditions unique. Additionally, intellectual resources include the development of the route's branding, marketing materials, and digital content, which are crucial for promoting the route and engaging with visitors.
- Physical Resources: This encompasses the infrastructure necessary to maintain the route, such as the venues where workshops are held, craft studios, and physical locations of the artisans. Additionally, it includes materials needed for the crafts themselves and any technological tools or platforms supporting the route (website and mobile app, for instance).
- Human Resources: Skilled artisans are at the heart of the route, providing workshops, demonstrations and unique experiences for visitors. Cultural managers and administrative staff also play key roles in ensuring the smooth functioning of the route. Additionally, marketing professionals are vital to promote the route and attract both local and international tourists.
- Financial Resources: The funding needed to sustain the route, which may come from regional development programs, government grants, or partnerships with local businesses, is also crucial. This covers costs for marketing, infrastructure maintenance, and operational activities related to the route.
- Multilingual people and resources: Multilingual staff in the workshops and events will be needed and materials available in different languages to ensure accessible and inclusive experiences for all visitors.

#### 4.7. Key partners

Key Partnerships refer to the network of suppliers and collaborators that play an essential role in making a business model function effectively. Organizations form these partnerships for a variety of strategic reasons, such as optimizing operations, mitigating risks, and acquiring vital resources or capabilities (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010, p. 38). In today's business landscape, partnerships are increasingly seen as a cornerstone of successful business models, helping businesses leverage the expertise and assets of external entities to enhance their own value propositions and achieve long-term sustainability. The route's key partners are:

- Local Artisans: The primary partners for the *Arts and Crafts Route* are the local artisans themselves, whose participation is indispensable for maintaining the route's authenticity and appeal. These artisans, through their craft workshops, expertise, and knowledge, form the core experience offered to visitors.
- Municipalities of Tâmega e Sousa: Each municipality within the Tâmega e Sousa region is a significant stakeholder in the success of the route. Municipal tourism departments can integrate the *Arts and Crafts Route* into their broader tourism strategies, contributing to the route's promotion among both local residents and visitors. Additionally, the *Comunidade Intermunicipal do Tâmega e Sousa (CIM Tâmega e Sousa)* serves as the most crucial inter-municipal partner. By fostering cooperation between municipalities, *CIM Tâmega e Sousa* helps ensure that the route receives cross-municipal support and benefits from regional tourism initiatives, contributing to its visibility and operational coherence.
- National and European Programs: The *Council of Europe* through the European Network of Cultural Routes offers an opportunity for the *Arts and Crafts Route* to gain international recognition by becoming part of the European Cultural Routes program. This would not only increase the visibility of the route but also foster knowledge sharing and collaborative marketing efforts with other similar routes across Europe, positioning it within a broader framework for preserving and promoting Europe's cultural heritage. Additionally, the *Saber Fazer* program, a national initiative dedicated to promoting traditional crafts, can serve as a key partner in advancing the *Arts and Crafts Route*. While *Saber Fazer* is a broader national initiative, it offers potential partnerships that could enhance the route's development by providing access to resources, expertise, and visibility within the

national framework for craftsmanship. This collaboration would complement the regional focus of the *Arts and Crafts Route*, further supporting its mission to preserve and promote the unique artisanal heritage of Tâmega e Sousa.

- Local Cultural and Tourism Associations: Partnerships with local tourism bodies, such as the *Associação de Turismo do Porto e Norte* and *ADER-SOUSA - Associação de Desenvolvimento Rural das Terras do Sousa*, can enhance the promotion of the route by aligning it with broader regional tourism efforts. These associations bring valuable expertise and resources to the table, helping the route to integrate into the larger framework of Northern Portugal's tourism offerings. Additionally, collaborations with institutions like the *Centro de Apoio ao Turismo Ativo do Montemuro* can enhance the route by providing infrastructure for hosting events, workshops, and guest artisan demonstrations, further enriching the visitor experience and expanding the route's cultural offerings.
- Local Accommodations and Hotels: Partnerships with local accommodation providers, such as hotels, guesthouses, and rural lodgings. These establishments are well-positioned to recommend the route to guests and can offer tailored accommodation packages that include workshops or guided visits to artisan studios. By leveraging these partnerships, the *Arts and Crafts Route* can extend its reach to tourists who may not initially be aware of it but are seeking authentic, region-specific cultural experiences.
- *Made in Tâmega e Sousa* Initiative: This initiative, focused on promoting regional identity products, including crafts, gastronomy, and culture, acts as an important partner in amplifying the visibility of the route. By featuring the route across its established platforms and networks, the *Made in Tâmega e Sousa* initiative supports the cross-promotion of crafts and cultural experiences. This collaboration enables both initiatives to mutually reinforce their objectives of preserving and showcasing the region's cultural and craft heritage.
- *CEARTE - Centro de Formação Profissional para o Artesanato e Património*: As a national institution focused on professional training in craftsmanship, *CEARTE* is a vital partner in ensuring that traditional skills are preserved and passed on to future generations. Through collaborations with *CEARTE*, the *Arts and Crafts Route* can offer different educational experiences, further enhancing its role as a center for the preservation and dissemination of the region's craft heritage.

