

Repositório ISCTE-IUL

Deposited in *Repositório ISCTE-IUL*:

2024-09-20

Deposited version:

Accepted Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Carvalho, J. (2023). Portugal: From exception to the epicentre. In Kennet Lynggaard, Mads Dagnis Jensen, Michael Kluth (Ed.), *Governments' responses to the Covid-19 pandemic in Europe: Navigating the perfect storm*. (pp. 65-75).: Palgrave Macmillan.

Further information on publisher's website:

10.1007/978-3-031-14145-4_6

Publisher's copyright statement:

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Carvalho, J. (2023). Portugal: From exception to the epicentre. In Kennet Lynggaard, Mads Dagnis Jensen, Michael Kluth (Ed.), *Governments' responses to the Covid-19 pandemic in Europe: Navigating the perfect storm*. (pp. 65-75).: Palgrave Macmillan., which has been published in final form at https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-14145-4_6. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with the Publisher's Terms and Conditions for self-archiving.

Use policy

Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a link is made to the metadata record in the Repository
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Portugal

João Carvalho (CIES-IUL)

Abstract

Portugal benefited from late exposure to the COVID pandemic, as the local community transmission was only observed from March 2020 onwards. Portugal's response to the health crisis was initially framed as a success due to the limited intensity of infection rates. However, this narrative was severely challenge by a spike in daily cases observed in January 2021 due to the lifting of restrictions during the Christmas season. To tackle uncontrolled virus dissemination, the government imposed two periods of national lockdown. In political terms, the health crisis failed to enhance the polarization of the political system as a close coordination was observed between the Portuguese President of the Republic and the Prime-Minister. Likewise, a consensual approach was adopted by the main opposition party towards the government. Nonetheless, the health crisis provoked distress regarding the support of the Portuguese left-wing parties for the Socialist minority government.

Timeline

- 3 March 2020 – First cases of Covid infection detected in national territory
- March 2020 – May 2020 – first wave of Covid
- 18 March 2020 – 2 May 2020 – First National lockdown
- 24 June 2020 – tension between Prime Minister and health experts
- Mid-October 2020 to Mid-December 2020 – second wave of covid
- 21 November – Deployment of three tier system to classify localities according to contagion rates
- 27 December – start of vaccination programme
- Mid-January 2021 to May 2021 – third wave of covid
- 15 January 2021 – 15 March – Second National lockdown

After prolonged media coverage of the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan from January onward, the first two cases of infection were reported in Portugal on 3 March 2020. Portugal's late exposure to the virus due to its geographical location benefited the start of preparations by the national government. Local community transmission only started from 12 March onward, with higher intensity in the northern regions. At this stage, a large section of the public started to voluntarily practice social isolation. Many parents removed their children from the education system before the nationwide lockdown, while the schools' directors publicly demanded their closure. Under intense pressure, the government announced the closure of all educational institutions on 12 March, at a time when Portugal had only registered 78 positive cases.

Three days later, the President of the Republic declared a state of emergency (*estado de emergência*), an unprecedented act since the establishment of democracy in 1974. The emergency decree imposed the lockdown of the economy and important restrictions on fundamental freedoms included in the *Portuguese Constitution*, like restrictions on freedom of circulation, suspension of the right to strike or restrictions on public gatherings. In consequence of the first wave of the epidemic, the highest single-day spike with 1,516 COVID-19 infections was observed on 10 April. Overall, Portugal reported a total of 41,912 cases of COVID-19 infection by 29 June (Figure 1). After initial success in tackling the pandemic, Portugal abandoned the state of emergency and transitioned to a state of calamity (*estado de calamidade*), a decision followed by the implementation of gradual reopening plan starting on 4 May. By mid-June, the rate of COVID infections in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area climbed to salient levels. This trend forced the government to reverse the lifting of lockdown measures, which had important repercussions on the tourism sector.

