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European bi-national marriages in Portugal and EU social integration¹

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Abstract

Some scholars have hypothesized that social integration in the European Union (EU) is a trigger for bi-national European marriages. Although this idea has been the motivation behind some research, empirical evidence shows that the effect of accession to the EU has had a limited effect on partner choice. This study aims to add to the knowledge on this issue by analysing the trends and patterns of marriages between Portuguese and non-Portuguese citizens between 1997 and 2011. We conducted bivariate and multivariate analyses using official data on marriages that took place in Portugal, with the results showing that bi-national European marriages remained stable throughout the period, although some nuances are evident depending on the type of marriage. While Portuguese-EU15 marriages declined over time, those between native Portuguese and other Europeans increased. Gender differences determined the development and composition of these marriages. This article also notes the existence of three distinct types of bi-national union: labour, recomposed and highly educated couples. The final part of the article seeks to explain and interpret the findings, specifically by focusing on the increase in cohabitation as a functional substitute for bi-national European marriage, the need to compare and combine the number of marriages in both spouses' countries, and

changes in the structure of the Portuguese matrimonial market due to the arrival of new social groups (e.g. Brazilian and Eastern European).

Keywords

Bi-national [EU](#) marriages

Marriage formation

[Cohabitation](#)

European social integration

Portugal

European Union

Introduction

The idea that European Union (EU) social integration would trigger the formation of a European society was part of the plans of the EU's founding fathers. By moving freely in a Europe without borders, its citizens would expand their social bonds and encourage greater social, economic and cultural interdependence and the formation of a post-national social community. The free movement of people would allow the construction of a Europe from 'below', strengthening the formal and informal ties between citizens. Adrian Favell's work (2008a) on those who take advantage of free movement drew attention to a group of European migrants whose legal and symbolic status – as Europeans – gave them rights to integrate socially in another country. European free movers, he

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claims, are citizens of any EU member state who exercise their right to move, work, live and shop anywhere within the EU, without discrimination based on country of origin, race, ethnicity, gender, education or income. They are the human by-product of the EU's political measures on freedom of movement: i.e., flexible and professional men and women in their 20s and 30s who are normally from well-educated middle-class backgrounds and who leave their home countries to seek a new life in Europe.

However, despite the rights conceded to its citizens by the EU (e.g. the free movement of people, goods and capital), the rise in intra-EU mobility has been rather modest, although constant, since the mid-1990s (Recchi 2008). The low level of mobility among citizens of western EU states contrasts with the rising number of migrants from more recent EU member states and post-Soviet countries, who are looking for better lives in 'old Europe' (De Valk and Díez Medrano 2014). East-to-west migration flows have brought both highly and poorly qualified individuals who frequently perform undesirable jobs in precarious conditions (Favell 2008b).

Despite intra-EU mobility being mapped nowadays by unskilled and highly qualified migrants, one of the consequences of stretching of social contacts between native Europeans is emotional ties. These love relationships can culminate in marriage, with the formation of bi-national unions and families (Gaspar 2008). Love can certainly be either the cause or the effect of EU mobility (Gaspar 2012). Europe-building from below can therefore be advanced by the conjugal and family lives of partners born in different

places, who, with their daily practices and experiences, forge and reinvent a European social community.

In making this point, this article aims to explore any possible effect that Portuguese accession to the EU in 1986 may have had on native Portuguese citizens marrying EU partners born outside Portugal. Although certain studies show that the emergence of bi-national marriage in Europe is more complex than this and does not point towards a direct effect between migration and marriage (De Valk and Díez Medrano 2014; Koelet and De Valk 2014), additional evidence needs to provide further lines of research to capture the full complexity of this phenomenon.

The article is divided into five main parts. The first section presents the theoretical background supporting the link between European social integration and EU bi-national marriage according to Portuguese immigration and emigration flows. We then describe the data used in this study. The following section analyses the trends and patterns emerging from the data and proposes a typology of bi-national European unions in Portugal. The rest of the article offers insights into unexplored issues that need to be addressed in further studies on bi-national conjugal relationships within the European Union (EU).

