POLICIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN PORTUGAL: CONTRIBUTIONS TO A FRAMEWORK FOR OLDER WOMEN

POLÍTICAS PARA LA IGUALDAD DE GÉNERO EN PORTUGAL: CONTRIBUCIONES A UN MARCO PARA LAS MUJERES MAYORES

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ABSTRACT

The way people age is exceptionally heterogeneous, diverse and fraught with various asymmetries (Fernandez-Ballesteros, 1999). Empirical evidence confirms that the diversity and cultural complexity interfere in how individuals age, and recognises that there are differences in how men and women experience their ageing. This article analyses the five National Plans for the Promotion of Equality and Citizenship, implemented between 1997 and 2017. The objective is to assess policies to gender equality in the context of ageing and focusing on older women. The authors concluded that the older population is practically invisible in the documents analysed, with a higher prevalence of women. The documents show a homogenization of older people as a group, only making a distinction by gender. There are not considered identity categories of this population. Measures concerning the senior population are mainly focused on the economic dimension, in the context of combating poverty and social inclusion.

RESUMEN

La forma en que las personas envejecen es excepcionalmente heterogénea, diversa y cargada de diversas asimetrías (Fernández-Ballesteros, 1999). La evidencia empírica confirma que la diversidad y la complejidad cultural interfieren con el envejecimiento de las personas, y reconoce que existen diferencias en cómo los hombres y las mujeres experimentan su envejecimiento. En este artículo, se analizan los cinco Planes Nacionales para la Promoción de la Igualdad y Ciudadanía, implementados entre 1997 y 2017. El objetivo es evaluar las políticas de igualdad de género en el contexto del envejecimiento y se centra en las mujeres mayores. Llegamos a la conclusión de que la población de edad avanzada es prácticamente invisible en los documentos analizados, con una mayor prevalencia de las mujeres. Los documentos muestran una homogeneización de las personas mayores como un grupo, solo haciendo una distinción por género. No se consideran las categorías de identidad de esta población. Las medidas relativas a la población de edad avanzada se centran principalmente en la dimensión económica, en el contexto de la lucha contra la pobreza y la inclusión social.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Public policies; national plans for gender equality; ageing; gender; Portugal.

KEYWORDS

Políticas públicas; planes nacionales para la igualdad de género; envejecimiento; género; Portugal.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ageing is one of the leading challenges of contemporary societies. However, the definition of the older people is anchored to cultural, social, political and economic issues. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines that the age groups of older people should be conceptualised according to the sociocultural and economic-political characteristics of the countries. In the European Union, it is agreed that older people are persons over 65 according to the reform standards. The United Nations argues that the seniors are all people over 60 years of age. In Africa, it is consensual to define that older people are individuals that should be either 50 or 55 years of age. Therefore, there is a pattern of social construction of the ageing process (Debert, 1999), which has been the subject of various discursive requalifications by leveraging it as adjectives such as «positive», «healthy» and «active» (Amaral & Daniel, 2016).

The phenomenon of demographic ageing has triggered an increasing scientific, media and political interest. Within the European context, the UN estimates that by 2050 the population over 65 years of age increases from 23% to 28%. Portugal has been experiencing a demographic transformation towards an ageing population and the current sociodemographic context highlights this reality. The National Institute of Statistics[1] states that, in 2031, Portugal will be below the threshold of 10 million inhabitants. The prediction is that, from the current population of 10.3 million, there will be a decrease to 7.5 million people. WHO (2015) estimates that the number of older people will increase from 2.1 to 2.8 million. In the 2011 Census, the population over 65 was 19%. The average life expectancy in Portugal is 80.6 and, in 2016, the longevity index was 48.8%, and the ageing index was 148.7 (PORDATA). This latter metric is the relationship between the old and young people, meaning that there are 148.7 seniors for every 100 young people in Portugal.

