

## Assessing the Social Impacts of Regional Services: The Case of a Portuguese Municipality

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**Abstract :** In recent years, the social economy is increasingly seen as a viable means to address social problems. Social enterprises, as well as public projects and initiatives targeted to meet social purposes, offer organizational models that assume heterogeneity, flexibility and adaptability to the “real world and real problems”. Despite the growing popularity of social initiatives, decision makers still face a paucity in what concerns the available models and tools to adequately assess its sustainability, and its impacts, notably the nature of its contribution to economic growth. This study was carried out at the local level, by analyzing the social impact initiatives and projects promoted by the Municipality of Albergaria-a-Velha (Câmara Municipal de Albergaria-a-Velha -CMA), a municipality of 25,000 inhabitants in the central region of Portugal. This work focuses on the challenges related to the qualifications and employability of citizens, which stands out as one of the key concerns in the Portuguese economy, particularly expressive in the context of small-scale cities and inland territories. The study offers a characterization of the Municipality, its socio-economic structure and challenges, followed by an exploratory analysis of multiple sourced data, collected from the CMA’s documental sources as well as from privileged informants. The purpose is to conduct detailed analysis of the CMA’s social projects, aimed at characterizing its potential impact for the model of qualifications and employability of the citizens of the Municipality. The study encompasses a discussion of the socio-economic profile of the municipality, notably its asymmetries, the analysis of the social projects and initiatives, as well as of data derived from inquiry actors involved in the implementation of the social projects and its beneficiaries. Finally, the results obtained with the Better Life Index will be included. This study makes it possible to ascertain if what is implicit in the literature goes to the encounter of what one experiences in reality.

**Keywords :** measurement, municipalities, social economy, social impact

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