

COUNTRY REPORT

PORTUGAL



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February 2021



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Country Background¹

Portugal, the oldest nation state on the Iberian Peninsula, is a democratic republic since the ratification of the Constitution of 1976, with Lisbon, the nation's largest city (around 508,000 hab.), as its capital.

Its main "organs of Sovereignty" are the President of the Republic, the Government, the Parliament (*Assembleia da República*) the Courts/Judicial System. Located in the westernmost margin of Southwestern mainland Europe, it has an extension of more than 92,000 km² and an estimated population of 10,3 million inhabitants as for 2019. Bordered to the west and south by the Atlantic Ocean and to the north and east by Spain, its territory also includes the Atlantic archipelagos of the Azores and Madeira, both autonomous regions with their own regional governments.

In the beginning of 2021 there has been a large debate raised by the fact that the "Index of Democracy" drawn up annually by the magazine "The Economist" downgraded Portugal from the category of "fully democratic country" to the category of a "democracy with flaws", a step backwards driven by the way according to which the restrictive measures imposed by the pandemic were approved.²

Brief constitutional history

On April 25, 1974, a Revolution took place with the purpose of ending the dictatorial political regime in force since – at least - the 1933 Constitution, and establishing a democratic political regime. On April 25, 1975, elections were held for the first time in Portugal, with universal suffrage for a Constituent Assembly charged with drafting a new Constitution, enshrining a democratic regime. The new Constitution came into force in April 1976 and is still in force, having endowed the Parliament with powers of constitutional revision. The latter were used, since then, for seven constitutional revisions (some being ordinary revision, other extraordinary – i.e. linked to the adherence to international treaties and other commitments):

- The first (which took a long time, between April 1981 and September 30, 1982) was an ordinary revision, and sought to reduce the ideological weight of the Constitutional formulation, to make the economic system more flexible and to redefine the structures of the exercise of political power, the Council of the Revolution being extinct and the Constitutional Court created.
- The second was also an ordinary revision, and occurred in 1989, seeking to provide a new round of opening to the economic system, namely putting an

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² <https://www.theportugalnews.com/news/2021-02-05/portugal-no-longer-fully-democratic-country/58069>

end to the principle of irreversibility of nationalizations carried out after the revolution.

- The third and fourth occurred in 1992 and 1997, being extraordinary revisions for adapting the constitutional framework to the principles of the Treaties of the European Union (Maastricht and Amsterdam), including changes referred to the electoral capacity of foreign citizens or to the possibility of legislative initiative by part of citizens.
- The fifth constitutional review in 2001 was an extraordinary one, mainly aimed to allow Portugal to ratify the Convention creating the International Criminal Court, also changing the rules on extradition.
- The sixth amendment occurred in 2004, being an ordinary review, which tried to deepen the political and administrative autonomy of the regions of the Azores and Madeira, namely by increasing the powers of the respective Legislative Assemblies.
- In 2005, the 7th constitutional review was approved. It was an extraordinary revision which, through the addition of a new article, allowed a referendum on the approval of a treaty aimed at building and deepening the European Union. The principle of limiting mandates, namely those holding political executive positions, was further developed, as well as the principle of non-discrimination, particularly in terms of sexual orientation.
- In 2010 a revision procedure was started but not completed.

Historical evolution since April 25, 1974

After the April 1974 Revolution, a National Salvation Board was formed, with the Armed Forces Program also appearing on the following day, which can be considered as a constitutional act of the State. It established the measures for replacing the organs of power, restoring civil liberties and the measures to be taken until the new constitution was made. It determined that within 12 months a Constituent Assembly would be elected, by direct, secret and universal suffrage. The National Salvation Board as a revolutionary organ drafted Laws 1/74 and 2/74, on the removal of existing bodies and Law 3/74, which came to define the organization of political power and all these laws was value of constitutional laws. The latter established as bodies: a Constituent Assembly, the President of the Republic, the National salvation Board, the Council of State, the Provisional Government and the Courts. It also determined that the 1933 Constitution remained in force in everything that did not contradict the Armed Forces Program, to which the constitutional laws published and to be published would execute. The first task was to prepare and approve the new constitution within 90 days of the verification of the deputies' powers, and the President of the Republic could extend it for an equal period, after hearing the Council of State.

