EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY NETWORK (ESPN)

National strategies to fight homelessness and housing exclusion

Portugal

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European Social Policy Network (ESPN)

ESPN Thematic Report on National strategies to fight homelessness and housing exclusion

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Summary

The definition of homelessness in Portugal is clearly linked to the European typology of homelessness and housing exclusion (ETHOS). It includes categories 1, 2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 of ETHOS Light – that is, those who are roofless and living in a public space or insecure form of shelter, or accommodated in an emergency shelter, as well as those who are houseless and living in temporary accommodation for the homeless.

There is no official data collection strategy for homelessness in Portugal. According to the latest survey on this subject, in the first half of 2018 a total of 3,396 people were either roofless or in some form of houseless situation, including 1,443 people sleeping rough. Available data show the homeless in Portugal to be mostly men, Portuguese, single and with no income source.

Overall, homelessness in Portugal seems to have remained constant over the last 10 years, linked to the absence of evident and significant efforts to end homelessness during most of this period. However, this may change in the near future.

The Portuguese strategy for the integration of homeless persons 2017-2023 (ENIPSSA), approved in mid-2017, represents the first time that central state authorities have established a clear linkage between homelessness and housing policies, including the recently approved 'New generation of housing policies' strategy. This includes the financing of solutions aimed at preventing homelessness arising from severe housing need, and support for 'Housing First' and other housing-led programmes. The ENIPSSA also includes a specific axis dedicated to the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy itself, which may help pave the way for innovation in the provision of homelessness services in Portugal.

Progress in implementing ENIPSSA is identifiable. Similarly, different measures have been approved since the launch of the 'New generation' strategy in mid-2018. There are also positive signs regarding the prevention of homelessness and housing exclusion (HHE), although there are currently only a few specific prevention services in Portugal for helping households in immediate risk of homelessness. After people fall into homelessness, the majority of services provided, generally by non-government organisations (NGOs) (including charities) and municipalities, are still not housing-led.

The prevalence of 'staircase' models and low-intensity support services compared with housing-led solutions and high-intensity support services is thus a weakness that should be addressed. Other gaps still identifiable include: (a) the persistence of a funding model for service providers that enhances neither organisational cooperation nor the integration/complementarity of services, but instead promotes competition; and (b) the lack of overall structures (e.g. umbrella organisations) that enhance capacity-building within the homelessness sector. Additionally, the evaluation of services continues to be largely absent. However, there are experiences of housing-led programmes (e.g. Housing First programmes) that have been providing promising results, and which indeed seem more capable of providing comprehensive and flexible support according to people's support needs.

In any case, tackling HHE also means addressing the systemic causes limiting the effective prevention of, and encouraging sustainable ways out of, homelessness in Portugal. Those include the overall imbalances in the housing market in Portugal, as well as the lack of housing affordability. In addition, housing policies in Portugal have been struggling with a number of difficulties hampering access to permanent accommodation solutions. Finally, the average levels of welfare benefits, particularly under the minimum-income scheme, remain very low, even if they have increased since the beginning of 2016.

In order to fight HHE as effectively as possible, it therefore seems crucial to ensure that the phenomenon is carefully considered as part of efforts to correct the imbalances in the housing market in Portugal, and is comprehensively integrated into the new basic law on housing, currently being discussed in Parliament. Other relevant priorities include

improving the system for collecting information on HHE and ensuring that the ENIPSSA has enough resources (human, financial, etc.) to ensure its effective implementation as well as the assessment of its results. Finally, it seems important to promote greater impetus towards the provision of high-intensity support services and housing-led solutions, within the scope of the ENIPSSA and reinforced by the recent approval of new measures for housing support.

1   The nature and extent of homelessness and housing exclusion

The Portuguese national strategy for the integration of homeless persons (ENIPSSA[1]) 2017-2023, approved in July 2017, clearly links the **definition of homelessness** to the European typology of homelessness and housing exclusion (ETHOS) and states that 'a homeless person is considered to be an individual who, regardless of his/her nationality, racial or ethnic origin, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and mental and physical health, is: i) roofless and living in a public space or insecure form of shelter or accommodated in an emergency shelter, or ii) is houseless and living in temporary accommodation for the homeless' (ENIPSSA, 2018). Thus, it includes categories 1 and 2 and also 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 of ETHOS Light (see Table A1 in the Annex). This definition is the same as that used in the first national strategy on homelessness (ENIPSA[2]), approved in March 2009 for the period 2009-2015.

In addition to the ETHOS typology, the strategy provides extra clarifications regarding the concepts of rooflessness and houselessness. Thus, as regards rooflessness, public space is defined as a space for public use such as gardens, metro/bus stations or stops, car parks, pavements, bridges, and other similar places. Emergency shelter is defined as including any structure that shelters, on an immediate basis and for short periods, for free, people who do not have access to other overnight accommodation. An insecure form of shelter is defined as a place that, given its current state, allows for public use – such as abandoned cars, stairwells, building entrances, abandoned factories, buildings or houses or other similar places.

Regarding houselessness, temporary accommodation is defined as anywhere accommodating, for a limited period of time, adult people deprived of permanent accommodation, and where they are directed to a more adequate social services. The category explicitly excludes specific types of institutional accommodation such as: i) children and young people's residential homes; ii) residential homes for the elderly; iii) residential homes for people with disabilities; iv) therapeutic communities for people with addictions; v) supported accommodation for people with addictions; and vi) refuges for women experiencing domestic violence.

During the first half of 2018, the ENIPSSA monitoring unit prepared and launched an on-line survey. Among other objectives, it was aimed at collecting data on the **estimated number of homeless people**, categorised according to the ETHOS Light typology, on the basis of the information collected at local level both by the homelessness planning and intervention centres[3] (NPISAs) and by local social networks. The data was collected between February and May 2018. The survey covered all the 278 municipalities in mainland Portugal and had a 99% response rate.

According to this survey, a total of 3,396 people were either roofless or in some form of houseless situation. This figure includes 1,443 people sleeping rough; 210 people living in accommodation for the homeless offering a time-limited stay and no provision of long-term housing; 1,111 people living in other types of temporary accommodation offering a time-limited stay and no provision of long-term housing (e.g. accommodation centres for

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[1] Estratégia Nacional para a Integração de Pessoas em Situação Sem-Abrigo.

