

Portugal: Monitoring Visits – Summary Report

**DIS-CONNECTED:
DISABILITY-BASED CONNECTED
FACILITIES AND PROGRAMMES
FOR PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN AND
CHILDREN**

101049690- DIS-CONNECTED

Disability-based connected facilities and programmes for prevention of violence against women and children (101049690 – CERV-2021-DAPHNE)

Portugal: Summary Report of the Monitoring Visits

DATES: June 28, 2024; January 7, 9 and 10, 2025

FENACERCI



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General information on the monitoring visits (Pilot, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)

The model adopted for monitoring visits was based on an **inter-organisational exchange of good practices**, to encourage reflection, self-diagnosis and **opportunities for improvement of the tools and procedures adopted by each organisation to prevent and monitor violence**. The main objective of the visit was to learn about the organisation's internal procedures for preventing and monitoring situations of violence and how they are operationalised in a specific social response.

In total, **16 people joined the monitoring teams at different times (including four people with disabilities, three men and one woman)** (see Table 1). Four organisations participated in the monitoring visits: PILOT ORGANISATION (pilot visit carried out on 28 June 2024; three participants); ORGANISATION A (four participants); ORGANISATION B (three participants) and ORGANISATION C (three participants). There were also three people from FENACERCI (from the project team) who were also part of the teams.

Table 1: Dates of visits, number of people in monitoring teams and services visited

PILOT VISIT PILOT ORG. 28 June 2024	VISIT #1 (SAVI) ORG. A 07 January 2025	VISIT #2 (RAI) ORG. A 7 January 2025	VISIT #3 (CACI) ORG. B 09 January 2025	VISIT #4 (LR) ORG. B 09 January 2025	VISIT #5 (CACI) ORG. C 10 January 2025
Monitoring team: two people from the FENACERCI project team	Monitoring team: nine people , including three people with disabilities (Independent Living Support Service)	Monitoring team: nine people , including three people with disabilities (Autonomy and Inclusion Residence)	Monitoring team: six people , including two people with disabilities (Centre for Activities and Training for Inclusion)	Monitoring team: six people , including two people with disabilities (Residential Home)	Monitoring team: five people , including two people with disabilities (Center for Activities and Training for Inclusion)

All visits were planned by the organisation being monitored. However, the proposed structure was common: (1) an initial meeting to present the structure of the organisation and its procedures for preventing and monitoring situations of violence; (2) a visit to the selected facilities (where the monitoring team could speak directly to the people being supported); (3) the visit ended with a final debriefing meeting with all participants - the monitoring team and the visited organisation – to reflect on lessons learned, positive aspects and areas for improvement. **In two organisations the visit was led by a person with disabilities supported by the organisation.**

All members of the monitoring team were familiar with the human rights principles that guided the visit¹. Any member of the monitoring team could ask questions during the visit. The FENACERCI team would act as rapporteurs for all the visits.

Selection of the institutions and services provided

The following criteria were used to select the participating organisations (see Table 2): diversity of services provided in order to produce reports on different services, reflecting different experiences and challenges - Independent Living Support Service (N=1), Autonomy and Inclusion Residence (N=1), Centre for Activities and Training for Inclusion (N=2), Residential Home (N=1) -, located in different geographical areas of the country (Centre and Interior-South, covering urban and rural areas). Table 2 provides a brief profile of the organisations and services visited.

Table 2: Description of the organisations and services visited

PILOT VISIT ORG. PILOT 28 June 2024	VISIT #1 (SAVI) ORG. A 07 January 2025	VISIT #2 (RAI) ORG. A 7 January 2025	VISIT #3 (CACI) ORG. B 09 January 2025	VISIT #4 (LR) ORG. B 09 January 2025	VISIT #5 (CACI) ORG. C 10 January 2025
Founded in the mid-1970s. Supports 301 people with intellectual disabilities or multiple disabilities in several services: 1 085 children². <i>No specific services were visited.</i> 209 staff, in all services.	Founded in the late 1970s. Supports 751 people with intellectual disabilities or multiple disabilities, including children (N=52). Two monitoring visits were carried out in the following services: Independent Living Support Service (N= 33; 14 women and 19 men); Two Autonomy and Inclusion Residence (N=10; 3 women and 7 men). 122 staff, in all services; 17 of whom work in the Independent Living Support Service; and 11 in each Residence (one full-time and the others part-time).	Founded in the mid-1970s. Supports around 900 people with intellectual disabilities or multiple disabilities, including children (N=300). Two monitoring visits were carried out in the following services: Centre for Activities and Training for Inclusion (N=105; 48 women and 57 men) and Residential home (N=20; 7 women and 13 men). 120 staff, in all services; 35 of whom work in the Centre for Activities and Training for Inclusion; and 16 in the Residential Home.	Founded in the mid-1970s. Supports around 800 people, including children (N=238). One monitoring visit: Centre for Activities and Training for Inclusion (N=100; 37 women and 63 men) 110 staff, 29 of whom work in the service visited.		

