

## CHAPTER 10

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# CHALLENGES AND CHANGES IN FAMILY(IES) FORMATION IN PORTUGAL SINCE THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

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This chapter aims to report the major challenges and changes in family formation in Portugal, based on an analysis of the social, historical, political and economic context over the past 40 years. There are changes in the roles of young people with the increase of educational levels, their entry into the labor market, and the postponement of family formation. Increased legislation on sexuality and reproduction rights gains prominence, as does the social acceptance of new forms of family. A significant decrease in birth and fertility rates is leading to important demographic losses. The economic crisis that has occurred over the last decade has contributed to the postponement of young people's economic independence. Portugal is currently

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presenting a more favorable scenario with the economic recovery and the encouragement of family support policies.

## 1. NATIONAL CONTEXT

### *Social, Historical, Political, Economic*

Portugal is one of the oldest nation-states in Europe and has a long and rich social and political history. An enthusiastic Republican period came after the Monarchy in 1910, followed by different governments. In 1933, the Salazar regime was set up with the Constitution defining the New State as a “unitary and corporative republic” approved in a national referendum (Sousa, 1996). This dictatorship government aimed at the construction of a strong republican and corporatist state under the moral principles of the Catholic Church (Baiôa, et al., 2003). Portugal managed to stay neutral during the Second World War and, despite the defeat of the right-wing dictatorships in Europe, Salazar’s position had not been seriously damaged. Although the regime survived the war and benefited economically from it, it failed to invest in the modernization of the country: state services were kept to a bare minimum, traditional agricultural structures were not reformed, and no appropriate stimulus was given to the industry (Baiôa, et al., 2003). The country continued to vastly underperform on its potential for growth, while basic political rights such as universal suffrage, free trade unions and freedom of expression continued to be denied. The regime’s highly centralized system virtually isolated decision-makers from those who they were theoretically supposed to represent and serve. This “acceptance” was in part due to the people’s fear of being punished and, at the same time, due to high rates of illiteracy of the population (Baiôa, et al., 2003).

The Portuguese authoritarian regime, which ruled the country for half a century, was brought to the end by a coup in 1974 led by young officers of the Armed Forces. The April Revolution of 1974 was called the “Carnation Revolution” (Revolução dos Cravos), since during the revolution people offered red carnations to soldiers on the streets who put them in the barrels of their rifles. It became a symbol of a peaceful revolution. The regime’s police and para-military forces were eradicated, special courts for political crimes were also eliminated, and political liberties were restored: freedom of expression, association, full participation in political life, etc. (Sousa, 1996). The revolution was an important milestone for women’s rights, challenging traditional gender roles. Important changes were observed in the Portuguese society: women’s universal voting rights and progressive participation in politics, the abolition of legal permission for honor crimes committed by fathers or husbands, the freedom to leave the country and travel without prior husband’s authorization, the freedom of expression granted to women and decision-making power (Aboim, 2010b). Concurrently, the 1976 Constitution decreed important measures having an impact on family formation

and development, namely sexual freedom, reproductive health and family planning, as well as access to education and the labor market (Aboim, 2010b).

The revolutionary period was over in 1976, but democratic stability was still a distant reality. Following the next ten years, until the integration in the European Community in 1986, Portugal entered a period of economic, social and political instability. In just 12 years of democracy, there were 10 constitutional governments. By 1986, internal political life had stabilized considerably. Some political changes were constituted, mainly because the radical parties that emerged after the Revolution had all but disappeared, and two main forces became dominant, both occupying the center of the political spectrum—the Socialist Party and the Social Democrat Party (Sousa, 1996).

