

## **“They fill jobs we do not want” – Non-EU nationals’ migrants and regional development**

**Elisete Simões Diogo<sup>1</sup>, Tatiane Lúcia Valduga<sup>2</sup>**

Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre, Portugal

### **Abstract.**

Public policies and social intervention are challenged to reinvent themselves facing the constraints of the nature of low-density territories. Furthermore, Europe and therefore Portugal have received migrants from a range of countries, comprising of a complexity in the management of the growing flow of migrants. Therefore, migrants and specifically third-countries nationals (TCN) may represent a resource for those regions where Portuguese people escape from. This exploratory study, based on a qualitative approach, aims to acknowledge, and understand the relation between professional practices for social inclusion of TCN and the development of low-density regions in Portugal. It presents the participants’ perspective about how their practices and activities carried out contribute to the inclusion of TCN. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, in 2020 and 2021. Sampling includes social workers from the three organizations that offer a CLAIM service (a local center to support migrants’ integration) in the Alentejo region. Qualitative data analysis, based on categorical analysis, is supported by WebQDA software. Data are being analyzed, and preliminary findings show that job opportunities are central to attract migrants to low-density regions. In cities with few job vacancies, migrants take up physically demanding and low wage sector jobs that no one wants, contributing to local demographic, social and economic impact. Conclusions seem to suggest that social workers’ practices reduce migrants’ daily obstacles and facilitate access to public services, promoting social inclusion. As for implications for policy and practice, we suggest more labour inspections are carried out, and public services professionals are provided with more training.

**Keywords:** Migration; Social Inclusion; Migration Impacts; Local Development; Policies

## **1. Introduction**

Low-density territories are characterized by two demographic tendencies: ageing population and the inability to maintain the population. In Portugal, the decrease in the number of population and ageing population would be sharper had it not been for immigrants. In 2019, a negative natural balance is registered, meaning that more Portuguese die than are born. In contrast, a positive migrant balance is registered, countering the tendency of ageing. (Oliveira, 2020, p. 5; Góis & Marques, 2018).

In this scenario, a question emerges, what is the impact from immigrants, namely third-country nationals (TCN), in the local development of low-density territories.

Limited statistical information on migrants' integration phenomena is available (Góis & Marques, 2018; Oliveira, 2020), similarly scant scholarly attention has been paid to the topic impact of TCN in these regions. This study intends to contribute to fill the research gap.

The present empirical paper, through an exploratory and qualitative approach, aims to contribute to the development of scientific knowledge and to design social policy and practice related to migration flux issues in the respect of human rights.

This study is part of a larger project called, “Ir Além – A inclusão social de TCN e o desenvolvimento de territórios de baixa densidade” [Going beyond – TCN’s social inclusion and the low-density territories development], co-financed by the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF). The central aim is to analyse the relation between professional practices for TCN social inclusion, and regional development. It contributes to inform the development of efficient management policies such as asylum, protection, and migration. Three provinces border “Ir Além” geography, in Alentejo region: Alto Alentejo, Alentejo Central e Baixo Alentejo.

### **1.1 Portugal as a migration country**

Until the beginning of the 21st century, Portugal was seen as an emigration country, few immigrants settle in Portugal. In 1999, 55% of the foreign population come from Portuguese speaking countries (Góis & Marques, 2018). Therefore, Portugal is identified as an immigration country.

According to Góis & Marques (2018), immigration in Portugal constitutes a complex, multifaceted, diverse reality, marked by different sociodemographic structures. In addition, the authors point out, there are different motivations to migrate and several processes, and diverse ways of perceiving both the integration in the host society, and the migratory project.

Between the cyclical continuity of seasonal immigration, sectorally determined in agriculture or tourism, a temporary migration (albeit in medium term), which characterizes the growing migrations of students, and the long-term migration typical of labor migrations - which includes migration in family, and long-term social integration - there is a whole different migratory universe to be addressed (Góis & Marques, 2018, p. 127).

For the authors, most of the time, immigration in Portugal is the result of multiple, historical, economic, and social processes, which, in macro or meso level, are unique in the lives of migrants.

According to data from Pordata (2020), we observed that in the 1980s the foreign population in Portugal has a significant increase. In the following decade, in the 1990s, the positive evolution of the annual growth of the foreign population in the country became more intense. The main contribution to this increase, according to Góis & Marques (2018), came from the entry of foreign citizens from the African continent, especially those from African Portuguese Speaking Countries and the European continent (in particular from the European Union countries). However, according to Góis & Marques (2018), between 1980 and 1999, there was a change in the geographic origin of immigrants, with the reduction of the proportion of European and African immigrants in the total of immigrants and with the significant increase in the percentage of Asians and Brazilians. Góis & Marques (2018) refer that this dynamic and diversity of migrants' origins alters Portugal's position from the periphery (in Europe) to the “gateway” into the European migratory system.

At the beginning of the 21st century, according to the authors, several countries in Eastern Europe (in particular Ukraine) and Brazil become the main countries of origin of migrants.