¹ Three meetings were held to prepare the visits (23 September 2024; 22 November 2024 and 20 December 2024), which were attended by all the members of the monitoring teams. The monitoring methodology was shared during these meetings.

² Children receive support within community context, such as, schools and kindergartens.

The services mentioned above are described as follows:

- The **Independent Living Support Service**³, a new service created in 2024, is a community-based response consisting of the provision of personal assistance to support people with disabilities (aged 14 and over) in the implementation of their individual Personal Assistance Plan. The support provided by personal assistants can include, according to Article 5 of Order n.º 415/2013, various activities (e.g. accompanying people to appointments, travelling, communication mediation, support at the workplace, attending vocational training, higher education, job search, leisure activities, etc.). Until 2023, the pilot project "Independent Living Support Model" was financed by European funds. Since January 2024, this service has been funded by the Social Security System. **(Monitoring Visit N.º 1)**
- The **Autonomy and Inclusion Residence**⁴ is a recent social response aimed at enabling personal, social and professional autonomy. Order no. 77/2022 establishes the "conditions for the establishment, organisation and operation" of this social response, which must have a maximum of 5 disabled residents. Each resident has an individual autonomy plan. **(Monitoring Visit N.º 2)**
- The **Centre for Activities and Training for Inclusion**⁵ is a social response with the highest number of beneficiaries in the field of intellectual disability in Portugal (around 16,000 people aged 18 or over in 2023⁶). This service aims to promote "vocational activities for people with disabilities, with the aim of improving their quality of life, facilitating their access to the community, its resources and activities, and empowering them for inclusion, according to their needs, abilities and level of functionality"⁷. **(Monitoring Visits N.º 3 and 5)**
- The **Residential Home**⁸ is an establishment for the collective accommodation, for temporary or permanent use, of people with disabilities who are prevented from living in their family environment. Is also one of the services for adults with disabilities with the highest number of beneficiaries in Portugal (around 7,000 people supported in 2023⁹). The capacity of the Residential Home can be a **maximum of 30 residents**. **(Monitoring Visit N.º 4)**

³ Order n.º 415/2013. Available at <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/portaria/415-2023-225397119>

⁴ Order n.º 77/2022: <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/portaria/77-2022-178602021>

⁵ Order n.º 70/2021: <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/portaria/70-2021-160316760>

⁶ Data provided by the report 'People with Disabilities in Portugal - Human Rights Indicators 2023' (ODDH, 2023); available at <https://oddh.iscsp.ulisboa.pt/publicacoes/publicacoes-oddh-pt/relatorio-oddh-2023/>

⁷ Order n.º 70/2021: <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/portaria/70-2021-160316760>

⁸ Order n.º 70/2021: <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/portaria/70-2021-160316760>

⁹ Data provided by the report 'People with Disabilities in Portugal - Human Rights Indicators 2023' (ODDH, 2023); available at <https://oddh.iscsp.ulisboa.pt/publicacoes/publicacoes-oddh-pt/relatorio-oddh-2023/>

The organisations involved have also signed the 'Letter of Commitment for Community Inclusion', which includes a principle called 'Violence Prevention Policy'¹⁰, showing interest and involvement to this issue. They see it as an aspect that can always be improved. Another important aspect: all the organisations support the activity of self-advocacy groups.

Monitoring techniques used during the visit

The following **monitoring techniques** were used on all the visits: **Observation** and **Interviewing** (the monitoring team visited the facilities, asked questions and talked to people supported and staff; the team took notes related to the environment but also from the interviews). All questions were answered openly and transparently.

Another very important technique for collecting data was the **Documentation Review**. All organisations shared their tools and procedures for preventing and monitoring violence with the monitoring team. In addition, they answered a short questionnaire before the visit (e.g. the number of people supported, questions about the tools and policies in place; what complaint mechanisms they had? etc.). All the information was analyzed and included in the final reports of the visits.

Gender- and disability-based violence

The four organisations visited have **developed their internal tools for preventing and monitoring situations of violence, which are** implemented in the different services visited. Most of them prepared their tools and procedures during the European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS¹¹) certification process: three organisations in 2011 and one in 2013. Since then, some of them have revised and updated their documents, while others are in the process of revision.

During the visits, the organisations shared specific cases of violence (and neglect) that had occurred over the years in family and institutional contexts (involving staff or supported people). **Occasionally, some situations led to formal complaints to the Public Prosecutor's Office. None of the services visited during the five monitoring visits registered situations of formal complaints.**

However, sometimes there are situations of verbal and physical aggression (e.g. between supported persons) and it is necessary to activate the internal tools (e.g. protocols, procedures or internal rules), depending on the situation. In addition to violence prevention tools, organisations have codes of ethics. Their organisational policies demonstrate a commitment to preventing situations of violence.

