

INTERNATIONAL DAY
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ERADICATING POVERTY THROUGH LOCAL & NATIONAL STRATEGIES

PORTUGAL

POVERTY WATCH 2025



EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK



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**Robert Bosch
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EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK

Poverty Watch

PORTUGAL 2025



EAPN Portugal
2025



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Introduction

The main objective of the **2025 Poverty Watch** is to reflect on the importance of National and Local Strategies to Combat Poverty as central tools in the eradication of Poverty.

It is intended to map the existing Strategies, to know their scope of action and main policy measures. Identify promising practices and guidelines that can be known at the level of the different member states. To understand the practices of involvement and participation of civil society entities and people living in poverty and/or social exclusion. And, finally, to present policy recommendations.

Portugal saw its National Strategy to Combat Poverty presented in December 2021 (Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 184/2021, of 29 December¹, and the respective 2022-2025 action plan, two years later, (Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 126/2023, of 17 October²). Portugal also has a Porto Municipal Strategy to Combat Poverty 2025-2030³ – unique in the country – which was approved in April 2025. This Strategy is from the Municipality of Porto and lasts for 5 years and is aligned with the *National Strategy to Combat Poverty*.

It is important to say that the XII Regional Government of the Azores (2016-2020) was a pioneer in the design of a regional Strategy to combat Poverty. The Regional Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion 2018-2028⁴ was presented in 2018. In a 2022 news article⁵, the Vice-President of the Regional Government points out a "new approach to the regional Strategy to combat Poverty capable of "safeguarding the evolution of times with the proliferation of crises, first with the pandemic, and now, with war and inflation". The news advances that a protocol has been signed with the School of Economics and the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra to improve the document. In the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP), an investment was included to "implement the priorities of the Regional Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion 2018-2028 (RSCPSE) of the Autonomous Region of the Azores"⁶ aiming at 4 areas of intervention:

- To ensure that all children and young people, from the beginning of life, have a process of integral and inclusive development;
- Strengthening social cohesion in the region;
- Promote a territorialized intervention;
- Ensure adequate knowledge of the phenomenon of poverty in the region.

¹ Consult: <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/resolucao-conselho-ministros/184-2021-176714553>

² Consult: <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/resolucao-conselho-ministros/126-2023-222877162>

³ Consult: https://coesaosocial.cm-porto.pt/files/uploads/cms/Estrategia_Municipal_Pobreza.pdf

⁴ Consult: <https://www.azores.gov.pt/NR/rdonlyres/904C6C12-8BA1-4EC5-A8A9-97E30B67465F/1099083/EstrategiaRegionaldeCombateaPobrezaeExclusaoSocial.pdf>

⁵ Governo dos Açores defende nova abordagem na estratégia regional de combate à pobreza, 15 de novembro 2022. Consult: <https://portal.azores.gov.pt/web/comunicacao/-/gacs-5276>

⁶ Recuperar Portugal. Respostas Sociais_Componente 03. Consult: <https://recuperarportugal.gov.pt/prr-resiliencia/respostas-sociais/>

On the RRP website there is no information on the implementation level of the established milestones and targets⁷.

At the same time, in 2021, the XIII Regional Government of Madeira approved the Regional Strategy for Social Inclusion and Fight against Poverty 2021-2027⁸ as a "congregating instrument that allows an integrated approach to intervention policies in the field of social inclusion in this matter"⁹. With the approval of the National Strategy to Combat Poverty, the Regional Strategy changed its period of application to 2030¹⁰, to accompany the National Strategy. The first action plan for the four-year period 2021-2024 was composed of 130 measures. The Strategy includes 5 axes of intervention:

- "Strategic Axis 1 – Strengthen public policies for social inclusion, promote and improve the integration and social protection of the most disadvantaged groups and ensure social cohesion and local development;
- Strategic Axis 2 – Ensure access to quality health and promote well-being in the most vulnerable populations, in conjunction with existing regional plans and strategies in the field of health promotion and disease prevention;
- Strategic Axis 3 – Strengthen educational responses that favour the full development of children and young people and their inclusion and that allow breaking generational cycles of poverty;
- Strategic Axis 4 – Invest in employment policies, guidance and professional qualification as instruments of social inclusion and the fight against poverty;
- Strategic Axis 5 – Generate and process information to better understand the social reality in the autonomous region of Madeira."¹¹

EAPN Portugal was responsible for one of the activities of this axis, that is, the Characterization Study of Poverty in the Autonomous Region of Madeira¹². A Scientific Committee of this Strategy was also

⁷ In the consultation made to the RRP page on October 3, 2025, the information on the fulfilment of the milestones and targets (5) of this investment referred to 0%. Consult: <https://recuperarportugal.gov.pt/prr-resiliencia/respostas-sociais/re-c03-i04-raa-implementar-a-estrategia-regional-de-combate-a-pobreza-e-exclusao-social-redes-de-apoio-social-raa/>

⁸ Parecer da EAPN Portugal sobre a Estratégia Regional de Inclusão Social e Combate à Pobreza 2021-2027 – Região Autónoma da Madeira, dezembro 2021: <https://www.eapn.pt/centro-de-documentacao/documentos/pareceres-e-tomadas-de-posicao/estrategia-regional-de-inclusao-social-e-combate-a-pobreza-2021-2027-da-regiao-autonoma-da-madeira/>

⁹ Resolução nº1145/2021, de 11 de novembro: <https://joram.madeira.gov.pt/joram/1serie/Ano%20de%202021/ISerie-204-2021-11-11.pdf>

¹⁰ Resolução n.º 1497/2021, de 30 de dezembro: <https://joram.madeira.gov.pt/joram/1serie/Ano%20de%202021/ISerie-237-2021-12-30sup3.pdf>

¹¹ Comissão de Acompanhamento e Monitorização da Estratégia Regional de Inclusão Social e Combate à Pobreza, 2021-2030, *Estratégia Regional de Inclusão Social e Combate à Pobreza 2021-2030*, Agosto de 2022.

¹² The Poverty Characterization Study in the Autonomous Region of Madeira was carried out under Protocol No. 5/2022 established between EAPN Portugal and the Social Security Institute of Madeira (ISSM), and implemented between February 2023 and October 2024. <https://on.eapn.pt/documento/estudo-de-caracterizacao-da-pobreza-na-regiao-autonoma-da-madeira/>

created, but, according to information available to EAPN, it will not have met in the 4 years of the I Action Plan¹³.

This Poverty Watch focuses on the operationalization of the National Strategy to Combat Poverty 2021-2030, in order to understand some of the progress achieved by it and existing challenges. This analysis is based on a reflection with people living in poverty and who are part of the National Council of Citizens of EAPN Portugal. Since the first report on the implementation of the Strategy's Action Plan was not made public, an interview was conducted with the Coordinator of the National Strategy, Sandra Araújo, with the aim of better understanding the operationalization of this initiative.

The report also highlights some principles and practices of the National Strategy that are considered promising and ends with a set of recommendations to make the fight against poverty more effective and effective.

¹³ According to information from our regional nucleus in Madeira, there will be news soon since the Regional Secretariat responsible for the social area sent a letter for EAPN Portugal to confirm its representative in the Commission (information from October 2025).

