

# THE QUALITY OF PORTUGUESE DEMOCRACY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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## 1. Introduction: Auditing Democracy

In the past thirty years Portuguese democracy became an important success story of what Samuel P. Huntington has called Third Wave of Democratization, which is evolving since the 1970s. (Huntington, 1993). The number of studies on Portuguese democratic transition and consolidation has increased substantially in the past three decades. This contrasts heavily with the period before 1974, which was characterized by a lack of studies both inside as well as outside the country. The authoritarian regime saw social sciences with suspicion, and in particular political science, which is extremely linked to the modern world of democracy. Indeed, political science defined in our days can be only a democratic science, so that it is indeed value-laden. Their results are linked to the continuing effort to improve democracy as a never ending open-ended effort. In Portugal, political science had major difficulties to emerge as an important support for Portuguese democracy. Although political science studies existed since the Revolution of Carnations, it is only in the late 1980s that a more systematic critical approach towards the Portuguese political system began to emerge. A community of scholars began to emerge who together began to unveil the mechanisms of Portuguese democracy. The institutionalization of the discipline found its climax with the foundation of the Portuguese Political Science Association (*Associação Portuguesa de Ciência Política - APCP*) in November 1998. Since then, two excellent conferences took place in 1999 and 2002. A new generation of excellent scholars is making big efforts to catch up with the rest of the world in this field.

Although Portuguese democracy can be regarded as a success, the young Portuguese political science had still not the possibility to make a systematic assessment of the quality of democracy. Such assessment of the quality of democracy is difficult to undertake. Since the 1990s, the work of David Beetham has helped to clarify the criteria of such democracy assessment. His studies on Auditing Democracy in the United Kingdom have led to the development of instruments for similar studies in other countries. A good example is the studies undertaken by David F. J. Campbell and his team on Austria in 1996 and more recently in 2003. David Beetham is aware that any auditing of democracy is a risky business, due to the fact that different people have different conceptions of it. (Beetham, 1996: 20) Democracy means also different things in different parts of the world. In this sense, our intention is to look at the quality of Portuguese democracy from a European Union democracy understanding. The development of the Copenhagen criteria, the European social model and the discussions on democratic legitimacy within the European Union, allows us to extrapolate some ideas of how democracy quality can be operationalised.

Indeed, the European Union is regarded as one of the most advanced regions of democratic peace, meaning that the members are oriented by liked-minded values which clearly constitute a pressure to adhere too. The institutions within and around the European Union further help to strengthen this like-mindedness. The recent enlargement to central and eastern Europe and the Mediterranean islands was characterized by this acquired taken-for-granted

values. In the past two decades the European Union improved their instruments to achieve comparability between member-states. Moreover, Bentham's auditing efforts led to the establishment of a handbook of democracy auditing by the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) based in Stockholm (IDEA, 2003). Indeed, IDEA's assessment framework is ideal to look at the quality of democracy in Portugal.

**TABLE 1:ASSESSMENT CATEGORIES OF QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY**

CATEGORIES OF ASSESSMENT	SUBCATEGORIES	COMMENTS
CITIZENSHIP, LAW AND RIGHTS	Nationhood and Citizenship	Inclusiveness of state citizenship, protection of ethnic groups
	The Rule of Law and Access to Justice	The coverage of the territory by the same rule of law, access to justice, proper conduct of law cases
	Civil and Political Rights	Protection of human and civil rights, protection from physical violence
	Economic and Social Rights	Access to public goods, education, health, infrastructures
REPRESENTATIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT	Free and Fair Elections	Conduct and outcome of the elections, appropriateness of representativeness, control of the population over governments and policies
	Democratic Role of Political Parties	The ability of parties to act freely, level of internal democracy in parties
	Government Effectiveness and Accountability	Executive-legislative relations, auditing institutions
	Civilian Control of the Military and Police	The ability of government to control military and police, the freedom from criminal gangs, warlordism, mafia
	Minimizing Corruption	The ability to counteract against corruption of civil servants and politicians
CIVIL SOCIETY AND POPULAR PARTICIPATION	The Media in a Democratic Society	Media support of democracy, independence of media
	Political Participation	The level of participation of citizens, equality of access, gender equality, civil society
	Government Responsiveness	Is the government responding to the concerns of citizens
	Decentralisation	The appropriateness of decision-making level, inclusion of social partners, relationship between centre and periphery
DEMOCRACY BEYOND THE STATE	International Dimensions of Democracy	Consistency of foreign policy in relation to democracy, support of the UN Charter and policies

**Source:** David Beetham, Sarah Bracking, Iain Kearton and Stuart Weir, *International IDEA Handbook on Democracy Assessment*. The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2001 and IDEA, Democracy Assessment. The Basics of the International IDEA Framework, p.9-12, <http://www.idea.int>, accessed on 6 August 2004

According to David Beetham, the best way to study the quality of democracy is to look at its basic principles. He defines two principles as being central to democracy. They are:

- Popular control over public decisions and decision-making
- Equality of respect and voice between citizens in the exercise of that control

These principles can only be achieved by mediating values which ensure the concrete realization of the principles. Table 1 summarizes the overall grid of categories and their more specific concrete issues. It is such a grid that will facilitate us to make a general and brief auditing of Portuguese democracy today.