Insert figure 1 near here

By the end of the summer 2020, the rate of infection observed a steady growth, and this trend was evident by mid-November when a single-day spike of 8,371 new cases was observed on 16 November. In late October 2020, the national parliament decreed the

mandatory use of face protection in public space whilst the government imposed the partial confinement of 121 localities with high risk of infection. Moreover, the Portuguese government proposed the re-establishment of the state of emergency to the President of the Republic. This time, the range of restrictions were more limited than in early 2020, and mostly concerned with the freedom of circulation and the forced confinement of national citizens. A three-tier system was created to classify localities and to decree the necessary public health measures according to the level of contagion rates in late November. Thus, the freedom of circulation in public areas was abolished during the weekends between 1pm and 5am in the municipalities that observed high or extreme risk of contagion. Consequently, the second wave of the epidemic started to weaken after a decline on the rate of daily infections, especially between the 11 and the 30 December of 2020 (Figure 1).

Encouraged by the relative success in tackling the second wave, the government relaxed the restrictions for the celebrations of Christmas. Thereby, the freedom of circulation between municipalities was reestablished between the 23 and 26 December to enhance family reunion whilst the restaurants were also allowed to reopen (opening times were more limited in municipalities whose risk was very high or extremely high). A more restrictive regime was established for the New Year's Evening celebrations involving the prohibition of public celebrations, imposition of street curfew from 11pm until 5am, and the suppression of freedom of circulation between localities until the 4 January. The lifting of restrictions during the Christmas period coincided with the introduction of the Delta variant in national territory, which enhanced the onset of the third wave of the epidemic. In consequence of uncontrolled dissemination across the community, the infection rate attained another single-day spike with 16.432 new daily cases on 28 January (Figure 1). By contrast to the success observed in early 2020, Portugal became one of the most affected countries in the world with the highest case rate and death rate in the world in early 2021.

Within this context of uncontrolled community dissemination and severe pressure on the national health system, the government reimposed a strict lockdown on the 13 January, and external frontiers were closed for passengers coming from risk areas. The Prime-Minister recognized that more restrictions should have been imposed during the

Christmas celebrations to prevent the rise of the infections of rates. In consequence of the strict lockdown, the rate of infection started to decline significantly from February onwards. The vaccination programme started being implemented in early 2021, initially for medical personnel and then extended to retirement houses and care workers. Consequently, the number of deaths started declining following the dissemination of vaccines and the national lockdown was progressively lifted from 15 March onwards. The subsequent steady rise of daily infections with COVID was not followed by the death rates observed in the recent past due to the success of the vaccination programme.

Polity - The Portuguese political system and the pandemic

Portugal's political system is a semi-presidential system wherein the President of the Republic is directly elected by universal suffrage and co-habits with the national government appointed by a unicameral chamber - the Assembly of the Republic (Assembleia da República) (Calca, 2021). The presidential powers encompass three main vectors: representation of the state in foreign affairs, a soft legislative veto power, and the power to dissolve the Assembly of the Republic. The Prime Minister – António Costa, is accountable to both the President and Parliament. He is responsible for leading the national government, which possesses full legislative powers and supervises policy implementation (Magone, 2014). The relationship between the President – Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa and António Costa was very cooperative during the health crisis, as in the past. A minor disagreement involved Marcelo's preference for declaring the state of emergency on 12 March 2020. This presidential prerogative can only be imposed for 15 days in cases of highly disruptive events, and its implementation demands parliamentary ratification after consultation with the government.

However, the Prime Minister delayed the President's request in order to prepare a legal text that safeguarded the respect for fundamental liberties such as freedom of information or freedom of expression. At the parliamentary debate on this bill, the Prime Minister expressed "unequivocal institutional loyalty" to the President (Sábado, 2020). Further institutional alignment was evident in foreign affairs regarding the President's demand for greater solidarity at the European Union (EU) level with respect to joint debt

issuance and financial assistance to the most affected member-states. In turn, Costa characterized the Dutch finance minister's doubts over Spain's budgetary capacity amidst the COVID-19 crisis as 'repugnant' and contrary to the EU spirit. Three quarters of respondents to public polling expressed their confidence in the response to the pandemic of both the President and the Prime Minister in both March and early May (ICS-ISCTE, 2020a; 2020b). Poll data conducted in indicates that public trust in the executive's response was intense during the pandemic.

