



Portugal Report

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Sustainable Governance in the
Context of the COVID-19 Crisis

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Executive Summary

Portugal approached the pandemic in a largely unenviable position. It had a highly exposed healthcare system, with a very low number of intensive care beds (27th out of the 30 SGI countries in terms of “Intensive Care Beds”), a low number of ventilators (just over 1,000) and a low testing capacity. Its education system was ill-prepared for remote learning, with an aging teaching staff, low IT capabilities in schools and virtually no prior experience. Furthermore, Portugal was economically vulnerable, with low productivity growth, diminishing potential output (i.e., the highest total GDP that an economy can generate at full sustainable employment), very high levels of debt, an unbalanced labor market and an aging population. And, finally, its position with regard to social inclusion was also vulnerable, not least as the proportion of people at risk of poverty after social transfers in Portugal is above the EU and euro zone averages.

These elements, combined with a cultural context that favors social interaction and a bureaucratic public administration, suggested Portugal would be particularly exposed to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as this report highlights, the country’s performance belied many of these vulnerabilities. The healthcare system coped very well; its education system responded fairly well and in an inclusive manner; and the country successfully harnessed its pre-existing strengths by, for example, involving its burgeoning R&I infrastructure in the testing process and actively cooperating at the international level. This allowed the country to avoid a potentially catastrophic outcome, particularly during the first wave of the pandemic. Moreover, the country’s economic and welfare response has not jeopardized fiscal sustainability, albeit at the cost of generating a less ample cushion against the effects of the pandemic.

This report suggests five interrelated factors for this positive outcome. The first is the high degree of dialogue and consensus, both within the political system – between the government, opposition parties and Portugal’s popularly-elected president – and with other societal stakeholders (trade unions, business associations and scientific experts). Second, a responsive, adaptive and centralized governance structure. Third, a highly adaptable public sector workforce across all public sectors (not least healthcare and education), which was successfully mobilized to deal with the pandemic. Fourth, a high degree of popular consensus regarding the response to the pandemic. Citizens

on the whole trusted and accepted the scientific guidance, with generally high levels of compliance with the restrictions. And last but not least, an active concern to ensure that democratic rights and mechanisms were preserved during the pandemic.

This is not to say that the country's response has been optimal. Considerable weak spots have become evident with regard to social inclusion, family and labor market policies. Moreover, the liquidity support provided to companies and households increases the risks associated with high public debt. Finally, it should be noted that the attempt to reconcile public health and the economy during the second wave of the pandemic has generated a response that is less clear for citizens and yielded higher rates of infection, albeit still within the healthcare system's capacity at the time of writing. Nevertheless, the overall assessment remains positive: the response proved considerably more agile and effective than the existing indicators might have suggested at the beginning of the pandemic.

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Anna Sauerbrey "Germany's Virus Missteps," New York Times February 12, 2021.

Amir, Mashed, et al. "A Comparison of National and International Approaches to COVID-19 Related Measures" Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 2021.)

Key Challenges

We should note three important aspects that are not a challenge in Portugal due to their absence: a strong anti-science discourse; widespread anti-vaccine attitudes; and a chief executive, as in the United States and Brazil, who denies the seriousness of the pandemic for political reasons, which aggravates the previous two aspects. Regarding the first point, both citizens and political actors generally support scientific insights and results. As for the second point, Portugal has the highest public support for and trust in vaccines of any EU member state, with over 95% of the population considering vaccines "safe" and "important" (Villareal & Suárez 2019). These elements, combined with a potentially effective national vaccination structure, bode well for what will be a key challenge in 2021, the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines.

However, key challenges remain.

First, as highlighted in the executive summary and expanded in this report, the response to the pandemic has been uneven. The areas where it has been less effective include those in which the response requires a long-term approach (e.g., family, labor market and social inclusion policies). A key challenge will be to develop strategically planned, long-term and sustainable policies that can

address these challenges. In a sense, the pandemic highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of Portugal's governance model. The strengths lie in its ability to quickly adjust and respond to new circumstances, making the best of often limited resources. Meanwhile, the weaknesses lie in its inability to develop and implement carefully assessed policies that can address longer-term issues.

Second and foremost, the country faces the key challenge of using the considerable EU pandemic recovery funds available, estimated to be in excess of €15 billion, effectively (Observador 2020). While all countries face an important moment with the pandemic, it does not seem overstated to say that, for Portugal, this constitutes a potentially critical juncture. The country faces a number of interrelated challenges highlighted in this report and in previous SGI assessments: an aging population, low productivity growth, diminishing potential output and an unbalanced labor market. The post-pandemic recovery, bolstered by the massive influx of EU funds, constitutes a unique, generational opportunity to address a number of structural imbalances. Doing so will require the country to invert its past record of using EU funds. As a 2017 study of 30 years of EU structural funding of projects in Portugal concludes, the country has not used EU funds "sufficiently well," with the study identifying an "institutional deficit" as the main cause for this (Marques 2017, p. 52).

Dialogue and consensus-building in developing policy responses to the pandemic, as well as the resilience of the country's democratic institutions during this crisis, are important building blocks for meeting this generational opportunity. However, doing so will require a concerted, long-term effort that has largely eluded Portugal in recent decades. It will also require that the European Union provide a large number of vaccines in a timely manner in order to vaccinate a sufficient percentage of the population to achieve so-called herd immunity. Due to the Trump presidency, the United States has not taken the lead in world health issues, including the pandemic, and the European Union has been less than stellar in its response. With Portugal assuming the rotating Presidency of the European Council in January 2021, one hopes that efforts to halt the pandemic in Europe will be the main focus of attention.

Citation:

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Observador (2020). "Covid-19. Subvenções para Portugal ficam nos 15,3 mil milhões de euros," *Observador*, 17 September 2020, available online at: <https://observador.pt/2020/09/17/covid-19-novo-calculo-de-bruxelas-tira-2-mil-milhoes-de-euros-em-subvencoes-a-portugal-para-13-mil-milhoes-de-euros/>

Villareal, A. & Suárez, C. (2019). "Europe's vaccine issue: the fault of anti-vaxers or religion?," *European Data Journalism Network*, 13 January 2020, available online at: <https://www.europeandatajournalism.eu/eng/News/Data-news/Europe-s-vaccine-issue-the-fault-of-anti-vaxers-or-religion>

Resilience of Policies

I. Economic Preparedness

Economic Preparedness

Economic Policy
Preparedness
Score: 6

Our assessment reflects policy choices that have trended in the right direction in recent years. While insufficient to fully address the very high levels of economic risk that Portugal faced prior to the pandemic, the policy framework did allow Portugal to face the COVID-19 crisis in a better position in 2020 than it would have had the pandemic had struck earlier.

The following factors mean that Portugal's economic position is highly vulnerable:

- Low productivity growth (Blanchard & Portugal 2017)
- Diminishing potential output (i.e., the highest total GDP that an economy can generate at full sustainable employment), which has decelerated since the 2000s and has been diverging from the euro zone since 2003 (Duarte et al. 2019)
- Very high public debt to GDP ratio, with public debt at 117.2% of GDP in 2019 (Eurostat 2020a), which has constrained fiscal policy options, forced the postponement of public investments intended to increase competitiveness, and reduced domestic demand through higher taxes and reductions in government expenditure (Gonçalves et al. 2020)
- Very high ratios of private debt and of non-performing loans to GDP (Blanchard & Portugal 2017), which have also constrained investment and domestic demand

- An aging population (Duarte et al. 2019), with the third highest old-age-dependency ratio in the European Union in 2019 (Eurostat 2020b)

Within this context, recent policy has mostly moved in the right direction. Public debt, while still very high, fell almost 15 percentage points between 2016 and 2019. Measures have been taken to reduce non-performing loans (OECD 2019). The country has made its legal framework for naturalization – already classified as “world-class” in the Migrant Integration Policy Index of 2020 (MIPEX 2020) – even more open, not least in order to redress demographic pressures. Finally, it has sought to foster productivity growth, notably through a 2017 national digital competency initiative (OECD 2019), which seeks to bolster digitalization and digital skills by 2030.

Much the same is true with regard to economic resource efficiency. The government has made the circular economy a central policy plank, adopting the National Action Plan for the Circular Economy in late 2017 and, in July 2019, formally adopting a roadmap for making the Portuguese economy carbon neutral by 2050.

Overall, policy is being framed to address economic growth and sustainability challenges. However, the country departs from a very unfavorable position, particularly with regard to challenges for economic growth. Overcoming these challenges will require that the measures approved in recent years are implemented and reinforced in a consistent effort that is sustained over time and across different governments.

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MIPEX (2020). Portugal, available online at: <https://www.mipex.eu/portugal>

OECD (2019). Portugal – Economic Policy Reforms: Going for Growth Country Note, available online at: <http://www.oecd.org/economy/portugal-economic-snapshot/>

https://ec.europa.eu/sites/info/files/file_import/2019-european-semester-country-report-portugal_en.pdf

Labor Market Preparedness

While unemployment declined considerably over several years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, this appears to be due to broader economic conditions rather than labor market policies themselves.

After peaking at 17.9% in January 2013, during the country's 2011 – 2014 bailout, unemployment gradually fell, reaching 6.5% in 2019, the lowest yearly level since 2004 (Pordata 2020a). However, this was largely driven by a return to economic growth after a period of contraction between 2011 and 2013. It was also aided by record levels of emigration, with nearly 600,000 people permanently and temporarily emigrating between 2014 and 2019 (Pordata 2020b).

Until the bailout, Portugal had the strictest employment protection legislation within the OECD (OECD.Stat 2020), with an overall score of 4.42 in 2009 and 4.13 in 2010, on a scale of zero to six. Portugal was the only country with a score above four, with the second most strict country in 2009 and 2010 scoring 3.38. While still above the OECD average, this score fell to 3.14 between 2014 and 2019.

The comparatively much lower regulation on hiring temporary workers created a dual workforce after the early 2000s, with the workforce split between permanent workers and the precariat (i.e., people working successive, intermittent, temporary contracts). Indeed, the share of temporary contracts in the workforce in Portugal has consistently exceeded 20% since 2006 and stood at 20.8% in 2019, the third highest level in the European Union and well above the EU average. While the legal protections of the former introduce rigidities in the labor market, the temporary nature of the latter provides few incentives for companies to train them (Blanchard & Portugal 2017). This has also contributed to very high levels of youth unemployment, which stood at 19.5% in January 2020, well above the EU-27 average of 14.7% (Eurostat 2020).

Successive governments have sought to address this issue. The current legal framework was established in 2009, with the new Labor Code (Código de Trabalho) that was, according to then Prime Minister Sócrates, “the most ambitious” legislation ever to address precarious working (Público 2008).

Since then, this code has been amended 16 times, a reflection that this challenge still remains within the labor market. Indeed, six of these changes took place in the last four years (2016 – 2019). This constant – and often quite substantial – tinkering is a reflection of the limited effect of policies in addressing labor market challenges.

What enables Portugal to maintain such low levels of unemployment are generally low (and unequal) wages and weak de facto unemployment protection, leading one author to state that Portugal has the most liberal employment regime of any southern European country (Afonso 2020). An

instance of this is the comparatively weak unemployment protections in Portugal, with some of the most restrictive access conditions in Europe that cover only one in five jobseekers in 2016 (Afonso 2020).

Citation:

Afonso, A. (2020). "Portuguese Labour Market Governance in Comparative Perspective," OSF preprints, available online at: <https://osf.io/ahpm8/>

Blanchard, O., & Portugal, P. (2017). Boom, slump, sudden stops, recovery, and policy options. Portugal and the Euro. Portuguese Economic Journal, 16(3), 149-168.

