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The Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and, with reference to its *Note Verbale* dated 5 October 2020, has the honour to enclose herewith the contribution of the Portuguese authorities to the request for information concerning promising/good human rights practices in response to COVID-19 and the recovery.

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



Geneva, 29 October 2020



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Direção-Geral de Política Externa

UNHRC report on the impact of the COVID-19
on the enjoyment of human rights

| ANSWERS FROM PORTUGAL |

To ensure a robust response to the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic posed to the protection of citizens' well-being and human rights in Portugal, a set of extraordinary and urgent measures has been approved over the past few months, including at legislative level. These measures are presented in detail in the document "Portugal and the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic", released in July 2020, available [here](#). Next, we mention and update just a few of those measures:

RIGHT TO INFORMATION:

- Creation of the platform [Estamos On](#). This website is intended to be a practical guide to support citizens, families and businesses in combating the effects of COVID-19. For this purpose, it gathers all information related to good practices and recommendations from health authorities, advice for working from home, access to public services, as well as exceptional measures adopted by the Government and approved legislation;

RIGHT TO HEALTH:

- Exemption from user fees in cases of diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19;
- Creation of a [microwebsite](#) with information on mental health and COVID-19, as well as recommendations and relevant contacts;
- Dissemination of specific, appropriate and accessible information and measures on COVID-19 to migrants and refugees;
- Establishment of a partnership between the Directorate-General of Health and the SIC television channel for the scientific validation of contents presented in the "Polígrafo" programme, which addresses news and rumours on social networks, in order to combat disinformation about COVID-19;
- Awareness-raising regarding the fulfilment of the National Vaccination Program, during the COVID-19 pandemic, to prevent outbreaks of other vaccine-preventable diseases (statement from the Directorate-General of Health of 25/03/2020 March);

GROUPS IN SITUATIONS OF VULNERABILITY:

- Launching of the national campaign [#cuidadetodos](#) by the António Sérgio Cooperative for Social Economy (CASES), in order to gather volunteers to support social responses for **older persons**;



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- Development of an extraordinary support measure to finance the reinforcement of the number of workers in social and health institutions, namely by hiring unemployed persons, workers with suspended contracts or reduced working hours, workers with part-time contracts, persons receiving the minimum guaranteed social income, students and trainees over 18 years old;
- Establishment of a video call service channel with easy access for **citizens with hearing impairment**;
- Opening of 21 supplementary emergency shelters all over the country, ensuring health care, food and clothing, where more than 500 **persons in a homelessness situation** were welcomed, in cooperation with municipalities and NGOs;
- Promotion of Solidarity Volunteer Network, an emergency social support network to immediately support older persons, persons with disabilities, chronically ill patients, and individuals without family support to whom prophylactic isolation was imposed;
- Establishment of a partnership with *End Violence Against Children*, a WHO/UNICEF partner organization, for the translation into Portuguese of information to support **parenting** during the COVID-19 pandemic, available [online](#);
- Establishment of a new helpline on the website of the National Commission for Promotion of Rights and Protection of Children and Youth to report abuse and/or mistreatment of **children and young people**;
- Adoption of measures to ensure safety and support for **victims and survivors of domestic violence**, due to the increased risk of violence during the confinement needed to contain COVID-19. These included widespread dissemination of [information](#) related to the available support services and helplines, advice and security alerts, strengthening and diversifying channels to facilitate victim's requests, and strengthening support structures and services for existing victims;
- Guarantee that **foreign citizens** with pending regularization processes in the Foreigners and Border Service would temporarily be, on 18 March (at the time of the declaration of the state of national emergency), in a regular situation in Portuguese territory, being able to exercise and access their rights under equal circumstances. This allowed them to access all public services (namely to obtain the health user number, use the National Health Service and other health care rights), social support benefits, lease contracts, employment contracts, opening bank accounts and contracting essential services ([Order](#) No. 3863-B / 2020, of 27/03/2020)
- Evaluation of the "Exceptional regime designed to make the enforcement of sentences and pardon measures more flexible in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic" for **prisoners**;
- Adoption of a set of extraordinary and temporary [measures](#) aimed at supporting **workers, families and employers** affected by the pandemic, guaranteeing household incomes and reducing the risks of job losses;
- Creation of a line (telephone and e-mail) to clarify doubts regarding the impact of the pandemic at work, both for employers and workers: the COVID-19 "Dúvidas Laborais" Line;
- Reduction of 30% on water, sanitation and solid waste tariffs, for all those with a drop in income;

