



Cristina Oliveira is the executive director of RuralVive. The cooperative was born following the research work for the Master's thesis carried out at ISCTE-Lisbon University Institute. The initiative was a finalist in the contest Acredita Portugal (2015 edition). In 2016 received an invitation to be presented in Brussels for several European institutions. At this same year, it received the support of FAO.

### **Cooperative RuralVive**

“**RuralVive** -Agencie for rural development is a multi-sectoral cooperative created in 2016 by a collective of Social Entrepreneurs.

Its social objective is to promote, support and develop the endogenous potential of the territories of its social area in order to contribute to the economic and social development of these territories, on its own initiative or in collaboration with official or private, national or international bodies or services, with a view to local and regional development in the pursuit of improving the living conditions of populations.

RuralVive chose the legal form of a cooperative because it intended to create a social enterprise. Since this legal type does not exist in Portugal, cooperatives are the type of organization that comes closest to this model.

RuralVive is implemented in several territories where we are developing projects aimed at the creation of income-generating activities, through individual training and development of entrepreneurial skills for the labor market, based on the Personal Brand methodology, or by generating new social businesses that contribute to the creation of

new jobs, new businesses in the areas of family agriculture, rural tourism, crafts, and culture”.



<https://www.ruralvive.pt/agencia/>

## 1 -Who is the Social Entrepreneur?

I have been a social entrepreneur for 6 years, I work on entrepreneurship in rural areas with the aim of combating desertification by supporting entrepreneurs. This way I contribute to the creation of small businesses, job creation and settlement of the population in the territories where we operate. We work mainly in Pampilhosa da Serra, Moura and Mêda.



## 2 - Can you tell us your journey, how you decided to be a social entrepreneur rather than the traditional way?

From very early on, I have been concerned about the desertification felt in the interior of the country, the departure of young people in search of better job opportunities, and an ageing population. I never wanted to set up a company, but rather a non-profit organisation.

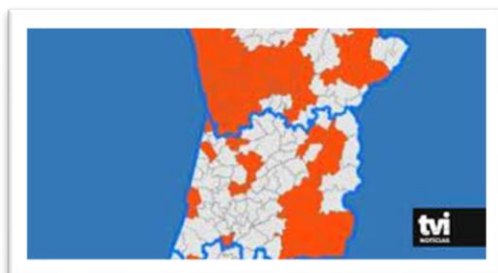
### 3- What kind of skill the social entrepreneur needs to run, when they decide to start their journey?

The skills should all be oriented towards social entrepreneurship, but the most important of all is communication, it is not easy to explain/present a social project in a few minutes.

You must also have management knowledge, and it is very important to know the project very well, target audience, the location where we want to implement the solution to meet the needs identified.

### 4 - But what kind of need and skill do you need to start your own entrepreneurship? What can an entrepreneur do against a problem and some difficult situation? What kind of skill do you think you should have that okay, I need to improve my skill in this field?

The biggest difficulty is in solving challenges (I don't like to use the word problem). During the process of starting RuralVive I was obliged to work and improve the solution I had to respond to the needs of low density territories.



**4 - Did you get support while trying to start your company, any foundation you get at the beginning or you use your own source as a final financial effect?**

I received technical support from an agency for social entrepreneurs (SEA). Regarding funding, I got a European application (Social Challenges).



**5 - What do you think about support and ongoing support for social entrepreneurship? How do you compare it to other European countries or just demand the regional perspective or the International? Are the government's supporter to develop the social entrepreneurship in Portugal actually like to think about that the government support is support in interesting only process or they support also in same time the monitoring and guidance or how is the politics before social?**

It is important to have support for social entrepreneurs, no doubt about it. Without this support from experts in the field, it is more difficult to implement any kind of social project.

If there are entities that provide support to entrepreneurs, there must also be support for social entrepreneurs.

I don't believe that this support is provided by the government. I think that our government still doesn't pay enough attention to social entrepreneurs (in this case the smaller ones).

**6 - What were the main obstacles and how did you overcome the obstacles?**

In the case of RuralVive the biggest obstacle is funding. Both European and foundation applications. We have managed to overcome this obstacle by attracting new clients (municipalities and entrepreneurs).

## 7 - Did you get support from other social entrepreneurs?

I received support from SEA, without them it would have been very difficult to achieve the success that RuralVive has at the moment. Currently RuralVive also supports social entrepreneurs.

## 8 - What would be your advice for the newcomers?

Seek support from entities specialized in social entrepreneurship, create a network of contacts and, above all, a lot of resilience.



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<https://inspire-eu.com/EN/>