

## **Country Focus: Migration of Portuguese nationals during the crisis**

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### **Background**

The results that are presented below are part of a broader study on the migration from the Southern Member States of the European Union (EU) and Ireland. Within this study an online survey was conducted between 21 May and 18 August 2013. The survey was disseminated through the large scale media and social networks. In the Portuguese case, the media chosen was the newspaper Público. The survey was also publicized on the Observatory of Emigration website, and through social networks such as Star Tracker, Rede Migra, Facebook and Faina Londrina.

The sample under examination consisted of all individuals who are currently residing abroad and have once resided in Portugal. One of the most relevant aspects of the survey was the high response rate (3,322). It is noteworthy that with just a few weeks of release, the number of responses had surpassed those of other countries involved in the project. Despite its volume, the sample is not representative. Given the newspaper and the type of social networks chosen, responses were dominated by skilled emigrants. For this reason, the analysis does not focus on Portuguese emigration in general, but on skilled emigration in particular.

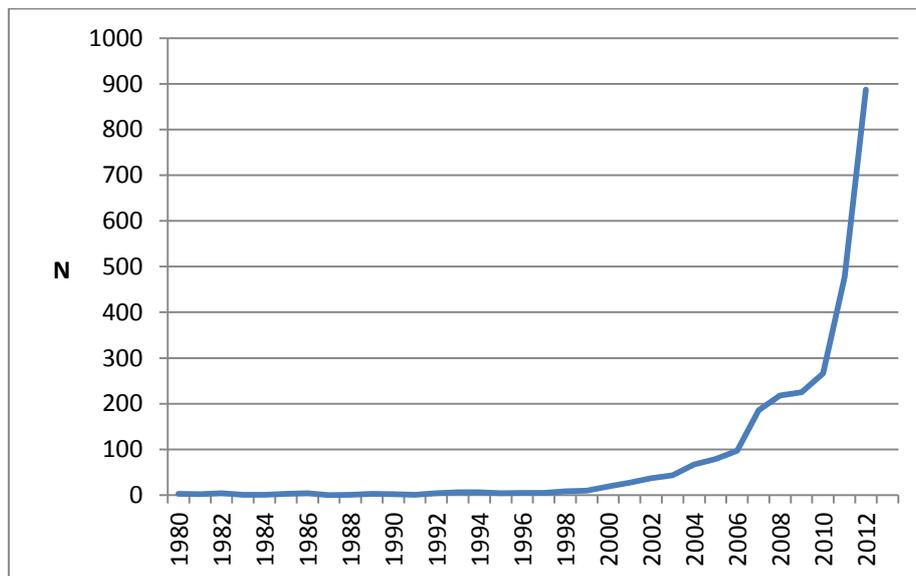
### **The main characteristics of our Portuguese dataset**

Regarding sociodemographic characteristics, the gender distribution denoted a slight imbalance in favour of men: 57.1% male and 42.9% female. The age distribution showed a balance between youth and adults: 44.6% of respondents were aged up to 30 years, while 49.4 % were in the age group 31-45 years. Hence emigration affects today both men and women and different age groups.

With respect to educational levels, the results confirm the skilled profile of the sample. A large majority (87.7%) holds a degree of tertiary education, university or equivalent. The fields of education were quite diverse. First came Engineering (23.2% of respondents), followed by Economics and Management (13.2%), Social Sciences (11.5%), IT (11.3%), Health (10.4%), Mathematics and Natural Sciences (9.9%), and Architecture (5.6 %).

Migration is recent and has been increasing. By analyzing the date of departure, flows have increased steadily along the new century, particularly after 2010 (Figure 1). In total, 9.4% of respondents left in 2010, 16.8% in 2011, 31.2% in 2012 and about 20% in the first six months of 2013. That is, three quarters of the more than 3,000 respondents left between 2010 and the present. Despite the limitations associated with the survey methodology, it is very likely that the economic crisis, recession and continued worsening of the labour market have reinforced the appeal to emigration.

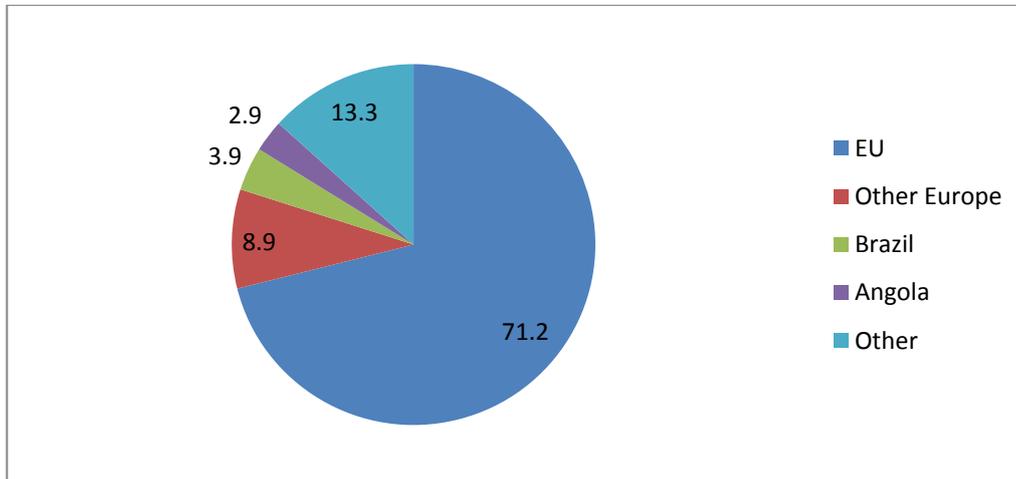
**Figure 1. Year of departure from Portugal (1980-2012)**