Migration and the marriage market in Portugal

Intermarriage is traditionally seen as an indicator of the social integration of minority groups in host societies (Kalmijn 1998). In addition, exogamy theory builds upon the fact

that partner choice is determined mainly by opportunities and preferences (Blau 1994; Kalmijn 1998). The choice of a partner is structurally conditioned by marriage market opportunities, where possible spouses compete for a partner. *Who marries whom* is therefore determined by the opportunity that individuals must meet on a social terrain on which they have a chance to interact and get to know each other. In this process, the diversity of social groups with different socio-economic characteristics (age, education, country of origin, ethnicity) comes into play in establishing the best or the worst candidate for marriage. Immigration and the marriage market are two related fields since the availability of future spouses not only depends on the native field of choice but also on a constellation of immigrant groups who can also compete as accessible and desirable candidates (Blau 1994; Blau and Schwartz 1984). As part of this interplay, the native-born can meet their partners either locally or abroad, as the various processes – immigration, travel or study – can conspire to offer individuals born in different countries the chance to develop a love relationship.

In Portugal, the marriage market has been determined by distinct immigration and emigration flows. Prior to Portugal's accession to the EU in 1986, most immigration to the country was from its former African colonies since their citizens enjoyed special legal rights to settle in the country. Consequently, bi-national marriages between Portuguese-born and foreign-born natives were dominated by Africans and other West Europeans (e.g. British, French or German) (Malheiros and Esteves 2012). EU membership offered home-born Portuguese the chance to meet other Europeans and increased the

possibilities for exogamy. EU social integration allowed travel to and settlement in other European countries, through informal transnational networks of partners, friends and colleagues and formal networks of professional and cultural associations, which helped construct a European society for Euro citizens (Díez Medrano 2008). The EU and consequent establishment of a common geographical and social space, in which all EU citizens could live, move and interact, opened the marriage market to partnerships of Portuguese and non-Portuguese. Portugal's economic growth from the 1990s, enhanced by its status as an EU member state, gave momentum to European citizen mobility while attracting economic migrants from Brazil (from the 1990s) and Eastern Europe (during the early part of the twenty-first century) (Peixoto and Figueiredo 2007). The diversification of social groups in the national arena had a definite impact on the marriage market and contributed towards the new types of marital formation between natives and non-natives (Ramos et al. 2015).

While recent studies have acknowledged that European bi-national couples do not form a homogenous group (De Valk and Díez Medrano 2014), Gaspar (2008) established a link between these marriages and different migratory flow, which gave rise to different types of exogamic unions formed by: (a) partners from neighbouring countries with a higher rate of cross-border movement (e.g. Portuguese-Spanish unions); (b) free movers – well-educated migrants who have settled throughout the EU; and (c) recent migrants from Eastern Europe (e.g. Ukraine or Russia) who marry native-born citizens.² This typology has

been tested recently in research involving intermarried European couples in Belgium (Koelet and De Valk 2014), whose results confirm and expand on Gaspar (2008).

Taking this typology into account, this article examines certain hypotheses based on the marital opportunities driven by emigration and the immigration processes in Portugal. First, apart from the impact that may be expected from the single market, some authors have reported that EU accession has had only a moderate or a weak effect on the marriage market (see De Valk and Díez Medrano 2014). We therefore postulate that, of the total number of marriages in Portugal, the weight of bi-national European marriages has remained constant over time (hypothesis A.1).

Second, previous studies indicate the spatial homogamy in intermarriage: that is to say, in increasing their cross-border interactions, citizens in neighbouring countries have a greater likelihood of forming a bi-national union (Haandrikman 2014; Haandrikman et al. 2011; Koelet and De Valk 2014; Schroedter and Rössel 2014). As such, we expect to find evidence that bi-national European marriages involving Portuguese and Spanish citizens have increased over time (hypothesis A.2).

Furthermore, following the pioneering work of Favell (2008a) in contextualizing the mobility of well-educated free movers (Eurostars) within the European area, and the work of Gaspar (2012) on the existence of Eurostars bi-national marriages in different EU countries, we may expect the number of bi-national European marriages between well-educated Portuguese and their EU15 national peers to have increased (hypothesis A.3).