According to Góis & Marques (2018) the need

maintaining controlled wages in sectors such as civil construction and public works, in tourism and in the sectors of unskilled services (e.g., cleaning) implied a recourse to hiring migrant labor. The temporal coincidence of the opening of the Portuguese labor market and of the offer in the international labor market, the existence of access opportunities (via short Schengen visas) and the integration of the Portuguese market in the expansion plan of the global migratory industries implied a change structural impact of immigration in Portugal. (Góis & Marques, 2018, p. 131).

In this period, Ukrainian immigrants were the most significant group, followed by Brazilians and Cape Verdeans, the three nationalities representing 52.6% of the total of third-country nationals legally resident in the national territory (Góis & Marques, 2018).

Since 2015 Portugal has seen an increase in the number of foreign residents in its territory (Pordata, 2020; SEF, 2020). The Immigration, Borders, and Asylum Report (SEF, 2020) grew by 22.9% in 2019, totalling 590,348 holders of residence permits. Among these, we also highlight the increase in national citizens from third countries (TCN). Brazilian nationality is the main resident foreign community with 151,304, representing 25.6% of the total. This is followed by Cape Verde (6.3%), Angola (3.8%) and Guinea-Bissau (3.2%), among African countries, and China among Asian countries, with 4.7%. (SEF, 2020).

As for the geographic distribution of the foreign population, including TCN, it mainly affects the continental coast, with 68.6% being registered in the districts of Lisbon, Faro and Setúbal, totalling 405,089 resident citizens. (SEF, 2020). The Alentejo region, namely the sub-regions, the “Alto Alentejo”, the “Alentejo Central” and the “Baixo Alentejo”, which delimit this study, follows the national growth trend (Pordata, 2020; SEF, 2020).

## **1.2 Social inclusion of non-EU nationals' migrants – tendencies**

In view of the increase in the population of migrants, integration policies deserve to be highlighted especially when considering that these in Portugal are more vulnerable to exclusion, discrimination, and poverty (Cáritas Portuguesa, 2019).

In this sense, integrating into society, as a citizen, implies five levels (Capucha, 2005): i) access to levels of income and guarantee of minimum consumption of goods and services; ii) participation in the labor market, with the appropriate rights of the labor law, which fosters feelings of usefulness and social satisfaction, in addition to a social status; iii) access to education and lifelong learning, allowing adaptation to changes that occur in institutional contexts; iv) access to social services, to guarantee quality of life and to allow family members to participate in public life, enter the labor market and share domestic responsibilities; v) enjoyment of housing with minimal comfort, in a surrounding environment with infrastructures and a positive image, which fosters social relations and enriches social capital. For immigrants, a country's integration approach shapes the way immigrants think and feel about their new country. Integration policies are one of the strongest factors in shaping attitudes; in the sense of belonging; in political participation; and the health of immigrants in their new country (Solano & Huddleston (2020). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines integration as the process by which immigrants are accepted into society. From the point of view of society, they differ between countries, and the responsibility for integration rests with the various actors: the immigrants themselves, the host government, institutions, and communities (IOM, 2004).

However, we argue that immigration policies must go beyond integration, bringing social inclusion to light, with a view to guaranteeing the rights and principles enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2016 / C 202/02, 7 June 2016). Costa (2017) states that inclusion is linked to the exercise of citizenship and the conditions of equality and opportunities created by societies to counter inequality and exclusion.

Meanwhile, we seek to understand the integration that Portugal promotes regarding immigrants, observing its policy in several areas, namely: social protection, health, education, employment, nationality, as well as family reunification. For that, we analyse what the policies address about them.

The social protection of Portuguese citizens, as well as TCN is guaranteed by the basic law of social security. This equates the TCN to national citizens, that is, they enjoy the same rights to different benefits, in a contributory and non-contributory regime. It is considered that the law considers migration issues, however, it only addresses regularized immigrants.

The basic law on health, on the other hand, identifies the beneficiaries of the National Health System, namely Portuguese citizens; and citizens, with permanent residence or temporary stay or residence, nationals of Member States of the European Union or equivalent, nationals of third countries or stateless persons, applicants for international protection, and migrants with or without their legal situation, under the terms of the applicable legal regime. The provision of health care is assumed without a time limit, and sickness benefit may apply.

The Constitution of the Portuguese Republic (CPR), through articles 15 and 74, determines that foreigners who are or reside in Portugal have the same rights as a Portuguese citizen, including those referring to education. The children of foreign citizens residing in Portugal are entitled to the same rights as Portuguese citizens within the scope of the right to equal opportunities for access and academic success. The Constitution also specifically states that the State must ensure the children of immigrants adequate support for the realization of the right to education. Still in the scope of education, the Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 12-B / 2015, of 20 March, which approves the Strategic Plan for Migration (2015-2020) identifies measures in relation to immigrant students, such as the consolidation of education programs. learning Portuguese as a non-native language; the promotion of intercultural education in schools; and measures that promote educational success and reduce school dropout. In 2016, the Network of Schools for Intercultural Education (REEI) was launched - a network of educational and teaching establishments involved in transforming the school, in its organization and in its pedagogical approach, aiming at interculturality - in a partnership between the High Commissioner for Migrations (ACM), the Directorate-General for Education and the Aga Khan Portugal Foundation.