Ageist prejudices dominate the European reality (Marques et al., 2017; Hesse & Dikken, 2010; Doron & Kafka, 2015). Age discrimination becomes a constant in an increasingly ageing continent (Grundy & Murphy, 2017). The results of the European Social Survey (ESS) 2008-9 show a bias concerning age, gender, and race/ethnicity. The majority of the respondents reported that they were unfairly treated according to their age (34.5%), followed by sex (24.9%) and lastly by race/ethnicity (17.3%). It was also reported that 44.4% of all respondents across Europe see age discrimination as a serious problem. Concerning unfair treatment, 39% of the respondents stated to have experienced a «lack of compliance» because of age – for example, have been ignored or reported patronised. The results also show that 29% described being «poorly treated» because of their age, i.e., they were insulted, abused or denied services. Therefore, the results suggest that more than a third of all Europeans experience age discrimination and that most of them experienced unfair treatment. This report acknowledges that the European legal framework to combat discrimination is not competent (Age UK, 2011). There is no minimum protection for people who are discriminated against on the grounds of age outside the working area (Directive 2000/78). To extend the scope of the EU equal treatment right, the European Commission has published a proposal for a directive, which has not yet been adopted - COM (2008) 4268 - which prohibits age discrimination in the acquisition of goods and services. In the

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[1] National Institute of Statistics: http://www.ine.pt

same vein are the results of the «World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014» in which respondents responded that they agreed (40% = agree, 18.6% = fully agree) with the statement «Old people are not very respected nowadays» (WVS, 2014). The idea of older people associated with economic and dependency issues seem to be evidence. This homogenization of the process of ageing stems from political and media discourses, which generalises a misconception that includes gender.

In this article we assume an intersectional approach (Crenshaw, 1991) anchored to the feminist perspective (Topa, Nogueira, & Neves, 2013), considering that ageing has gender and biographies matter so that older people are considered a heterogeneous group. The theory of intersectionality emerges in the 1970s from feminist movements and anti-racist struggles (Nogueira, 2011; Topa, Nogueira, & Neves, 2013). Oliveira explains that this approach is «particularly useful for understanding and reading a world where the illusion of identity stability has been lost and where diversity needs finer and more sophisticated lenses to be perceived» (2010, p. 26). In this regard, Magalhães and Alvarez argue that

> the social and relational character of the concept of gender, which distances it from the biological stronghold of the concept of sex, will allow us to look at inter-individual differences from a new paradigm that rejects and abandons the presupposition of hierarchy of the feminine versus the masculine, the diversity in men and women, and which reveals with acuity the inequalities and the invisibility of women and femininity, as well as non-normative masculinities and other groups considered deviant or transgressors (2013, p. 5).

Diversity and intersectionality are thus central issues in political discourse because they assume identity categories that contribute to the conceptualisation of society more broadly, corresponding to the various heterogeneous groups that make up its social structure (Topa, Nogueira, & Neves, 2013).

This paper aims to contribute to the critical problematisation of public policies for equality between men and women in the perspective of ageing. The authors propose a content analysis of the five national plans for equality with the purpose of examining the transfer of policies to gender equality in the context of ageing and focusing on older women.

1.1. AGEING AS A HETEROGENEOUS PROCESS

The scientific literature emphasises that the process of ageing is not homogeneous, being diverse and leveraged to various asymmetries (Fernández-Ballesteros, 2002; Fonseca, 2005; Mair, 2013). Homogenizing assumptions that portray this process as one, categorising older people as an identical group obscures the heterogeneity that characterises ageing. However, the excessive generalisations of this process are denounced in some critical studies that show that differences and inequalities are hidden (Paúl, 1997; Cabral et al., 2013). In fact, the ageing process is plastic and diverse. There are ethnic, age, sexual, gender and socioeconomic differences that contribute to the diversity of the ageing experience (Daniel, Simões, & Monteiro, 2012).

There are multiple factors that contribute to the heterogeneity of the ageing process, namely transversal determinants: culture and gender; issues connected to health and social service systems; behavioural factors; dynamics related to personal aspects; aspects associated to the physical environment; elements related to the social environment and economic factors (WHO, 2002). Empirical evidence confirms that diversity and cultural complexity interfere with the way individuals age; also recognises that there are differences in the way men and women experience their ageing process (Daniel, Caetano, Monteiro, & Amaral, 2016).

However, several authors report that linkages with gender have been poorly addressed in studies with populations of advanced ages (Levy, 1988; Alber & Ginn, 1996). In this perspective, Alber and Ginn argue that the focus on studies with age and sex has been too simplistic in treating these «as independent and additive variables» (1996, p. 21). By being insensitive to interactive processes, this bias-generating simplification has an impact not only on policy design but also induces conventional ways of acting that have repercussions on the quality of life and well-being of older people.