In terms of the party system, the centre-left executive led by Costa observed the COVID-19 crisis from the standpoint of a minority government, after being the most voted-for party in the 2019 general elections. However, the lack of an absolute majority in Parliament led to the formation of a minority government with the informal parliamentary support of the left-wing parties – PCP (PCP, Partido Comunista Português) and the Left Block (BE, Bloco de Esquerda). A similar agreement was observed in the 2015 election (Fernandes and Magalhães, 2020). During the state of emergency, the Assembly of the Republic never ceased its activity, and the parliamentary sessions were held under a contingency plan but never ceased activity. However, this institution is amongst the weakest parliaments in Europe vis-à-vis the executive (Magone, 2014). Thus, the government's legislation concerning the crisis' management was enacted through Decree-Laws, which do not require parliamentary ratification, a distinct path from the normal procedure of legislative decision making. In exception to its endemic weakness, the Portuguese parliament approved an expansion of social support despite the government's rejection of this proposal in March 2021 (this bill was later vetoed by the Constitutional Council because it implied higher public expenditures).

The state of emergency was extended several times by Parliament in between March 2020 and May 2021 with the favourable votes of PS, PSD, CDS-PP and PAN (Party of Animals and Nature), whilst the BE opted for abstention, but increasing political opposition was observed. Whereas the President's request for the exceptional measures was only rejected by a right-wing party named Liberal Initiative (*Iniciativa Liberal*), the subsequent extension requests faced the additional opposition of the Portuguese Communist Party and the abstention of the two Greens (*PEV, Partido Ecologista "Os Verdes"*) MPs and the extreme-right party – Enough (*Chega*). The transition into a state

of calamity in early May 2020 empowered the Prime Minister's control over the crisis' management, as the President's request for its renewal was unnecessary unlike the state of emergency. The electoral campaign for the presidential elections in January 2021 developed in the context of the third wave and a national lockdown, which prohibited mass public gatherings. Under these exceptional circumstances, the incumbent president obtained an overwhelming victory, as Marcelo was re-elected with 60.7 per cent of the vote in the first round of the election and was the most voted candidate in all localities for the time ever (MAI, 2021).

Regarding the federal-unitary dimension of the state, Portugal is classified as a unitary and centralized state due to the absence of governmental bodies at the regional level (apart from the two autonomous regional governments of the Azores and Madeira islands) (Calca, 2021). In the absence of decentralization in the continental territory, there are two main tiers of power: the national government and the local municipalities. This trend enhanced the adoption of a vertical structure of power and the centralized coordination of the crisis' management in the early stage of the pandemic. In parallel, the uneven geographical distribution of the Portuguese population strengthened the government's response to the pandemic, as almost two-thirds (60 per cent) of the population lived a short distance from the Portuguese coast in the late 2020s.

Portuguese municipalities hold the responsibility of implementing the national plan of civil protection and possess important levels of autonomy from the central government. Consequently, local mayors of areas with salient chains of transmission, like Felgueiras or Lousada, adopted a state of alert (*estado de alerta*) that locked down local public services and advised social isolation for their populations in early March. Additional financial resources were provided by the national government to support the municipalities' efforts against the pandemic. The coordination between central and local authorities were initially marked by tensions involving the national statistics, as mayors complained of a higher number of infections at the local level than those reported nationwide. This gap reflected the inadequacy of the health system's information infrastructure (*SINAVE*) to deal with a pandemic of such intensity. Lastly, the rise of infections observed in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area from mid-June onwards fostered tensions between local mayors and the health authorities. The disagreements concerned the diminished

availability of public transport and the lack of sufficient resources allocated to the Directorate-General of Health to supervise the pandemic's evolution during the reopening process.

