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National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21*

Portugal

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



I. Introduction

1. Portugal is submitting its national report under the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review mechanism (UPR), in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 and with Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1, 16/21 and decision 17/119. The report reviews the progress made in the field of human rights in Portugal between May 2019 and March 2024, in light of the country's international obligations and of the recommendations made during the third cycle of the UPR in 2019.

2. Portugal maintains an unwavering commitment to protect, respect and fulfil all human rights – whether they be civil, cultural, economic, political or social – for all persons. Portugal is also determined to continue promoting human rights through its external action, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

II. Methodology

3. The process of drafting this report involved several stages:

(a) Monitoring. Monitoring of UPR recommendations – which is a continuous task – is entrusted to the Portuguese National Human Rights Committee (PNHRC), an interministerial coordination body comprised of representatives hailing from 22 different areas of Government. The PNHRC functions as the national mechanism for implementation, reporting and follow-up (NMIRF). In October 2022, Portugal voluntarily submitted its UPR third-cycle midterm report.¹

(b) Drafting. This national report was first drafted by the Executive Secretariat of the PNHRC, i.e., the Human Rights Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The report was then circulated for comments by the members of the PNHRC.

(c) Consulting. The draft report was shared with the around 300 civil society organizations which are accredited before the PNHRC, so that they could review the draft and express their opinion. A meeting of the PNHRC with civil society organizations was then held on 19 June 2024.

III. Developments since the previous cycle

A. Context

4. During the reporting period, Portugal faced essentially four crises: *i*) the lingering effects of the financial and sovereign debt crisis; *ii*) the continued repercussions of the wildfire crisis which devastated significant areas of the country; *iii*) the multifaceted crisis provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic; *iv*) the inflationary crisis. Throughout these crises, Portugal remained deeply committed to implementing its international human rights obligations and to minimizing the impacts of these crises, especially on persons in vulnerable or marginalized situations.

5. Indeed, the focus of public authorities was on combatting these four crises through a human rights-based approach, and results were globally positive. Regarding the financial and sovereign debt crisis, in 2023, Portugal concluded the year with a budget surplus of 1,3% of GDP – the highest in its democratic history – and with public debt lower than 100% of GDP – the lowest value since 2009. Regarding the wildfire crisis, in 2023, burnt area was reduced by 93,6% and the number of rural wildfires was reduced by 60% when compared to 2017 (i.e., the peak of the crisis). Regarding the sanitary crisis, Portugal was the first country in the world to vaccinate 85% of its population. Regarding the inflationary crisis, average household disposable income rose by 1,9% in 2023.

6. Throughout the reporting period, Portugal also defined four strategic challenges (climate change, demography, inequalities and digitalization) and set out on six structural transformations which have a direct impact on the realization of human rights. Firstly, Portugal promoted economic growth: from 2015 to 2023, the economy grew by 18,1%

(compared to the EU's 13,2% and the Eurozone's 11,7%). Secondly, Portugal focused on increasing employment and salaries: from 2015 to 2023, an extra 629 thousand persons have engrossed the employed population, and the minimum wage rose by 62% while the average wage rose by 27,7%. Thirdly, Portugal became more qualified: from 2015 to 2023, school dropout rate lowered from 13,7% to 8% and the number of young persons aged 20 who are in tertiary education rose from 39% to 54%. Fourthly, Portugal became more economically competitive: from 2015 to 2023, private investment rose by 85% and medium and high-tech exports rose by 71%. Fifthly, Portugal became more equal: from 2015 to 2023, the poverty or social exclusion rate lowered by 20,1% (659 thousand persons and 228 thousand children were taken out of situations of risk of poverty and social exclusion). Sixthly, Portugal combatted climate change: from 2015 to 2023, greenhouse gas emissions lowered by 17% and the weight of renewable sources in electricity production rose from 52,6% to 62%.

B. Accession to international instruments

7. During the reporting period, Portugal ratified the following instruments:²
 - International Labour Organization (ILO):
 - Protocol to Convention no. 29: Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention of 1930, on 23 December 2020;
 - Convention no. 188: Working in Fishing Convention, on 26 November 2019;
 - Convention no. 190: Violence and Harassment Convention, on 16 February 2024.
 - Council of Europe:
 - CETS no. 167: Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons, on 11 July 2023;
 - CETS no. 207: Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority, on 16 September 2022;
 - CETS no. 209: Third Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Extradition, on 8 April 2019;
 - CETS no. 212: Fourth Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Extradition, on 28 July 2021;
 - CETS no. 219: Protocol amending the European Landscape Convention, on 1 July 2021;
 - CETS no. 220: Council of Europe Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production (revised), on 18 October 2023;
 - CETS no. 222: Protocol amending the Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons, on 11 July 2023;
 - CETS no. 223: Protocol amending the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data, on 18 October 2023.
 - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):
 - Multilateral Convention to Implement Tax Treaty Related Measures to Prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS Convention), on 28 February 2020.
8. During the reporting period, Portugal signed the following instruments:³
 - United Nations:
 - Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty (also known as the High Seas Treaty), on 20 September 2023.
 - Council of Europe:

- CETS no. 148: European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, on 7 September 2021;
- CETS no. 224: Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime on enhanced co-operation and disclosure of electronic evidence, on 15 May 2022.

C. Legal and institutional human rights framework

9. During the reporting period, we highlight the adoption of the following legal diplomas:⁴

- Law no. 4/2019, which establishes a quota system for the employment of persons with disabilities;
- Law no. 26/2019, which establishes gender equality parameters in leadership positions of public administration;
- Law no. 80/2019, which determines that the mandatory initial training for judicial magistrates (i.e., judges and prosecutors) must include two new components (out of a total of eleven): human rights and gender-based violence;
- Law no. 83/2019, which approves the Housing Law;
- Law no. 95/2019, which approves the Health Law;
- Law no. 100/2019, which approves the informal carer ‘status’;
- Law no. 110/2019, which establishes the rights applicable in the context of preconception, medically assisted procreation, pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period;
- Law no. 2/2020, which establishes free childcare;
- Law no. 85/2021, which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity regarding eligibility for donating blood;
- Law no. 98/2021, which approves the Climate Law;
- Law no. 3/2023, which waives the need for conciliation attempts in divorce proceedings, in the context of domestic violence;
- Law no. 13/2023, which approves the Decent Work Agenda;
- Law no. 26/2023, which strengthens the protection afforded to victims of crimes involving non-consensual dissemination of intimate content;
- Law no. 35/2023, which approves the new Mental Health Law;
- Law no. 40/2023, which strengthens the fight against violence in sport, namely of a racist or xenophobic nature, and attributes greater powers to the Authority for Preventing and Combatting Violence in Sport;
- Law no. 41/2023, which creates the status of ‘stateless person’;
- Law no. 45/2023, which strengthens the protection afforded to victims of crimes against sexual freedom;
- Law no. 56/2023, which approves measures to address the housing crisis;
- Law no. 3/2024, which makes the Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination an independent entity;
- Law no. 4/2024, which amends article 240 of the Criminal Code by adding language and nationality as prohibited grounds of discrimination;
- Law no. 15/2024, which prohibits conversion therapy against LGBTI persons;
- Decree-Law no. 101/2020, which establishes a new leave paid for by Social Security for cases of domestic violence;