The Assembly would automatically dissolve after having approved the constitution or after the established period had elapsed. The State Council would have constituent powers and the Government would legislate through decree-laws. The

National Salvation Board would also have legislative powers. Law no. 5/75, of 14 March, created the Council of the Revolution to which it conferred the powers of the Council of State and the Junta de Salvação Nacional. However, until 1976, 35 constitutional laws were issued. The current Constitution it has as an immediate source the revolutionary constitutional laws; as external sources the Bonn Fundamental Law of 1949, the Italian Constitution of 1947, as regards some aspects of the fundamental rights regime; as for regional autonomy, the French Constitution of 1958 - 5th Republic; as for some features of the government system, some socialist constitutions such as the R.D.A. 1968 and Yugoslavia 1963-1974.

How open is Portuguese Constitution to Citizens?

First, it is important to emphasize that one of the main features of democracy is to allow citizens to participate in decision-making processes. How can the Portuguese get involved according to the constitutionally established procedures? As we detailed above, the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, dated April 2 1976, was revised seventh times through constitutionally-established specific processes, since it is a rigid constitution with several limits to unconstitutionality.

Mechanisms for citizens' intervention

Citizens cannot participate in the processing of a Constitutional Review Law, but they can manifest themselves in the legislative and political process in two ways: by participating in a referendum; by exercising legislative initiatives. The referenda in Portugal may take place at the national, local or regional levels, but they are very rarely used, with little adherence, which also happens for national historical reasons. As for the national level, the legal framework of referenda was created in 1989, by the 4th constitutional revision, and the matters it can deal with are limited. The juridical regime is provided for in article 115 CRP and Law no. 15-A / 98, of April 3 (with changes in 2005, 2010, 2011, 2015, 2016, and 2017). The referendum may result from an initiative addressed to the Portuguese Republic Assembly by Portuguese voters (being that the threshold of requiring citizens must be not inferior to 60,000 citizens registered in the national territory). To date, three national referenda have taken place, and none of them had more than 50% voter turnout, which made their results not-binding.

The exercise of legislative initiatives by citizens is also included in the Constitution. The legal framework is provided by Article 167 of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, and by Law n. ° 17/2003, June 4 June 4 (with changes in 2012, 2016 and 2017). It may occur at the national level as well as at the European Union level, which was important to the process. This is not the only political right recognized in democracy, but it is a very promising aspect. The rights of citizens to legislative initiatives is exercised through the presentation to the Portuguese Parliament of projects signed by a minimum of 20.000 enfranchised citizens.

The popular initiative has to be presented in a written form, on paper or electronically, and must be addressed to the Portuguese Parliament, which already provides an electronic platform that allows the submission of the popular initiative

and the collection of the necessary elements. Without success in its practical application in Portugal, although there have been subscriptions without legislative results, it is, however, an important instrument with great democratic significance to be taken into account for the future.

Procedural steps³

In the Portuguese legal system, the legal framework of citizens' rights to political participation in the legislative process is described and instructed by the Portuguese Parliament, as follows:

The citizens' right of legislative initiative is exercised through the presentation to the Parliament of bills signed by a minimum of 20,000 enfranchised citizens (definitively registered in the electoral register, at home or abroad). The Parliament verifies, by sampling, the authenticity of the identification of the subscribers and verifies the validity of their e-mail addresses whenever this means is used. The law projects referred to in the preceding paragraph are submitted in writing, on paper or electronically, to the President of the Portuguese Parliament, and must contain:

- A designation that briefly describes its main object;
- A justification or explanatory statement containing the brief description of the initiative, the legislative diplomas to be amended or related to it, the main consequences of its application and its grounds, in particular the respective social, economic, financial and political motivations;
- The identification of all proponents, in paper form or electronically, depending on the submission method, with full name, ID card or citizen card number and date of birth corresponding to each subscriber (Law No. 47/2018, of August 13, which made changes to the legal system of voter registration, approved by Law No. 13/99, of March 22, eliminating the number of voters);
- The identification of the elements that make up the representative committee of the subscribing citizens, as well as the indication of domicile for the latter;
- A list of the documents submitted.