It should be noted that the term «gender» was adopted by Oakley (1972) to deconstruct the sociobiological arguments that prevailed until the 1970s. Sociologist claims that the concept of gender goes further than the biological differences between the two sexes, socially and culturally constructed meanings and presuppositions on «feminine» and «masculine», on «being woman» and «being a man», which impose themselves on social and individual cognitions, producing and reproducing stereotypes (Amâncio, 1993; Monteiro, 2005). It follows that men and women are expected to behave differently and assume different social roles. The conceptions of masculine and feminine are normative since «according to [they] define themselves and attribute capacities, roles and differential functions to women and men» (Monteiro, 2005, p. 27), and that influence the opportunities and results of some others in the various stages and spheres of life. Sen, George and Öslin (2002) argued that the non-recognition of gender inequalities results from resistance based on the idea that the differences are of a biological nature and not the result of social relations.

Gender differences are the result of biographical trajectories that are graded in masculinised or feminised form. This path begins with the choice of the name they give us, which reflects only the sex with which we were born (Shaffer, 1994). Education, modes of socialisation, professional careers, social roles, and extra-family networks contribute to the life experiences being experienced differently for those born to men or women. Despite the distinct social evolutions, the differences persist. Thus, in the old age, inequalities reflect social constructions and differentiated living conditions. Therefore, the social relations of gender are determinants of the living and health conditions of men and women (Esteban, 2006). Different roles and social representations affect the relationship with others, active life, and the body.

A different terminology has emerged around the phenomenon of ageing populations leading to shifts in social representations and public policies. Bowling and Dieppe (2005) reviewed 170 articles on «successful ageing» and revealed a normativity, elitism and tendency to homogenise experiences of ageing in a vision that was hegemonic and based on value judgments. Almeida (2007) noted the same normative trend in the various national and international studies she categorised. According to the author, there is evidence that the definition of «healthy ageing»

prevails, as something that either does or does not exist but is never expressed as a continuum. Almeida also notes the small number of studies focussing on the perspective of older adults themselves.

Research on the later stages of the life cycle has been expanded, although studies on ageing and gender issues are still practically non-existent in the context of public policies. Political discourses combat negative social representations and stereotypes under the «active ageing» paradigm. Inspired by the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, the notion of «active ageing» emanates from a definition of WHO (2002) and proposes a requalification of the concept of old age. The concept of «active ageing» promotes positive conceptions of the process and an extension of the social and economic participation of the senior citizens, against the persistence of stereotypy that this stage of life associates uselessness, disease and dependence (Daniel, Antunes, & Amaral, 2015; Daniel, Caetano, Monteiro, & Amaral, 2016; Amaral & Daniel, 2016). The homogenization in political policies, particularly in the context of the European Union suffered a setback with the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, which reinforced the idea that it is necessary to change the societal representations of older people and the ageing process. It is in this context that begins to be equated the existence of gender differences and the implications of gendering ageing. Indeed, several authors had already reported the invisibility of gender aspects in studies and public discourse on ageing, even in feminist analyses (Wheeler, 1997; Goldani, 1999; Miller & Simeth, 2007). At a time when the notion of ageing is mutating, with profound social and individual impacts, promoting gender equality in ageing is a condition directly associated with constant societal transformations.

1.2. GENDER INEQUALITIES AND INVISIBILITIES

Over the last few decades, there has been a growing emphasis on the study of women and their role in society. To follow this path, the support of the feminist movements in the 1980s gradually gave voice to the skills that women were acquiring, namely to combat discrimination and gender inequality (Carvalho, 2011). Feminism is an «eminently demanding movement» (Ferreira, 2005, p.76).

The scientific literature points to three waves of feminism (Kaplan, 1992). At first, feminist movements focused mostly on the well-being of Women. This first wave of feminism is anchored in the campaign for civil rights, namely the right to vote. The process of emancipation, which dates back to the 1960s, appears in the second wave of feminism (Brandt & Kizer, 2015). According to Macedo, the third wave of feminism is called «post-feminism» since it is related to the «discourse of postmodernism, insofar as both aim to deconstruct/destabilise gender as a fixed and unchanging category» (2006, p.153).

The new societal configurations have substantially altered the role of women and the way in which women are represented socially. There are still negative social representations, and the standardisation of women's role depends primarily on cultural and geographical issues. Nevertheless, there are also new narratives that seek to overcome the stereotypes developed over the years, combated by the vagaries of feminism and by different organisations.

