CHILDREN’S RIGHTS ARE NOT FOR SALE
Discussing Children’s Suffrage in Light of the Economic Crisis in Portugal

Author: Vera Reisner
Supervisor: Ana Filipa Neves
Abstract

The economic crisis and austerity measures taken in Portugal severely impact children’s rights. Although children are most affected by these measures, they are a priori excluded from any democratic decision making.

Therefore, this Master’s Thesis argues that the right to vote should be given to children to make their rights more crisis-resilient.

This Thesis intends to fill two research gaps: firstly, the effects of the economic crisis on children’s rights will be discussed, focusing on child poverty, child labour, education and children’s access to health care. Secondly, this Thesis explores how the right to vote would enable children to efficiently defend their interests in future policies.

Through the lens of Johan Galtung’s triangle of violence, this Thesis outlines how the uneven distribution of resources and power constitutes twofold structural violence against children. Both forms of structural violence could be overcome by giving children the right to vote.

The advantages and disadvantages of four models how to include children in democratic processes will be evaluated, also referring to experiences that have been made in other countries.

This Thesis concludes that the voting age could be first lowered on a local and regional level before lowering it at a national level, while a future introduction of the right to vote for all should be considered.
Table of Contents

Table of Figures .................................................................................................................. 2
Table of Acronyms ................................................................................................................ 2

1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 3

2 THE ECONOMIC CRISIS ................................................................................................... 7
  2.1 The European Union: A Divide between the Core and the Periphery ..................... 7
  2.2 Portugal’s Economy within the European Union: Its Way into Recession .......... 10
  2.3 Portugal’s Austerity Programme: Is the Medicine “Killing the Patient”? .......... 15
  2.4 The Economic Crisis and Structural Violence ......................................................... 17

3 THE INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN’S RIGHTS REGIME WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS ................................................................. 22
  3.1 The Evolution of the International Children’s Rights Regime ............................... 22
  3.2 Children’s Rights that Are at Stake During the Crisis ........................................... 26
      3.2.1 The Duty of the State to Allocate Resources (article 4, CRC) ...................... 26
      3.2.2 The Right to an Adequate Standard of Living (article 27, CRC) ............... 27
      3.2.3 The Right to Be Protected From Any Form of Exploitation (article 32, CRC) 28
      3.2.4 The Right to Education (articles 28 and 29, CRC) ..................................... 29
      3.2.5 The Right to Health (article 24, CRC) ....................................................... 30
  3.3 Children’s Rights and Structural Violence: Questioning the Fundaments ........... 31

4 THE EFFECTS OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS ON CHILDREN’S RIGHTS IN PORTUGAL ................................................................................................................ 37
  4.1.1 Child Poverty ........................................................................................................... 39
  4.1.2 Child Labour .......................................................................................................... 46
  4.1.3 Schooling and Education ....................................................................................... 49
  4.1.4 Access to Health Care ............................................................................................ 51

5 THE INCLUSION OF CHILDREN IN DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES ................................................. 53
  5.1 Redistributing Resources: Why Children Should Have the Right to Vote ....... 53
  5.2 Rethinking Democracy: Models for Children’s Inclusion .................................... 62
      5.2.1 The Demeny Vote ............................................................................................... 62
      5.2.2 The Progressive Right to Vote ........................................................................... 63
      5.2.3 The Right to Vote at Age 16 on All Political Levels .......................................... 65
      5.2.4 The Right to Vote for All .................................................................................... 66

6 CONCLUSION ....................................................................................................................... 69

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................................................. 74
  7.1 Literature ....................................................................................................................... 74
  7.2 International Legal Instruments and United Nations Documents ....................... 79
Children's rights are not for sale: discussing children's suffrage in light of the economic crisis in Portugal

Reisner, Vera

https://doi.org/20.500.11825/460

Downloaded from Open Knowledge Repository, Global Campus’ institutional repository