Eurostat (2020), "Unemployment by sex and age – monthly data," available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/UNE_RT_M_custom_391948/default/table?lang=en

OECD.Stat (2020). "Strictness of employment protection – individual and collective dismissals (regular contracts)," available online at: https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EPL_OV

Pordata (2020a). "Taxa de desemprego: total e por sexo (%)," available online at: [https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Taxa+de+desemprego+total+e+por+sexo+\(percentagem\)-550](https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Taxa+de+desemprego+total+e+por+sexo+(percentagem)-550)

Pordata (2020b). "Emigrantes: total e por tipo," available online at: <https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Emigrantes+total+e+por+tipo-21>

Público (2008). "Sócrates acusa detractores do novo código de trabalho de promoverem 'embuste monumental'," 28 June 2008, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2008/06/29/politica/noticia/socrates-acusa-detractores-do-novo-codigo-de-trabalho-de-promoverem-embuste-monumental-1333934>

Fiscal Preparedness

Fiscal Policy
Preparedness
Score: 7

There is a clear difference in budgetary policy before and after the 2011 – 2014 bailout.

This is starkly visible in terms of deficit results. In the period 2000 – 2010, the budget deficit averaged 5.6% of GDP per year. In the post-bailout period between 2015 and 2019, this average stands at 1.9% of GDP. Moreover, while during the first period Portugal met the euro zone target of a deficit below 3% of GDP only once, since the bailout it has done so every year bar 2015. Indeed, the last two years saw democratic Portugal set successive records, with a deficit of 0.3% and an unprecedented surplus of 0.2% in 2019 (Eurostat 2020).

These very positive outcomes reflect the introduction of new budgetary institutions. In September 2015, the new Budgetary Framework Law was adopted, which not only transposed the EU framework for fiscal policy, but also revised internal processes within administration to ensure greater efficiency (Sarmiento 2015). Moreover, this legislation has been upgraded, meaning that it now prevails over other national laws.

In addition, in 2012, a "fiscal watchdog" was created, the Portuguese Public Finance Council (Conselho das Finanças Públicas, CFP). The CFP's stated mission is "to conduct an independent assessment of the consistency, compliance and sustainability of fiscal policy, while promoting fiscal

transparency, in order to contribute to the quality of democracy and of economic policy decisions and to enhance the state's financial credibility" (CFP 2020). The CFP has a number of formal prerogatives set out in the Budgetary Framework Law.

These institutional changes reflect attitudinal changes within Portuguese politics. The bailout brought budget deficits to the fore of public debate, making citizens, the media and political parties very aware of fiscal sustainability. While this framework is not perfect, with considerable room to improve in the transparency of the budgetary processes (Morais 2020), it has clearly placed Portugal on a path of fiscal responsibility.

Citation:

CFP (2020). Available online at: <https://www.cfp.pt/en/cfp>

Eurostat (2020). "Government deficit/surplus, debt and associated data," available online at: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=gov_10dd_edpt1&lang=en

Morais, P. (2020). "Despesas ocultas, sem sentido e perdulárias. Assim vai o Orçamento do Estado." Público, 26 Oct. 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/10/26/opiniao/noticia/despesas-ocultas-sentido-perdularias-assim-vai-orcamento-estado-1936360>

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<http://www.ipp-jcs.org/2020/02/07/analise-da-execucao-orcamental-de-decembro-2019/>

Research and Innovation

Research and
Innovation Policy
Preparedness
Score: 7

Research and innovation are areas where Portugal has historically lagged considerably. With the partial exception of the bailout period, governments have sought to redress this imbalance and considerable attention has been placed on this field. The first EU Innovation Scoreboard of 2001 stated that Portugal has "a relatively low innovation performance" and that "its innovation performance has been falling further behind." In the most recent 2020 EU Innovation Scoreboard (which provides data for 2019), Portugal has for the first time been placed in the category of "strong innovators," which includes, among others, France, Germany and Ireland.

This improvement is a reflection of a strong and long-term commitment to research and innovation, which includes organizational structures aimed at promoting and coordinating innovation, such as the National Agency of Innovation (created in 2014), the Portuguese Science and Technology Foundation (established in 1997), and their respective precursors.

At the same time, the 2020 EU Innovation Scoreboard also highlights Portugal's unequal R&I development. The country presents very good framework conditions, with a very strong innovation-friendly environment, an

attractive research system and a workforce that scores close to the EU average. However, Portugal performs less well with regard to financing innovation, with R&D expenditure in the business sector particularly low and well below R&D expenditure in the public sector. In terms of innovation at the firm level, Portugal's results point to very high levels of innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises, but with few linkages to other private and public bodies, and intellectual assets. Finally, the impact of innovation in Portugal is the weakest among the group of countries assessed, with a low employment impact and a very low sales impact.

This unequal performance shows that Portugal's R&I development is far from complete, with innovation not fully percolating through to the general economy. As such, it cannot be said that R&I in Portugal prior to the pandemic was highly effective. At the same time, given the very low starting point, it is fair to say that Portugal's R&I policy performance has been very good over the last 20 years and is an example of a concerted long-term commitment to R&I that is now yielding fruit.

Citation:
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https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/innovation/pdf/library/innovation_scoreboard.pdf
 European Innovation Scoreboard 2020 – Portugal. Available online at:
<https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/41887>
<https://www.portugal2020.pt/content/projetos-de-id-colaborativa-uma-nova-opportunidade-no-portugal-2020>

II. Welfare State Preparedness

Education System Preparedness

Education Policy
 Preparedness
 Score: 5

Despite improvements in the new millennium, Portugal's education system faced significant challenges in the run-up to the pandemic. The average level of quality is not high and masks high levels of inequality in the quality of education obtained. The system presents low levels of efficiency, with a highly centralized institutional framework that provides little scope or incentives for innovation and adaptation. Moreover, the education system is burdened by a highly unstable policy framework.

A reflection of these challenges is provided in the PISA assessments. While Portugal is one of the countries to have improved the most since the first round in 2000, the most recent 2018 PISA results suggest that the country has reached a potential ceiling. The country's scores show stability in

mathematics, and a decline in Reading and science. The only other occasion in which there was no improvement in any one of the three indicators was 2012, in the midst of the bailout.

PISA assessments put Portugal at around the OECD average. However, there is significant variation in the quality of education between schools. The average school score in the 2019 national exams ranged from 13.02 (out of 20) for the highest rated public school to 7.67 for the lowest rated public school, an increase in the performance gap from the previous year. The variance is even greater when we consider all schools, thus encompassing private schools, with the best performing school presenting an average of 15.55, more than twice the average for the lowest rated school. Moreover, anecdotal evidence suggests that the quality of education is often unequal within schools.

These results reflect a highly centralized, one-size-fits-all, educational system, which leaves little autonomy for schools or teachers to adapt to their specific circumstances. This leaves little scope for curricular adaptations or experimentation with new learning methods. Moreover, it paradoxically generates a highly unstable policy framework, with frequent legal changes that reflect the need for legislation that “determines everything and foresees everything,” as one school director put it in a recent study (Silva 2017, p. 247). Indeed, the same research noted that one of the main challenges that schools and teachers face is frequent legal changes.

There is an appreciation that autonomy and flexibility are necessary. The Ministry of Education launched an experimental project to promote curricular autonomy and flexibility in a limited set of schools in 2017, which was expanded to all schools in 2019. While a step in the right direction, it should be noted that this expands autonomy and flexibility only to a degree. And, given the high levels of policy instability, it is far from certain that this flexibility will survive a change in government or will remain a priority of the Ministry of Education, which may reduce school and teacher commitment to the initiative. The current government’s program, presented to parliament in October 2020, proposes greater school autonomy, though within a very limited scope (XXII Governo Constitucional 2019, p. 22).

Schools had very limited digital resources prior to the pandemic, in no small part due to cuts in investment during and after the bailout. Likewise, the usage of online learning platforms by schools was very limited. Last but not least, public sector hiring freezes generated one of the oldest teacher cohorts within the OECD (OECD 2020). In 2007, there were 102 teachers aged 50 or over per every 100 teachers aged under 35 for grades five to 12. In 2019, that ratio had reached a staggering 1,595:100, up more than 200 from 2018 (Pordata 2020).

All this had meant that the education system's preparedness for a pandemic was generally low.

Citation:

OECD (2020). "Teachers by age," available online at: <https://data.oecd.org/teachers/teachers-by-age.htm>

Pordata (2020). "Índice de envelhecimento dos docentes em exercício nos ensinos pré-escolar, básico e secundário: por nível de ensino – Continente," available online at: <https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Índice+de+envelhecimento+dos+docentes+em+exerc%C3%ADcio++nos+ensinos+pré+escolar++básico+e+secundário+por+n%C3%ADvel+de+ensino+++Continente-944>

Silva, H. A. D. M. (2017). "A preparação do Diretor de escola pública em Portugal Continental," PhD Dissertation, FCSH-UNL/FCT-UNL/ISPA.

XXII Governo Constitucional (2019). "Programa do XXII Governo Constitucional 2019 – 2023," available online at: <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/comunicacao/documento?i=programa-do-xxii-governo-constitucional>

<https://expresso.pt/sociedade/2019-11-26-O-Estado-da-Educacao-menos-dinheiro-muito-professores-jovens-e-sucesso-qb>

Social Welfare Preparedness

Social Welfare
Policy
Preparedness
Score: 6

Government policies were moderately successful in reducing poverty and social exclusion for all groups in society prior to the pandemic, with improvements in recent years.

The share of the population at risk of poverty after social transfers fell to 17.2% in 2019, a slight improvement vis-à-vis 2018 (17.3%) and more than one percentage point below the level of 2017 (Eurostat 2020a). This is the lowest level since 1995 – the period for which Eurostat has data. These results represent a substantial improvement over the bailout years, when this percentage peaked at 19.5%. However, they remain above the EU and euro zone average.

Levels of inequality have also diminished, with the Gini coefficient of equalized disposable income standing at 31.9 in 2019, the lowest level since 1995 – the period for which Eurostat has data – and well below the 2005 peak of 38.1 (Eurostat 2020b). Indeed, 2017, 2018 and 2019 are the three years with the lowest Gini coefficients since 2005. However, despite these positive trends, levels of inequality remain above the EU and euro zone average.

This positive trend reflects the combination of three factors. First, the greater economic dynamism and significantly lower unemployment levels (noted in "Labor Market Policy Vulnerability"), which reduced the number of people living in low labor intensity households (Observatório Nacional da Luta Contra a Pobreza 2020). Second, increases in the minimum wage, which rose to €635 per month in 2020, the sixth consecutive year of increases following a four-year plateau at €485 per month during the bailout period (2011 – 2014).

Third, a gradual reversal in austerity measures imposed on pension and welfare payments during the bailout period.

While there remains a long way to go with regard to eliminating the risks of poverty and social exclusion, not to mention the associated feelings of marginalization, these results are encouraging and have been achieved while ensuring fiscal responsibility.