Another dimension that leads to social inclusion is related to employability. However, *Cáritas Portuguesa* (2019) highlights the social risks faced by immigrants, not due to the lack of employment, but due to working conditions. They remain “on the front lines for the worst jobs”, receiving the worst wages, in a situation of extreme precariousness. On the other hand, the exercise of professional activity benefits foreigners from the point of view of the law, providing for legality under a contract (provision of services or independent professional activity) and having your situation regularized before Social Security, for a minimum 12 months. At the same time, it is foreseen the certification of companies in the extension of the reception of TCN that intend to develop a highly qualified activity, emphasizing the importance for the internationalization of the Portuguese business fabric.

A guarantee of citizenship and social inclusion is related to the recognition of nationality. The nationality law in Portugal, amended in 2020, promulgates the guarantee of becoming Portuguese at birth, of the children of immigrants residing in Portugal, for at least one year.

Family reunification takes on one of the most important aspects of immigrants' lives. This policy measure is one of the ones that has the greatest impact on immigrant communities and allows, through legal means, to require regularization for the entry and stay of family members, which is one of the elements that justify immigration as a support to the demographic growth seen in Portuguese society between the last two censuses (Martins, 2015). The most relevant reasons for granting new residence permits were family reunification (38,204), professional activity (31,511) and study (13,356). (SEF, 2020).

Despite the Portuguese position regarding the integration policy, we emphasize the relevance of the attention to be paid to the level of regularization of migrants. The regularization of migrants and their conditions with the structures, be they political, social and / or employment can present bureaucratic procedures that often “push” the migrant towards situations close to illegality (Esteves, 2017).

Echoing their voices and promoting their involvement in integration actions seems to be the most effective way to achieve a dignified life where human rights are respected, in practice and not only in legislation.

### 1.3 Non-UE nationals' migrants in low density territories

Considering demographic contributions of migrants for Portugal (Oliveira, 2020) a question emerges, how could Non-EU citizens impact on uninhabited regions.

Machado (2003) analysing migrant distribution in Portugal, found out particularities in the countryside. These regions were unable to retain young people and were barely able to attract immigrants. Few local opportunities appealed to natives neither immigrants. Which in turn meant there was no room to substitute emigrants for immigrants. Despite, the author's findings, an increase of immigrants is perceived in the three subregions of the Alentejo: 1) the Alto Alentejo, 2) the Alentejo Central and 3) the Baixo Alentejo (SEF, 2020; Pordata, 25 January 2021) As showed in table 1, in 2019, Brazil is the most represented country of origin (Portada, 25 January 2021), which could be explained by Portuguese also being the native language.

*Table 1 – Settled non-EU national's migrants in the 3 subregions of the Alentejo region, in 2019.*

| Country of origin        | The Alto Alentejo Subregion | The Alentejo Central Subregion | The Baixo Alentejo Subregion |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Angola                   | 42                          | 100                            | 66                           |
| Cape Verde               | 28                          | 177                            | 163                          |
| Guinea Bissau            | 27                          | 24                             | 269                          |
| Mozambique               | 36                          | 39                             | 29                           |
| São Tomé e Príncipe      | 14                          | 21                             | 12                           |
| Other African countries  | 43                          | 58                             | 117                          |
| Brazil                   | 588                         | 1271                           | 622                          |
| Other American countries | 78                          | 85                             | 131                          |
| China                    | 146                         | 340                            | 221                          |
| India                    | 14                          | 29                             | 93                           |
| Nepal                    | 5                           | 77                             | 20                           |
| Other Asian countries    | 39                          | 111                            | 142                          |

*Source: Pordata (25 January 2021).*

In the Alentejo, low population density concept reflects depopulation and an ageing population (Pordata, 25 January 2021), with the inability for renewing the population naturally (Câmara Municipal de Portalegre, 2006; Martins et al, 2013). In the three subregions of the Alentejo the birth rate is 6,8%, meaning 6,8% in the Alto Alentejo, 7,5% in the

Alentejo Central and 8,4% in the Baixo Alentejo (Pordata, 25 January 2021). The Alto Alentejo has the lowest rate in the national territories. Demography seems to be related directly with GDP (gross national product) of these regions, in the Alentejo GDP per capita, in 2017, in the Alto Alentejo is 14,7 well below national data (18,9). The Alentejo Central is 16,7 and the Baixo Alentejo is 18,1. However, according to 2018 data available, these subregions are in line with a continuous growth since 2012 (INE, 27 January 2021).

From the point of view of Non-EU migrants influence in the development of low-density territories, Kasimis (2008) refers to the existence of a positive relationship between the migration dynamics and the regional development. Demographic impact is solid, Oliveira (2020) states that foreigners proceed in contributing to births, in 2019 foreign women were responsible for 12,7% of live births in Portugal, minimizing ageing. Immigrants are likely to be younger than Portuguese citizens, reporting to fertile and working age (Oliveira, 2020). The immigrant community moreover balance the financial situation of retirement pension in the Portuguese system each time that social security contributions occur (Quintino, 2018).

