

Ageing in digital societies: enablers and barriers to older persons exercising their social rights

Portugal

June 2022

Contractor: Centro de Estudos Sociais

Authors: Diana Barros and João Paulo Dias

DISCLAIMER: This document was commissioned under contract as background material for comparative analysis by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) for the project ‘Ageing in digital societies’. The information and views contained in the document do not necessarily reflect the views or the official position of the FRA. The document is made publicly available for transparency and information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or legal opinion.

Contents

1	Legal and policy framework	3
1.1	National legislation on digital public administration	3
1.2	National policy, strategy or action plan on the digitalisation of public services or digital inclusion	5
1.3	National recovery and resilience plans covering the digitalisation of public services.....	7
2	Programmes and practices aimed at ensuring equal access to public services in the digital age ..	7
3	Research and data focused on equal access to public services in the digital age	9
4	State of digitalisation of selected public services	13

1 Legal and policy framework

1.1 National legislation on digital public administration

In Portugal, the national legislation on digital public administration is centred on the digitalisation process of the various public services offered to citizens. Therefore, in general, the legislation available does not directly address the right to equal access but may indirectly promote it by establishing mechanisms that enable access to digital public services for the general population (even offline access).

Decree-Law 74/2014¹ establishes the rule of digital provision of public services according to which public services must, in addition to face-to-face services, also be provided digitally. However, to ensure that all citizens have access to digital services, this decree-law also establishes that those who cannot, will not, or do not know how to use digital tools can receive support and direction from a public officer/digital mediator in "Citizen's Shops" (Lojas do Cidadão). Moreover, this decree-law also foresees that the public officer/digital mediator also plays a pedagogical role in promoting digital literacy regarding the use of digitalised public services.

Law 37/2014² establishes an alternative and voluntary system of authentication of citizens on government portals and websites - the Digital Mobile Key. This mechanism allows the user to access several public portals and sign digital documents with a single login, by associating a mobile phone number to their civil identification number, as a Portuguese citizen, and the passport or residence title/card number for a foreign citizen.

Decree-Law 93/2017³ created a single digital address according to which citizens can indicate an email address and receive electronic notifications from public services. Citizens can indicate their email address through a procedure of verification of identity and actual ownership of the chosen email address. This procedure can be carried out digitally on the computer system which supports the public electronic notifications service or on the Citizen's Portal; and in person at the Citizens' Shops (Lojas do Cidadão), at the Tax and Customs Authority services,

¹ Portugal, [Decree-Law 74/2014, which establishes the rule of digital provision of public services, enshrines assisted digital attendance as its indispensable complement and defines the mode of concentration of public services in Citizens' Bureaux](#) (Decreto-Lei 74/2014, que estabelece a regra da prestação digital de serviços públicos, consagra o atendimento digital assistido como seu complemento indispensável e define o modo de concentração de serviços públicos em Lojas do Cidadão), 13 May 2014.

² Portugal, [Law 37/2014 establishing an alternative and voluntary system of authentication for citizens on Public Administration portals and websites called the Digital Mobile Key](#) (Lei 37/2014, que estabelece um sistema alternativo e voluntário de autenticação dos cidadãos nos portais e sítios na Internet da Administração Pública denominado Chave Móvel Digital), 26 June 2014.

³ Portugal, [Decree-Law 93/2017, which creates the public service of electronic notifications associated with the digital single address](#) (Decreto-Lei 93/2017, que cria o serviço público de notificações eletrónicas associado à morada única digital), 1 August 2017.

and at the Institute of Registration and Notary Public Services (Instituto dos Registos e do Notariado).

Regarding the promotion of the right to equal access to public services, it also should be noted that Decree-Law 73/2014⁴, which made the third amendment to Decree-Law 135/99⁵, created the "Linha do Cidadão", a central service line that allows citizens, by dialling a single number, to access the universe of public services provided by the Central Public Administration.

Within the diverse legal framework related to digital public administration, there is legislation that does recognise the right to equal access for specific vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities. However, these sources are scarce.

