



Country Issue: Portugal



The Relaunch of Europe

Mapping Member States' Reform Interests

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About the authors

Carmen Gerstenmeyer, Julia Klein, Julian Plottka, Jana Schubert, Amelie Tittel, all IEP.
Bruno Oliviera Martins, Department of Global Political Studies, Malmö University; Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).

Institut für Europäische Politik (Institute for European Politics, IEP) is one of the leading foreign and European policy research centres in the Federal Republic of Germany dedicated to the study of European integration.

Further information on the project can be found here:

www.relaunch-europe.eu

Responsible for this publication in the FES

Dr. Dominika Biegón, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES).
Arne Schildberg, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES).

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THE RELAUNCH OF EUROPE

MAPPING MEMBER STATES' REFORM INTERESTS

The Relaunch of Europe. Mapping Member States' Reform Interests (RelaunchEU) is a project conducted by the Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) on behalf of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) that surveys the implementation prospects for twelve concrete reform proposals. It covers the policy areas of Social Union, Economic and Monetary Union and Defence Union as well as asylum and migration policy and the EU's institutional set-up. Furthermore, it analyses the support for flexible integration and the positioning towards the five scenarios presented in the European Commission's »White Paper on the Future of Europe« of spring 2017. It covers the positions of national governments and of relevant progressive political parties, which received a minimum share of 5 % of the votes in the previous European or national elections.¹

The study follows two main objectives: (1) It demonstrates the scope of action for prompt reforms of the EU in the selected policy areas while also taking into account which member states would, under certain conditions, be willing to implement the specific proposals. (2) It empirically determines which member states could belong to an avant-garde group willing to deepen integration.

Researchers from think tanks and research institutions in the member states of the EU-27 compiled information to determine the position of governments and progressive political parties towards the twelve reform proposals. This qualitative analysis reflects the country experts' views and is based on documents such as coalition agreements, government or party programmes, position papers, press releases, interviews, op-ed pieces, and official documents. It presents a snapshot of the discussions within the governments and parties. In order to keep the country issues short, internal debates and deviating opinions cannot be covered in detail. Positions are subject to change, especially following elections and the formation of new governments. The snapshot was taken at the end of September 2017. More recent developments could not be included. Notable exceptions are the country issues of Austria and Germany, which were updated following the latest coalition negotiations.

The study's results are published in English on the website www.relaunch-europe.eu. It presents maps for every actor and reform proposal, 27 country issues and an analytical paper. The paper compares the positions of all actors in all member states of the EU-27 on the twelve concrete reform proposals and presents five flagship-projects, which bear the chance for a relaunch of Europe.