Kasimis (2008) concludes the larger agricultural practice there is, the higher immigrant manpower is demanded, an increased tendency in the last years. In every region studied, immigrants do not compete against local labour force, in contrast, they meet necessities, especially in seasonal campaigns. Saying this, competition against non-qualified workforce is not excluded, as immigrants are likely to represent a lower cost salary. However, other benefits emerge in family farming business, physical tasks are conducted by immigrants, while the owner and natives conduct management tasks. Therefore, agriculture may represent one of the reasons for the increase of foreigners in the Alentejo. In a land with ageing population, immigrants replace local workforce (Reis et al. 2011; Castro, 2009; Velez, 2011).

Castro (2014) carried out a similar study, namely in the Alto Alentejo and in Badajoz, Spain. The author proves that immigrants, in this Iberian region, constitute human and social capital that promote regional development and effectively it has happened. Fundamental, this position is supported in contributions as: producers (businesses, job creation, services and products offered to local population); consumers (local services and products, home purchase); buildings rehabilitators (real estate); demographic (increase population, mainly working age groups); sociocultural (volunteer, cultural and educational sharing).

In Portalegre, in the Alto Alentejo subregion, a social diagnosis about migrants was taken (Câmara Municipal de Portalegre, 2006). The sampling was constituted by a board of local migration observers, to whom several questions were asked for a possible scenario within five years about migrants' regional impact, focused on a) economic activity ("probable" is the answer on average), b) Social Security budget (40% consider it likely), c) negative impact on people and property security (40% consider it unlikely), d) negative impact on sociocultural dynamic and associativism (40% said unlikely), e) tolerance increase (the majority said even), f) negative impact on health conditions of native people such as contagious diseases (the majority said unlikely), f) changes in local education opportunities (the majority said likely). Summary, the answers reflected a moderated or high position about the occurrence probability.

## 2. Methods

This exploratory study, based on a qualitative approach, aims to acknowledge, and understand the relation between professional practices for social inclusion of TCN and the development of low-density regions in Portugal. It presents the participants' perspective about how their practices and activities carried out contribute to the inclusion of TCN.

This study, as it is integrated into a larger research, is in progress. At a first stage, it is developed through a qualitative methodological approach, through bibliographic reviews and documentary analyses of the existing scientific literature on the state of the problem.

In a second stage, empirical data gathering has been performed. In 2020 and 2021 semi-structured interviews were conducted with professionals. Attending the SARS-Cov-2 Pandemic scenario, one face-to-face interview, and two remote interviews were considered safer. It varied in length and, on average, took over one and a half hours. Whether face-to-face or remotely, the conversation was conducted in each team office to ensure that participants felt comfortable. Oral consent was obtained as the first step, before recording the conversation. Therefore, all interviews were digitally recorded and fully transcribed verbatim. Interviews were anonymised and the participants were assured of confidentiality.

The interview schedule comprised four dimensions in general terms (1) the interviewees' personal background and experience with migrants; (2) migrants / Non-UE nationals' migrants' features — i.e., numbers, motivations, impacts, future expectations; (3) professional practices for migrants' social inclusion; and (4) perspectives on immigration policy, suggestions for improvements and so on.

Sampling includes practitioners from the three organizations that offer a CLAIM service (a local centre to support migrants' integration) in the Alentejo region. The interviewees in this paper are identified as *CLAIM team 1a* and *CLAIM team 1b* (two participants from the team participated); *CLAIM team 2*; and *CLAIM team 3*, according to the name of the service and a number associated with the chronologic order of the interview conducted. In terms of education, 2 social workers (*CLAIM team 1 and 2*), 1 social pedagogue (*CLAIM team 3*) and 1 engineer (*CLAIM team 1a*), having professional experience with migration ranging from 2 to 25 years.

Qualitative data analysis, based on categorical analysis, is supported by WebQDA software. The qualitative empirical data treatment is based on a categorical analysis. The understanding of a text provides a theory and complementarily, constitutes support for further data collection (Flick, 2005). Codes and categories emerged and then several analytical outputs were raised based on them. Diagrams and memos supported the construction of the report.

### 3. Preliminary Results

Data is being analysed, and preliminary findings show that job opportunities are central to attracting migrants to low-density regions. In cities with few job vacancies, migrants take up physically demanding and low wage sector jobs that no one wants, contributing to local demographic, social and economic impact.

The integration that the Government promotes regarding immigrants, takes place through politics in several areas, namely: social protection, health, education, employment, nationality, housing, as well as family reunification. In this sense, we also seek to understand how these are developed on the ground through professionals and reception services.

The social protection of the TCN is guaranteed by the law of Social Security. It is considered that the law takes into account migration issues, however, it only addresses regularized immigrants.

“Only if the situation is regularized. We try the typical social supports, to which anyone will be entitled, such as family allowance, RSI [*Rendimento Social de Inserção* – a benefit for social integration], or other social support”. (CLAIM team 1b)

However, those who still do not have their situation regularized in the country also receive social support from the Local Support Center for the Integration of Migrants (CLAIM).