Finally, the rise in marriages between Portuguese and Eastern European immigrants has been reported in several contexts (Díez Medrano et al. 2014; Haandrikman 2014). Given the high flow of Eastern Europeans (particularly Ukrainians and Russians) to Portugal during the first decade of the century and the consequent increase in the number of mixed unions (Ramos et al. 2015), we expect the number of marriages between Portuguese and Ukrainian or Russian citizens to have increased (hypothesis A.4).

While opportunities to meet are determinant in bi-national matching, existing research on intermarriage recognizes that the choice of marrying a partner from a different group is based on similar preferences and individual characteristics such as age, educational resources, language, religion and social status (Blau 1994; Kalmijn 1998; Van Tubergen and Maas 2007). In other words, preference is given to a partner with similar world-views and life experience, irrespective of their geographic or ethnic origin. Accordingly, homogamy related to age or education is seen as a determinant in the success of a matrimonial union.

Based on preference theory, we would like to address four additional hypotheses. Relying on previous studies (Cortina et al. 2008; Haandrikman and Wissen 2012), we expect to find age homogamy among European bi-national newlyweds (hypothesis B.1). Similarly, reflecting other research supporting the view that educational homogamy is dominant in conjugality (Cortina, Esteve and Domingo 2008; Kalmijn 1998; Van Tubergen and Maas 2007), we expect most bi-national European couples to have the same level of education (educational homogamy) ~~be homogamous in education~~ (hypothesis B.2). Moreover, as

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marriage tends to take place in early adult life, we also argue that most partners (nationals and other Europeans) are single before marriage (hypothesis B.3).

Finally, given that cohabitation before marriage has increasingly been common over the decades, we examine whether the number of previous consensual unions has increased among the newly wed (hypothesis B.4). This is a central question that needs to be added to the analysis as a record of cohabitation is often an absent variable in research on bi-national unions. It may be useful to assess whether cohabitation is a substitute for formal marriage (De Valk and Díez Medrano 2014).

In addressing these hypotheses based on theories of opportunity and preferences in the marriage market, and in line with the work of Koelet and De Valk (2014), this article will also examine whether the types of couple projected by Gaspar (2008) are represented in Portuguese society.

Data and methods

The data are drawn from marriage registers for the years 1997, 2001, 2006 and 2011, collated by the Portuguese Statistical Institute (INE),³ which includes the number of newlyweds per year. By using quantitative data, we capture the incidence and trends in bi-national European marriages over the years (Kalmijn 1998). The years examined were selected according to theoretical and technical determinants. First, we observe whether EU15 freedom of movement had a positive impact on the rise of bi-national EU marriages in 1997 (two years after the entry of Sweden, Finland and Austria) and in later years

(2001, 2006 and 2011), particularly following the accession of twelve other member states in 2004 and 2007 (Haandrikman 2014). The years selected enable us to observe and interpret possible consequences of maturation in the matrimonial market following EU enlargement. Second, although electronic data on marriages registered in Portugal are available for 1988 onwards, it is only possible to find the same unifying variable in databases from 1997 onwards. This limitation could not be overcome and, in part, dictated the initial year of analysis.

The annual marriage register data in Portugal contain sociodemographic information on individuals and couples. The analysis considered place of birth, nationality, marital status, age, highest level of education completed (operationalized as primary, secondary and tertiary) and prior cohabitation. Based on individual variables, certain other indicators were calculated to present the couple as a level of analysis: type of couple (native man/EU15 woman, native man/other European woman, native woman/EU15 man, native woman/other European man), educational homogamy (same educational level, woman more educated than man, man more educated than woman) and age homogamy (partners of the same age, woman older than the man, man older than the woman).⁴

In accordance with our definition of bi-national European marriage (unions of partners of different European origins) we used place of birth as it implies a more stable condition than nationality: while the former is immutable, the latter relates to a sociopolitical dimension that can change during the life course. Even if the rate at which EU citizens deciding to change nationality after migration is much lower than among non-EU

nationals, place of birth is a more accurate indicator of marriage trends among first-generation migrants in Portugal.

The groups of origin that we take into consideration are 'EU15' and 'other European'. The latter category includes EU27 member countries (excluding the EU15) and other European countries whose citizens form part of a large immigrant community in Portugal (e.g., Ukraine, Russia, Moldavia and Belarus). Because of previous studies registering gender differences in marital formation (Haandrikman 2014; Koelet and De Valk 2014; Wissen and Heering 2014) we conducted separate analyses for male and female partners, making a gender-based distinction between Portuguese men and woman, EU15 men and women and other European men and women. This means that our analysis excludes marriages between two people of the same origin (whether Portuguese or foreign).