Politics

Supported by Portugal's late exposure, the government monitored the pandemic's development and prepared for a 'worse-case-scenario' from the end of January. The national lockdowns implemented both in 2020 and 2021 imposed strict social distancing practices and the general duty of home confinement for the population. In addition, workplaces were closed down, working remotely became mandatory, and all non-essential businesses were locked down. These measures allowed the Portuguese government to prevent the overcrowding of hospitals during the first wave of the epidemic and to tackle the intense pressure observed on the health service during the third wave. Additional restrictions on the freedom of circulation were observed during public holidays, with only intra-municipal travel being authorized, in order to contain the virus' propagation. Throughout this period, the President and the Prime Minister made several public statements to request the Portuguese citizens' compliance with the exceptional restrictions and the Directorate-General of Health's guidelines. The state of calamity imposed from early May to the end of June of 2020 also allowed the government to impose the temporary suspension of individual freedoms and rights.

The government's overall approach to the crisis' management was supported by both scientific advice and foreign countries' experiences in dealing with the pandemic. The Portuguese government's health approach was based on the development of mass testing, contact tracing protocols, and the mandatory confinement of positive cases to break the chains of transmission. The testing capability was very meagre in early March due to the difficulties in securing the required kits in the global market. However, Portuguese scientists from public universities developed a test protocol whose necessary reagents were produced at the domestic level. This procedure was certified by the National Health Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Saúde*) and increased Portugal's testing capacity significantly: in early April, Portugal conducted 9,000 daily tests and, by mid-

May, it had increased to almost 14,000 daily tests. Consequently, Portugal is among the European countries with a higher COVID testing ratio relative to its population. By contrast, the national capability to perform contact-tracing failed to attain a satisfactory level in-between 2020 and 2021, as a quarter of infected cases detected in May 2021 were not traced by the health authorities due to the lack of human resources (DGS, 2021).

Building upon strong political and economic ties with China following the signing of a strategic partnership in 2004, Portugal also organized several flights to expand the national stockpile of personal protective equipment and to acquire ventilators from March onwards. Parallel to this, the national textile industry diverted its production chains from the usual manufacture of garments toward that of protective face masks. By early May, Portugal achieved a daily production of one million face masks that were directed toward the domestic and European markets. Thereby, protective equipment for the health workers on the frontlines of the fight against the virus was ensured by the national government. The efficiency of the response of the National Health Service (*Serviço Nacional de Saúde*) to the COVID-19 outbreak was also enhanced by the significant investment performed by the centre-left government since 2015. The low rate of infections in the first wave was also associated with the public's general compliance with the Portuguese state's restrictions. Nonetheless, the national health system was on the verge of collapse in February 2021 when 6,869 national citizens required hospital internment whilst 904 individuals required the provision of intensive care service (DGS, 2021).

Following the deployment of periods of lockdown in 2020 and 2021, the government announced reopening plans based on a gradual approach divided in different stages. The first stages led to the reopening of small-sized local commerce and public services (subject to previously scheduled appointment) with caps on customer capacity. Working remotely was mandatory throughout the lockdown periods. The second stage allowed the reopening of street-facing commerce, restaurants, kindergartens, museums, and visits to care homes were once again allowed. During the third and fourth stages, most of the economic restrictions were expected to have been lifted, whilst maintaining caps on customer capacity and the mandatory use of face masks in enclosed public spaces and transport. In the first year of the epidemic, the low infection rate of COVID-19 in Portugal

led the international football organization UEFA to reassign the last rounds of the football tournament – Champions League, to take place in Lisbon in August 2020. The UEFA's decision was presented by the government as evidence of the national success in tackling the epidemic, but public attendance was severely limited.

After the first period of lockdown, a spike in the infection rates in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area derailed the overall reopening plan. The daily infection rate climbed to 417 cases on 18 June 2020, a majority of which were identified in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. Due to a steady growth rate of 1 per cent in new daily cases of COVID-19 infection, the government was forced to exempt the Lisbon region (it was placed under a state of contingency) from the transition to a state of alert declared at the national level from 1 July onward. Moreover, the state of calamity (including the public duty to self-confine at home) was maintained in 19 parishes of five municipalities in the Lisbon area where salient chains of transmission had been identified. This spike challenged the government's recommendation that the population return to public spaces, under the new health guidelines, to counter the economic shock.

