



# The Emigration of the Portuguese People and the Reception of Refugees in Portugal

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## Short Letter

Migration is a challenging global phenomenon that has been a growing trend in recent years [1], [2]. In 2020, it is revealed that approximately 3.6% of the world population were international immigrants [3]. In the same year, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), around 10% of all refugees in the world were living in the EU and around 2.25 million residence permits were issued, showing a decrease relative to 2019 due to the existing pandemic crisis [4]. The main factors influencing this phenomenon are socio-political, demographic, economic and environmental. While some people emigrate in search of a better life for themselves and their families, many others do it for survival, becoming refugees [5]. We can group migrants into three categories: temporary workers/students (those who seek another country, for a certain time, to study or to work); permanent emigrants (those who seek a life in another country to stay and settle down) and refugees (those who are forced to leave their country for survival) [6], [7].

As far as Portugal is concerned, according to the last Portuguese Emigration Report of 2018 from Gabinete da Secretaria de Estado das Comunidades Portuguesas (Office of the Secretary of State for Portuguese Communities) [8], it is estimated that the total number of Portuguese people who are spread around the world today is around 5 million. The largest Portuguese communities living abroad reside in France, with 1.405.053 citizens, followed by Brazil, with 821.276 Portuguese citizens. These two countries have been the privileged places for Portuguese emigration, followed by Switzerland, with 439.342 citizens, as well as Germany, with 224.573 citizens and Luxembourg, with 116.505 citizens. These diverse countries have been throughout Portuguese contemporary history [9] the privileged places for Portuguese emigration. For example, before 25th April, 1974, Portuguese sought not only better living conditions, but also a different political regime from the dictatorship that ruled Portugal until that time.

Meanwhile, new trends have emerged in Portuguese emigration [10], namely in the search for other countries that are more attractive for the new characteristics for Portuguese emigration, such as United Kingdom, with 349.427 citizens, followed by Spain, with 125.382 citizens, in Europe, as well as, Canada,

with 46.000 citizens and Australia, with 39.674 citizens, outside Europe. These differences lie in the current motives that lead Portuguese people to emigrate. Generally speaking, they are workers with a high level of education, such as nurses, physicians, engineers, who find in these countries a higher remuneration and better working conditions suited to their level of study [11]. For example, nurses trained in Portuguese university institutions earn twice the salary in the United Kingdom than in Portugal, performing the same clinical functions. As an example, we have the nurse Sílvia Nunes [12] who was awarded with the “Great British Care Awards”, in the category of best nurse for innovation, creativity and zeal in her work with patients, in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the nurse Luís Pitarma [13], who works at St. Thomas’s Hospital, was praised by Boris Johnson, due his great care with the English Prime Minister, during his stay in the hospital with covid-19 pandemic. This situation became more usual with the global crisis, in 2008 followed by the financial rescue of Portugal to Europe, in 2011 [14].

On the other hand, Portugal is not traditionally a country of immigration, where the balance of Portuguese who leave the country is greater than those foreign citizens who enter Portugal [15]. Due to historical conditions [16], the citizens of the Portuguese ex-colonies, such as Brazilians, Angolans, Cape Verdeans and Guineans, are the ones that represent the highest percentage of the total of immigrants in Portugal. The same spoken language (Portuguese), that facilitates progression in academic studies, and the possibility of entering in other European countries to find a good job, are factors that could justify this trend. There is another kind of immigration, associated with foreign pensioners, namely, British, French, German citizens, in Europe, and Americans, Chinese, outside Europe, who are attracted by good weather conditions, excellent food and quality of life associated with internal security [17].

There is a particular form of migration linked with refugees [18]. In the last 6 years, the Conselho Português para os Refugiados (Portuguese Council for Refugees) (CPR) [19] welcomed 5.006 refugees, of which 2.150 were received in 2019. CPR has enabled training and organization for asylum seekers and refugees who include classes in Portuguese, socio-cultural activities and legal support to allow an easier integration in Portuguese society. Within the refugees’ various origins, we highlight the creation of the Global Platform for Syrian Students (PGES) [20] created by the Portuguese ex-president, Jorge Sampaio, who was awarded by the United Nations Mandela Award, which has already welcomed more than 400 young Syrians fleeing the war in Syria and northern Iraq (with more than 11million refugees and displaced people). These young people go to various Portuguese cities, such as, Braga, Oporto, Covilhã, Lisbon, Faro, where they have the opportunity to finish their studies at Portuguese academic institutions, through the financing of scholarship sponsored by Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa, Luso-American Foundation (FLAD), Santander bank, among others. Later, when they finish their academic studies, most of these young people bring their family to Portugal where they find a good job, in a country that give them peace and security. Portugal is also currently preparing to receive 500 unaccompanied minors, who are currently in refugee camps in Greece, as soon as the restrictions imposed on the circulation of people due to the covid-19 pandemic are lifted [21], [22].