The entrance of Portugal into the European Union in 1986 had an important effect on the convergence of national policies and social measures contributing to stable economic growth and development, largely through increased trade ties and an inflow of funds allocated by the European Union to improve the country's infrastructure. At the same time, Portugal was not an industrial society and could not, therefore, be integrated in the designated advanced industrial economies (OECD, 2019a). Even so, in 1999, it continued to enjoy sturdy economic growth and falling rates of unemployment. The country qualified for the Economic and Monetary Union of the European Union (EMU) in 1998 and joined ten other European countries in launching the euro on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1999 (OECD, 2019a). Portugal made significant progress in raising its standard of living to that of its EU partners. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita on a purchasing power parity basis rose from 51% of the EU average in 1985 to 78% in early 2002. By 2005, it dropped to 72% (of the average of all of the then 25 EU members, including seven with GDP per capita lower than Portugal) as GDP per capita rose in other EU countries. Unemployment stood at 4.1% at the end of 2001, above the EU average (OECD, 2019a). However, from 2002 to 2007, important changes in Portuguese economic and political panorama were observed. The unemployment rate increased dramatically to 65% (270,500 unemployed citizens in 2002, 448,600 unemployed citizens in 2007) and, from 2007 to 2013, a growing trend in unemployment rates was observed (Figure 10.1). In December 2009, the rating agencies lowered its long-term credit assessment of Portugal from “stable” to “negative”, voicing pessimism with respect to the country's structural economic indicators.

Between 2010 to 2013, a financial crisis emerged in Portugal. The global recession resulting from the United States financial crisis had a disastrous impact on the Portuguese economy (Eichenbaum et al., 2016). In addition, the financial collapse of two important banks, the budgetary slippage of “public-private partnership” (PPPs), and swaps contracts that resulted in potential losses higher than 3000 million euros, contributed to the Portuguese highest economy's recessions since 1970 (Wall & Correia, 2014). As a consequence, there has been an increase in unemployment rates, salary cuts, heavier taxation and general disinvestment in

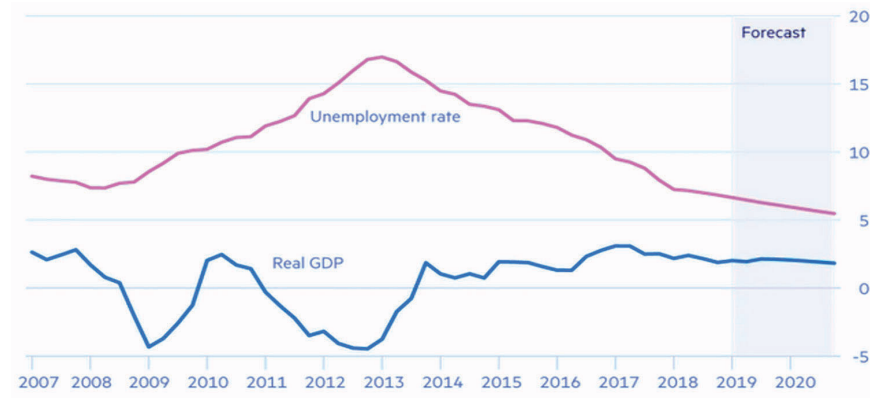


FIGURE 10.1. Portugal Economic Recovery—Real GDP and Unemployment Rates. Source: OECD Economic Outlook: Statistics and Projections (database), November 2019.

family policies. Family and child well-being indicators, such as poverty, material deprivation, work intensity, fertility, school drop-out and expenditure, reveal that the Portuguese family and work conditions have worsen during this period (Wall & Correia, 2014).

In April 2011, Portugal confirmed the receipt of a financial bailout from the IMF and the European Union worth €78 billion. The three-year EU aid program incorporating the €78 billion support package ended in May 2014. The year of 2014 marked the start of the recovery of the Portuguese economy (PEO, 2015). GDP is now back to its pre-crisis level and the unemployment rate has declined by 10 percentage points since 2013 to below 7%, one of the largest reductions in any OECD country over the past decade (Figure 10.1). This decline is not independent from the significant increase in emigration rates, namely of woman and highly qualified young people (Perista & Carrilho, 2015). Legacies of the crisis remain, with the poverty rate of the working age population still high and perceptions of subjective well-being below pre-crisis levels (OECD, 2019a).