Empirical work was based on descriptive bivariate and multivariate analyses. First, various techniques were used to examine our hypotheses. Second, some indicators, such as age, marital status, education, origin country of origin and cohabitation before marriage, were used to perform a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) and a cluster analysis to design a typology of bi-national EU couples.

Results

Are marriage market opportunities structured around gender differences?

The empirical evidence for whether bi-national European marriages have remained constant over time (A.1) is confirmed only in relative terms. Bi-national European

newlyweds may have fallen by more than half between 1997 and 2011, and yet if we consider the proportion in relation to the total number of marriages celebrated in those years we find that its importance has remained constant: 6.4% in 1997, 7.2% in 2001, 7.3% in 2006 and 6.9% in 2011 (INE, 1997, 2001, 2006, 2011).

— **Graph 1 about here - : Types and trends of bi-national European marriages.**

— **Source: INE, Marriage micro-data 1997, 2001, 2006 and 2011**

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However, the data indicate that when the total number of bi-national European marriages is taken as a point of reference, there are certain specificities according to the type of couple (Graph 1). In fact, while in all the years considered Portuguese spouses married to EU15 partners are a larger group than that of the Portuguese married to other Europeans (for similar results see Díez Medrano et al. 2014), the former has been falling in size while the latter has shown a slight increase over this period. Couples involving a native man/EU15 woman registered a slight fall – from 54.4% in 1997 to 44.4% in 2011, while marriages between Portuguese males and other European women increased from 1% to 12.1% over the same period. The marriages between Portuguese women and EU15 men fell from 43.3% in 1997 to 38.8% in 2011, while marriages with other European men increased from 1.3% in 1997 to 4.6% in 2011. These findings have been reported by several authors in different contexts, which suggest a sharp distinction between gender (Díez Medrano et al. 2014; Haandrikman 2014).

Regarding the types of marriageable groups in the European free movement space (Gaspar 2008), the findings indicate that when the total numbers of bi-national European unions are considered, new registered marriages between Portuguese and Spanish remained rather stable for Spanish male partners and increased slightly for Spanish females. These findings partially confirm hypothesis A.2 as they reveal an increase in weddings involving Portuguese and Spanish citizens. Again, the gender effect is relevant here. Spanish husbands have remained constant over the years in the total number of bi-national marriages (2.3% in 1997, 2.0% in 2001, 2.3% in 2006 and 2.3% in 2011), while Spanish wives have increased slightly within the total of Portuguese newlyweds (1.8% in 1997, 1.5% in 2001, 2.1% in 2006 and 2.7% in 2011) (INE, 1997, 2001, 2006, 2011). Furthermore, until 2006 there were more males than females marrying Portuguese partners, although this trend was reversed in 2011, when Spanish women exceeded Spanish men by 0.4%. Additional analysis has shown that there has been an increase in the number of Spanish with a tertiary education marrying well-educated Portuguese (both male and female). This boost may have been motivated by the consolidation of EU mobility for well-qualified free movers – particularly women – thus also affecting marriage trends between partners from neighbouring countries (Favell 2008a; Gaspar 2008; Haandrikman 2014).

Moreover, in accordance with hypothesis A.3, there has been a rise in the number of bi-national unions exclusively between highly educated partners (Portuguese and EU15) (Graph 2)⁵. This increase was constant for all the years analysed. This trend shows the

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impact of EU membership and the Eurostars' freedom of movement (Favell 2008a, 2008b) on the marriage market structure (Gaspar 2008), even though the number of these marriages remains fairly low when compared to the total number of European bi-national marriages. In addition, even though in 1997 and 2006 the percentages between women and men were almost equal, there were always more newlyweds between Portuguese women and EU15 men, indicating gender specificity among free mover couples (Koelet and De Valk 2014). If we look at educational levels of both the wives and the husbands, we see that over the years there has been a somewhat higher percentage for the combination native women/EU15 men (4.2% in 1997, 7.8% in 2001, 10.4% in 2006 and 12.6% in 2011) than for couples including native men/EU15 women (4.1% in 1997, 5.9% in 2001, 10.3% in 2006 and 11.3% in 2011). These results indicate that educated Portuguese women have been more prone to marrying EU15 men than their male counterparts to marrying EU15 women, which corroborates the tendency found in previous studies (Díez Medrano et al. 2014).