- Decree-Law no. 26/2021, which creates the National System for Urgent and Temporary Housing;
 - Decree-Law no. 80/2021, which approves a new organic for the Ombudsperson's Office;
 - Decree-Law no. 89/2021, which defines the obligations and competences of public authorities regarding alternative housing, legal preference and the inspection of habitability conditions;
 - Decree-Law no. 105/2021, which regulates the activity of cultural professionals;
 - Decree-Law no. 113/2021, which establishes the organization of mental health services;
 - Decree-Law no. 58/2022, which provides for the installation of landline phones inside prison cells and dormitories;
 - Decree-Law no. 2/2023, which regulates the usage and characteristics of bodycams by security forces;
 - Decree-Law no. 41/2023, which creates the Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum;
 - Decree-Law no. 89/2023, which creates the Institute on Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies;
 - Decree-Law no. 113/2023, which enhances social protection for unemployed persons with the status of 'victims of domestic violence';
 - Resolution no. 139/2019, which defines concrete measures to prevent and combat domestic violence;
 - Resolution no. 118/2022, which provides for the progressive shutdown of the Lisbon Central Prison;
 - Order no. 12625/2021, which creates the National Committee on International Humanitarian Law;
 - Order no. 5670/2023, which regulates the process of conferring the status of 'victim of domestic violence' by the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality;
 - Order no. 7798/2023, which establishes the fourth Programme for Priority Intervention Education Territories.
10. During the reporting period, Portugal adopted the following strategies and plans:⁵
- National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination (2018-2030), which is comprised of three Action Plans (the first ones for 2018-2021 and the second ones for 2023-2026):
 - Action Plan for equality between women and men;
 - Action Plan for preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence;
 - Action Plan for combatting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sexual characteristics.
 - National Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2021-2024), which comprised two operational Action Plans (the first for 2021-2022 and the second for 2023-2024);
 - National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (2021-2025);
 - National Strategy for Combatting Poverty (2021-2030);
 - National Strategy for the Integration of Persons in Situations of Homelessness (first one for 2017-2023 and prolonged for one year, the second one for 2025-2030);
 - National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities (2018-2022, prolonged until the end of 2023);

- National Strategy for the Rights of Victims of Crime (2024-2028);
- National Strategy for Combatting Corruption (2020-2024);
- National Strategy for Food and Nutritional Security (adopted in 2021);
- National Strategy for Citizenship Education (approved in 2017 and still in place);
- Strategy for Portuguese Development Cooperation 2030 (adopted in 2022);
- National Plan for Combatting Racism and Discrimination (2021-2025);
- National Plan for Youth (first one for 2020-2022, the second one for 2022-2024);
- National Plan for the Child Guarantee (2022-2030);
- National Plan for Housing (2022-2026);
- National Plan for Health 2030 (approved in 2023);
- National Plan for the Reduction of Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies 2030 and Action Plan for the Reduction of Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies Horizon 2024;
- National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution no. 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (the third edition for 2019-2022, the fourth edition is currently being drafted);
- National Plan for the Implementation of the Global Pact for Migration (adopted in 2019);
- National Plan for Energy and Climate (2021-2030);
- Action Plan for Active and Healthy Ageing (2023-2026);
- Action Plan for preventing and combatting trafficking in persons (the fourth edition for 2018-2021, the fifth edition for 2024-2027 has recently been under public consultation and awaits approval);
- Action Plan for the circular economy (2017-2020, the second edition for 2023-2027 has undergone public consultation);
- Plan for the Prevention of Manifestations of Discrimination in the Security Forces (adopted in 2021)⁶;
- Sectoral Defence Plan for Equality (first for 2019-2021 and second for 2022-2025).

IV. Follow-up on recommendations

11. At the thirty-third session of the UPR in May 2019, Portugal received 245 recommendations, of which 231 were accepted and 14 were noted. This section contains information concerning the implementation of the recommendations which were supported, grouped by subject matter.

A. Institutional cross-cutting issues

1. Human rights machinery

(a) National mechanism for implementation, reporting and follow-up (NMIRF)

12. The PNHRC continued to work throughout the reporting period, despite the changes in representatives due to parliamentary elections and the formation of the XXII, XXIII and XXIV Governments and the challenges posed by COVID-19. It continued to meet 3 times per year at a plenary level (one of those times with the participation of civil society), and very regularly at working group level. Apart from regular meetings of two standing working groups (Business and Human Rights, and Human Rights Indicators), *ad hoc* working groups were created for the purposes of: *i*) three dialogues with UN Treaty Bodies (CEDAW,

CESCR and CERD); *ii*) two visits of UN Special Procedures (Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent and Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment); *iii*) one visit of the Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT); *iv*) commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

13. With regard to the international promotion of NMIRFs, Portugal has continued to Chair the Group of Friends of NMIRFs in Geneva. Together with Morocco and Paraguay, Portugal has been part of a joint effort to establish an international network of NMIRFs, which was created in May 2024, in Asuncion. Apart from cooperation initiatives with other States,⁷ the Executive Secretariat of the PNHRC also had the opportunity to share its experience and exchange best practices bilaterally: in 2022, meetings were held with the Gender Equality Commission of Serbia and with the National Preventive Mechanism on Trafficking in Persons of Cabo Verde; in 2023, a virtual meeting was held with Paraguay’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding SIMORE Plus.

(b) *National human rights institution (NHRI)*

14. The Ombudsperson – created in 1975, accredited since 1999 with A-status as the NHRI⁸ and functioning as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM)⁹ since 2013 – has been reinforced via Decree-Law no. 80/2021, at the request of the Ombudsperson herself. This legal diploma of 2021 established a new organic structure of the Ombudsperson’s Office (the former organic having previously been established in 1993). The aims were essentially threefold: *i*) grant greater flexibility and latitude to the Ombudsperson so that she can better organize her Office how she sees fit; *ii*) adapt the labour conditions of the staff working at the Ombudsperson’s Office to the general rules of civil servants; *iii*) explicitly reflect its role as NHRI and NPM and improve the functioning of the Office, allowing it to respond in a faster and more efficient way to citizen’s complaints.

15. Indeed, according to the previous model, the Office was composed by the Consultancy (“*Assessoria*”) and the Department of Technical and Administrative Support, which was divided into four Units (Documentation; Information and Public Relations; Administration; Informatics). The current model divides the Office into five: *i*) the Deputy Ombudspersons; *ii*) the Cabinet of the Ombudsperson; *iii*) the Office’s Secretary-General; *iv*) the four Departments (General Intervention; NPM; International Relations and Law; Studies and Projects); *v*) administrative services.