### *Demographic Trends Relevant to Family Formation*

In 2018, Portugal's estimated population was 10,276,617, with 14,410 inhabitants less than in the year before. Since 2010, the downward population trend has been increasing, although with important deceleration since 2017. This results from the increase in net migration (from 4,886 in 2017 to 11,570 in 2018) since there was a negative *natural population growth* (from -23,432 in 2017 to -25,980 in 2018). Thus, the rate of net migration showed, in 2018, a positive rate of 0.11%, while on the other side, the rate of natural increase showed a negative rate of 0.25% (INE, 2019a). The number of inhabitants from foreign countries

living in Portugal was 480,300, the highest number recorded since 1976 (SEF/GEFP, 2019). The ten most represented countries of origin are Brazil, Cape Verde, Romania, Ukraine, United Kingdom, China, France, Italy, Angola and Guinea-Bissau (SEF/GEFP, 2019).

In 2018, with regard to the structure of the population by age groups, the percentage of young people (aged 0–14) stood at 13.7% of the total resident population, those aged 15–24 represented 10.6%, those aged 25–64 stood at 53.8%, and the percentage of the elderly (aged 65 and over) was 21.8% of the total. This age distribution led to an ageing ratio of 159.4 elderly per 100 young people (i.e., 4.0 p.p. increase vis-à-vis the previous year). The changes in the size and age-sex structure of the resident population in Portugal, in particular due to low birth rates and increased longevity in the last decades, suggest that, aside from the population decrease in the last years, the demographic ageing continued. Life expectancy at birth was estimated at 80.80 years. In 2016–2018, men and women could expect to live up to 77.78 years and 83.43 years, respectively. Within a decade, there was a gain of 2.06 years of life for the total population, 2.29 years for men and 1.62 years for women (INE, 2019a).

With respect to the number of live births of mothers residing in Portugal, in 2018 it was 87,020—an increase of 1.0 % compared to 2017, which translated into a crude birth rate of 8.5 live births per 1,000 inhabitants. There was also a slight recovery of the total fertility rate (TFR) in relation to previous years, which stood at 1.41 children per woman in 2018, compared to 1.37 in 2017 (Figure 10.2). Even so, since the last 30 years, Portugal has shifted from being one of the

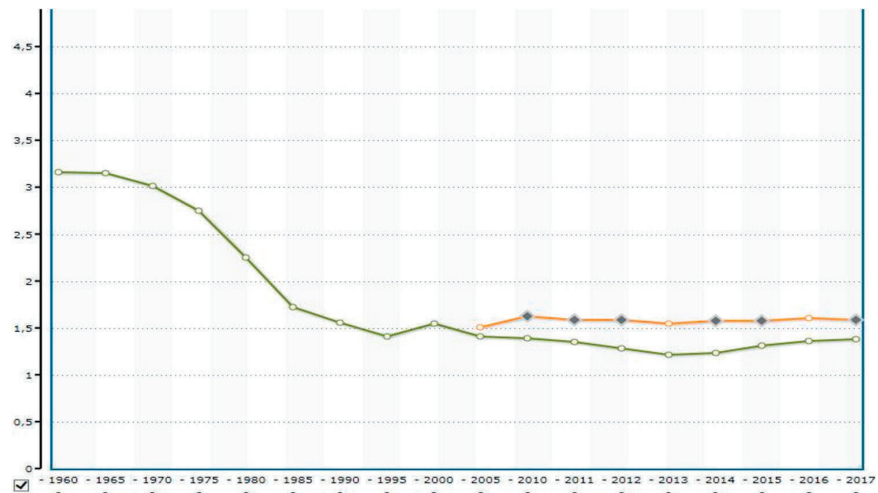


FIGURE 10.2. Synthetic Fertility Rate in Europe (UE28) (yellow line), Evidence in Portugal (green line). Source: PORDATA

high fertility countries in Europe to having the lowest fertility rate. There were 281 deaths in the first year of life in 2018, an increase of 52 cases compared to the previous year.

