



Audit on the Operational Programme for the Most Deprived

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2.nd SECTION

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The audit focused on the Operational Programme for the Most Deprived / *Programa Operacional de Apoio às Pessoas Mais Carenciadas* (POAPMC), that on a national level, and concerning the period 2014-2020, applies the support from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), and namely, assessed the management and control system, the levels of execution and the adequacy of the assistance provided to the most needy people, aiming to determine whether the Programme contributes regularly and effectively to attenuate poverty in Portugal .

The POAPMC is one of the instruments that contributes to attenuate the economic need situation in Portugal, as well as the poverty reduction goals set in the Europe 2020 Strategy and Agenda 2030. However, the impact of it's contribution to the overall framework of poverty reduction in our country has not being determined and estimated, and the coordination between the various policies in this field need to be better consolidated.

At the end of 2019, the Programme had an execution rate of only 32%, despite the commitment rate being of 92%. This Programme supported 37,615 people in 2017, 79,037 in 2018 and 92,632 in 2019 and is well accepted by the beneficiaries. Food support and some other social inclusion measures were provided, but not the basic material support as foreseen.

The POAPMC funds proved to be insufficient to cover the costs of the beneficiary entities with the transport and storage of food goods, and in 2017 a Complementary Support Programme was created that has provided additional funding to the beneficiary institutions, through funds from the distribution of the net results of the social games operated by the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia* of Lisbon .

The adequacy of food support was affected by some constraints in the collection and preservation of food, existing an excess of frozen vegetables in the food basket, which were distributed on a monthly periodicity, instead of weekly. On the other hand, there were deviations, in relation to the defined basket, in the composition and quantity of some goods distributed, due to problems concerning public procurement purchases and that the quantities purchased, based on an average age reference, should by adapted to the age reality of the households.

A model for distributing food and essential goods through vouchers or electronic cards is foreseen, although not yet implemented, which will save costs and resources, favouring autonomy, strengthening the local economy, and avoiding constraints resulting from the procedures for purchasing goods, and storage difficulties, as well as ensuring greater security during the COVID-19 pandemic period.



Taking into account especially the relevance for the definition of the model to be applied in the next programming period 2021 - 2027, in the framework of the European Social Fund, as well as in the fulfillment of the objectives of the Agenda 2030, the following recommendations were made:

- Consider in the ongoing process of drafting the National Strategy to Combat Poverty : the commitments of the United Nations Agenda 2030 ; the articulation of social policies / support in the context of combating poverty ; the entities and areas of governance responsible for the execution of the various policies, their calendar, costs involved and coordination with programmes / funds likely to finance the necessary measures; and the creation of a poverty monitoring system, with a definition of indicators and targets that allow the monitoring and evaluation of the various policy measures;
- Promote the implementation of the system of vouchers or electronic cards as a means for food support / basic necessities for the most needy people, in accordance with the provisions of European Regulations and the Economic and Social Stabilization Programme;
- Ensure effective participation of the entities representing the social economy, regarding the improvements of the Programme;
- Promote the design of a new Programme with more targeted, specific and quantified objectives, associated with corresponding goals and indicators, which, among other aspects, allow to measure the improvement of the situation of the beneficiaries and the evolution of their social inclusion.

Recommendations were also made to the Managing Authority of the APMC Programme and to the Institute of Social Security concerning the improvement of the procedures and systems analyzed, as well as guidelines to be issued on the matter.