16. The Ombudsperson is also one of the three Permanent Observers to the PNHRC (the other two being the Parliament and the Public Prosecutor’s Office). Throughout the reporting period, representatives of the Ombudsperson’s Office have participated in almost all of PNHRC’s meetings (both at plenary and working group levels). The Ombudsperson’s Office also sent written information and ensured in-person participation at the dialogue between Portugal and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in April 2023.

(c) *Human rights professional training*

17. The National Administration Institute offers a variety of training programmes with a strong human rights component. For 2024, the Institute’s training plan foresees 6 training areas, one of them being ‘Participation and Citizenship’; under ‘Citizenship’, there are 11 programmes divided into two subsections: ‘Inclusion’ (6 programmes in total which delve into the rights of persons with disabilities, namely on physical and digital accessibility, recruitment and professional inclusion, among others), and ‘Equality’ (4 programmes: *i*. a 4-hour programme on skills for interculturality; *ii*. a 4-hour programme on literacy on racism and racial discrimination; *iii*. a 21-hour programme on equality between women and men in public administration; *iv*. a 30-hour human rights training programme for civil servants). Launched in December 2021, this last human rights training programme already had 5 editions (the last one having taken place in March-April 2024), and it is developed in collaboration with the PNHRC.

(d) *Cooperation with civil society*

18. Portugal maintains a strong cooperation with civil society in a wide variety of different areas and levels of governance. The Economic and Social Council – established by the

Constitution – is the primary forum for such articulation; the Council brings together representatives from the Government, from municipalities and autonomous regions, from business associations, from trade unions and from other civil society actors. The Council has two types of competences: *i*) publishing opinions – which are either mandatory opinions (on legislation relating to social, economic or regional development as well as Portugal’s participation in the EU), opinions requested by the President, the Government, Parliament or the judiciary, or own opinions; *ii*) social dialogue, namely on labour legislation.

19. Public consultation of regulations – which is also an established practice, apart from being enshrined in the Constitution – has also been evolving: even though the law does not require public consultations for all new regulations, in practice the scope, length and number of regulations subject to public consultations have increased. In July 2019, a new website called ‘*ConsultaLEX*’ was created to centralize and facilitate the participation of civil society in public consultations.

20. In the field of human rights, the PNHRC continued to maintain a mailing list of civil society organizations. Registration is simple and it is clearly explained in the PNHRC’s website: representatives of civil society who wish to be registered need only send an email with their names and contact information. The PNHRC’s mailing list currently has around 300 civil society representatives. Apart from receiving information about UN processes (and namely how to participate and be involved in Portugal’s dialogues with Treaty Bodies), they are invited to one of the three yearly plenary meetings of the PNHRC. Those meetings tend to focus on a specific topic: in 2021, racism, welcoming of Afghan refugees and the ‘*Never Forget*’ programme about the memory of the Holocaust; in 2022, mental health and human rights; in 2023, HIV and human rights.

2. Inter-State cooperation

21. During the reporting period, Portugal reinforced cooperation with other States in the field of human rights. The Executive Secretariat of the PNHRC offered free in-person training to civil servants in Malabo on international human rights mechanisms, as part of the Support Programme to Integrate Equatorial Guinea in the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP). Portugal also maintained bilateral human rights dialogues, with a focus on multilateral positions, with South Africa and Argentina. Portugal also contributed to the establishment of a network of human rights focal points in CPLP.

3. Statistics

22. During the reporting period, *Statistics Portugal* – which is an independent body – had as its main task the organization of the Census 2021. *Statistics Portugal* also carried out four statistical operations with a direct bearing on human rights: *i*) the Gender Dossier; *ii*) the Survey on Public and Private Security; *iii*) the Survey on the conditions, origins and trajectories of the resident population; *iv*) the development of indicators on Sustainable Development Goals. Finally, *Statistics Portugal* – whose representatives have a seat at the PNHRC – has contributed to the revitalization of the PNHRC’s standing working group on human rights indicators, where work is ongoing to develop a new set of indicators on the right to free participation in cultural life.

23. Regarding the ‘Gender Dossier’ (with indicators disaggregated by sex in 9 areas), *Statistics Portugal* has been revising indicators which allow for the monitoring of inequalities between women and men. Regarding the Survey on Public and Private Security, results were made available in December 2023, gathering data on issues such as ‘stalking’, violence in childhood, sexual violence, physical and psychological consequences of violence, awareness of support services, among others. Regarding the Survey on the conditions, origins and trajectories of the resident population, results have been made available in December 2023; this is the first-ever survey in Portugal to gather disaggregated data on ethnic origin and on racial discrimination, as recommended by several human rights bodies. Regarding the 2030 Agenda, *Statistics Portugal* continued to work on improving indicators on Sustainable Development Goals, making an independent publication as well as a review which was annexed to the second Portuguese Voluntary National Review (presented in 2023).

B. Thematic cross-cutting issues

1. Racial discrimination

24. Before the reporting period, Law no. 93/2017 established the legal framework for the prevention, prohibition and fight against discrimination based on racial and ethnic origin, colour, nationality, ancestry and territory of origin. Throughout the reporting period, new advances were made: *i*) the adoption of the first National Plan for Combatting Racism and Discrimination (2021-2025); *ii*) the organization of the first-ever national survey to gather data disaggregated by race and ethnicity; *iii*) the new legal regime of the Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination, making it an independent body financed by Parliament as opposed to its previous dependence of the former High Commission for Migration; *iv*) the establishment of an Observatory for Racism and Xenophobia, lodged at the Law Faculty of *Universidade Nova de Lisboa*; *v*) the amendment to article 240 of the Criminal Code adding language and nationality as prohibited grounds of discrimination; *vi*) the publication of the Guide for Preventing and Combatting Racial Discrimination in Schools; *vii*) the signature of a protocol between the Lisbon Regional Council of the Portuguese Bar Association, the Secretariat-General of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination launching a pilot-project on legal aid to victims of racial discrimination.

25. Regarding the National Plan for Combatting Racism and Discrimination, it was built inclusively with civil society; the working group which drafted the Plan was composed of 16 individuals drawn from academia (7), anti-racist and migrants' associations (5) and Government officials (4); the Plan was discussed with 60 entities from the public and private sector in 10 different meetings, and then put to public consultation, where 139 contributions were received, of which 118 of a favourable nature. The Plan includes benchmarks, targets and indicators, which are being continuously monitored through an online collaborative platform, which will allow for an evaluation due in 2025.

26. From 2019 to 2023, the Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination provided around 10 thousand hours of training on preventing and combatting racial discrimination to a number of stakeholders (namely civil servants, security forces, school professionals and media workers). Since 2015, the Commission trained around 3 thousand security forces professionals. In 2022, two new online courses – built in partnership with the National Administration Institute and targeting civil servants – were launched and, in that year, they reached over 19 thousand persons. Since 2021, the Centre for Judiciary Studies has provided 7 editions of a 34-hour training course on racial discrimination and hate speech to around 570 judges and prosecutors. In 2022, the Directorate-General for Justice Administration has given around 160 hours of training on racial discrimination and hate speech, targeting court professionals and paralegals.

