

“Innovation, urban integration or industrial tourism are some solutions for ceramics affirmation”

In 2nd July, Alcobaça City Hall presented to ceramics’ entrepreneurs two SWOT analysis, which revealed the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of this sector.

These SWOT analyses were made by INTELI – Intelligence Centre in Innovation (analysis of West Region) - and SDO Consultants (analysis of Alcobaça territory). Those SWOT provide the strategic guidelines to fight against the crisis of the sector and the pathway to make ceramics a more profitable and competitive sector.

Innovation, sustainability, urban integration, industrial tourism, handicraft and art promotion, are some of the “tips” included in the studies.

The analysis comes out from CeRamICa project (Ceramics and Crafts Industries Increased Cooperation”, in which the Municipality has been working since 2007 and its aim goal, is promotion, revitalization and support towards a sector with a strong history in the region and in Portugal, in economical and number of jobs level.

Nowadays, the Sector of Utilitarian and Decorative Ceramics of Alcobaça is composed by 53 units, including the providers of raw materials, producer and distributing enterprises, having the study received the inputs from 38 entities, of which 73% are industrial enterprises, 19% craftsmen, 6% exporting enterprises and 2% providers of raw materials.

The study has also concluded that, the majority industrial tissue of Alcobaça is composed by small and medium enterprises, with the exception of SPAL* (**an enterprise with almost 500 workers**), which historically has been connected to Alcobaça** (**but is located in Nazaré territory, at the moment**) and still has an important influence there, so, it was considered in the study.

The ceramics sector is responsible for about 1.234 direct jobs and for a gross income of around 47 million Euro.

At national level, the sector represents 15% of total gross income. In terms of exportations and because of the strong exporter activity of Alcobaças’s enterprises, the weight of exportations there, in the total value of the sector in the country, is around 18%.

After the presentation of these studies, which are not closed yet, the Municipality will still work in the promotion of the sector.

SWOT Analysis of Alcobaça territory

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	THREATS	OPPORTUNITIES
Strong know-how of the productive process and sector	Dispersion of the sector in the region	Aggravation of the Crisis in EU territory and the "slowing down?" of worldwide economy	Bet in specific markets
Availability of labour force in the region with experience and know-how	Aged and low qualificated labour force	Dissemination of the utilization of low cost alternative products (e.g. plastic)	Partnership with Real state sector in the commercialization of de product "house ready to use"
Strong exporter vocation	Strong dependence related to some external markets	Instability and Umpredictability of Energy costs	Increase/growing of the Tourism and restaurant/hotel sector
Recognition of Portugal as a country that produces quality ceramics	Low investment in Design and R&D	Relative increase of Labour force costs	Seizing the Proximity and Touristic Market
Investments in new equipment and prodution methods	Structure of Production Costs	Unfavourable evolution of Exchange Rate EUR/USD	Internationalization by reallocating the production towards markets with lower costs
The production units are located near the production and sales point of raw materials	Low/bad use of the profits came from the Production Investments	Production process easily imitable	Re(utilization) of alternative sources of energy
Existence in Portugal and in the region of Training structures and Technological Centres specialized for the Sector	Strong dependence of intermediary services for the productos commercialization	Strength of international competitors' position in the main destination markets.	Incorporation in Ceramics of new materials and seizing of the Incentives System to Industrial Revitalization and Modernization (SIRME)
Existence of open-minded entrepreneurs, willing to stablish partnerships	Weak utilization of new technologies/electronic devices	Fast change of the preferences in the destination markets	Utilization of new EU Funds Framework
Enterprises in Alcobaça with Design Department	Non-using of synergies between enterprises		Increase of the demanding at European and worldwide levels, related to Quality and Environmental Protection patterns
Diversify sector in what concerns Products and Materials	Low affirmation of Own Trends (Label)		General increase of the uding og Electronic Commerce (E-Commerce)
	Few number of certified enterprises		
	Reactive strategy of ceramics enterprises		

Source: “Revista Informativa Município de Alcobaça / Agosto 2009”

* Note of the translator

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