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

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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.
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