Decree Law 83/2018⁶, which transposes Directive (EU) 2016/2102⁷, defines the accessibility requirements of websites and mobile applications of public bodies in order to ensure that people with disabilities have access, under equal conditions with other citizens, to digital public services. This legal source establishes that websites and mobile applications belonging to public bodies shall adopt mechanisms that enable people with disabilities to fully access and use that digital platform. The mechanisms have not only to enable reading and writing but also enable interaction without depending exclusively on the use of sight, hearing, precise movements, simultaneous actions or the use of pointing devices, namely the mouse. These platforms also need to have technical specifications that ensure maximum interoperability with existing support technologies.

It also should be noted that, in 2020, through the Ordinance 200/2020⁸, the Programme for Accessibility to Public Services and on Public Roads (Programa de Acessibilidades aos Serviços Públicos e na Via Pública) was created. The aim of this programme is to eliminate architectural barriers and create spaces with access conditions for all citizens (especially people with disabilities and/or impairments) in installations, buildings or units which integrate public services. Indirectly, this programme promotes the offline access to digital (and physical) public services by people with disabilities and/or impairments, for those who cannot, will not, or do

⁴ Portugal, [Decree-Law 73/2014, which approves a set of administrative simplification and modernisation measures, making the first amendment to Decree-Law 4/97, of 9 January and the third amendment to Decree-Law 135/99, of 22 April](#) (Decreto-Lei 73/2014, que aprova um conjunto de medidas de simplificação e modernização administrativa, procedendo à primeira alteração ao Decreto-Lei 4/97, de 9 de janeiro e à terceira alteração ao Decreto-Lei 135/99, de 22 de abril), 13 May 2014.

⁵ Portugal, [Decree-Law 135/99, which defines the general principles of action to be obeyed by the services and organisms of the Public Administration in their dealings with citizens](#) (Decreto-Lei 135/99, que define os princípios gerais de acção a que devem obedecer os serviços e organismos da Administração Pública na sua actuação face ao cidadão), 22 April 1999.

⁶ Portugal, [Decree Law 82/2018, which defines the accessibility requirements for the websites and mobile applications of public bodies, transposing Directive \(EU\) 2016/2102](#) (Decreto Lei 82/2018, que define os requisitos de acessibilidade dos sítios web e das aplicações móveis de organismos públicos, transpondo a Diretiva (UE) 2016/2102), 19 October 2018.

⁷ Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 October 2016 on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies, OJ 2016 L 327/1.

⁸ Portugal, [Ordinance 200/2020, which creates and regulates the Programme of Accessibility to Public Services and on Public Roads](#) (Portaria 200/2020, que cria e regulamenta o Programa de Acessibilidades aos Serviços Públicos e na Via Pública), 19 August 2020.

not know how to use digital tools, and, therefore, have to dislocate to a Citizens' Shop in order to receive support and direction from a public officer/digital mediator.

1.2 National policy, strategy or action plan on the digitalisation of public services or digital inclusion

Resolution of the Council of Ministers 55-A/2014, that approved the Strategy for the Reorganisation of Government Services⁹, recognised that if, on the one hand, Portugal was one of the most successful cases in the digitalisation of government services, on the other hand, there were still difficulties regarding mobility to access physical services, or access to digital means by socially and/or geographically vulnerable groups. Taking into account this trend, the strategy aimed to promote geographical, economic and social cohesion, which in part involved providing the population with equal conditions and access to services and opportunities, regardless of their geographical location or social vulnerabilities. Taking into account this concern regarding equal access, older people and the info-excluded (people that have less digital literacy or are less able to deal with new technologies) were recognised as the most vulnerable groups. Therefore, some measures were foreseen to protect the right to equal access to government services. One example is the extension and implementation of more "Citizen's Shops" (Lojas do Cidadão) - places where several public services are provided in a single location - and, in addition, the implementation of a mobile network of 'Citizen's Vans' (Carrinhas do Cidadão) - mini Citizen's Bureaux available in a van - that periodically take the main public services to citizens and ensure that people, particularly those with reduced mobility or living in areas with very low population density, have access to a range of public services. However, it should be noted that this strategy only foresees a reorganisation model for a set of sectoral public services whose characteristics and type of interaction with the public showed greater similarity with "attendance services", such as the local services for finance, employment, social security, registry offices and others of a similar nature. The current national action plan for the digitalisation of public services and digital inclusion is the "Digital Transition Action Plan", approved by the Resolution of the Council of Ministers 30/2020¹⁰. This action plan doesn't directly recognise the right to equal access, but some of its measures take into account the right to equal access, such as the measure to develop an educational project aimed at the digital inclusion of one million info-excluded adults (including older people), where the content covered by the programme involves, among others, the access and use