The rest of the paper is divided in the four main categories suggested by the IDEA Assessment framework. It allows us to give some structure to what may be considered as a very difficult task.

## **2. CITIZENSHIP, LAW AND RIGHTS**

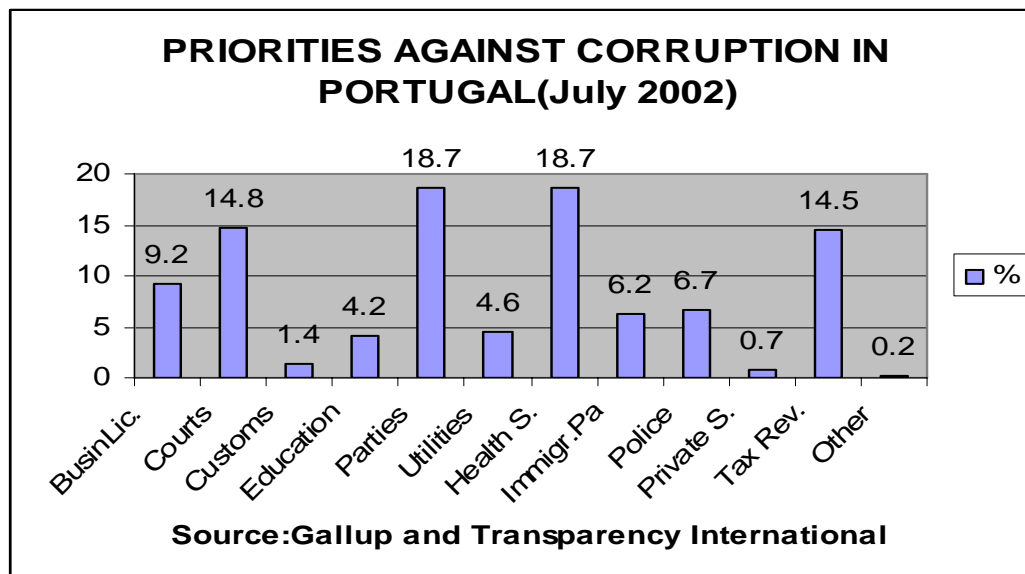
The first category of the assessment grid is concerned with aspects related to the rule of the law. It includes also questions about the way a particular country deals with minorities. One of the most important characteristics of Portugal is that it is one of the oldest nation-states. Despite of centuries of war with neighbor Spain, the borders of continental Portugal have been more or less intact. The homogeneity of the territory was also characterized until the 1970s by a strong homogeneity of the population. During and after the decolonization process, Portugal had to absorb over 400,000 so-called *retornados* from the former colonies which led to a different society. Despite of many problems, the country was able to integrate these newcomers. Nationally and internationally, this was regarded as a success story. Indeed, these *retornados* are indistinguishable from mainstream Portuguese society. Nevertheless, in the 1990s Portugal, a traditional emigration country, became a target for immigration from African countries, particularly the former colonies, and South America, in particular Brazil. This naturally changed the nature of Portuguese society. It is today a more heterogeneous society with ethnic minorities. Although expressions of xenophobia and latent racism were registered against the under-privileged black African population, in general terms Portugal has been free of strong xenophobic parties. Indeed, the National Renewal Party (*Partido Renovador Nacional-PNR*) which belongs to the European family of xenophobic parties such as Nick Griffin's British National Party or Jean Marie Le Pen's Front Nationale received only very few votes across Portugal. In comparison to new democracies such as Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia and Romania, Portugal is blessed by very peaceful relations between different ethnic groups. It shows also that there is no general feeling of threat of the national identity. This suggests that Portuguese society continues to be quite moderate in terms of their attitudes towards otherness.

Portuguese identity is today firmly linked to the European integration process. Indeed, after decades of isolation due to the authoritarian dictatorship, Portuguese are very keen to be part of the European family of democracies. Identity clearly is linked to democratic citizenship and all rights and duties that entails.

The arbitrariness of the former authoritarian regime makes justice and the rule of law among the most important indicators for assessing the improvement of democracy. Although the rule of law is firmly embedded in the

Portuguese political system and access to justice is ensured in the constitution and in practice, one has to be concerned about its quality. A major study conducted by Boaventura Sousa Santos and his team brought to the fore evidence about very slow and inefficient running of the justice system. One of the main issues is naturally the continuing difficulties of qualitative for the vast majority of the population to have qualitative and equal access to the justice system. Negative perceptions of entitled legal defense, lead poor people to reject it. The Portuguese judiciary system is characterized by lack of human and financial resources to deal with the cumulative number of cases.