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~~— Graph 2 about here - : Highly educated Portuguese EU15 couples (male and female).~~

~~— Source: INE, Marriage micro data 1997, 2001, 2006 and 2011.~~

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Finally, the evolution of bi-national marriages including Portuguese and new economic migrants from Ukraine and Russia only supports hypothesis A.4 for non-Portuguese

females. A rise in the number of mixed unions is found in the data, although its weight in the total number of bi-national European marriages remains low: while in 1997 there were only nine recorded marriages between Portuguese and Eastern Europeans, in 2011 there were 162. This trend has accompanied the in-flow of Ukrainians and Russians to Portugal over recent decades – the number of Ukrainians arriving in Portugal increased from 83 in 1997 to 48,010 in 2011, while the number of Russians increased from 597 in 2001 to 4,878 in 2011.⁶ There is a clear gender bias in these marriages, with the number of female Ukrainian and Russian spouses being much greater than the number of male spouses, which account for less than 1% (of the total number of bi-national European marriages as a reference). The number of Ukrainian and Russian women marrying Portuguese men increased quite significantly – from an insignificant number in 1997 to 2.5% in 2011 in the case of Ukrainians, and from occasional cases in 1997 to 2.9% in 2011 in the case of Russians. This gender gap in marriages between Portuguese men and Eastern European women has already been reported in Portugal (Ramos et al. 2015) and other European countries (Díez Medrano et al. 2014; Haandrikman 2014; Wissen and Heering 2014).

Are there similar partner preferences across gender?

In respect of age at marriage, the figures show an increase across both genders: the mean age for male partners increased from 25.9 in 1997 to 32.7 in 2011 for men, and 23.9 in 1997 to 30.4 in 2011 for women. We applied the Pearson correlation coefficient to every year, with the results showing a moderate positive correlation between the age of both

partners ($r=0.693$ in 1997; $r=0.688$ in 2001; $r=0.694$ in 2006; $r=0.703$ in 2011). The hypothesis that most European marriages reveal age homogeneity (B.1) is confirmed for all the periods analysed. In Graph 3 we see that most marriages are celebrated between same-age spouses, even though these unions have been falling over the years (82.8% in 1997, 80.9% in 2001, 76.5% in 2006 and 73% in 2011). As the graph shows, marriages in which the husband is older than the wife have been increasing (from 15% in 1997 to 21.4% in 2011); a similar process has been taking place in marriages in which the wife is somewhat older than the husband (from 2.2% in 1997 to 5.6% in 2011).

— **Graph 3** [about here](#) - ~~Age homogeneity in bi-national couples.~~

— **Source:** ~~INE, Marriage micro-data 1997, 2001, 2006 and 2011.~~

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The education level of each spouse has changed over time. While in 1997 male spouses tended to have a lower level of education (66.7% primary, 21.4% secondary and 12% tertiary), in 2011 the levels were more balanced (35.2% primary education, 32.8% secondary and 32% tertiary). In the case of women, the increase in education level is even more pronounced – from 56.3% primary, 27.2% secondary and 16.5% tertiary education in 1997 to 22.7% primary, 30.7% secondary and 46.6% tertiary education in 2011 (INE, 1997, 2011). Despite women tending to be better educated than men, there is a positive and moderate correlation for better or less well-educated partners to marry between them (the Spearman correlation coefficient between the educational levels of the partners:

$r=0.637$ in 1997; $r=0.582$ in 2001; $r=0.565$ in 2006, $r=0.635$ in 2011). Looking now at the empirical evidence available for hypothesis B.2, Graph 4 shows that bi-national European marriages tend to involve partners with the same level of education. This feature is consistent with data found elsewhere (Díez Medrano et al. 2014), indicating that this is a distinctive attribute of conjugal unions between partners of different origin. Moreover, the data show a rather complex trend: even if educational homogamy is the most frequent category, there was a fall in 2001 and 2006, followed by a rise in 2011 (from 73.1% in 1997 to 50.8% in 2001 and 52.5% in 2006, then 61.6% in 2011). However, in 2001 and 2006 heterogamy is balanced with homogamy since couples composed by women who are better educated than men are also frequent. There was a significant increase from 19.6% in 1997 to 30.9% in 2011 in cases in which the woman is better educated. This is not surprising if we consider that in the 2011 census women registered a higher level of educational attainment than men (Instituto Nacional de Estatística [INE] 2011). Finally, the cases in which the man is more educated than the woman have been decreasing since 2001 (from 1997 to 2001 there was an increase) as the percentages came down from 14.1% in that year to 11.3% in 2006 and 7.5% in 2011.

— **Graph 4 about here :** Educational homogamy in bi-national couple.

- **Source:** INE, Marriage micro data 1997, 2001, 2006 and 2011.

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The evidence also suggests confirmation of hypothesis B.3, which postulates that partners in bi-national European marriages are mainly single for men and women, with being single before marriage the most common marital status. However, this situation has been falling over time, while during the same period the number of previously divorced individuals has been increasing (e.g. of all bi-national European marriages, 3.1% and 15.3% of men and 2.9% and 13.4% of women were divorced in 1997 and 2011, respectively). This increase runs parallel with the divorce rate in Portuguese society for the same years, which grew from 1.4 per 1000 in 1997 to 2.5 per 1000 in 2011, an absolute increase from 13,927 in 1997 to 26,751 in 2011.

From the analysis examining whether prior cohabitation has increased over time (hypothesis B.4), the key trend shows that there has been a sizeable increase in cohabitation before marriage when we consider the total number of bi-national European marriages – from 9.3% in 1997 to 13.2% in 2001, 26% in 2001 and 44.5% in 2011 (Graph 5). This confirms previous studies in other EU countries (De Valk and Díez Medrano 2014; Wissen and Heering 2014). The graph shows that as cohabitation has increased the number of bi-national marriages has fallen (particularly since 2001). However, the data only refer to cohabitation as a preliminary stage to these marriages and do not include cases in which cohabitation is a substitute for formal marriage. Accordingly, even if cohabitation trends add important information to this phenomenon, it may still underestimate the social reality.

— **Graph 5** about here : ~~Bi-national cohabitation and marriage.~~

—Source: INE, Marriage micro-data 1997, 2001, 2006 and 2011.

Patterns and types of bi-national European couples

Drawing on the literature identifying the diversity of patterns in bi-national European marriages in different countries (Valk and Díez Medrano 2014; Gaspar 2008; Koelet and Valk 2014), this section explores the existence of distinct groups of marriages in Portugal. To achieve this goal, we performed an MCA and then a cluster analysis to identify specific groups for 2011.

The MCA procedure enabled the mapping of three patterns of bi-national marriages: (a) unions between young (25 or under), single and less well-educated Portuguese males and European-born (EU or other European) females; (b) unions between older (35+) divorced or widowed partners who had previously cohabited; and (c) unions between Portuguese females and UE15 males in their prime (26–34), with a high level of education (especially women) who had not previously cohabited.

After identifying these three types of bi-national marriages, a typology (cluster analysis) was developed.⁷ Figure 1 presents the projection of the three groups as a supplementary variable that shows a clear correspondence between the configurations found by the MCA and the cluster analysis. By crossing each cluster with the input variables of the MCA it was possible to validate the patterns found and to provide a quantitative description of the different types of bi-national marriage (see Table 1 in the Appendix).

— **Figure 1** about here - ~~Patterns and types of bi-national European couples in Portugal (2011).~~

- Source: INE, Marriage micro data 2011.

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Cluster 1 (Labour couples) includes 39.8% of all couples and is comprised mainly of Portuguese men/EU15 women (68.3%). However, in this group the type 'Portuguese men/other European women' also reports the highest levels, in terms of both percentages and absolute numbers. This is the youngest group, particularly in respect of women. In fact, nearly 90% are under the age of 34, although the number under 25 is also extremely high (43.2% of women and 25.4% of men). Such young ages of these couples youth probably explains the fact that practically 95% of these spouses~~couples~~ were single and had not cohabited before marriage (61.2%). In addition, this is the least qualified group, with 56% of men and 30.3% of women having completed primary education only. These data are partially consistent with the findings reported by Díez Medrano et al. (2014), in which Spanish men with a low level of education had a greater propensity to marry other Europeans than EU15 partners. Moreover, this group may represent a type of exogamic union Gaspar (2008) identified, which is formed by labour migrants from Eastern Europe and Portuguese citizens.

