Mafra Local Housing Strategy

Submitted By: Municipality of Mafra



Organization Profile

Organization Name: Municipality of Mafra

Organization Type: Subnational government

Website: https://www.cm-mafra.pt

Practice Details

Country(ies): Portugal

City(ies): Mafra

Start Year: 2022

Ongoing: Yes

End Year: N/A

Main Adequate Housing Components:



Housing Thematic Areas:

- Rental Housing
- Social Housing
- Housing Rights & Social Inclusion
- Housing Policy, Legislation & Governance

Relevant SDGs:



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Problem & Context

The municipality of Mafra faces serious housing issues, with many families living in inadequate and undignified conditions, a situation worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic. The shortage of public housing and the rising prices of rentals and property purchases make access to adequate housing increasingly difficult. The growth of short-term rentals has further reduced the availability of long-term housing. According to the Municipality´s Social Action Services, 285 families have already submitted applications under the 1.º Direito programme, meeting the eligibility criteria. The number of requests has steadily increased over time, demonstrating the growing severity of the problem. Over 70% of these households are made up of single-person (36%) or single-parent families (35%), both especially vulnerable to housing insecurity.

Solution Developed

Mafra aims to address housing challenges through its Local Housing Strategy (ELH), under the 1.º Direito programme.

The initiative supports families living in inadequate housing and in situations of social and economic vulnerability. The main beneficiaries are national citizens and foreign residents with valid residence permits who meet the programme's eligibility criteria.

The key strategic objectives include: supporting vulnerable families in accessing adequate housing (rehabilitating municipal housing, increasing public housing stock, and strengthening rental support); regenerating Mafra's central urban axis (rehabilitating public buildings and encouraging private rehabilitation); and consolidating an integrated governance model (enhancing the municipality's capacity to implement the New Generation Housing Policies and supporting beneficiaries in accessing the programme).

The strategy promotes access to adequate housing, social inclusion, and territorial cohesion, and stands out for its coordination among municipal services, parish councils, and local entities, enabling a more integrated and locally adapted response.

Implementation

Mafra's housing solution involves a range of strategic actions under its Local Housing Strategy.

It includes the rehabilitation of residential buildings in neighborhoods like Mafra and Malveira, benefiting families under supported rental schemes, as well as the renovation of 20 scattered housing units, focusing on improving living conditions and energy efficiency. New buildings will be constructed to replace degraded ones, increasing the housing stock from 8 to 17 units. Additionally, 50 housing units will be acquired and rehabilitated, and 226 new units will be built on municipal land to house families currently living in inadequate conditions.

The “Arrendar” programme will be adjusted to reflect local rental market dynamics. Other interventions include the rehabilitation of key public buildings and spaces, such as the Former Municipal Water Services building, Largo da Feira and Casa das Canas, the Music Conservatory, the Quinta da Raposa complex and the Elderly Home in Sobreiro.

The “Mafra Requalifica” programme will continue until 2031, covering several urban areas. Implementation is based on an integrated governance model, supported by dedicated technical teams, ongoing monitoring, and assistance for 1.º Direito beneficiaries.

Funding comes from the municipal budget and national programmes such as 1.º Direito, IFRRU 2020, and the New Generation of Housing Policies.

Enablers & Obstacles

The implementation of Mafra’s Local Housing Strategy has been driven by key factors such as strong political commitment from the municipality, alignment with national programs (1.º Direito and New Generation of Housing Policies), and active community involvement. The Executive Plan Team played a crucial role in technical coordination and governance. Updated data on housing needs strengthened decision-making.

The strategy is funded until 2026 through the 1.º Direito programme and the Recovery and Resilience Plan.

Challenges include complex bureaucracy, a shortage of skilled labor, and rising material costs. To overcome these, the municipality invested in technical capacity, expanded partnerships, and simplified administrative processes, ensuring continuous progress towards the housing goals.

Results & Impact

The Municipality of Mafra is making a historic investment of €42.2 million in housing construction and rehabilitation, aiming to expand the municipal housing stock by around 200 new units, most of which are already in progress.

Through the Recovery and Resilience Plan (PRR), 17 applications covering 279 housing units—99 of which involve rehabilitation—have been approved, with €41.6 million in funding. The initiative addresses the shortage of affordable housing, lack of basic infrastructure, substandard living conditions, and overcrowding.

Recent milestones include the launch of several construction projects in Malveira, Ericeira, Venda do Valador, and Encarnação, as well as the rehabilitation of 100 housing units.

Additionally, under the “Construir Portugal” programme, funding was secured for 76 more units.

The strategy has improved living conditions for vulnerable families, particularly single-parent households and individuals living alone, by providing safe, affordable housing and greater social stability.

Broader impacts include urban regeneration, job creation in the construction sector, and environmental sustainability through energy-efficient practices. Mafra's Local Housing Strategy is strengthening territorial cohesion, promoting social inclusion, and enhancing the municipality's appeal as a place to live, work, and invest.

Replication & Scale Up

Mafra was a pioneer in Portugal by developing the first Local Housing Strategy under the 1.º Direito programme, becoming a model for other municipalities within and beyond the Lisbon district, including Loures, Amadora, Sintra, Cascais and Setúbal.

Key factors enabling successful replication include: well-structured strategy, alignment with the 1º Direito programme, creation of a dedicated technical team, coordination between governance levels, clear documentation, and community involvement. These factors enabled adaptable and replicable housing solutions across various regions.

To scale up the housing practice and expand its reach, it is important to strengthen institutional frameworks, increase financial resources through national programs, EU funds, and public-private partnerships, and invest in technical capacity building for local authorities and staheholders. The use of advanced technology and data improves planning and monitoring. Community participation should be promoted, as well as the replication of best practices, to ensure inclusive and sustainable solutions that benefit more families and contribute to urban development.

Policy Uptake

This housing practice has been fully adopted into formal policy frameworks and legislation, and is being implemented at scale with institutional support.

To embed this initiative into public policy, it is essential to institutionalize successful methodologies, such as Mafra's Executive Plan Team, into national housing planning models and strengthen coordination between municipalities, IHRU, and other public entities. Stable and diversified funding from national and European sources must be ensured. Additionally, regulations promoting participatory and data-driven approaches should be encouraged, along with continuous monitoring to adapt actions and guarantee the program's success and scalability.

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Lessons & Takeaways

Based on Mafra's experience, areas for improvement include speeding up and flexibilizing administrative processes to avoid delays, engaging local communities early on to build trust and better tailor solutions, expanding technical capacity-building to address labor shortages and improve quality, and implementing impact evaluation systems from the early stages to enable continuous and more effective adjustments.