[2] Estratégia Nacional para a Integração das Pessoas Sem-Abrigo.

[3] Núcleos de Planeamento e Intervenção Sem-Abrigo.

immigrants); and 632 people living in low threshold hotels or private rooms paid for by social services (see Table A2 in the Annex). 11,113 other people were living in some form of insecure or inadequate situation, designated as risk categories.

Figure 1 provides a picture of the geographical distribution of people sleeping rough and houseless people by region in mainland Portugal.

Figure 1: People sleeping rough and houseless people by region in mainland Portugal, 2018 (number)
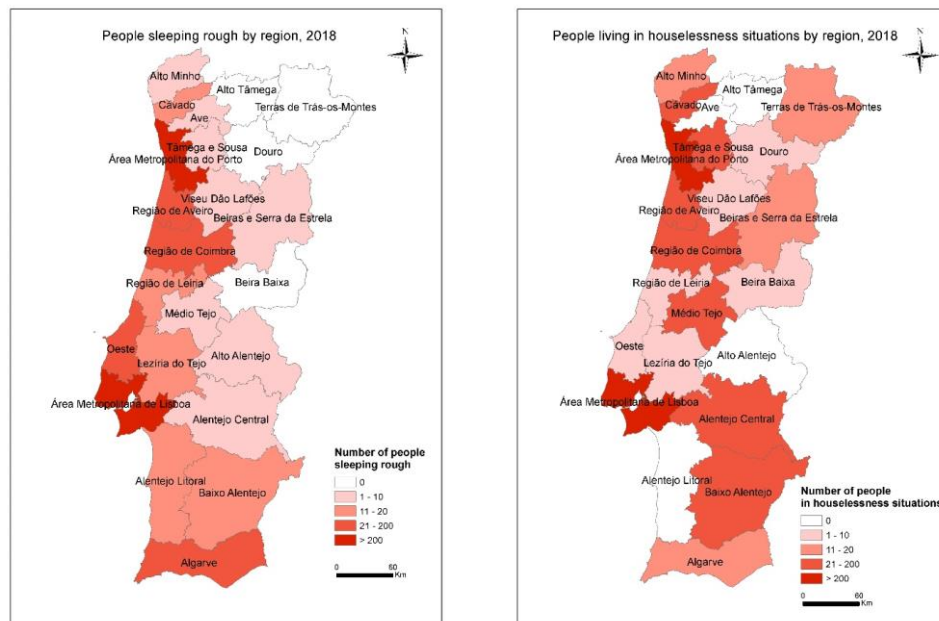
Source: GTMA-GIMAE (2018: 31).

However, as emphasised in the latest FEANTSA[4] country fiche regarding Portugal 'there is **no official data collection strategy for homelessness in Portugal**' (FEANTSA, 2017: 1), which prevents a consistent analysis of the **evolution of the homelessness figures over time**.

In any case, by combining the results of the aforementioned survey with the results of a previous survey conducted by the Institute of Social Security[5] in 2009, it is possible to gather some insights in this regard. This latter survey identified a total of 2,133 homeless people on one night in Portugal. Of these, 922 were sleeping rough (ETHOS 1.1); 1,088 were living in shelters for the homeless (ETHOS 2.1); 43 were institutionalised (in mental health centres and prisons) (ETHOS 6.1 and 6.2); and 80 were uncategorised.

More recent and comparable data can be reported regarding Lisbon. The entity responsible for social action in the city of Lisbon (Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa) conducted two night counts in 2013 and 2015, covering only categories 1 and 2 of ETHOS. The number of people identified fell between the two years, from 852 (509 sleeping rough and 343 in overnight shelters) to 818 (431 sleeping rough and 387 in overnight shelters) (Rede Social de Lisboa, undated).

Considering the available data, and bearing in mind the aforementioned measurement difficulties, it seems reasonable to say that, overall, homelessness in Portugal has remained flat over the last 10 years. The absence of evident and significant efforts to end

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[4] Fédération Européenne des Associations Nationales Travaillant avec les Sans-Abri (European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless).

[5] Instituto da Segurança Social (ISS).

homelessness during this period represents the **main driver** explaining this trend. Even though the first strategy on homelessness was approved in 2009, 'full concretisation is yet to be achieved since work within the scope of the strategy was interrupted in 2013' (ISS, I.P., 2017: 27). Services have also remained largely unchanged, focused on low-intensity support/'staircase' models. Additionally, housing policies have remained largely unchanged in the last 10 years.

However, both these areas have witnessed significant changes in recent times, with the approval of the ENIPSSA in mid-2017 and of different measures within the scope of a 'New generation' strategy (see Section 2). These may indeed constitute important drivers regarding the fight against homelessness and housing exclusion (HHE). However, they are too recent to allow a concrete analysis of their impact so far.

As for the **profile of the homeless population**, the latest FEANTSA country fiche regarding Portugal highlights the fact that both counts undertaken in Lisbon identified the homeless as 'mostly men, Portuguese, single and with no income source' (FEANTSA, 2017: 1).

National surveys largely corroborate this profile. The 2009 survey by the Institute of Social Security reported that 82% of homeless people were male, 82% had Portuguese nationality, more than 60% were aged 30-40, and 31% had completed secondary education. 28% had problems related to drug addiction, 19% suffered from alcoholism, and 11% had mental health issues.

According to relevant stakeholders consulted, there is a lack of information and knowledge regarding other characteristics of the homeless population. This is the case, for instance, regarding homeless families, which may derive either from the fact that this tends to be a residual situation or from the fact that most NPISAs use the restricted definition of homelessness (restricted to ETHOS categories 1, 2 and 3) and that it is rare to find homeless families in such situations. In any case, stakeholders identify as vulnerable groups the following: lone-parent families; families containing members with mental health or addiction problems; women with children affected by domestic violence; and migrant families with children who originally came to Portugal within the framework of healthcare protocols with the Portuguese-speaking African countries[6] (when these did not dispose of certain medical specialties/treatments).

