

## **UNGA Resolution 72/148. Improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas**

### **Portugal**

#### **General:**

By 1960, 65% of the national population lived in rural areas. Income was largely drawn from agriculture, livestock and related activities. By 2017, only 35% of the population in Portugal lived in rural areas. The share of individuals employed in the primary sector of the economy, which stood at 27% in 1981, fell to as low as 6% in 2017.

According to the last national census (2011), around 39% of women (2 125 083) resided in rural areas and represented 20% of the resident population in Portugal. Rural women were the majority in these areas (52% of the population residing in rural areas). Ageing was more pronounced among rural women than other women (1.87 women aged more than 64 for each woman with less than 15).

Despite notable improvements in the access to healthcare and education, with very significant consequences for the lives of people in rural areas, the contemporary reality of these areas in Portugal is still permeated by multiple sources of concern.

Regarding formal education, in 2011, 25% did not hold any level of schooling; however, this was an improvement from 2001, where it stood at 36%. More than half of the women in rural areas had completed only primary education or less (52% in 2011 and 64% in 2001) and 9% had tertiary education (from 2% in 2001).

39% of the women in rural areas were part of the active population.

With regards women agricultural producers, in 2016, they reached the number of 83 299, representing 34% of all individual agricultural producers (in 1999 they were 23%). 98.6% of which were autonomous producers, i.e., based on family labour.

70% of women agricultural producers had four years of schooling or less (compared to 67% of men); 6.4% had more years of schooling (compared to 5.5% of men).



With regards their qualification for agricultural activities, 74% had only practical experience (44% of men), 25% had professional training (54% of men) and 0.5% had full training (1.7% of men).

These women face particular vulnerabilities, which translate into lower levels of schooling and integration in the labor market, lower salaries, reduced participation in decision-making, less access to vocational training and higher difficulties in reconciling work, family and personal life. They are also affected by restrictions to their mobility, by isolation, by the aging population and by the scarcity of infrastructures and proximity services such as schools, health facilities and banking services.

Women living and working in rural areas are diverse as can be. Adding up to sex, some of them suffer from discrimination and violence at the intersection of sex and other grounds such as age, racial and ethnic origin, disability, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or sexual characteristics.

Portugal recognizes the importance of the role of women in rural areas, not only because of their influence on the economy of these areas, but also for their contribution to economic diversification, environmental conservation and preservation of natural heritage.

## **Public policies**

Portugal is committed to fulfilling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which asserts gender equality as a major goal. Economic growth is key, but so is the empowerment of all women and girls; so is the elimination of violence and harmful practices; so is the investment in lifelong education and inclusive scientific and technological development; so is gender parity in decision-making at the political, economic and public levels.

Portugal recognizes the importance of the role of rural women and girls in the economy as well as their contribution to socio-economic diversification, preservation of the environment and of our natural heritage. Portugal also recognizes the urgency of guaranteeing these women and girls the full exercise of rights in all dimensions of their



lives, from participation in the labor market and public life, to protection against all forms of violence and discrimination.

Aiming to produce structural impacts, the Government approved in 2018 a National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030 (National Strategy), aligned with the sustainable development goals until 2030. This strategy includes three actions plans, with concrete measures defined until 2021: action plan for equality between women and men; action plan for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence; action plan for combating discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics.

In its National Strategy, Portugal puts a strong emphasis on the **territorialization** of public policies. This means bringing local characteristics and needs into the process of policy design from its very outset. It means creating specific tools to ensure and stimulate the fruitfulness of initiatives on the ground. It means investing in networking and partnerships. It means ascribing local authorities and non-governmental organizations a role as strategic agents in the definition and implementation of measures.

To achieve this, the Government is reinforcing cooperation between central and local public administration, through cooperation protocols between the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality and municipalities. The purpose is to align local equality and non-discrimination policies with the National Strategy, adapting it to territorial characteristics and needs. In 2019, 192 protocols had been entered across the country.

In terms of **representation and participation**, the Association of women farmers and rural women Portugal – MARP (the main association in Portugal representing rural women) is represented and participates in the consultative body of the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality, in charge of developing public policies in the areas of citizenship and gender equality.

Moreover, and recognizing the needs of rural women in the area of prevention and protection against violence, the new plan of action (under the National Strategy) – in full alignment with the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe) - reinforces the national coverage of victim support and protection services particularly in rural and isolated areas,



strengthening local networks between municipalities, women's NGOs and other actors (see below).

