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**DID THE EUROPEAN UNION INVESTMENTS AND FUNDS PROGRAMMES'
IMPROVED PERFORMANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY OF PORTUGUESE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT?**

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ABSTRACT

The European Union (EU) Investments and Funds Programmes, established since 1986, takes a crucial role on economic and social development of Portuguese Country and, particularly, on Investments and Funds Plans' of Portuguese State, namely at a local level. The growing competences and investment importance of Portuguese municipalities accrues the relevance of these EU Investment and Funds Programmes that, themselves, demonstrated a strategic evolution since the First Plan (1986-1988) until the Last Plan, National Strategic Reference Programme (NSRP/ 2007-2013).

This paper focus on the main consequences of EU Investments and Funds Programmes on Portuguese Councils' Performance. Financial Sustainability and performance evaluation of Local Government is a major topic of International Research on local development issues. The analysis is even more rewarding once Portugal is a young democracy and part of EU Southern Developing Countries.

Which dimensions of EU Programmes' have been more relevant for performance improvement and sustainable development of Portuguese Municipalities? Did EU Investment and Funds Programmes' really improved key financial indicators and overall performance and sustainability of Portuguese Local Government? Empirical evidence draws a positive conclusion on that, specifically on Lisbon, for the period 2000-2006 and Alentejo Region, for the period 2007-2013.

Some policy implications and lessons are brought about Portugal "Special Case" as an Euro-Atlantic economy and, simultaneously, a Southern European Developing Country that surpassed a huge basic infrastructure investment backlog to be integral part of Euro Zone and even a building modern European Society, notwithstanding some remaining recognized structural problems. Further investigation can deeply explain the differentiated regional impact of EU Programmes' on Municipalities' Performance and Sustainability, regarding Portugal and, even more important, different European Regions, concerning size, autonomy and specific pathways throughout a Sustainable Developed Economy and Society.

KEYWORDS: European Union (EU) Investments and Funds Programmes; Portuguese Councils' Performance and Sustainability Evaluation; Regional Development; Community Sustainability