



PERMANENT MISSION OF PORTUGAL
GENEVA

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The Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and, with reference to its request dated 30th of August, has the honour to enclose herewith the input of the Portuguese authorities to its report on the role of public service delivery in the promotion and protection of human rights and in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including in relation to the protection of persons in vulnerable situations.

The Permanent Mission of Portugal avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.



Geneva, 30 October 2023

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Email: ohchr-registry@un.org;
Cc : maria.veramendivilla@un.org;



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Call for inputs – Human Rights Council resolution 52/8 on promoting human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals through transparent, accountable, and efficient public service delivery

Input from Portugal

- 1. What are the main challenges identified in your country/region in relation to public service delivery? Please address both institutional and practical barriers in your response.**

Most of the constraints to public service delivery are related to integration difficulties, for example, data restrictive management by each department. There are also bureaucratic obstacles, such as red tape related issues, and organisational silos. Finally, service delivery is also hampered by a lack of sufficient digital literacy and technology acceptance often accompanied by issues as a result of socio-economic inequality.

- 2. What are the examples of good practices and approaches taken to overcoming identified challenges to the provision of public services.**

Some of the efforts we have put into overcoming identified challenges in public service delivery can be seen through several initiatives that we have implemented.

Here are a few examples:

- Deepening interoperability in Public Administration through an interoperability platform (iAP) and ensure—a single digital ID authentication mechanism. (<https://www.iap.gov.pt/>)
- Implement a single digital public service design standard to provide a coherent, effective user-experience through a common model for the design and the development of digital public services, centred on citizens and businesses: MOSAICO. (<https://mosaico.gov.pt>)



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- Launch of the LabX, the public sector innovation centre, to redesign and simplify services based on a human-centre approach. (<https://labx.gov.pt/?lang=en>)
- Launch of a whole of government approach in 2006 with an administrative modernisation strategy focused on high-impact simplification measures (National Strategy for the Digital Transformation of the Public Sector).
- Programmes such as SIMPLEX, the Portuguese flagship programme for simplification and modernisation. SIMPLEX has a citizen-driven approach and a strong focus on co-creation, with the ultimate goal of simplifying as much as possible the daily lives of citizens and businesses, as well as their interaction with the public administration. (<https://www.simplex.gov.pt/>)

The Office of the Secretary of State for Digitalisation and Administrative Modernisation and its services, chief among them the Administrative Modernisation Agency (AMA), have made great efforts to maintain simplification as a core tenet of their design processes by enabling human-centred-design elements at the core of service delivery, including digital services.

A cross-sectoral governance steering through the Council for Information and Communication Technologies in Public Administration (CTIC), created by Council of Ministers Resolution No. 33/2016 of 3 June 2016, is also a key element. This is the coordinating-structure responsible for developing and managing the ICT strategy and the overall action plan for ICT in the Portuguese public administration.

3. To what extent does corruption play in excluding individuals and households from accessing public services? How does corruption affect the delivery of public services to population groups in your country?

Although the impact of the public service delivery seems to be relatively low, at least at the digital level, there is an awareness that several issues that hinder the delivery of public services can be mitigated, namely through accessibility and open government initiatives that promote inclusive and transparent services.



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For example, Portugal is part of the Open Government Partnership and has been consistently promoting initiatives and solutions, such as Simplex, the More Transparency Portal (*Portal Mais Transparência Portal*), and the Participate Portal (*Participa.gov*), among others, to increasingly respond to the expectations of the citizens.

<https://www.simplex.gov.pt/>

<https://transparencia.gov.pt/pt/>

<https://participa.gov.pt/>

4. What percentage of eligible individuals and households do not claim and/or benefit from public services in your country (non-take up)? What are the barriers that hinder them from accessing public services to which they are entitled? How can non-take-up be reduced?

There is currently no data available on the non-take up rate in Portugal. However, we are aware of some of the barriers that hinder our citizen's ability to access public services.

Beside the challenges, there are others related to socio-economic barriers, many of which are the result of an increase in the senior population (making up nearly 30% of Portugal's population by 2021), which implies a lack of digital literacy and unawareness of most means of service delivery and channels contact channels. These barriers can be further broken down into known issues such as those faced by low-income families, minorities, families with low levels of education, and citizens living in remote regions of the country – all groups who, for a myriad of reasons, often face difficulties in interacting with the existing network of the public services.

Our approach to mitigate the non-take up rate is anchored on two core efforts:

1. Redesigning and digitally enhancing our public service delivery model:



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- a. Consolidation of a single web portal (Single Digital Gateway) for all public entities.
 - b. Omnichannel service delivery, from customer service through telephone to a citizen and/or corporate mobile app, AI-powered virtual assistance mechanisms on the web, and other disruptive solutions we are currently developing.
 - c. Enhanced face-to-face service delivery by simplifying current business models and redesigning architectures to streamline our citizen's experience. Our philosophy is to turn our Citizen Spots (*Espaço Cidadão*) and Citizen Stores (*Lojas Cidadão*) into one-stop shops and to reduce the volume of users in the more popular stores through a modular solution – the “pop-up store” concept.
 - We also currently provide Mobile Citizen Spots, which bridge the gap in service delivery to our citizens in rural areas who would not otherwise have easy access to public services.
 - d. We are revamping our customer service model by consolidating public service delivery into a single telephone service line (*iCidadão*) and creating a video call service line where citizens can carry out a wide range of services using biometric authentication.
2. For the socio-economic limitations, our government has adopted several proactive social policies aimed at alleviating these problems, and has also implemented measures to automate and expedite several procedures:
- a. Social Energy Tariff supply (*Tarifa Social de Energia*) – a programme that automatically provides lower energy costs for low-income families; child benefits (*Abono de família*) – financial support from the social security system to help families with childcare costs; Social Inclusion Benefit (*Prestação para a Inclusão*) – Support for people with a disability level of 60% or more.
 - b. Automatic renewal of national identity card, automatic renewal of driving licence, automatic renewal of residence permit for foreigners working/studying in Portugal.