1. The goals of the National Strategy to Combat Poverty

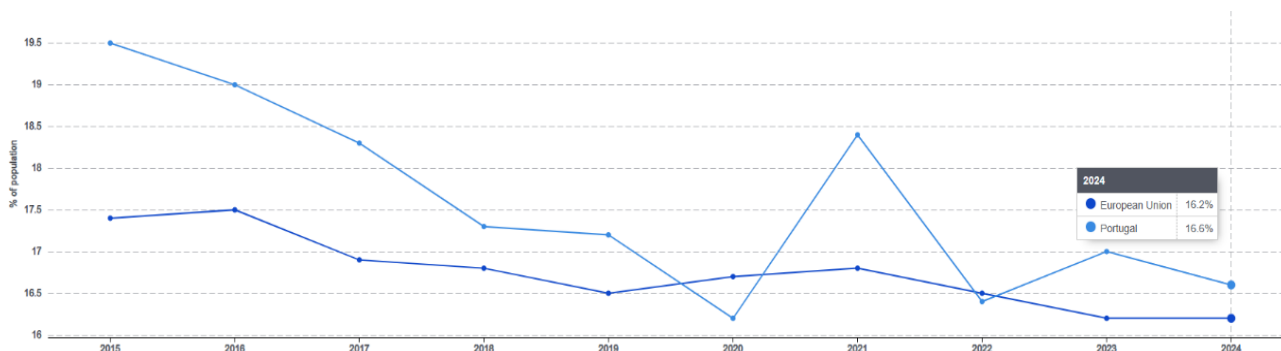
The National Strategy to Combat Poverty (NSCP) 2021–2030 establishes a set of goals to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion in Portugal. The central objective is to reduce the monetary poverty rate to 10% by 2030, with a special focus on children, working poor and territorial disparities. The goals established are as follows:

- Reduce the population's monetary poverty rate to 10%, which means lifting approximately 660,000 people out of monetary poverty.
- Halve monetary poverty in the group of children – about 170,000 children.
- Bring the child material deprivation indicator closer to the European average, in percentage points.
- Halve the rate of monetary poverty of the working poor – about 230,000 workers.
- Reduce territorial disparities in the poverty rate, so that differences between territories are no more than three percentage points in relation to the national average rate.

Regarding the monetary poverty rate, there was a decrease in the indicator (16.6%) in the 2024 survey compared to the previous year (17%). However, although the rate has been decreasing consecutively since the 2021 survey, compared to what was initially defined, we have seen a worsening in the number of people in this situation. When the target was established in the National Strategy, there were 1 million and 665 Portuguese at risk of poverty in Portugal (16.2%). Now the number stands at 1.761, 96 thousand more people.

The difference with the EU is 0.4 percentage points, which places Portugal in 12th position among the 27 member states with the highest rate of monetary poverty.

Figure 1: People at risk of poverty (% of population)



Source: Social Scoreboard, Eurostat¹⁴

Monetary poverty is still above the targets set for 2030, which puts the at-risk-of-poverty rate far from the 10% set.

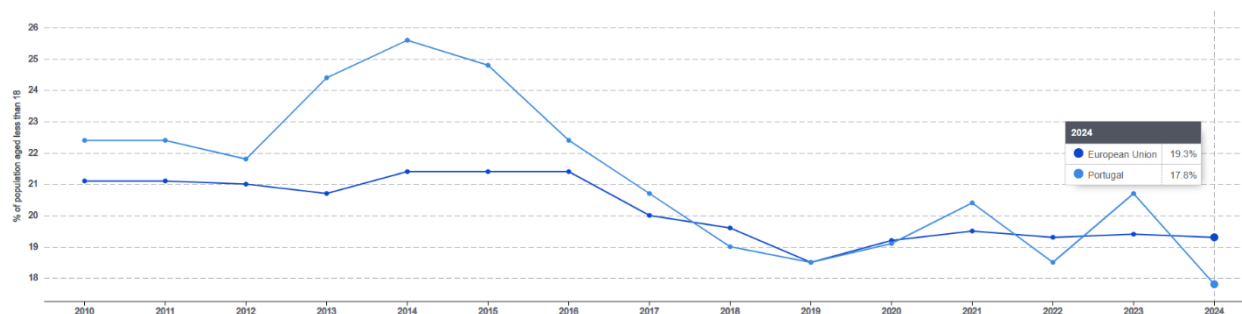
¹⁴

Consult:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TESSI010_custom_6090720/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=a5c6bd9e-f631-4a90-950f-44d194ec30b3&c=1712242939185 (Online data code: tessi010 / updated on 02/10/2025).

However, we are witnessing a reduction – a significant one – in the case of children's monetary poverty. The at-risk-of-poverty rate for this population group reduced by 2.9 percentage points between 2023 and 2024 and by 1.3 percentage points compared to the period in which the target was set (2020), which means 28 thousand fewer children in this situation. However, we are witnessing a worsening in the indicator of material and social deprivation. This indicator increases to 4.8% in 2024, that is, 0.4 percentage points more¹⁵, which is still worrying and questions to what extent this is a significant decrease in terms of children's risk of poverty and whether the target will be truly met by 2030.

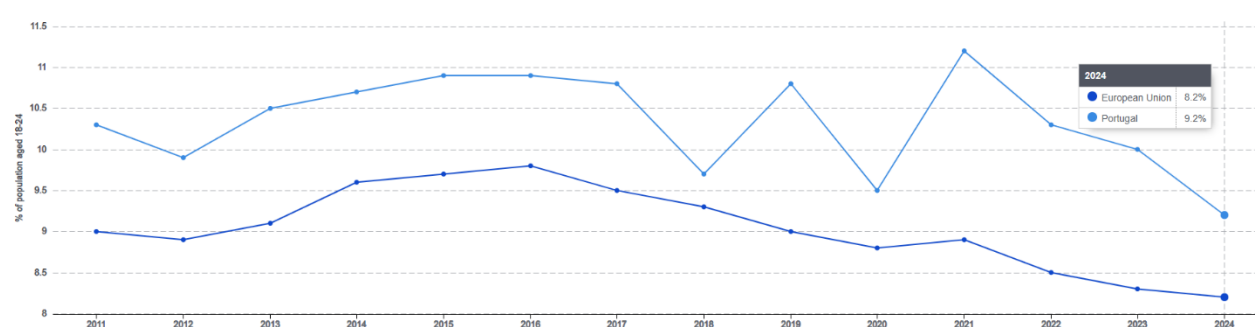
Figure 2: Children (under 18) at risk of poverty (% of population)



Source: Social Scoreboard, Eurostat¹⁶

About working poverty, Portugal continues to have a significant percentage, higher than that of the European Union, although there was a reduction between 2023 (10%) and 2024 (9.2%). In the context of the EU, Portugal is the 9th country with the highest rate of working poor. The goal of halving working poverty requires urgent improvements in employment, wages, working conditions and a reduction in precariousness. What is certain is that Portugal occupies the 3rd position in the EU as a whole, regarding the highest poverty rate among the self-employed or other situations excluding employees (i.e., situations of greater vulnerability).

Figure 3: Employed people at risk of poverty (% of population over 18 years old)



15

Consult:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TEPSR_SPI120_custom_10787734/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=514be381-5a55-4861-8009-112e5907ff9d&c=1712673091053 (Online data code: teprspi120 / updated on 02/10/2025)

16

Consult:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TEPSR_SPI110_custom_10787497/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=612dd429-44b2-45e4-bba8-68837fde35ac&c=1712672586082 (Online data code: teprspi110 / updated on 02/10/2025).