Cluster 2 (Recomposed couples) represents 15.9% and is more diversified in terms of the spouses' origins. In fact, while the most frequent type of couple is also Portuguese

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man/EU15 woman, its importance is much more limited than among the labour couples (49.9%). Also important in this cluster are the couples: Portuguese woman/EU15 men (nearly 30%) and Portuguese man/other European woman (nearly 15%). It is also the most diverse group in terms of age, although it is also the one with the oldest spouses (particularly in case of male partners, of whom over 90% are over 35). Possibly related with the latter age group is the fact most partners (especially men) were divorced or widowed (74.9%). For this reason, we can expect many of these families to be recomposed (i.e., families formed by a couple in which at least one of the partners had been divorced and lives with common children or children from previous unions) as a sizeable proportion of partners have been previously married. Moreover, as with the labour couples, this group also has a considerable cohort of less well-qualified males (43.2% primary and 32.7% secondary education). In the women's case, the situation is rather different, with 35.1% having a primary education, 28.3% having a secondary education and 36.6% having a higher education (against 24.1% for men). This confirms the previous results showing that women in bi-national unions are better educated than the men (Ramos et al. 2015).

Finally, cluster 3 (Highly educated couples) is the largest of all groups (44.3%), sharing certain characteristics with cluster 1: in this group, we also find partners who were previously single and had not cohabited. In addition, 70% of these partners are between 26 and 34 years old. However, a distinctive feature of the group is the fact most of the couples are composed of Portuguese women/EU15 men (68.5%) with a high level of

education – 57.3% of men and 67.4% of women have a tertiary education. This group, therefore, seems to represent the type of bi-national couple projected by Gaspar (2008), which is formed by European free movers and highly educated Portuguese citizens.⁸ However, in contrast to previous data (Gaspar 2012), this type of marriage is gender-constrained. As illustrated above, Portuguese women marrying EU15 males are dominant in this group, a result that is in line with other research based on different EU contexts (Valk and Díez Medrano 2014), which also reports a greater proportion of highly educated females marrying EU15 males than their counterpart EU females.

Discussion and conclusion

The findings of this study allow us to draw some conclusions about the relative numerical stability of bi-national European marriages in Portugal between 1997 and 2011, with the concomitant decline in EU15 mixed partnerships and the significant rise in marriages between Portuguese and other Europeans. First, answers need to be found to interpret this fall, which weakens the idea of the EU social integration as a trigger for intermarriage. As suggested more than once (Valk and Díez Medrano 2014; Recchi 2008), European citizens have not moved as much as was expected for mobility to have an impact on people's daily lives and their social and emotional ties.

Second, as found elsewhere (Van Wissen and Heering 2014), the growth of cohabitation may be behind the decline in formal marriage. In this vein, previous evidence reveals that among international couples Europeans have the highest levels of consensual unions in Spain (Cortina et al. 2010). In Portugal, the proportion of foreign citizens cohabitating in

2011 was greater than that of the native Portuguese (28.2% and 12.3%, respectively).

Cohabitation – both national and bi-national – among foreign nationals was as follows:

French 29.6%; Spanish 35%; British 41.1%; Romanians 39.9%; Ukrainians 24.2%; and Moldavians 17.5% (INE 2011). Further investigations that include cohabitation among intermarried couples need to be undertaken to quantify this phenomenon and assess its importance within the conjugal and family practices of EU citizens.

A full picture of the trends and types of bi-national marriages between Portuguese and Europeans can only be completed with a joint register of marriages between both partners' countries of origin (Díez Medrano et al. 2014; Koelet and De Valk 2014). This means that the analysis should include marriages that take place in the country of origin of the non-Portuguese partner, which implies working with cross-national data for further comparisons. Clearly, within the market guaranteeing EU freedom of movement, native Europeans can marry in any country in which they live.

