

# Audit of the system, implementation, monitoring, review and reporting on SDG 5

## REPORT NO. 7/2023

### 1-EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The audit revealed that at the end of 2022, seven years until the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, almost half of the planned implementation period, there is still no information to provide at least some understanding on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Portugal and the results achieved. If the entities responsible do not evaluate progress now and introduce the necessary corrective measures, they will soon have no time to do so in a useful way.

The national institutional model for the SDGs has not been formalized through publication in the *Diário da República* (Official Gazette), nor has any entity been created specifically for the general implementation of the 2030 Agenda for the SDGs, but rather existing organizational structures have been used. The structure for monitoring the 2030 Agenda in Portugal, which has operated in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2016, has proved to be insufficient, and it is hoped that the model for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the SDGs at a domestic level, approved by Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 5/2023, can be translated into effective monitoring of that Agenda.

In the case of Portugal, the model followed to implement the 2030 Agenda has been to incorporate the SDGs into national instruments and procedures for implementing sectoral policies, without giving rise to a strategic redefinition or the drafting of a new coherent and integrated national sustainable development strategy and its implementation plan.

National statistical institutions are the basic entities in the production and availability of data. The audit found that the National Statistics Institute (INE) participates in the established coordination mechanisms, but does not have a formalized mandate for monitoring indicators and working together with the various relevant stakeholders.

This audit focused on the planning, implementation, monitoring, review and reporting of SDG 5 in Portugal, which is materialized, in particular, through the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030 - Portugal + Igual (ENIND), in particular through two of the Action Plans (AP) that are part of it, and has the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) as its main responsible body.

The implementation, from 2018 to 2021, of the AP for equality between women and men and the Action Plan for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, each comprising a vast number of specific objectives, measures, product indicators, responsible entities and targets, showed little robustness and weaknesses, some of which are inherent in the way the Plans themselves were drawn up, which make it difficult for the CIG to monitor them and assess their results.

These limitations prevent the formulation of a sustained opinion on the planning, implementation, monitoring, review and reporting systems of SDG 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, including the progress achieved both nationally and internationally, particularly from the perspective of alignment with the targets and indicators.

## Conclusions

The audit work, reflected in the respective observations, led to the conclusion that:

1. The national strategic guidelines, which are intended to be aligned with the six policy pillars established by the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the European Commission's guidelines, continue to fail to identify the measures and resources that contribute to achieving the SDGs.
2. The integration of sustainable development goals into existing planning instruments has not always been clearly ensured into existing planning instruments, both at national and sectoral level, as recommended in the Voluntary National Report (RNV) presented by Portugal in 2017.
3. The targets and objectives for gender equality and preventing and combating domestic violence set out in the various planning documents contribute, to varying degrees, to the achievement of SDG.
- 5 – Relating to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, there is no systematization and correlation with the targets of that SDG and they are not included in any strategic planning system.
4. ENIND is considered the reference and roadmap for the implementation of SDG 5 in Portugal; however, there is no unambiguous and explicit relationship between the specific measures of the APs and the different targets of SDG 5 and the actions that specifically contribute to the pursuit of these goals are unknown, which hinders the monitoring and evaluation process and the consequent taking of corrective measures.
5. The audit revealed shortcomings in the mechanisms for coordination between entities and budget transparency. At State Budget level, the financial resources needed to implement ENIND (and SDG 5) are not always identified and are not always ensured and the total cost of the Strategy and plans is not determined.
6. Coordination mechanisms have been established for the implementation of ENIND and the respective APs, although some have limitations in terms of their effectiveness, mainly due to the large number of participants in the ENIND Monitoring Committee and in the Technical Committees for each Plan.
7. Concepts relevant to the operationalization of ENIND are not defined, such as those of entities responsible and involved, as well as product, result and impact indicators.
8. The large number of measures and entities envisaged as responsible and involved in the implementation of ENIND's APs makes it difficult for CIG to coordinate them in general, and there are not enough provisions to ensure the effective accountability of entities. In fact, there are no instruments or mechanisms that individually bind the entities, specifying the measures and product indicators that are their responsibility or competence.
9. The work of ministerial equality advisors (who should exist in each government department) is inadequate and show shortcomings in terms of coordination with the CIG, particularly with regard to the effectiveness of the existing communication and monitoring mechanisms. To date, there has been no revision of the statute for equality advisors, with a view to clarification of their functions, despite the fact that the current statute has been considered inadequate for a long time, and causes constraints on the implementation of the current APs.
10. ENIND is implemented at local level, with a view to territorializing public policies for gender equality and preventing and combating domestic violence with the participation of civil society, academia and the private sector; however, there is a small number of municipal equality plans, compared to the number of protocols signed between the CIG and the municipalities.
11. The monitoring carried out by CIG, namely the follow-up of the evolution of the indicators, relates exclusively to ENIND and does not include SDG 5. There is no systematic monitoring and reporting structure for the actions planned and carried out under ENIND and SDG 5.