The Parliament provides an electronic platform that allows the submission of the legislative initiative and the collection of the aforementioned elements. The electronic platform for receiving legislative initiatives from citizens and for collecting signatures over the Internet allows the reception of draft legislative initiatives submitted by enfranchised citizens, which are open for online subscription within the chosen period, with a view to their subsequent submission as legislative initiatives by citizens. For obtaining the number of subscribers, documentation can be sent cumulatively in paper form and through an electronic platform that guarantees compliance with legal requirements. The exercise of the right of legislative initiative

³ Parlamento: <https://www.parlamento.pt/EspacoCidadao/Paginas/DireitoIniciativaLegislativa.aspx>

is free in more than one sense – it cannot be subjected to external and unjustified hindrances, and it is free of charge.

Predictions

The use of information technologies and digital media can help to boost democratic participation by citizens and, without new legal mechanisms, bring new life back to existing ones by encouraging the involvement of younger sections of the population. In these legal terms, the ordinary and parliamentary legislative process in the Portuguese Republic allows a group of enfranchised citizens to present a bill of approval to the Parliament. It is necessary to gather 20,000 signatures of enfranchised citizens in a text of the topic of the statute that they want to see discussed, sent that text to the Parliament and, after the proceedings of the legislative process, eventually be approved. The signatures can be collected through a computer platform provided by the Parliament itself, a resource that represents a great value in the chances of success of the instrument nowadays, especially with regard to attracting the interests of the younger layers of the population. As a concrete example, in 2018 the collection of signatures for proposal on the full consideration of the time of teaching service takes place, as it can be consulted at <https://participacao.parlamento.pt/initiatives/76>.

Currently, different proposals of legislative initiative are under discussion in the Parliament, as one of the last ones in June 2019: The ANIMAL association delivered a Citizens' Legislative Initiative signed by more than 22,000 people defending the end of public subsidies to bullfighting⁴. The citizens' initiative bill calls for an end to the granting of financial support by public entities to carry out bullfighting activities, an industry that they claim to have lost public over the last decade and “which has always, but especially in recent years, which has increasingly met with opposition from public opinion.”⁵

Final remarks on the right to Legislative Initiative

The citizens' right of legislative initiative has always to be analyzed by a triple perspective: the political nature – that evidences the relevance to the concept of democracy; the juridical nature – that focuses on the examination of its constitutional and legal regime; and the empirical nature - which measures its exercise in parliamentary legislatures favorable to the corresponding exponentiation.

It is worth underlining that in Portugal Law 43/1990 provides a framework for petition to different organism of the State, which include the possibility of involving the requiring citizens in Parliamentary Audits to debate the specific requirements of the petition (which can also be about changes to legal measures of frameworks).

⁴ A similar request – the year before – ad be presented in the National Participatory Budgeting (OPP), at the same time as an opposite request of investing in consolidating the bullfighting tradition.

⁵ See: Observador: <https://observador.pt/2019/06/04/iniciativa-legislativa-de-cidadaos-pelo-fim-dos-subsidios-a-tauromaquia-entregue-na-ar/> - 4 June 2019

Citizens' participation in the political-administrative praxes.

Art. 2 of the Constitution (reformed during the '90s, and not originally included in the post-revolutionary first version of the constitutional framework) praises for deepening “participatory democracy” as one of the duties of the State of the Rule of Law. Although such Constitutional recommendation has never been viewed as a real principle to be applied directly on constitutional transformations, it has gradually become a point of reference for a complexification of the framework of subsidiarity in the country.