In 2018, the Assistência Médica Internacional (AMI) organisation supported 1,465 people who were homeless (compared with 1,445 in 2008 and 1,679 in 2013). The majority were men (75%). 52% were aged 40-59, and 16% were aged 30-39. Most of them were born in Portugal (81%), followed by those born in Portuguese-speaking African countries (10%), other European Union countries (3%) and other countries (6%), especially Brazil and India (3%). These figures are similar to those registered in 2013.

According to the data provided by the AMI, the number of new cases of homelessness supported by the organisation fell by about 23% between 2008 and 2018. The profile data collected by the organisation regarding the new cases reveal some changes over time (Table 1).

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[6] Angola, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau.

Table 1: Number and characteristics of new cases of homelessness supported by AMI in 2008, 2013 and 2018			
	2008	**2013**	**2018**
Number of new cases	640	546	492
Gender	26% women	26% women	25% women
Place of birth	66% born in Portugal; 13% born in Portuguese-speaking African countries	79% born in Portugal; 10% born in Portuguese-speaking African countries	76% born in Portugal; 8% born in Portuguese-speaking African countries; 2% born in Brazil
Age	16% aged under 30	29% aged under 30	26% aged under 30; 13% aged over 60
Status regarding the minimum income scheme	20% were beneficiaries of the minimum-income scheme	14% were beneficiaries of the minimum-income scheme	18% were beneficiaries of the minimum-income scheme; 11% had a pension; 9% had labour income

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of FEANTSA (2017) and of data provided directly by AMI.

2   Relevant strategies and policies tackling homelessness and housing exclusion

The ENIPSSA was approved on July 2017 through a Council of Ministers' Resolution 107/2017 (República Portuguesa, 2017). The strategy is based on three intervention axes, the first two of which were carried over from the previous national strategy (which covered the period 2009-2015). These three axes are operationalised by 15 strategic objectives, which are then translated into targets.

The first axis (and its five strategic objectives) covers promoting knowledge, information, awareness-raising and education on the phenomenon.

The second axis (seven strategic objectives) covers the strengthening of intervention aiming at promoting the integration of homeless persons. It includes objectives such as: i) improving the quality of existing support services (e.g. promoting specialised training to all the NPISAs; developing quality-assessment tools; fostering user-participation mechanisms; enhancing evaluation and assessment of services; and promoting access to healthcare, social protection, training and employment); ii) supporting the development and mainstreaming of the case-management approach introduced by some NPISAs to ensure that individuals' unique needs are addressed, and long-term solutions found; and iii) providing a wide range of permanent accommodation solutions.

The third axis (three strategic objectives) is aimed at strengthening the involvement of different entities and their coordination, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The ENIPSSA is coordinated by the Institute of Social Security, which was already responsible for the previous strategy. Implementation will be in accordance with biannual action plans prepared by an inter-institutional group composed of public and private non-profit organisations. This is the so-called group for the implementation and evaluation of the strategy (GIMAE), which is responsible for monitoring the strategy's implementation in close cooperation with NPISAs.

The strategy does not include any EU indicators on housing to monitor HHE such as housing cost overburden, overcrowding, severe housing deprivation, or arrears of mortgage or rent payments.

The ENIPSSA represents the first time that the central state authorities have established a clear linkage between homelessness and housing policies. It establishes a direct link

with the 'New generation' strategy for the financing of solutions aimed at preventing homelessness arising from institutional discharge or severe housing need, as well as those aimed at supporting Housing First and other housing-led programmes. As emphasised by Baptista, 'although it is not possible to say that the ENIPSSA introduces a decisive shift into "Housing first"/housing led "solutions" to homelessness, it is possible to observe a clear institutional – and financial – commitment from national public housing authorities towards enabling access to permanent housing solutions by the promotion of state programmes aimed at promoting access to permanent accommodation for homeless people' (Baptista, 2018: 102).

Moreover, on November 2018, three organisations (the Institute of Social Security, the National Institute for Housing and Urban Rehabilitation, and the Institute of Financial Management of the Social Security) signed a protocol aiming at establishing a partnership for promoting increased permanent housing solutions for homeless people, through the promotion of lease contracts.

The **'New generation of housing policies'** strategy was launched by the Portuguese government in May 2018 (República Portuguesa, 2018). The document acknowledges that the number of people with housing vulnerabilities has been increasing. It also highlights the increased difficulties of those in poverty, living in lone-parent households, and especially young people. The document stresses young people's increased difficulties in becoming autonomous, both because of the lack of affordable rented housing and because of the increasing difficulty in getting housing credit. One of its four strategic objectives is to ensure that an answer is provided to those households living in serious housing deprivation. The strategy establishes as a medium-term target increasing the share of public-supported housing within the overall housing stock from 2% to 5%, which represents an increase of 170,000 housing units.

The strategy envisages the use of a set of specific policy instruments. The programme for supporting the provision of emergency accommodation[7] was established and regulated in mid-2018. It is aimed at providing emergency accommodation to those who become or are at imminent risk of becoming deprived of housing, either temporarily or permanently, as long as they do not have an adequate housing alternative and their movable assets are less than 240 times the Social Support Index (IAS) (i.e. €104,582 in 2019).

The programme for supporting access to housing (1º Direito[8]) was also established and regulated in mid-2018. It is aimed at providing a housing solution to those living in poor housing conditions and who cannot meet the costs of adequate housing. The concept of poor housing conditions encompasses situations of: i) precariousness – including homelessness; ii) lack of safety, and insalubrity; iii) overcrowding; and iv) incompatibility of housing with specific characteristics of the dweller, such as disability or incapacity. In order to be entitled, the applicant should not be the owner or tenant of another dwelling considered to be suitable, their movable assets should be less than €5,146.80 and their household's mean monthly income should be less than four times the IAS (i.e. €1,743 in 2019).

The eighth post-programme surveillance report of the European Commission (EC) regarding Portugal acknowledged that the 'New generation' strategy represents an effort to address the main weaknesses of the housing market, as well as to protect the most vulnerable, for example through the renewed reliance on social housing (EC, 2018).