Moreover, the National Strategy also reinforces **gender mainstreaming** mechanisms in all fields of governance to ensure an integrated, coherent and effective intervention on the ground. In particular, the gender perspective is integrated in the national program for the valorization of inland areas: through new protocols between central and local administration, financial support to local projects to promote equality between women and men, and through reinforcing local networks to prevent and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence.

Also, in 2018, the Government approved the Small-Scale Family Agriculture Status<sup>1</sup>. This is an area where women face severe disadvantages. This status is supposed to have a strong impact on the empowerment and participation of rural women, particularly in the agricultural labor market by providing them with more skills, means, and access to more favorable social security and tax systems.

With regards **education**, in Portugal, women have attained high levels of education and currently outnumber men in tertiary education. In 2016, more than three million adults participated in activities of lifelong learning – about one million more than in 2007 –, with a balanced distribution between women and men.

Portugal actively promotes gender equality at all levels of education and eliminating of gender stereotypes in education, in vocational training, and in careers choices as a vital step towards tackling gender inequalities. Noteworthy, is the project "Engineers for a day", which aims to prevent and combat the segregation of occupations on the basis of sex. It is addressed to secondary school students and students of the 3rd cycle of basic education. The 1<sup>st</sup> edition (2017/18) involved 517 students, 10 escolas, 3 companies, 1 higher education institution, and other entities such as municipalities, foundations and associations. The 2nd edition (2018/19) involved 3000 students, 27 schools, 25 companies, 11 higher education institutions, and other entities such as municipalities, foundations and associations.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dgadr.gov.pt/agriculturafamiliar> (in portuguese)

In 2016, the Government implemented a pilot distance-learning education program, fundamental to reduce training and skill shortages, also in ICT. This program aims to complement the recurrent secondary education network, responding to the problem created by geographical dispersion, particularly in regions of low population density, such as rural areas, and the need felt by an active population in Portugal that has not completed secondary education.

In terms of **services**, the Government has been putting a strong focus on the territorialization of public policies to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, namely in line with the new National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination (aforementioned). To do this and aiming to ensure a national coverage of support services for domestic violence victims, a series of protocols are being developed across the country specifically on this issue and aiming to cover territorial shortages. These are entered between the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality, municipalities, security forces, social security, education, health and justice authorities, and local NGO's. These protocols aim to put in place support services where they are lacking, to define intervention flowcharts between local authorities, to promote training, awareness raising and networking.

As a result, the national support network for victims of domestic violence currently counts 157 support services in 214 municipalities, representing 70% of the national territory.

Also, a specific App has been developed with information on support services available in each municipality, on how to lodge a complaint or a request for information and on which entities can give legal advice or psychological support.

Finally, security forces develop special programs of community policing, such as the Program Support 65 – Safety which aims to ensure a safety net for isolated seniors or for those at risk of social isolation, by supporting and raising awareness.

The Program Support 65 covers 94% of mainland territory. Risk cases that are detected, depending on the situation, are signaled to Social Security, to the Santas Casas da



Misericórdia (which are private institutions of social solidarity - IPSS), to social services and health centers.

In terms of **funding programs**, the Government has recently launched a funding line (within the EEAGrants 2014-2021 financial mechanism) to support municipalities in developing local policies that promote equality between women and men, in sectoral areas (i.e., health, social services, culture, sports, youth, leisure, employment and professional training, human resources, work-life balance, communication, security, mobility, urban planning, housing, environment, transportation, education) as well as in developing local projects to foster women and girls' political and civic participation (i.e., through mentoring, networking, associations and training) with a particular focus on vulnerable groups and inland areas.

Moreover, the Portuguese model of sustainable rural development aims to strengthen the multifunctional agro-forestry sector through a three-fold approach: firstly economic, through the enhancement of marketable goods; secondly environmental, by developing services and sustainable management of resources; and thirdly strengthening territories by improving the governance of local communities and their related activities.

The country rural areas present an enormous and diversified potential of natural, human and cultural resources, but they are also affected by setbacks in terms of social and economic development and by insufficient access to basic infrastructure.

Nevertheless, Portugal, like other countries in Europe, had a considerable transformation of rural areas, with the change of agricultural activities, the continued migration of population to urban centres, in the country and abroad, the ageing of the population and the emergence of new activities, particularly in the secondary and tertiary sectors.