Source: Social Scoreboard, Eurostat¹⁷

There is certainly a greater effort that must be made at the national (and even European) level to meet the established goals and achieve a significant reduction of this scourge.

Portugal remains a rather asymmetrical country from a regional point of view. Regional differences persist, and mastering the disparities so that they are within 3 percentage points of the national rate is a major challenge, as it involves structural inequalities, differentiated access to services, income, housing costs, employment opportunities, mobility, etc. The at-risk-of-poverty rate remains quite high in the Autonomous Regions, in particular, in the Azores (24.2%) and Madeira (19.1%), with Greater Lisbon area being the region in which the risk of poverty was lowest (12.9%)¹⁸.

Poverty is a complex phenomenon, and the indicators present in the National Strategy that allow monitoring the established goals do not capture this complexity. The same can be said of the indicators of the Social Scoreboard, referred to here, which allows monitoring compliance with the European Pillar of Social Rights.

¹⁷

Consult:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TESOV110_custom_9490763/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=7bcead35-5d86-422d-a154-0a0061fee5f1&c=1706092581873 (Online data code:

tesov110 / updated on 02/10/2025)

¹⁸ INE, *O risco de pobreza diminuiu para 16.6% em 2023*. Destaque do INE, 3 de dezembro de 2024. Consult: https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_destaques&DESTAQUESdest_boui=646322945&DESTAQUESmodo=2

2. The National Strategy to Combat Poverty 2021-2030: a critical analysis

In December 2021, Portugal saw the first National Strategy to Combat Poverty 2021-2030 approved.

EAPN Portugal has always argued that the fight against poverty requires an integrated and multidimensional response aimed at combating the structural causes of poverty. It was with this objective in mind that in 2015 it created a working group with experts and relevant entities in the area to make the fight against poverty a "national priority"¹⁹. The group advocated that "the objective of poverty eradication should be included in the country's political governance agenda, [and for this it was essential that] a national strategy and goals for the elimination of poverty be defined and adequate institutional support be found to enforce human rights and sanction their respective non-compliance".

Despite all the lobbying work carried out²⁰, it was only in 2021 and within the scope of the European Pillar of Social Rights, that the National Strategy to Combat Poverty (NSCP) was published.

For the construction of the Strategy proposal, the Government created a Coordination Committee (Order No. 10277/2020, of 26 October²¹) with the participation of a group of personalities and experts in the area who aimed to outline the proposal²² and present it to the Minister of State and the Presidency and the Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security. They also had the mission of involving civil society entities. EAPN Portugal was one of the entities that participated in this process of collecting contributions for the definition of the Strategy. The consultation took place in November 2020, and, with the presentation of the proposal, a public consultation took place between October 1 and 25, 2021²³.

The National Strategy presented in December 2021 adopts a **broad concept of poverty** and recognizes it as a "complex and multidimensional phenomenon, which constitutes a violation of human rights and citizenship and which requires integrated action by the different sectoral areas in the field of public intervention. That is, poverty defined as the scarcity or absence of resources of individuals or households to meet their welfare needs". Articulation with other national strategies is also assumed. From the point of view of **financing**, it is recognized that the NSCP is a condition for the current financing framework (Portugal 2030) and is one of the reforms of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) (RE-r08).²⁴ The RRP highlights the adoption of the National Strategy, but then

¹⁹ EAPN Portugal, *Erradicar a Pobreza: Compromisso para uma Estratégia Nacional*, Rediteia nº 48, Porto, 2015. Available at: <https://www.eapn.pt/centro-de-documentacao/rediteia-48-2015/>

²⁰ Over the years, EAPN Portugal has promoted several activities, reinforcing the importance of a National Strategy to Combat Poverty. Among the various activities, we highlight the National Forums to Combat Poverty, where the importance of the National Strategy was the main theme of the agenda; the Regional Meetings with people in poverty; webinars; production of various documents.

²¹ Consult: <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/despacho/10277-2020-146241059>

²² *Estratégia Nacional de Combate à Pobreza. Proposta.*, Portugal Melhor: <https://www.gep.mtsss.gov.pt/documents/10182/170077/Proposta+de+ENCP.pdf/b111c3a7-dc79-4348-a9d1-b45f587ae063>

²³ See: *Resposta da EAPN Portugal à Consulta Pública da Estratégia Nacional de Combate à Pobreza 2021-2030*, outubro de 2021: https://www.eapn.pt/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/EAPN-Portugal_Resposta-a-Consulta-Publica-da-ENCP_Outubro21.pdf

²⁴ More information: <https://recuperarportugal.gov.pt/prr-resiliencia/respostas-sociais/re-r08-estrategia-nacional-de-combate-a-pobreza/>

focuses the investment on integrated operations in disadvantaged communities in the Metropolitan Areas of Lisbon and Porto. In EAPN Portugal's response to the public consultation of the RRP, it was warned that this "centrality" in pockets of poverty in metropolitan areas is reductive and does not include "all the needs in the field of the fight against poverty in Portugal".²⁵

From the point of view of **the governance mechanisms** to ensure the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the NSCP, the following structures are contemplated:

- **High-Level Interministerial Commission (CIAN)** responsible for analysing, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the NSCP. This CIAN is composed of members of the Government from the areas of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, Education, Local Authorities, Health, Infrastructure and Housing. It meets quarterly and can invite other members of the Government when necessary.
- **Technical Monitoring Committee (CTA)** that provides technical support to CIAN and is composed of a National Coordinator (appointed by CIAN), representatives of the government areas involved, representatives of the services and executing bodies and 3 personalities of merit in the areas covered.
- **National Coordinator** responsible for presenting the Action Plans 2022–2025 and 2026–2030; making the mid-term and final evaluation and organising meetings of the consultative forum.
- **Consultative Forum** that includes representatives of public and private non-profit entities, NGOs, experts and representatives of civil society. Consultation meetings are held for the recipients of the NSCP.

The NSCP 2021-2030 defined a set of **intervention axes** organized in six dimensions:

- "a) Reduce poverty in children and young people and their families;
- b) Promote the full integration of young adults into society and the systemic reduction of their risk of poverty;
- c) To enhance employment and qualification as factors for the elimination of poverty;
- d) Strengthen public policies for social inclusion, promote and improve societal integration and social protection of the most disadvantaged people and groups;
- e) Ensuring territorial cohesion and local development;
- f) Make the fight against poverty a national goal."

It also defined **5 targets and 5 indicators** to be met by 2030 and that contribute to the targets of the European Pillar of Social Rights:

- "a) Indicator 1: risk of monetary poverty for the total population:

Target: reduce the monetary poverty rate for the population as a whole to 10%, which represents a reduction of 660,000 people in poverty;

²⁵ *Plano de Recuperação Económica: recuperar Portugal reconstruindo o futuro*. Resposta à consulta pública da EAPN Portugal, fevereiro 2021. Available at: <https://www.eapn.pt/uploads/files/e92ebe17adc0383ca27a808ce8df8f14.pdf>

b) Indicator 2: risk of income poverty in children (< 18 years):

Goal: to halve monetary poverty in the group of children, which represents a reduction of 170 thousand children in poverty;

c) Indicator 3: child-specific material deprivation rate by age (children aged 1 to 15 years):

Target: approximation of the child material deprivation indicator to the European average, in percentage points;

d) Indicator 4: at-risk-of-in-work poverty rate (18 years and over):

Goal: to halve the rate of monetary poverty of the working poor, which represents a reduction of 230 thousand workers in poverty;

e) Indicator 5: at-risk-of-poverty rate, by region:

Goal: to reduce the disparity in the poverty rate of the different territories to a maximum of 3 percentage points in relation to the national average rate."