On February 2019 additional programmes under the 'New generation' strategy were approved. These included the programme for affordable tenancy, which is aimed at widening the provision of rented accommodation at affordable prices (i.e. at least 20% lower than market prices). It is targeted at households who do not meet the criteria for accessing means-tested public housing support, but who are also not able to secure

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[7] Porta de Entrada – Programa de Apoio ao Alojamento Urgente.

[8] 1º Direito – Programa de Apoio ao Acesso à Habitação.

adequate housing without becoming financially overburdened. The programme establishes maximum rent amounts and a maximum contribution rate for tenants of 35%, as well as a minimum lease period of five years.

It should also be mentioned that currently there are other proposals regarding the rental market under discussion, such as the application of lower taxes to long-duration rental contracts, and a set of legislative changes aimed at increasing stability and protecting the most vulnerable tenants. In this respect it should be mentioned that a temporary suspension of the (possible) eviction of vulnerable tenants (i.e. those aged 65 or more or with an advanced level of disability) who had been living in their dwelling for at least 15 years, was in place between July 2018 and March 2019. This measure became permanent with the publication of Law 13/2019 in February 2019. Landlords can only evict such tenants if they prove they need the dwelling to be their permanent home or if it needs extensive renovation works. In this latter case, the landlord should provide an alternative equivalent dwelling, and restrictions on the level of rent apply.

Reflecting on the development of the ENIPSSA since its creation, Baptista concluded that one of the main limitations identified in the previous homelessness strategy had been the lack of a clear **allocation of resources**, along with an imprecise commitment from public authorities regarding funding (Baptista, 2018).

Furthermore, Baptista considered that: 'although progress has been made in the present process, the action plan document recognises that such a budgeting exercise was not possible in all areas, thus demanding further efforts as regards the need for future assessment and improvements' (Baptista, 2018: 103).

An analysis of the legislation creating the ENIPSSA reveals that funding is associated, in more than one instance, with maximising resources. The preamble of the resolution states that: 'the intervention model is based on a principle of maximisation of human and financial resources' (República Portuguesa, 2017: 3926). The idea is repeated in the main text, for example in the statement that: 'the methodology for intervention and integrated follow-up assumes that the articulation between different local social services as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of intervention are ensured. [This would be achieved] through the maximisation of existing resources based on the enforcement of existing measures and programmes' (República Portuguesa, 2017: 3926).

The strategy's action plan for 2017-2018, the latest currently available, identifies the budget allocated to different measures, differentiating between direct and indirect allocations – that is, between specific (new) state allocations to support the strategy's measures, and allocations from the budgets of different entities that in the past had already been used for similar purposes and were now integrated within the strategy.

Thus, in reality, approximately half of the over €60 million allocated for the strategy's first two-year period were previously already being spent on similar activities. The bulk of the direct allocations (around €25 million) was related to the objective of ensuring access to existing measures (such as integration communities, direct intervention teams, temporary accommodation centres (CATs), and shelters), which means a reinforcement of the support for non-housing solutions.

As for the allocation of funds to support people's access to housing, the report on the state budget for 2019 indicates a total of €700 million to be invested in the 1º Direito programme (see above) up to 2024, €40 million of which in 2019, with the objective of 'eradicating undignified housing conditions in Portugal by 2024' (Ministério das Finanças, 2018: 25). The report specifically mentions a national assessment of rehousing needs, conducted by the National Institute for Housing and Urban Rehabilitation, which identified a total of 25,762 families experiencing housing precariousness in 187 municipalities (IHRU, 2018).

However, one should bear in mind that the report estimated the total cost of rehousing those families through the acquisition and/or rehabilitation of dwellings to be

approximately €1.5 billion. An additional €192.6 million would be needed for rent subsidies.

The focus on a programme such as 1º Direito seems indicative of the current **orientation of public housing policies**. As mentioned above, a declared objective of the 'New generation' strategy is to increase the share of public-supported housing within the overall housing stock from 2% to 5%. However, this does not mean that the current proportion, composed mainly of social housing units, is to be reinforced with additional funding for social housing.

Rather, the focus is on public-supported housing that includes both social housing and other types of public support to housing. In fact, no significant prospect of investment in social housing can be envisaged at this time, and indeed two out of the three draft proposals for a basic law on housing, presented by the left-wing parties represented in parliament and currently under discussion there, place a focus on the 'social function of housing' rather than on social housing.[9] The basic law on housing was expected to be voted on in parliament during the first half of 2019.

EU funding has been used to address homelessness in Portugal. For instance, priority axis 6 of the operational programme for the region of Lisbon relates to the promotion of social inclusion and the fight against poverty and discrimination. The homeless population is mentioned specifically as a target group under two specific objectives of two different investment priorities.

The first relates to the 'increase of personal, social and professional skills of vulnerable groups as well as their access to employment, increasing employability and reducing economic vulnerability'. The second relates to 'enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, including healthcare and social services of general interest'.

Priority axis 6 is funded in equal parts by the European Social Fund and by the European Regional Development Fund.[10] However, the text of the operational programme clearly links the aforementioned priorities to funding from the European Social Fund.[11]

The operational programme for social inclusion and employment, which covers three of the five regions in mainland Portugal,[12] includes similar priorities but only in one case refers to the homeless population. In most cases reference is made to 'people and families experiencing poverty and social exclusion including situations of crisis and social emergency'.

The target group of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) comprises the most vulnerable persons and households, including the homeless. The main objectives of the operational programme in Portugal are to provide food products and basic material assistance such as hygiene products, clothing and footwear to the most vulnerable population, and to develop accompanying measures promoting their qualifications, autonomy and accountability.

The annual implementation reports currently available (2014 and 2015) emphasise that these were years of transition between operational programmes and that it was not possible to gather data at all the levels of disaggregation required. Thus, the numbers of

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[9] Only the proposal by the Communist Party emphasises the primacy of social housing, while the proposals by the Socialist Party and by the Left-Wing Bloc focus on the social function of housing as the duty of a home-owner to use it in a way that the exercise of property rights contributes to the general interest.