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- Payment exemption of rents in municipal houses and education fees (related to after-school care) for all families that suffered loss of income due to unemployment by one or two members of the household;

RIGHT TO CULTURE:

- Safeguarding cultural rights, both in maintaining access, fruition and participation and in supporting artists, creators and other cultural sector workers, in order to mitigate the effects of the cessation of ongoing and planned works caused by confinement measures;
- Implementation of an Emergency Support Line for the Arts Sector to support artistic creation projects (budget of 1.7 million EUR for 311 projects);
- Creation of a Support Line for Publishers and Bookstores to help safeguarding the book and publishing markets in Portugal, in return for the delivery of copies of works from the respective catalogues and bibliographical funds;
- Financial support to media, through the allocation of 15 million EUR for early purchase of spaces for institutional advertising;
- Additional Social Support Line for Artists, Authors, Technicians and other cultural professionals (budget of 34.3 million EUR); Support Line to Professional Artistic Entities (budget of 3 million EUR) to support the maintenance of artistic entities' activities; Support Line for the Adaptation of Spaces (budget of 750 thousand EUR to support the adaptation of cultural spaces and equipment in the pandemic context); Increase in the Cinema and Audio-visual Institute (ICA) budget with 8.5 million EUR; Creation of the Networked Cultural Programming Funding Line (budget of 30 million EUR) to finance cultural and tourist activities;
- Videos of collections, virtual visits, educational games and challenges for children, families, youth and adults, as well as exhibition catalogues were made available in the *online* platforms of museums, monuments and palaces;
- Creation of a website, within the National Arts Plan, containing transdisciplinary pedagogical resources, directed to teachers, parents and students;
- Film contents were made available on free public platforms, in particular addressing human rights issues, within the National Cinema Plan and respecting the legal framework regarding Copyright and Related Rights;
- Implementation by national theatres of on-line programmes, ensuring the public's inclusive access to culture and contact with performing arts related activities;

PUBLIC SERVICES:

- Adoption of temporary measures in onsite public services, such as the need for pre-booking, avoiding unnecessary visits;
- Development of coordination guidelines for central and local authorities, with the goal of progressively resuming ideal levels of service, whilst ensuring safety conditions for employees and the public;

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- Promotion of digital and telephone channels and strengthening of the technological infrastructure to accessing public services, namely the Portuguese single digital gateway ePortugal portal;
- Legal guarantee of acceptance of documents, such as Citizen's card (national identification card), to expire until 30 October 2020, also accepted after that date, provided that the holder proves the scheduling of their renewal;
- Teleworking was established as the mandatory working modality for **public employees**, in the first phase of the pandemic and it is currently the preferential one, whenever compatible with the performance of duties, keeping full salary and meal allowance;
- Acquisition of computers and mobile internet services, both for teleworking and for distance learning;
- Preparation of the Guide "HOME + Working from Home and Mental Health Care" to support the employees working from home and providing a wide range of resources;
- If someone from the public employee's family is infected and he/she can work remotely, he/she is entitled to receive full salary and meal allowance. If public employees themselves were infected, they get full pay, but no meal allowance. If the health authorities have not decided to isolate the whole household, public employees can still support their families by staying with them, but only getting 65% of their full pay;
- Establishment of an exceptional regime of justified absences, during the period of schools' closure, to assist a child or other dependents under 12 years of age or, regardless of age, with a disability or a chronic illness;