In late June 2020, the UK, alongside Austria, Denmark, Greece and the Czech Republic, excluded Portugal from their national list of safe travel destinations because the number of detected COVID-19 infections per 100 thousand citizens exceeded 20 individuals for the preceding 14 days. This development challenged the national narrative of success and implied severe repercussions on the tourism sector. In order to prevent a similar increase of the contagion rates, the government deployed a more careful approach after the end of the second lockdown and adopted a more gradual approach regarding the reopening of the society. Nonetheless, the moderate increase of contagion rates in-between May and July 2021 led to Portugal's exclusion from the list of safe travel destination of many foreign countries, with significant impact on the national economy.

In parliament, the left-wing parties' support for the PS minority government can be jeopardized by the pandemic's impact on public finances. This trend can lead to the potential option of re-imposing the austerity policies and cuts to public expenditure, like it was observed in the early 2010s. Consequently, the Left Block leader recalled her party's opposition to the austerity programme in the early 2010s. In a sign of increasing division, the *PCP* voted against the supplementary budget proposed by the *PS* minority

government in late June, whilst the *BE* abstained. The PS's national budget proposal for 2021 received the abstention of PCP and the rejection of BE, which indicated increasing tensions between the government and the left-wing parties in parliament.

In turn, the main opposition centre-right party – Social Democratic Party (PSD, *Partido Social Democrata*) adopted a consensual approach, as the party leader – Rui Rio claimed it would be unpatriotic to attack the government during the epidemic. Furthermore, Rio expressed his availability to participate in a 'national salvation government' to deal with the economic crisis engendered by the disruption provoked by the pandemic. The PSD's consensual approach helped to decrease the political polarization regarding the crisis' management. This trend was evident from the PSD's parliamentary approval both of the government's supplementary budget in 2020 and the 2021 national budget. The political debate was briefly polarized by André Ventura, *Chega's* leader, who was elected MP in 2019. In line with *Chega's* cultural xenophobia, the mandatory confinement of Portuguese Roma communities was demanded because of serious disrespect for sanitary and security restrictions. This proposal was rejected by all mainstream parties as it challenged the principle of full equality inscribed in the national Constitution.

To obtain scientific advice to support the decision-making process, the Portuguese government organized bi-weekly meetings with four epidemic specialists. These events were also attended by the President of the Republic, the leaders of opposition parties, and members of interest groups such as trade unions and employers' associations.¹ This approach enhanced the involvement of social partners. Nonetheless, the health specialists lacked a public representative to summarize the scientific research presented at the meetings, which hampered communication with the public at large. This gap was not solved through the establishment of daily press conferences with members of the Directorate-General of Health and the Ministry of Health (*Ministério da Saúde*) to report on the pandemic's evolution. In late June of 2020, tensions around after the Prime Minister's expressed his disappointment over the experts' inability to explain the resurgence of COVID cases in the Lisbon area. In January 2021, the health specialists expressed their disappointment for the lack of preparation for the probable

¹ These experts' meetings would end in July 2020 and revived later with less regularity, however, the private consultation to the experts by the government continued to take place.

consequences of lifting restrictions during the Christmas season. In overall, the health crisis empowered epidemic specialists that were employed in academic institutions and detached from the national health agencies.

In mid-March 2020, most of the Portuguese interest groups represented within the Economic and Social Council (*Conselho Económico e Social*) expressed their support for the exceptional measures adopted by the health authorities. However, the main trade union – *CGTP* conveyed grave concern with the limitations to workers' fundamental rights imposed by the state of emergency, such as the right to strike, imposed by the state of emergency (OIT, 2020). In mid-April 2020, members of the business community endorsed a public letter requesting the reopening of the economy under strict health guidelines following the example of South Korea or Singapore. Unlike in the past, the traditional official street parade celebrating the Carnation Revolution on 25 April of 2020 was cancelled because of the state of emergency. However, the *CGTP* demanded a downsized celebration of Labour Day on 1 May of 2020 because of the vast violations of workers' rights observed during the crisis. After obtaining the government's special permission, the *CGTP* organized a small event observing strict social distancing rules to emphasise the social crisis. These celebrations took place in April and May 2021 in the context of less restrictive regulations and higher level of public attendance than in 2020.