Also, in 2018, the mean age of women at first childbirth was 29.8 years, 2.1 years more compared to 2008, and the mean age of women at childbirth (regardless of birth order) went up to 31.2 years (PORDATA, 2019a). In the EU, the proportion of live births outside marriage stood at about 43% in 2016, whereas it was 54.9% in Portugal (PORDATA, 2019a). This seem to be more that 15% higher than in 2000, with an increase of 1% each year, that may signal changing patterns of family formation, with births occurring to non-marital relationships, cohabiting couples and single parents (EUROSTAT, 2019).

The number of marriages in Portugal in 2018 was 34,637, with a growth of 3% compared to the previous year, leading to an increase in the gross marriage rate from 3.3 to 3.4 marriages per thousand inhabitants. The data confirmed a trend over the past decade among both men and women to postpone their first marriage, with the average age rising from 33.2 to 33.6 years among men and 31.6 to 32.1 years among women in 2018, compared to 2017 (PORDATA, 2019b). There has been an increase in average age at first marriage of 1.9 years for both sexes over the last six years and an increase in average marriage age of 2.8 years among men and 2.7 years among women. More than half of marriages (68%) were first marriages (between singles), but this proportion dropped slightly compared to 2017 (68.5%). Also, civil marriages (67.1%) are largely more represented, compared with Catholic ones (32.5%)—a consistently increasing trend since 2007 (civil marriages 52.5%, Catholic marriages 47.4%) (PORDATA, 2019b).

Statistics showed that divorce rates in Portugal decreased in line with what has been happening since 2015. In 2018, 20,345 divorces were registered in Portugal, 3,032 less than in 2015. In this sense, the upward trend registered from 1974 (777 divorces) to 2002 (27,708 divorces) has been suffering an inverse path since 2010 (27,556) and more consistently since 2015 (PORDATA, 2019). According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE) (2019c), there was a growth of same-sex marriages from 25 to 75 from 2013 to 2018, given that since 2010 Portugal approves same-sex civil marriage. In 2018, there were in Portugal a total of 4,144,619 private households, 22.7% of which were single individuals, 24.3% couples without children, 34% couples with children, 11.1% single parent families, and 7.9% other types of private households (PORDATA, 2019a).

## 2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Concerning the labor market, the active population (age 15–64) in Portugal in 2018 ascended to 78.8% (52,326 people) of the working age population, confirming the growth trend since 2013 (76.9%). We also observe a growing trend of educational qualifications of the active population. In 2013, the proportion of population with secondary or higher education was 43.6%, in 2018 it was 54% (PORDATA, 2019b). The unemployed population in 2018 was 7.0%, in contrast

to 16.2% in 2013 (PORDATA, 2019b). The youth unemployment rate (population aged 15–24) was 20.3%, contrasting the dramatic proportion of 38.1% in 2013. Among the unemployed population in 2018, 51.1% were looking for a job for one and more years (long-term unemployment), i.e., 6.4% less than in the previous year. In 2017, the average monthly (gross) earnings of employees in Portugal amounted to €1,130.79 (INE, 2019a). This value was higher by €25.22 (2.3%) than in the previous year, representing a real increase (i.e., having in consideration the effect of the change in the consumer price index) of approximately 0.9% (INE, 2019a). The minimum salary in 2020 was fixed to 635 euros, an important increase of 150 euros since 2014 (PORDATA, 2019b).