⁹ Portugal, [Resolution of the Council of Ministers 55-A/2014, that approves the Strategy for the Reorganisation of Public Customer Care Services](#) (Resolução do Conselho de Ministros 55-A/2014, que aprova a Estratégia para a Reorganização dos Serviços de Atendimento da Administração Pública), 15 September 2014.

of digital public services. Moreover, regarding the digitalisation of the public sector, one of the goals established by this action plan is to build an increasingly inclusive and democratic digital society, through the investment in measures that enable access to digital public services, in particular for people with disabilities and/or impairments, so that they can benefit from a more inclusive and closer relationship with the public sector. Examples of those measures are the promotion of the Declaration of Accessibility and Usability (Declaração de Acessibilidade e Usabilidade) and the subsequent granting of the Usability and Accessibility Seal (Selo de Usabilidade e Acessibilidade) – a seal that distinguishes the application of best practices in websites and mobile applications, aiming to improve, simplify and make more efficient the use of online public services by citizens, namely those with disabilities who interact with computers or mobile devices through assistive technologies; the promotion of best practices for content design; and the promotion of partnerships between entities of the public administration and entities of civil society for the promotion of best practices for user experience¹¹. This plan adopts a comprehensive approach since, as explained above, it specifies several groups associated with info-exclusion, such as older people and people with disabilities and/or impairments. Within this context, examples of measures or safeguards dedicated to older people and people with disabilities and/or impairments are the ones mentioned above.

Resolution of the Council of Ministers 55/2020, that approves the Strategy for Innovation and Modernisation of the State and Public Administration 2020-2023¹², provides that one of the measures to be implemented is to make the attendance areas more inclusive (physical and virtual), creating adequate conditions for personalised attendance for senior citizens, extending the telephone translation service and providing services that guarantee access for people with disabilities, recognising, indirectly, the right to equal access. Although not directly related to the right to equal access, it should be noted that the Digital Transformation Strategy for Public Administration 2021-2026, approved by Resolution of the Council of Ministers 131/2021¹³, recognizes the obligations regarding the accessibility of digital public services arising from Decree Law 83/2018¹⁴,

¹¹ For more information, see the [website of the Portugal Digital](#).

¹² Portugal, [Resolution of the Council of Ministers 55/2020, that approves the Strategy for Innovation and Modernisation of the State and Public Administration 2020-2023](#) (Resolução do Conselho de Ministros 55/2020, que aprova a Estratégia para a Inovação e Modernização do Estado e da Administração Pública 2020-2023), 31 July 2020.

¹³ Portugal, [Resolution of the Council of Ministers 131/2021, approving the Digital Transformation Strategy for Public Administration 2021-2026 and the respective Transversal Action Plan for the legislature](#) (Resolução do Conselho de Ministros 131/2021, que aprova a Estratégia para a Transformação Digital da Administração Pública 2021-2026 e o respetivo Plano de Ação Transversal para a legislatura), 10 September 2021.

¹⁴ Portugal, [Decree Law 82/2018, which defines the accessibility requirements for the websites and mobile applications of public bodies, transposing Directive \(EU\) 2016/2102](#) (Decreto Lei 82/2018, que define os requisitos de acessibilidade dos sítios web e das aplicações móveis de organismos públicos, transpondo a Diretiva (UE) 2016/2102), 19 October 2018.

explained above, as well as the commitments established by the European Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030¹⁵.