Another possible explanation for the decline in bi-national unions with EU15 nationals has already been suggested by Díez Medrano et al. (2014) and Gaspar (2012). A considerable proportion of immigrants living in southern European countries are lifestyle migrants who are older and already have partners of their own nationality. In the case of Portugal, this trend is clearly visible among the British, who, among all the ethnic communities, are the oldest (mean age 50.2 years) retired group (47.1 per cent) on the south coast (INE 2011).

While Portuguese emigration flows never stopped following EU accession, from 2008 onwards we must consider the impact of the European financial and economic crisis on migration in Portugal. While this article did not control for this effect (as there is no available background information on migratory status), further analysis should include it as a determinant variable. In fact, looking at the figures, we see that in 2010, 2011 and 2012 a total of 100,978, 121,418 and 128,108 citizens, respectively, left Portugal. Most of these emigrants were young – in their 20s and 30s – and of marrying age, a reality that translates into the depopulation of the national marriage market. The impact of these exceptional waves of emigration on intermarriage still remains to be assessed.

Finally, as Díez Medrano et al. (2014), Haandrikman (2014), Van Wissen and Heering (2014) discovered in other contexts, the decline in EU15 bi-national marriage in Portugal has run parallel with a sharp increase in mixed unions with non-European immigrants, particularly Brazilians (among whom the unions are more commonly with a foreign woman than a foreign man) (Ferreira and Ramos 2012). This tendency is also evident in the above-mentioned studies. According to the Portuguese 2011 census, the Brazilian community is mostly one of young, single females with secondary education, who are natural competitors with national and foreign women in the marriage market (INE 2011).

The potential impact of the single market on conjugal and family lives of European citizens must be interpreted according to the socio-economic characteristics of the partners involved. Within the total number of European marriages, the evolution of Portuguese-EU15 unions remained stable in relative terms and declined in absolute terms, exhibiting

clear gender and educational differences among the groups. What stands out from the data is the rise in the number of well-educated Portuguese women who marry EU15 men, a fact that supports the idea of increased mobility among free movers – who derive greater advantages from EU social integration (Favell 2008a). However, both the proportion and the absolute numbers show a decrease in bi-national marriages among the remaining EU15 citizens. The effects of immigration flows on Portuguese conjugality can also be seen in the growing waves of Eastern Europeans who have settled in Portugal in recent decades. Like Portuguese Brazilian couples, marriage between native Portuguese and other Europeans (particularly Russians and Ukrainians) was greatly facilitated by the labour and social opportunities granted to non-EU workers in the country since the 2000s. In this case, gender effects also structure these unions, although conversely to the way in which they affect citizens from the older EU15: Portuguese men more frequently marry Russian or Ukrainian females than Portuguese women marry Russian or Ukrainian men. Further research needs to clarify the motivation, ideals and values contributing towards these exogamous marriages. Finally, the types of bi-national European marriages in Portugal found in this article (labour, recomposed and well-educated couples) provide reassurance for the idea that European intermarriage includes heterogeneous groups of partners with different experiences, networks and lives, thus – to an extent – helping construct Europe from below.

Insert Appendix

Table 6: Cluster profile.

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Notes

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² For an overview of east-to-west migration, see Favell (2008b).

³ We excluded bi-national same-sex marriages (only legal since 2010) from the analysis.

⁴ This category was created using a five-year difference between spouses. As such, for the category ‘same educational level’ the age difference between both partners was less than five years; for the category ‘woman more educated than man’, women were five or more years older than their husbands; and for the category ‘man older than women’, men were five or more years older than their wives.

⁵ Since the hypothesis only refers to highly educated partners, the authors had decided not to include here other educational levels.

⁶ No data available for 1997.

⁷ The input variables used in the cluster analysis were the object scores. To define the type of couple, the solution of the three patterns suggested by the MCA plan was confirmed by a hierarchical cluster analysis (Ward's Method and Euclidian Squared Distance) and finally defined by the K-means method (for further technical procedures, see Carvalho 2008).

⁸ A third type of couple expected to be found by Gaspar (2008), that formed by neighboring partners (e.g., Portuguese-Spanish), can also be in part included here.