The number of recipients of unemployment allowances was 406,000, i.e., 12.4% less than in 2016 and 14.7% less in terms of the values managed. The number of recipients of social integration income was 288,000, i.e., 0.2% more than in the previous year. The risk of poverty rate in the 18–64 age group was 16.7%, while in the population over 65 it was 17.7%. Children are the population group most affected by and exposed to poverty, particularly the so-called monetary poverty, i.e., they live in households in which ‘per capita’ income is below 60% of the median ‘per capita’ national income (INE, 2019a). Especially with only one active parent, one-parent households are more vulnerable, particularly if the household head is a woman, due to their lower labor force stability and wages (OECD, 2019). Despite increasing one-parent employment rates, poverty rates remain high on average since employment is no longer a guarantee for poverty prevention. Single mothers are often in low-paid jobs or part-time jobs with insufficient in-work benefits to reduce their poverty rates (Pailhé et al., 2014). Additional information about Portugal are the ratings of housing indexes. In Portugal, housing index measures the evolution of housing prices in the residential market. Housing index in Portugal increased to 141.49 index points in the second quarter of 2019 from 137.14 index points in the first quarter of 2019. **Lisbon is the most expensive Portuguese city to buy a house in**, with an average price of 4,263 euro per m<sup>2</sup>. In the second and third place are Porto (2,677 euro/m<sup>2</sup>) and Faro (1,753 euro/m<sup>2</sup>). Between 2011 and 2018, the number of inhabitants in Portugal decreased from 10,542,398 to 10,276,617, which represents a rate change of –2.52% (INE, 2019b). Population estimated prevalence has decrease in 274 and increased in 34 of the 308 Portuguese municipalities mainly concentrated in the littoral and in the Lisbon metropolitan area (INE, 2019b).

With respect to educational rates, above 25% of adults (aged 25–64) in Portugal have attained tertiary education. Although this share still falls below the OECD average of nearly 40%, it represents a considerable improvement over the past decades. Among the younger generation (aged 25–34), tertiary education attainment rate in 2018 was 35%, considerably higher than the 14% attainment rate among 55–64-year-olds and 12 percentage points higher than in 2008 (OECD, 2019b). Despite high enrolment rates, tertiary education attainment in Portugal suffers from low completion rates. In Portugal, around 41% of 19–20-year-olds—



the age at which tertiary education begins in most OECD countries—are enrolled in tertiary education, above the OECD average of 37%. Completion of tertiary education, however, remains a challenge. Only 30% of students who enter a bachelor's program graduate within three years—the expected duration of the program (average is 39%). Within six years, completion increases to 65%, which is still below the average of 67% (OECD, 2019b).

### 3. NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

Portuguese culture, mostly influenced by values inherent to the Catholic Church/Christianity, describes family formation in a close relationship with marriage. However, these links have always been gendered. Forty years ago, it was culturally expected that women leave home just to get married and usually start a family. With the end of the dictatorship and the Constitution in 1976, the struggle for women's rights contributed to their decision-making power and increased their personal freedoms, which implied changes in the family formation paradigm, as well as in gender roles. With the increase in education levels and the entry of women into the labor market, the traditional “male breadwinner and housewife” was no longer prevalent as a Portuguese family pattern—now this pattern is often associated with low education levels and lack of employment opportunities (Aboim, 2010a). In fact, in contrast to higher prevalence of women in higher education (58.4%), women seem to have consistently higher rates of analphabetism (2011 data—6.8% women, 3.5% men). Additionally, although Portugal seems to have higher full employment rates than other Southern European countries (Aboim, 2010a), unemployment seems to affect women disproportionately—a growing gap registered since 2014 (2018 data—55.5% 44.5%) (PORDATA, 2019b). Portugal is still far from equality for men and women with regard to family roles, with women assuming most roles related to children and household care (Perista et al., 2016). According to Aboim (2010a), Portuguese gender culture results from the combination of severe domestic inequalities and women's full employment rates. Dual earner couples with young children seem to be a prevailing reality in Portugal, in fact, it is the only country from the 15 countries included in the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) that showed an increase in dual earners couples with a pre-school child (Aboim, 2010a). Portugal has the second highest rate in dual earner couples with children under the age of 3 in Europe (66%) (Wall & Escobedo, 2013). The necessity of being fully involved in both contexts is in direct clash with women's aspirations of being equally considered in the workplace and, as mentioned, they are highly involved in the labor force, working full-time and with long schedules. Due to this and the extensive labor demands, along with increasing women's expectations to win top positions, the postponement of family formation in Portugal is a reality, particularly among younger cohorts.