**TABLE 2: PERCEIVED AREAS OF CORRUPTION IN PORTUGAL (2002)**



In the Global Corruption Barometer conducted by Gallup on behalf of Transparency International, Portuguese regard that it is important to tackle corruption in the judiciary sector as a third priority after political parties and the health service. (Transparency International, 2003) This means that many Portuguese feel still that they do not have a proper access to the justice system. Despite of calls for a reform of the judiciary, the Portuguese judiciary is still caught between the accumulated negative inefficiencies of the past and the growing demands of the present. (Freitas do Amaral, 2000; Sousa Santos *et al.*, 1995) According to António Barreto the arrival of democracy after 1974 made many Portuguese aware of their rights and consequently engages in a growing number of litigations in court to achieve compliance. (Barreto, 2003:177) According to the 2003 report of the Portuguese Ombudsman a large part of complaints against public administration are against the Ministry of Finances, due to tax issues, and the Ministry of Justice. The main reason for complaints is related to the excessive delay of court cases (Provedor de Justiça, 2003:895-896). Among the complaints in this area, 65 percent are against excessive delay of court cases, particularly in civil cases (*ibid*, 900)

A more positive note can be given about political and civil rights. In the past three decades, Portugal was able to establish itself as an exemplary democracy in this area. It is always difficult to make a qualitative assessment, but according to the Freedom House indexes in relation to political and civil rights and the quality of democracy, Portugal was able to catch up with the rest of Europe. Indeed, here Portugal has done far better Portugal distinguish itself

from the new democracies of central and Eastern Europe and even Greece and Spain. (Alonso, Maravall, 2003:288-290). The authoritarian dictatorship is a major reminder that political and civil rights have to be protected in order to strengthen the quality of democracy.

Quite a different picture emerges when we look at economic and social rights. Indeed, Portugal has been catching up with the rest of Europe in terms of economic and social development. Despite of thirty years of successful social and economic transformations, Portuguese society is still one of the most unequal of the European Union. According to the Social Situation Report 2003 published by the European Commission, in 2001 the income difference between the highest paid and lowest paid was 6.4 times. Portugal belongs to a group of countries such as Greece (6.2), Spain (5.7) and the United Kingdom (5.2). It contrasts heavily with the Scandinavian countries Sweden (3.2), Denmark (3.2) and Finland (3.4). Portugal is above the EU average of 4.6. This is reinforced by the fact that the highest paid tends to earn more than the EU average, but the lowest paid is still catching up with the rest of Western Europe. It means that a huge part of Portuguese society have major difficulties in making ends meet. The number of households at risk of poverty after social transfer was highest in Portugal, achieving 21 percent in December 2002 and without social transfers 27 percent. This means that about one fifth to one quarter of the population is really at risk of poverty. One has to take into account that income in Portugal for the majority of the population is still 60 percent from the EU average in power purchasing parity. (European Commission, 2003:30)

Social exclusion is therefore a major problem for Portuguese democracy. Poverty may affect up to half of the population. Indeed, according to a Eurobarometer study done on behalf of Directorate-General V of the European Commission, Portuguese and Greeks have the highest number of people perceiving themselves as being poor. In 2001, 66 percent of Portuguese and 54 percent Greeks considered themselves as poor. (Gallie, Paugam, 2002:12) Moreover, more than 50 percent of Portuguese and Greek households were facing financial difficulties in the same year. (Gallie, Paugam, 2002:13) Such figures were registered after six years of a very pro-active social policy of the Guterres government. It is too early to make an assessment of the austerity policies of the Barroso government, but I suppose that it is further aggravating the already dire situation in Portugal.

Poverty is naturally linked to the existing educational divide in European society. Education is still a privileged commodity in Portugal. This does not refer so much to access to education, but the ability to stay over nine years in education and finish with a degree. The poverty of families forces many children to drop out from school and search for job, in order to support the survival of the family. A vicious cycle of educational failure contributes to the continuing high level of families at risk of poverty. According to Eurostat data Portugal has the lowest share of people finishing at least upper secondary education. In 2001, only 36 percent of the aged between 25 and 29 finished secondary education, while only 10 percent of the aged between 50 and 64. It contrasts heavily with the EU average of 75 percent and 52 percent respectively. Although illiteracy was almost eradicated, structural illiteracy continues to be a major problem. This has major effects on the ability of potential workers to qualify themselves through vocational training programs. Indeed, Portugal along with Greece has the lowest share of people involved in vocational training programs of the European Union. Indeed, only 3 percent of the population participated

vocational training activities in comparison to the EU average. This contrasts heavily with Denmark (18 percent), Sweden (17 percent), Finland (19 percent) and the United Kingdom (22 percent). Only Greece (1 percent) and France (3 percent) have also low figures. This naturally reinforces the continuing structural nature of the Portuguese labor market which is characterized by a low qualifications structure. (European Commission, 2004:25).