#### **4.8. Revenue streams**

The Revenue Streams represent the cash a business generates from each Customer Segment. While costs must be subtracted from revenues to create earnings, understanding what value each segment is willing to pay for is crucial. Just as customers are the heart of a business, revenue streams keep it running by providing the money needed for growth and success. By identifying and delivering value to customers, a business can generate various streams of revenue (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010, pp. 30-32).

For the *Arts and Crafts Route* of Tâmega e Sousa, revenue generation is not primarily centered on selling the route itself, as this is a cultural initiative where the route and most information are freely accessible to visitors. However, several revenue streams can be generated through complementary services and activities provided by the route, giving added value to visitors while supporting the route's sustainability:

The first, but not most important, revenue source will be through paid craft workshops and demonstrations where visitors can engage directly with local artisans. These experiences will offer tourists the chance to learn traditional techniques such as pottery, embroidery, or woodcraft. Visitors will be able to book workshops directly with artisans through the route's website and app, paying a set fee for the experience. A small percentage of this fee will support the route's project, while the majority will go to the artisan, helping sustain their business and preserve traditional crafts.

Craft product sales also present a viable revenue stream, with visitors having the opportunity to purchase authentic handmade items either on-site at workshops or through the route's online platform. This initiative not only promotes local artisans but also allows for a percentage of sales to be reinvested into sustaining the route.

Collaborations with local businesses like accommodations and restaurants can lead to mutually beneficial partnerships. For instance, hotels may offer packages that combine overnight stays with craft workshops or artisan visits, with the route receiving commissions or fees from these package deals. This cross-promotion will integrate the route into the broader tourism ecosystem, helping to attract more visitors to the region.

The route could also explore event hosting and sponsorships. Cultural events, festivals, and craft fairs centered on local heritage can attract a wide audience, with ticket sales and sponsorship deals from regional businesses or government bodies providing

additional revenue. These events would serve not only as promotional platforms but also as opportunities to generate income while celebrating the region's rich cultural heritage.

Another avenue is through educational programs and partnerships. Collaborations with institutions such as *CEARTE (Centro de Formação Profissional para o Artesanato e Património)* can result in paid courses and training programs that both tourists and locals may attend. These programs could offer long-term learning opportunities and play a crucial role in preserving traditional crafts by passing them on to new generations.

Finally, as a cultural heritage initiative, the route may benefit from funding and grants. By tapping into regional, national, or European cultural programs such as *Horizon Europe*, the route could receive support aimed at preserving intangible heritage, which would help ensure its sustainability while expanding its reach and impact.

Through these multiple revenue streams, the *Arts and Crafts Route* will be able to balance its cultural mission with economic viability, ensuring it remains a vibrant and sustainable project.

#### 4.9. Cost structure

The Cost Structure describes all expenses necessary to operate a business model, encompassing the costs involved in delivering value, maintaining customer relationships, and generating revenue. Costs can be categorized into fixed costs, which remain constant regardless of production volume, and variable costs, which fluctuate with demand (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010, p.40). For the *Arts and Crafts Route* of Tâmega e Sousa, the cost structure is primarily value-driven due to the focus on promoting cultural heritage and offering high-quality, immersive experiences for visitors. The key costs include:

The fixed costs for the *Arts and Crafts Route* of Tâmega e Sousa will encompass a range of essential expenses that ensure the smooth operation and sustainability of the project. Salaries for staff will form a significant portion of these costs, including cultural managers who oversee the route's development, administrative personnel responsible for daily operations, and marketing professionals who drive outreach and promotional efforts. Additionally, rent and maintenance for craft studios, workshop venues, and operational offices will be essential to ensure suitable spaces for both artisans and visitors. Development and maintenance of the route's digital platforms, including the website and mobile app, represent another ongoing fixed cost, as these platforms will serve as key access points for bookings, information, and interaction with the route. Other fixed operational expenses will include insurance, utilities, and general office maintenance, ensuring that all legal, safety, and logistical needs are met. Research costs will also fall under fixed expenses, as they cover ongoing market analysis, cultural studies, and sustainable practices research, which ensure the route stays relevant.

On the variable side, costs will fluctuate depending on the scale and frequency of activities. Workshops and special events, a cornerstone of the route, will incur costs that vary with participant numbers, as each session requires preparation, materials, and potentially additional staffing. Marketing campaigns will also vary seasonally and be dependent on tourist demand, with specific promotional pushes during peak travel periods requiring more investment in both digital and physical marketing materials. Lastly, the costs of materials for craft workshops, such as textiles, clay, wood, or other resources, will differ based on the level of participation and the specific types of crafts being produced. These variable expenses will need to be carefully managed to balance quality

and affordability, ensuring that each workshop provides an enriching experience while remaining financially viable.