Thus, despite a rooted tendency of Portuguese institutional culture for centralistic approaches (which is well reflected in a common say, once wrongly attribute to the writer Eça de Queiroz: “Lisbon in Portugal, while all the rest is landscape”), in the last two decades, the country experienced significant changes that are making its structural organization evolve. Only a limited number of such transformations is being reflected in legal transformations; the majority of them remain at a “policy level”, where the political will of different elected governments (both at national and local level, and also at regional level in the two archipelagos of Madeira and Azores Islands) are experiencing administrative practices that directly involve citizens – and not only organized stakeholders – in the construction of some important public decisions on different thematic areas of their competences (as, for example, policies related to housing, green areas, mobility, culture, civil protection, etc.).

As we will see later, such practices tend to look “lighter” (in the sense of less radical) and more as “*una tantum* experiments” when they are promoted by the central government or the Parliament, while they dare to become more incisive and repeated in time when they are promoted and coordinated at local (or regional) level. The financial crisis seems to have contributed to multiply political praxes related to a horizon of participatory democracy, within a frame of scarce resources and clear asymmetries of the decentralization structure. Moreover, frequently the discourses of public authorities, when motivating their support to such practices, tended to refer to a visible need of increasing legitimacy and authoritativeness of elected institutions, in a country where abstentions in local election grew from 39,9% (in 2001) to 45% (in 2017), remaining however lower than in parliamentary elections (51,4% in 2019) and in other institutional levels that – as several editions of European socio-political barometers show – are able to generate a lower level of trust in Portuguese citizens.

It is worth emphasizing that – in line with what is recommended in Art. 2 of the Constitution – the main reference to all practices and policies of “social dialogue” in Portugal has been the horizon of “participatory democracy”. In fact, the translation of the term “deliberation” - which in Portuguese would be “*deliberação*” - has a different meaning than in Anglo-Saxonic traditions, being used mainly to describe “decision-making” and, often, its formal outputs (legal acts as by-laws, diplomas, etc.). Therefore, as often happens in other countries with neo-latin languages, the term “deliberative” is used in connection to that of “participatory” to describe those practices of social dialogue that are based on a co-decisional model, as those where

(at the end of the process) participants from civil society are called to voting or rank priorities to be ratified by elected officials. In this perspective, the term is used in opposition to “consultative” (intended as describing practices of involving citizens where consultation has a merely advisory value).

In line with these specificities, it is neither surprising that Portugal has not developed any tradition of “mini-publics” or other similar experiences, nor that “sortition” and “random selection” are concepts that – up to now – have not been at the centre of meaningful political proposals for involving citizens in public affairs or policy-shaping. The few occasions in which such proposals emerged, were mainly academic-led documents directed to the policy-making community. Among them, for example, one can count:

- the “Carta de Recomendações para a Assembleia Da República e para as Assembleias Regionais da Madeira e dos Açores. Contributos para o fortalecimento da Democracia Participativa em Portugal” (Charter of recommendations for the Parliament and the Regional assemblies of Madeira and Azores. Contributions for the strengthening of participatory democracy in Portugal”), presented in March 2016 by the partners of the “Portugal Participa” project (which included also some municipal governments as those of Porto, Cascais, Funchal and Odemira), funded by the Gulbenkian Foundation with its “Active Citizenship Program” and some EEA Grants of Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein;
- the “*Primeiro Relatório do Fórum dos Cidadãos*” (First Report of the Forum of Citizens) addressed to Portuguese President in January 2017⁶, emerging from a practical experimental example supported by a research unit of the Universidade Nova of Lisbon (IFILNOVA).

Neither of these two grassroots experiences had an immediate practical impact on policies, although they paved a path and contributed to strengthening a debate – that is still existent within some Portuguese State institutions – about the need to renew the methodological tools used in involving citizens in the making of decisions of public interest. However, it is not possible to say that in Portugal – at the moment – a visible group of supporters of what in other cultural contexts are usually known as “deliberative practices” exists.