27. In the Resolution which approved the National Plan for Combatting Racism and Discrimination, “the Government recognizes that, notwithstanding the existing legal framework, there are still phenomena of racism and discrimination. These phenomena violate the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic and are rooted in stereotypes based on ideas, myths and theories espousing an alleged superiority of a race or of a group of persons from a certain ethnic origin or nationality. These stereotypes generate direct and indirect discrimination, including from an intersectional perspective, and reflect the historical processes which are at their origin, such as slavery and colonialism, thereby perpetuating models of structural discrimination.” Furthermore, in September 2022, during his visit to Mozambique, the then Prime-Minister publicly apologized for the Wiriyamu massacre; on 25 April 2023, the President of the Republic stated that Portugal should take full responsibility for its colonial past and for slavery.

2. Right to a healthy, clean and sustainable environment

28. Portugal was one of the first countries in the world to constitutionally recognize the right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment, in 1976. A crucial element of the realization of this right is combatting climate change. Several advances have been made in this area: *i*) in 2016, an Environment Fund was created as a result of the consolidation of

different financial instruments, it is mostly funded by carbon and pollution taxation and its budget grew from 154 million euros in 2017 to 1.842 million euros in 2024; *ii*) in 2017, environmental impact assessment norms were defined with stricter criteria than those stipulated by the EU; *iii*) in 2019, Portugal committed to carbon neutrality by 2030; *iv*) in 2021, single-use plastic products were prohibited; *v*) in 2021, a new Climate Law was approved; *vi*) in 2021, the green transition was defined as one of the three pillars of the Recovery and Resilience Plan, and investments in this area were given a budget of 4.388 million euros; *vii*) in 2021, Portugal became the first European country without nuclear energy to abandon coal by shutting down its power stations in Pego and Sines. In terms of renewable energy, Portugal intends to double the installed capacity for electricity production from renewable sources by 2030. All of these reforms and plans are a result of consultation with civil society, and namely with the National Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development.

3. Sustainable development

29. Portugal is committed to maintaining a human rights-based approach to sustainable development, and therefore the Executive Secretariat of the PNHRC has actively collaborated with the *taskforce* headed by the Secretariat-General of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers to elaborate the National Roadmap for Sustainable Development 2030, which is currently under public consultation. The Executive Secretariat of the PNHRC has also contributed to the drafting of the II Voluntary National Review presented in 2023; according to the publication by the National Statistics Institute, out of the 170 indicators under analysis from 2015 to 2022, 101 have registered a positive evolution (out of which 20 have already reached the 2030 final goal), 38 were inconclusive (due to unavailable or irregular data), 28 have evolved negatively and 3 presented no change.¹⁰

C. Civil and political rights

1. Prohibition of torture

(a) *Excessive use of force by security forces*

30. In 2021, Portugal adopted the Plan for the Prevention of Manifestations of Discrimination in the Security Forces. The Plan has led to work in five areas: *i*) tightening of control in recruitment through stronger personality and psychological tests, while making efforts to increase the diversity of candidates; *ii*) training, with more hours of initial and lifelong training being dedicated to issues such as human rights and combatting discrimination; *iii*) the publication of new manuals of actions and internal documents regulating the interaction of security forces with citizens, including in social media; *iv*) promoting good practices through internal and external communication; *v*) strengthening of preventative and monitoring mechanisms, namely through the appointment of a Human Rights Officer in each security force as well as providing new financial and human resources to the Inspectorate-General of Home Affairs.

31. Outside of the Plan, other measures have been taken such as: *i*) in 2022, the issuance of a recommendation on handcuffing by the Inspectorate-General of Home Affairs; *ii*) the approval of Decree-Law no. 2/2023 determining the widespread usage of ‘bodycams’ by security forces to strengthen transparency in police action while ensuring that data is collected and stored in conformity with privacy laws; *iii*) in 2023, the signature of a protocol between the Directorate-General for Reinsertion and Prison Services, the Inspectorate-General of Home Affairs and the Inspectorate-General of Justice Services, aiming to streamline procedures applicable in cases where inmates enter the prison system from police custody and present injuries or allege ill-treatment; *iv*) the implementation of data collection fields in the systems of the security forces, making it mandatory that all information related to detention is recorded.

(b) Conditions of detention

32. Throughout the reporting period, Portugal made considerable efforts to realize the rights of persons deprived of liberty, namely through the improvement of material conditions of detention, thereby implementing recommendations issued by CAT, the Council of Europe's CPT and in the context of the UPR's third cycle. The following measures are to be highlighted: *i*) the approval, in 2023, of a multiannual investment plan towards renovation and expansion works of several prisons, the construction of a new prison in the Azores and renovation works in all 6 youth detention facilities, as well as the approval, in 2022, of a multiannual investment plan (until 2026) in the security forces, which dedicates 236 million euros to infrastructure, including the modernization of detention centres; *ii*) the intervention already made in 30 prisons to strengthen privacy in sanitary facilities; *iii*) the creation of more facilities for conjugal visits (there are 24 prisons equipped with these rooms, and 5 will soon be equipped too); *iv*) the progressive installation of CCTV as a means to prevent abuses (34 prisons are fully covered and 2 are partially so, with 6 others soon to be equipped); *v*) the approval of Resolution no. 118/2022, which provides for the progressive shutdown until 2026 of the Lisbon Central Prison (whose conditions have severely deteriorated); *vi*) the approval of Decree-Law no. 58/2022, which provides for the installation of landline phones inside prison cells and dormitories; *vii*) the creation of a digital platform – which started as a pilot-project in March 2024 and will soon be rolled-out – to allow inmates to access websites in a secure environment and to lodge requests and complaints electronically.

33. Apart from measures to improve material conditions, the Directorate-General for Reinsertion and Prison Services also issued a regulation, in June 2023, on the protection of children who reside with a parent in prison. In the area of health, the following measures are to be highlighted: *i*) the presentation, in 2024, of the proposal for a Health Plan for Prisons by an interministerial working group, suggesting that prison health units become integrated in the National Health Service; *ii*) National Health Service desks have been set up in all prisons, allowing for medical consultations via videoconference; *iii*) the integration of the health databases of prisons in the general National Health Service database, avoiding the duplication of individual clinical files (initially as a pilot-project launched in 2024); *iv*) the implementation of the Restructuring Programme of the Forensic System, increasing the number of vacancies in forensic units run by the National Health Service while creating transitional residence units.

2. Prohibition of slavery

34. Regarding trafficking in persons, Portugal continued implementing the IV Action Plan for preventing and combatting trafficking in persons (2018-2021), an implementation which was continuously scrutinized by the Technical Monitoring Committee; the Committee met twice per year and integrated a variety of representatives from the central administration, from the judiciary, from security forces and from municipalities. The final monitoring report published in June 2022 indicated that the IV Action Plan had an execution rate of 75%. A working group was established to draft the V Action Plan, which is currently at a stage of final approval.