#### 4.10. Investment plan

The investment plan for the *Arts and Crafts Route* of Tâmega e Sousa outlines the key financial resources needed to successfully launch, promote, and sustain the project. Given the cultural nature of the initiative, the focus is not on profit generation but on fostering regional development, preserving local crafts, and providing artisans with a platform to sustain their livelihoods. The proposed budget covers essential elements such as marketing, infrastructure and technological development ensuring that the route remains a dynamic and engaging experience for visitors. The following investment breakdown represents the costs associated with the first year of the project's implementation, carefully structured to support the route's long-term sustainability and growth.

*Table 4: Investment plan (1 year)*

*Source: original. Based on research and data from comparable cultural routes regarding investment.*

Category	Estimated Cost (Year 1)	Notes
Marketing & Promotion	€7,000	Social media, brochures, PR partnerships
Workshops & Artisans	€2,400	Artisan fees (€1,800) + materials (€600)
Venue Costs	€1,800	Rental fees for 12 workshops (€150 each)
Website Development	€8,000	Interactive website with route maps
App Development	€10,000	Basic app for route navigation and booking
Maintenance & Updates	€1,500	Website and app maintenance
Project Management	€30,000	Salary for project coordinator
Admin & Staff Costs	€20,000	Marketing and operations staff
Cloud Hosting & Servers	€1,200	Hosting and data management
Translation and Multilingual resources	€6,000	Development of multilingual materials and translation staff
Research & Development	€5,000	Market studies, visitor surveys, cultural research
<b>Total</b>	<b>€92,900</b>	

#### 4.11. Funding

It is anticipated that funding secured through public grants, regional development programs and private sector partnerships will be able to support a significant portion of the costs that are outlined in the Investment plan. Based on projections, available funding opportunities could potentially cover approximately up to 90% of the total estimated costs for one year while addressing key expenses such as marketing, infrastructure, and artisan engagement. This financial support would reduce the burden on direct investments and ensure a smooth launch of the route. To achieve this, funding for the *Arts and Crafts Route* will be strategically sourced from multiple channels, including public sector grants, regional and intermunicipal support, cultural associations, European networks, and private sector sponsorships. This multifaceted approach ensures that the project not only secures the financial resources needed to successfully launch and sustain operations but also forges strong partnerships that align with the route's broader cultural and economic goals.

Public funding will be central to the project's success, with a particular focus on national and European programs designed to support cultural heritage and tourism development. At the national level, *Turismo de Portugal* offers grants and financial incentives specifically aimed at enhancing regional tourism and promoting cultural initiatives, making it a key funding opportunity. Furthermore, the *Saber Fazer* program could potentially be included as a funding source or partnership opportunity for the Arts and Crafts Route. Since *Saber Fazer* is part of the National Strategy for Traditional Arts and Crafts, it aims to support the preservation and promotion of traditional craftsmanship, which aligns with the objectives of the *Arts and Crafts Route*. By applying for support from *Saber Fazer*, the route may be able to access financial resources, grants, or expertise that enhance its activities, particularly in areas like artisan training, documentation, and promotion of intangible heritage. This partnership could strengthen the route's funding foundation. At European level, programs such as the EU *Horizon Europe Programme (Cluster 2: Culture, Creativity, and Inclusive Society)* and *Creative Europe* provide essential resources for initiatives focused on preserving and promoting cultural heritage. These programs align perfectly with the route's mission of showcasing the rich craft traditions of Tâmega e Sousa while fostering tourism and community engagement. Besides these, becoming part of the *European Network of Cultural Routes*, a *Council of*

*Europe initiative*, offers another promising funding avenue. Membership in this prestigious network opens up European funding designed to promote sustainable tourism and cultural heritage, as well as opportunities for joint projects, cross-border collaborations, and enhanced international visibility.

At the regional level, partnerships with intermunicipal entities like the *Comunidade Intermunicipal do Tâmega e Sousa (CIM Tâmega e Sousa)* and *ADER-SOUSA (Associação de Desenvolvimento Rural das Terras do Sousa)* will further impulsionate the project. These entities have access to funding allocated for regional development, sustainable tourism, and cultural preservation. Their involvement will provide both financial support and logistical assistance, ensuring that the route is well integrated into local development strategies and tourism initiatives. Also, collaborating with the *Made in Tâmega e Sousa* project, which received €287.76 thousand in funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), could be instrumental in the initial implementation phase of the *Arts and Crafts Route*. As an established initiative promoting the region's endogenous products and culture, this partnership could provide both financial support and strategic guidance. Support from cultural and craft associations will also play a vital role in securing both financial backing and the expertise necessary to maintain the authenticity of the route. Organizations such as *CEARTE (Centro de Formação Profissional para o Artesanato e Património)* are deeply committed to the preservation of traditional craftsmanship. These associations may provide funding and support for artisan workshops, training programs, and special events, ensuring that the route remains grounded in authentic regional practices. Private sector sponsorships will provide additional financial support, especially from businesses directly linked to the tourism industry. Local hotels and other types of accommodation could, for example, become key sponsors by contributing to the promotion of the route. In return, these businesses would feature in marketing materials or offer special tourism packages in partnership with the route, creating a symbiotic relationship that benefits both the project and the local economy.