Serge Moscovici (1976) argued that the way people see the other derives from a social construction, that is, from a social representation. These representations give meaning and are validated by society. Conceptually, the author distinguished the «collective representations» postulated by Durkheim from «social representations». Collective representations were interpreted as «a social reality independent of individuals» (Vala & Castro, 2013, p. 581), assuming themselves as social facts.

Arguing that in the reality of today's societies, a plurality of ideas prevailed, Moscovici claimed that social representation implies that «one can not explain the individual without the social, nor vice versa» (Vala & Castro, 2013, p. 584). Therefore, «this approach confers particular revelation to everyday communication and discourse since these constitute the means by which representations are elaborated, diffused and transformed» (Vala & Castro, 2013, p. 584). Social representations are, then, constructions that social subjects make from objects/subjects that are socially valued (Jodelet, 1986).

Social representations derive from «the process of socialisation and are directly associated with collective identity» (Daniel, Antunes, & Amaral, 2015, p. 291), that is, the behaviours that are mirrored by society are assumed. In this sense, societal discourses and their narratives often embody representations that the media make of women. In this regard, Cerqueira stresses, «media texts and images (verbal and iconic messages) help to organise the ways of understanding gender relations» (2008, p. 140). In the same line of reasoning, Mota-Ribeiro and Pinto-Coelho consider that «in the media discourse, the exclusion or secondaryization of female voices implies that the knowledge triggered in this discourse and produced by it is necessarily partial and, as has been shown, often is selective and negative» (2005, p. 2).

During the feminist movements, the mass media helped to expand feminist goals but also contributed to the devaluation of these same goals (Silveirinha, 2009). It should be noted that the discrimination against women made by the media remains a current issue. In general, the media continues to devalue the real value of the news, opting for very superficial journalistic approaches, hiding the real issues and insisting on a «stereotyped social construction of masculinity and femininity» (Peça, 2010, p. 92).

Silveirinha (2009) states that although there is high growth in the value of women in the media, it continues to be held in place in the Family. Monteiro and Policarpo argue «the media contributes to the social construction of discrimination against women, through the politically correct treatment of the subject» (2002, p. 2). However, the authors also conclude that, regardless of being rooted in Portuguese culture, there is a gradual growth for this theme to enter the public discussion, underlining the successive number of political initiatives.

Since the 1980s, the United Nations has played a vital role in integrating women and the concept of gender in corporate discourse (Amâncio, 2003). The organisation was creating spaces of dialogue that allowed a more extensive range of topics such as discrimination and inferiority that affected women in their social life. Throughout several conferences, the United Nations was drawing increasingly essential milestones.

The Fourth United Nations Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 became the most consecrated, having promoted three strategies that intensified the struggle for rights and emphasised

«the concept of gender, the notion of empowerment and the transversality approach» (Viotti, 2006, p. 149). The normalisation of the discourse of the United Nations arises by its repercussion in the media, which allows the composition of corporate narratives about women.

The social discourse on a given subject, object or event is a shared construction of reality, diffused by various means. In this sense, political discourse inevitably shapes the social representations of its objects of study. In fact, political discourse allows the understanding of a discursive memory (Swain, 2001) that has societal reflexes since scientific knowledge translates into practical knowledge (Santos, 1988). It follows that the social representations of the subjects are assumed as narratives that contribute to the shared social constructions about these same subjects. It is in this sense that public policies, as instruments of political action, have transformative power.

1.3. PUBLIC POLICIES FOR EQUALITY IN PORTUGAL

Gender mainstreaming is defined by the Council of Europe as «(re) organization, improvement, development and evaluation of decision-making processes, so that the gender equality perspective is incorporated into all policies, levels and at all stages, by the actors generally involved in the political decision» (CIDM, 1999, p. 30). As Monteiro, Agostinho and Daniel explain, «mainstreaming the equality of women and men is an intervention not merely rhetorical or formal, but truly transformative and reformatory» (2015, p. 424).

Cerqueira and Cabecinhas argue

> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) can be considered the inaugural framework within the framework of policies for equality between men and women. Since 1950, the United Nations has been pushing for the introduction of equality in international law. Pressed by women's intergovernmental organisations, they succeeded in making several countries, albeit at different rates, include measures sensitive to gender inequality (2012, pp. 106-107).