The answer to the country of current residence showed a large variety of destinations. However, a clear majority is in the EU (Figure 2). The highest frequencies are found in the UK (22.9% of all responses), Germany (7.7%) and the Netherlands (6%). In total, the EU and associated countries (including Switzerland and Norway) received almost 80% of the emigrants. The possibility of free movement, the labour shortages (skilled or not) in Central and Northern Europe and the active recruitment led by some countries

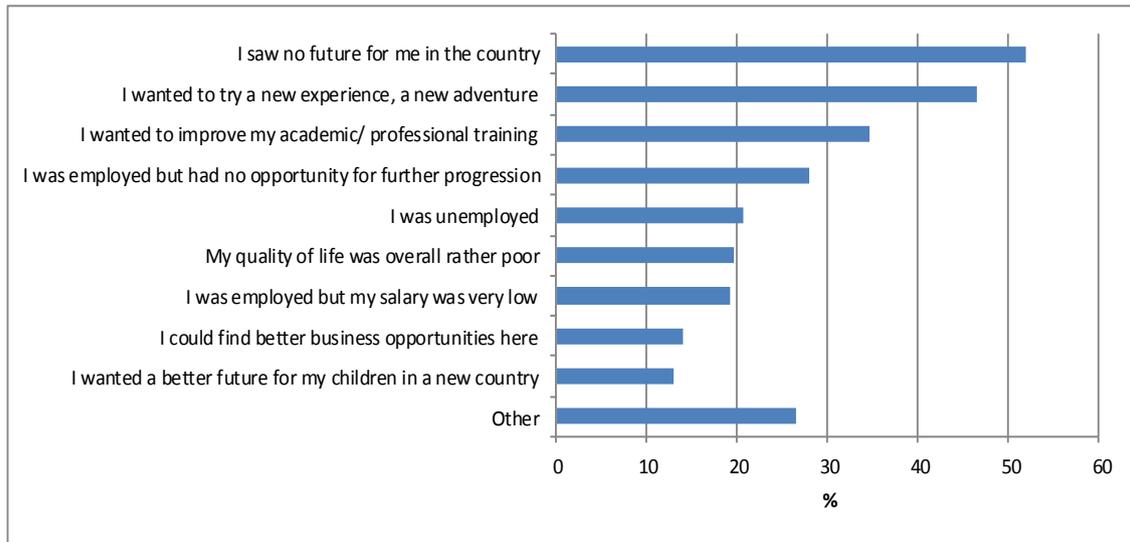
(in Portugal and other southern European countries) explain that reality. In addition to flows directed to the EU, also relevant are the ones targeting Brazil (3.9%), Angola (2.9%), USA (2.6%), Australia (1.3%), Mozambique (1.2%) and Canada (1.1%).

**Figure 2. Main destination countries (%)**



With respect to the reasons for the departure, the weight of negative attitudes and discouragement regarding Portugal is large (Figure 3). Slightly more than half of respondents (51.9%) declared to see "no future for me in this country" and 12.9 % reported wanting "a better future for my children in a new country". A very high number pointed out reasons related to a poor insertion in the labour market: 27.9% were employed but did not see career opportunities, 20.6 % were unemployed, 19.2 % were employed but with low salaries. In addition, 19.6 % stated that their "quality of life was very poor". (It should be noted that, in this question, multiple responses were possible.) An equally large number of respondents, however, had more positive attitudes: almost half (46.5%) indicated that they want to try "a new experience, a new adventure" and slightly more than one third stated wanting to improve academic or vocational training.

**Figure 3. Reasons for departure (%)**



Note: multiple reasons could be ticked by the respondents

From the point of view of migration paths, the high international circulation of respondents must be emphasized. When asked if they have resided in another foreign country before the current one, almost half (44.5%) said yes. It is not clear, given the existing data, whether this movement occurs through the free initiative of individuals - representing a form of "cosmopolitan" life - or if it results from the difficulty of integration - representing a response to job insecurity or adverse ways of social integration.

With respect to the situation in the labour market back in Portugal, the answers confirm what was observed regarding the reasons for departure. On the one hand, unemployment was very high, and a strong reason for emigration: about one third of respondents had been unemployed in the six months before leaving. On the other hand, the number of employed (the remaining 2/3) was high, but their reasons for departure raise the question of job quality, insufficient to prevent emigration. When asked about the career opportunities offered by that job, more than a half (51.3%) said to be "few" or "none".

Consistently, nearly half (46%) said they were "not very satisfied" or "not satisfied" with their jobs.

In brief, from the point of view of the labour market, the main reasons for departure are the current high unemployment in the country, affecting especially the younger generations, the precarious labour arrangements and low incomes in many jobs. In other words, the lack of jobs and the poor quality of employment are the strongest reasons for departure.

In contrast, job opportunities in destination countries were generally good. A large majority of respondents (89.1%) declared to be employed. The type of professional insertion correspond to existing skills: the majority of those who were working (79.7%) fits in with the top professional segments of the labour market. From the point of view of the contractual situation, a majority (63.3%) has a permanent contract - an unusual reality among the younger generations in Portugal.

The level of declared income also shows the quality of labour market integration. About a third of respondents (27.5%) receive more than 4,000 euros per month, followed by 23.4% that earn between 2,001-3,000 euros and 23.1 % in the range 1,000-2,000 euros. The income differences when compared with the so-called "500 euros per month jobs", widely observed in Portugal, is very large. But also, the level of satisfaction with current income is in line with those figures: nearly 80% of respondents declared they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied".

Finally, as for future plans, the clear majority of respondents (58.5%) expressed a desire to stay in the current destination country for at least the next five years. Among the other, the 32.9% plans to stay for a period of one to five years and then return to Portugal, and just a small number, 8.6%, intends to return in the short-term.