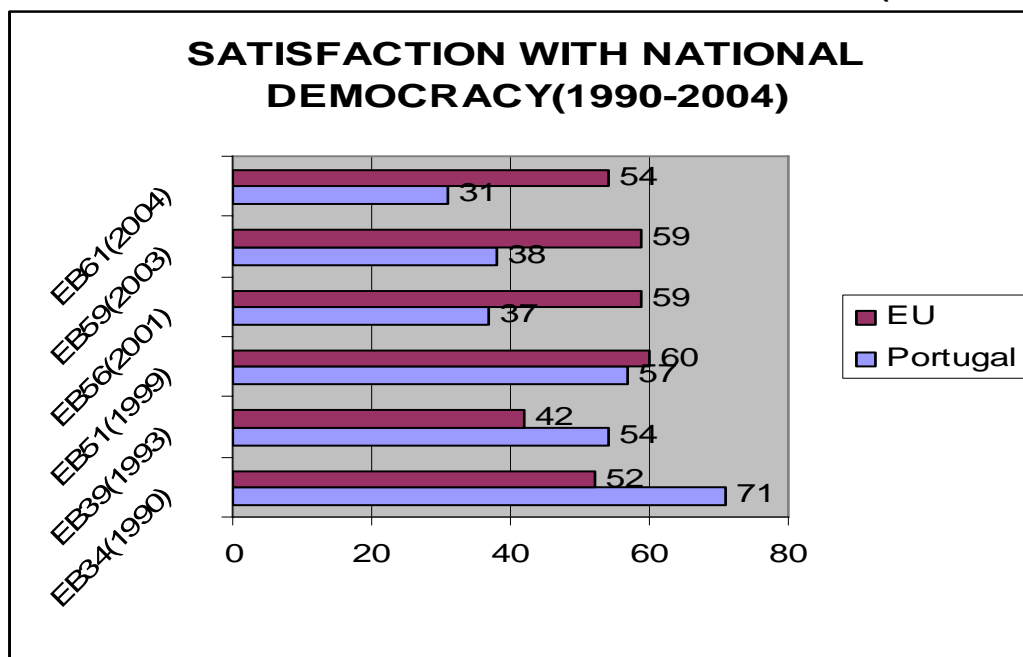
Although Portuguese have access to the health service, the lack of resources, inefficient administration and growth of demand has created high levels of dissatisfaction among the population. In the already mentioned Global Corruption Barometer, the health sector is regarded by the Portuguese respondents as being one of the main priority areas where corruption has to be eradicated. Indeed, Portuguese health service is certainly in a dire state. The main problem seems to be the fact, that for decades a proper reform has been postponed by several governments. This inertia is also characterized by a lack of an overall national health policy, which would increase the number of doctors and nurses. The lack of places for medicine in Portugal leads many students to choose Spanish universities for their training. (Oliveira, Magone, Pereira, forthcoming)

In sum, Portuguese democracy is well-established in terms of citizenship, rule of law and political rights. The main problems are in the output legitimacy of the political system. The continuing inequalities in education, health and income distribution lead to social exclusion which keeps a vast part of the population outside democracy. It is this output performance that has to be enhanced, so that Portugal can move in the long run towards a more participatory culture.

### **3. REPRESENTATIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT**

The Portuguese democratic institutional framework can be regarded as representative and based on principles of accountability. In spite of this, dissatisfaction with Portuguese democracy has increased considerably in the past fifteen years.

**TABLE 3: SATISFACTION WITH NATIONAL DEMOCRACY (1990-2004)**



It may be an indicator for a growing distance between the population and their political institutions. In 2004, Portuguese had a low trust in parliament (37 percent), government (34 percent) the civil service (37 percent) and the judiciary (36 percent). In line with most other countries, Portuguese have a low level of trust in political parties (16 percent). On the other hand, they have a high level of trust in the police (59 percent), the army (70 percent) and the church (63 percent). The trust in television and radio is quite high, while in the written press is low. (Eurobarometer, 61, 2004; Magone, 2003 a: 218)

This distrust in the main political institutions shows that the population has difficulties to relate to the discourse of the political elite. Such growing gap between the *paese legale* and *paese reale* has similarities to the Italian case, which also has having persistent high levels of dissatisfaction with the political system over the past thirty five years. (Tarchi, Morlino, 1996)