It is also important to mention that the Competence Centre for Planning, Policies and Foresight of Public Administration (PLANAPP),²⁶ together with the Strategy and Planning Office of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, provides support in monitoring the targets and indicators of the Action Plans.

Although the Strategy indicates that the **1st action plan** should refer to the 2022-2025 time period, it was only presented in the last quarter of 2023 (Council of Ministers Resolution No. 126/2023 of 17 October). The Action Plan includes more than 270 measures organized according to the strategic axes mentioned above. The measures refer in particular to the following population groups: children, young people, the elderly, workers, people with disabilities, migrants and citizens with addictive behaviours, according to a document²⁷ made available by the Government.

The first report on the implementation of this plan has not been made public and, at the time of writing this Poverty Watch, the report for the year 2024 is being prepared.

One of EAPN Portugal's concerns has always been that NSCP should carry out "a route through the territory in order to get closer to the needs of the population".²⁸ The National Strategy itself provides for proximity to the place and the promotion of territorial cohesion. In the following chapter, some of the activities carried out are presented, but it is important to mention one of the main results achieved and that is related to the elaboration and approval of the 1st Municipal Strategy to Combat

²⁶ PlanAPP is the Centre for Planning and Evaluation of Public Policies, which aims to support the State in the "definition and implementation of public policies and prospective analysis". More information: <https://PlanAPP.gov.pt/>

Approved by Decreto-Lei nº21/2021 de 15 de março, which was later repealed by Decreto-Lei nº 67/2024 de 8 de outubro. More information: https://www.pgdlisboa.pt/leis/lei_mostra_articulado.php?nid=3401&tabela=leis&so_miolo=

²⁷ Ninguém fica para trás. Estratégia Nacional de combate à Pobreza. Medidas que fazem parte do Plano de Ação, identificadas por públicos, October 17, 2023. Available at: <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc23/comunicacao/documento?i=plano-de-acao-20222025-da-estrategia-nacional-de-combate-a-pobreza>

²⁸ EAPN Portugal, *Linhas Orientadoras para uma intervenção local integrada de combate à Pobreza. Um pensamento estratégico que leva à ação*, 2022. Internal working document.

Poverty in the municipality of Porto²⁹. A strategy that is still recent (April 2025) to present an analysis of it but pioneering as a process of territorialization of the National Strategy.

Municipal Strategy of Porto to Combat Poverty³⁰

The Porto Municipal Strategy, approved in April 2025, was based on the National Strategy to Combat Poverty to ensure "strategic alignment" and "support the measurability of the results obtained locally, transposing them to the scale of the National Strategy". From the point of view of **content**, instruments from the Porto Social Network were used, namely, the Social Development Plan (PDS 24-28); the Porto Social Diagnosis for 2024 and the Action Plan 24-25.

A set of 10 priority groups for intervention were defined that aim to intervene in the following **most vulnerable groups**: homeless population, families in poverty, the elderly, migrants, people with disabilities, young people at risk and women victims of domestic violence.

The Strategy presented includes an **action plan for 2025** structured in **5 axes**: Reduce poverty in children and young people and their families; Promote the full integration of young adults into society and the systemic reduction of their risk of poverty; Enhance employment and qualification as factors for the elimination of Poverty; Strengthen public policies for social inclusion, Promote and Improve societal integration and social protection of disadvantaged people and groups; Ensuring territorial cohesion and local development.

From a **governance perspective**, it includes the following structures:

- Local Council for Social Action (CLAS) of the Porto Social Network
- Executive Nucleus of the Porto Social Network
- Municipal Department of Social Cohesion, which includes the Municipal Division of Social Network Management and the **Monitoring Group of the Municipal Strategy of Porto to Combat Poverty**.

This monitoring group³¹ aims to monitor the impact of social intervention planning instruments in the city of Porto.

2.A. Experience of EAPN Portugal and Citizens in situations of poverty and/or social exclusion in the follow-up and monitoring of the Strategy

The National Strategy to Combat Poverty is a significant step forward for EAPN Portugal in the way it looks at Poverty and how it thinks about its intervention. This premise is important because it requires us to be vigilant about the operationalization of the Strategy. It is essential to ensure that it acts on the structural causes of poverty, breaking generational cycles of poverty, and that progress

²⁹ It is also worth noting the temporal alignment of the Regional Strategy of the Autonomous Region of Madeira with the ENCP (see introduction).

³⁰ Divisão Municipal de Gestão da Rede Social, *Estratégia Municipal do Porto de Combate à Pobreza 2025-2030*. Available at: https://coesaosocial.cm-porto.pt/files/uploads/cms/Estrategia_Municipal_Pobreza.pdf

³¹ EAPN Portugal has no information on whether this group was formed and its composition.

is made towards the eradication of this scourge. In this sense, the National Strategy to Combat Poverty has been one of the focuses of the organization's work and one of the points of reflection with our members of the Local Citizens' Councils and the National Council³².

The writing of this chapter is based on the work that EAPN Portugal has done in monitoring the Strategy, an interview with the Coordinator of NSCP, Sandra Araújo, and a reflection meeting with the members of the National Council of Citizens³³. Since the NSCP was approved, EAPN Portugal has held sessions to disseminate it, with the presence of the National Coordinator; debates with people in poverty (e.g. the National Forum to Combat Poverty), in addition to direct participation in some of the actions of the Strategy that will be described below.

It is important to note that on February 26, 2025, the National Strategy to Combat Poverty and EAPN Portugal signed a **Cooperation Protocol** with the following objectives:

- a) To promote knowledge of the National Strategy to Combat Poverty among several key actors;
- b) To raise public awareness in general of the issues of poverty and social exclusion in the national context;
- c) Enhance the definition of local strategies to combat poverty, at municipal or intermunicipal level and support the processes for their implementation;
- d) Promote the participation of people in poverty in the follow-up and monitoring of the Strategy and support the establishment of Local Forums to Combat Poverty.

EAPN Portugal is also one of the entities that integrates the Strategy **Consultative Forum**, which implies, so far, participation in periodic meetings³⁴ and collaboration in two participatory practices involving citizens in poverty. The Forum is made up of "43 representatives of social and solidarity economy organizations, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, as well as experts, personalities and entities of recognized merit in matters relevant to the fight against poverty in Portugal".³⁵

From the point of view of its functions and according to the presentation made at the first meeting, this Forum is responsible for collaborating in the implementation of the NSCP Action Plan, namely by promoting events to consult the Strategy's target audience and to contribute to the monitoring and participatory evaluation of the Strategy. The planned activities include annual meetings, 2 pilot projects with a view to the participatory monitoring and evaluation of the NSCP; holding of Thematic Forums, with the involvement of the target groups of the measures; information and awareness actions and other activities that are proposed.

