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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.

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 Fundamentals	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