1.3 National recovery and resilience plans covering the digitalisation of public services

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan is divided into three dimensions, one of which is the digital transition. This dimension establishes as one of its aims the digitalisation of public administration, enhancing interoperability and facilitating access to public services, especially in areas related to health, social security, finance and justice services, making public sector services more inclusive. In addition, the availability of digital services, complemented by physical attendance locations, will guarantee a greater equality in access to public services, both from a social perspective (democratisation of public services and access) and geographical distribution (for those living in remote places), thus reinforcing social and national cohesion. However, although this complementary approach to digital and physical services may promote more accessibility to citizens, this Plan doesn't mention older people or other groups at risk of digital exclusion, except for people living in more remote places, and chooses a neutral and global approach.

2 Programmes and practices aimed at ensuring equal access to public services in the digital age

There are some programmes and practices aimed at ensuring equal access to public services in the digital age. Two can be highlighted, namely:

Mobile Citizen Space Project (Projeto Espaço Cidadão Móvel)¹⁶: This is an initiative launched in 2018 and still ongoing. It arose from the need to support the populations that were victims of the wildfires that occurred in October 2017, and was maintained with the aim of diversifying the mechanisms of access to public services by citizens, gaining a national scope. This project is part of the national network of Citizen Spaces, and is a result of a close collaboration between the Central Government and local authorities, especially the municipalities (city halls). The purpose of this project is to make public services more accessible to isolated and vulnerable populations (this includes older people or other socially excluded

¹⁵ European Commission (2021), [Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#), COM(2021) 101 final, Brussels, 3 March 2021.

¹⁶ For more information on this project, see the [website of EPortugal Portal](#).

groups), taking these services to the localities further away from urban centres. This itinerant service point provides more than 200 public services¹⁷ available digitally, such as public health services (making and cancelling medical appointments, registering a family member authorising them to make appointments and requesting medication, requesting renewal of repeat prescriptions, etc.) or pension-related services (applying for survivor's pension or other benefits, changing personal information, requesting reimbursement for funeral expenses, among others). Although this is an itinerant service point that functions on a physical level, it provides a physical space where online services are provided to people who live in isolated localities away from urban centres and/or without enough digital literacy to access these services themselves. The monitoring of the project is evaluated on the number of services provided – and because of that, the project continues to expand. There is no information publicly available about this evaluation.

Digital Literacy Project - We and our Grandparents (Projeto Literacia Digital - Nós e os Avós)¹⁸: Launched in 2019 and still ongoing, this is a local project integrated into the Initiative INCoDe.2030¹⁹, a public policy programme that aims to improve the level of digital skills amongst Portuguese citizens. This initiative is divided into 5 axes, and the project “We and our Grandparents” is part of Axis 3 dedicated to digital inclusion. This intergenerational project is run by civil society organisations in collaboration with the local municipalities and a private company (financed by European and Portuguese funds). The project is directed to older people and aims to combat several of the problems associated with isolation, including info-exclusion. Thus, this project consists of digital literacy sessions for people over 65 years old, run by students and supervised by volunteers and/or teachers. The focus is on a social and intergenerational intervention in a community context that will create and develop a series of activities to combat isolation and loneliness (problems often associated with older people). One of the examples of the digital literacy activities developed by this project is to teach people how to work with a computer and mobile phone, indirectly promoting greater access to public services (for example, one of the activities was to fill in the annual Personal Income Tax declaration, an increasingly digitalised service). There is no publicly available information on the evaluation of the project.

¹⁷ For more information, see the [website of the EPortugal Portal](#).

¹⁸ For more information, see the [website of the INCoDe.2030](#).

¹⁹ For more information, see the [website of the INCoDe. 2030](#).