“We have an easy articulation at that level (...) we articulate with the social canteens or with the POAPMC [*Programa Operacional de Apoio às Pessoas Mais Carenciadas* – a Program to support the most poor people] that distributes foodstuffs, we do the signaling, we talk to colleagues and whenever there are vacancies [we make them available], and also taking into account the urgency of the situation, they are integrated”. (CLAIM team 1b).

“When we don't have it, we ask the Social Store of the City Council. Household products”. (CLAIM team 1a)

(...) Often when they need certificates of residence, composition of the household with the parish council, we accompany these processes; some social support depending on the needs that we are perceiving, may have to do with our store, provision of goods, such as clothing, food. Punctual monetary support, too, for a household income, electricity, purchase of diapers for children, these type of situations”. (CLAIM team 1b).

As noted, health is also part of the foreigners' integration policy. In this sense, the social services that work with TCN citizens act as facilitators with the national health service, through local services. The objective is to ensure that the TCN have the rights that are enshrined in the legislation in a practical way, through the assignment of a family doctor, for example, and normal access to health care like any other citizen.

“We articulate with the Health Center, we facilitate their registration at the Health Center, if they have no “expression of interest”[to regularize and have got authorization for being in Portugal], they cannot be assigned a user number, but usually the colleague, a Social Worker, can facilitate the assignment of a family doctor and they make appointments, make regular appointments whenever they need to, have normal access like anyone else. They pay like us, they are not exempt. (...) They do the exams, consultations, if they manage to pay, they pay, if they do not have a debt. Nevertheless, even if they have a debt, they do not fail to enjoy the care.” (CLAIM team 1b).

"Regularization is not an impediment to accessing the health service they always have".  
(CLAIM team 2).

The education of the children of foreign citizens residing in Portugal must be ensured, however, there may still be some constraints in this regard.

"Sometimes they feel obstacles in schools because children do not have a Social Security number, they do not let them enroll. - *"We cannot accept your child's registration because there is no social security number"*. We try to unlock these situations. (...) ACM [Alto Comissariado para as Migrações - High Commission for Migrations] which issues credentials stating that all children have access to all education and health care, and they present this document to schools (...) but often do not have this information". (CLAIM team 1b).

Another important aspect for social inclusion mentioned by the study participants concerns the learning of the Portuguese language. (CLAIM team 2)

The search for better living conditions is what drives TCN to migrate to Portugal. Entering the job market is the main objective to achieve this improvement. Employment is a dimension for the social inclusion of TCN, however, together with the expectations of a better life, being in another country implies some uncertainty as to the fact that to be able to work they need to be in a legal situation. In this sense,

"Some come with the fear that they will not be able to get a job because they do not have a regularized situation, they have no "expression of interest". But most of them, yes, they already have work, but they have no "expression of interest" and that conditions and hinders their lives, the fact that they are not legal, and unblocking this situation, facilitating this process of legalization. (CLAIM team 1b).

"They travel a lot in the country for knowledge, they heard that there is a job opportunity. For example, now with [a company name] he has been recruiting since September / October. There started to be a lot of Indians, and Sub-Saharan people". (CLAIM team 1a).

"We have a lot of demand from immigrants (...). Here there is a little work in the field and as they need to be legalized and need an employment contract, they have to go to an entity that gives them an employment contract". (CLAIM team 3).

The reception services accompany migrants in this process of integration with the labor market.

"We also coordinate with the employment center, facilitate registration with the IEFP [Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional - Institute of Employment and Professional Training] whenever they are not registered". (CLAIM team 1b).

Therefore, a large part of the TCN that come to these territories, according to social actors, are attracted to work in agriculture, industry, civil construction, catering, or, especially in the case of the female gender, in homes. This fact concerns the existing offer in each territory.

"Many come to work in the fields. As we know it is very hard work". (...) Precarious work". (CLAIM team 2).

"They come to [name of a place] because there are almonds, then it was the olive tree. Then, when the harvest begins, there is a lot of work, because we have many bosses with many (...) in this field (...) They really like the Alentejo." (CLAIM team 3).

"Here in agriculture, there is little supply. It is mainly in the Baixo Alentejo. (CLAIM team 1b).

Here in [name of a city] it is mainly in the factory and some civil construction. Little restoration. (CLAIM team 1a).

“There are some Brazilians who are in services at home. (CLAIM team 1b). Some 3 or 4 Brazilian ladies do work in their homes. In the Campo Maior and Elvas area, agriculture”. (CLAIM team 1a).

In this segment, a guarantee of citizenship and social inclusion is related to the recognition of nationality. However, despite this being what many immigrants want, it is still “very residual”. (CLAIM team 1a).

Many of the TCNs migrate at first without their family, but family reunification, which aims to require regularization for the entry and stay of family members, is the main objective of most immigrants, but for this they need to be stabilized in the country and guarantee dignified conditions for their family.

“Most people want to bring the family, if the conditions of stability, especially financial, are met, the goal is to bring the family”. (CLAIM team 1b).