In the past three decades Portugal was able to establish mechanisms for the conduct of fair and free elections. Although the founding elections of 25 April 1975 were undertaken under the control of the Movement of Armed Forces (*Movimento das Forças Armadas-MFA*) they were fair and free. Since then, the National Commission of Elections (*Comissão Nacional de Eleições-CNE*) oversees the electoral process. Complaints can be made to the CNE and they are taken seriously. The legislature, the Assembly of the Republic, is elected by proportional representation based on the Hondt electoral formula. This allowed throughout the three decades the election of a representative assembly. The reduction of the members of parliament from 250 to 230 in 1989 have increased the disproportionality, but in general terms small parties are still able to achieve representation. According to several authors, the Portuguese party system is moving towards a majoritarianism. The main reason is that the two main parties, the Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista-PS*) and the Social democratic Party (*Partido Social Democrata - PSD*) concentrate over 75 percent of the vote from election to election. In contrast, the smaller parties, the Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Português - PCP*) and the Democratic Social Centre-People's Party (*Centro Democrático Social - Partido Popular - CDS-PP*), are

losing votes from election to election. The emergence of the leftwing Block of the Left (*Bloco de Esquerda-BE*) since 1999, did not substantially change this trend towards a majoritarian party system. (Magone, 1999; Magone, 2004: 73-76; Magalhães, 2003:183-184) Marina Costa Lobo links this to a growing interaction of presidential elections with the legislative elections. Indeed, only the two main parties are able to present potential candidates, undermining so the chances of candidates of the smaller parties.(Lobo,2001) One problem that is spreading among the Portuguese electorate is that a vast majority does not feel longer represented by the existing parties. (*Expresso*, 5.10.2001) This is one of the reasons for the high levels of abstentionism which has been rising at a faster rate in Portugal than in the rest of Europe. (Freire, Magalhães, 2001) These are strong signs of alienation of the population from the political system and the political elites. Naturally, this is reinforced certainly by the perceived low output performance of the political system in general.

Political parties are able to act freely, nevertheless their internal democracy is still far from ideal. Indeed, the closed PR list gives a monopoly to political parties to choose their candidates for national elections. This means that candidates do not have to be linked to the constituency in which they candidate. The centralization of the candidate selection and the lack of connection to the pluri-nominal constituencies undermine a stronger linkage of voters and MPs. On one hand, this has to be regarded as positive, because the past electoral history of Portugal led to establishment of networks of clientele and *caciquismo* during the Constitutional Monarchy and the First Republic. On the other hand, it is negative, because once elected the MP does not need to do any surgery job in its constituency. Portuguese vote for political parties, not for MPs and this is certainly a major factor of alienation. The practice of “parachuting of candidates” to constituencies is common in Portuguese politics. (Magalhães, 2003: 187)

Although Portuguese Parliament has become more professionalized in the past thirty years, it is still a weak parliament in comparison to similar bodies across the European Union. Indeed, Portugal belongs to what has been labelled as the southern European parliamentarianism along with Spain, Greece and at some extent Italy. It is true that in the 1990s Portuguese parliamentarianism gained in good reputation, nevertheless the lack of human and financial resources allowed only for a modest performance. (Magone, 2003c: 330-331) This means that executive-legislative relations have been always dominated by the former. Indeed, the Cavaco Silva absolute majority governments between 1985 and 1995 undermined the influence of parliament in the policy-making process, in spite of giving also stability and time to institutionalize itself. (Magone, 1997, 47-51; Bandeira, 2004). Such low profile of Portuguese parliament could be witnessed throughout the Guterres years, where party ideological conflict was more important, than finding a compromise in essential issues such as the regionalization question. The present Barroso, and now Santana Lopes government is also quite dominant in relation to the legislature.

The relationship of successive governments towards auditing institutions such as the Constitutional Court, the Auditing Court and the Ombudsman has been so far one of conflict in many instances. Although the Constitutional Court is highly respected in Portugal in certain occasions, like during the Cavaco Silva and the Guterres period, it remained the only instance able to withstand the growing dominance of government power. Moreover, the Auditing Court is



playing a major role in scrutinizing governmental financial accounts. One good example was the reporting of the Audit Court of major irregularities in the autonomous region of Madeira under the presidency of Alberto João Jardim. (Magone, 1997: 52-53)

The revolutionary period of 1974-75 led to a general anarchic situation, where the political elites were not able to gain civilian control over the military and the police. Such situation changed considerably in the past three decades. Portuguese political elites are in full control over the military and the police. (Aguero, 1995) In the past three decades the military changed its overall priorities. Today, it is fully integrated in the European military networks. It fulfils along with other countries peacekeeping missions around the world. The military has also changed the way it recruits its people. It embarked in the new millennium on a transition process from compulsory to voluntary conscription. The civilian-military relationship has become extremely professional over the past three decades.

Political corruption is a problem in all democracies and probably it is very difficult to eradicate it totally. One key to the minimizing of political corruption is naturally education for civic behavior. After so many decades of authoritarian rule, it was difficult for the country to establish a culture of transparency and accountability. Political instability until 1987 further undermined efforts to develop policies of transparency and accountability. In 1983, a High Authority Against Corruption (*Alta Autoridade Contra a Corrupção-AACC*) was established which led to discovery of several corruption cases, both at national as well as local levels. Attempts to increase the powers of the AACC in 1986 and 1992 led to its abolishment by Parliament. The AACC had collected 1.5 million pages of evidence relating to corruption over a ten-year period. Most of the files were transferred to the Torre do Tombo, while the most sensitive files were burnt. Files will only be open to the public in 2013.