3 Research and data focused on equal access to public services in the digital age

In 2021, the Ombudsperson's Office didn't receive any complaint claiming discrimination in access to public services on the grounds of age. However, 10 complaints were received and processed, touching on different facets of community life, in which it is clear that the advanced age of the complainant is a circumstance underlying the difficulty of access to use of public services, especially when access is predominantly online. These cases are mostly linked to situations associated with the lack of availability of the necessary devices to communicate online (access to Internet, computers and/or mobile phone)²⁰.

In a more detailed manner, and within the scope of the system for issuing COVID-19 certificates (a digital process), some people were denied access because they did not have a mobile phone or an electronic email, and the Ombudsperson subsequently suggested to the Ministry of Health the creation of a subsidiarity mechanism for access to the certificate based on a postal, telephone or face-to-face validation system to identify the beneficiary, through the services installed for that purpose in the Citizen's Spaces and in the Parish Councils. At the same time, complaints were filed by older people where the targeted entities were private companies of essential services in which, once again, the tendency for the exclusive possibility of digital communications was the source of obstacles. In these cases, the Ombudsperson's Office addressed specific warnings to those entities concerning the need to adapt communications and means of contact to the most vulnerable consumers, according to their age/physical limitations and effective capacity to access the internet and to use online tools.²¹

In addition, through the Elderly Helpline (Linha do Idoso), a telephone line made available by the Ombudsperson's Office where people can complain or report situations of discrimination, 136 calls were registered regarding public services, with almost half (66) due to difficulties in accessing digital platforms of some public services. In more detailed terms, 22 calls were related to difficulties in telephoning the National Institute of Civil Registration (Instituto Nacional de Registo) or due to difficulties in accessing their digital service to make appointments to renew a citizen card or passport; 17 were related to difficulties in telephoning the Institute for Social Security (Instituto de Segurança Social), along with difficulty in accessing their online tools; 13 were related to online access to make appointments for renewal of driving licences, at the Institute for Mobility and Transport (Instituto da Mobilidade e dos Transportes); 8 were related to telephone contact with primary health care units, where the use of IT (email or user's portal) was impractical; 4 related to requests for the COVID-19 digital

²⁰ Ombudsperson's Office, written response, 18 May 2022.

²¹ Ombudsperson's Office, written response, 18 May 2022.

certificate due to lack of access to computer tools or to a mobile phone; and 2 related to answers to the CENSUS 2021 (General Population Census) due to lack of access to IT tools and internet, associated with difficulties in contacting the entities involved through the helpline provided²².

The Ombudsperson's Office also registered complaints that, although not directly connected with digital access, are related to potential issues of discrimination on the grounds of age. These complaints were made not only by older people but also by disabled people regarding physical accessibility, namely situations of difficulties in access to health centres (i.e. installation of medical offices on upper floors, with the only means of access being the use of stairs due to the non-existence or inoperability of lifts). Some of these complaints were also regarding the actions of the security forces, which revealed a lack of sensitivity to adapting their actions to the physical and psychological conditions of older citizens. Regarding this last type of complaint, a warning to the security forces was issued²³.

There are only a few examples of research conducted with a focus on older people regarding experiences of discrimination and unequal access to public services. In general, studies don't focus specifically on older populations. Therefore, the following study was selected amongst the ones considered as more relevant for the theme.

The study "Too Old for Digital? Active ageing and the used of ICTs by older people in Brazil and Portugal"²⁴ (*Demasiado Velho para o Digital? Envelhecimento ativo e os usos das TIC por pessoas mais velhas*), is a comparative study conducted by the Center for Research in Communication, Information and Digital Culture (Centro de Investigação em Comunicação, Informação e Cultura Digital - CIC. Digital), financed by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia). This study aimed to evaluate the role that increasingly digitised information and communication technologies play in the process of active ageing. Although this study did not particularly focus on access to public services, this theme was also studied. Thus, according to the results, it was possible to conclude that although, both in Portugal and Brazil, there are public policies to promote digital literacy and reduce digital exclusion, the number of older internet users is still very small, when compared with younger users, which means that, older people cannot fully benefit from the advantages associated with the digitalisation of services. Another conclusion is that older citizens continue to be, even if partially, ignored by public policies regarding the digitalisation of public services as initiatives that include this vulnerable population are scarce. The study also highlights a few differences between the experiences

²² Ombudsperson's Office, written response, 18 May 2022.