35. Both plans have three strategic objectives: *i*) consolidate knowledge about trafficking in persons and produce information about it; *ii*) ensure that victims have better access to their rights; *iii*) reinforce the fight against organized criminality. Both plans are aligned with the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings (2021-2025) and with recommendations issued by the Council of Europe's GRETA, which published its third evaluation report about Portugal in June 2022.

36. Throughout the reporting period – apart from the yearly national campaigns, awareness-raising initiatives and training programmes which reach hundreds of stakeholders (note that, in 2020, a new leaflet on the rights of migrant workers and a new mobile app, with contents in 10 different languages) and apart from the increase of inspections carried out by the Working Conditions Authority and the former Border Service to control for situations of labour exploitation and forced labour – we highlight one new development. In May 2021, a new National Referral Mechanism for child victims was established – thereby strengthening the already-existing general National Referral System (first set up in 2008 and last updated in 2014); this new Mechanism for child victims also integrated a new Protocol between the

Directorate-General for Health and the former Border Service to identify and accompany child victims of trafficking in the National Health Service.

D. Economic, social and cultural rights

1. Right to work and right to social security

37. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 and 2021, Portugal made considerable efforts in the labour and social areas to minimize the impacts of lockdowns and other prophylactic measures; the IMF's Fiscal Monitor estimates that the State's support (not including liquidity support measures) during those two years was equivalent to 6% of GDP. Those measures included: *i)* 'lay-off' regime whereby Social Security would pay 70% of an employee's salary; *ii)* creation of direct and automatic social benefits, namely for independent and domestic workers, artist and cultural creators; *iii)* enlarging conditions for access and extending the duration of unemployment benefits and other already-existing social benefits; *iv)* extension of social support to persons not covered by any protection mechanism; *v)* increase of the social support index, from which all social benefits are calculated. As a result of the dissemination of 'teleworking' and questions surrounding workers' rights in that context, the Labour Code was revised and new rules were laid down for this practice.

38. The EU-financed Recovery and Resilience Plan allocates a total of 1.043 million euros to investment in social responses, and two of Portugal's priorities during the reporting period were the modernization of social infrastructure and equipment as well as automatizing the administrative processes towards pension attribution. At the same time, Portugal approved two plans in this area: *i)* the National Strategy for Combatting Poverty (2021-2030); *ii)* the National Strategy for the Integration of Persons in Situations of Homelessness (first one for the period 2017-2023 and prolonged for one year, the second one for the period 2025-2030).

39. Apart from the evolution of the minimum wage mentioned above (which rose from 530 euros per month in 2016 to 820 euros per month in 2024), an agreement was reached with social partners – employers and trade unions – in October 2022 and reaffirmed in October 2023 with five objectives: *i)* raise salaries; *ii)* attract and fixate young talent; *iii)* increase workers' liquidity also through non-salary means; *iv)* support companies (namely by investing in professional training), especially those which increase salaries; *v)* administrative simplification.

40. Furthermore, Portugal approved the Decent Work Agenda, namely through Law no. 13/2023, with 70 measures such as: *i)* reducing the number of renewals of fixed-term temporary employment contracts; *ii)* prohibiting outsourcing in certain circumstances (namely in the context of collective redundancies or extinction of a position); *iii)* raising the minimum pay for professional internships; *iv)* increasing the benefit when parental leave is shared equally by both father and mother; *v)* creating a leave for geostationary mourning and increasing leave in case of spouse death; *vi)* additional rights for informal carers (whose 'status' was approved in 2019); *vii)* stricter rules for temporary employment agencies; *viii)* protection of digital platform workers; *ix)* benefits for companies with collective bargaining; *x)* establishment of a pilot-project for the 4-day week.

2. Right to adequate housing

41. Before the reporting period, in 2018, Portugal launched a 'New Generation of Housing Policies' with four pillars: *i)* direct intervention in situations of severe housing need; *ii)* assist those who cannot find solutions in the housing market, namely through rental support programmes; *iii)* urban rehabilitation; *iv)* social inclusion and territorial cohesion. These four pillars were also at the basis of the Housing Law, approved in 2019, and ensuing diplomas such as Decree-Law no. 26/2021 (which created the National System for Urgent and Temporary Housing) and Decree-Law no. 89/2021 (which defined the obligations and competences of public authorities regarding alternative housing, legal preference and the inspection of habitability conditions). More recently, Portugal approved a National Plan for Housing (2022-2026).

42. To face the housing crisis, the Recovery and Resilience Plan allocates a total of 3.229 million euros to investment in housing. In 2023, to tackle inflation, a limit of a 2% increase in rents was imposed. In the same year, a new housing package was presented – which culminated in the approval of Law no. 56/2023 – and it included measures in the areas of: *i*) defining ceilings for rent increases; *ii*) freezing older contracts; *iii*) fiscal benefits for renting (especially if contracts are longer and rents are cheaper); *iv*) stricter rules on gains from selling property; *v*) higher local property taxes for vacant buildings or abandoned land; *vi*) possibility of forced renting of vacant buildings; *vii*) limiting homestay licensing; *viii*) new tax for homestays; *ix*) financing municipalities and local cooperatives to promote accessible renting; *x*) end of golden visas.

3. Right to health

43. After the Health Law was approved in 2019 – which determined that health policy should not focus exclusively on managing the National Health Service but also on the general promotion of health –, the Directorate-General for Health conducted a long process of consultation and dialogue with public entities and civil society for the elaboration of the National Plan for Health 2030, which was approved in 2023. The Plan emphasizes the social and environmental determinants of health, with goals such as the promotion of equity in health, the promotion of health literacy, strengthening quality and sustainable health services, maintaining a high vaccination coverage, guaranteeing access to sexual, reproductive, maternal and infant health or keeping waterborne health issues under control.

44. In terms of investment, apart from the 1.739 million euros budgeted under the Recovery and Resilience Plan, in 2023 the health budget has again grown by 8%, thereby reaching the 15.000-million-euro mark. Indeed, for every seven euros of public investment, one is invested in health. Portugal has continued to work to ensure that every person is registered with a General Practitioner ('household doctor') and that the National Health Service maintains its non-discriminatory nature, open to every person regardless of their economic situation, nationality or migratory status. During the reporting period, Portugal also abolished the majority of the fees in the National Health Service and increased social support to buy medicines (namely for older persons).

45. During the reporting period, Portugal also sought to strengthen the rights of persons in need of mental health support or with psychosocial disabilities, reinforcing the principle of autonomy and fighting against stigma. The new Mental Health Law approved in 2023 replaced the previous law from 1998, and eliminated the possibility of indefinite extensions of confinement or internment security measures which deprived persons of liberty. Decree-Law no. 131/2021 created a national structure to coordinate mental health policies and implement the National Mental Health Programme; the diploma also introduced the principle of deinstitutionalization by integrating mental health care into local and primary care instead of psychiatric hospitals and by reinforcing the role of community-based independent living units.