Through this diverse range of funding sources, the *Arts and Crafts Route* of Tâmega e Sousa will not only secure the financial backing necessary for a successful launch but also build a network of strong partnerships. These collaborations will ensure the route's long-term sustainability, allowing it to continue promoting cultural heritage, supporting local artisans, and enhancing the region's tourism offering.



This project has conducted a comprehensive exploration of the transformative potential inherent in cultural and creative industries as vehicles for driving tourism development, with a concentrated examination of the proposed arts and crafts route in the Tâmega e Sousa region of northern Portugal. Throughout the research process, it has become increasingly clear that the integration of CCIs into tourism strategies presents unique opportunities not only for fostering economic growth but also for the preservation and revitalization of cultural heritage in regions often overlooked by mainstream tourism. The findings of this study underscore the critical importance of creating authentic and immersive experiences that resonate deeply with both national and international tourists, ultimately enriching their understanding of local traditions and crafts while simultaneously contributing to the broader economic resilience of the region.

Central to this investigation is the conceptual framework of the *Arts and Crafts Route*, envisioned as a strategic initiative designed to decentralize tourism by redirecting visitor flows away from crowded hotspots toward lesser-known locales rich in cultural significance. This initiative aims to highlight the intricate cultural tapestry of the Tâmega e Sousa region while providing a vital platform for local artisans to showcase their work, thereby establishing meaningful connections between tourists and craftspeople. Such interactions not only bring economic benefits for artisans but also cultivate a profound sense of community pride and ownership over cultural heritage, thereby reinforcing the social fabric of the region and promoting a sustainable tourism model that thrives on local engagement and participation.

The comprehensive market analysis assessment conducted in this research have illuminated several key challenges and opportunities that will significantly influence the successful implementation of the arts and crafts route. Among the primary challenges identified are the pressing need for enhanced marketing strategies, the development of adequate infrastructure, and the fostering of collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Effective marketing is paramount, not only for raising awareness about the route but also for distinguishing it from existing attractions, thereby ensuring it garners the attention and visitation it deserves. Simultaneously, the establishment of adequate infrastructure, including well-maintained access roads, informative signage, and visitor facilities, is crucial to facilitate ease of travel and to enhance the overall visitor experience. Additionally, collaboration among local governments, tourism agencies, and artisans is necessary to create a unified approach that can effectively promote the route and attract a

diverse array of visitors. Conversely, the analysis highlights numerous opportunities that could bolster the route's success. The growing interest in experiential travel reflects a broader trend among tourists seeking authentic and immersive experiences that connect them with local cultures. This shift in consumer preference creates an advantageous context for the arts and crafts route, which offers unique cultural encounters that align seamlessly with this demand. Furthermore, the increasing appetite for distinctive cultural experiences positions the route as an appealing alternative to more conventional tourist attractions. The potential for partnerships with local businesses and organizations presents yet another avenue for growth, enabling the arts and crafts route to benefit from shared resources, cross-promotional opportunities, and a more extensive support network.

A significant finding of this thesis is the essential role of innovative digital tools in enhancing the accessibility and reach of the *Arts and Crafts Route*. By incorporating a dedicated website and mobile application, the initiative can engage a broader audience, facilitating easier access to vital information about local artisans, workshops, and cultural events. Furthermore, the inclusion of multilingual support within these tools is crucial to catering to a diverse range of visitors, ensuring that language barriers do not impede engagement with the region's rich cultural offerings. This technological integration is not merely a convenience but a strategic necessity in today's interconnected world, where a strong digital presence significantly influences tourist decision-making and shapes their travel experiences.

Beyond its economic advantages, which encompass job creation, increased tourism revenue, support for local artisans, and enhanced economic resilience, the *Arts and Crafts Route* has the potential to serve as a catalyst for social cohesion and intercultural dialogue. As visitors engage with local crafts and traditions, they gain valuable insights into the stories and histories that define the Tâmega e Sousa region. This intercultural exchange is essential in today's globalized scenario, where understanding and valuing diversity is indispensable for cultivating social harmony. By promoting cultural exchange, the route can play a significant role in building bridges between different communities, fostering mutual respect and appreciation while simultaneously enriching the overall cultural landscape of the region.

The *Arts and Crafts Route* should be perceived as a community-driven initiative that empowers residents to take an active role in shaping their cultural landscape. By fostering community engagement, the project can cultivate a sense of ownership and pride

among local artisans and residents, thereby further enhancing the authenticity of the visitor experience and encouraging a spirit of cooperation and shared purpose. In conclusion, the route stands as a pioneering model for future initiatives aimed at harnessing the transformative power of cultural and creative industries. By focusing on local artisans and their crafts, this project can inspire similar endeavors in other regions, paving the way for a more sustainable and inclusive approach to tourism that celebrates cultural diversity and heritage while simultaneously enhancing the quality of life for residents. Ultimately, the *Arts and Crafts Route* not only promises to enrich the tourist experience but also to contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable cultural tourism development, heritage preservation and community empowerment through the revival of local traditions.