[10] See: https://lisboa.portugal2020.pt/np4/66.html.

[11] Available at:
https://lisboa.portugal2020.pt/np4/%7B$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=107&fileName=Implementation_report_Acknowledgement_of.pdf

[12] The convergence regions, Norte, Centro and Alentejo. The more developed region of Lisbon and the transition region of Algarve are covered by specific operational programmes.

people supported who have given characteristics, including homeless people, are not available (Relatório Anual de Execução do FEAD, 2014, 2015).

This prevented Perista and Perista, in their contribution to the mid-term evaluation of FEAD, from assessing the specific issue of the extent to which the programme reached the most vulnerable groups (homeless people, children at risk of poverty, etc.) and helped them move further towards inclusion. In any case, the authors stress that: 'as one of the aims is to reduce food waste, the households selected should know how to cook and indeed cook their meals. Such a condition is deemed not to suit part of the homeless population. (…) However, it does not mean that another part of the homeless population, especially if considered in its wider sense, cannot be included as recipients of the programme' (Perista and Perista, 2017: 17).

Additionally, the conclusion of the ex-ante evaluation of FEAD should be highlighted, that: 'the Fund is aimed at mitigating the extreme forms of poverty affecting the most socially excluded, such as homelessness, child poverty and food deprivation. However, the national programme does not have an explicit reference either to homelessness or to specific products to be distributed to the homeless population (sleeping bags, backpacks, waterproof materials, etc.)' (GEP, 2014: 45).

From the above, and also bearing in mind what has been mentioned regarding the funding of the ENIPSSA, it seems clear that, in the field of HHE, EU funding cannot be described as playing an important role.

In her analysis of the development of the ENIPSSA since its creation, Baptista emphasises that: 'by the end of March 2018, it was possible to identify some **progress in the attainment of several activities that contribute to different strategic objectives under the three ENIPSSA major intervention axes**' (Baptista, 2018: 104).

Since then, additional steps have been taken (e.g. the aforementioned tripartite protocol) and documents have been produced in respect of several activities, including:
- the action plan 2017-2018 (ENIPSSA, 2017);
- a leaflet on the concept of homeless people;
- a model for intervention and integrated follow-up (GTI-GIMAE, 2018);
- a training framework (GTF-GIMAE, 2018);
- a report on the survey of concepts and local information systems 2018 (GTMA-GIMAE, 2018); and
- a report of the first national meeting of NPISAs (Cruchinho et al., 2018).

As mentioned above, the GIMAE is responsible for **monitoring** implementation in close cooperation with NPISAs. The inclusion of a third autonomous axis aimed at strengthening coordination, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms 'was considered essential during the drafting stage, given the complexity of the tasks involved and the lessons learnt from the hindrances experienced during the 2009-2015 implementation stage of the first national strategy' (Baptista, 2018: 102).

Unlike the failure to implement monitoring and evaluation procedures under the strategy for 2009-2015, different monitoring activities have been undertaken within the current strategy. Baptista (2018) presents the following as concrete examples, up to March 2018, of developments under the axis 'Coordination, monitoring and evaluation':
- a proposal for the creation of a new structure representing the different ministerial areas;
- direct consultation with NPISAs over the identification of potential constraints on the operationalisation of ENIPSSA activities;
- strengthened representation of NPISAs within the GIMAE structures, based on a proposal by the existing NPISA representatives; and

- preparation of the interim evaluation report on implementation of the 2017-2018 action plan (Baptista, 2018: 105-106).

Since then, additional developments have been registered, and the above-mentioned report on the survey of concepts and local information systems in 2018 (GTMA-GIMAE, 2018) represents a concrete output of the monitoring process. The evaluation of implementation of the 2017-2018 action plan is currently underway and the report will represent the first visible output in terms of evaluation.

3   Analysis of the current patterns of service provision and challenges in implementing Portugal's responses to homelessness and housing exclusion

As mentioned above, homelessness in Portugal is defined according to the first two categories of ETHOS Light; that is, roofless and houseless persons. As such, those facing eviction orders due to rent arrears or repossession orders due to mortgage foreclosures are excluded from the specific system of services provided for homeless people.

Bearing this in mind, it should be mentioned that there are only a few specific **prevention services** in Portugal for helping households in immediate risk of homelessness.

One example is the measure protecting from eviction those tenants aged 65 or more or with an advanced level of disability, who have lived in their dwelling for at least 15 years, (see Section 2). As mentioned, this measure became permanent in March 2019 after having been implemented on a temporary basis between July 2018 and March 2019.

Another example regards the social emergency fund for households at risk of becoming homeless, run by some municipalities through the payment of (part of) their monthly housing expenses. Support is granted on a temporary basis but beneficiaries can apply for an extension of support. However, it should be mentioned that the budget available per year and per household is limited to a maximum of €1,000, which is, in many cases, insufficient to cover the rents in some of the municipalities where it was introduced. Moreover, the support is often not cumulative with other housing support programmes put in place by the municipality. Some municipalities such as Sintra do allow cumulation, but if the applicant is also benefiting from social housing the budget available for that household is reduced to €500 per year.

In municipalities where that kind of programme is not in place, households faced with rent arrears and/or difficulties in meeting their housing costs should resort to the general welfare support system, namely to social assistance. In these cases, solutions (e.g. a short-term temporary subsidy) are decided on a case-by-case basis by the social workers responsible.

The available data seem to indicate **some positive signs regarding the prevention of homelessness**. The Portuguese strategy establishes as one of its objectives that no one should stay on the streets for more than 24 hours. Thus, as emphasised in the ENIPSSA model for intervention and integrated follow-up: 'whenever one comes across a situation, directly or indirectly, this should be signalled and referred to the service/welcoming unit of the NPISA/local stakeholder. In the absence of a NPISA/local stakeholder, signalling and referral should be made to social security services or to the national social emergency line 144' (GTI-GIMAE, 2018: 8-9).

The evaluation report on the former strategy (2009-2015), although stressing that 'there is no detailed information regarding this strategic objective', highlights the importance of the national social emergency line (LNES-144), 'as this is a social emergency service providing an immediate response to people faced with an absence of minimum conditions for survival, namely homeless people' (ISS, I.P., 2017: 23).