“Many, when they receive their wages, go to the country of origin but they are in need here in Portugal. Then they want to do the family reunification, bring them here, to Portugal”. (CLAIM team 1a).

“[an immigrant] wanted, asked how the woman could have the qualifications here, to exercise, I think the woman is a nurse. And bring the kids. Often they do not get a job or an income that allows them to have a house with decent conditions and end up failing to regroup, some end up leaving [name of a city] in search of those conditions. And some may even return to their country of origin if they fail to achieve these goals. But a large part expresses this desire”. (CLAIM team 1b).

It is observed that foreigners suffer constraints to rent a house and many need social workers to intercede for them, but even so there is some discrimination on the part of the owners because they are foreigners.

“I accompanied some of them here to look for a house, and when the owner looked at them, he pulled a face. He said, "Oh yeah, but the house needs some work here." (CLAIM team 1b) and the house was not rented.

For reasons such as those mentioned above, TCNs are liable to rent houses in poor condition and even with some health risk.

“Either they are not mobilized, or they are houses in the historic area that are very damp and even a little degraded. But then, when they rent, they are subject to these conditions. This week we had contacts asking for beds or even mattresses because they must be sleeping on the floor”. (CLAIM team 1b).

There is an overcrowding of houses on the part of foreigners as a reality.

"I know that on the street [a street name] there are at least two houses with many rooms there and these sub-Saharan people live there, and they all sleep there (...) Well, it must be a kitchen or a bathroom for I don't know how many". (CLAIM team 1a).

According to the social actors who participated in this study, some people still do not find houses to rent and then stay in an establishment that provides accommodation services, such as hostels, for example.

According to our sources, even foreign citizens living in housing in these precarious conditions, what really matters to them is that they are integrated into the labor market.

"In my view, as long as they are working and that they get paid for it, this is what they are looking for". (CLAIM team 1a).

### **3.2. Motivation for living in the Portuguese countryside**

Professional teams intend that employment is central for attracting migrants to the countryside in low-density territories. Other factors are not as relevant for them while the first requisite is satisfied. Once a job calls for immigrants, they tend to remain in the place providing that there is employment.

"While there is work, they will continue here [...] – In your opinion, what brings migrants to this specific region? – Jobs, job opportunities. They heard about a job opportunity." (CLAIM team 1a)

"in Lisbon, they need speak Portuguese, the language is a problem. So, they come here for work [namely in agriculture] and then they remain." (CLAIM team 2)

"employment... In the hospital, we have doctors and nurses from Spain and from Brazil. They come to work here." (CLAIM team 3)

It means that when unemployed and no job opportunities appear, migrants tend to leave a region, seeking a job in other counties or even another country,

"if they cannot find a job, they leave... residual unemployed remain here. We know a family who are unemployed who are having family and friends support and our help, but the situation is becoming unbearable". (CLAIM team 1a)

Men tend to migrate firstly and without their families. When a man has employment stability, he makes efforts to bring the family, ask for family reunification, and to be settled permanently. Brazilians seem to be an exception, families come together to Portugal but irregularly.

"They want to bring their family" (CLAIM team 1)

"they come to stay. They like to be here" (CLAIM team 2)

"Eastern people, only the man comes. And then, if conditions are guaranteed, the family comes. The Brazilians are not like them. The family comes together, illegally! And then *Let us see!*" (CLAIM team 3)

Another reason for Non-UE citizens' migrants reaching and staying in these regions are peace, security and the quality of life offered there. These constitute important dimensions that are not found in their country of origin,

"They stay because of the quality of life" (CLAIM team 2)

"They tell me that after his son-in-law had been murdered in a street, it was impossible to live in Brazil anymore." (CLAIM team 3)

### **3.3. Migrants' regional impact**

According to the participants, migrants represent a vast contribution to the local community and economy. In professionals' narratives, no concerns are referred to about a possible negative impact of immigrants. However, the absence could complementarily represent sensibility, understanding, and empathy with migration issues, considering that practitioners manage migrants' experiences and challenges daily.

Demographic influence is consensual among the participants. In regions characterized by rural exodus, where people in active age escape to urban and coastal areas, immigrants contribute to increasing both populations in general and births. Few births are from the Portuguese because of the aging population but also because culturally it is not frequent to have more than 2 or 3 children. Immigrants come from countries where likely families have a significant number of children.

“The main part of the births is from immigrants, some years ago, children who had been born were Romanian. They were a very active community” (CLAIM team 1b)

“Portuguese have one child, they [immigrants] have four or five children” (CLAIM team 2)

“[only] One in every ten births are from the Portuguese [the rest are from immigrants]. If it weren't for immigrants there would be no people here” (CLAIM team 3).

The economic impact is solid and one of the most relevant contributions in the local development of these regions. Immigrants constitute a relevant workforce for vacancies that the Portuguese do not want to fill, namely laborious jobs. Complementary, immigrants create new workplaces for local citizens, related to the implementation of brand-new companies as restaurants and shops. They offer cultural products and services based on for instance gastronomy (restaurants and delivery of gastronomic dishes), products (stores), and aesthetics (i.e., hairdressers).

