

**16th Session of the Conference of States Parties (COSP) to the International
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

**Statement by H.E. Ms. Ana Sofia Antunes, Secretary of State for Inclusion,
during the General Debate**

13 June 2023

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Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Portugal is strongly committed to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. In 2021, we adopted the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, inspired by the European Strategy and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, whose implementation we are debating here today.

The results are already visible: last May, around 140,000 persons with disabilities were already covered by the Social Benefit for Inclusion, more than twice as many as 2017. This is a social benefit for citizenship, the first of its kind in Portugal, to which citizens are entitled simply by proving that they have a disability. To its basic amount, equal for all, is added a supplementary amount that benefits only persons with disabilities living in poverty. The benefit also covers a total of 10,000

children with disabilities, with a higher amount in cases of single-parent families. For 2023, the government has earmarked a total of 500 million euros in the state budget for these benefits.

Regarding the pilot project of the Independent Living Support Model, Portugal today has 35 support centers all over the country, coordinated by technical experts with and without disabilities, whose total budget for 4 years was 47 million euros. At the moment, we already have about 1,100 persons with disabilities benefiting from personal assistance. This year, we will implement the final Independent Living Support Model, with which we hope to double the current number of recipients within a year.

Mr. President,

Notwithstanding the pandemic period that we went through, and the more recent inflationary crisis that we are still facing, Portugal has implemented a wide range of measures to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, always based on strong public consultation processes:

- We passed a new law on inclusive education: in 2018, Portugal already had 98% of its children with disabilities attending regular schools, but with this law, it was possible to strengthen the support mechanisms for these children, transforming an integrating school into an inclusive school;
- We provided grants to cover higher education tuition fees for all university students with disabilities;
- We created the Portuguese Sign Language Service for deaf citizens in the National Medical Emergency and Public Health Helplines;

- We created 300 places in Autonomy and Inclusion Residences for persons with disabilities; and
- We also created quotas in companies to hire persons with disabilities in the private sector, corresponding to 1% or 2% of the number of employees in the company, depending on its size.

Mr. President,

These measures demonstrate the commitment of the Portuguese Government to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to the implementation of policies that contribute to make an increasingly inclusive society.

I thank you!