

Access to Unemployment Benefits

All workers who are resident in Portugal and covered by the general social security scheme may claim unemployment benefits if:

- They had an employment contract and have become unemployed; or
- They have suspended their employment contract on the grounds of wage arrears;
- They have ceased work involuntarily (self-employed workers who are financially dependent);
- They are former recipients of disability benefits who are later deemed capable of working following a capability assessment.

Alternatively, in the cases where workers are not entitled to unemployment benefits (do not fulfill the requirements) or after unemployment benefits have ended, workers may claim Social Unemployment Benefits (previous work for a certain period of time is required, but may include work in other countries). This is a cash benefit paid to the unemployed beneficiary, to compensate them for lack of income due to involuntary unemployment. Workers may also claim Partial Unemployment Benefits, a cash benefit paid to workers who claimed or were receiving unemployment benefits and who subsequently resume employment on a part-time contract or who start self-employed work.

Eligibility

Eligible beneficiaries must: reside in Portugal; be involuntarily unemployed; be capable of working and available for employment; be registered as a job seeker at a *Centro de Emprego* [Job Centre] in their locality; and meet the minimum qualifying period requirement for unemployment benefits: 360 days of paid employment (with registered earnings) in the 24 calendar months immediately prior to the date of unemployment; for initial Social Unemployment Benefits: 180 days of paid employment (with registered earnings) in the 12 calendar months immediately prior to the date of unemployment (exceptions apply to certain professions). Days in which the beneficiary worked in the following countries are counted towards the minimum qualifying period: EU states, Iceland, Norway, Lichtenstein or Switzerland, as well as countries that have signed bilateral social security agreements with Portugal allowing contributions registered in those countries to be counted towards unemployment benefit claimed in Portugal.

Comparative Unemployment Data

The economic crisis in Europe has hit Portugal particularly hard, although it should be added that Portugal was already in conditions of economic crisis by the early years of the last decade. Both of these realities are reflected in comparatively high unemployment figures in the country, especially among the young. Only Spain ranks higher than Portugal in all of the unemployment categories presented in the table below (Table 1). Despite unemployment rates much higher than the EU-28 average, Portugal does not spend much more on benefits than its fellow EU member states. That said, comparatively speaking, unemployment benefits must be considerably lower in Poland, as the Polish state spends only 1.66 of its GDP on unemployment despite a jobless rate of just over 10 percent. On the other hand, consider Norway or the Netherlands, where the expenditure on the unemployed is nearly equivalent to the percent of those without work.

	Unemployment rate	Long-term unemployment	Unemployment, ages 20-24	Unemployment, ages 25-29	Unemployment, ages 30-34	Spending on unemployment as % of GDP
Netherlands	5.3	2.0	9.2	5.6	4.6	5.61
Norway	3.1	0.6	7.3	4.3	2.6	2.47
Poland	10.1	4.1	25.3	13.1	8.4	1.66
Portugal	15.5	7.7	34.2	20.0	16.5	6.81
Spain	24.8	11.0	48.8	31.5	24.7	14.03
Turkey	9.2	-	-	-	-	-
UK	7.9	2.7	16.8	8.7	6.4	2.53
EU-28 average	10.4	4.7	21.5	13.9	10.8	5.35

Table 1. Selected unemployment indicators 2013

Source: PORDATA (EU and Norway); World Bank (Turkey)

Within Portugal, the unemployment rate of every foreign origin population is higher than that of the Portuguese, especially among Guineans (32.5%), Angolans (29.1%) and Cape-Verdians (27.8%). Non-EU foreigners are more vulnerable to unemployment, as are women of most nationalities, except for Cape Verdian and Angolan women, who tend to work in the domestic services, jobs that are more protected from economic instability (Table 2).