According to Yves Meny and Martin Rhodes Portugal is in an intermediary position of somewhat corrupt countries between the Quite Corrupt Countries (Greece, Italy, Russia, Ukraine) and the Least Corrupt Countries (Sweden, Finland, Denmark). (Meny, Rhodes, 1997, 103; Heidenheimer, 1996:338). According to the 2003 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of Transparency International Portugal is still in such middle-ranking position between the least corrupt (10) and the quite corrupt (1). Portugal has a score of 6.3, this contrasts heavily with Finland (9.7), Iceland (9.6) and Denmark (9.5) on one hand, and Poland (3.6), Greece (4.3), Italy (5.3) and Lithuania (4.7). Portugal is in place 25 of out of 133 in the ranking of least corrupt countries. (.Transparency International, 2003b) This shows that corruption is still out there, but it seems that the mechanisms to counteract it have become more sophisticated and resilient. (Morgado, Vegar, 2003; Magone 2003b) Portugal is also well-integrated in European and international networks, which help to increase awareness of all forms of corruption. A particular important institution is naturally the Office of Fight Against Fraud (OLAF) of the European Union which since 1999 has become more pro-active in tackling fraud and corruption of the European Union. (Pujas, 2003; Pujas 2002; European Commission 2002).

In sum, Portuguese government is representative and accountable similar to most west European democracies. Nevertheless, certain problems continue to persist. The main issue is naturally the growing alienation of the population from the national political class which over the years became more

isolated from the main problems of society. One specific aspect is the still low level of responsiveness to the demands of the citizens. The low public policy performance in key areas such as education, health and justice is contributing to a negative perception of the main institutions: government, parliament and the judiciary sector (Eurobarometer, 61, 2004:B.54). Such split between the national political class and the rest of the populations becomes quite salient among the elected local political elites, who have a very negative perception of MPs, national politicians and political parties. They also present very negative attitudes towards the judiciary. (Martins, 2003: 92-96)

#### **4. CIVIL SOCIETY AND POPULAR PARTICIPATION**

One of the most important aspects of democracy is naturally the creation of structure of opportunities for an enhanced participation of the population. The role of a strong civil society is naturally very important in this context. This is reinforced by free responsible media, which are able to challenge negative aspects of government. Furthermore, decentralization of the political structures is essential for a proper participation of the population at local and regional level.

One of the greatest achievements of Portuguese democracy was the emergence of the freedom of the press. Indeed, in the freedom of the press index developed by *Reporters sans frontiers* Portugal is among the countries where press freedom is not threatened. Indeed, Portugal fares well against some of the larger European countries achieving place 28 overall in the 2003 ranking. (Reporters sans frontiers, 2004) In the past fifteen years, Portugal saw also the arrival of private television broadcasters which allowed for more plurality of visions in the mainstream of Portuguese society.