AGRICULTURE AND FISHING:

- Implementation of measures to ensure the continuity of essential services related to production, transportation, distribution and supply of goods and services in the agriculture and livestock sectors, in order to guarantee the adequate functioning of the food supply chain during the COVID-19 pandemic (Order no. 4146-A/2020 of 03/04/2020 of the Minister of Agriculture). A contact group was formed, for continuous market monitoring by the responsible public services, together with agro-food production, industry, distribution and supply representatives;
- Approval of a series of exceptional temporary financial support measures to address liquidity and cash-flow problems that put at risk the continuity of farming activities and of small businesses active in processing, marketing or development of various agricultural products, in response to the mandatory closure of shops, outdoor markets and restaurants;
- Broadening of the range of admissible destinations for the free distribution of products withdrawn from the market (in perfect conditions, but withdrawn for market stability purposes only), so that apart from charity institutions, also penitentiary institutions, child holiday camps, hospitals and retirement homes can benefit from this redistribution mechanism (Order no. 4946-A/2020 of 23/04/2020 of the Minister of Agriculture);
- Creation of an online platform, in the context of a program called «Feed those who feed you», to promote the consumption of local agricultural products and to strengthen local food chains. Farmers were invited to use this platform to advertise their products online, as an alternative to

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their regular distribution channels, and consumers were encouraged to use this platform as a way of strengthening local markets and supporting farmers in their local communities, while ensuring access to the necessary food goods during lockdown;

- Reinforcement of the National Strategy for combating food wastage in order to tackle the increase of food deprivation situations arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on three strategic goals – «Prevent, Reduce and Monitor» –, the action plan is comprised of 14 measures aimed to enhance consumer awareness and to facilitate and encourage donations of excess food, for the purpose of combating food deprivation;
- Services under the tutelage of the Portuguese Ministry of the Sea adopted measures to prevent and protect against infection by SARS-CoV-2, in order to safeguard the provision of work in conditions of hygiene, safety and health to all workers, as well as the adoption of the remote working regimes and organizing mirror work routines, with turnover schedules between remote work and face-to-face work weeks;
- Free access to the online auction system, which allows the purchase of fish at distance in five auctions in the country;
- Control of fluctuations in fish prices, with changes in auction times and suspension of fishing at weekends, to maintain the fleet's income, due to the greater concentration of buyers;
- Incentive to local fish consumption, launching a promotional campaign where it is possible to identify fresh fish transacted in the auctions of the Portuguese continent in the fish stands of municipal markets and large stores;
- Donation of 12 tons (until now) of fish to 23 parish councils, private institutions of social solidarity and the Portuguese Red Cross, for inclusion in social support programs for families in need;

MOBILITY:

- Release of useful information on transport and mobility in the context of the pandemic, by the Institute for Mobility and Transport. Furthermore, the Portuguese railway company has taken measures for the safety of the employees and passengers, having received the COVID-19 Clean and Safe Certification;

NATIONAL DEFENCE:

- Redirection of the activity, in the context of the defence industry, by companies associated with the Defence Technology and Industrial Base (BTID) and Aeronautics, Space and Defence (EDA), to combat COVID-19. It is also noted the role that “Europe of Defence”, including the respective financial instruments, can play in strengthening the European business and in responding to the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, namely enhancing investment in Defence as a driving force and recovery;
- Support by the National Defence to multiple requests by the National Health Service, the National Emergency and Civil Protection Authority (ANEPC), as well as municipalities. This centralized

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process was co-driven by the Armed Forces General Staff and the Secretary of State of Civil Protection, in order to avoid redundancies and dispersions and give prioritized responses;

- Reorganization of the Military Laboratory to increase the production of disinfectant gel distributed to the National Health Service, almost tripling its production, which covers the total needs of this Service;