According to the Strategy Coordinator, there is an understanding that the fight against poverty is not only the role of the State, and it is necessary to involve civil society, in particular the third sector:

³² Local citizens' councils are internal working groups of EAPN Portugal composed of people who live or have lived in poverty and/or social exclusion. EAPN has 19 local councils in operation (one in each district of mainland Portugal, for a total of 18; and one in the Autonomous Region of Madeira). The National Citizens' Council is composed of one representative from each local council.

³³ The interview with the Strategy Coordinator took place on June 20 (online). The meeting with the members of the National Council of Citizens took place on July 14 (online).

³⁴ Until the writing of this report, 4 meetings were held.

³⁵ *Fórum consultivo da ENCP reúne-se pela primeira vez*, notícia PlanAPP, 4 de abril 2024. Available at: <https://www.PlanAPP.gov.pt/forum-consultivo-encp-primeira-reuniao/>

"although it is a Government strategy, it is known and assumed in the strategy that there has to be a very strong commitment from all actors in society. Axis six is rooted exactly in this commitment"

Sandra Araújo

Axis six of the Strategy aims to "make the fight against poverty a national goal" and integrates two strategic objectives: "Ensure mechanisms for the participation of populations in vulnerable situations in the design, monitoring and evaluation of the NSCP"; and "Ensure full integration between the different sectoral strategies, so that in the coherence of the options the collective commitment to fight poverty in all its forms and manifestations can be established".

From the point of view of sectoral articulation, the Strategy integrates in its action plan a diversified set of measures that are the responsibility of other sectors and public actors. The constitution of the CTA aims to create this formal structure for monitoring and articulation between public actors, in particular the public administration, and CIAN also seeks intersectoral articulation and participation from a governmental point of view. This work is recognized as central, but difficult to achieve, still needing maturity:

"... This works within the Government because it wants to assume poverty as a political priority, calling on the different sectoral areas to hold them accountable for what they can, what they do and what can generate or can cause an increase in the number of people in poverty or the opposite, therefore, and we know that work, Employment, therefore, education, training, all have very important interventions here and therefore this is in fact a different way of working from what we were used to until now."

"Even this particularity of working with a group of public administration agents committed to fighting poverty, is also new, isn't it? [...] And that's all, it's a path, it's often a difficult and slow path as well."

Sandra Araújo

The exercise of participation is, in fact, time-consuming, requiring time, availability and resources. Speaking of the specific case of civil society entities, participation is not always possible. Many of these organizations operate with limited human and financial resources, which hinders their ability to follow participatory processes consistently. The absence of adequate structural support, the existence of overloaded work schedules, end up compromising their presence and active intervention, even when there is will and commitment. These concerns and limitations were expressed to some extent at the first meeting of the Consultative Forum. It is important to recognize that participation cannot be taken for granted or spontaneous. Especially when it is intended that participation has a central role in the effective monitoring of the measures (and the Strategy as a whole) and a role of co-construction of actions with concrete results (e.g. the participatory forums and pilot projects that will be mentioned). It is essential to create adequate conditions for entities, taking into account their constraints – time, resources and financial – and to ensure information on what is being done, what is intended to be worked on, immediate and long-term results.

The involvement of civil society entities is not limited to participation in the Consultative Forum and also intersects with the **participation of people living in poverty and/or social exclusion**, which is assumed by the coordinator as "very important".

There are two ongoing practices that involve people in vulnerable situations and in which elements of the National Council of Citizens are also involved: Participatory forums promoted by civil society entities, such as EAPN Portugal; and participatory sessions (pilot projects) within the scope of the

NSCP Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Project promoted by PlanAPP, in collaboration with civil society entities.

Regarding the **Participatory Forums**, EAPN Portugal, in partnership with the National Confederation of Social Solidarity Institutions (CNIS), promoted on February 10, 2025 a Forum with people in vulnerable situations who are members of the National Council of Citizens of EAPN. This Forum, as part of the NSCP monitoring process, focused on the Transfer of competences of social action to local authorities. It was intended to understand how the process of transferring social skills to municipalities was received and evaluated, whether citizens use local social services and how they evaluate their quality, also identifying obstacles in access. They were also asked about the functioning of the services in the local social action services, whether the proximity of the municipalities resulted in more effective responses to the needs of families, and, finally, what suggestions for improvement they have for the social services provided by the municipalities. EAPN Portugal prepared a report of the Forum that was sent to the NSCP. However, we have no information on the continuity given to it and whether other forums were held and their conclusions.

Main concluding messages of the Participatory Forum on the Transfer of Competences to Municipalities

- *Overall assessment of the transfer of powers:*

The process took place smoothly and without causing major visible impacts for the beneficiaries, but risks related to proximity emerged, such as the strengthening of small local powers.

- *Need for training of local teams:*

The teams need continuous training, better articulation and knowledge about the services available to effectively serve the community.

- *Importance of prevention and agility in response:*

It is essential to invest in prevention with well-planned actions. The delay in responses harms beneficiaries and reveals a lack of integrated vision and anticipation of the impacts of non-response or late response.

The participation of the most vulnerable citizens in the context of the NSCP remains, in our view, more limited. The members of the National Citizens' Council themselves refer to the importance of citizen participation through participatory forums in the monitoring of the Strategy but consider that this does not happen in a structured way. They highlight that there is a lack of public knowledge about the Strategy and are concerned about the lack of dissemination and understanding of it:

"(...) There has to be information. People have to be informed (...) people have to know the Strategy backwards and forwards so that the Strategy can be implemented and worked on (...) The Strategy can be very good, but if no one knows about it and no one talks about it, no one knows how to implement it."

"If I asked you if you know of any good practices within the Strategy that can be disseminated... practices that we want to be maintained?"

- We have little information....

- *There should be an obligation to disclose. The Municipalities themselves should talk about it.*
- *We have no knowledge about the application of the Strategy."*

Members of the National Council of Citizens

It is important to note that so far, the National Strategy does not have a website and some of the information on the operationalization of the Strategy is known on the PlanAPP and GEP website, as well as on the Coordinator's facebook page.

The other participation practice is being conducted by PlanAPP with the collaboration of EAPN Portugal and other civil society entities. This action is part of the participatory monitoring and evaluation of the NSCP (see box) and involves two **pilot actions** aimed at people living in vulnerable situations. EAPN Portugal is one of the entities that is collaborating with PlanAPP in the organization of the sessions: identification of participants (also with other civil society entities), logistical organization. The dynamization is the direct responsibility of PlanAPP. These pilot sessions are thematic: decent work and social benefits.

EAPN Portugal is collaborating in the area of decent work and the people identified to participate are linked to this dimension (precarious workers; unemployed and long-term unemployed, among others).

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

PlanAPP provides technical support to the National Strategy to Combat Poverty, in collaboration with the Strategy and Planning Office of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security. According to the information³⁶ available on the website of this structure, all this work began with the realization of a «Living Lab» (in which EAPN Portugal and other entities were also involved) which involved the holding of "co-creation sessions to think about how the participation of populations in situation or at risk of poverty can be implemented in the design, monitoring and evaluation of the NSCP" and resulted in the elaboration of the "Roadmap for the participatory monitoring and evaluation of Public Policies - The case of the National Strategy to Combat Poverty".³⁷

The 2022-2025 Global Monitoring, Follow-up and Evaluation Plan was also drawn up, which includes the production of annual progress reports and a panel of indicators for monitoring the impact and targets of the NSCP; an evaluation plan; an implementation report of the NSCP 2022-2025 action plan (to be delivered by the 1st quarter of 2026) and an interim evaluation (1st quarter of 2026). The implementation of the pilot actions (see previous information) is a contribution to the monitoring and evaluation of the NSCP. This work will contribute to the balance and recommendations for the NSCP 2026-2030 Action Plan.