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- 5. Please refer to challenges and good practices of public services delivery to persons belonging to groups in situations of vulnerability and marginalization including persons living in poverty, women and girls; children and youth; ethnic, national and linguistic minorities; persons with disabilities; indigenous peoples; migrants; and older persons.**

We have a framework for measuring accessibility in Portuguese websites through a web plugin called “Accessmonitor” (<https://accessmonitor.acessibilidade.gov.pt>). the purpose of this plugin is to assist manual reviewers of Portuguese public service websites and is currently being maintained by the AMA, although the architecture for this plugin has been shared with other countries for their accessibility monitoring needs. Accessmonitor is W3C compliant, as well as Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and the Accessible Rich Internet Applications Suite with the purpose of keeping Portuguese websites in line with EU norms for web content (Directive No. 2016/2102).

We have also adhered to EUPAN’s tenets of transforming both “public services and public workers towards a new model of growth, a humane, inclusive and solidary Europe, in line with the ambitions of the European Pillar of Social Rights, and the promotion of the values of peace and democracy on the European continent.” To this end we seek to ensure that our public service design principles are in line with the following values:

- Attractive, modern, and innovative civil services that lead by example.
- Transparent and resilient public services that meet users' expectations.
- High-quality, inclusive digital public services that respect European values.

Also, the redesign of public services led by LabX – the centre for innovation in the public sector, is an inclusive process, that takes into consideration the minority and vulnerable sectors of our society.



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6. Are public services digitalized in your country? Please provide details including challenges and good practices in digitalization of public services that ensures transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the delivery of public services.

According to the Capgemini 2021 eGovernment benchmark, Portugal has the 8th highest score for the digitalisation of public services, reaching almost 100%, well above the EU average of 81%. Portugal also ranked 8th in the highest performance ranking, which takes into account several indicators, such as: transparency, user centric design, service availability, and cross-border services, among others.

We are currently working on the expansion of the ePortugal website as a centralised public administration portal, where information on public service needs can be found based on life events, as well as the pilot version of our AI Avatar project, which is currently working on queries regarding the activation of the Digital Mobile Key (*Chave Móvel Digital*). The AI Avatar project is a ChatGPT-based bot that will eventually be used as the first line of support for all public services as it:

1. Allows for 24/7 Coverage.
2. Can reply through voice or chat.
3. It was built with cell phone compatibility.

To ensure the quality of our ongoing digital transformation procedures we have also been working on two major structures: MOSAICO and iAP (please see above).

7. How is the participation of private actors in public service delivery regulated and monitored in your country/region? Please share challenges and good practices.

Stakeholder engagement is a core necessity to ensure that we can maintain a whole of society approach in reviewing the structure of our business model for public service delivery. Despite this, the private companies have an important role to play in



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transformation initiatives at local/municipal level, as they manage a wide array of services and sectors which would otherwise be outside the purview of local authorities.

At the local level, interactions between private actors and civil society at large are regulated and directly handled by the municipalities and, at a larger level, there is direct public intervention bound by an extensive regulatory framework harmonised with that of the EU.

8. Describe economic policies, legislation, promising practices, or strategies and national, regional or local processes aimed at:

- Increasing social spending, through national and local budgets, for the provision of public services;
- Addressing structural discrimination in the provision of public services;
- Maximising the resources available for the provision of public services;
- Prevent corruption in the provision of public services and related illicit financial flows;
- Relocation of public expenditure to the provision of public services.

We have already mentioned a few of these initiatives in the course of this questionnaire, but we would like to highlight the following:

- For the mitigation of socioeconomic issues, we have programmes such as the Social Tariff for Energy Supply, *Child Benefits*, *Social inclusion Benefits*, pension programmes and other family support benefits.
- Towards the allocation of funds for the provision of public services there are several examples, one of which is the Participatory Budget (Orçamento Participativo). It can be found in various instances, from those practised at the local municipal level to a larger institutional scale such as the AMA's OPP (*Orçamento Participativo Portugal*). In fact, much of Portugal's regional participatory budgeting ecosystem can



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be seen on the Participate Portal (*Participa.gov*), which, among other things, promotes the visibility of each initiative.

- Concerning the fight against structural discrimination, we have legal frameworks such as those put forward by the Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination, with Law number 93/2017 and a course developed by the Commission with the National Institute of Administration destined to ensure that public servants are instructed in the principles of equality and non-discrimination in the performance of their duties.
- When it comes to ensuring inclusivity and accessibility in our websites, we have invested in plugins such as Accessmonitor, but we have also made efforts to homogenise the digitisation of public services through MOSAICO and to ease the burden on our citizens through iAP.
- In order to prevent corruption, the government has developed the 2020-2024 National Strategy for Corruption, which comprises a vast array of objectives and targets focused on, among other things, improving civic awareness, preventing corruption, encouraging the private sector to comply with anti-corruption measures, homogenizing the implementation of the strategy and guaranteeing its efficiency. In addition, the Recovery and Resilience Plan has allotted a large amount of funds to the fight against corruption.