The new parenthood protection system, implemented since 2009, was an important turning point in leave policies in Portugal, contributing to gender equality in work-family reconciliation (Cunha et al., 2017). Besides protecting the indi-



vidual rights of the mother (42 compulsory days after childbirth) and the father (5 compulsory plus 15 optional days), it introduces the possibility of parents sharing an additional 120 to 150 days of bonus leave (ISS, 2020). Since then, we observe a growing trend in shared initial parenting leave, from 12,506 applications in a 6-month period in 2009 to 20,941 applications in 2015 (Cunha et al., 2017). According to the results of the ISSP 2012 Survey, there was a favorable recognition, both by men and women, of the benefits of fathers taking up parental leaves in terms of parental relations, conjugal dynamics and gender equality, individual well-being and women's careers (Cunha et al., 2017).

At the same time, reproductive trajectories of different ages of women (25, 30 and 35) suggest in these three age cohorts that the number of children tends to decrease with the increase of age of first maternity (Cunha et al., 2016). This change in birth rates accompanied the evolution and role of young people in society, opening up the possibility of accessing various reproductive choices. In Portugal, the emergence and affirmation of sexual and reproductive rights contributed significantly to the emancipation of women and the way families developed. Contraceptive methods, initially introduced into the Portuguese National Health System through the concept of Family Planning, initiated birth control. However, from the 1990s onwards, sexual and reproductive health rapidly spread to feminist movements, guaranteeing the right to enjoy the benefits and health care, and the exercise of individual rights (Vilar, 2016).

With respect to freedom of choice, in April 2007, woman's right to interrupt her pregnancy before week 10 was introduced into the abortion law. Abortion at later stages was only allowed for specific reasons, such as risks to woman's health, rape or other sexual crimes, or fetal malformation. In February 2016, the Portuguese Parliament reversed the law imposing mandatory counseling and medical payments for women seeking an abortion through the public health service. The introduction of voluntary interruption of pregnancy was an important moment for women's freedom with regard to their sexual and reproductive health in Portugal, but it does not constitute a reason for the decline in birth rates. The number of legally induced abortions has dropped from 18,607 in 2008 to 15,492 in 2017 (EUROSTAT, 2019).

## 5. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The dynamics of family formation has changed in contemporary societies. The sequencing of life stages over the course of life is becoming more diverse and more unpredictable. Furthermore, compared to previous decades, Portugal now sees more people cohabit, have children outside marital unions, experience the dissolution of their unions, re-partner, enter stepfamilies, live separately from their children or remain childless. Family life courses have become increasingly diverse as the sequence of events and the pace at which they occur have become less standardized. The postponement of family projects results from sociocultural changes concerning greater investment in education trajectories, professional ca-

reers and prevailing individualistic values, together with economic precariousness and job uncertainty (Saraiva & Matos, 2016). Moreover, new types of households, such as single parent families, Living-Apart-Together (LAT) relationships and same sex couples are emerging.

With the decrease in marriage rates and the rise in non-marital births and divorce, the number of single-parent families has increased substantially in the last few decades (Pailhé et al., 2014). On average, across European countries, nearly 15% of all children live with one parent, about 10% in Portugal (OECD, 2019a). Women are over-represented amongst single parents—they represent 85% of single parent families in OECD countries—since women live with children more often than men and they are more often granted physical custody. At the same time, currently in Portugal, couples have further departed from the obligation of marriage and may even take on more or less separate experiences—Living Apart Together (LAT). In this case, LAT relationships can forge a compromise between a job and a relationship with someone who lives and works elsewhere (Pailhé et al., 2014). A structural factor here are the improvements in transportation and communications that increase the livability of LAT relationships. These reasons increase the probability of falling in love with someone who lives far away and make it easier to maintain a relationship over a long distance. Also, we can recognize that the increased emphasis on individualism and self-fulfillment heightens the incidence of LAT relationships. Individuals have more opportunities to create their own life course and pursue their own goals without the approval of the extended family (Pailhé et al., 2014).