Lastly, Portuguese public opinion developed a very cautious approach to the COVID epidemic, following extensive exposure to the pandemic's development in foreign countries. The news coverage of the epidemic was closely followed by the vast majority (80 per cent) of respondents to a public poll conducted between 20 and 22 March (ICS-ISCTE, 2020a). Moreover, the declaration of the state of emergency in 2020 was approved by more than nine in ten of the respondents (95 per cent), which indicates intense public pressure for the adoption of exceptional measures. In early May 2020, a majority (53 per cent) of respondents considered that public authorities should wait longer to lift the exceptional restrictions imposed due to the epidemic. Similarly, almost three quarters of the public disagreed with the reopening of kindergartens on 15 May 2020 (ICS-ISCTE, 2020b). The two latter trends suggest salient levels of public mistrust towards the government's plans to reopen the economy. Unsurprisingly, the vast

majority of respondents expressed their concern with public health and the national economy (91 per cent and 94 per cent) (ICS-ISCTE, 2020b).

Policies

Portugal developed its economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic in a context of balanced public finances, after having posted a budget surplus of 0.2 per cent of the GDP in 2019. This accomplishment had not been observed since the reestablishment of democracy in 1974 and enhanced the government's swift response to the economic decline provoked by the pandemic. However, the impact of the government's fiscal and economic package was expected to amount to 6.5 or 7 per cent of the GDP in 2020. A stimulus package of 9,2 billion euros was announced in March 2020 aimed at supporting the economy and employment, which included fiscal measures, financial assistance to the most affected economic sectors (restaurants, tourism, hospitality), and support for social security contributions. Nonetheless, the national economy contracted by 7.6 per cent in 2020, mostly due to the intense exposure to the crisis in the tourism sector. In terms of supporting workers, the mandatory prophylactic isolation of suspected or confirmed cases of infection would entitle the affected workers to full sick pay. Exceptional financial assistance was provided for workers forced to dropout from work for taking care of children under 12, whose classroom activities were cancelled during the lockdowns (ILO, 2021).

Moreover, the government adopted a simplified temporary lay-off scheme. The scheme ensured support for the maintenance of employment contracts for companies affected by the crisis equal to two-thirds of the wage (70 per cent of this amount is paid by Social Security, and another 30 per cent by the employer). This scheme was also extended to independent workers (ILO; 2021). After the end of the first lockdown, there were 1,325,635 workers benefiting from the layoff scheme by 21 May 2021 (Silva et al.; 2020). This data indicated the arts and events sector, food and beverage, and education services as the economic sectors most benefited by the state's layoff scheme. The unemployment rate increased to 6.8 per cent by the end 2020, which represented an increase of 3.4 per cent in comparison to 2019 (Banco de Portugal, 2021). According to the available data, the economic impact derived from the second lockdown in 2021 seemed less severe than

the first according to the GDP data and the lower number of workers placed under the lay-off scheme observed during the first trimester (Banco de Portugal, 2021).

Additional exceptional measures were undertaken by the government to prevent the observation of a social crisis. Thereby, a temporary scheme was deployed to support the delay in (housing and non-housing) rental payments, whilst evictions and the cessation of house rental contracts were also suspended. Likewise, suspension of the termination of essential services (water, electricity, natural gas, telecommunications) due to lack of payment was decreed by the government, to help the consumers most affected by the economic crisis. During the state of emergency, the centre-left government announced the temporary regularization of all irregular immigrants and asylum seekers with pending applications at the Immigration and Borders Service (*Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras*). This exceptional measure was justified to promote health and public safety. On similar grounds, the government also promoted a special amnesty to pardon sentences for convicts involved in minor crimes, which affected two thousand individuals.