Citation:

Eurostat (2020a). “People at risk of poverty after social transfers,” available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/t2020_52/default/table?lang=en

Eurostat (2020b). “Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable income – EU-SILC survey,” available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_di12/default/table?lang=en

Observatório Nacional da Luta Contra a Pobreza (2020). “Pobreza e Exclusão Social em Portugal: Relatório 2020,” available online at: <https://on.eapn.pt/wp-content/uploads/Pobreza-e-Exclusão-social-em-Portugal-Relatório-2020.pdf>

Healthcare System Preparedness

Health Policy
Preparedness
Score: 7

Historically, Portugal’s healthcare system has done comparatively well in terms of providing equal access to quality healthcare. This is reflected in the country’s comparatively good performance, especially when taking into account the level of expenditure, in a number of indicators (e.g., life expectancy, but also cancer care and primary care). As the most recent 2019 OECD Country Profile for Portugal notes, Portugal’s healthcare system effectiveness is above that of the EU average (measured in terms of mortality from preventable and treatable causes) and also presents “very low avoidable hospitalization rates,” indicating the “general effectiveness of primary care services.” Moreover, these above average results have been achieved with a below average level of expenditure.

The bulk of healthcare provision is provided by the country’s National Health Service (Serviço Nacional de Saúde, SNS). This covers all residents in the country, and is universal, comprehensive and provided free or at nominal cost at the point of delivery.

The strength of the country is in its comparatively high number of physicians, who are generally highly qualified, and primary care. As the 2019 OECD report notes, “Portugal has a strong primary care system, which manages to keep patients out of hospital when appropriate.”

However, it should be stressed that these good results have been achieved with a comparatively low level of expenditure, which has been constrained over the last decade by the need to ensure fiscal sustainability. This percolated through

to a relative lack of material resources ahead of the pandemic, with the country presenting a low number of intensive care beds and ventilators at the outset of the pandemic. With regard to the former, the number of intensive care beds per 100,000 inhabitants ranks 27th out of the 30 countries in the indicator “Intensive Care Beds” and – with five beds per 100,000 inhabitants – is less than half of the average for the 30 countries assessed. As for the latter, Portugal’s national healthcare system had 1,142 ventilators at the start of the pandemic (Maia 2020). At the outset of the pandemic, testing capacity was very low, with an estimated capacity of only 1,500 tests per day on 2 March (Triunfol 2020).

Citation:

Maia, A. (2020). “Número de ventiladores no SNS cresceu 72% desde o início da pandemia,” Público 14 December 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/12/14/sociedade/noticia/numero-ventiladores-sns-cresceu-72-desde-inicio-pandemia-1942922>

Triunfol, M. (2020). High COVID-19 testing rate in Portugal. *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, 20(7), 783. https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/pais/indicadores-de-saude-em-portugal-melhoram-mas-abaixo-das-medias-europeias_n1218657

OECD (2019). State of Health in the EU – Portugal: Country Health Profile 2019, available online at: <https://www.oecd.org/portugal/portugal-country-health-profile-2019-85ed94fc-en.htm>

Families

Family Policy
Preparedness
Score: 6

Existing measures fall well short of providing a legal and substantial support framework that would enable parents to freely decide whether and when they want to enter full- or part-time employment.

The participation of both parents in full-time work is one of the highest in the OECD. However, this reflects the income needs of households more than the actual choices of families. As Afonso (2020) notes, low wages make double incomes “more than elsewhere an economic necessity” for households in Portugal. Moreover, despite both parents working, the burden of parenting and household chores fall overwhelmingly on women, as a recent study shows (Sagnier et al. 2019).

Furthermore, the high levels of unemployment and temporary work contracts among younger cohorts serve as a constraint on young couples becoming parents. Overall, 25% of women in fertile age have fewer children than they would wish to have, mostly because of their economic situation (Sagnier et al. 2019, p. 138).

This lack of preparedness in the family support system is reflected in the country’s very low birth rates, which stood in 2019 at 8.4 per 1,000 persons, a marginal decline on the previous year (8.5) and well below the EU-28 average of 9.5 (Eurostat 2020). This contrasts with the pattern prior to 2003, when

births per 1,000 inhabitants in Portugal exceeded the EU-28 average, with 10.8 for Portugal and 10.3 for the European Union (Pordata 2020).

It should also be noted that there appears to be a close association between the increase in precarious work (noted in “Labor Market Policy Vulnerability”) and the declining birth rate. As Sobotka (2016, p. 57) notes, “High women’s labor force participation combined with a high frequency of self-employment and temporary employment imply that women across all socioeconomic groups in Portugal have become more strongly affected in their fertility decisions by labor market trends.”

Consistent with this backdrop, there is equally little support for parenting and work in single parent households. While single parent households receive additional financial support for childcare, the amounts are very low: for the lowest income households, it stands at around €50 per month for children over six years old. Legislation on work also enables single parents with children under 12 to request flexible schedules or part-time work from their employers. However, employers can reject requests provided they give grounded reasons and actual take-up of this measure is limited. Aside from the fact that this largely does not cover precarious workers, employers are not wont to grant these to workers that request them (Neves 2018). It is also quite likely that many single parents do not ask through a combination of expecting a refusal and fear of antagonizing their employers.

Overall, policy has largely failed to create effective family support systems that attenuate labor market trends, forcing many parents to choose between parenting and employment.

Citation:

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Eurostat (2020). “Live births and crude birth rate,” available online at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00204/default/table?lang=en>

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Sobotka, T. (2016). “Understanding low fertility: Portugal in a European context.” In Cunha, V., Vilar, D., Wall, K., Lavinha, J., & Pereira, P. T., eds. *A(s) problemática(s) da natalidade em Portugal: uma questão social, económica e política*. Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, pp. 49-71.

Neves, C. (2018). “Pais de menores de 12 anos têm direito a horário flexível, mas empresas recusam,” *Diário de Notícias* online, 25 June 2018, available online at: <https://www.dn.pt/portugal/pais-de-menores-de-12-anos-tem-direito-a-horario-flexivel-mas-empresas-recusam-9506809.html>

III. Economic Crisis Response

Economic Response

Economic
Recovery
Package
Score: 6

Portugal's economic policy response to the COVID-19 crisis needs to be considered in two distinct yet complementary dimensions. The first is the package to provide an immediate response in 2020 and 2021. The second is the broader and more long-term economic recovery package, over the next five to 10 years.

With regard to the former, the package was timely though less-than-optimally targeted. As for the latter, it provides an ambitious set of measures that take into account future growth potential. However, at the time of writing, it has not moved to the implementation stage. As such, its ultimate effects will only become clear as its various measures are implemented.

Measuring COVID-19 economic response packages is not a precise science, with different analyses providing somewhat different overall totals (e.g., Bruegel 2020; European Commission 2020; IMF 2020).

Nevertheless, the various assessments are consistent in providing the following picture for Portugal.

First, a relatively small direct support to firms and families, most of which comprises job-protection schemes, such as simplified layoff provisions, across all sectors (Neutel 2020). Using the IMF (2020) estimates, which provide for a wider comparison, this stands at 2.4% of GDP. This is comparatively very low: it is the third lowest of the 35 advanced economies for which the IMF provides data.

Second, a larger set of measures that defer revenue (e.g., tax deferrals) and accelerate spending (e.g., earlier outlay of state support). These amount to 4.1% of GDP and are the fifth highest out of the 24 advanced economies for which the IMF provides data.

Third, the largest component of Portugal's 2020 package involves contingent liabilities such as loan guarantees. This stands at 6.7% of GDP and is the eighth highest out of the 34 advanced economies for which the IMF provides data, though closer to the lowest placed country (Ireland's 0.4%) than the highest placed countries (Italy, with 32.8%, and Germany, with 24.8%).

These measures were largely provided in a very timely manner, with a significant part being approved in March 2020, during the first lockdown. However, they were targeted at keeping businesses afloat and protecting jobs in general rather than targeting future-oriented jobs, competitive businesses or future growth potential, or facilitating the transition to such sectors.

As noted, the broader and more long-term economic recovery package is more targeted and takes future growth into consideration. As such, on paper the country may have a sound and effective two-pronged strategy that keeps businesses afloat in the short term and then helps the economy pivot over the medium term. However, until the measures of the longer-term package are implemented, Portugal cannot be scored in the highest overall category.

Citation:

Bruegel (2020). The fiscal response to the economic fallout from the coronavirus, available online at: <https://www.bruegel.org/publications/datasets/covid-national-dataset/>

European Commission (2020). Commission Opinion of 18.11.2020 on the Draft Budgetary Plan of Portugal, available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/opinion_on_dbp_portugal.pdf

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Neutel, H. (2020). “Lay-off custa 563 milhões por mês. É a maior fatia da despesa de combate à Covid-19,” TSF, 8 May 2020, available online at: <https://www.tsf.pt/portugal/economia/lay-off-custa-563-milhoes-por-mes-e-a-maior-fatia-da-despesa-de-combate-a-covid-12168551.html>

Sustainability of Economic Response

Recovery
Package
Sustainability
Score: 6

As noted in the previous question, the recovery package can be divided into two categories: the immediate response in 2020 and a broader recovery package over the next five to 10 years. While the former largely does not take sustainability concerns into consideration, the latter has these concerns very much at the forefront.

In October 2020, the government approved the post-pandemic Strategic Plan for Portugal, which will run until 2030, and lists climate change and resource sustainability as one of its four key areas (XXII Governo Constitucional 2020a). This strategic plan informs and frames a number of key government plans, including the government’s Preliminary Recovery and Resilience Plan for 2021–26 (XXII Governo Constitucional 2020b) and the National Program of Investments (XXII Governo Constitucional 2020c). Both of these feature climate change as one of their three key dimensions. Demonstrating strong investment in environmental sustainability and mobility, the government is allocating €6.3 billion to public transport, mobility and railways, although the bulk of this will go to railways (€10.5 billion), and the Lisbon and Porto metro

service (€3.7 billion). An additional €2 billion has been budgeted for road improvements. Nevertheless, the implementation of these plans should generate significant gains in terms of sustainability.

Citation:

XXII Governo Constitucional (2020a). “Estratégia Portugal 2030: documento de enquadramento estratégico,” available online at: <https://eurocid.mne.gov.pt/sites/default/files/repository/paragraph/documents/10615/estrategiapt2030docenqestrateg.pdf>

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XXII Governo Constitucional (2020c). “Programa Nacional de Investimentos 2030,” available online at: <https://eurocid.mne.gov.pt/sites/default/files/repository/paragraph/documents/10615/pni2030relatorio.pdf>

Labor Market Response

Labor Market
Policy Response
Score: 6

Portugal saw unemployment increase during the COVID-19 crisis. From 7% in December 2019, it rose to a peak of 7.9% in August 2020 and, in the most recent data for November, stands at 7.6% (Eurostat 2020). Moreover, Portugal had the largest wage bill loss out of 28 European countries assessed by the International Labour Organization, at 13.5%, which has a greater impact on women than men (ILO 2020, pp. 44 – 47).

The main labor market response was the introduction of job-protection schemes, such as simplified layoff rules, in all sectors (as noted in “Economic Recovery Package”). The government has also introduced a range of measures to facilitate the re-entry of the unemployed into the labor market under the Ativar.Pt program. Most of these measures were laid out in the Social and Economic Stabilization Program approved in June 2020 (XXII Governo Constitucional 2020).

These measures include some aimed at the most vulnerable groups. For example, the Social and Economic Stabilization Program included a measure that allows beneficiaries of the Social Insertion Income (provided to those at risk of extreme poverty) to receive this income along with grants for participating in professional training activities and disability support. There were also some measures aimed at single parent households, which allow single parents with children under 12 who were working remotely to request leave from work in exchange for a subsidy equal to two-thirds of their salary, with a minimum value of €65 per month and a maximum of €1,995 per month. At the same time, it should be noted that the Ativar.Pt program states that it has a particular focus on the recently unemployed and unemployed young people.