A slow-changing decentralization framework

When the reformulation of Art. 2 of the 1976 Constitution occurred in Portugal, there were very reduced legacies of the Municipalist Movement born in the brief period of the first republic, in the early ‘90s. But gradually, a gradual movement of reforms of the decentralization framework took place, with special strength after 2012, due to some obligations contained in the bailout agreement with the so-called Troika signed by Portuguese government. At the time – when the Green Book on Administrative Reform (2011) was edited – Portugal had four main levels of

⁶ <http://www.forumdoscidadãos.pt/o-que-fazemos/jan-2017-como-nos-fazer-ouvir/forum-cidadãos-1a-edicao-relatorio-presidencia.pdf>

decentralization: 1) the lower level was represented by almost 4,259 inframunicipal boroughs called “freguesias” (heirs of the old medieval parishes, yet transformed into decentralized organisms of the secular State), which have always been recognized as very important by citizens, especially in rural areas; 2) the second level was represented by 308 municipalities; 3) the third by the so-called “districts” (second level institutions, appointed by the municipal governments and councils, and not elected by people, unlike the others) and 4) the central level, with its executive branch (the national government) and its legislative branch (the Parliament). Only the two archipelagos (Madeira and Azores islands) also have an autonomous Regional Government: the continental part of Portugal, instead, has just a form of light deconcentration (five merely administrative regions, governed by CCDRs - Regional Coordination and Development Commissions – created in 2003 to extend the role of the Planning regions created in 1969). Such organization is the consequence of a confirmative referendum held in 1998 for ratifying the proposed regional reform (that was intended to create politically-elected entities in the continental Portugal), which did not reach the required minimum quorum.

The Laws nº 56/2012 and nº 11-A/2013 on decentralization – proposed by the right-wing government led by the prime minister Pedro Passos Coelho – tried to reduce the “cost of politics” through massive cuts in line with some of the requirements imposed by the European Commission, the IMF and the European Central Bank. The reform was highly contested (even inside the political circles as well as in the bases of the right-wing parties), especially for the top-down approach used to merge (or eliminate) almost 1/3 of the sub-municipal boroughs, despite the centrality they have in the Portuguese administrative traditions. The results of the reform (that underperformed in relation to its original goals) managed to reduce “freguesias” from 4,259 to 3,091, and formally cancelled the “district level”, which was gradually replaced by inter-municipal voluntary associations, while metropolitan governments were not substantially empowered as was in the original intentions. No process of participation accompanied such a difficult transition, and not even proper studies on local institutions’ performance were used to justify and explain the transformations occurred.

However, a few local governments anticipated the central government reforms to reduce the impact of top-down decisions. For example, the Lisbon Municipality – early in 2012 – approved its own reform of the “freguesias”, reducing them from 53 to 24 through merging and redefinition of their administrative boundaries. The process was mainly expert-led, but included some larger negotiations among municipal and infra-municipal authorities, also including a participatory consultation to propose the names of the new entities (Schmidt, Seixas & Baixinho, 2014; Seixas, 2017). What apparently looks as a secondary issue, in reality was felt as very important by citizens in terms of “identity” and “belonging”, because the majority of names given to Lisbon’s freguesias reflected a negotiation among inhabitants, to avoid an unfair top-down decision on something strongly related to the history of places, or a compromise that produced elsewhere very unsatisfactory results (like complex and unfriendly new names that wanted to include all the previous

names of the merged freguesias, as “Union of the ex-parishes of...”). This local reform has been monitored for the first years of implementation by a mixed group coming from civil society and the academy, to guarantee possible improvements.

It is worth to underline that other reforms approved in the last 15 years have been contributing to gradually deepen a “culture of participation” in Portugal at the local level. Among them, the law n° 46/2005 on the “limitation of mandates” for mayors that favoured a turnout in the political elites, opening space for younger mayors with more participatory approaches and governing style. Not all the reforms that tried to introduce participatory elements in the local governments were well accepted. For example, the Constitutional Court vetoed a part of Law n. 8/2009 on Local Councils of Youth (then modified with Law n. 6/2012), considering that – as underlined by the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities (ANMP) – the obligations posed by the Parliament to the local authorities for activating funds to be managed by local councils were violating the respect of the subsidiarity principle. Another example of a legal provision on participation that did not have real participatory effects is that on the approval of Municipal Master Plans, which have been reformulated always everywhere in Portugal in the last decade (following a new National Plan of Territorial Governance – PNPOT – issued in 2007), but rarely using real participatory methodologies that could go beyond the minimalist and “light” requirements of consultation provided by the legal system.