As regards evictions, in 2018, the competent body (Balcão Nacional de Arrendamento) received 294 eviction requests per month, on average. This represented a fall of 44 compared with 2017 and was the lowest figure since the creation of this body in 2013. Similarly, the number of evictions fell by approximately 45%.

Media reports acknowledge that both landlords' and tenants' associations believe that this fall is linked to the fact that, between July 2018 and March 2019, there was a temporary suspension of evictions of vulnerable tenants (see above).[13] As mentioned previously, this measure became permanent in March 2019.

As regards home-ownership, Law 13/2016 protects families' permanent dwellings during tax execution procedures. Permanent dwellings may be seized but not sold unless they are subject to the maximum municipal tax rate on real estate transactions (in 2019, properties over €574,323). In these cases, they may only be sold one year after the deadline for voluntary payment of the oldest debt.

It should be mentioned that, according to the Portuguese tax and customs authority, the number of real estate properties seized – including not only permanent homes but also industrial and commercial property, as well as plots of land – increased from 16,166 in 2017 to 18,008 in 2018. The number of properties actually sold increased from 1,547 in 2017 to 1,561 in 2018.[14] These figures are about half those registered in 2014 and 2015, before the approval of Law 13/2016 (Perista and Baptista, 2016).

Regarding **emergency/temporary accommodation**, both emergency shelters and CATs provide emergency and temporary accommodation to adults living in a socially vulnerable situation, including homeless people, until they get referred to a more adequate social service. The homeless may be referred to these centres by the social emergency line that responds to different emergency situations. According to Institute of Social Security's guide, CATs should also satisfy basic needs and help people shape their own lives. (ISS, I.P., 2014).

Thus, in addition to sleeping facilities, CATs usually offer psychosocial support along with laundry, hygiene and food services. However, it should be mentioned that most of them are closed during the day. Thus, only dinner and, in some cases, breakfast is provided.

The main difference between emergency shelters and the emergency accommodation in CATs relates to the procedures for renewal of stays. In some cases the internal rules determine that emergency accommodation should be occupied up to a maximum of 72 hours, after which a further application must be made.

Emergency accommodation for homeless people may also be provided in private rooms or in boarding houses. This solution is more common in municipalities without emergency shelters. As most homeless people in Portugal live in the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto, emergency/temporary centres tend to be scarce in the remainder of the country.

As for **supported housing**, it should be noted that CATs can often be included in that category. Especially in regions where the numbers of homeless people are lower, some accommodation that tends to be considered as temporary (e.g. temporary hostels, room lettings, and private rented houses) may be triggered instantly during an emergency situation. Yet, even in these situations, they may become a mid- to long-term accommodation solution given the lack of alternatives. This is true of the aforementioned rooms/hostels financed by social services. In larger cities, those different forms of accommodation may easily be considered as temporary accommodation because they

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[13] 'Balcão dos despejos recebeu 294 pedidos por mês. São menos 44 do que em 2017', DN 17 November 2018, available at: https://www.dn.pt/edicao-do-dia/17-nov-2018/interior/balcao-dos-despejos-recebeu-294-pedidos-por-mes-sao-menos-44-do-que-em-2017-10188949.html (accessed 11 April 2019).

[14] Statistics available at: https://vendas.portaldasfinancas.gov.pt/bens/estatisticas.action (accessed 11 April 2019).

tend to be proposed only after the stay at a CAT – in an emergency situation or otherwise.

As regards temporary rooms/pensions, it should be stressed that these cannot be considered services (no staff are available on site and people receive support through the local social services), but rather as a housing solution found within the general resources of local communities – hence, it is hard to characterise them. Nonetheless, in general terms, as a condition of supporting the rental costs of them, social services demand that they offer, in addition to accommodation, access to cooking facilities, a bathroom and, preferably, laundry facilities, even if these are shared.

In some cases, emergency accommodation may also be available in **insertion communities**. These are facilities that are open during the day but which, unlike day centres, do not provide food. Rather, they usually provide occupational support along with job-seeking activities (e.g. information on job opportunities, social skills training, and advice services for job search). In some cases, this type of facility may also be called occupational workshops.

It is important to note that there are services providing support to refugees and asylum-seekers, and programmes focusing on alcohol and drug addiction, that do not directly address homeless people. Nonetheless, they often represent an important source of support for some subgroups of homeless people.

Street outreach teams are among the most common services provided for homeless people, mainly in larger urban areas. Some teams are operated with volunteers while others are operated with professionals: this often leads to different goals, levels of commitment, and methods of working.

Teams operated with professionals are usually multidisciplinary (mainly composed of social workers and psychologists), approaching homeless people in order to improve their life conditions, particularly those who do not use social services. They are aimed at providing comprehensive support from the emergency stage, including access to food and clothes, to resettlement and social integration support, including psychosocial support.

These teams usually have expertise in the different support systems in place (e.g. social welfare, mental illness, justice, migrations, addictions) in order to better respond to the diverse needs of the homeless population.

Outreach teams operated with professionals are more common in areas where there is a higher concentration of homeless people, and they usually operate on a daily basis. Outside these areas it is more common to find teams operated both with professionals and volunteers, usually operating on a weekly basis.

There are also teams operated only with volunteers. Their composition varies considerably in terms of the working skills of the volunteers. The support provided tends to focus on responding to basic needs (mobile food services and distribution of clothes/blankets) and on keeping homeless people company in order to fight loneliness. They usually operate during the night.

In some major cities, there are also outreach teams focusing on providing health support. Their objective is to give homeless people equal access to healthcare. The team is usually composed of a psychologist, a social worker, a nurse and a medical doctor (although not every day, and on a volunteer basis).

The **solidary lockers programme** consists in granting each homeless person a locker, situated in a public place, allowing them somewhere to keep personal goods as well as providing a postal address. The programme teams are coordinated by a professional (psychologist) and supported by volunteers trained in social intervention. Users are contacted on the spot on a biweekly basis (at the least) and psychosocial support is offered.