12. It was also found that the annual activity plans for implementing of the APs, the annual activity plans for the implementation of the Action Plans, the interim and final reports on the implementation of the AP 2018-2021, the ongoing or formative evaluations of the AP 2018-2021 and the proposals for revising the AP 2022-2025 were not drawn up and delivered within the deadlines set.
13. The interim reports from the various ministries did not make it possible to ascertain the reasons and constraints that made it impossible to continue with some measures, and also did not meet the date on which they were to be delivered to the member of the government responsible for the area of citizenship and equality.
14. The interim reports on the APs produced by CIG in the first implementation period (2018-2021) reveals, among other things, the lack of homogeneity in the structure of the reports, the insufficient information in the implementation reports of governmental areas and the lack of quantitative data on the measures.
15. In planning and implementing the APs, CIG did not take into account all the observations identified in the independent external evaluation reports, particularly with regard to the development of a system for monitoring the implementation of the APs.
16. In the context of the pandemic, CIG did not revise the APs, although it invoked the creation of new responses to the problems that have arisen, particularly in strengthening support mechanisms for victims of domestic violence, given the increased risk of violence in the context of the isolation necessary to contain Covid-19.
17. Underline the lack of an online portal/integrated platform dedicated to the 2030 Agenda to give information on policies, measures, structures for implementing the SDGs, relevant resources, actions taken, progress in the implementation of the Agenda, with the exception of the INE portal in the statistical area.
18. No formal responsibility for developing indicators or monitoring the SDGs has been assigned to the National Statistics Institute (INE), although it is the entity that monitors the progress of the 2030 Agenda at a statistical level. Of the 7 indicators available to verify the progress of SDG 5 in Portugal, INE only calculates 3, that in general show a favorable development. There are indicators whose latest information dates back to 2012.

## **Recommendations**

A. To the Government, through the Secretary of State for Equality and Migration:

1. Define, in a systematic way, the correlation between the goals and objectives of gender equality and the combating violence against women and domestic violence in the various existing planning documents and the degree of achievement of the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 5;
2. The necessary resources and capacities must be expressly provided, namely the financial ones, to ensure that the actions set out in the various APs are carried out;
3. Make the entities involved in implementing the ENIND APs jointly responsible in a clear and objective manner, specifying clearly and objectively each one's responsibility for the measures/product indicators defined.
4. Review the Statute of the Ministerial Councillors for Equality, in order to remedy the shortcomings in terms of coordination with the CIG;
5. Re-evaluate the coordination and implementation model established for the ENIND Monitoring Committee and the Technical Committees for Monitoring the APs, with a view to Plans, with a view to increasing efficiency in the pursuit of their duties;

6. Define a monitoring and evaluation model and respective reporting mechanisms for ENIND (and SDG 5), which shows, in particular, the measures, targets and actions planned and carried out, the role of the various stakeholders and the financial resources allocated.

B. To the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality:

7. Include in the planning and implementation of the APs the observations identified in the external and independent evaluation reports, to ensure the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the respective operations;

8. Define the unequivocal and explicit relationship between the specific measures of the APs and the different SDG 5 targets to which they contribute, in order to know which actions contribute to the respective targets;

9. Obtain timely and targeted information that allows it to assess the degree of implementation of the measures assigned to each Ministry and the motivations and constraints that prevented them from being pursued.

10. Complying with the deadlines for drawing up and submitting the plans and reports set out in ENIND, as the coordinating body;

11. Address, in the preparation of the next interim reports of the APs, the deficiencies detected in the interim reports produced in the first implementation period (2018-2021);

12. Disclose, at the end of each cycle in which the APs are in force, the results achieved in the impact and result indicators and the targets reached;

13. Encourage local authorities to draw up municipal plans for equality and non-discrimination and increase monitoring of each municipality's intervention in terms of gender equality.