Overall, these measures have helped to cushion the impact of the crisis on the labor market. However, they do not fully protect labor, particularly workers in the most vulnerable sectors of the labor force. Unemployment rose most significantly among unskilled workers and those with the lowest wages (Aníbal 2020), and Portugal experienced one of the highest increases in wage inequality in Europe during the pandemic (ILO 2020, pp. 48 – 49).

Citation:

Aníbal, S. (2020). “Trabalhadores com baixos salários são os que mais perdem emprego,” Público, 7 December 2020, pp. 2-3.

Eurostat (2020), “Unemployment by sex and age – monthly data,” available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/UNE_RT_M_custom_391948/default/table?lang=en

ILO (2020). International Labour Organization – Global Wage Report 2020-21, available online at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-dcomm/-publ/documents/publication/wcms_762534.pdf

XXII Governo Constitucional (2020). “Programa de Estabilização Económica e Social,” available online at: [https://www.portugal.gov.pt/download-](https://www.portugal.gov.pt/download-ficheiros/ficheiro.aspx?v=%3d%3dBAAAAB%2bLCAAAAAAABACziLQ0BgCEWok2BAAAAA%3d%3d)

[ficheiros/ficheiro.aspx?v=%3d%3dBAAAAB%2bLCAAAAAAABACziLQ0BgCEWok2BAAAAA%3d%3d](https://www.portugal.gov.pt/download-ficheiros/ficheiro.aspx?v=%3d%3dBAAAAB%2bLCAAAAAAABACziLQ0BgCEWok2BAAAAA%3d%3d)

Fiscal Response

Fiscal Policy
Response
Score: 7

Portugal’s response to the pandemic has, for the most part, been very cautious to ensure fiscal sustainability. This is, for instance, displayed in the very low direct outlay noted above (see “Economic Recovery Package”). It is also reflected in the government’s budget proposal for 2021, with the government’s fiscal response to COVID-19 equivalent to only 0.9% of GDP and its continued effort to reduce public debt forecasted to achieve a reduction of close to five percentage points in 2021 (European Commission 2020). Indeed, the European Commission’s opinion of the proposed budget is that “the fact that crisis mitigation measures are planned to weigh less on the deficit in 2021 should support the improvement of public finances next year” (European Commission 2020, p. 5).

Within this generally very cautious approach, the one risk that Portugal is exposed to concerns the liquidity support provided by the government, noted in “Economic Recovery Package.” As the European Commission (2020, p. 4) highlights, “Should these guarantees be called, this will be reflected in public debt and deficits in the future.” The extent to which they will be called is of course uncertain. As noted above, while the amount of these guarantees is not very high (6.7% of GDP), and well below that of Italy, Germany, France and the UK, they represent a significant risk given Portugal’s generally high public debt levels. The extent to which these guarantees will be called will depend on the extent to which there is an economic recovery in 2021. That being said, the government’s risk seems relatively small, given the likely rollout of vaccines

and of the European Union’s Resilience and Recovery Facility in 2021, which should provide a significant economic boost.

The government’s cautious approach, combined with the rapidly shifting dynamic of the pandemic, has been reflected in the government’s hesitancy to define when support measures will be terminated. This has resulted in the lack of an exit strategy for COVID-19 policies during the period under review (most notably for the loan moratoria program, which was extended again at the end of December). However, the government’s cautious approach seems warranted. As the European Commission’s Autumn 2020 Post-Programme Surveillance Report notes, “Portugal’s high public debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to be sustainable over the medium term,” albeit it “remains vulnerable to economic shocks.”

In terms of investments, the government launched the ambitious National Program of Investments for the 2020 – 2030 period (XXII Governo Constitucional 2020), with funding coming from the national budget, European funds and private investment, with each source contributing approximately one-third of the total outlay (Lusa 2020).

Citation:

European Commission (2020). Commission Opinion of 18.11.2020 on the Draft Budgetary Plan of Portugal, available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/opinion_on_dbp_portugal.pdf

European Commission (2020). Post-Programme Surveillance Report Portugal, Autumn 2020, available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/ip138_en.pdf

Lusa (2020). “Programa Nacional de Investimentos vai envolver 43 mil milhões de euros,” Visão online, available online at: <https://visao.sapo.pt/atualidade/politica/2020-10-22-programa-nacional-de-investimentos-vai-envolver-43-mil-milhoes-de-euros/>

XXII Governo Constitucional (2020). “Programa Nacional de Investimentos 2030,” available online at: <https://eurocid.mne.gov.pt/sites/default/files/repository/paragraph/documents/10615/pni2030relatorio.pdf>

Research and Innovation Response

Research and
Innovation Policy
Response
Score: 6

The maturation of Portugal’s R&I, noted above (“R&I Policy Vulnerability”), was reflected in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Scientists and companies in Portugal contributed to the development of vaccines and in some instances led these efforts (Teixeira 2020; Fonseca 2020; Soares 2020). In December 2020, it was announced that a team of Portuguese scientists had developed a rapid saliva test for COVID-19 (Público 2020). Its R&I system rapidly developed a technically very sound tracing app, Stayway Covid (Neves 2020).

Last, but not least, R&I institutions were able to collaborate with the healthcare system in testing. As a July 2020 Lancet article on Portugal’s high testing rate illustrates, scientific research units collaborated with the

Directorate General of Health to assist in testing (Triunfol 2020). This contributed to Portugal's excellent testing levels early on, highlighted in "Health System Response."

In addition, policy measures were introduced to support R&I to tackle the COVID-19 crisis. The Social and Economic Stabilization Program (mentioned under "Labor Market Response") included COVID-19-related innovation and development as one its areas, with funding provided for both companies and scientific research bodies ((XII Governo Constitucional 2020, p. 80). In addition, the Portuguese state's research body, the Portuguese Science and Technology Foundation, opened several calls for projects and scholarships on the pandemic, notably a call for projects in May 2020 on artificial intelligence and data science in public administration to fight the pandemic (FCT 2020).

While these results obviously pale in comparison with those of countries with larger and more developed I&D infrastructures, it is a very solid performance for a country and an economy of Portugal's size. It is all the more remarkable if we take into account the underdeveloped state of the country's R&I system just 20 years ago.

Citation:

FCT (2020). R&D Projects Call – AI 4 COVID-19: Data Science and Artificial Intelligence in the Public Administration to strengthen the fight against COVID-19 and future pandemics – 2020. Available online at: <https://www.fct.pt/apoios/projectos/concursos/datascience/index.phtml.en>

Fonseca, J. M. (2020). Biotecnológica portuguesa desenvolve vacina contra a Covid-19 administrada pelo nariz. Espera tê-la pronta em 2022. Eco, 22 October 2020, available online at: <https://eco.sapo.pt/2020/10/22/biotecnologica-portuguesa-desenvolve-vacina-contra-a-covid-19-administrada-pelo-nariz-espera-te-la-pronta-em-2022/>

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Soares, D. (2020). Investigação portuguesa pode contribuir para vacina contra a Covid-19. Rádio Renascença, available online at: <https://rr.sapo.pt/2020/05/08/pais/investigacao-portuguesa-pode-contribuir-para-vacina-contra-a-covid-19/especial/192085/>

Teixeira, S. (2020). Covid-19: uma vacina (também) made in Portugal, Observador, 21 September 2020, available online at: <https://observador.pt/2020/09/21/covid-19-uma-vacina-tambem-made-in-portugal/>

Triunfol, M. (2020). High COVID-19 testing rate in Portugal. The Lancet Infectious Diseases, 20(7), 783.

XXII Governo Constitucional (2020). "Programa de Estabilização Económica e Social," available online at: [https://www.portugal.gov.pt/download-](https://www.portugal.gov.pt/download-ficheiros/ficheiro.aspx?v=%3d%3dBAAAAB%2bLCAAAAAAABACziLQ0BgCEWok2BAAAAA%3d%3d)

[ficheiros/ficheiro.aspx?v=%3d%3dBAAAAB%2bLCAAAAAAABACziLQ0BgCEWok2BAAAAA%3d%3d](https://www.portugal.gov.pt/download-ficheiros/ficheiro.aspx?v=%3d%3dBAAAAB%2bLCAAAAAAABACziLQ0BgCEWok2BAAAAA%3d%3d)

IV. Welfare State Response

Education System Response

Education
Response
Score: 7

In the academic year 2019/20, schools and universities went into lockdown on 16 March. With regard to schools, most grades stayed in lockdown until the end of the school year on 26 June. The exceptions were 11th and 12th graders, who returned to school on 15 May; nursery schools (ages zero to three), which reopened on 1 June; and kindergartens (ages three to six), which reopened on 15 June. As for higher education, the Ministry of Higher Education recommended that laboratory and practical classes should be conducted in-person from May on. However, the greater autonomy in higher education allowed various institutions to make their own specific plans and the overwhelming majority of classes continued to be provided online. For the academic year of 2020/21, schools were reopened. As for universities, the bulk of classes were in-person, though with some universities adopted a mixed format, with some online and some in-person classes (or even some students in class and others online), to avoid overcrowding in classrooms.

As noted in “Education Policy Vulnerability,” the education system’s preparedness for a pandemic was very low. Yet its ultimate response proved far more effective than the pre-existing structure suggested it would be. Schools, teachers and students adjusted very quickly to online teaching. At the beginning of the lockdown, an estimated one-fifth of students did not have computers at home and 5% did not have internet access (Expresso 2020). Schools, teachers and local governments sought to cover these gaps, finding other ways to maintain contact with school children (e.g., via telephone).

Moreover, the government very quickly set up a universal system of schooling via free-to-air television, with teachers “teaching” content over TV, which began on 20 April. Given the traditionally very expository system of teaching in Portugal, this model worked well, and was an important means of ensuring equal and uninterrupted access to education across different social cohorts.

This response is also evident in the 2020/21 school year. Schools have engaged in a number of creative and effective means to ensure that pupils who are in isolation due to COVID-19 do not fall behind (Viana 2020).

This rapid and creative response (e.g., the use of TV to ensure equality) was assisted by two elements. First, the frequent changes in the educational system

(noted in “Education Policy Vulnerability”) have made its various stakeholders, not least schools and teachers, experienced in dealing with change. This allowed the response to be far more rapid than the pre-existing structures might have suggested. Second, the highly centralized primary and secondary education system meant that responses were very consistent and equal across the system.

As for universities, adaptation to online classes was rapid. However, there was little hardship compensation: fees were maintained, though several universities extended the period in which payment could be made.

Across all levels of education, this shift has generated far greater interest in new forms of teaching and testing. While it will take time to generate change, the reflection initiated could be the harbinger of much-needed change in a system that currently privileges expository teaching and largely assesses memorization of factual knowledge (Reis 2020).

There is broad agreement that education should support and accommodate all of the population, including those of lesser means. However, in Portugal, as elsewhere in the world, new forms of education (particularly online forms of education) favor more privileged sectors of the population who, for example, possess computers and are IT literate.

Citation:

Expresso (2020), “Covid-19: Governo sugere que correios entreguem TPC a alunos sem Internet,” Expresso, 20 March 2020, available online at: <https://expresso.pt/coronavirus/2020-03-20-Covid-19-Governo-sugere-que-correios-entreguem-TPC-a-alunos-sem-Internet>

Reis (2020). “Pandemia “é oportunidade” para retirar peso aos testes escritos na avaliação,” Diário de Notícias, 2 June 2020, available online at: <https://www.dn.pt/edicao-do-dia/02-jun-2020/pandemia-e-opportunidade-para-retirar-peso-aos-testes-escritos-na-avaliacao-12241388.html>

Viana, C. (2020). “Escolas não poupam nas soluções para chegar aos alunos que estão em casa,” Público, 10 October 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/10/10/sociedade/noticia/escolas-nao-poupam-solucoes-chegar-alunos-estao-casa-1934695>

Social Welfare Response

Social Welfare
Policy Response
Score: 5

A survey carried out in December 2020 showed that 26% of Portuguese residents saw their household income decrease during the pandemic, versus 69% that maintained their income and 5% that saw an increase (Crisóstomo 2020).

