

## **NATURAL STONES: ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY IN PORTUGAL**

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In spite of the large potential in natural stone existing in Portugal, some challenges arise in the sector that should be conveniently solved in order to assure the perspectives of its increment in the medium and long term periods. In that context, some of the topics which an adequate revision for a future strategy, such as those identified with the structure of the productive sector (e.g., comprehensive selection of exploitable masses, underground quarrying, quality control of raw-materials) and others where strategic options request inevitable reorganisations (environmental policies, improvement of marketing actions, reinforcement of the internationalisation of companies,...), are pointed out. In fact, the prices that the natural stone is reaching in the markets, imposes the adoption of solutions to the producing countries which allow them to obtain the maximum profit from their available resources of stone. This objective was formerly reserved to the minerals considered of larger value. A comparative analysis of this new reality of the profitability for the mining activity is clear enough: in fact, nowadays, the value of the mean cut-grade for gold and copper ores is worth much less than a ton of Portuguese marble or granite blocks in the quarry.