It has to be recognized that the majority of positive transformations in the participatory culture of Portugal owes a lot to the local level dynamics of the last two decades. Since 2002, in fact, Portugal has been undergoing a series of waves of different experiences of social dialogue, in the field of social inclusive networks of support to vulnerable groups, youth policies, and Participatory Budgeting (PB). Especially the latter has been growing very fast in the last two decades, bringing Portugal at the center of the European map for these typologies of device (Dias, 2013, 2018). The last census of PBs in Portugal (Dias et al. 2019) shows that there are almost 1686 active experiences in the country (around 36% of the entire European critical mass of existing practices), of which 124 happens in local administrative institutions, 2 in regional governments (in the island) and 3 are linked to central government experiments. The rest, in the majority, are experiences done in high schools, due to the fact that Portugal “was the first, and so far, the only country in the world to put in place a national legislation defining the mandatory implementation of PB by all public schools from the 7th to the 12th year of high school”, following an initiative promoted in 2017 by the Ministry of Education that set out “the specific methodological procedures that should be adopted” (Dias et al, 2019, p. 47).

Therefore, while until 2017, the almost 300 past experiences of PB could be defined as “self-promoted” initiative originated and supported by the political will of local authorities, today around 74% of Participatory Budgeting exist due to the requirements of binding legislation (id.). At the local level, municipalities and parishes either use municipal by-laws or other legal rulings. Active PB processes count today on 57 official municipal by-laws and 42 other typologies of legal rulings (id, p. 75).

In the last decade, the range of different participatory devices used at local levels grew substantially, also thanks to the creation (in 2014) of the Network of Participatory Local Authorities (RAP)⁷ which promoted interchanges among political officials, experts, technical personnel and civil servants in charge of participatory processes. The RAP, in the last years, produced a series of documents, oriented to improve the quality of the participatory process, as – for example – the “Charter for Quality of participatory Budgets in Portugal” (2017), that gradually oriented the construction of a self-evaluation system that municipality can use to measure and monitoring the progresses of their processes⁸. The RAP also created a Best Practice Award, annually given to a series of innovative participatory processes, partially decided by a quality jury, and partially by popular voting. It is possible to observe how this award promoted innovation, recognizing efforts of creativity and prolonged investments on participation (as in the case of the BIP_ZIP programme, through which Lisbon, since a decade, funds practices of collaborative development in almost 70 of its social estates), as well as incentivizing borderline experiments, as can be considered the Green Participatory Budgeting of Lisbon, that started in 2020 in parallel with the year in which the Portuguese capital has been declared as Green Capital of Europe.

There are two main tendencies regarding Portuguese participatory processes at present: 1. The predominance of multichannel approaches (systems that try to coordinate different participatory tools for different audiences and on different topics); 2. The spreading of the number of experiences of youth PB (in municipalities, parishes and schools), that had been increasing in the entire country after 2016, often conjugated with other types of processes (like Youth Councils) involving new generations in policymaking. Recently, in the city of Vila Nova da Cerveira (near the Spanish northern border of Portugal), a rare experience of transnational PB took place, in collaboration with the municipality of Tomiño. In Portugal, local Participatory Budgets, without any special legal framework to promote them, started in 2002 being just “advisory” consultation processes, but since 2008 (when Lisbon started devoting 5 millions €) they tended to become co-decisional spaces in which citizens can vote for prioritizing a list of proposals they want to see implemented.