²³ Ombudsperson's Office, written response, 18 May 2022.

²⁴ Azevedo, Celiana. (2019). [Demasiado Velho para o Digital? Envelhecimento ativo e os usos das TIC por pessoas mais velhas](#) (Too Old for Digital? Active ageing and the used of ICTs by older people in Brazil and Portugal), Lisbon, Nova Institute of Communication.

of women and men, one of the conclusions being that, in Portugal, men between the age of 55-74 are more likely to use the internet to interact with public services (27%) than women in the same age group (15%).

Regarding the methodology used, this study resorted to empirical research through field research and the establishment of contact with the various institutions linked to active ageing. The participants for the interviews conducted, during the field research were selected based on different socio-demographic dimensions, life experiences, ways of thinking, the social context, and the attitudes towards the ICTs. In terms of the sample, in Portugal, there were a total of 17 participants, 13 women and 4 men, 8 of whom were between 60 and 69 years old, 7 were between 70 and 79 years old, and the remaining 2 were over 80 years old. In terms of education, 7 had a primary level of education, 6 a medium level of education, and 4 a higher education.

It should be noted, that regarding other research studies/surveys, we have conducted desk research and selected the most relevant information on the topic. From the desk research, we concluded that the research on unequal access to public services undergoing or having completed digital transformation regarding older persons or people with disabilities is very scarce. In Portugal, the focus of research on these social groups often relates to issues such as discrimination, violence, isolation or access to physical public services. Access to digital public services was not a key dimension of the focus on these vulnerable social groups. Therefore, we have provided examples that, although not related to access to digitalised public services, are related with the use of ICT by older people.

The study "Older online: study on the adoption of mobile technologies in different learning scenarios"²⁵ (Seniores online: estudo da apropriação dos dispositivos móveis em diferentes cenários de aprendizagem), conducted an experiment that aimed at promoting a more effective older engagement in the digital society, through the use of tactile mobile devices. Mobile devices were the tool chosen because older people are more predisposed to use mobile devices than computers due to their touch features and functionalities. The results indicate that, after the participation in learning workshops, older people used mobile devices, essentially, in the areas of leisure, health and well-being, communication and socialisation and creation of digital content. It concluded that older people need to learn how to use digital devices in order to make the best of their possibilities to make their life easier. This learning process enabled them to improve their knowledge of mobile computing, testing new and existing pedagogical approaches to explore the possibilities contained in their smartphones.

Methodologically, this study was conducted with two learning scenarios: a programme designed for older people living in urban areas and one for those living in rural areas, located in the centre of Portugal. A Design-Based Research was applied, due to the use of real applicational contexts and problem solving techniques as a way to understand how older people use the mobile devices available in their daily life, in a useful and meaningful way. The study was divided into 4 stages, with the goal of designing and conceiving a learning model prototype that suits the needs of older people regarding mobile device usage.

The study "How the Portuguese Age - ageing, health, ageism"²⁶ (Como Envelhecem os Portugueses - envelhecimento, saúde, idadismo) draws a general picture of how the Portuguese age: who they are, where they live, with whom they live and who looks after them, and how they access health care and other public services. It collected various statistical studies and information from various national institutions, such as the Institute for Social Security and the Retirement Public Services to reach these conclusions.

This study concludes that, in an increasingly digital society, not using new technologies can accentuate digital and social exclusion. And although the study acknowledges that the number of mobile phone and computer users between the ages of 65 and 74 has increased, the numbers are still low. This result may indicate that, in this age group, there is a significant number of individuals who lack digital skills, which may hinder their access to services that are digitalised. The study also concludes that since older people are more likely to live mainly off pensions, with a high number of individuals receiving pensions below the national minimum wage; more likely to live alone or in the company of people of the same age group; and more likely to live mainly in rural and semi-urban environments, they are also more likely to face barriers when accessing physical and digital health care services due to problems related to geographical distance, accessibility or digital illiteracy. Another finding is that all of the factors listed above (live mainly off pensions, alone or in company of people within the same age group and on rural or semi-rural environments), combined with low levels of education and of digital literacy can have a negative impact on how older people self-assess their state of health, since they have a limited access to information available about health services locations and/or contacts, access to digital health services or even to information to identify symptoms related with health problems. .