“They [immigrants] fill jobs we don't want. If it were not for immigrants, we would not have a workforce for agriculture, and agriculture is so important for our country. We must have this in mind [...] a Chinese restaurant, an Indian restaurant...” (CLAIM team 2)

“in shops and other businesses, they [immigrant entrepreneurs] must have a Portuguese employee according to the law. Chinese shops, restaurants... and so on, must contract Portuguese, at least one Portuguese, or other nationalities. It is not allowed to have only a Chinese workforce. It is for social integration.” (CLAIM team 3)

Although, a new tendency profile appears to emerge. Instead of just unqualified and low-income immigrants, a wave of academic qualification, a brain drain, is on the way. Brazil, a Portuguese-speaking country, leads this wave, composed of doctors and nurses and other professions. It is not significantly representative but in the near future could present competition with locals.

“(...) doctors from Brazil and Spain in the hospital” (CLAIM team 3)

Inherent to employees are social monthly contributions to Social Security system. In places where working-age people are few and older people are several, the financial system of pensions tends to collapse.

In terms of culture, cultural diversity is considered a positive aspect by all the participants, as these territories are likely to preserve traditions and have homogeneous communities. It seems

to give a sense of pluralism, diversity, and richness to these places. Some cultural events are organized by social institutions to promote the social integration of diverse populations, in moments of sharing and cultural acknowledgment.

“more cultural diversity, yes...” (CLAIM team 1a)

“yes, yes, it [cultural diversity] is so beneficial!” (CLAIM team 2)

“yes, of course” (CLAIM team 3)

Associativism and the creation of institutions impacts regions, however, it seems to be relatively active. Only one of the participants showed a dynamic movement driven by immigrants.

“he [a Cape Verdean immigrant] set up the *Immigration Association of Beja*. And now he works at the city council” (CLAIM team 2)

About religion, practitioners seem to be unaware of rituals, consequently they consider that no novelty is observed. Again, Brazilian people are the most visible,

“We do not know... Catholics... and Adventist or Evangelic...? But those are Brazilian...” (CLAIM team 1a)

“They [immigrants] have the Mosque...” (CLAIM team 2)

“I don’t like to talk about it... I get along with all of them very well. There is respect among people” (CLAIM team 3)

#### **4. Discussion**

Portuguese immigration policy and legislation address values on social inclusion, expanding the number of citizens (Santinho, 2013; Cáritas Portuguesa, 2019; Solano & Huddleston, 2020). In Portugal, foreigners, and foreign residents (stateless persons) have the same labor, social and civic rights as Portuguese citizens.

However, there are some exceptions that include some political rights, the exercise of some public functions, and the rights and duties expressly reserved by the Constitution and the law for Portuguese citizens.

Despite these achievements in rights, the daily experience of TCNs in Portugal shows a tougher reality. An important dimension regarding the integration and inclusion of TCNs, for example, concerns, according to Capucha (2005), the enjoyment of housing with minimal comfort, in a surrounding environment, with an infrastructure and a positive image, which fosters social and enrichment of social capital. However, this level is still far from being reached for many TCNs, according to the participants of this study. TCNs are liable to rent houses in poor condition and even with certain health risks. There is an overcrowding of houses on the part of foreigners as a reality.

There is some discrimination on the part of the owners due to the fact that they are foreigners, according to the social stakeholders.

In addition to this dimension, there is also a need to remove some obstacles in terms of access to education for the children of the TCN, with regard to reducing bureaucracy in the process regarding integration in schools. The reception services seek to collaborate in this regard.

Another important dimension for the social inclusion of TCNs would be the integration in the labor market, however, there is still a need to improve the working / employment conditions for most immigrants in Portugal, since they are still represented in low qualified professional categories, facing arduous working conditions and levels of insecurity. Many TCNs have jobs that are below their qualification levels, which means a process of using skills. In addition, working conditions can also bring some obstacles to providing adequate living conditions for their family members.

According to *Cáritas Portuguesa* (2019), social inclusion means guaranteeing equal treatment between nationals and foreigners, equal access to social support services and equal opportunities in access to education, accommodation, health and essential resources.

The same source says that the process implies the commitment, involvement, qualification and training of the whole host society. For *Cáritas Portuguesa* (2019) it is important to communicate the rights and duties of each stakeholder in the process of encouraging social integration.

Integration will only become a reality when representatives of public services, users of services and the general public are fully informed and involved in the proposed process. Clarifying and communicating the challenges and projects to be built together and demonstrating the benefits of an intercultural society is, therefore, a fundamental task. (*Caritas Portuguesa*, 2019, p. 7).

Non-EU citizens migrants seem to influence local development namely in the countryside, regions characterized by low density in terms of the resident population. The preliminary findings of this study indicate that migrants are an essential workforce for the local community especially in the agricultural sector. According to the professionals' perspective, without the presence of immigrants, agriculture would be at risk or would consist in reduced land and would have a minor representation in the national economy. Results are in line with the *Kasimis'* (2008) and *Castro* (2014) studies referring to the existence of a positive relationship between the migration dynamics and the regional development.