46. Regarding persons who use drugs, two new advances were made: *i*) in 2023, Portugal adopted the National Plan for the Reduction of Addictive Behaviours and Dependence 2030 and the Action Plan for the Reduction of Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies Horizon 2024; *ii*) in the same year, Decree-Law no. 89/2023 was approved, thereby creating the Institute on Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies. This new Institute replaced the former Service for Intervention for Addictive Behaviours and Dependence; this organic change conferred administrative and financial autonomy to the new Institute while also transferring to it competences which were previously held by Regional Health Administrations, therefore ensuring that the new Institute has nation-wide jurisdiction. These two reforms reinforce the public health (as opposed to punitive) model which Portugal adopted over 20 years ago when it decriminalized consumption and possession of all drugs, putting an emphasis on treatment and harm reduction as well as on the human rights of persons who use drugs; this model led to the reduction of new HIV cases among persons who use drugs by 90% between 2000 and 2011 and by 86% between 2012 and 2022.

4. Right to education

47. Portugal has invested considerably in education (whose budget rose by 35,8% since 2015) and continued to implement three major reforms which took place before the reporting period and which placed human rights more at the centre of educational policy: *i*) the National Strategy for Citizenship Education; *ii*) the legal framework for inclusive education; *iii*) the Programme for Education Priority Intervention Territories (whose fourth edition was approved in 2023 and which aims at supporting schools in areas with a high number of students in situations of vulnerability). As part of this implementation work, a new Human Rights Reference Guide for teachers and educators was approved in early 2024. We also note that, during the reporting period, the school dropout rate was reduced significantly (from 17,4% in 2014 to 5,9% in 2021).

48. During the COVID-19 pandemic, apart from a number of guidelines being issued on how to conduct distance learning, the public broadcaster (*RTP*) started an ambitious programme called #StudyAtHome with different classes for different levels being broadcasted in national television as a complement to distance learning; in that period, free-of-charge school meals were provided to students benefitting from social action (around 45 thousand meals a day were provided). In the period of pandemic recovery, Portugal approved the *School + Plan (2021-2023)* to allow for the recovery of knowledge and skills, including through more curricular autonomy for schools, diversification of teaching strategies and more investment in pedagogical resources and school libraries.

49. In the area of higher education (where there is a record high number of students, around 446 thousand in 2022/2023), scholarships were raised and three programmes began being drafted: one in the area of combatting dropout, one in the area of mental health promotion and one in the area of building affordable student housing.

50. With regard to lifelong learning, apart from the Professional Training Agreement reached with social partners in July 2021, the participation rate in lifelong learning increased by 4,1% between 2015 and 2021 and, in September 2022, the *Qualifica* programme (i.e., the main free-of-charge public programme for adult learning set up in 2017 and currently with 313 centres throughout the country) reached the mark of having attributed 1 million certifying diplomas.

5. Cultural rights

51. During the reporting period, Portugal reinforced the two existing national cultural networks (namely those of public libraries and of museums) and created two new national cultural networks (namely of theatres and cine-theatres, and of contemporary art); these networks allow for increased cooperation and information-sharing between cultural establishments while decentralizing resources. New regulation was introduced to ensure fair working conditions and social protection to cultural professionals (namely Decree-Law no. 105/2021, amended twice, first in 2022 then in 2024). From 2020 to 2024, the financial support to the arts was increased and programmes specifically targeting persons in situations of vulnerability (namely persons deprived of liberty, persons with mental health conditions, persons with disabilities, older persons, and persons living in rural areas or urban peripheries) were set up.

E. Rights of specific persons

1. Women

(a) Gender equality

52. During the reporting period, Portugal focused on the implementation of the Action Plan for equality between women and men (2018-2021). The final monitoring report published in June 2022 indicated that this Action Plan had an execution rate of 79%. In August 2023, a new Action Plan was approved for the period 2023-2026; it has seven main goals: *i*) to mainstream the fight against gender-based discrimination and equality between women and men in all public policies; *ii*) to promote education free of gender stereotypes;

iii) to promote equality in research and development, and in the digital world; *iv*) to guarantee full and egalitarian participation of women in the labour market; *v*) to promote the balance between professional, family and personal lives; *vi*) to combat poverty and to promote access to health; *vii*) to promote gender equality in culture and the media.

53. The State Budget for 2021 (approved in December 2020) was the first to include a specific norm stipulating that each area of government's budget must include a gender perspective and that programmes or initiatives undertaken by each area of government should include disaggregated data by sex. Additionally, since 2018 and reaffirmed again in 2022 with a new legislature, every legal diploma (both those issued by Parliament and by Government), before their approval and when they undergo final analysis, must be accompanied of a technical note which must include a gender impact assessment.

54. Given that considerable efforts have been made to ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed in all areas of public policy, this report will not single out specific sectoral measures (even though particular attention has been paid to the areas of education – and namely increasing the number of women in STEM – and the labour market – and namely equalizing parental leave). However, the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality offers technical support to all other public entities from central administration so that they can define sectoral gender equality plans (note also that each Ministry must appoint an equality counsellor). Support is also offered to private companies (note that state-owned enterprises and companies listed in the stock exchange are mandated by law, since 2017, to draft a yearly gender equality plan). The Commission also offers support to municipalities when drafting their local gender equality plans; while they are not mandated by law to do so, 195 out of 308 municipalities have already adopted such plans.

55. In terms of funding, the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality granted a total amount of 150 thousand euros in 2021 to projects related to women's rights carried out by 19 NGOs; in 2023, 200 thousand euros were granted to projects developed by 23 NGOs. From 2019 to 2022, the Commission disposed of a budget (funded by the EU) of 5,67 million euros for financial and technical support to civil society organizations. The Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality is also managing an EEA Grant with total funding of over 7 million euros to support projects in the area of gender equality (with a special focus on the labour market); the programme started in 2017 and is due to be finalized in the end of 2024.

56. With regard to public administration, after the introduction of quotas for leadership positions in public administration through Law no. 26/2019, the number of women in leadership positions has been rising: in 2022, 45,8% of higher management positions in public administration (central, regional and local levels) were held by women; that percentage was even higher for middle management positions, 57%. Regarding the private sector, after Law no. 62/2017 (gender equality in state-owned companies and private companies listed in the stock exchange), indicators have also been improving: in 2015, women represented 13,5% of persons in Boards of Directors of companies listed in the Portuguese Stock Exchange; in 2022, that number rose to 33,3%.

(b) *Violence against women and domestic violence*

57. During the reporting period, Portugal focused on the implementation of the Action Plan for preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence (2018-2021). The final monitoring report published in June 2022 indicated that this Action Plan had an execution rate of 79%. In August 2023, a new Action Plan was approved for the period 2023-2026; it has six main goals: *i*) to eradicate social tolerance towards violence against women through the promotion of a human rights-based culture; *ii*) to support and to protect victims; *iii*) to act towards perpetrators, promoting accountability; *iv*) to qualify professionals dealing with violence; *v*) to investigate, monitor and evaluate public policies; *vi*) to prevent and combat harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation as well as child, early and forced marriages.