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**Appendix I – Table (5) Descriptive table of the route’s artisans and sites presented in the map of figure 2.**

Site	Municipality	Description
1. <i>Casinhas de Colmo</i>	Cinfães	In the the Montemuro Mountains in the municipality of Cinfães, the charming village of Vale de Papas is home to the meticulously preserved <i>Casinhas de Colmo</i> . With just over 15 inhabitants, this picturesque village thrives on agriculture and pastoral traditions, embodying a serene way of life deeply rooted in its surroundings. At the center of this community is Cristina's atelier, where the art of traditional craftsmanship comes to life. Visitors can go here to explore the intricate process of creating <i>casinhas de colmo</i> , a unique local craft characterized by their small houses with thatched roofs made from reeds. Alongside this, the artisan also produces a variety of other items, including the <i>croças</i> (traditional clothing) and <i>brezas</i> (traditional straw baskets) which visitors can explore.
2. <i>Casa das bengalas de gestaço</i>	Baião	Located in the village of Gestaço, this museum hub was created to preserve the historical memory of a craft with decades of tradition in the region, while also elevating its social value. The space invites visitors to explore the history of the iconic <i>Bengala de Gestaço</i> through a thoughtfully curated exhibition, which highlights the stories of the artisans who dedicated their lives to this trade. At the workshop demonstration area, guests can witness the entire process of cane-making, from design to

		production, gaining insight into the meticulous craftsmanship behind each piece. This craft has deep roots in the region, with the first cane workshops emerging in Gestaçô in the late 19th century, largely driven by Alexandre Pinto Ribeiro, who opened his workshop in 1902.
3. 4. 5. 6. <i>Dolmen promotion centers</i>	Amarante, Baião, Marco de Canaveses, Resende	Located in Amarante, Baião, Marco de Canaveses and Resende, these Dolmen Promotion Centers serve as welcoming hubs for visitors, offering a window into the diverse and vibrant <i>Douro Verde</i> region. Each of the four centers celebrates the unique places, traditions, knowledge, flavors, and people that define the region they're inserted in. These are must-see places for anyone interested in local craftsmanship, given the impressive variety of handmade goods on display. These spaces feature the products of around 200 local producers and artisans, offering an authentic experience of the region's rich cultural heritage.
7. <i>Museu Rural do marão</i>	Amarante	At the Marão Rural Museum, visitors encounter more than just black clay pottery or sacred art, they experience the ways of life, work techniques, and history of the region. The museum is home to a vast collection of tools and artifacts connected to the people of the land, highlighting professions related to traditional pottery making and craftsmanship. Within the museum, a 400 m <sup>2</sup> exhibition area adds depth to the storytelling. The space itself is a piece of history, and alongside the permanent display, the museum hosts a variety of activities that bring the region's cultural heritage to life.

8. <i>Engenho do linho</i>	Marco de Canaveses	This small museum space is dedicated to preserving the history of the linen mill and the traditional process of linen production. It serves as both a cultural and artistic hub, promoting activities that celebrate the craftsmanship and heritage associated with linen making. Through exhibitions and events, the museum offers visitors an opportunity to connect with this important part of the region's cultural legacy.
9. <i>Casa da Cultura Popular de Maureles</i>	Marco de Canaveses	The Casa da <i>Cultura Popular de Maureles</i> , was inaugurated in September of 2013, and stands as a captivating and culturally rich space. Inspired by the traditions and origins of the Marco de Canaveses region, the museum features two distinct areas: one dedicated to wine culture and the other to linen. Visitors can explore one of the most comprehensive museum spaces in Portugal devoted to linen, alongside a detailed exhibition celebrating the region's winemaking heritage.
10. <i>Centro interpretativo da Cerâmica</i>	Resende	The Ceramics Interpretative Center hosts both an exhibition and educational space, offering visitors a glimpse into the region's rich pottery tradition. It houses the Municipal collection of black pottery pieces crafted by Master Joaquim, the last potter of Fazamões. This interpretive center aims to breathe new life into the ancient craft of black clay pottery, which has deep roots in Resende.
11. <i>ADEP – Casa dos Engenhos</i>	Castelo de Paiva	The Association for the Study and Defense of the Historical-Cultural Heritage of Castelo de Paiva (ADEP) is a cultural association dedicated to preserving and promoting local heritage through various initiatives such as its library,