Portuguese public policies aimed at promoting gender equality stem from international guidelines such as the International Decade for Women (1975-1985), the establishment of International Women's Day and the World Conferences on Women (Mexico, Copenhagen, Nairobi and Beijing) (Subtil & Silveirinha, 2017). It was in the context of these international commitments that awareness was raised about the problem and the policies for equality between men and women were legitimised (Cerqueira & Cabecinhas, 2012).

National plans for equality are one of the policy instruments that governments use as an expression of their commitments to gender equality and inclusion of other disadvantaged groups (Ferreira & Monteiro, 2012; Subtil & Silveirinha, 2017). In this regard, Monteiro and Portugal argue

> Pressed by the European commitment to «gender equality» (1997), Portugal started to adopt National Equality Plans as a materialisation of a mainstreaming strategy. The importance of these policy documents is therefore extreme, as a point of convergence of the dynamics of production and the construction of meanings of the public policies of gender equality (2013, p. 99).

The first political intention to recognise gender-mainstreaming policies emerged in 1994 with a legislative initiative. However, it placed «the focus on measures and policies around the situation of women as workers» (Monteiro & Portugal, 2013, p. 100). As Monteiro and Portugal refer, in this document

> the policy of promoting equal opportunities and responsibilities between men and women is seen as a means for the social revaluation of the family as a function of the State, taking into account the problems that the International Year of the Family (celebrated in that same year) [1994] had come to reveal. The interpretative frameworks were therefore associated with family issues rather than the equality of women and men and the rights of women (2013, p. 100).

In the post-dictatorship and democratization period of the country, civil society entities and actors such as the Working Group on the Definition of a Global National Policy on Women (1970), the Working Group on the Participation of Women in Economic and Social (1971), and the Commission on the Status of Women (1975) worked together with feminist movements, women's associations and political parties in discussing the promotion of gender equality and strategies to place the issue on the public agenda (Monteiro & Portugal, 2013; Subtil & Silveirinha, 2017).

The country also did not follow the various policies of the European Union towards equality. The XIII Constitutional Government implemented public policies in the area of citizenship and the promotion of equality for the first time in Portugal. In the Global Plan for Equality of Opportunities[2], the Portuguese government assumes its commitment to international organisations such as the European Union and the United Nations on the need to implement a strategy of gender mainstreaming in the various sectors of society (Subtil & Silveirinha, 2017). The Global Plan for Equal Opportunities (1997) emerged nine years after the Commission on the Status of Women had proposed to some political actors a Common Platform for Action, seeking to establish a strategy for mainstreaming equality in the various policy areas (Monteiro & Portugal, 2013).

Between 1997 and 2017, Portugal had five national plans for the promotion of equality and citizenship (Global Plan for Equality of Opportunities 1997-1999, II National Plan for Equality[3] 2003-2006, III National Plan for Equality - Citizenship and Gender[4] 2007-2010, IV National Plan for Equality, Gender, Citizenship and Non-Discrimination[5] 2011-2013, V National Plan for Equality: Citizenship, Gender and Non-Discrimination[6] 2014-2017). The National Strategy for

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[2] Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 49/97, approved by the Council of Ministers of March 6, 1997, and published in the Diário da República, Series B, n. 70, March 24.

[3] Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 184/2003, published in the Diário da República, Series I B, n. 273, November 23.

[4] Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 82/2007, published in the Diário da República, Series I, n. 119, 22 June.

[5] Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 5/2011, published in the Diário da República, Series I, n. 12, 18 January.

[6] Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 103/2013, published in the Diário da República, Series I, n. 253, 31 December.

Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030 - Portugal + Equality, which will encompass several national plans, has now been approved by the Portuguese government.

2. RESEARCH GOALS

In this work, the authors assume the context of the need for public policies for equality between men and women in the perspective of ageing. To contribute to a critical problematization of this issue, the research question that guides this article is: «How are older women included in public policies for gender equality?».

This paper aims to analyse the five national plans for equality with the purpose of examining the transfer of policies to gender equality in the context of ageing and focusing on older women. The main goal is to understand how these public policies ensure the rights of older women in this context, considering the political engagement of constitutional governments in promoting gender equality and opportunities.