The direct involvement of people in poverty is extremely relevant, but in our perspective it needs greater consolidation and periodicity. It is essential to form a group, work on its cohesion and

³⁶ More information: <https://PlanAPP.gov.pt/apoio-tecnico-estrategia-nacional-combate-pobreza/>

³⁷ PlanAPP e ICS-UL, *Roteiro para a monitorização e avaliação participativa de Políticas Públicas - O caso da Estratégia Nacional de Combate à Pobreza*, agosto de 2024. Available at: <https://PlanAPP.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/PlanAPP-ICS-RoteiroMAP-ENCP.pdf>

capacity building, so that they can continuously monitor the operationalization of the Strategy, or eventually certain central measures to combat poverty that are contemplated in the Strategy. The meetings foreseen in these pilot actions are 5 and too spaced in time. Some elements have since left the process, and other people will be contacted to join it. Participation is a practice that requires time, specific conditions and continuity. Interruptions, and even abandonment, of the participatory process are part of these practices, and in this specific case it is important to reflect to what extent they are not weaknesses of the chosen and implemented model.

The creation of mechanisms that ensure greater stability and commitment of the participants is central to ensuring effective, structured and transformative participation, contributing significantly to the success of the Strategy to combat poverty.

2.B. The implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Poverty: Challenges and Limits

The impacts of the National Strategy to Combat Poverty are not immediate. If the Strategy aims at structural changes, these require time, continuity and political commitment and commitment from society as a whole. The Strategy's action plan was presented one year late (2023) but referring to the period 2022-2025. The plan includes 145 measures and 273 activities³⁸ and is still in the operationalization phase.

As it is not possible to access the first report prepared, it is practically impossible to understand the level of implementation of the measures and activities included in the plan. In any case, it is important to note that the plan includes measures that were already underway, measures that are being financed by the current financing framework (some calls have not yet opened) and by the Recovery and Resilience Plan. Sandra Araújo also points out the fact that there are measures associated with legislative changes and the fact that there are activities included in the Strategy that "do not depend exclusively on a governmental area", but on "collaborative work between governmental areas".

Sandra Araújo also mentioned that in the preparation of the second report (2024) there is a concern - presented by the Secretary of State - with the indication of results, although it is recognized that it is difficult to do so with a short execution time.

"... There was an attempt to respond... With the implementation of the Theory of Change [see box], we even introduced in the instrument that was created, a new, additional component, related to the transformative change of the strategy in which we could, in addition to monitoring the data, we even asked all entities to identify the level of contribution of the activities that are included in the Plan for the Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion, in a direct or indirect way. Therefore, almost a self-assessment of the contribution of those activities to the fight against poverty. Those who say they are, consider that they have a very direct contribution, and others that they have a more indirect contribution."

Sandra Araújo

³⁸ According to the presentation made at the 1st meeting of the Consultative Forum.

As this is a work in progress, there is no additional information that can be shared. In the same sense, without also knowing the instrument created, the question remains whether this self-assessment allows objectivity, whether there are specific criteria to understand the level of contribution – direct or indirect – to the fight against poverty. Something that can also compromise the confirmation of the effectiveness of the plan's measures and actions and their impact on the effective improvement of people's living conditions.

Theory of Change: the process chosen by NSCP to evaluate and monitor the current Action Plan

The study of the NSCP Theory of Change aims to improve the monitoring system and support the preparation of the new Strategy Action Plan, focusing on the active participation of various entities. This study called: "Participatory Construction of the Theory of Change NSCP" is being developed by COLABOR in collaboration with PLANAPP. This project aims to support the participatory construction of the theory of change in the NSCP that covers the period 2021-2030.

Objectives and Methodology:

- Improvement of the monitoring process: the study seeks to improve the Plan's monitoring system.
- Active Participation: The project involves the participation of organizations from the social sector, civil society and experts in the fight against poverty.
- Methodology: the approach adopted aims to integrate the experiences of people in poverty and map projects and studies related to the fight against poverty, using participatory forums and questionnaires.

The study aims to provide relevant contributions to the planning of future evaluation exercises and to the implementation of effective public policies to combat poverty in Portugal. This study is expected to conclude with the start of the mid-term evaluation of NSCP and the new Action Plan that will come into force in 2026.

It should be noted that the work carried out was presented to the members of the consultative forum in July 2025 and this presentation revealed the intention of the evaluation team of the next steps, reinforcing the problems that arise in the preparation of this evaluation: multidimensional and holistic scope of the problem that was not accompanied by the prioritization of measures; Another criticism made is related to the fact that the strategic axes defined in the plan are some aspirational, others categorical and others thematic.

The solution found by the evaluation team to solve this problem was to develop several Theories of Change (7) through a sectoral approach This involved selecting NSCP measures and activities and discarding some measures and activities because no relationship was found between the achievements, results and impact.

We await feedback from this review.

The progress of the NSCP in reducing a phenomenon that is complex is not easily noticeable, especially when it is all very recent. The latest poverty figures have decreased, but it is very difficult to understand whether this is due to the impact of the Strategy. In any case, for those who live in

poverty, there is an understanding – real and lived – that the challenges are still many. At the meeting with the members of the National Council of Citizens, persistent challenges in the fight against poverty in Portugal were identified: housing, low wages, rising cost of living, response of services, namely employment, worsening social stigma³⁹ and "institutional violence".⁴⁰

"The changes [if they exist] are so subtle, that they are not noticeable"

"I believe that there are differences [that the Strategy brought] but that end up not being visible because of the stigma of poverty, hate speech, which exists on social networks and that we constantly hear... which turns out to be a barrier to some changes. It ends up emphasizing this stigma that the person is at risk of poverty, or in poverty, the only one to blame is him(her)self."

Members of the National Council of Citizens

Despite the problems identified, the participants recognize that the Strategy can be relevant to *"create less inequality, more social justice, more quality of life"*, but it needs to be known and needs to be accompanied by the people who directly experience the problems. Above all, it needs to be a political commitment.

Herein lies a dimension that can be a barrier to the operationalization of the Strategy and, above all, to the fight against poverty as a national goal. Since the Strategy was created and implemented, Portugal has gone through several crises and several political cycles. The Strategy coordinator says that these scenarios had to be contemplated in the action plan, that is, this *"had to be a living and dynamic plan"*. In this sense, the Government's measures to mitigate the effects of inflation were framed in the Strategy⁴¹ and the same was true for Housing and Health:

"When I was drawing up the plan, I was doing it based on a Strategy that had been approved (...) in 2021, and, therefore, there was a need and there was availability at the time of some government areas, namely, health, but also housing, and they were not the only ones, but mainly health and housing, that wanted to include in the plan a set of actions to respond to new problems. The issue of Housing was almost entirely the Mais Habitação Program."