58. Resolution no. 139/2019 adopted concrete measures to tackle domestic violence in areas such as: *i*) harmonization of indicators about domestic violence and permanent updating of databases managed by different entities (namely the judiciary, various security forces, the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality), while

ensuring interoperability; *ii*) establishment of a dedicated website (the Violence Portal) which unifies the databases and also includes useful information about relevant legislation and contact for support network for victims; *iii*) drafting of an action manual for police forces harmonizing procedures on the steps to take in the 72 hours after a domestic violence complaint is lodged (including in the areas of victim protection, collection and preservation of evidence, and treatment of the alleged aggressor); *iv*) creation of a common training plan for all public professionals who may have to deal with cases of domestic violence.

59. The Public Prosecutor's Office has also engaged in a series of institutional and policy developments in this area. These include: *i*) in 2019, the creation of two specialised sections on domestic violence within the Lisbon and Porto regional Prosecutor's Offices; *ii*) in 2019, the issuance of Directive no. 5/2019, providing specific guidance to prosecutors about domestic violence; *iii*) since 2020, the creation of ten Victim Support Offices which are headed by a prosecutor, staffed by a local NGO and funded by the Ministry of Justice and which offer proximity-based support; *iv*) in 2022, the enlargement of the Office for Family, Children, Young Persons, Older Persons, and against Domestic Violence, by making it a National Coordination Office; *v*) in 2023, the publication of a practical note on domestic violence.

60. The Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality also coordinates yearly national campaigns – especially around the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November) – which are carried out throughout the country and in partnership with all areas of government as well as with municipalities. These campaigns usually have a digital as well as an in-person component, and involve the organization of events, the publication of leaflets and other relevant materials as well as targeted advertising. There are also two separate campaigns: one organized in partnership with schools and municipalities about violence in dating (which criminal law regards as domestic violence since 2013); and one about female genital mutilation, organized around the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (6 February).

61. Funding to fight violence against women goes primarily to the National Support Network for Victims of Domestic Violence, which comprises 223 support centres (i.e., multidisciplinary teams who provide support free of charge, both in person and via the phone, in the areas of legal information as well as social and psychological support), 39 shelters (i.e., residential units which can host victims of domestic violence and their legal dependents for up to 6 months) and 26 emergency centres (i.e., residential units for urgent cases). This National Network is funded from the national budget with a yearly 9,1 million euros (5,8 of which from the Social Security Institute and 3,3 from profits from the national lottery) which is complemented by EU funds (14,4 million euros for the period 2019-2022).

62. Regarding harmful traditional practices, in 2020 and 2021, three new guideline documents were published for identifying and protecting victims of female genital mutilation: one by the National Commission for Protection of Children and Youth, one by the former Border Service and one by the Directorate-General for Health. In 2020 and 2021, three new Victim Support Offices with a focus on gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices were opened inside the National Centres to Support Migrants' Integration (in Lisbon, Porto and Faro), as a partnership between the former High Commission for Migration and the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality. In 2021, a working group was established to tackle child, early and forced marriages, with representatives from the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality, the security forces, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the National Institute for Forensic Sciences and a range of civil society actors; the working group created a repository of useful information, launched an awareness-raising campaign and presented a standardized procedure form for professionals working in the field.

2. Children

63. Portugal approved a National Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2021-2024) with five priorities: *i*) promote well-being and equality of opportunities; *ii*) support families and parenthood; *iii*) promote access to information and participation; *iv*) prevent and combat violence; *v*) produce scientific knowledge. Under the purview of the Strategy, two operational Action Plans were approved, the first for the period 2021-2022 and the second for 2023-2024.

One of the crucial goals of these documents is halving child poverty by 2030, and progress has been made: from 2014 to 2021, the child poverty rate was reduced by 22,5% (which not only is below the EU average, but also this reduction happened at a time when child poverty rates have significantly increased in the world's 40 wealthiest countries).

64. We highlight four emblematic measures in this area: *i*) ensuring that kindergartens are free of charge, a measure which has been progressively implemented and already targets 85 thousand children; *ii*) progressively raising the family benefit, which is a benefit that all families can receive and whose value depends on the number of children and the household income; *iii*) establishing a programme called Child Guarantee which is a financial complement to the family benefit, in cases of families where children are at risk of extreme poverty, and which currently benefits 150 thousand children; *iv*) reinforcing the School Social Action programme by enlarging the number of free meals at schools and by ensuring the provision of meals during school holidays.

3. Older persons

65. The Portuguese Constitution was innovative in devoting one article exclusively to the rights of older persons, and one of Portugal's current priorities in multilateral human rights fora is the opening of negotiations towards a legally-binding instrument in this area. Apart from the measures described above regarding social security, Portugal adopted its first Action Plan for Active and Healthy Ageing (2023-2026) foreseeing 83 concrete measures across six areas: *i*) health and well-being (strengthening community-based care and improving carers' working conditions); *ii*) autonomy and independent living (minimizing isolation and promoting collaborative housing); *iii*) lifelong learning (reskilling and upskilling); *iv*) work (promoting intergenerational diversity); *v*) income (strengthening pensions); *vi*) participation (volunteering, political life and active citizenship).

4. Persons with disabilities

66. During the reporting period, Portugal focused on the implementation of the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (2021-2025), which has 183 measures across eight priority areas: *i*) citizenship, equality and non-discrimination; *ii*) promotion of an inclusive environment; *iii*) education and qualifications; *iv*) work and vocational training; *v*) promotion of autonomy and independent living; *vi*) social support; *vii*) culture, sports, tourism and leisure; *viii*) knowledge, research and development.

67. In legislative terms, an advancement of note is the adoption of Law no. 4/2019 establishing a system of employment quotas for persons with disabilities. In operational terms, we highlight not only the dissemination of the model of Independent Living Centres (created in 2017) but also two programmes which are currently receiving funding from the Recovery and Resilience Plan: *i*) 'Accessibilities 360°' (improving accessibility for persons with reduced mobility to public spaces, public buildings and private housing); *ii*) 'Platform + Access' with three aims – to aggregate and systematize all relevant information pertaining to persons with disabilities, to create a national georeferencing system with information of accessibility conditions which is in real-time in case of parking, and to create a call centre for all public services which ensures real-time interpretation to Portuguese Sign Language.

5. Migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons

68. In 2019, Portugal was one of the first countries in the world to approve a National Plan for the Implementation of the Global Pact for Migration; the Plan's aim was twofold: on the one hand, to facilitate and regularize migratory flows while ensuring their safety; on the other, to promote the integration of migrants through education, health, housing and social protection. To facilitate and regularize migratory flows, Portugal signed two bilateral labour mobility agreements (with India in 2021 and with Morocco in 2022) as well as the Mobility Agreement between Member-States of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries.

69. During the COVID-19 pandemic, first in March 2020 and then subsequently, Portugal temporarily regularized all migrants with pending applications before the Border Services, allowing around 246 thousand persons to fully access all public services, from the healthcare

and education systems to social security. Migrant students' residence permits were also automatically renewed.