Since the beginning of the millennium, Portugal has shown a high inflows from various origins, including Eastern countries such as Ukraine. As for the Ukrainian people, we highlight that at the beginning of the century, the number of Ukrainian residents registered in Portugal was 163. This number climbed between 2005 and 2006, increasing from 2120 to 22.846. In the year 2009, it was recorded the highest number of residents, 52.494 [23]. This number has been decreasing, and according to the most recent data, in 2020, 28.621 individuals were registered with legal resident status [24]. The current conflict between Ukraine and Russia led to the reception of Ukrainian refugees in Europe [25], particularly in Poland, Romania, Moldova, in an unprecedented situation, since the II World War that started on 24th February [26]. Both on humanitarian level, around 4 million Ukrainian refugees are spread across Europe [27], and on an economic level, they are in the European Union countries seeking alternative sources of supply for gas and oil [28].

In this regard, the Portuguese Government based on a European Union directive, activated the Law n.º 67/2003, of 23 August of «Temporary Protection Directive» that regulates the “regime for granting temporary protection in the event of a massive influx of people displaced from third countries, unable to return in the short term to their country of origin, establishing the procedures application of this regime” [29]. In fact, a reception program for Ukrainian citizens was created containing various measures under

the temporary protection regime. This was granted to all displaced persons from Ukraine and includes a temporary residence permit; a tax identification number (NIF); a social security identification number (NISS) and a national health service (SNS) user number that gives access to all basic health services. The Institute of Employment and Professional Training (IEFP) created "The Portugal for Ukraine platform" in order to help newcomers to search for employment and support the simplification of professional recognition of qualifications. Regarding education, children, and adolescents between 6 and 18 ages have access to the Portuguese public education system, and it is also possible to apply for academic equivalences to higher education. All those who wish to learn the Portuguese language will have free access to it through various teaching places. They have also access to a Portuguese driving license and support for pets, namely in their identification and vaccination [30]. At the time were writing this article, around 8.250 requests for temporary protection have been filed by Ukrainian individuals [31]. Another platform was also created to help Ukrainians and their families integrate in the country [32].

With the current events happening in Eastern Europe, the mental health of these individuals is also affected and the World Health Organization states that this is a priority issue to consider given the scale of the existing conflict. Many Ukrainian refugees are arriving at the borders of neighbouring countries, distressed, and suffering from a high number of mental health problems. As the conflict continues, it increases the development of these associated problems, such as anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and depression [33].

It is important to consider how this migration affects the individuals' mental health and what consequences it will have on children and adolescents when going through a crisis like this [34].

According to Murthy and Lakshminaryana [35]'s literature review, as well recent studies [36], the exposure to violence and displacement is associated with increased psychiatric symptoms, namely depressive and anxiety disorders. These individuals faced with intense traumatic pre-migration events that lead them to emigrate, not only have to leave a life in their countries of origin, but also face the challenges of a new society where they seek to insert themselves in search of a better life. Children and adolescents are affected not only in their social context, which changes, but also their family members become vulnerable and are exposed to tensions such as stress, anxiety, among other disorders [37].

Ordem dos Psicólogos Portugueses (OPP) (Association of Portuguese Psychologists) is also aware of current events and took part in the Global Psychological Alliance's position, presenting its support not only to Ukrainian psychologists, but also to the entire Ukrainian population in general. Resources were also made available for the promotion of literacy in health and psychological well-being, aimed at the population and reinforcement of professional training [38].

In summary, the war in Ukraine and the reception of refugees in Portugal have gained a special relevance, making the problems of the pandemic [39] and climate change [40] in Portugal and Europe being delegated to a secondary plan.

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