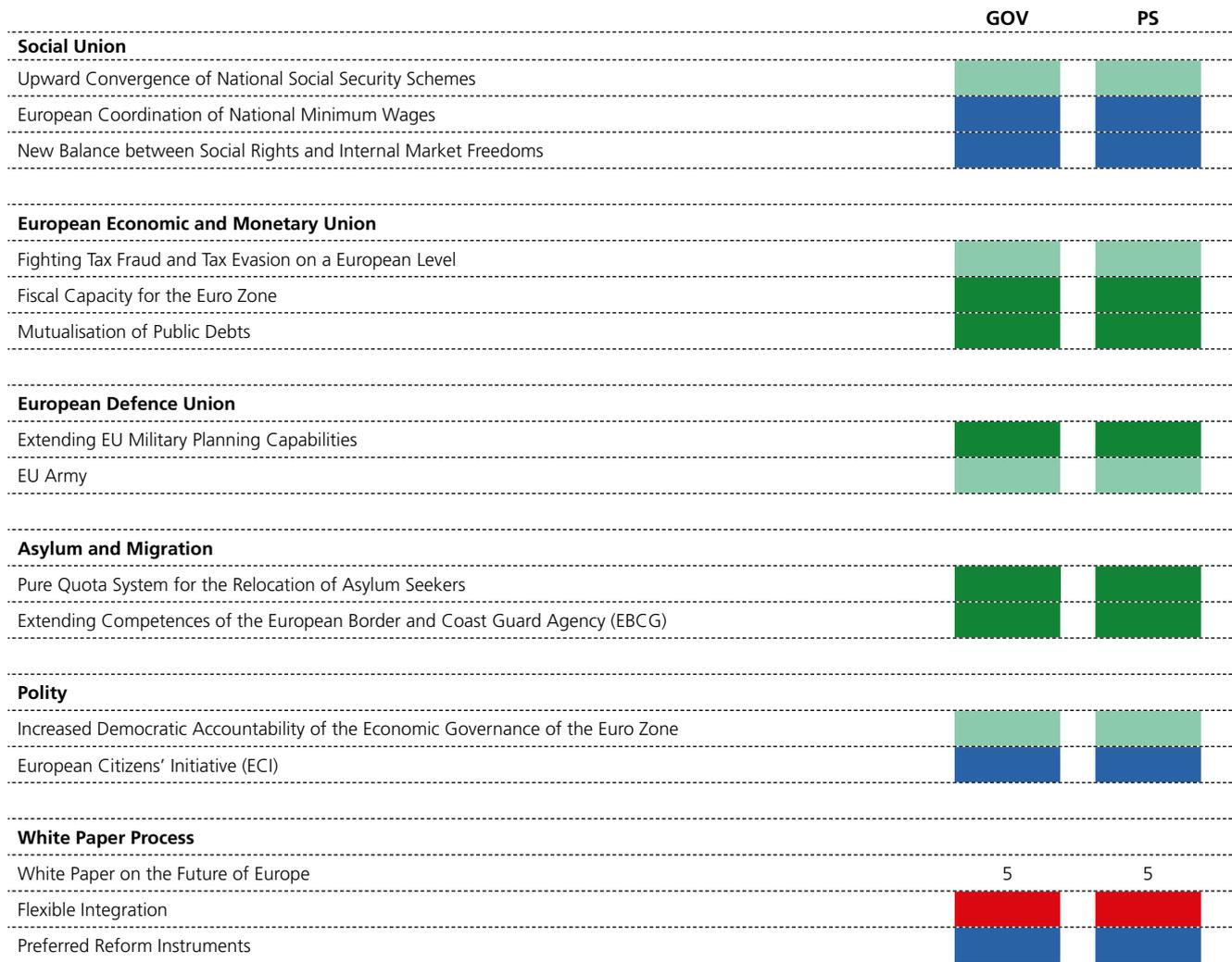
¹ If a party fulfills this criterion, but is not a relevant actor in the national public debate anymore, it was deleted from the sample based on the judgement of the projects' country expert.

PORTUGAL

After the country's bailout in 2011 and a three-year austerity programme implemented by a centre-right government, the general elections held in 2015 were inconclusive. The progressive party *Partido Socialista* (PS) was invited to form a government based

upon a parliamentary agreement with the communist-green *Partido Comunista Português-Partido Ecologista* «Os Verdes» and the far-left alliance *Bloco de Esquerda*. Thus, the PS-led minority government has to rely on their parliamentary support.

Support of the Portuguese Government and the PS for Deepening EU Integration



Legend

- support for
- support under conditions
- against
- neutral

- GOV** National Government
- PS** Partido Socialista

- 1 – Scenario 1: «Carrying on»
- 2 – Scenario 2: «Nothing but the single market»
- 3 – Scenario 3: «Those who want more do more»
- 4 – Scenario 4: «Doing less more efficiently»
- 5 – Scenario 5: «Doing much more together»

SOCIAL UNION

Social security schemes in Portugal were extensively affected by the crises in the euro zone and the subsequent austerity measures implemented by the previous coalition government. The present left-wing government aims at reinstalling the level of social security schemes prior to the crises. For this reason, it concentrates on strengthening social security schemes. However, the debate on social issues is mostly focused on the national level. In general, both the government and the PS support more **upward convergence of national social security schemes in Europe** that aims at strengthening social rights and protection. According to the government, social cohesion across the EU and the convergence of Portuguese social security schemes with EU-wide standards needs to be achieved in the future, in parallel with more economic convergence, which remains a top priority. However, different national policies should be adopted considering the diverging national social and economic realities in each country. Hence, the government opposes a harmonized EU-wide set of policy instruments. Both the government and the PS have not yet adopted a position concerning the **European coordination of national minimum wages**. Once again, the relevant political debates have a national focus particularly on returning to salary levels, which were in place prior to the crises. Thus, the level of the national minimum wage has recently been raised from 505 to 557 euro, a rate that is far from meeting average EU levels. **A new balance between social rights and internal market freedoms** has not been a relevant topic of political discussions in Portugal. Neither the government nor the PS has adopted a position towards this reform proposal. However, both actors underline that any reform of the EU, in general, must be combined with fostering social rights and protection. The PS prime minister also stressed that a reform of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) should not cause collateral damage on social security schemes across the EU.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION

Some of the most efficient measures adopted by the former Portuguese government during the financial crisis dealt with the fight against tax evasion. In line with this policy, the PS-led government generally supports the idea of **fighting tax fraud and tax evasion on a European level**. Both the government and the PS support more transparency and accountability as well as increasing efforts against tax havens. It is criticised that due to discrepancies between the fiscal systems of member states, competition in the EU is unfair and distorted. Consequently, a certain level of fiscal harmonisation within the EU is considered to be indispensable. However, member states continue to be the main actors, as, according to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, total uniformity of national taxation systems would not be desirable either. The persistence with which both the prime minister and other members of the

government support a **fiscal capacity for the euro zone** is worth highlighting, as is the explicitness of the PS-led government's programme on the topic: »The Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) needs to support the common currency with some autonomous budgetary capacity, gradually built, for example, upon the future Financial Transaction Tax. Without hesitation we defend a reinforcement of the budgetary capacity of the EMU.« The fiscal capacity is seen as a valuable instrument to respond to asymmetric shocks in the euro zone and work towards more convergence between member states. The government and the PS have all voiced support for the **mutualisation of public debts** in the EU, as it could be one possibility to address the country's vast public debt, which amounted to 130 percent of its Gross Domestic Product in 2016. The mutualisation of public debts through the issuing of Eurobonds is just one of several possible measures that the PS and the Left Bloc agreed on in April 2017. In addition, the Public Sector Purchase Programme of the central banks could become permanent, and the public debt could be restructured within the existing mechanisms, namely the asset purchase programmes and the European Financial Stability Mechanism (EFSM). Even though the proposals have been agreed on by the PS, they have not received official endorsement from the government as of yet.

EUROPEAN DEFENCE UNION

Portugal is both strongly committed to NATO and a supporter of a strong Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which both constitute the cornerstones of the country's defence policy. The country actively participates in military missions and operations of NATO and EU. Thus, the government and the PS generally support **extending EU military planning capabilities** as long as it is compatible with NATO structures and does not lead to a duplication of capabilities. Furthermore, the expansion should not impose additional expenditure obligations, as Portugal's investment in defence policy is limited and not considered to be a budgetary priority. These conditions essentially determined the government's position towards the recently created Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) that has hardly required any financial investment. The Portuguese defence minister welcomed its establishment as a means to increase the efficiency of EU missions and operations by addressing the lack of a military interlocutor during the execution of such missions and operations in the past. However, he also highlighted that the MPCC does not correspond to a fully-fledged, central EU command, which might not be supported by the government. The same conditions are also applicable to the support of the government and the PS towards the establishment of an **EU army**. Once more, both the government and the PS stress the importance of EU-NATO relations for further deepening the CSDP. Additionally, any measures fostering a better allocation of resources and more efficient burden-sharing, as proposed by the Commission's Action Plan on Defence, are welcomed too. The emerging debate related

to the creation of an EU army is seen as a positive development, as it was not expected a few years ago. However, the lack of concrete steps towards the establishment of an EU army keeps the debate at an undefined level.

ASYLUM AND MIGRATION

Traditionally, Portugal has not been one of the target countries of refugees or asylum seekers, receiving only 17,769 asylum applications between 1975 and 2015. Therefore, the government's decision in 2016 to host more refugees than the EU relocation quota ascribed to Portugal was a significant development, albeit one allegedly motivated less by humanitarian concerns and more by demographic and economic considerations and the possibility to achieve political dividends at the European level by being a supportive member state. However, as of May 2017, Portugal only took in 1,306 refugees under the EU quota programme, receiving far less asylum applications than it was willing to accept. It is against this background that the Portuguese government and the PS are in favour of further deepening the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and a more equitable distribution of responsibilities among EU member states. Thus, establishing a **pure quota system for the relocation of asylum seekers** is supported, too, although the details of its implementation remain undefined. The Prime Minister (PS) has pledged his support for a joint and comprehensive European approach, particularly concerning the external dimension of the European Migration Policy and addressing the main causes of the migration flows, e.g. war, violent conflicts and poverty. Portugal has traditionally been supportive to the idea of further integration of the control of the Schengen area's external borders. The PS-led government states that the management and control of Portugal's borders is understood to be within the context of Schengen. While there is no clear position on the technical details envisaged for a possible **extension of the competences of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG)**, Portugal favours a strong force at the EU's external borders, especially at sea. Its contribution to the EBCG consists of 47 personnel, distributed among the gendarmerie (18), the police (5), the border agency (14) and the maritime police (10). The Portuguese air force has contributed to rescue operations in the Mediterranean in the framework of Frontex and its naval assets have been deployed in the region since January 2017 as part of the operation Triton.