70. In 2023, Portugal sought to change the paradigm of its migration and asylum policy, rendering it more humanist and more based on solidarity, by extinguishing the Border Service and the High Commission for Migration and by creating the Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum. Previously, the Border Service – which was a security force – was not only tasked to monitor the air, land and maritime borders but it was also responsible for processing asylum and residence permits applications, whereas the High Commission for Migration was responsible for the integration dimension (namely by managing the National Network to Support Migrants' Integration with its 3 'one-stop shop' National Centres, its over 150 Local Centres and its remote support services). The current model gives the task of border control to security forces (Public Security Police for airports and National Republican Guard for land borders), whereas the whole administrative migratory process – from application to integration – is accompanied by the new Agency.

71. Regarding refugees, Portugal maintained its resettlement programme with UNHCR which started in 2007 and was reinforced in 2018, receiving around 300 refugees per year who were settled in Turkey, Egypt and Jordan. From 2021 onwards, Portugal also received around 1.400 refugees from Afghanistan. From 2022 onwards, Portugal made considerable efforts to receive around 60.000 refugees from Ukraine – who were granted 'temporary protection' status – and to ensure their access to housing, employment, health and education: 4.000 persons were vaccinated against COVID-19, 5.000 children were placed in public schools, 10.000 persons were given Portuguese language classes, 15.000 persons were registered in the Employment and Vocational Training Institute, and 14,2 million euros were given in social aid; particular attention was paid to trafficking in human beings, in this context.

72. Regarding stateless persons, Law no. 41/2023 established a legal definition of 'stateless person' in conformity with relevant international instruments and created a new travel document to be issued to stateless persons. According to article 6 of this law, Parliament will now have to draft and approve a new diploma specifying the procedures and the entity responsible for the attribution of the stateless status, the guarantees of those who seek to obtain that legal status, and the rights deriving from such recognition.

6. Ethnic minorities

(a) Roma

73. In 2018, the National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities – which had been approved in 2013 – was revised and its validity was prolonged (now until the end of 2023). The execution rate of the Strategy has been increasing: 60,14% in 2019, 73,53% in 2020 and 74,22% in 2021. As part of the Strategy, several awareness-raising initiatives were launched, chief among those a training programme on Roma history and culture; more than 8.400 hours of this training programme have been provided to a wide variety of stakeholders. The Strategy also includes public interventions in the following areas: *i*) education – scholarships for basic and secondary education have risen from 49 in 2019 to 210 in 2024, and around 40 scholarships for higher education have been granted every year since 2019; *ii*) work – around 1.400 personal employment plans have been established; *iii*) housing – a protocol between the former High Commission for Migration and the Housing and Urban Rehabilitation Institute was signed; *iv*) territorialization – local plans for the integration of Roma communities were launched and so was the intercultural municipal mediator project, with 49 mediators, of whom 28 Roma; *v*) civil society – 22 projects of Roma associations have been funded with 310 thousand euros.

(b) Persons of African descent

74. Apart from the general measures to combat racial discrimination which have been described above, we highlight four initiatives to commemorate the International Decade for People of African Descent: *i*) in 2019, the former High Commission for Migration launched three publications covering the period between the 15th and the 21st century by historian Isabel Castro Henriques (one on African presence in Portugal, one on African women in Portugal,

and one on a historical itinerary of Lisbon from an African perspective); *ii*) on 31 August 2022, a series of informative cards on the International Decade were published; *iii*) on 13 March 2023, the former High Commission for Migration signed a protocol with the Network of School Libraries to involve these libraries in the commemorations of the International Decade; *iv*) in April 2023, new informative materials about the Decade (poster and flyer) were produced.

7. LGBTI persons

75. During the reporting period, Portugal focused on the implementation of the first Action Plan for combatting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sexual characteristics (2018-2021). The final monitoring report published in June 2022 indicated that the I Action Plan had an execution rate of 85%. In August 2023, the II Action Plan was approved for the period 2023-2026; it has three main goals: *i*) to promote knowledge about the needs of LGBTI persons and the discrimination they face; *ii*) to guarantee the mainstreaming of issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sexual characteristics in all public policies; *iii*) to prevent and combat all forms of violence against LGBTI persons.

76. To promote the human rights of LGBTI persons, the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality conducts national campaigns to celebrate the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (17 November) and organizes training programmes. Portugal is also an active part of the *Equal Rights Coalition*, an intergovernmental organization.

77. In 2022, the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality commissioned a study focusing on the issue of discrimination; in 2022 and 2023, the Commission issued guidelines about the rights of LGBTI youth and children and about discrimination in schools. In 2021, the Commission financed projects of 10 NGOs working with LGBTI persons (almost 60 thousand euros of funding); in 2023, the funding increased to over 80 thousand euros and reached projects from 13 NGOs.

78. In terms of legislative change, Parliament approved the following two diplomas: *i*) Law no. 85/2021 prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity regarding eligibility for donating blood; *ii*) Law no. 15/2024 prohibiting conversion therapy against LGBTI persons.

79. In the area of health, the Directorate-General for Health published in 2019 a sectoral health strategy for LGBTI persons and, in 2023, a working group was set up to follow-up and monitor this strategy. Ordinance no. 402/2023 was also published to enlarge access to pre-exposure prophylaxis to HIV (PrEP).

V. Looking ahead

80. Due to the word limit on these reports, a great deal of information and data had to be omitted. However, priority was given to the key reforms and important developments undertaken during the reporting period.

81. Portugal is conscious of the remaining challenges and that the full realization of human rights is always an incomplete task. Portugal remains committed to continue cooperating with all international human rights mechanisms, including the UPR, and to comply with its obligations to protect, respect and fulfil all human rights.

Notes

¹ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/upr-implementation>.

² Only instruments with a human rights component or with an important bearing for the realization of human rights have been selected.

³ *Idem*.

⁴ For the purposes of this report, “*Lei*” has been translated as “Law” and “*Decreto-Lei*” as “Decree-

Law”; in the Portuguese legal framework, Laws and Decree-Laws are legislative acts of the same legal value, their difference resides in the fact that Laws are approved by Parliament and Decree-Laws are approved by the Government. Other normative or administrative regulations issued by the Government have been translated as follows (in order of legal precedence): *i*) “*Decreto regulamentar*” as “Decree”; *ii*) “*Resolução do Conselho de Ministros*” as “Resolution”; *iii*) “*Portaria*” as “Ordinance”; *iv*) “*Despacho*” as “Order”.

⁵ Only strategies and plans with a human rights component or with an important bearing for the realization of human rights have been selected.

⁶ Note that, in the EU’s Fundamental Rights Agency first-ever report on racism in policing, Portugal’s Plan features prominently and is described as a “promising practice”.

⁷ See section A.2. below.

⁸ Note that, in April 2024, the GANHRI Sub-Committee on Accreditation renewed the Ombudsperson’s A-status.

⁹ As per the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture.

¹⁰ See <https://www.ine.pt/xurl/pub/615849077>.