		<p>photography, crafts, history, archaeology, and ethnography projects. A visit to the <i>Casa dos Engenhos Dr. Justino Strecht Ribeiro</i>, located within the ADEP, is an essential journey to make. This captivating museum showcases an impressive collection of reconstructed traditional milling and flax processing machinery. As you wander through the exhibits, we are transported back in time, discovering the intricate agricultural and craft practices that have defined the local culture.</p>
<p>12. <i>Abel Magalhães da Silva atelier</i></p>	<p>Lousada</p>	<p>Abel's workshop is a vibrant hub of clog craftsmanship, embodying the spirit of traditional arts. What began as a hobby during his free time gradually evolved into a full-time dedication. Abel transformed his curiosity into a flourishing craft, creating custom clogs that reflect his skill and passion. His artistry has made him a beloved figure among local folklore groups, who regularly seek out his unique creations. In his commitment to preserving this craft, the artisan frequently visits schools to engage children in educational activities, aiming to pass the tradition on to younger generations. "As long as my health allows, I will always do this," has he affirmed in an interview (OLouzadense, 2022), underscoring a continued dedication to keeping the art of clog-making alive.</p>
<p>13. <i>Museu Municipal de Penafiel</i></p>	<p>Penafiel</p>	<p>For over seventy-five years, the museum has stood as a cornerstone in the planning and management of the municipality's cultural resources, playing an active role in preserving</p>

		both tangible and intangible heritage. In the Crafts Room, visitors can explore some of the key traditional professions of the region’s past, centered around two main materials: iron and wood. Here, you can also admire the <i>croças</i> alongside clogs and other artifacts, all offering a glimpse into the craftsmanship and cultural practices that shaped the local community.
<i>14. Casa do Risco</i>	Felgueiras	The Casa do Risco is the ultimate gathering place for embroidery enthusiasts. Located in the parish of Airães, its mission is to promote and certify <i>Bordado Terra de Sousa</i> while protecting and valuing the artisans behind it. Its visit program includes opportunities for observation, interpretation, and hands-on interaction, allowing guests to immerse themselves in the intricate world of <i>Bordado Terra de Sousa</i> while gaining a deeper appreciation for this cherished craft.
<i>15. Júlio Leal atelier</i>	Paços de Ferreira	In this wood carving and sculpture workshop, those who visit will discover intricate wooden masterpieces. The artisan has crafted thousands of pieces, including sacred art figures, crucifixes, candlesticks, and decorative items such as coats of arms, mirrors, and frames. Each piece presented reflects the skill of the artisan and the dedication poured into preserving the art of wood carving.
<i>16. Tanoaria Rocha</i>	Penafiel	Born in 1953, Manuel Rocha grew up surrounded by the rich tradition of barrel-making, learning the craft from his father at just seven years old. In 1967, the family founded <i>Tanoaria Rocha</i> , where today the artisan

		<p>continues the time-honored practice of crafting and restoring barrels with tools passed down through generations. But his workshop is more than just a place to preserve tradition, it's where creativity thrives. Manuel transforms the iconic shapes of barrels into unique pieces like chairs, tables, bars, planters, clocks, and fruit bowls. He welcomes new challenges, turning each request into a personalized work of art. For visitors, <i>Tanoaria Rocha</i> offers an inspiring glimpse into the fusion of heritage and innovation, inviting them to witness the evolution of a timeless craft.</p>
<p>17. <i>António Faria Vieira</i></p>	<p>Felgueiras</p>	<p>His workshop is a must-visit site along the route, especially for those interested in the <i>viola amarantina</i> (Amarantina guitar). As one of the few remaining artisans dedicated to producing this unique instrument, he not only preserves its rich heritage but also continues to innovate within the craft. Visitors to his workshop will gain valuable insights into the intricate process of crafting the <i>viola amarantina</i> and its historical significance. The artisan also shares his passion for other traditional instruments, inviting guests to appreciate the artistry involved in their creation.</p>
<p>18. <i>Erre Cerâmica</i></p>	<p>Celorico de Basto</p>	<p>Erre Cerâmica stands out as the only site on the route that leans towards a more contemporary style, yet this in no way diminishes its relevance. While it brings a modern approach to design and technique, the workshop remains deeply connected to tradition by working with classic materials like ceramic and granite. Its focus on craftsmanship and small-batch production</p>

		<p>ensures that each piece retains the authenticity and quality rooted in the region's cultural heritage. In partnership with Professor Vítor Resende, Erre Cerâmica also offers artistic workshops, especially in the schools of Celorico de Basco, blending contemporary creativity with traditional techniques and allowing participants to explore both worlds while crafting.</p>
<p>19. <i>Eduardo Cardoso</i></p>	<p>Baião</p>	<p>Eduardo Cardoso is the skilled artisan behind thousands of canes produced annually, which play a key role in the iconic Queima das Fitas (a traditional academic celebration marking the culmination of university studies). These canes, crafted from <i>lódão</i>, a shrub carefully harvested from the wetlands near the Douro River, embody a unique connection to the region's natural landscape. While simpler than the famous cherry or chestnut wood canes from the nearby village of Gestaçô, Eduardo's creations are deeply woven into the cultural fabric of the celebration, making his work a vital part of preserving local craftsmanship and tradition.</p>
<p>20. <i>Cunha - Coppercrafts</i></p>	<p>Castelo de Paiva</p>	<p>This small crafts shop, specializing in the manufacture of copper and tin items, offers visitors a glimpse into a rich artisanal tradition. At the entrance, a century-old boiler stands as a testament to the craft's long history. Inside, the shop showcases a wide array of beautifully crafted pieces, including kitchen utensils once used in the preparation of traditional candies and sweets. Each item reflects the skill and dedication passed down through generations,</p>