Conclusions

The emergence of the COVID-19 epidemic failed to have direct repercussions on the Portuguese policy-making pattern, which is mainly dominated by the national government. The alignment between the President of Republic and the Prime Minister throughout the crisis' management has so far been observed at the domestic and the European level. Nevertheless, the unconditional support of the former for the centre-left government failed to have negative consequences on the latter's prospects for re-election in January 2021. Likewise, the epidemic's impact on the informal parliamentary support from left-wing parties that sustains the *PS* minority government is yet to be known. The *PCP*'s abstention and the *BE*'s rejection of the 2021 national budget suggests the observation of political instability in the medium term. Political fragmentation will be aggravated if the epidemic's extensive impact on public finances is followed by the re-adoption of austerity policies like those observed in the early 2010s.

The absence of political polarization empowered the Prime Minister's supervision of the crisis' management. However, the absence of criticism from opposition parties also

enhances the observation of intra-party conflicts within the *PS*, between members of the executive or between central and local branches of government. Overall, the Portuguese government's response to the first wave of COVID was initially hailed as a success due to the quick lockdown of the economy and the low rate of infections observed until the end of May. The acute intensity of the third wave observed after the Christmas period in consequence of the government's moderation of restrictions during this season period challenged this narrative of success. The imposition of two national lockdowns during 2020 and 2021 failed to foster polarization within the political system. Health experts from outside national health agencies were also empowered by the health crisis, especially due to their intense exposition in the media. The political impact of the COVID epidemic in the medium and long terms is yet to be known.

Bibliography

Banco de Portugal (2020) Mercado de Trabalho. July. Banco de Portugal: Lisbon Available at: https://www.bportugal.pt/sites/default/files/anexos/3-mercado_trabalho.pdf.

Banco de Portugal (2021) Boletim Económico. Março de 2021. Banco de Portugal: Lisbon. Available at: https://www.bportugal.pt/sites/default/files/anexos/pdf-boletim/be_mar2021_p.pdf

Calca, P. (2021) *Executive-Legislative Relations in Parliamentary Systems: Policymaking and Legislative Processes*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Concelho das Finanças Públicas (2020) Perspetivas económicas e orçamentais 2020-2022. Lisbon, June, available at: https://www.cfp.pt/uploads/publicacoes_ficheiros/cfp-rel-07-2020.pdf

Direção Geral de Saúde (2020) Ponto de Situação Atual em Portugal. Available at: <https://covid19.min-saude.pt/ponto-de-situacao-atual-em-portugal/>

Direção Geral de Saúde (2021) Monitorização das linhas vermelhas para a COVID-19. Direção Geral de Saúde: Lisbon, available at: <https://covid19.min-saude.pt/relatorio-linhas-vermelhas/>

Fernandes, J. and Magalhães, P (2020) “The 2019 Portuguese General Elections.” *West European Politics* 43(4): 1038–50.

ICS/ISCTE (2020a) Covid 19. Lisbon, March, available at: <https://sondagens-ics-ul.iscte-iul.pt/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Sondagem-ICS-ISCTE-Mar%C3%A7o2020-Covid.pdf>

ICS/ISCTE (2020b) Covid 19. Lisbon, May, available at: <https://sondagens-ics-ul.iscte-iul.pt/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Sondagem-ICS-ISCTE-Maio2020-Covid-versaofinal.pdf>.

ILO (2021) COVID-19 and the world of work. Country policy responses. ILO: Geneve. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/regional-country/country-responses/lang--en/index.htm#PT>

Lijphart, Arend (2018) *Patterns of Democracy : Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. <https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300172027/patterns-democracy> (November 21, 2019).

Magone, J. (2014). *Politics in Contemporary Portugal: Democracy Evolving*. Rienner

Sábado (2020) Coronavírus: Parlamento aprova declaração de estado de emergência. 18 de Março.

Ministério da Administração Interna (2021) Resultados Globais. Território Nacional e Estrangeiro. Available at: <https://www.eleicoes.mai.gov.pt/presidenciais2021/resultados/globais>

Silva, P.; Carmo, R.; Cantante, F.; Cruz, C.; Estêvão, P.; Maso, L.; Pereira, T. and Lamela, F. (2020) Trabalho e desigualdades no Grande Confinamento (II) (Estudos CoLABOR , N.º2/2020).