For the 26% that saw a reduction in income, the effects were quite severe. For over half (54%), their income during the pandemic was one-third or less of what they earned before the pandemic. In total, over 80% saw their income fall to 50% or less of what they earned before the pandemic. These effects have

contributed to an increase in poverty, with growing pressure on social solidarity institutions (RTP 2020) and the head of Portugal's Food Bank noting that shanty towns had returned to Lisbon during the pandemic (Pereira & Franco, 2020).

The government has sought to respond to critical situations as they arise. Thus, it provided support to independent workers without contracts and individuals within the informal sector without a record of making social security contributions. Many of these measures were introduced in the Social and Economic Stabilization Program approved in June 2020 (XII Governo Constitucional 2020), although some were brought in more recently, such as a supplement for low-income workers who had lost a third of their income due to layoffs, which was introduced in August (Almeida, 2020). These measures have helped prevent more extreme effects for many households.

The amounts involved in these measures are not high, as noted above ("Economic Recovery Package"). Portugal's direct support was comparatively small and largely used to support the layoff program. For instance, support for individuals in the informal sector is capped at €438.81 per month, with the same cap also applied to some other measures.

Moreover, accessing these funds requires certain criteria to be met and bureaucratic processing that can be inefficient, if not Kafkaesque, at times. For example, initially, to access the €438.81 per month support, lawyers need to prove that benefit claimants had sought and failed to get support from all close family members, including spouses, children, parents, siblings and even former spouses (Henriques 2020).

Finally, it should also be noted that some populations saw their vulnerability increase with the pandemic. Child protection services blocked visits to at-risk children early on (Pereira 2020), and the number of children at risk identified by the system fell by over 50% in March and April due to a lack of capacity to track children's circumstances (Público 2020).

Citation:

Almeida (2020). "Governo cria dois novos apoios únicos para trabalhadores e famílias que perderam rendimentos," Público, 4 June 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/06/04/politica/noticia/dois-novos-apoios-unicos-trabalhadores-familias-perderam-rendimentos-1919349>

Crisóstomo, P. (2020). "Quatro em cada cinco pessoas estão no local de trabalho habitual," Público, 17 December 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/12/17/economia/noticia/quatro-cinco-pessoas-estao-local-trabalho-habitual-1943242>

Henriques, A. (2020). "Covid-19: Advogados têm de processar a própria família para conseguirem subsídio," Público online, 22 September 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/09/22/sociedade/noticia/advogados-processar-propria-familia-consequirem-subsidio-covid19-1932426>

Pereira, A. C. (2020). “Crianças em risco de maus tratos deixaram de receber visitas de rotina dos técnicos,” Público online, 1 April 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/04/01/sociedade/noticia/criancas-risco-deixaram-receber-visitas-rotina-tecnicos-1909912>

Pereira, H. & Franco, G. (2020). “Isabel Jonet: ‘Voltou a haver barracas em Lisboa’,” Público, 4 June 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/06/04/sociedade/noticia/isabel-jonet-voltou-haver-barracas-cidade-lisboa-1919322>

Público (2020). “Durante a pandemia, sinalização de crianças em risco caiu 52%,” Público, 20 May 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/05/20/sociedade/noticia/durante-pandemia-sinalizacao-criancas-risco-caiu-52-1917334>

RTP (2020). “Pedidos de ajuda disparam,” RTP 2 October 2020, available online at: https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/economia/pedidos-de-ajuda-disparam_v1263881

XXII Governo Constitucional (2020). “Programa de Estabilização Económica e Social,” available online at: <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/download-ficheiros/ficheiro.aspx?v=%3d%3dBAAAAB%2bLCAAAAAAABACztLQ0BgCEWok2BAAAAA%3d%3d>

Healthcare System Response

Health Policy
Response
Score: 7

The healthcare system responded rapidly and mostly very effectively to the pandemic. It benefited from a centralized and largely responsive system, which ensured a coherent and integrated response.

In terms of resources, while the country presented a low number of intensive care beds and ventilators, it compensated for this with comparatively very high levels of testing early on. For instance, by late March 2020, Portugal was testing more people per 1,000 inhabitants than Germany and, by late April, the testing rate in Portugal was more than twice the rate in Germany (Romer et al. 2020). Overall, Portugal had the sixth highest number of tests per 1,000 inhabitants in the world by late May (Branco 2020).

This high testing capacity reflects the healthcare system’s swift and efficient response to mobilizing resources. As noted above (“R&I Policy Response”), scientific institutions were involved in the testing process. As a July 2020 article in the *Lancet* highlights, this was made possible by the efficient and swift response of the country’s healthcare system. As the article describes, early in the pandemic the head of one research institute reached out to the Directorate General of Health to help with testing. The response from the Directorate General of Health came within minutes and, a couple of days later, research institutes were testing for COVID-19 (Triunfol 2020).

The healthcare system was also largely efficient in mobilizing other human and material resources. As for the former, hospitals strengthened their staff numbers at the outset of the pandemic. As for the latter, while there were shortages of personal protective equipment in the initial stages of the pandemic, the healthcare system placed orders for more equipment early on (Pereirinha 2020) and these shortages seem to have been largely resolved by

April/May. Furthermore, the number of ventilators has increased by 72% since the outset of the pandemic (Maia 2020).

These measures – combined with an early lockdown: schools were closed when there were 331 confirmed COVID-19 cases and the first state of emergency was declared when there were 785 cases (Branco 2020) – allowed Portugal to avoid its vulnerable healthcare system being overwhelmed by the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, only 31% of the 620 intensive care units reserved for COVID-19 patients were occupied in May 2020 (Esteves 2020).

The scale of the second wave of the pandemic in late 2020 has been much larger than the first, in no small part due to the relaxation of lockdown rules. While occupancy rates of intensive care beds were much higher at the peak of the second wave in late November, in some cases exceeding 90%, the healthcare system managed to avoid being over-run in 2020 – in part because the number of hospital beds has increased since the start of the crisis (SIC Notícias 2020).

Portugal's strong response is reflected in the OECD's Health System Response Tracker, with Portugal being one of only seven countries (out of 45 assessed) that implemented all nine of the measures assessed (OECD 2020).

Within this largely positive response, there are two less positive aspects to note. The first is that non-urgent non-COVID-19 cases were postponed. The government estimates that, in 2020, hospitals will have 12.6% fewer appointments and carry out 21.6% fewer surgeries than in 2019 (Lopes & Maia 2020). The second is the limited use of the tracing app, as mentioned above (see "R&I Policy Response"). The app requires patients who have received a positive COVID-19 diagnosis to insert a code within the app. This code is provided to patients by their doctor, who must generate the code. In mid-October, only 1.9% of infected patients had received the code for the app (Pequenino & Neves 2020).

Citation:

Branco, J. (2020). "Why Portugal's Covid-19 test rate is more than double almost every other nation," Daily Telegraph, 26 May 2020, available online at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/portugals-covid-19-test-rate-double-almost-every-nation/>

Lopes, M. J. & Maia, A. (2020). "Um milhão e meio de consultas por fazer e menos 150 mil cirurgias até ao final do ano," Público 5 November 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/11/05/sociedade/noticia/milhao-meio-consultas-menos-150-mil-cirurgias-ate-final-ano-1938003>

Maia, A. (2020). "Número de ventiladores no SNS cresceu 72% desde o início da pandemia," Público, 14 December 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/12/14/sociedade/noticia/numero-ventiladores-sns-cresceu-72-desde-inicio-pandemia-1942922>

OECD (2020). "COVID-19 OECD Health System Response Tracker," available online at: <http://www.oecd.org/health/COVID19-OECD-Health-System-Response-Tracker.xlsx>

Pequenino, K. & Neves, S. (2020). "StayAway Covid: após 38 mil casos, foram gerados apenas 730 códigos de infectados," *Público*, 17 October 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/10/17/tecnologia/noticia/stayaway-covid-apos-38-mil-casos-gerados-apenas-730-codigos-infectados-1935607>

Roser, M., Ritchie, H., Ortiz-Ospina, E. & Hasell, J. (2020). "Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19)." Published online at OurWorldInData.org. Retrieved from: 'https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus' [Online Resource]

SIC Notícias (2020). "Covid-19 no Norte. Taxa de ocupação em UCI ultrapassa os 90% em alguns hospitais," available online at: <https://sicnoticias.pt/especiais/coronavirus/2020-11-17-Covid-19-no-Norte.-Taxa-de-ocupacao-em-UCI-ultrapassa-os-90-em-alguns-hospitais>

Triunfol, M. (2020). High COVID-19 testing rate in Portugal. *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, 20(7), 783.

Family Policy Response

Family Support
Policies
Score: 5

The already poor family policy response noted under "Family Policy Vulnerability" seems to have worsened in during the pandemic. For many independent working mothers, maternity leave payments fell to €50 per month from October 2020 on, because maternity leave payments are calculated based on the earnings of the first six of the eight months prior to childbirth, with a minimum amount of €50 per month. With the loss of income caused by the pandemic, many independent working mothers saw their maternity leave payment fall to the minimum amount (Cordeiro 2020). Moreover, the additional burden of family responsibilities during the lockdown appears to have fallen mostly on women (Pereira & Pimenta 2020).

Unsurprisingly, this is reflected in a further fall in the country's already low birth rate, with almost 2,000 fewer births between January and October 2020 than in the equivalent period in 2019 (Campos 2020).

This is one of those cases where the lack of resources in Portugal, which mean that men are often the main economic providers in families, is crucial. For example, the "Programa Nacional de Saude Infantil e Juvenil e Epidemia de Covid-19" stipulates extensive support for childcare, but does not define whether a mother or father is responsible.

Citation:

Campos, A. (2020). "Mais mortes e menos nascimentos. Portugal está com o maior saldo natural negativo do século," *Público*, 2 December 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/12/02/sociedade/noticia/mortes-menos-nascimentos-portugal-maior-saldo-natural-negativo-seculo-1941388>

Cordeiro, A. D. (2020). "Licenças de maternidade de recibos verdes pagas abaixo do salário mínimo a partir deste mês," *Público*, 11 October 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/10/11/sociedade/noticia/licencas-maternidade-recibos-verdes-pagas-abaixo-salario-minimo-partir-mes-1934645>

Pereira, A. C. & Pimenta, P. (2020). "Quem garante a retaguarda das mulheres na frente do combate à covid-19?," *Público*, 31 May 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/05/31/sociedade/noticia/garante-retaguarda-mulheres-frente-combate-covid19-1918380>

International
Cooperation
Score: 7

International Solidarity

The country rapidly provided support for Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa and East Timor to combat the pandemic, and drew up a plan of action to provide funding, training and equipment to these countries (Porto Canal 2020). Portugal also actively participated in the development of COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and tests.

Portugal has been supportive of international efforts to fight the pandemic. For example, former Prime Minister Durao Barroso became the president of the Global Alliance for Vaccines (GAVI) and the Portuguese government has committed funds to GAVI.