¹⁰ Letter of Commitment for Community Inclusion' <https://www.fenacerci.pt/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Carta-de-Compromisso.pdf>

¹¹ An initiative of the European Platform for Rehabilitation, which aims to strengthen the social sector by engaging social service providers in continuous improvement, learning and development to ensure quality services for service users. More information available at <https://equass.be/index.php/equass>

Summary of the main issues

Four organisations were visited: one during the pilot visit (June 2024) and three during the monitoring visits (January 2025). The organisations visited are located in different regions of Portugal (South; and different regions in the Centre such as Lisbon Area, and other regions), including urban and rural areas.

The five monitoring reports describe the internal tools developed and used by the participating Organisations to monitor and prevent violence in five different services: two **Centres for Activities and Training for Inclusion** (N=105 and N=100 persons with intellectual and multiple disabilities); the **Independent Living Support Service** (N=33 persons with different types of disabilities); **Autonomy and Inclusion Residences** (N=10, 5 per residence; persons with intellectual and multiple disabilities); and one **Residential Home** (N=20 persons with intellectual and multiple disabilities).

Conclusions and recommendations

Positive aspects

- Overall, the four participating organisations are **guided by human rights principles** and promote a person-centred approach, respecting the dignity of the people they support and promoting their participation and respect for their choices.
- The organisations visited have developed **specific tools to prevent situations of violence** (most of them started to develop them during the EQUASS certification process); but some organisations have more detailed procedures than others (and revise documents more regularly).
- The **people supported are directly involved and consulted in drawing up their individual personal plans** (mandatory in all the services visited).
- All organisations support the work of self-advocacy groups (although there is no public policy to formally support their work). One of the organisations sees the group as a fundamental pillar of its work, giving voice to and creating conditions for the work of the self-advocates; for example, supported people are involved in national and international projects on equality, violence prevention, and other issues.
- It is important to ensure that, before starting work in any of the organisation's social responses, all professionals have received specific training on prevention of violence. Some organisations prioritise specific training on violence (considering it mandatory, including their internal tools) compared to others (considering it optional).
- In general, the involvement of the people supported in activities developed in a community context is prioritised; however, the importance of going out and the constant promotion of autonomy and participation in the community must be constantly safeguarded.
- Some organisations have accessible websites which provides a 'complaints channel' that can be used for any type of complaint (but other are in the process of making these tools accessible).

- Some documents (e.g. The Charter of Rights and Duties is now available for easy reading), but other should also made available (see suggestions below).

Aspects of improvement (within the organisation)

- Although the four organisations have tools in place to prevent and monitor situations of violence, in some cases (with the exception of one organisation who has more detailed procedures), these could be **revised and improved** to:
 - a) make them **clearer and more specific**;
 - b) explicitly define **how and when the tools/procedures in place will be communicated to staff** (including volunteers, and others) **and the people supported** (and their families or legal representatives);
 - c) Indicate what mechanisms are in place to protect people who make complaints from possible retaliation or discrimination;
 - d) Reference in the tools to Law 46/2006, which prohibits and punishes discrimination on the grounds of disability, and to Article 152A of the Criminal Code on ill-treatment.
- **Provide existing tools to prevent and monitor situations of violence in an easy-to-read format**, so that they can be systematically disseminated by the people supported.
- Provide more **information about complaints mechanisms in an accessible format** (in articulation with self-advocacy groups).
- Encouraging partnerships with organisations specialised in victim support, as they can be an additional asset for disability organisations (and vice versa), whose legal offices may not have specific and specialised knowledge of the legal framework in the area of violence.

Areas of improvement (outside the organisation)

- A gap was identified in the training of personal assistants, within the **Independent Living Support Service**. In order to work as a personal assistant, it is mandatory to complete a 50-hour training course, but the content does not refer to the issue of prevention and identification of situations of violence. It would be important for the national bodies responsible for defining the content of the training to include a topic related to violence prevention.
- Although the Independent Living Support Service aims to promote greater participation by the people it supports in the community, one of the challenges it faces relates to **travelling and transport**. For example, the people supported are sometimes unable to take part in sporting or cultural activities due to the lack of transport.
- With regard to the Autonomy and Inclusion Residences, the legislation that defines the conditions and typology of this type of facility should be revised to prioritise the creation of single rooms. Double rooms are still predominant, which compromises residents' privacy.
- Promote more formal support for Self-advocacy Groups at national level. It is considered that there is little awareness of this issue, and it is an aspect that should be prioritised,

promoting specific financial support to sustain these structures and to give a voice to people with intellectual disabilities. A recent report shows that there is a lack of formal support in Portugal regarding this issue¹².

- At national level, there is a lack of valorisation of the work in the social field (low salaries), which is an obstacle to finding qualified people to provide high quality services.
- Articulation with the justice system is also seen as a challenge, and it is important to reflect how to promote a closer partnership between organisations and judicial bodies.

¹² Inclusion Indicators 2023. Disponível em <https://str.inclusion.eu/4fbaa7b98fcf6c493d7f54e03.pdf>