POLITY

Overall, there is widespread support of the Portuguese government and the PS to **increase the democratic accountability of the economic governance in the euro zone**. When the PS was part of the opposition, it has criticised the deficiencies of the governance in monetary policy, especially during the so-called »Troika years«, leading to exacerbated asymmetries between North and South and lacking convergence. In January 2017, Portugal and Spain commonly

advocated initiatives in order to strengthen and complete the EMU. For the government, the Eurogroup has indeed too much power and responsibilities as well as it does not deem a European finance minister necessary. To reform the euro zone governance and to increase its accountability, the PS-led finance ministry suggests creating a European Fiscal Board for greater coordination of fiscal policies, enhancing economic coordination and its enforceability throughout the European Semester, supporting private and public investment and creating a proper euro zone budget and a European Monetary Fund. Both the Portuguese government and the PS welcome the **European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)** as a measure to bring the EU closer to its citizens. Regarding the reform of the ECI, the PS does not address the issue on a national level, but is actively involved in the reform process through several deputies in the European Parliament. Their work towards a more citizen-friendly and accessible ECI procedure reflects the party's position on civil society empowerment, democratic legitimacy and participation in the EU.

WHITE PAPER PROCESS

In Portugal, the »**White Paper on the Future of Europe**« has been received with a rather high level of enthusiasm and has led to proactive discussions, both within the government and among civil society. The current PS-led government has been outspoken about their take on the future of the European Union: Any reform should strengthen the EU and not roll back on current policies and achievements. The government considers economic convergence to be of the utmost importance within the EU and stresses that – before any real reform can be successful – the EMU has to be reformed. Therefore, the government endorses scenario five, »doing much more together«, within the methodology of scenario 4, »doing less more efficiently«, meaning that they wish to pursue European integration on carefully selected policy domains as a whole, prioritizing areas such as migration, counter-terrorism and the Monetary Union including a social pillar and risk prevention mechanisms. As scenario 3, »those who want more do more«, is not preferred by Portugal, believing that it would ultimately harm the project of European integration as a whole, the government rejects **flexible integration** in principle. However, it is understood that a Europe of different speeds might be necessary to advance integration within the EU at all. In such a scenario Portugal wishes to remain at the core of the Union. While flexible integration is by no means desired by Portugal, as it favours the entire Union advancing together, the government and the PS would agree on it before the Union is paralysed. The PS-led coalition remains indecisive as to how reforms should be implemented, but underlines the importance of upholding the principles of democratic legitimacy and accountability throughout the process.

Legend

Actors Covered by the Study in each EU Member State

- *National Government*: including its members from one or more political parties, the Head of State or Government, relevant executive ministers and administration.
- *Progressive Parties*: They include all parties that are represented either in the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D) or that are members of the Party of European Socialists (PES) and have gained a minimum share of 5 % of the votes in the last national or European elections. They also include La République en Marche (REM) in France.

Concrete Reform Options in Different Policy Areas

Social Union

1. *Upward Convergence of National Social Security Schemes* to provide Europe-wide protection against social risks and to ensure a decent standard of living for EU citizens.
2. *European Coordination of National Minimum Wages* to ensure a decent income within the EU to prevent in-work poverty, to promote social convergence and to avoid social dumping across the EU.
3. *New Balance of Social Rights and Internal Market Freedoms* to compensate the current precedence of internal market freedoms over national social rights.

European Economic and Monetary Union

4. *Fighting Tax Fraud and Tax Evasion on a European Level* for a fair allocation of tax burdens among natural and judicial persons.
5. *Fiscal Capacity for the Euro Zone* to provide stabilisation against economic shocks through public expenditure in the euro zone.
6. *Mutualisation of Public Debts* to tackle the problem of a sharp increase in public debts in some member states as a result of the euro zone crisis.

European Defence Union

7. *Extending EU Military Planning Capabilities* also for executive military missions and operations.
8. *EU Army* establishing a permanent multinational military force under European command.

Asylum and Migration

9. *Pure Quota System for the Relocation of Asylum Seekers* which would replace the Dublin system.
10. *More Competences for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG)* expanding the current EBCG tasks in terms of »shared responsibility« between the EBCG and national authorities.

Polity

11. *Increase Democratic Accountability of the Economic Governance of the Euro Zone* to make its institutions more responsive to EU citizens.
12. *European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)*: revision of the ECI regulation to make the instrument more citizen-friendly and effective in order to strengthen the participative democracy in the EU.

White Paper Process

13. *The White Paper on the Future of Europe* by the European Commission presents five possible scenarios for the future course of European integration.
14. *Flexible Integration*: limiting the application of certain rules to certain EU member states.
15. *Preferred Reform Instrument*: Treaty reform, reforms inside or outside the Treaties.

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