Finally, in Portugal, a significant number of LGBT people are starting families. Research has been pointing to similarities between heterosexual and same-sex couples (e.g. Gato, 2016). In fact, Portugal was the first country in Europe and the fourth in the world to prohibit discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation in its Constitution. With regard to LGBT rights, Portugal was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> on the list of 45 countries in terms of equality policies in 2015 (Gato & Leal, 2019). Some egalitarian laws have allowed for improvements in recent years with regard to same-sex couples' family rights. In 2010, Portugal approved same-sex civil marriage and, in 2016, it approved access to the adoption of children, as well as access to medically assisted reproduction techniques for all women, regardless of their sexual orientation, marital status or fertility status (Gato & Leal, 2019). The number of same-sex marriages in Portugal has increased from 523 in 2017 to 607 in 2018. Between 2013 and 2018, there were 2,515 same-sex marriages, with a higher predominance among men (1,484) (INE, 2019a).

Regardless of family configuration and due to the low levels of births during the last two decades in Portugal, there was a need to implement population reinstatement measures, including incentives for family formation, in order to compensate population's aging. Over the past decade, the Portuguese government has sought to develop social policies to support families. As part of reconciling family and working life, there was a need to support households with children in

their early years, highlighting the government proposal for a Program to Encourage Birth and Partial Employability, which supports the transition to part-time work by parents. Also, the aim was to improve the conditions for balance tasks sharing and responsibilities between women and men, and to carry out national campaigns with businesses and the general public with dissemination in the media, public spaces and other appropriate media (Ferreira, 2016).

The reconciliation of work and family has also been supported through community funding and the still operative Axis 7—Gender Equality—of the Human Potential Operational Program (POPH) of the National Strategic Reference Framework (QREN). The main objectives were: 1) Reduce persistent inequalities between women and men in the labor market, particularly in the salary; 2) Promote female entrepreneurship as an element of women’s mobilization for active economic life and disseminate good practices; 3) Encourage the implementation of equality plans in private companies and monitor compliance with the rules regarding the implementation of these plans in the state business sector; 4) Strengthen women’s access mechanisms to places of economic decision (Ferreira, 2016).

For this purpose, some programs have been implemented after 2010 for couples with children, namely: 1) *Tax justice* with the reduction of “IRS” (income taxes); reduction of “IMI” (house acquisition state taxes), and benefits in social security state support; 2) *Work–family reconciliation* with one-year part-time parental leave; 100% paid with parent-alternating and flexible and simultaneous sharing of parental leave; and possibility of leave extension; employment incentives for pregnant women, mothers/fathers with children up to 3 years old; 3) *Education, health and social support* with decrease in spending on textbooks; health care during pregnancy and the first six years of life - mandatory family doctor assignment to all pregnant women; broadening medical support in infertility situations; resource condition for medical fees; 4) Local commitment with improvement and certification of “Child-Friendly Organizations”, namely household tariffs for water, waste and sanitation; creation and development of “Resource Banks” at the service of children and families; vacation and after school times; reduction on student pass and family pass for public transport (Wall, 2016).

## 6. COUNTRY-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES TO FAMILY FORMATION

Considering the last three decades, some changes have been reported in the Portuguese society. The entry into the European Union in 1986 had a significant influence on the perspectives of social and economic standards. However, due to the underdeveloped conditions of the state, the change of traditional and conservative ideas from the dictatorial government has been a long process.