		making this shop a living tribute to the region's heritage and craftsmanship.
21. <i>Marta Cruz - tecelagem</i>	Amarante	<p>Marta Cruz, a skilled weaver from Amarante, has been creating beautiful textiles in her atelier since the age of 18, continuing a family tradition passed down through generations. Raised in a household of weavers, the artisan learned the craft from her grandmother, who grew flax, and her mother, who worked at the loom.</p> <p>Determined to preserve this heritage, she established her workshop in Fridão, where she blends traditional techniques with modern flair. Using three wooden looms, replicas of those used centuries ago, Marta crafts towels, rugs, bedspreads, and wall hangings. While staying true to age-old methods, she incorporates bold colors and geometric designs to appeal to younger audiences, offering personalized and contemporary pieces. Her craftsmanship has even attracted the attention of designer Christian Louboutin, for whom she created a special collection of handbags. Marta Cruz's atelier is a must-see for anyone visiting Amarante.</p>
22. <i>Associação de Artesãos do Marco – Visit Marco</i>	Marco de Canvasses	<p>The Associação dos Artesãos do Marco, located in the Marco de Canaveses region, is a non-profit organization dedicated to stimulating and promoting traditional craftsmanship. Its main focus is to support local artisans and ensure their work gains visibility. At the <i>Visit Marco</i> shop, visitors can explore a wide range of artisanal products made in the municipality, including the iconic straw hats. This space not only showcases these handcrafted items but also provides</p>

		<p>information about the association's initiatives and upcoming events, making it a key destination for those interested in the region's rich craft heritage.</p>
<p>23. <i>Casa Assisrego</i></p>	<p>Amarante</p>	<p>Dona Maria Assis Rego is a skilled artisan specializing in embroidery, having begun her journey at the tender age of six alongside her grandmother. At Casa Assisrego, visitors can discover certified embroidery and a variety of traditional products, all crafted with the meticulous care and dedication that define her work. This establishment is more than just a shop; it is a celebration of heritage and artistry, where each piece tells a story of tradition and skill. Visitors have here the unique opportunity to learn traditional techniques from a highly specialized craftswoman while deepening their appreciation for the art.</p>
<p>24. <i>Manuel Leal Moreira</i></p>	<p>Penafiel</p>	<p>At the Manuel Maria Leal atelier, a legacy of craftsmanship thrives, rooted in a family of basket makers from the parish of Peroselo. Growing up surrounded by willow, wicker, and Australian wood, Manuel was introduced to the art of weaving at just eleven years old, learning the trade from his father and a cousin. Although he pursued a different career at twenty-seven, he never strayed far from basketry, stepping in to fulfill his father's orders. After retiring, Manuel fully embraced his passion for craftsmanship, dedicating himself to the artisan trade since 2010. Equipped with his father's plane, chisel, and workbench, he skillfully repairs and creates a variety of woven items, including trays,</p>

		baskets, and even bottle covers, all tailored to the tastes and needs of his customers. Each piece reflects Manuel's expertise and dedication to preserving the art of basketry, ensuring that this cherished tradition continues to flourish.
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**Appendix II – Table (6) *Arts and Crafts Route Business Model Canvas* summarization**

<b>Key Partners</b>	<b>Key Activities</b>	<b>Value Propositions</b>	<b>Customer Relationships</b>	<b>Customer Segments</b>
Artisans	Route research and design	Promote authentic experiences	Personal assistance	Cultural tourists
Municipalities, tourism and cultural organizations	Workshops coordination	Tourism decentralization	Self-service (website/app)	Craft enthusiasts
<i>CIM Tâmega e Sousa</i>	Marketing and promotion	Support local artisans	Communities (online feedback)	Creative explorers
<i>Made in Tâmega e Sousa</i>	Multilingual support	Preserve regional identity	Co-creation (visitor input)	Eco-conscious travelers
Local accommodations	Customer service	Cultural heritage		National/international tourists

<b>Key Resources</b>	<b>Channels</b>
Artisans and cultural managers	Website/app
Craft studios and locations	Social media
Multilingual staff	Local accommodations
Funding	Partner craft shops

<b>Cost Structure</b>	<b>Revenue Streams</b>
Salaries	Paid workshops
Marketing	Grants from funding
Workshops materials	Event sponsorships
Website/app maintenance	Educational programs

## Appendix III – CIM Tâmega e Sousa's position regarding the *Arts and Crafts Route* project

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### Pedido de colaboração; Estudante; ISCAP; PPorto;

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Exma. Senhora,

A Comunidade Intermunicipal (CIM) do Tâmega e Sousa é uma pessoa coletiva de direito público, de natureza associativa e âmbito territorial, que visa a realização de interesses comuns aos municípios que a integram (Amarante, Baião, Castelo de Paiva, Celorico de Basto, Cinfães, Felgueiras, Lousada, Marco de Canaveses, Paços de Ferreira, Penafiel e Resende).