3. METHODOLOGY

The corpus of analysis was the five National Plans for the Promotion of Equality and Citizenship already implemented in Portugal (Global Plan for Equality of Opportunities 1997-1999, II National Plan for Equality 2003-2006, II National Plan for Equality - Citizenship and Gender 2007-2010, 4th National Plan for Equality, Gender, Citizenship and Non-Discrimination 2011-2013, V National Plan for Equality: Citizenship, Gender and Non-Discrimination 2013-2017). The methodology of this study was content analysis (Bardin, 1977), crossing the quantitative and qualitative dimensions. The analysis of the data was made using software webQDA.

The study was operationalised from the identification of the descriptors «older people» and «older women» in the 478 measures of the five plans. From these descriptors, two categories of analysis were isolated to identify in the public policies differentiated identities in the older population from a gender perspective.

4. RESULTS

The five plans analysed are divided into measures, entities responsible for their implementation and/or institutions involved in the application, objectives, target audience, and performance indicators. The structure of the planes varies in form but not in the substance of these items. Table 1 presents the number of measures that each plan contemplates.

Table 1 - Description of the National Equality Plans

National Plan	Years	Measures	Measures related to "older people"	Measures related to "older women"
Global Plan for Equality of Opportunities	1997 - 1999	51	2	0
II National Plan for Equality	2003 - 2006	104	2	3
III National Plan for Equality - Citizenship and Gender	2007 - 2010	155	0	1
IV National Plan for Equality, Gender, Citizenship and Non-Discrimination	2011 - 2013	97	2	0
V National Plan for Equality: Citizenship, Gender and Non-Discrimination	2014 - 2017	70	1	1

Source: Own elaboration

It was found that only 12 (25%) referred to the older population. From the identification of a small number of measures aimed at the senior population (7) and the senior women (5), only two categories were constructed: «older people» and «older women". Therefore, the methodological option was the documentary record with the purpose of answering the research question: «How are older women included in public policies for gender equality?». The results report that public policies frame the rights of women and promote gender equality in a very limited perspective in the period analysed (1997-2017).

In the Global Plan for Equality of Opportunities, were identified in the preamble only two references to older women and the senior population in general:

> On the other hand, adolescent mothers, older women and single mothers with dependent children constitute social groups that are highly vulnerable to poverty and at risk of social exclusion, especially when these conditions are accompanied by reduced or no schooling and the absence of professional qualification.

> At the demographic level, the combined effect of increased life expectancy and low birth rates results in the progressive increase in the older population and the reduction of the young population. If these trends are associated with the effects of urbanization and the gradual decrease in the average size of families, we are faced with some of the factors that contribute most to confining women's activity to the family context, due to the diversification in the urban space and in the lifetime, of the assistance activities they are called to assure with their families.

At the level of the measures, only two references were identified to the older population within a total of 51. The first reference is in Objective 4 - Reconciliation of private and professional life:

> Measure 4 - Encourage the creation of care institutions for children (day care centres), older people (home support and day care centres) and the disabled (rehabilitation and rehabilitation institutions) through the articulation between the central administration, local authorities local and non-governmental organizations, including through financial support under the European Regional Development Fund.

The second reference to older people is in the same objective and in measure 5:

> Give particular priority to the activities which, in the context of the social employment market (Council of Ministers Resolution 104/96 of 9 July), respond to the increasing social demand in the area of child and elderly care and other dependent persons, as well as other services of proximity which contribute to the quality of life of families, and in particular of women.

The II National Plan for Equality covers 104 measures, five of which include the older population. Three of these measures relate specifically to older women. Measures arise in the context of the following significant areas of intervention: Professional activity and family life and Citizenship and social inclusion. The proposals concerning the older population concern the reconciliation of work and family life:

> 1.2. Reconciliation of work and family life
>
> (...) The phenomenon of the ageing of the population influenced the social structure, and many older adults currently live with their descendants. Between 1960 and 1997 the senior population residing in Portugal more than doubled. Consequently, more and more workers have to reconcile work with the custody of not only children but also other dependents.
>
> (...) the promotion of study to meet the costs of providing tax breaks to companies that introduce the concept of childhood ticket, elderly or disabled ticket, to be granted to employees who use social structures external to undertakings for support to dependents.