²⁶ Moreira, Maria João Guardado. (2020). [Como Envelhecem os Portugueses - envelhecimento, saúde, idadismo](#) (How the Portuguese Age - ageing, health, ageism), Lisbon, Fundação Francisco Manuel dos Santos.

4 State of digitalisation of selected public services

		Selected public services relevant for older persons			
		Access to health records – SNS 24 (Health National Services 24)	Public statutory pensions – Caixa Geral de Aposentações (Retirement Public Services – only for public servants)	Social benefits – Instituto da Segurança Social (Institute for Social Security)	Other (as relevant in your context)
Stage of digitalisation	Not digitalised (Y/N)	No	No	No	N/a
	Information is available online (Y/N)	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/a
	Transactions are possible online (Y/N)	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/a
Recognition of groups at risk of digital exclusion	Service specific regulation recognises barriers to digital inclusion / vulnerable and disadvantaged groups (Y/N).	No	No	No	N/a
	If yes, please list the barriers and groups that are mentioned.	Na	Na	Na	N/a
Multichannel access options	Telephone service (Y/N) If yes, please describe what kind of personalised services it provides.	Yes. In terms of health care, this service provides health care by evaluating the symptoms reported and providing health information even calling an ambulance and reporting the situation to the nearest hospital, if needed. Because of the pandemic situation, it provides information related to COVID-19. It also provides psychological advice. In addition, this service provides	Yes. The telephone service is available every working day from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, and provides general information about retirement, contributions, payment of pensions, verification of disability, survivor's pensions and other benefits related to pensions. It also provides information about the online channels and offers appointment scheduling if the person	Yes, the telephone service provides nearly every service the physical location provides, except for the delivery of forms, but it can provide information about the filling in of forms or any other information about social benefits. It also offers appointment scheduling, if the person prefers to go to the physical office. This telephone service is available every working	N/a

		information on administrative matters, and it also schedules medical appointments. However, it doesn't provide access to health records.	prefers to go to the physical administrative office.	day from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm.	
	Physical administrative access points (Y/N). If yes, please specify the level of availability (local, regional, national), the opening days and hours.	Yes. Citizens can access their health records through their family doctors or any doctor that is following their medical situation. The access can be done in the local health centres, every working day, and, at some centers, on Saturdays. As to opening hours, it varies from one local health centre to another.	Yes, there is a physical administrative access point in Lisbon and Porto, services are available every working day from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm.	Yes, the public institution responsible for social benefits has local administrative centres where citizens can access services related to social benefits. These local administrative services are available every working day, from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. In some cases, depending on the location, the service may be open until 5:30 pm.	N/a
	Specific locations that facilitate offline access to the service (Y/N) If yes, indicate the location(s). Please describe what kind of support is provided.	No.	No.	No.	N/a
	Specific locations that facilitate online access to the service (Y/N). If yes, indicate the location(s). Please describe what kind of support is provided.	No.	No.	Yes. At every administrative office, there is a physical counter with a computer where citizens can access every service provided by this institution online, with or without the help of a desk clerk.	N/a
	Other – please indicate any other access channels to the service.	N/a.	N/a.	N/a.	N/a

Other forms of support for online use	Please indicate any other form of support to facilitate the use of the online service for older persons such as easy-to-read versions, different language versions, etc.	N/a.	N/a.	On the website of the institution that provides this service, there are several user guides available on how to work with the online services. However, these guides are for the use of the general population ²⁷ .	N/a
--	---	------	------	--	-----

²⁷ For more information on these user guides, see the [website of the Institute for Social Security](#).