Citation:

Porto Canal (2020). "Covid-19: Apoio aos PALOP é de aplicação imediata e reajustável no tempo – MNE," available online at: <http://portocanal.sapo.pt/noticia/225871/>

<https://www.publico.pt/2020/09/29/mundo/noticia/durao-barroso-nomeado-presidente-alianca-global-vacinas-1933362>

<https://expresso.pt/coronavirus/2020-05-04-Covid-19-Angariacao-de-fundos-para-vacinas-chega-a-74-mil-milhoes-muito-perto-do-objetivo>

Resilience of Democracy

Media Freedom

Media Freedom
Score: 9

The independence of both public and private media has been institutionally protected and respected during the pandemic.

Media independence and freedom of the press is constitutionally enshrined in article 38 of the constitution.

During the pandemic, Portugal saw the first ever application of a state of emergency, first from 19 March until 2 May, and then from early November onward.

According to the constitution, a state of emergency “may only cause the suspension of the rights, freedoms and guarantees that are capable of being suspended,” and must be limited “to that which is strictly necessary for the prompt restoration of constitutional normality” (article 19 of the constitution).

In the case of the state of emergency decrees issued during the pandemic, none of the decrees included restrictions on the media. Moreover, the government explicitly stated that during a state of emergency “democracy cannot be suspended, in an open society” (XXII Governo Constitucional). By all accounts, it has practiced what it has preached: media freedom during the pandemic and the state of emergency periods was not constrained compared to pre-pandemic periods. Regarding public media, it should be noted that the CEO of the public TV and radio broadcaster, RTP (Radio and Television of Portugal, Rádio Televisão Portuguesa), is a registered member of the main opposition party.

The media are regulated by the Portuguese Regulatory Authority for the Media (ERC – Entidade Reguladora para a Comunicação Social). This body reflects article 39 of the constitution, stipulating that an “independent administrative entity shall be responsible for ensuring,” inter alia, freedom of the press, independence from political power and economic power, and that all currents of opinion are able to express themselves and confront one another.

Portugal does not have specific legislation regarding the provision of misinformation and fake news, though the introduction of such legislation has been discussed since at least 2018 (Henriques 2018). On the whole, established media have not disseminated fake news regarding the pandemic. Rather, the media approach has been very much to trust scientific knowledge. To the extent that there is disinformation, it is spread via social media, particularly Facebook, and through the “Doctors for Truth” and “Journalists for Truth” groups (the latter ironically led by a non-journalist). However, the impact of these groups is relatively limited: the most popular of these groups has 58,000 followers, a small fraction of Portugal’s estimated 7.2 million Facebook users (Bacelar 2019).

In this area, as in multiple others, membership in the European Union has been supportive of media freedom and dealing with “fake news.”

Citation:

Bacelar, R. (2019). “As 10 redes sociais mais usadas em Portugal em 2019,” 4gnews, 13 December 2019, available online at: <https://4gnews.pt/redes-sociais-mais-usadas/>

Henriques, J. P. (2018). “Leis para as ‘fake news’? Parlamento prepara caminho,” *Diário de Notícias*, 9 November 2018, available online at: <https://www.dn.pt/edicao-do-dia/09-nov-2018/leis-para-as-fake-news-parlamento-prepara-caminho-10151230.html>

Portuguese constitution, available online at: <https://dre.pt/constitution-of-the-portuguese-republic>

XXII Governo Constitucional (2020). “Decreto do Governo que regulamenta o estado de emergência,” available online at: <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/comunicacao/documento?i=decreto-do-governo-que-regulamenta-o-estado-de-emergencia->

https://ec.europa.eu/portugal/news/coronavirus-EU-strengthens-action-to-tackle-disinformation_pt

Civil Rights and Political Liberties

Civil Rights and
Political Liberties
Score: 9

As noted in “Media Freedom,” the constitution limits the rights that can be suspended during a state of emergency and the government has sought to restrict as few democratic rights as possible.

With regard to religious freedoms, the initial lockdown in March impeded religious services that involved people gathering together (Decree no. 2-A/2020, article 17). However, from mid-April on, the government met with religious leaders in order to prepare for a return to in-person religious services (Faria 2020a; Observador 2020). In late April, a timetable for gradually allowing services to resume from late May on (albeit with guidance from the health authorities) was announced (Faria 2020b). The government also allowed the exceptional celebration (albeit with restrictions) of a major Catholic celebration on 13 May (Almeida 2020).

With regard to political freedoms, the legislation on the state of emergency is very protective of these freedoms. Thus, the law on the state of emergency

stipulates that “the meetings of statutory bodies of political parties, unions and professional associations will in no case be prohibited, dissolved or submitted to prior authorization” during a state of emergency (article 2 of Law 44/86). This allowed, for instance, the holding of the Communist party’s congress in late November, during a state of emergency.

The government allowed the largest trade union confederation, the General Confederation of the Portuguese Workers (Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses – Intersindical Nacional, CGTP-IN), to organize Labor Day commemorations (with social distancing rules) on 1 May. Likewise, the Communist Party’s Avante! Festival was held in September, during a period when a state of emergency was not in place, with the government stating that the “Constitution and the law do not permit forbidding any political activity and initiative” (Lopes & Borges 2020).

While these political events created considerable controversy (as did a dinner rally organized by the radical-right Chega party in October), the government’s position has been to allow political activities and freedoms, including by groups that contest the government’s COVID-19 restrictions, such as the “Doctors for Truth” and “Journalists for Truth” groups.

The government has restricted freedom of movement, typically at weekends when it expected large numbers of people to move around, in order to reduce social contact. However, the application of these measures has been relatively pedagogic, with the police in the majority of cases simply informing violators of what the rules are rather than enforcing penalties.

Portugal’s protection of democratic freedoms during the pandemic is also evidenced in the latest Pandemic Violations of Democratic Standards Index of the V-Dem Institute. Covering the period of March to December 2020, this index states that Portugal is one of only eight European countries that have not violated democratic standards during the pandemic (V-Dem 2020).

It is important to note that laws defining the restrictions were found to be constitutional by the Superior Administrative Court in September 2020.

Citation:

Almeida, S. J. (2020). “Primeiro-ministro e cardeal-patriarca acordaram celebrações do 13 de Maio na Basílica de Fátima,” *Público*, 4 May 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/05/04/politica/noticia/primeiro-ministro-cardeal-patriarca-acordaram-celebracoes-13-maio-basilica-fatima-1914925>

Decree no. 2-A/2020, available online at: <https://dre.pt/application/conteudo/130473161>

Faria, N. (2020a). “Governo prepara levantamento das actuais restrições às celebrações religiosas,” *Público*, 19 April 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/04/19/sociedade/noticia/governo-prepara-levantamento-actuais-restricoes-celebracoes-religiosas-1912935>

Faria, N. (2020b). “Igrejas voltam a abrir-se aos fiéis a partir do último fim-de-semana de Maio,” Público, 30 April 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/04/30/sociedade/noticia/igrejas-voltam-abrirse-fieis-partir-fimde semana-1914678>

Law 44/86, available online at: <https://dre.pt/application/conteudo/221696>

Lopes, M. & Borges, L. (2020). “Governo diz que Constituição não permite proibir Festa do Avante!,” Público, 13 August 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/08/13/politica/noticia/governo-constituicao-nao-permite-proibir-festa-avante-1927996>

Observador (2020). “Confissões religiosas e Governo acertam regras sobre reinício da atividade religiosa,” Observador, 15 May 2020, available online at: <https://observador.pt/2020/05/15/confissoes-religiosas-e-governo-acertam-regras-sobre-reinicio-da-atividade-religiosa/>

V-Dem (2020). “Pandemic Backsliding: Democracy During COVID-19 (March to December 2020),” available online at: <https://www.v-dem.net/en/analysis/PanDem/>

<https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/ge22comunicacao/comunicado?i=acordao-do-supremo-tribunal-administrativo-valida-constitucionalidade-das-medidas-de-controlo-da-pandemia-aprovadas-pelo-governo>

Judicial Review

Judicial Review
Score: 8

Courts are able to review actions taken during the pandemic and judicial review was not curtailed either de jure or de facto. Likewise, decisions have been mostly swift. The best example of this is the court system’s handling of the pandemic measures of the regional government of the Azores. From 26 March, the regional government established that anyone landing in the Atlantic archipelago had to quarantine for a compulsory 14 days, with non-residents staying in hotels and residents at home.

On 10 May, a Portuguese citizen with a negative COVID-19 test contested this rule, requesting habeas corpus for illegal detention. On 16 May, the first instance judicial court granted habeas corpus and ordered the immediate release of the citizen (Expresso 2020). While the Public Prosecutor appealed this decision, it was upheld in August by the Constitutional Court, which declared the regional government’s compulsory quarantine unconstitutional (Portugal News 2020).

Citation:

Expresso (2020). “Afinal o Governo dos Açores não podia decretar quarentenas,” available online at: <https://expresso.pt/coronavirus/2020-05-16-Afinal-o-Governo-dos-Acores-nao-podia-decretar-quarentenas>

Portugal News (2020). “Azores quarantine considered a violation of the constitution,” available online at: <https://www.theportugalnews.com/news/azores-quarantine-considered-a-violation-of-the-constitution/55218>

Informal Democratic Rules

Informal
Democratic Rules
Score: 9

The October 2019 legislative elections widened the ideological spectrum represented in parliament, particularly as two new parties further to the right entered parliament: the populist radical right Enough (CH, Chega) and the avowedly economic liberal Liberal Initiative (IL, Iniciativa Liberal).

However, this has not translated into a significantly higher level of polarization in the management of the pandemic crisis. While disagreements inevitably emerge, the parties have, by and large, avoided politicizing the management of the pandemic. Moreover, the largest opposition party, the center-right Social Democratic Party (PSD, Partido Social Democrata) has largely supported the government's measures.

While the opposition's support has inevitably eroded as the pandemic endured, it remains considerable. The first state of emergency of March 2020 had the support of 216 members of parliament (out of 230 in Portugal's parliament), with the remaining 14 abstaining. The last state of emergency of 2020, voted by parliament on 17 December, had the backing of 188 members of parliament: those of the two main parties, the governing Socialist Party (PS, Partido Socialista) and the largest opposition party, PSD, as well as one independent member of parliament. As for the remaining votes, there were 27 abstentions and 15 votes against (Botelho 2021). Moreover, it should be noted there has been a strong practice of dialogue between political parties, the government and the elected president in Portugal's semi-presidential system with regard to the country's response to the COVID-19 crisis, which has contributed to the low level of party polarization.

Citation:

Botelho, L. (2021). "Estado de emergência: mais oito dias apenas com o apoio do bloco central," Público, 4 January 2021, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2021/01/04/politica/noticia/estado-emergencia-oito-dias-apenas-apoio-bloco-central-1944904>

Resilience of Governance

I. Executive Preparedness

Crisis Management System

Crisis
Management
System
Score: 6

Portugal's crisis management systems prior to the COVID-19 pandemic were considered reasonably solid. The 2019 Global Health Security System Index, which assesses "health security and related capabilities," and their ability to "respond to infectious disease outbreaks that can lead to international epidemics and pandemics," ranked Portugal 20th worldwide and 14th in Europe (GHS 2019).

Within this index, Portugal's ranking for the detection category was comparatively low, ranking only 61st out of 195 countries assessed. This score was particularly weighed down by the low epidemiology workforce, though the country scored comparatively well (in the top 20) for laboratory systems, and real-time surveillance and reporting.

Portugal's preparedness was much higher in terms of the response category, ranking eighth worldwide. Within this category, Portugal ranked very well for emergency response operations (10th worldwide) and response plan exercises (11th worldwide), though less so for emergency preparedness and response planning (38th).

