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Pollinators in Action: Portugal leads where most of Europe is still catching up

A new national plan puts Portugal among the first southern European countries to respond formally to pollinator decline — with direct implications for beekeeping.

By Raquel T de Sousa, Portugal

*"I hope to see pollinator conservation increasingly reflected in real decisions on the ground — from ecological restoration and pollinator-friendly farming to better urban green space management and stronger public awareness." That is **João Loureiro**, co-coordinator of [PolinizAÇÃO project](#) and co-PI of the FLOWer Lab at the University of Coimbra, speaking about the plan his team helped build. Last month, the [Portuguese government made it official](#).*

Polinizadores em Ação ("Pollinators in Action"), approved on 31 March 2026, is **Portugal's first national plan dedicated exclusively to pollinator conservation and sustainability** — arriving at a critical moment for European biodiversity.

The scale of the problem

For Portugal's agricultural sector, animal pollination is worth an **estimated €2 billion per year, around 0.81% of national GDP**. Key crops such as Rocha pear, Alcobaça apple and Algarve citrus depend directly on this service. Yet [across Europe](#), one in three bee, butterfly and hoverfly species is in decline, and one in ten is threatened with extinction. Habitat loss, pesticide use, invasive species, climate change and disease are the main drivers.

A European race most countries are still entering

The [EU Nature Restoration Regulation](#), in force since August 2024, sets a legally binding target for all Member States to reverse pollinator decline by 2030. The revised EU Pollinators Initiative — [A New Deal for Pollinators](#) — further requires every country to develop a National Pollinator Action Plan, and a standardised Europe-wide monitoring scheme must be operational by December 2026.



Despite this pressure, **most EU countries still lack a comprehensive national plan**. The Netherlands, France, Spain and Ireland are among the few with published strategies. By approving its plan in March 2026, **Portugal positions itself among the first southern European countries to meet this framework proactively** – with a science-based, participatory approach and initial funding already secured.

Why Portugal matters

The country hosts **746 bee species, 148 daytime butterfly species, over 2,600 moth species and 221 hoverfly species**, plus **24 species endemic to the Azores and Madeira** found nowhere else on Earth. The native honey bee subspecies *Apis mellifera iberiensis* is **one of the most valuable genetic resources for Iberian beekeeping**. Portugal is also an active partner in European projects including SPRING, EPIC-Bee, EPIC-Fly and EPIC-Butterfly, cementing its role as a key contributor to the continent's scientific monitoring efforts.

What the plan delivers

Developed by the [PolinizAÇÃO project](#) in coordination with the Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests (ICNF), and involving **130 experts from more than 90 institutions**, the plan sets out a **10-year roadmap with 30 actions and 116 measures** across four pillars: research and monitoring, sustainable land management, education and public engagement, and governance. The Environmental Fund will provide **€2 million in 2026–2027** through open calls for research institutions, universities, and NGOs. For beekeepers specifically, the plan includes **updates to the national apiculture support programme**, research into **pests and diseases** and their transmission to wild pollinators, genetic diversity assessments of *Apis mellifera iberiensis*, and incentives to promote **100% native subspecies in new apiaries by 2035**.

Loureiro is clear that approval is just the beginning: success will require *"sustained political commitment, long-term funding, effective coordination across sectors, and robust monitoring."* **His wider message for the international community** is that *"collaborative and science-based processes can help turn concern about pollinator decline into concrete national action."* For beekeepers in Portugal and beyond, that is an encouraging signal – and one worth following closely.



You can **follow up progress** at [ICNF](#) and [polli.NET network](#). For the **full national action plan** read [here](#).

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