**Study on the Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human rights of young people**

**Human Rights Council Resolution 48/12**

Contribution from

PORTUGAL

**What measures is your Government taking to support young people and ensure the full implementations on their rights during and after the pandemic?**

The Portuguese youth has been hit hard by the wide-reaching labour market and social impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. Youth unemployment rate (reference being persons aged 16 to 24) stood at 23,4% (0,9 percentage points more than in the previous year), while the proportion of long-term unemployment was 43,4%, (up 10,1 percentage points from 2020).

Education and work-based learning have been heavily disrupted; and many young persons are suffering from financial insecurity, housing instability and mental distress. The Portuguese Government has responded to this situation by taking comprehensive policy measures for young persons, ranging from labour market and income support measures to housing responses and mental health support.

**Please provide examples of policies and programmes adopted to this end, in particular regarding:**

* **Right to work and social security**

a) Youth strategy to guide cross-sectoral and employment policies

The first-ever National Youth Plan was approved in September 2018 and remains operational through to 2021. The plan covers areas such as education, employment, housing, governance, participation, social inclusion, and the environment.

In the context of this National Plan, Portugal has implemented the reinforced Youth Guarantee, a measure targeting young persons aged 15 to 30 who are not integrated into any form of education or training or in the labour market. The Youth Guarantee includes three types of actions: recruitment support, education and training, and traineeships.

The focus now is on stabilizing partner networks, carrying out information and training seminars for new partners, improving the Youth Guarantee IT platform and continuous monitoring, particularly regarding the number of young persons identified by partner.

b) Hiring subsidies to stimulate job creation for young people

A broad hiring subsidy (INCENTIVO ATIVAR.PT) was introduced for employers hiring jobseekers who have been long-term unemployed and registered with the employment service for permanent contracts or fixed-term contracts lasting a year or longer. Employers can only apply for the subsidy when hiring jobseekers who have been unemployed for six months or longer, but this is reduced to two months for young persons, and subsidies can be more generous when hiring young persons under certain conditions.

There is also the Young Investment Measure (INVESTE JOVEM) aiming at promoting the partnerships between the Institute of Employment and Professional Training (IEFP) and banking institutions. Unemployed young persons who want to create their own job or create a company has access to bank credit, technical support for the creation and consolidation of the project, training, and consulting.

c) Promoting work-based learning for young persons at a time of crisis

Portugal introduced a new scheme (ESTÁGIO ATIVAR.PT) to promote nine-month long internships in order to support young persons’ transition into the labour market. The scheme was introduced for the first time in 2020 and repeated in 2021. The allowance paid by the employment service to young persons is pre-determined and based on qualification levels, and employers can also be reimbursed for costs associated with hiring. If the intern is hired for an open-ended or fixed-term contract at the end of the internship, the employer can apply for further financial incentives. A scheme that existed before the crisis also offers allowances and remuneration to young persons from low educational backgrounds who join a six-month programme of work-based learning. No financial incentives are in place for employers to recruit apprentices.

d) Strengthening employment services for young people

A Reinforced Support Program for Employment and Vocational Training (ATIVAR.PT) was adopted in August 2020, which aims to support the integration of young persons into the labour market through providing professional training, work-based learning opportunities, and hiring and apprenticeship subsidies. The public employment service also adopted a Digital Transition Plan in 2020 which emphasises the need for digital skills and qualifications for the future of work, and which includes measures to promote digital skill acquisition among young persons with secondary or higher education qualifications. The Young+ Digital Programme launched in 2020 provides training for unemployed young persons over 18 and under 35 with secondary education or higher with the opportunity to develop digital skills. As part of the Support Program for the Emergency Strengthening of Social and Health Equipment, which aims to increase capacity of health and care sector, training is provided to jobseekers in related areas, and eligibility to be part of the programme includes young students who are 18 years or older.

* **Right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (including with the increase in domestic violence and abuse, anxiety and depression, stress caused by social isolation, etc.)**

In Portugal, the National Health Service (NHS) has an integrated model of responses in interpersonal violence prevention, implemented through the National Program for the Prevention of Violence in the Lifecycle of the Directorate-General for Health (Order No. 9494/2019). This program includes three major intervention areas: Health Action for Children and Youth at Risk; Health Action on Gender, Violence and Lifecycle, including response to young persons; and Action Plan for the Violence Prevention in the Health Sector.

The National Program was created to reinforce prevention, diagnosis and intervention mechanisms in interpersonal violence, in a lifecycle perspective due common determinants, with special attention to persons in situations of increased vulnerability, especially in early ages: guaranteeing the early detection of risk factors and situations of interpersonal violence; ensuring an adequate, timely and articulated intervention; promoting human rights literacy in the context of interpersonal relationships and a culture of non-violence.

The Program has a national and regional coordination and an emphasis on ongoing training and prevention. At a local level, in Primary and Hospital Health Care in NHS, there is also a national network of 551 multidisciplinary teams, with specific training in interpersonal violence prevention: Support Centres for Children and Youth at Risk and Teams for the Prevention of Violence in Adults. These Teams constitute the reference elements within the health services. There is a close work of collaboration within health professionals, police, child protection services, educational and judicial and social protection systems.

During the pandemic, there has been a reinforcement of literacy campaigns regarding family well-being and violence prevention, including materials directed to the younger population such as dating violence and cyber violence, as well adaptation of training to health professional in this area to a virtual format.

**What role have the young people had in COVID-19 response, vaccination and recovery efforts in your country?**

A National Youth Competition was developed: Arts, Sciences and Letters for Health “Stay at the helm!”, addressed to all schools in the 2nd and 3rd cycles of basic education and secondary education in the country, in an initiative of the Task Force of Behavioural Sciences, whose objective was to set the tone and encourage a participatory and multidisciplinary dynamic at the level of schools, where children, young persons, teachers and other professionals and educational agents were involved in a dialogue about the experiences of the pandemic and innovative ways to resist and overcome it.

There was a vast participation of the youth in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, namely:

* in the organization of the circuits inside the COVID-19 vaccination centers;
* accepting vaccination (over 95% of young persons are fully vaccinated with primary schedule);
* a lot of health care professionals are young persons and they contribute as vaccinators and for the health care of COVID-19 patients.

**What measures is your Government taking to value/encourage the role of youth in COVID-19 response, vaccination and recovery efforts?**

Surveys were developed with the aim of understanding adherence to vaccination throughout all stages of the life cycle, including for those with +12 years old. Based on the collected information, communication campaigns were designed.