It should be noted that the country strengthened its health crisis systems ahead of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2016, the Centre for Public Health Emergencies (CESP, Centro de Emergências em Saúde Pública) was established. Operating within the Health Ministry's Directorate General of Health (DGS, Direção Geral da Saúde), CESP is tasked with strengthening "the systems for the early detection of health threats, anticipating them, as well as increasing the capacity for monitoring indicators and warning signs, promoting communication in terms of response and intensifying the respective coordination capacity" (Portal SNS 2016). Prior to that, in 2009, the country

established the System of Public Health Vigilance (Law no. 81/2009), that inter alia created the National Council for Public Health, with “advisory functions to the government in the field of prevention and control of communicable diseases and other risks to public health and, in particular, for the analysis and evaluation of serious situations, namely large-scale epidemic outbreaks and pandemics” (article 4, Law no. 81/2009).

The healthcare system responded rapidly to the emerging pandemic, not least in terms of ensuring an adequate stock of personal protective equipment (PPE). Thus, in early March – when new daily cases were around two to three and total cases below 10 – a daily COVID-19 meeting of various healthcare system bodies agreed to increase PPE stocks by 20% (XXII Governo Constitucional 2020a). As noted above (“Health System Response”), while there were some shortages of personal protective equipment in the initial stages of the pandemic, these seem to have been mostly resolved by April/May.

Within the government itself, a crisis cabinet was established on 19 March, which comprised the prime minister and eight of his ministers (XXII Governo Constitucional 2020b).

Unfortunately, in Portugal, as in several other countries, there was a second wave of COVID-19 cases. In Portugal, the second wave came in late October/early November 2020 and resulted in a second state of emergency. The president of the republic announced the decree on 5 November, following the approval of the parliament based on the support of the government.

Citation:

GHS (2019). “2019 Global Health Security Index,” available online at: <https://www.ghsindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2019-Global-Health-Security-Index.pdf>

Law no. 81/2009, available online at: http://www.pgdlisboa.pt/leis/lei_mostra_articulado.php?nid=1981&tabela=leis&ficha=1&pagina=1

Portal SNS (2016). “Criação do Centro dge Emergências em Saúde Pública,” 19/09/2016, available online at: <https://www.sns.gov.pt/2016/09/19/criacao-do-centro-de-emergencias-em-saude-publica/>

XXII Governo Constitucional (2020a). “Reunião diária Covid19 de 4 março 2020,” available online at: <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/comunicacao/comunicado?i=reuniao-diaria-covid19-de-4-marco-2020>

XXII Governo Constitucional (2020b). “Constituído gabinete de crise,” available online at: <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/comunicacao/noticia?i=constituído-gabinete-de-crise>

Raphael Minder, “In Lisbon, Finding Care is a ‘Door to Door’ Ordeal,” New York Times February 3, 2021.

II. Executive Response

Effective Policy Formulation

Effective Policy
Formulation
Score: 7

The government's initial response to the pandemic crisis was swift and effective. As noted in "Health System Response," during the first wave, the country introduced a lockdown comparatively early, which prevented its vulnerable healthcare system from being overwhelmed by the pandemic. The response to the pandemic was informed by expert advice from various fields. With regard to input from health experts, the government established a regular meeting of health specialists and political decision-makers – including government officials, the president and representatives of all parliamentary political parties – as well as trade union and business sector representatives, and other stakeholders. The first of these meetings took place on 24 March, with a total of 10 sessions held initially weekly and then fortnightly during the first wave (the last of which was held on 24 July). While a regular meeting schedule was not subsequently established, this group met again in early September, in November and a further time in December.

The government also engaged in consultations with experts from other fields. For example, the prime minister regularly met with a number of leading economists to discuss economic recovery policies, beginning as early as mid-April (XXII Governo Constitucional) and continuing in October 2020 (Público 2020). The input from experts has also been taken into account during the second wave. For example, the minister of health and the minister of state for the presidency met with experts in late October to solicit advice on how to address the emerging second wave (Renascença 2020). Overall, the experts selected represent a diverse body of opinion and by all accounts this group was not closed to new members.

The one caveat to make to this very positive response is that policy was less effective in the run-up to and during the second wave. As in many other countries, after the first lockdown ended in May/June 2020, the government sought to reconcile controlling the pandemic with revitalizing the economy by adopting a tiered system of localized restrictions to react to changes in local conditions. Inevitably, this generated less efficient policies given the associated complexity, and the inevitable tension between keeping the economy open and containing the pandemic. This led to a rising number of cases at the end of 2020, which seems to have been exacerbated by the relaxation of rules over the Christmas period.

Citation:

Público (2020). “Primeiro-ministro ouve economistas e empresários sobre Plano de Recuperação e Resiliência,” Público, 5 October 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/10/05/politica/noticia/primeiroministro-ouve-economistas-empresarios-plano-recuperacao-resiliencia-1934061>

Renascença (2020). “Covid-19: Governo reúne-se com especialistas para decidir novas medidas,” 28 October 2020, available online at: <https://rr.sapo.pt/2020/10/28/pais/covid-19-governo-reune-se-com-especialistas-para-decidir-novas-medidas/noticia/212760/>

XXII Governo Constitucional (2020). “Primeiro-Ministro reúne-se com académicos e economistas sobre as medidas de relançamento económico,” 13 April 2020, available online at: <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/comunicacao/comunicado?i=primeiro-ministro-reune-se-com-academicos-e-economistas-sobre-as-medidas-de-relancamento-economico>

Interview by President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa on RTP November 2, 2020.

Policy Feedback and Adaptation

Policy Feedback
and Adaptation
Score: 7

The government has actively and regularly assessed its measures and sought policy feedback. A good example of this are the regular meetings of political decision-makers with health specialists noted in “Effective Policy Formulation” above. Policies have also been adapted as new knowledge emerges. Overall, there has been a high level of policy feedback and adaptation, especially during the first wave of the pandemic that began in March 2020.

When the second COVID-19 wave became obvious in early November 2020, a series of meetings to discuss a second state of emergency, involving medical specialists, politicians and civil society representatives, began on 19 November. The government maintained and renewed the Economic and Social Stability Program in much the same way as during the first wave. However, in November 2020, they emphasized economic support for two specific groups of enterprises: those that were hit particularly hard during the first wave and export-oriented businesses.

Public Consultation

Public
Consultation
Score: 7

The government has actively and regularly consulted societal actors regarding its policy response to the pandemic. One example of this are the regular meetings noted in “Effective Policy Formulation,” which included not only political decision-makers and health specialists but also a number of other stakeholders, including trade unions, business associations, and – in the most recent meeting of 3 December – the national associations of local government and the Catholic Patriarchate of Lisbon (Público 2020a). Likewise, the elaboration of the Social and Economic Stabilization Program, and of the Recovery and Resilience Plan, mentioned in previous questions, received input from trade unions, business associations, local government representatives and selected business leaders (Público 2020b).

The most recent 2020 V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index ranked Portugal seventh worldwide (V-Dem 2020). As one of the coordinators of this research noted, the extent of political dialogue and consensus in Portugal is a key explanatory factor for this ranking, and gave the country's pandemic response as an example of dialogue and consensus-building between political forces and civil society (Botelho 2020).

Societal consultation has, therefore, been pluralistic and fair at the input level, and no groups were systematically excluded from this debate. However, not all groups influence policy equally.

Citation:

Botelho, L. (2020). "Portugal: será o consenso o segredo da 7.ª melhor democracia do mundo?," *Público*, 13 April 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/04/13/politica/noticia/portugal-sera-consenso-segredo-7-melhor-democracia-mundo-1911989>

Público (2020a). "Costa convoca partidos e parceiros sociais para reunião no Infarmed na quinta-feira," *Público*, 30 November 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/11/30/politica/noticia/costa-convoca-partidos-parceiros-sociais-reuniao-infarmed-quinta-feira-1941209>

Público (2020b). "Primeiro-ministro ouve economistas e empresários sobre Plano de Recuperação e Resiliência," *Público*, 5 October 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/10/05/politica/noticia/primeiroministro-ouve-economistas-empresarios-plano-recuperacao-resiliencia-1934061>

V-Dem (2020). "Democracy Report 2020," available online at: https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/de/39/de39af54-0bc5-4421-89ae-fb20dcc53dba/democracy_report.pdf

Crisis Communication

Crisis
Communication
Score: 6

The government established a regular and consistent model of communication at the outset of the pandemic. However, with time, this model has become less effective.

The main bulk of communication has been through the regular press conferences of the Health Ministry's Directorate General of Health (DGS, *Direção Geral da Saúde*), with the presence of the minister of health and the most senior civil servant in the DGS, the director-general for health.

These press conferences began in early March and were held daily until mid-June, after which they were held three times a week (Silva 2020). Since late November, they have become somewhat more sporadic, though in part this was due to the director-general for health contracting COVID-19.

These long press conferences, while providing a great deal of information, gradually led to an over-saturation of information. Moreover, the participation of non-experts in these conferences led to instances of miscommunication. For example, in mid-December, a DGS press conference presented

recommendations for the Christmas period, with the sub-director general for health's recommendations unintentionally going viral (Davim 2020).

The government's communication challenges became more evident during the second wave of the pandemic. As noted above ("Effective Policy Formulation"), this period saw the introduction of a more complex system than the generalized lockdown of the first wave, as the government sought to balance economic and health concerns. The complexity of the new rules, and the changes they entailed, generated additional communication challenges that were not fully met, particularly as new restrictions were introduced in November. That much was recognized by the prime minister, who publicly acknowledged a number of government communication failings (Borges 2020).

Citation:

Borges, L. (2020). "“A culpa é toda minha. O mensageiro transmitiu mal a mensagem,” diz Costa,” Público, 12 November 2020, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/11/12/politica/noticia/culpa-mensageiro-transmitiu-mal-mensagem-costa-1939017>

Davim, M. (2020). "Quem é o médico que nos recomenda dar compota no Natal?," Sábado, 17 December 2020, available online at: <https://www.sabado.pt/portugal/detalhe/quem-e-o-medico-que-nos-recomenda-dar-compota-no-natal>

Implementation of Response Measures

Implementation
of Response
Measures
Score: 8

The implementation of the crisis measures across various sectors – health, education and social protection – has been impartial, generally swift and largely effective. Public administration mobilized toward the response to the crisis in a manner that was far more rapid and efficient than pre-existing conditions would have suggested.

The country quickly developed a tracing system, Trace COVID-19, which was announced in late March. This has proven largely effective, gaining international recognition and largely perceived as positive by doctors (SNS 2020; Pinheiro 2020; Cerca 2020).

This is not to say that implementation of measures was flawless. However, on the whole, the system has been able to respond and overcome initial challenges. A good example of this is the phone line system that serves as a first contact point for COVID-19 triage. This line was inundated by calls in March 2020, with one in three calls not being answered and an average call waiting time of 26 minutes. By October, almost 98% of calls were answered and the average waiting time fell to only 57 seconds (Saúde Mais 2020).

The successful implementation of measures benefited from the centralization and adaptability of Portugal's administrative machinery. It also crucially

benefited from the general consensus regarding the crisis measures, which meant that it did not face significant vested interests openly opposed to the government's measures.

If implementation includes failing to discourage people from interacting over Christmas and New Year's Eve, which resulted in a huge spike in the numbers of infections and deaths, then implementation would have to be graded much lower in the above scale.

In the struggle against COVID-19, as in so much else, one has to recall the critical importance of EU membership. This has implications not only for domestic policies, but also the relationship with and travel between other countries, especially neighboring Spain.