In the last five years (starting with Decree n. 30/2015) the reform of the decentralized competences of local authorities has been the object of a broad process of negotiations with the XXI Government, that brought new responsibilities (and resources) for local authorities in fields such health, education and housing. In many cases, the recommendations issued by the State and the requirements for supporting municipalities in such a transition were strictly linked to the prevision of participatory processes that could support and monitor the future decentralization of such policy sectors. At present, at the beginning of 2021, a large series of transfers of competences from the State to local authorities entered in force. For now, it only

⁷ See www.portugalparticipa.pt

⁸ See: http://portugalparticipa.pt/upload_folder/table_data/97196eb8-fb0b-425f-abb6-0f98debf9bdb/files/2017_CARTA_QUALIDADE_ENG.PDF

applies to municipalities which signed a special agreement for accepting totally (or partially) the new competences in 2021, but the process will be compulsorily completed in Spring 2022.

At last, we could also emphasize, as already indicated before (see Predictions), that the spread of digital technologies and the work upon the increasing of digital competences is leading to a new future framework, where technologies are getting increasingly relevant. In the last decade, the Portuguese governments have stimulated different initiatives to enhance the digital component of our public life. The Covid-19 pandemic situation as fostered this demand. Recently, the Plano de Ação para a Transição Digital (Action-plan for the Digital Transition) (2020) reinforces the digital inclusion (for citizens and companies) and also promotes the digitalization of public services. They consider supporting, among others, digital hubs and infrastructures that can foster the digital communication between citizens and the public services.

Participation policies at the national level

In the last five years, it seems that the “culture of participation” developed at the local level scaled-up gradually, generating a series of national experiments, often linked to the names of politicians that had been already in charge of participatory processes in their previous experiences in local administrative institutions. In 2015, the Socialist Party proposed – in its programme for parliamentary elections – the idea of experimenting a Participatory Budgeting at the national level. The idea, supported by the Prime Minister and a Secretary of State in charge of Administrative Modernization (both responsible of 7 years of PB experiments in the Lisbon municipality), was transformed into a Program called “OPP-Portugal”⁹, that had already two editions and was partially blocked by obstacles posed by the central techno-bureaucratic structures in the phase of implementation of co-decided priorities (Falanga, 2018). Following this experience, the Ministry of Education has been promoting for two years the National Youth PB¹⁰ (which counts on resources that correspond to 10% of the National PB – OPP), and issuing the Ministerial Order 436-A/2017 that made PB compulsory (for part of the funds received by the Ministry itself) in all high-schools of the country. The three different experiments of National PBs “were extended to all the Portuguese territory since the mainland until the islands of Azores and Madeira and demand some articulation from the national cabinet with local agents as schools, municipalities and other local organizations” (Dias et al., 2019).

Among the thematic areas where, recently, the Portuguese National Government have been promoting an innovative attempt to increase the social dialogue, we can quote the domain of housing. In fact, in 2018, the prime minister and former mayor of Lisbon, the socialist António Costa, on the centenary of Decree no. 4137 which inaugurated the first social housing policies (1918), decided to

⁹ See: <http://opp.gov.pt/>

¹⁰ See: <https://opjovem.gov.pt/>

reformulate the strategic guidelines, objectives and tools of action for a new generation of housing policies (NGPH) to fully implement the constitutional provision, and in particular the article 65 on the right "to a house of adequate size in conditions of hygiene and well-being, and which protects personal intimacy and family privacy". Following this move, the Parliament (to which Article 165 of the Constitution assigns the exclusive competence to approve laws on rents, land use and urban planning) also intervened on the sector, leading to the approval - on July 5 2019 – of the "Fundamental Law on Housing" (Lei de Bases da Habitação), completed by the approval of the "National strategy for housing" (ENH 2015-2031; see Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 48/2015) which seeks to articulate the strategy on housing with the objectives of urban development and requalification, and demographic and economic revitalization.