Some municipalities develop **contingency plans for cold weather spells** (i.e. when the air temperature drops below 3º Celsius for a period equal to or longer than two days). These plans usually involve diverse elements such as health professionals and volunteers, outreach teams, the police, municipalities' civil protection departments, and other social volunteers. Typically, a pavilion is opened offering shelter, warm meals and clothing/blankets. Users are also given information about good practice in how to prevent the dangers generally associated with severe weather conditions and (when possible and if needed) referrals are made to emergency accommodation in shelters. In Lisbon and Oporto, some metro stations are kept open during the night while the contingency plan is active.

As well noted in FEANTSA's latest country fiche regarding Portugal, '**homelessness has traditionally been understood as a social issue, as opposed to a housing issue**' (FEANTSA, 2017: 3). The report also emphasised that 'for the first time, the national strategy emphasises housing as a key response to homelessness', 'stresses that people should not stay in temporary accommodation for long periods and that permanent housing solutions should be found' and 'clearly promotes housing solutions for homeless people through programmes that support access or maintenance of housing for individuals and families, and prioritises permanent housing solutions based on the Housing First approach' (FEANTSA, 2017: 3).

The report therefore considered that 'Portugal has adopted a **housing-led strategy**' (FEANTSA, 2017: 3). However, it also noted that the strategy had not yet been put into practice. Two years later, this assumption remains largely true. Despite the significant steps registered since the launching of the strategy (see Section 2), most existing services cannot be considered as housing-led. Steps towards housing-led services (e.g. the 1º Direito programme) have only very recently been taken, and no concrete evidence on their results is yet available. Nonetheless, it seems clear that the recent approval of measures within the scope of the 'New generation' strategy may represent a decisive step forward.

In any case, it should be mentioned that the oldest Portuguese **Housing First programme** dates back to 2009. A project for 65 homeless people with mental health issues was developed in Lisbon. The programme has achieved excellent results – more than 85% of residents have stayed in their homes since the project was launched. The initial funding was not continued after 2012. However, with the support of the municipality of Lisbon's social emergency fund, it was possible to continue the project. Other projects have been implemented in different locations throughout the country. A national network is currently being developed, given the interest of more municipalities in implementing the methodology (ISS, I.P., 2017).

The approval of the current national strategy probably represents the most significant **innovation in the provision of homelessness services within the last five years** in Portugal. Even if its objectives are largely consistent with those of the former strategy (2009-2015) – in other words to promote the gathering of information and a better understanding of homelessness in Portugal, and to reinforce interventions directed towards the integration of homeless people – it includes a whole new axis, dedicated to the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy itself.

However, it seems important to mention that its significance as an innovation derives from the fact that, between 2013 and 2015, despite autonomous developments at the local level such as the gradual establishment of NPISAs, there was a complete halt in the coordination of the former strategy.

The **main service providers** in Portugal are non-government organisations (NGOs) (including charities) and municipalities. In most cases NGOs, although private, are at least partially funded by public entities. In some cases, the programmes and/or services provided by private institutions are funded by local authorities. In other cases, funding comes from the social security system.

There are also programmes that get private financing, but usually this funding only covers the initial implementation stage or particular one-off needs/resources (e.g. to purchase a van; to develop a computer system; to rent a number of houses for a Housing First programme; or to buy clothes and blankets to be distributed to roofless persons). Moreover, this means that these private entities do not actually share with the public entities the power to define policy or the specific functions of the services.

Relevant stakeholders consulted consider that the establishment of NPISAs throughout the country enhanced communication between public entities and the private sector, at least at the local level. Local authorities seem to be more aware of the specificities relating to the planning and delivery of services for homeless people. In any case, the power to define the services is mainly reserved to public entities and, in most cases, NPISAs are coordinated by social security services or by the municipality.

Within the current strategy, the representation of NIPSAs has been strengthened through their inclusion within the GIMAE; and the ability and commitment of local stakeholders has led to positive changes in reorganising local responses to homelessness in a coordinated and integrated way in several local territories (Baptista and Perista, 2017).

As mentioned before, the GIMAE is responsible for monitoring and evaluation. This structure is coordinated by social security services and includes a wide range of public actors – but not municipalities, for instance – along with six private actors (NGOs and also a company).

As regards the **effectiveness of services in providing comprehensive and flexible support according to people's support needs**, relevant stakeholders identify different cases where the support provided by services fails to meet this objective due to the type of service provided (e.g. street outreach teams; solidarity lockers) or due to the way services are organised (e.g. shelters/CATs exclusively for men or for women, preventing a homeless couple from staying together if they decide to use the service). Some organisations are deemed to be more effective than others even when they provide similar services.

Additionally, FEANTSA's country fiche regarding Portugal stresses that 'whilst social workers are generally well-qualified, the ratio of staff to service users is often too high. The national strategy set a target of 15-20 service users per case manager. Currently, the reality is more like 30-40, and more in some cases' (FEANTSA, 2017: 4).

The situation is different, though, when services are housing-led. Ornelas et al. (2014) examined the impacts of a Housing First programme on participants' community integration, and determined that the acquisition of stable and independent housing was associated with improvements in participants' community integration. The authors argue that, after being housed, participants reported that they began to use local resources and participate in community activities, and that they developed a sense of belonging within their neighbourhoods. The authors concluded: 'Overall, our findings provided evidence that access to an independent, permanent and scattered-site housing, coupled with support services, is associated with improvements in community integration. (…) Having a permanent house and privacy gave participants a sense of safety and stability, which is essential to address other stressors, and to reorganise various aspects of their lives' (Ornelas et al., 2014: 48).

In recent years, **housing policies have struggled with a number of difficulties hampering access to permanent accommodation solutions**.

Social housing units belong mainly to municipalities and represent only about 2% of the overall housing stock (INE, 2016). As mentioned in a recent paper, there is a 'weak investment in social housing based on a model targeting the poorest, most spatially concentrated, and most socially homogeneous households. (…) The populations living in social housing neighbourhoods are mostly made up of families with indicators of poverty so high that no social or housing mobility is possible' (Pinto, 2017: 134-135).

