

Portugal leads test of innovative methodology with pilot study by Nova SBE and Fast Forward Foundation

New Assessment Methodology was developed by Fast Forward Foundation to unlock the potential of digital payments in the social welfare sector

Carcavelos, 5th November 2025 — **Nova SBE**, through its Leadership for Impact Knowledge Center, partnered with Fast Forward Foundation — the philanthropic entity that promotes the sustainable and inclusive transformation in welfare systems in Europe — to carry out a **pilot study in Portugal aimed at improving the delivery of payment services in the social welfare sector through digital solutions**.

Welfare Sector Payments (WSPs) are the financial flows that sustain social welfare services. They cover transfers to beneficiaries, contributions, and transactions among public and private actors. Together, these flows keep welfare systems functioning effectively. Across Europe, many of them continue to operate with legacy infrastructures, which can lead to fragmentation, inefficiency, and limited coordination between actors. These challenges may result in higher costs and reduced access for beneficiaries, affecting the overall efficiency of welfare delivery.

To address these challenges, the **Fast Forward Foundation developed an Assessment Methodology**, presented in the report “Leveraging modern payment techniques to enhance integrated welfare solutions”. This methodology evaluates WSPs across 15 key areas — including legal frameworks, interoperability, cost-efficiency, and data governance — to identify national modernization gaps.

To confirm the methodology is robust, practical, and adaptable to different contexts, **it is now being tested under real-world conditions in Portugal by the Nova SBE Leadership for Impact Knowledge Center team**. The pilot uses qualitative research, primarily interviews with key stakeholders across the WSP ecosystem, and benefits from the support of the Instituto de Informática da Segurança Social of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, together with a range of public and private partners from the social, healthcare, and financial sectors.

Portugal was selected for the pilot due to its strong record in digital innovation, high level of financial inclusion, and collaborative environment between the public and private sectors. Applying Assessment Methodology enables the production of a country assessment for Portugal while simultaneously gathering feedback to refine the framework into a refined version for wider use across Europe. The study also employs a Systemic Mapping Methodology, developed by the Nova SBE Leadership for Impact Knowledge Center, which supports an integrated evaluation of the ecosystem and fosters pathways toward systemic change.

“This project is a unique opportunity to deepen research on how digital payments can transform the social welfare sector, promoting greater efficiency and financial inclusion in Portugal and across Europe,” states **Ricardo Zózimo**, Professor of Management at the **Nova SBE Leadership for Impact Knowledge Center**.

*“Welfare sector payments affect millions of people every day,” says **Livia Piermattei, President of the Fast Forward Foundation**. “Through this partnership with Nova SBE, we can test and strengthen our methodology in practice — paving the way for systems that are not only more digital, but also fairer, more accessible, and designed for the future,” she adds.*

About Nova SBE

Nova SBE is the most prestigious business school in Portugal and one of the leading business schools in Europe. It is the School of Economics, Finance, and Management at NOVA University Lisbon. The current Dean is Professor Pedro Oliveira (PhD, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). Since December 2007, Nova SBE has been a CEMS member and holds the prestigious international Triple Crown accreditation (EQUIS, AMBA, and AACSB). It was the first Portuguese business school to obtain international accreditations and global recognition in higher education. Nova SBE's international vision is also reflected in the adoption of English as its primary language of instruction. The vast majority of undergraduate courses and all master's, MBA, and PhD programs are taught in English.

About the Leadership for Impact Knowledge Center

The Nova SBE Leadership for Impact Knowledge Center was created in 2017 with the mission to co-create social progress and organizational performance by aligning action with academic knowledge. Currently, the center focuses on three key knowledge areas: Leadership; New Forms of Organizing for Impact; and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Leadership for Impact develops various research, action, and capacity-building projects with companies, non-profit organizations, and public entities, involving the entire Nova SBE community, including current and future leaders – its students. [More here.](#)

About the Fast Forward Foundation

Fast Forward Foundation – Philanthropic Entity has a tradition of promoting and advancing scientific research in the field of health in Europe. Founded in 2004 in Italy by BFF Bank, it has over two decades of dedication, during which it has conducted in-depth studies and supported cultural initiatives. In 2022, it began a transformation process, recognizing the need for strategic change to better serve its global community. The Foundation's new purpose is to promote the sustainable and inclusive transformation in welfare systems, safeguarding individuals and communities. This objective responds to the need to operate at the crossroads of health, social protection, and digital payments for financial inclusion fields, to better respond to the challenges of the current historical moment. www.fffoundation.eu

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