The writing of both these new documents was accompanied by processes of social listening, considered indispensable in relation to a topic located at the junction between welfare and spatial planning that plays a central role, both in regard to the quality of living for all inhabitants, as to the interconnection of other policy concerns, so that Portugal – already in the past – decided to experience a larger involvement of citizens in policy production. The main cultural reference in the sector has been the so-called SAAL brigades (Local Support Ambulatory Service, 1974–1976), a pioneering approach to the regeneration of informal settlements through participatory processes completed by the co-design of residential units for vulnerable social groups, which showed great attention to regional differences, and aroused international interest for the ability to reveal a possible strategic role of architecture in the consolidation of a revolution (Bandeirinha, 2007).

The creation of the Governmental Programme for the New Generation of Housing Policies happened following 34 consultations, 25 meetings and 5 larger public debates, accounting for 494 registered participants and 621 specific contributions collected, as specified at page 14-15 of the document published to present it (Republica Portuguesa-Ambiente, 2018)¹¹. In the case of the Fundamental Law on Housing, the public consultation period lasted between 15/05/2018 and 13/07/2018 and was prorogued until 31/07 following a request coming from citizens and social organizations¹². Within such new legal frameworks, and following the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, the national government decided to scale-up a local development programme (the BIP-ZIP of Lisbon) to the benefit of the entire country, calling it “Healthy Neighbourhoods”. The Ruling Document of the new Programme – written by a multidisciplinary team coordinated by the ex-MP Helena Roseta

¹¹ The document Republic Portuguesa-Ambiente (2018) tries to synthetize all the suggestions coming from the public debates that reinforced government orientations, and introduced complementary dimensions (among those stand, for example, the integration with territorial policies; Urban security promotion tools and tenancy stability and an increased support for students’ accommodation).

¹² See Comissão de ambiente, ordenamento do território, descentralização, poder local e habitação (2019), and Grupo Parlamentar do Partido Socialista (2019), and also the links: <https://www.helenaroseta.pt/legislacao/leisemconstrucao/000286,000076/index.htm?t=lei-de-bases-da-habitacao>.

(considered the “mother” of the Fundamental Law on Housing) – was the object of a public discussion that collected 750 contributions, and identified 820 estates with potential for intervention in 140 counties across continental Portugal.¹³

Also, the revision of the National Plan for the Governance of Territory or PNPOT (which abolishes Law n° 58/2007) has been “the result of an open and participative process of discussion around the problems and opportunities for the development of the various territories and (...) the national territory”. In over 20 months, a system of Focal Points and an Advisory Committee submitted two drafts to public discussion – “based on an informed territorial vision” and, in the final version, 107 observations (36 contributions from individuals and 71 from different organized stakeholders) have been incorporated by the writing committee, while a final round of 9 public sessions was held “in 5 cities on the continent and in the two autonomous regions with more than 950 participants”¹⁴. Also, the “Sustainable Cities Strategy for the period 2014-2020” (which sets out Portugal's sustainable urban development strategy) has been put on public consultation between April 8/30, 2015, the Report that explains results and weight of public consultation is published by DGT (2015) and is included in the strategy, approved by Resolution of the Council of Ministers n° 61/2015.

It is also worth to underline that, in 2015, a grassroots collaboration among universities, municipalities and communities created the project “MAIS PARTICIPAÇÃO, melhor saúde” (More Participation, Better Health), which worked on a national “Charter for Public Participation in Healthcare”, which was approved by the Parliament with Law 108/2019. Finally, during the COVID emergency, the Ministry of Modernization promoted a process of participation open to all its civil servant, aimed to share ideas for the Innovation and Modernization Strategy for the State and Public Administrations 2020-2023 (<https://www.apin.gov.pt>), realizing a public report that allows to know the methodologies used and the main outputs¹⁵.

¹³ <https://www.bairrossaudaveis.gov.pt/>

¹⁴ See p. 6 of the preamble of Law 99/2019

¹⁵ See: <http://www.ina.pt/index.php/not-outras/2347-relatorio-oficinas-de-participacao>, and http://www.ina.pt/index.php/component/docman/doc_download/2592-relatorio-de-participacao-estrategia-de-inovacao-e-modernizacao-do-estado-e-da-administracao-publica-2020-2023?Itemid=

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