Sandra Araújo

This ability to adapt the plan to the context of crisis, new phenomena that arise or worsen, political contexts that change, is still relevant. But this can also be a problem. The Coordinator highlights one of the challenges inherent to this: the need for *indicators*. She also points to a possible solution with *"new sources of information that allow us to understand, and there civil society and the consultative forum are very good. That is why I think that the Consultative Forum is a very important structure, even to give us information about the measures that are being implemented, if they actually reach the ground and how they are being implemented"*.

³⁹ At this level, we highlight the concept of "aporophobia" presented by Adela Cortina, as being hatred of poor or disadvantaged people, repulsion, prejudice.

⁴⁰ EAPN Spain has addressed this phenomenon of institutional violence against people in situations of social vulnerability. This violence refers, for example, to situations of discrimination and prejudice in access to services, situations of exploitation, situations of abuse of power and lack of information that prevent access to people's rights.

⁴¹ For example: Measure 1.53 - Maintain the execution of the Bilha Solidária program to support the acquisition of liquefied petroleum gas.

More qualitative information on the existing challenges and the effective impact of the measures can be relevant and be a way to solve the problems of monitoring a more flexible plan. However, this flexibility can be a profound challenge, since it is intended that the NSCP achieves structural changes, can prevent and not act in a palliative way. In the same sense, the fight against poverty needs to be above political cycles, as EAPN Portugal has been advocating. The Strategy itself, regardless of the government cycle, needs to be a priority. It is clear that changes are needed, and monitoring and evaluation are central to this, but the strength of the Strategy as an effective tool in the fight against poverty cannot depend on electoral cycles and cannot lose its focus on combating poverty in a structural and proactive manner.

Another relevant aspect in the implementation of the Strategy focuses on the ability to implement it at the local level. It was essential that local strategies to combat poverty be created. This objective is contemplated in the NSCP and the coordinator says that when she started she considered it essential *to disseminate the strategy at the local level, so that everyone could be aware of what was at stake and, at the same time, commit local entities to the development and implementation, monitoring and evaluation (...)* That is why she made, in the first quarter of the year, an appeal to all CIMs⁴²... *I understood that they would be a privileged partner."*

Meetings were held and letters of commitment were signed between the CIMs and the NSCP (13 letters have been signed so far⁴³) and with the Metropolitan Areas. A work that has been consolidated.

"This letter of commitment was, on the one hand, an attempt to put the issue of poverty on the local agenda. The idea was that poverty occurs in territories and it is in territories that people and populations are found, and therefore agents in territories are much better positioned locally to understand and even anticipate problems. The dimension of anticipating problems, of knowledge, of deepening understanding of the problems in the territory and then trying to move on (...) to sectoral programmes and plans for which there is public funding, and which in some cases I realised there is still a great deal of ignorance about the funding that is available."

Sandra Araújo

As Sandra Araújo says, this close knowledge of the problems and populations is central. Poverty is not homogeneous and has a distinct expression throughout the territory. In the same way, the resources are also different, as are the needs of the people. That is why it is also so important to align the Development Plans with the NSCP:

"And what I would ask all CIMs, (...), is to try to align their plans with the National Strategy so that this can make sense, right? That the plans are aligned and that they identify exactly what the contributions are to the objectives and axes of the National Strategy, on the one hand, and on the

⁴² The Intermunicipal Communities "are free associations of municipalities, through the creation of a higher sub-regional entity (supra-municipal), to which the associated municipalities delegate part of the functions or competences conferred on them by law, with the aim of providing services to all of them, aiming, above all, to solve common problems that, therefore, are of trans-municipal geographical scope", in <https://ensina.rtp.pt/explicador/areas-metropolitanas-e-comunidades-intermunicipais/>
See also: Lei nº 75/2013, de 12 de setembro, Regime Jurídico das Autarquias Locais (versão atualizada): https://www.pgdlisboa.pt/leis/lei_mostra_articulado.php?nid=1990&tabela=leis&so_miolo=

⁴³ The letters were signed with: Algarve, Ave, Cávado, Baixo Alentejo, Beira Baixa, Cávado, Lezíria do Tejo, Médio Tejo, Tâmega e Sousa, Terras de Trás-os-Montes, Alto Tâmega e Barroso, Alto Minho, Lisbon Metropolitan Area and Porto Metropolitan Area.

other hand that they invest in the evaluation motorization systems". At this level, Sandra also says that "I wanted to go a little further in creating a system of a battery of indicators that could be harmonized at the intermunicipal level and even at the municipal level, so that we could then feed the motorization systems and we can compare".

Sandra Araújo

EAPN Portugal itself held in 2025 three (North, Center and South) Regional Meetings on Social Intervention Practices in the area of poverty and social exclusion, which had the partnership of the National Strategy to Combat Poverty and the Social Security Institute I.P. These meetings aimed to share operating models and innovative practices promoted by Local Social Networks in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. It was intended to create spaces for knowledge and discussion about the constraints and challenges that arise in the current context of networked social intervention, identifying solutions (practices/strategies/projects) that support professionals in activating and capturing the strengths of individuals and/or families in situations of poverty or exclusion.

The locals are still struggling with several constraints. It is very difficult to have a diagnosis of poverty in the territories, as there is a lack of disaggregated indicators at the local level, as well as systematic instruments for collecting and analysing data on the multiple dimensions of poverty. This weakens the planning of measures at local level and their implementation.

At the same time, the attention given to the issue of poverty is also differentiated and, in many cases, it is not a political priority, which constitutes a barrier to the territorialized implementation of the Strategy and to the fight against poverty itself. This is also reflected in the availability of resources (technical and financial) for this area and even in the capacity and technical competence to respond to it and its challenges. Without political commitment in the territories, NSCP is also fragile at the national level. It is necessary to invest in strengthening the technical and analytical capacity of the territories and at this level it is worth highlighting the training plan that is being designed and operationalized for the CIMs^{44,45}, and ensuring political commitment.

It is important to say that in October (the 12th) local elections will take place, so at the stage of writing this report, the commitments to be made are very tenuous, especially in this area.

⁴⁴ Within the scope of the Regional Operational Programs, applications are being made for the promotion of Skills and qualifications in local administration (IT). Example: North 2030_ <https://portugal2030.pt/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2024/04/unnamed-file.pdf-381.octet-stream>

"Training actions associated with modernization and administrative innovation projects and that qualify local public administration workers for the development of processes of decentralization of competences from central administration to local administration, namely in areas such as education, health, culture, social action, transport or housing, are eligible.", in <https://www.norte2030.pt/concurso/competencias-e-qualificacoes-na-administracao-local-it/>

⁴⁵ The EAPN Portugal team, together with the Logframe team, will be responsible for promoting a training action aimed at the qualification of territorial services. The training is the direct responsibility of the FEFAL Foundation (Foundation for Studies and Training in Local Authorities) (Notice NORTE2030-2024-80 | "Skills and qualifications in local administration (IT)" and will be addressed to the CIM of Alto Tâmega e Barroso. Other actions are also planned for the CIM of AVE and the CIM of Central Alentejo, but there is still no information on content and schedule.