Table 2.
Unemployment rate by nationality and by sex in 2011 (%)
Source: Instituto Nacional de Estatística (Census 2011); Reis, Oliveira, & Gomes (2014)

Nationality	Male	Female	Total
Total	12.6	13.8	13.2
Portuguese	12.3	13.5	12.9
Foreign	17.9	19.2	18.6
EU27 (excl. Portugal)	12.4	15.5	13.9
Non-EU foreign	19.4	20.1	19.8
Brazil	13.2	19.2	16.6
Cape Verde	36.6	20.2	27.8
Ukraine	15.2	18.7	16.9
Angola	31.7	26.4	29.1
Romania	15.6	17.6	16.5
Guinea Bissau	35.3	28.4	32.5

Rendimento Social de Inserção (Social Insertion Income)

Social Insertion Income (RSI) is a mechanism of social protection aimed at supporting persons or families in situations of extreme economic deprivation who are at risk of social exclusion. It is composed of: an insertion contract (to promote their social and work integration) and a cash allowance to support basic needs. RSI may be claimed only by legal residents in Portugal: citizens of the EU, EEA, and third country nationals from states that maintain free circulation agreements with Portugal, the minimum residence time is one year; for other countries, a minimum of three years of legal residence is required. In June 2015, according to data from Social Security, there were 208.974 beneficiaries of the RSI. Again, as a result of the economic crisis, there has been an increase in payouts to both Portuguese citizens and resident foreigners (Figure 1). Following the data in Table 2 above, between 2004 and 2009, Cape Verdians and Angolans were the greatest recipients of RSI; from 2009 on, benefits payments to Romanians has increased (Segurança Social 2015).

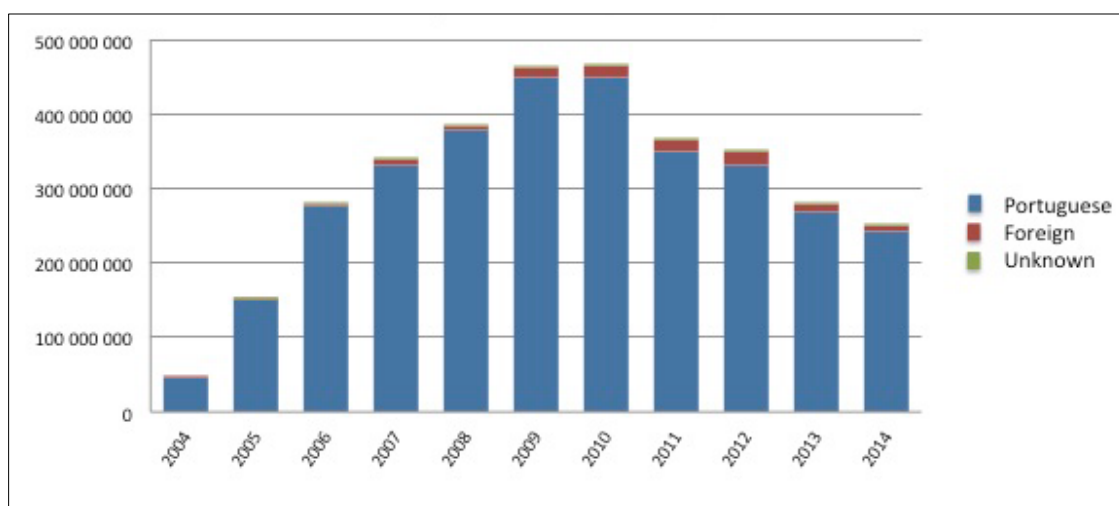


Figure 1.
Expenditure
with social
insertion
income, foreign
and nationals,
2004-2014
Source:
Segurança Social
(2015)

References

- Instituto Nacional de Estatística. (2011). <https://www.ine.pt/>
- Reis, Oliveira, C., & Gomes, N. (2014). *Monitorizar a Integração de Imigrantes em Portugal*. Lisbon: ACM.
- Segurança Social/Social Security. (2015). *Instituto de Informática*. <http://www4.seg-social.pt/ii-ip-instituto-de-informatica-ip>