The increase in employability and educational levels in the 1980s and 1990s provided a strong incentive for stabilization with regard to family formation. Traditionally in Portugal, leaving home tended to coincide with the possibility of economic stability through permanent employment. Until then, rising schooling has guaranteed a promise of finding a more stable and better paid job. Due to the

influence of the Catholic religious' culture, the beginning of family constitution was also related to leaving home at the time of marriage. However, both cultural and socio-economic reasons have brought a significant change in the last two decades. Due to the fragile economic situation in the Portuguese society in 2002, the tendency towards family formation decreased. The main reasons were related to the decrease of economic power, namely the increase of unemployment and precarious work, which led to the difficulty of finding financial autonomy (Cunha et al., 2016). As a result, many young people tended to postpone leaving home and increasingly invested in higher education to achieve a stable future work prospect (e.g., Robette, 2010; Saraiva & Matos, 2016). However, this issue was significantly gendered. These changes were more clearly seen among women, who tended to increase their education levels and seek to invest in their professional careers.

At the same time, a change of paradigm of personal emancipation happened in Portugal, so the process of separation-individuation and the transition to adulthood tended to be significantly delayed (Mendonça & Fontaine, 2013). Although Portugal has a cultural influence aimed at preserving the proximity to the family, particularly in helping with childcare and providing an extent of economic support, this change of paradigm of personal emancipation seems to have delayed the normative course of the constitution of new families. In Portugal, as in many countries on the Mediterranean coast, it has become common for children to stay in their parents' house until older ages (30 years and over) and to be economically dependent on them, as it is difficult to find financial stability to buy or rent a home. As a result, the lack of jobs has led young people to invest more in higher education in Portugal, although it is no guarantee of entry into the labor market (Mendonça & Fontaine, 2013).

In the last decade in Portugal, competition in the labor market has become increasingly aggressive, and the entry of women into work contexts usually connoted by Portuguese culture to men (e.g. construction, business and sports) represent an important aspect of postponing family formation. Some obstacles are still encountered in terms of women's employability, particularly in entities that offer resistance in respect to parity and also as well as employment rights (Cunha et al., 2016). Thus, family formation may be a consequence of women accepting commitments to have no children in the future, in order to ensure levels of attendance and unconditional willingness to perform the tasks at work (Kreyenfeld et al., 2012).

In Portugal, the increasing number of women in management positions in various areas of the economic sector is now a reality, but in many of these cases family formation is postponed or compromised by the short time spent with the family. These data corroborate the fact that the age of maternity is increasingly postponed, so that, although the mean age of women at first childbirth was 29.8 years, it is increasingly common for women to have their first child in their 40s. Given the current socio-economic experience, Portuguese society seems to experience significant cultural changes and it is beginning to accept more openly the

individual choices, in particular the role of women and their free choice regarding family formation or maternity.

As a direct consequence of delaying motherhood, women are facing more difficulties in getting pregnant due to lower levels of fertility, with increased anxiety about the expectation and frustration inherent to the difficulties in becoming pregnant (Cunha et al., 2016). It is noteworthy that in Portugal the age limit for access to assisted reproduction techniques (ART) funded by the Portuguese National Health Service is 42 years, with a legally established upper age limit of 50 years (CNPMA, 2020). As a result, the number of premature births is increasing and complications during pregnancy and childbirth are a reality.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Portugal is a country with long-term cultural traditions closely related to the Catholic Church. After a dictatorial regime that persisted for 40 years, Portugal's entry into the European Union was an important milestone for the change of the family paradigm. The global financial crisis and the Portuguese recession added additional challenges to youth economic independence and to family formation. Women's emancipation and entry into the labor market, combined with the growing concern about sexual and reproductive health, as well as important human rights achievements, such as the same sex marriage legislation, contributed also to the diversification of family's configurations in Portugal. Currently, Portugal lives a variety of new types of households such as one-parent families, Living-Apart-Together (LAT) relationships and same-sex couples. Over the years, this led to a progressive decrease in the birth rate, but a greater concern for the quality of life. The absence of economic opportunities has created a delay in the separation-individuation process of young people, who decide to continue studies and stay at home with their parents until a late age. In addition, there is the family paradigm shift, which focuses on the personal and professional needs fulfillment that delays or makes family formation unfeasible. Policies to encourage the formation of the family currently seem to be a concern for the Portuguese government entities. The country's economic recovery is now underway and could serve a further revision of family formation.

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