3. Promising practices of the National Strategy to Combat Poverty

The National Strategy to Combat Poverty is recent, and it is important to recognize that it needs to be strengthened and assumed as a political commitment at the national and local levels. At its core, the Strategy includes a set of principles and practices that are positive, but that still need to be evaluated and improved in order to achieve the desired results. In this chapter, we highlight some of these practices:

- **Multidimensional and intersectoral approach:** the NSCP recognizes poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon that requires integrated action and seeks to involve all ministerial areas, local authorities, civil society organizations and citizens.
- **Alignment with the European Pillar of Social Rights and other national Strategies aimed at specific audiences.**
- **The participation of social economy entities and people living in poverty:** the NSCP promotes a Consultative Forum with civil society entities and experts and promotes Thematic Participatory Forums, organized by civil society entities and with the participation of citizens in poverty. The forums promote debate on topics such as digitalization of public services; decentralization of social competences to the Municipalities; circular economy and social employment market; inclusion of people in poverty in the evaluation of public policies.
- **The participatory construction of the Theory of Change,** which aims to improve the monitoring system of the NSCP; integrate the experience of people in poverty in the definition of policies and support the elaboration of the new Action Plan to be presented in 2026.
- **Organization of the Action Plan into strategic axes:** the 2022-2025 action plan is structured in 6 axes, with 15 strategic objectives, 145 measures, totalling 273 activities. The existence of a strategic axis that aims to make the fight against poverty a national goal and, as such, involve all actors in this fight, raise awareness in society of the importance of combating this phenomenon and promote effective public policies that combat inequalities and promote an effective improvement in people's living conditions.
- **Participatory monitoring and evaluation** through the Technical Monitoring Committee (CTA) and the Consultative Forum, with regular meetings with more than 40 public and private entities; impact assessments and progress reports; integration of updated statistical data to guide decisions. Participatory forums with people in poverty also allow for monitoring specific measures of the plan.
- **The work with the territories** where it seeks to promote the design and operationalization of local strategies to combat poverty in line with the National Strategy. The training of actors in the territories in poverty alleviation, governance strategies, public policy measures and networking.

4. Final remarks

The National Strategy to Combat Poverty 2021–2030 represents an important milestone in the political recognition of poverty as a structural, multidimensional phenomenon that requires a coordinated response at national and local levels. The process of designing and starting to implement the Strategy is based on a set of relevant principles – cross-sectoral approach, involvement of civil society and people living in poverty, alignment with the European Pillar of Social Rights – which are significant advances compared to previous more fragmented policies. Although the Strategy shows a national concern with the problem of poverty, the investment made remains insufficient to reduce the indicators significantly, thus compromising the achievement of the established goals.

The analysis developed throughout this report also highlights structural limitations and challenges that put at risk the full achievement of the goals and objectives set for 2030. The late operationalization of the first Action Plan (2022–2025), the absence of public implementation reports, the difficulties in intersectoral and territorial articulation, as well as the scarcity of disaggregated data, compromise the ability to monitor results and adjust policies effectively.

At the same time, participation is an inherent principle of the Strategy. However, this participation still needs to be consolidated and structured. The absence of permanent support mechanisms (financial and technical) limits the active and transformative participation of organisations and citizens in the monitoring and evaluation processes. It is noteworthy the lack of knowledge that citizens (and even social intervention professionals) still have about the Strategy and the fact that they perceive that it has little impact on improving their living conditions.

At the territorial level, there have been relevant advances, such as the signing of letters of commitment with the Intermunicipal Communities and Metropolitan Areas, as well as the pioneering adoption of municipal strategies (e.g. Porto). However, regional disparities, lack of robust local diagnostics and different degrees of political priority assigned to the fight against poverty by local governments persist, factors that weaken the coherence and effectiveness of the intervention and the definition of Local Strategies to combat Poverty.

The Strategy's ability to adapt to crisis contexts — such as inflation, the housing crisis and political instability — also raises questions about the consistency of the indicators and the possibility of maintaining a long-term strategic focus, independent of political cycles, and with an effective impact on the structural causes of poverty and the breaking of generational cycles of poverty.

In the NSCP, the articulation with different Strategies and agendas is expressed, at different times, which is relevant from the outset due to the *intersectionality* associated with the phenomenon of poverty and social exclusion. However, this necessary coordination makes it somewhat difficult to understand what actually depends on and results from this Strategy and what comes from the others. In the meetings in which EAPN Portugal participated, this was one of the difficulties raised by the evaluation team itself.

EAPN Portugal has always defended the existence of a National Strategy to Combat Poverty because it is necessary to create a systemic change at this level. Despite the challenges inherent to the current Strategy, it is essential to see it as a starting point from which we cannot stop or retreat, as there is a risk, in the current context of multiple crises, of witnessing a serious worsening of this

phenomenon. It is also important to highlight the importance of the European Commission presenting in 2026, and for the first time, a European Strategy to Combat Poverty, which could be a relevant contribution to boosting the national Strategy and the definition of Local Strategies to Combat Poverty, essential initiatives for the construction of structural public policies to combat poverty.

5. Recommendations

- The Fight against Poverty must be a local, national and European goal. It is essential **to strengthen the National Strategy to Combat Poverty, namely, the next action plan that will be outlined with concrete measures aimed at combating the structural causes of poverty.** The **European Strategy to Combat Poverty** that will be presented, together with the revision of the action plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Plan for Housing, can be relevant impulses in strengthening the National Strategy and in the definition of Local Strategies to combat poverty. It is important to highlight the importance of having an articulation in the territories between different measures and projects that are being developed in order to promote an integrated response to the phenomenon of poverty.
- Maintain poverty as a national priority, **integrating the various sectoral policies in a consistent and articulated way.** The added value of a Strategy of this nature is to create a new *rationale*, that is, that effectively values the fight against poverty and its eradication at local, national and European level.
- It is essential **to ensure stable political and financial commitments**, transversal to government cycles. The National Strategy needs to be strengthened from a budgetary point of view to ensure the promotion of new projects and even the continuity and deepening of projects already started (e.g. pilot projects with people in poverty); It also needs to have **realistic objectives and targets**, focused on what is possible to achieve by 2030 and taking into account the global adversities that impact the national situation.
- It is essential to **strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms**, with regular, disaggregated and accessible data and with more qualitative information that allows us to understand people's reality and the real impact of policies on the problems they face.
- Hate speech and stigma against people living in poverty are increasingly present in public discourse. **Aporophobia needs to be fought** because it creates barriers to inclusion, to the fight against poverty, and contributes to policies that can be more restrictive because they reinforce stereotypes about people in poverty. It is a barrier to access to rights and contributes to further exclusion; it weakens people even from a mental point of view, self-esteem, etc. It is important to organize awareness campaigns on poverty and social exclusion, working on issues related to hate speech associated with poverty and groups that are in this situation. It is also important to promote, and finance, pilot projects that make it possible to combat hate speech on social networks, as well as the financing of studies that allow us to understand this phenomenon (to know its dimension in Portugal; to identify institutional practices - in education, health, security, housing, the media - that reproduce or combat *aporophobia*; to characterize the social groups where *aporophobia* is more permeable; etc.).
- **Empowering teams** working in the social area and who are confronted daily with new challenges: the complexity of social phenomena and the immediacy of the responses needed to meet people's needs do not give time for reflection, for the discussion of cases and problems and for better intervention. **Training must be an instrument in the fight against poverty.**

- The **promotion of the participation of people in poverty** must be strengthened in the next action plan and there can be no place for specific moments of consultation that do not produce change. True listening requires access to information, it requires time to listen to the other and the will to produce change resulting from this listening.

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