This has resulted in a permanent shortage of social housing. Moreover, as mentioned in the national assessment of rehousing needs 'the distribution between vacant social housing units and families facing housing precariousness is very uneven. There are units available in municipalities without families in need and there are families in need in municipalities without or with minimal availability of units [further adding that] only 25 municipalities have a sufficient number of social housing units available to provide an answer to the number of families in need in their municipality, in a total of 200 families' (IHRU, 2018: 3-4).

Another example regards the 'social rental market', launched in 2012, which was aimed at facilitating access to housing for low-to-average income families experiencing difficulties in accessing the regular housing market. The actual success of this initiative has been undermined by the extremely small number of dwellings that have been put into the 'pool' by the programme partners. In April 2019, there were in total just 105 dwellings available for social rent in the country, and only 19 in the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto where HHE is most evident.

Additionally, as emphasised before, decisive steps towards the provision of housing-led services have only been taken recently.

The above-mentioned factors represent one of the **systemic causes limiting effective and sustainable ways out of homelessness** in Portugal.

Another important factor is (the lack of) housing affordability. The European housing exclusion index 2018, released by Abbé Pierre Foundation and FEANTSA, notes that Portugal was one of the countries where housing costs among poor households increased the most (by 39.6%) between 2010 and 2016. In 2017, the share of poor households overburdened by housing costs stood at 26%, compared with 2.4% of non-poor households. The report also highlights the fact that non-EU citizens are 4 times more likely to be overburdened by housing costs than Portuguese citizens – 29% compared with 6.8% (Abbé Pierre Foundation/FEANTSA, 2018). As noted in a recent report, 'since the beginning of the crisis housing costs as a share of disposable income have increased significantly, especially for the poor' (Pittini et al., 2017: 90).

The latest data on housing cost overburden issued by Statistics Portugal indicate a fall from 9.1% in 2015 to 7.5% in 2016 and to 6.7% in 2017. This fall was only significant for the two lower income quintiles, and in particular for the lowest one (INE, 2018). In 2017, the household types most affected by housing cost overburden were lone-parent households (20.7%) and single-person (aged less than 65) households (19.1%).

Additionally, average levels of welfare benefits, including under the minimum-income scheme, remain very low, even if they have increased since the beginning of 2016,. According to the latest statistics from the Institute of Social Security, in February 2019 average monthly benefits were €117.78 per person and €263.45 per household. These amounts have been fairly stable over the years.

The above was recognised by the EC in its country report for Portugal for 2019, when it clearly states that 'while the minimum-income scheme has increased its take-up by 14,500 people since September 2017, its adequacy is among the lowest in the EU: on average, the net income of a minimum-income recipient amounts to around 40% of the national poverty threshold' (EC, 2019: 43).

Addressing these systemic causes seems crucial for tackling HHE in Portugal, along with addressing a set of other **weaknesses/gaps**, which include:

- the prevalence of 'staircase' models and low-intensity support services over housing-led solutions and high-intensity support services, leading to insufficient provision of comprehensive and flexible support according to people's support needs;

- the persistence of a funding model for service-providers that does not enhance organisational cooperation or the integration/complementarity of services, but instead promotes competition;

- the lack of overall structures (e.g. umbrella organisations) that might enhance capacity-building within the homelessness sector;

- the fact that the evaluation of services is mostly absent; and

- the overall imbalances in the housing market in Portugal.

Thus, **priorities for improvement** should include:

- improving the system for collecting information on HHE;

- promoting greater momentum towards the provision of high-intensity support services and housing-led solutions, within the scope of the strategy and reinforced by the recent approval of new measures for housing support;

- ensuring that the ENIPSSA has enough resources (human, financial, etc.) to safeguard its effective implementation as well as the assessment of its results;

- comprehensively integrating HHE into the new basic law on housing; and

- ensuring that HHE is carefully considered in any efforts to correct the imbalances in the housing market in Portugal.

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Annex

Table A1: ETHOS Light categories defined as homeless in Portugal

	Operational category		Living situation	Definition	Defined as homeless in Portugal
1	People living rough	1	Public space/ external space	Living on the streets or in public spaces without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters	Yes
2	People in emergency accommodation	2	Overnight shelters	People with no place of usual residence who move frequently between various types of accommodation	Yes
3	People living in accommodation for the homeless	3	Homelessness hostels	Where the period of stay is time-limited and no long-term housing is provided	Yes
		4	Temporary accommodation		Yes
		5	Transitional supported accommodation		Yes
		6	Women's shelter or refuge accommodation		No
4	People living in institutions	7	Healthcare institutions	Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing	No
		8	Penal institutions	No housing available prior to release	No
5	People living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing	9	Mobile homes	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence	No
		10	Non-conventional buildings		No
		11	Temporary structures		No
6	Homeless people living temporarily in conventional housing with family and friends (due to lack of housing)	12	Conventional housing, but not the person's usual place of residence	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence	No

Table A2: Latest available data on the number of homeless people in Portugal

	Operational category		Living situation	Most recent number	Period covered	Source
1	People living rough	1	Public space/ external space	1,443 people	Feb-May 2018	ENIPSSA (2018); GIMAE (2018)
2	People in emergency accommodation	2	Overnight shelters	210 people	Feb-May 2018	Same as for category 1
3	People living in accommodation for the homeless	3	Homelessness hostels	Categories 3.3 and 3.4: 1,111 people	Feb-May 2018	Same as for category 1
		4	Temporary accommodation			
		5	Transitional supported accommodation	Category 3.5: 632 people		
		6	Women's shelter or refuge accommodation	Category 3.6: 475 people		
4	People living in institutions	7	Healthcare institutions	190 people	Feb-May 2018	Same as for category 1
		8	Penal institutions	620 people		
5	People living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing	9	Mobile homes	4,549 people (whole category 5)	Feb-May 2018	Same as for category 1
		10	Non-conventional buildings			
		11	Temporary structures			
6	Homeless people living temporarily in conventional housing with family and friends (due to lack of housing)	12	Conventional housing, but not the person's usual place of residence	3,701 people	Feb-May 2018	Same as for category 1