This also led to a feminization of rural areas affecting, both positively and negatively, household welfare and women's roles in rural communities in various ways.

The positive impacts were that in many places of rural Portugal different initiatives emerged that were implemented by women, such as cooperatives or micro-enterprises; activities in tourism; the processing of agricultural products; small retailers and service companies, among others, due to the efforts of financing women's activities.

In fact, economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services and other productive assets, skills development and market information.

In the last decade, the European initiatives and funds to support European Countries in agriculture and rural development were extremely important in the dynamization of activities performed by women. A study carried out in Portugal stresses that these funds had allowed women, "alone, or in conjunction with other operational and community programmes, to develop and acquire new skills, and to invest in projects of diversification of activities...".

In this context, the rural development program 2014-2020 (PDR) aims to support investment in agricultural and forestry holdings, in agrifood undertakings and the establishment of young farmers, by promoting their business competitiveness.

Among support to young farmers establishing, for the first time, an agricultural holding, at the end of 2016, 42% of approved projects were promoted by women.

Under the PDR's local development measures (known as LEADER: which includes "Small investments in agricultural holdings", small investments in transformation and marketing" and "diversification of exploration activities"), in 2018, 20% of requests for LEADER Support were promoted by women (941 out of 4 717).

Also, PDR supports training and dissemination, as well as awareness raising and information activities. In this context, the project "Engaging the Feminine" promoted by the Association of women farmers and rural women Portugal – MARP, is supported by PDR, and establishes a set of goals in four areas:

- Promoting women's entrepreneurship: aiming to encourage the entry of women into the agricultural labor market through skills acquisition, provision of means and strategies to promote entrepreneurship, contributing to the improvement of the quality of life in rural areas. To do this, MARP has been conducting seminars, workshops, producing publications (such as "Rural women" magazine), as well as creating a web page with the goal of boosting female agricultural entrepreneurship.

- Developing information activities: aiming to promote discussion around the theme "Rural Development and Regional Producers". To do this, MARP organized a roundtable with women producers, among others, to share experiences and produce contributions to rural development.
- Agricultural marketing: aiming to promote and bring visibility to the agricultural market, through workshops and seminars to stimulate and encourage the use of marketing strategies for the promotion of brands and products.
- Good practices in agricultural production: aiming to enhance accountability and competence for an efficient and sustainable management of the farm, safeguarding the principles of food safety in the production, storage, transportation, use and treatment of associated waste.

All these measures create economic and social conditions to improve the quality of life of rural women, increasing their economic status, as well as to contribute to national growth, to reduce poverty, to reduce the disparities and increase social and territorial cohesion.

In the field of tourism in rural areas, in some regions, the presence of women as workers is essential. In the field of artistry, numerous successful experiences are known in which women are featured, which have helped to enhance the knowledge and local traditions in combination with innovative elements of technologies, design and marketing.

Financing and support to the participation and economic empowerment of women in the development of rural areas in Portugal is therefore a continuous challenge.

Finally, in terms of **development cooperation**, Portugal supports activities that are intended to promote the implementation of models of integrated development and growth with the aim of strengthening institutions and local communities and increasing availability and access of good quantities of quality food for those most in need, especially in rural areas. Rural development, in line with strategies for the safe and healthy feeding of populations, paves the way for sustainable farming systems for a more efficient and dynamic local economy.



Interventions in this area aim to:

- Increase production and productivity in a sustainable manner to ensure the well-being of populations and their nutritional safety and improve local income, particularly with new techniques and investment in technology to encourage better use and proper development of resources, particularly arable land and water for irrigation.
- Facilitate and improve better access to markets and rural commerce, locally and regionally.
- Improve food safety and the nutritional well-being of local communities, with a special focus on the role of women and food production organizations.
- Organize training, research and development activities, particularly through the creation and enhancement of partner networks.
- Increase the resilience of rural communities with regard to combating climate change and drought.

In this context, Portuguese co-operation fosters gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in partner countries as a fundamental factor in pursuing sustainable development goals and making global development more equitable, fair and sustainable. Gender equality is particularly important for a more coherent development policy, through Portuguese bilateral and multilateral co-operation and partnerships with civil entities and the private sector in order to ensure full implementation of women's rights.