ACCÈS A L'ACTUALITÉ PAR PAYS → choisir un pays



Free Press

Extremely restricted press

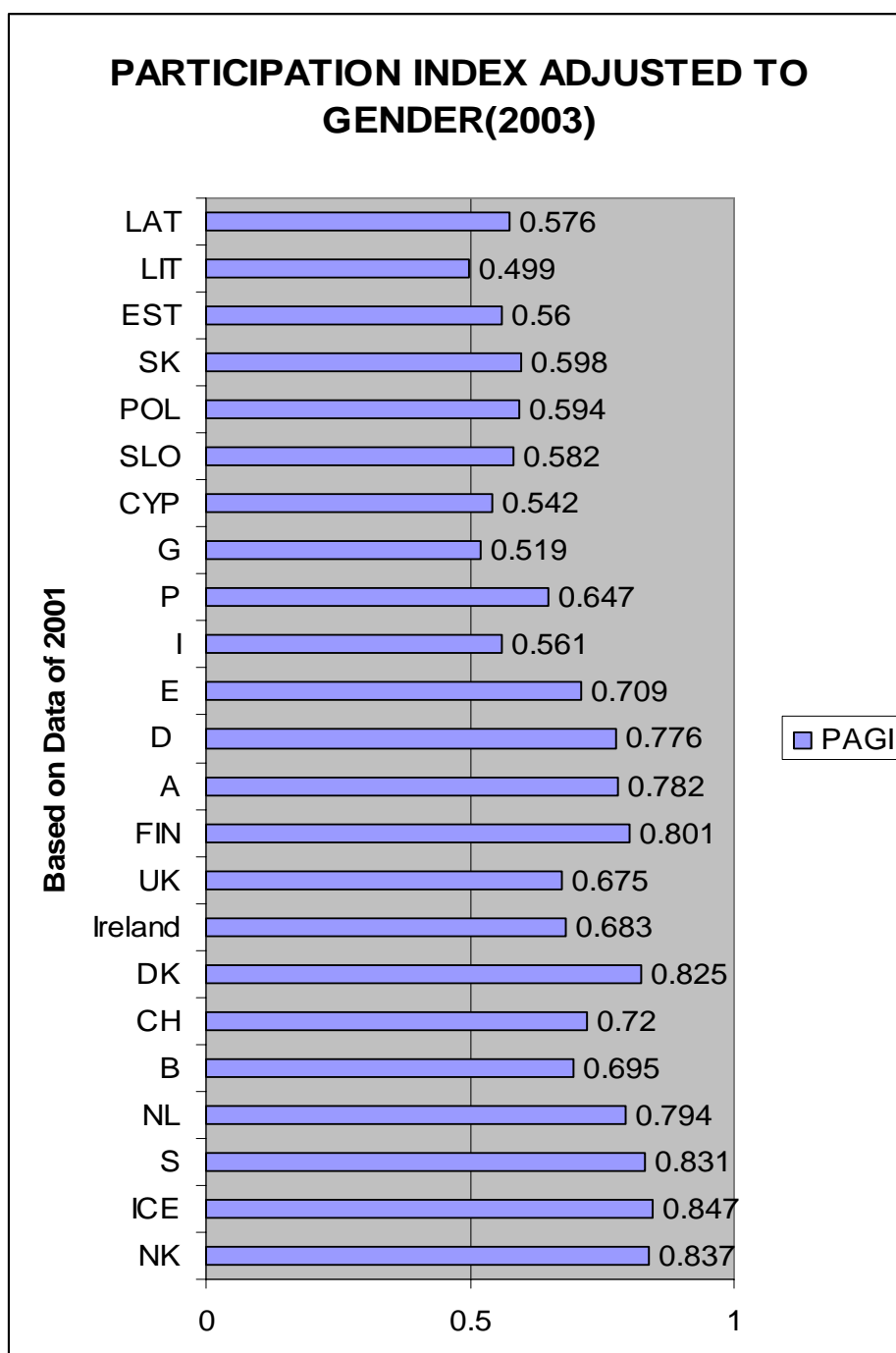
Source: Reporters sans frontières, <http://www.rsf.fr>, accessed on 6 August 2004

In terms of political participation, Portugal still registers a deficit. Several reasons may account for it, but I suppose that the low level of educational qualifications is a major factor. Portugal is characterized by a weak civil society along other southern European countries such as Spain and Greece. One positive sign has been the growing participation of citizens' groups in local elections. Although the number of elected citizens' groups represents only 4.4 percent of the total vote and about 6 percent of all elected local councilors, the tendency is increasing. This was achieved by a change of the legal structure of opportunities making it easier for citizens' groups to take part in elections. The success of these citizens' groups has been concentrated in the northern parts of the country around Porto, Viana do Castelo, Braga and Castelo Branco. It is also concentrated in the rural parts of the country. These findings of Manuel Meirinho Martins are encouraging, but he also shows that there are still many problems in terms of the low education qualifications of the elected and their general perception of ability to influence politics. What his study tells us is that there is a growing gap between the national and political elites. (Martins, 2003)

Overall political participation of the population has been quite bleak. According to a study by Manuel Villaverde Cabral, the attitudes of the population towards political participation are quite negative. A general feeling of alienation and distance from the political system is becoming more evident. Indeed over two thirds of the population is not taking part in the political process. (Cabral, 2000:155). Most of the active Portuguese are affiliated to non-political sport or cultural organizations; there is a lack of participation in civic organizations or political parties. Indeed, total political party membership is estimated not to exceed more than 3-4 percent.

In terms of gender equality, one has to acknowledge that Portugal is still lagging behind most west European countries. Indeed, both at national as well as at local level women are underrepresented in the main political bodies, and in particular in top positions. Nevertheless, one has to assert that the situation has improved considerably in the past thirty years, due to the growing integration of women in the labour market. Moreover, some parties such as the Socialist and the Communist parties have introduced quota mechanisms to assure a better representation of women in the different political bodies.

**TABLE 3: THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS AND SOCIETY (2003)**



**Source:**Data from United Nations Development Programme,*Human Development Report 2003*.(New York:United Nations 2004)

In the most reliable indicator of women's role in society and politics across the world Portugal is ranked as 23 of 144 countries. It is still distant from the role women play in Scandinavian societies, but fares well against the new democracies of central and Eastern Europe. In 2001, 19 percent of seats in the legislature were occupied by women in comparison with 45.3 percent in Sweden, 38 percent in Denmark and 36 percent in Norway. (UNDP, 2004). According to my figures, in the present 9<sup>th</sup> legislature the figure was 21.3 percent. (Magone, 2003c, 329)

As already commented, the Portuguese government has improved its record in terms of public policy performance, but it still registers deficits in government responsiveness. Suffice to say, that the biggest challenge for the future for the Portuguese government is to bring public administration closer to the citizens by achieving a higher level of decentralization. (Magone, 2004:101-129) Moreover, policy output performance has to concentrate on the three areas that matters more to Portuguese citizens: education, health and the justice system. Sometimes it is not about the human and financial resources, but the need to think anew about a bipartisan long-term strategy in order to allow ownership of the country's future to the Portuguese population.