The measures that contemplate the senior women refer to poverty and social inclusion:

> 3.2 - Poverty and social inclusion. (...) Due to women's longer life expectancy in the face of men, older women find themselves in more fragile situations that are reflected both in the lack of economic resources and in the isolation in which they live. Women make up more than three-quarters of the poor, elderly population living alone, and the vast majority survives at the expense of State support. The low levels of schooling and the high level of illiteracy that characterise this age group only reinforce the vulnerability of these women to poverty.
>
> 3.2.1 - Gender mainstreaming in all policies and programs to combat poverty and promote social inclusion and study of their impact on women and men. Sensitization and specific training of all equality advisors within the Interministerial Section of CIDM [Committee on Equality and Women's Rights] and other agents of the Public Administration for the need to take into account the problem of female poverty and social exclusion.
>
> 3.2.3 - Adoption of positive action measures targeting women belonging to particularly vulnerable groups, in particular where they are the sole educator of the children, are detained, are disabled or older people. Application of a priority scheme for access to vocational training, the use of social facilities and social housing for women who have the dual circumstance that they are the sole educators of their children and are in economic need.

The III National Plan for Equality - Citizenship and Gender includes 155 measures to promote citizenship and gender equality. However, only one is addressed to the older population, specifically to women. Within the sizeable strategic area Gender perspective in priority policy domains, in the measures for Inclusion and Social Development, it is proposed to improve the quality of life of senior women. The process indicator is «to create the necessary support mechanisms to improve the quality of life of older women».

The IV National Plan for Equality, Gender, Citizenship and Non-Discrimination considers 97 measures. It was found that the large strategic area Social Inclusion fits the older population. However, this framework is made assuming contexts of dependency and a welfare policy:

> The dissemination of the solidarity supplement for the older population is part of the solidarity subsystem for pensioners aged 65 and over and aims to support low-income elderly.

> The Integrated Continuing Care Network, which consists of the creation of a set of services and teams aimed at people in a situation of dependency, through an integrated and articulated intervention between the health sector and social security, allows to intervene at the level of satisfaction of old people and their families, as well as their needs that have an impact on the practical improvement of the elderly's well-being. (…)the phenomenon of social exclusion continues to affect women, particularly older women, immigrants or ethnic minorities with disabilities, and those in poverty.

Measures 63 and 64 refer to the following:

> 63 - Evaluate the social insertion income from a gender perspective.

> 64 - To evaluate the solidarity supplement for the older people from a gender perspective.

The V National Plan for Equality: Citizenship, Gender and Non-Discrimination introduces inclusive gender language. In Strategic Area 2 - Promotion of Equality between Women and Men in Public Policies, it is stated that:

> Sex appears to be the first and most structural inequality factor. Whenever the various situations and deprivations that constitute a situation of social exclusion, and the groups associated with it, are highlighted, women are, particularly at a disadvantage. In this sense, socio-economic studies invariably present women at the base of the social pyramid and in multiple discrimination, such as women in poverty, rural women, immigrant women, older women, women with disabilities and single mothers with dependent children.

This strategic area is divided into five sub-areas in a total of 27 measures that take on nine strategic objectives, two of which target the older women and the older population in general:

> Promote basic skills necessary for the construction and development of inclusive living projects with specific groups of women in situations of greater vulnerability, including rural women, immigrant women and older women;

Contribute to the prevention of the multiple factors that are the source of the condition of a higher vulnerability of the older population in several domains.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The five plans analysed include 478 measures, of which only 12 target the older population and of these, only 5 refer to older women. Most of the measures are focused on issues of combating poverty and social inclusion, in a welfare logic. It was found that older women have higher visibility than men. Only the IV National Plan for Equality, Gender, Citizenship and Non-Discrimination introduces public policy analysis from a gender perspective. However, the public policies under study are financial support for social measures.

The categories «older people» and «older women» allow concluding that this population is a target audience dispersed in the plans, not taking as focus the different identity conditions of the senior citizens and their contexts. On the contrary, there is a direct identification of older people with other issue such as support social and financial. The National Plans for Equality reveal the absence of the older population, particularly the male gender. The documents also show that there is an aggregation of the older people in a homogeneous group, not considering their heterogeneity. This issue is worrying, and public policies must emanate effective discourses and actions capable of transforming society. The authors conclude that the five National Plans for Equality (1997-2017) provides an interpretation of the older population as a whole, disregarding their identity categories and not attending to the need to conceptualise public policies from an intersectional approach.

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