No âmbito do Turismo, depois da aprovação e publicação do Decreto-Lei n.º 99/2018, de 28 de novembro de 2018, foi corporizada a transferência de competências para as entidades intermunicipais no domínio da promoção turística sub-regional. Esta transferência de competências implicou, conforme exposto no artigo 2.º do Decreto-Lei, o seguinte:

- a) Participar na definição e implementação do plano regional de turismo a nível sub-regional, cuja iniciativa e responsabilidade de execução é da competência das entidades regionais de turismo;
- b) Assegurar a promoção dos produtos e recursos turísticos sub-regionais no mercado interno, compreendido pelo território nacional, tendo como enquadramento a estratégia turística nacional e regional, designadamente em eventos de promoção turística;
- c) Recorrer a programas de financiamento nacionais e europeus;
- d) Gerir e implementar programas com financiamento nacional e ou europeu;
- e) Definir os eventos considerados âncora para a sub-região e participar na sua organização.

Tendo em conta as competências elencadas, torna-se evidente que a CIM do Tâmega e Sousa deverá criar, implementar e melhorar os produtos e recursos turísticos da região, fomentando o desenvolvimento económico, a valorização cultural, a sustentabilidade ambiental e a atração de investimento para o território.

Consideramos, portanto, pertinente a criação de uma **Rota de Artes e Ofícios no Tâmega e Sousa** por representar uma mais-valia para a promoção turística da região, e por reforçar a identidade, cultura e tradições do Douro, Tâmega e Sousa.

O artesanato é, em particular, uma área que a CIM do Tâmega e Sousa pretende preservar, mas também modernizar, facto refletido na nossa "Estratégia Integrada de Desenvolvimento Territorial" (EIDT), que corporiza várias ações que visam o desenvolvimento territorial da região, entre as quais a "Promoção das Artes e Ofícios Tradicionais", para promover e qualificar essas artes e ofícios, através de apoios destinados ao mapeamento, à dinamização, modernização e formação na área, em parceria com as Associações de Desenvolvimento Local e os municípios.

Esta é, para a CIM do Tâmega e Sousa, uma área de atuação relevante, na qual se pretende apostar, pelo impacto positivo que pode ter para os artesãos, para as comunidades locais e para os próprios turistas, que têm acesso a experiências autênticas, que valorizam a cultura e as tradições locais, contribuindo para a promoção da nossa identidade como região, para o desenvolvimento económico, sustentabilidade e resiliência deste território.

Com os melhores cumprimentos,

**Telmo Pinto**

Primeiro-Secretário

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English translation of the text:

Dear Madam,

The Intermunicipal Community (CIM) of Tâmega e Sousa is a collective person governed by public law, of an associative nature and territorial scope, which aims

to achieve common interests of the municipalities that comprise it (Amarante, Baião, Castelo de Paiva, Celorico de Basto, Cinfães, Felgueiras, Lousada, Marco de Canaveses, Paços de Ferreira, Penafiel and Resende).

In the context of Tourism, after the approval and publication of Decree-Law No. 99/2018, of November 28, 2018, the transfer of powers to inter-municipal entities in the field of sub-regional tourism promotion was implemented. This transfer of powers implied, as set out in article 2 of the Decree-Law, the following:

- a) Participate in the definition and implementation of the regional tourism plan at sub-regional level, the initiative and responsibility for execution of which is the responsibility of regional tourism entities;
- b) Ensure the promotion of sub-regional tourism products and resources in the internal market, comprising the national territory, within the framework of the national and regional tourism strategy, especially in tourism promotion events;
- c) Use national and European financing programs;
- d) Manage and implement programs with national and/or European funding;
- e) Define the events considered anchor for the sub-region and participate in their organization.

Considering the competencies listed, it becomes clear that the Tâmega e Sousa CIM must create, implement and improve the region's tourist products and resources, promoting economic development, cultural appreciation, environmental sustainability and attracting investments for the territory.

We therefore consider it pertinent to create an Arts and Crafts Route in Tâmega e Sousa as it represents added value for the region's tourism promotion, and for reinforcing the identity, culture and traditions of Douro, Tâmega and Sousa.

Crafts are, in particular, an area that the CIM of Tâmega e Sousa intends to preserve, but also modernize, a fact reflected in our “Integrated Territorial Development Strategy” (EIDT), which embodies several actions aimed at the territorial development of the region, including the “Promotion of Traditional Arts and Crafts”, to promote and qualify these arts and crafts, through support for mapping, dynamization, modernization and training in the area, in partnership with Local Development Associations and municipalities.

This is, for CIM do Tâmega e Sousa, a relevant area of activity, in which it intends to invest, due to the positive impact it can have on artisans, local communities and tourists themselves, who have access to authentic experiences, that value local culture and traditions, contributing to the promotion of our identity as a region, to the economic development, sustainability and resilience of this territory.

With best regards,

Telmo Pinto  
First Secretary