An outstanding issue is decentralization. The attempt by the Guterres government to establish eight elected regions in continental Portugal failed after a negative referendum on 8 November 1998. Since then, regionalization, which is enshrined in the constitution, continues to be an important priority in the governmental agenda. The Barroso government tries to develop an alternative regionalization plan of ten associations of municipalities across the country. Decentralization is an important issue, because Portugal is regarded as one of the most centralized countries of the European Union. There is a need for a bold move of the political elites to change the traditional administrative culture of centralization and develop a more flexible decentralized system that allows for a better response of different parts of Portugal to the globalization processes. Regional decision-making had always to go through the Lisbon ministries. The regionalization debate in 1998 was conducted along partisan lines, instead of achieving a bipartisan basis. The decentralisation/regionalisation question has remained unresolved for the past thirty years undermining so the future of the population of most parts of continental Portugal. (Gallagher, 1999; Baum and Freire, 2001; Lopes, 2001)

In sum, one has to emphasize that there is still a high deficit in the making of a strong civil society and popular participation. Although there was a substantial improvement, the continuing under-performance of the political system in terms of public policy output is undermining the prospects for a more educated, healthier and more just society. Furthermore, the high level of centralization of decision-making that can be witnessed in Portugal still today, constraints the possibilities for citizens to become politically engaged. Any bipartisan strategy to decentralize decision-making is welcome, but for the moment it seems that partisan interests seem to prevail over the national interest.

## **5. DEMOCRACY BEYOND THE NATION-STATE**

The Revolution of Carnations has allowed for a transformation of Portuguese foreign policy. In spite of difficulties until the mid 1980s, Portuguese foreign policy is today committed to the United Nations and the emerging new multi-level system of global governance. Since 1986, Portugal is integrated in

the European Union networks. Indeed, the EU has been one of the most loyal and strongest allies of the United Nations, in spite of the recent conflict over the Iraq War. Although Portuguese resources are limited, the country has been participating in peace-keeping consolidation and facilitating transitions to democracy in different countries. A success story is naturally East Timor, which was pursued by Portuguese foreign policy with persistence in the past three decades. Portugal has been also instrumental in supporting the democratization efforts in the new Portuguese speaking countries. Indeed, in 1995 it created the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (*Comunidade de Países de Língua Portuguesa - CPLP*) which also includes Brazil. (Magone, 2004: 251-256) The recent nomination of former Prime Minister Manuel Durão Barroso has to be regarded as a big success for Portugal and for the smaller countries of the European Union in general.

In sum, Portuguese foreign policy gained in more consistency in the past three decades and it is expected to continue to be so in the future. One crucial inspiring force of this foreign policy is the liberation felt after the successful Revolution of Carnations. It is a country engaged to create a better world based on the principles of the United Nations, in particular the growing emergence of what has been labeled as democratic peace. (Huntley, 1998)

## **6.CONCLUSIONS:THE CENTRALITY OF DECENTRALISATION,EDUCATION AND JUSTICE**

The past three decades were a successful adventure for Portugal. The well-organized Soccer European championships in June 2004, put this small country again in the spotlight. It shows that Portugal has strong will power. The main problem has been so far the inability of the political class to join together and to work together towards the fulfillment of the constitution. Regionalization is the outstanding issue in this context. As long as there is political inertia in this issue, the development towards a more democratic society is delayed.

Quite essential is the need to overhaul all education policies, which have been failing in the past thirty year, because it is creating inequalities in society. This is reinforced by a vicious cycle of poverty which successive governments were not able to tackle satisfactorily.

A proper reform has also to be undertaken in the justice system, otherwise the legitimacy of the political system may suffer considerably. As already mentioned many citizens in the global Corruption barometer mentioned this as one priority areas, where corruption has to be tackled (see table 1)

This means that Portugal was able to create a vibrant democracy which is formally working, but qualitatively has still quite a long way to go. The most dangerous aspect of today's Portuguese democracy is the growing gap between the political class and the population. (Magone, 2003c). The growing dissatisfaction with Portuguese democracy in the past five years is related to the weak record of policy output record.

In sum, the Revolution of Carnations has certainly shaped the expectations of the population. They expect a more socially equal and just society, in which their voice is heard and appreciated. Such a society will only emerge if the political elites overcome their continuing isolation from the needs of the population.

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