Citation:

Cerca, F. (2020). "TRACE COVID@: inteligência artificial ao nível dos Cuidados de Saúde Primários?," Ordem dos Médicos, 22 July 2020, available online at: <https://ordemdosmedicos.pt/trace-covid-inteligencia-artificial-ao-nivel-dos-cuidados-de-saude-primarios/>

Saúde Mais (2020). "Linha SNS24 atende 97% das chamadas e tem tempo de espera de 57 segundos – ministra," 9 October 2020, available online at: <https://www.saudemais.tv/noticia/23564-linha-sns24-atende-97-das-chamadas-e-tem-tempo-de-espera-de-57-segundos-ministra>

SNS (2020). "Plataforma Autoreport e Trace COVID-19," 17 December 2020, available online at: <https://www.sns.gov.pt/noticias/2020/12/17/plataforma-autoreport-e-trace-covid-19/>

Pinheiro, L. G. (2020). "O Nosso Segredo: O Trace Covid-19," Associação Portuguesa para o Desenvolvimento Hospitalar, 8 June 2020, available online at: <https://www.apdh.pt/artigo/26#>

https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/recovery-plan-europe_pt

National Coordination

National
Coordination
Score: 8

Portugal is one of the most centralized countries in western Europe. A total of 308 municipalities represent the main subnational level of government. However, few tasks are decentralized, which is reflected in very low levels of subnational public expenditure. According to the most recent Eurostat figures (Eurostat 2020), subnational government expenditure in Portugal accounted for 5.7% of GDP in 2019, practically half of the EU-28 average (10.6%). The central government was thus able to shape and implement policy largely without the need to coordinate with subnational governments. While the role of municipalities in the country's pandemic response has been relatively limited, the government and municipalities have sought to coordinate their responses. Thus, the National Association of Municipalities' analysis of the pandemic response noted the fruitful communication it had established with the government (ANMP 2020, p. 1).

Regional government exists only in the Atlantic Island regions of the Azores and Madeira. In these cases, regional authorities had considerably greater autonomy in responding to the pandemic, which allowed them to engage in

more aggressive and regionally specific measures that reflected their insular natures. This enabled the regional authorities to keep infection numbers at much lower levels than continental Portugal.

The collaboration between the central government, municipalities and other organizations has been mainly concerned with the pandemic. In other aspects, including economic and social, the central government has implemented its policies without much involvement from municipalities or the autonomous regions.

:

ANMP (2020). “Pandemia Covid-19: A Importância da Participação dos Municípios na Resposta à Crise,” available online at: https://www.anmp.pt/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2020101490_0.pdf

Eurostat (2020). “Government revenue, expenditure and main aggregates,” available online at: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=gov_10a_main&lang=en

Duarte Caldeira “Covid-19: Investigador identifica fragilidade no relacionamento entre municípios e Governo” LUSA 01-05-2020

International Coordination

International
Coordination
Score: 8

Portugal has been a committed and active member of the international community in recent years (indeed, since democratization) and continued to be during the COVID-19 crisis. This generally active role was strengthened by the country’s Presidency of the European Council in the first semester of 2021 and its participation in the council presidency trio throughout the pandemic. The European Presidency role has meant that Portugal’s institutional capacity to contribute to international efforts was strengthened ahead of the crisis. Given its role in the presidency trio, Portugal has been particularly active in contributing to the European Union’s response to the pandemic.

Portugal has also been especially active in GAVI (the Global Alliance for Vaccines), which is led by Duraõ Barroso, a former prime minister of Portugal. Portugal has contributed €100,000 to GAVI. In addition, there is a program to encourage startups to respond to the pandemic.

Learning and Adaptation

Learning and
Adaptation
Score: 5

As noted in SGI reports for Portugal, policy evaluation and monitoring of institutional arrangements are comparatively underdeveloped elements of the country’s governance structure. While policymakers do reflect on existing crisis management systems and make changes, these assessments are conducted on an ad hoc basis rather than as part of an institutionalized process of evaluation, learning and adaptation. In addition, during the pandemic, the focus has been more on responding to the COVID-19 crisis rather than on improving institutional evaluation and adaptation processes.

On the other hand, policymakers do pay great attention to the experience of other countries. By and large, policy formulation actively seeks to take into account international benchmarks and best practices.

III. Resilience of Executive Accountability

Open Government

Open
Government
Score: 5

The government has a dedicated website that provides a range of information to citizens, both regarding the evolution of the pandemic and policies.

A subpage of this website offers an overview of the current situation of the pandemic and provides a wide range of information, including the numbers of total cases, active cases, recovered cases, deaths and hospitalizations (total and in ICU), as well as cases by municipality, age and gender. It also includes all daily situation reports regarding the pandemic in Portugal from 26 February 2020 on as well as policy documents (e.g., most recently, the Vaccination Plan for Portugal).

On the whole, data for citizens is fairly complete. However, researchers have noted the data compiled by the DGS has some errors (Campos 2020). An academic study (that has not yet been published in a peer-reviewed journal) compared the DGS dataset from April with that of August and found a “significant number of missing data and inconsistencies” (Costa-Santos et al. 2020).

:
Costa-Santos, C., Neves, A.L., Correia, R., Santos, P., Monteiro-Soares, M., Freitas, A., Ribeiro-Vaz, I., Henriques, T., Rodrigues, P.P., Costa-Pereira, A. and Pereira, A.M. (2020). COVID-19 surveillance-a descriptive study on data quality issues. medRxiv, available online at: <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.11.03.20225565v1.full.pdf>
<https://covid19.min-saude.pt>

Legislative Oversight

Legislative
Oversight
Score: 8

Legislative oversight has been maintained in Portugal both de facto and de jure during the pandemic. First, it should be noted that the declaration of a state of emergency does not depend on the government. Rather, it is called by the popularly elected president of the republic (and dependent on his hearing of the government) and has to be approved by parliament.

The legal checks and balances with regard to a state of emergency were reinforced in the context of the pandemic by the fact that the president and

government ministers belong to different political parties, that no single party has a parliamentary majority, and that the executive is a minority government.

Consistent with the constitutional restrictions regarding states of emergency and the government’s indication that “democracy cannot be suspended” (see “Media Freedom” above), the state of emergency decrees and the pandemic have not led to any de jure restrictions on parliamentary oversight. While it has obliged the parliament to revise its procedures to avoid social contact, it has established the possibility of members of parliament participating in plenary sessions and committee meetings via video conferencing (Observador 2020).

In addition, parliament has established a parliamentary committee for monitoring the application of measures to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the economic and social recovery process. In December 2020, this committee had three separate hearings with government ministers (the minister of health, the minister of economy and the minister of social solidarity).

:
 Assembleia da República (2021). Comissão Eventual para o acompanhamento da aplicação das medidas de resposta à pandemia da doença COVID-19 e do processo de recuperação económica e social, available online at: <https://www.parlamento.pt/sites/com/XIVLeg/CEAMCOVID19/Paginas/default.aspx>
 Observador (2020). “Covid-19. Assembleia da República vai ter novas regras com parte dos deputados a participar via gabinetes,” Observador, 17 November 2020, available online at: <https://observador.pt/2020/11/17/covid-19-assembleia-da-republica-vai-ter-novas-regras-com-parte-dos-deputados-a-participar-via-gabinetes/>
www.parlamento.pt

Independent Supervisory Bodies

Auditing
 Score: 8

The Court of Audits (Tribunal de Contas) adjusted its mechanisms to allow for assessment through digital means beginning in early April (Tribunal de Contas 2020a). It has also maintained an active and largely swift ex post assessment of expenditure for the pandemic. In July 2020, it published its first report of budgetary execution for COVID-19 measures, covering the first three months of the pandemic (Tribunal de Contas 2020b), as well as its first assessment of contracts under new exceptional rules for the pandemic (Tribunal de Contas 2020c). In October, it published its assessment of the impact of the pandemic on the activity and access to the national healthcare system (TC 2020c). And, in early 2021, it published its second assessment of contracts under new exceptional rules for the pandemic (Tribunal de Contas 2020d).

The Court of Audits is largely able to conduct audits effectively. However, its most recent assessment of early January reiterates that there are some insufficiencies in the publication and communication of information which “limit a better and more detailed assessment of contracts” (Tribunal de Contas 2020e).

:
 Tribunal de Contas (2020a). Resolução n.º 1/2020, available online at: <https://dre.pt/application/conteudo/132936736>
 Tribunal de Contas (2020b). “Relatório de Acompanhamento da Execução Orçamental – COVID-19 Medidas e Reporte nos primeiros 3 meses,” 22 July 2020, available online at: <https://www.tcontas.pt/pt-pt/ProdutosTC/Relatorios/RelatoriosAcompanhamentoExecucaoOrcamental/Documents/2020/aeo-dgtec-rel01-2020-2s.pdf>
 Tribunal de Contas (2020c). “Relatório de Acompanhamento dos Contratos Abrangidos pelo Regime de Exceção previsto na Lei n.º 1-A/2020, incluindo os Isentos de Fiscalização Prévia,” 21 July 2020, available online at: <https://www.tcontas.pt/pt-pt/ProdutosTC/Relatorios/relatorios-oac/Documents/2020/relatorio-oac-2020-03.pdf>
 Tribunal de Contas (2020d). “2.º Relatório Intercalar de acompanhamento dos contratos abrangidos pelo regime de exceção previsto na Lei n.º 1-A/2020, incluindo os isentos de fiscalização prévia,” 5 January 2021, available online at: <https://www.tcontas.pt/pt-pt/ProdutosTC/Relatorios/relatorios-oac/Documents/2020/relatorio-oac-2020-06.pdf>
 Tribunal de Contas (2020e). “Contratação pública no regime de exceção, de junho a setembro: saúde com os valores mais significativos,” 5 January 2021, available online at: <https://dre.pt/application/conteudo/132936736>

Data Protection
 Score: 8

Portugal has had the National Authority for Data Protection (Comissão Nacional de Protecção de Dados, CNPD) since 1994.

The CNPD plays an active role in data protection issues and has done so during the pandemic. It has issued a number of orientations, deliberations and opinions regarding privacy and data protection issues arising from the pandemic, ranging from the health data that employers can obtain during the pandemic to assessments of the tracing platform and app that have been developed (CNPD 2020a).

Previous SGI reports noted that budgetary restrictions had limited the CNPD’s ability to carry out its tasks. Indeed, the introduction to the most recent CNPD activity report, for the years 2017 and 2018, notes that the authority “cannot ensure the full execution of its tasks” given the conditions it has faced (CNPD 2019). While this lack of resources still remains (Caçador 2020), the CNPD has been swift in responding to data protection issues related to the pandemic. A good example is the tracing app mentioned in “R&I Policy Response.” This was submitted for ex ante assessment of the CNPD on 15 June and the CNPD made its deliberation on 29 June (CNPD 2020b).

:
 Caçador, F. (2020). “CNPD já avaliou mais de 2 mil processos no âmbito do RGPD. Foram registadas 557 violações de dados,” Sapo Tek, 29 May 2020, available online at: <https://tek.sapo.pt/noticias/negocios/artigos/cnpd-ja-avaliou-mais-de-2-mil-processos-no-ambito-do-rgpd-foram-registadas-557-violacoes-de-dados>
 CNPD (2019), Relatório de Atividades 2017-2018, available online at: https://www.cnpd.pt/media/fjhffphw/relatorio_201718.pdf
 CNPD (2020a). COVID-19, available online at: <https://www.cnpd.pt/covid-19/>
 CNPD (2020b). Deliberação 2020/277, available online at: <https://www.cnpd.pt/umbraco/surface/cnpdDecision/download/121773>

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