Demographic impact is solid, for the direct increasing of population and for new births. The same is observed in the national situation in Portugal, *Oliveira* (2020) states that foreigners proceed in contributing to births and that immigrants are likely younger than Portuguese citizens. As immigrants are in active age and stay in Portugal for work, they contribute to the balance of the financial retirement pension system, idea validated by *Quintino* (2018).

Employment, namely in agriculture, attract immigrants to the countryside. *Kasimis* (2008) concludes the larger agricultural practice there is, the higher immigrant manpower is demanded. It seems that immigrants do not compete against local labour force, in contrast, they meet companies' necessities, in line with *Kasimis'* (2008) findings. Therefore, agriculture may represent one of the reasons for the increase of foreigners in the Alentejo. However, a wave of highly qualified immigrants is emerging and in the near future, it could represent a problem for natives as in these regions few job opportunities exist for skilled trades. Political decision-makers should pay attention and follow closely this tendency.

The economic impact is solid, not just because of the workforce but also because immigrants establish new companies that create jobs for the immigrants and simultaneously for natives. Immigrants offer new products and services to the local community.

However, cultural impact, associative, and religious diversity is referred to but relatively focused as a relevant contribution to local development.

Castro (2014) points out that immigrants in these regions contribute as producers (businesses, job creation, services and products offered to local population); consumers (local services and products, home purchase); buildings rehabilitators (real estate); demographic (increase population, mainly working-age groups); sociocultural (volunteer, cultural and educational sharing).

No concerns about a possible negative impact of migration are referred to by the participants of this study, in line with the Portalegre social diagnosis (Câmara Municipal de Portalegre, 2006) saying the answers demonstrated a moderated or high probability of changes provoked by immigrants' local presence.

## **5. Conclusion**

It is intended that this study contributes to a deeper comprehension of the impact of Non-EU citizens migrants, namely in low density territories. Also, for social and economic policy and in what way the Government benefits should be conducted in these regions. In spite of a low number and concentration of migration in these regions, it is relevant. When compared to the issues in migrants' countries of origin, it is understood the attraction of those territories.

While Portugal is well recognized internationally on migrant's integration policy (Solano & Huddleston, 2020) and presents legislation progresses, the literature (Santinho, 2013; Cáritas Portuguesa, 2019) highlights the importance of change in the political and society paradigm. Migrants, whatever, their status is, should be given the citizenship recognition in terms of rights, a real social inclusion policy.

Preliminary conclusions suggest that professionals' practices reduce migrants' daily obstacles and facilitate access to public services, promoting social inclusion. Agriculture represents a central reason for foreigners increase in the Alentejo. As a result of foreigners being younger and of childbearing and working age (Oliveira, 2020), an urgent investment is needed to balance migrants allocation in the national territory.

Considering a work in progress study, several limitations emerge. Further research should focus on community Social Work, that is, a research action project to be implemented.

As for implications for policy and practice, we suggest a strategic policy to establish migrants in the countryside; more labour inspections to be carried out, and public services professionals to be provided with more training.

## References

- Câmara Municipal de Portalegre (2006). Diagnóstico sobre a situação social dos imigrantes no concelho de Portalegre.
- Capucha, L. (2005). *Desafios da Pobreza*. Oeiras: Celta Editora.
- Cáritas Portuguesa. (2019). *Migrações e desenvolvimento em Portugal. Avançar nas práticas: rumo à inclusão e coesão social*. Cáritas Portuguesa.
- Castro, F. (2014). *Imigração e Desenvolvimento em Regiões de Baixas Densidades*. Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra. DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.14195/978-989-26-0706-1> Common Home. Series. Disponível em <https://www.plataformaongd.pt/uploads/subcanais2/casa-comum-pt-digital.pdf>.
- Costa, C. (2017). A mediação comunitária como mecanismo de inclusão de refugiados. Disponível em <https://repositorio.iscte-iul.pt/handle/10071/14809>.
- Flick, U. (2005). *Métodos Qualitativos na Investigação Científica [Qualitative Research Methods]*. Monitor – Projetos e Edições, Lda.
- Góis, P. & Marques, J. C. (2018). Retrato de um Portugal migrante: a evolução da emigração, da imigração e do seu estudo nos últimos 40 anos, *e-cadernos CES* [online], 29| 2018. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/eces/3307>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/eces.3307>.
- Kasimis, C. (2008). “O novo papel dos imigrantes nas economias rurais da Europa do Sul”. In Papademetriou, Demetrios G. (eds.). *A Europa e os seus Imigrantes no Século XXI*, Fundação Luso-Americana para o Desenvolvimento, pp.211-242.
- Lei n.º 28/2019. Diário da República n.º 63/2019, Série I de 2019-03-29. Assembleia da República.
- Lei n.º 83-A/2013, de 30 de dezembro. Lei de Bases da Segurança Social. Assembleia da República.
- Lei n.º 95/2019, de 04 de setembro de 2019. Lei de Bases da Saúde. Assembleia da República.
- Lei Orgânica n.º 2/2020, de 10 de novembro de 2020. Lei da Nacionalidade. Assembleia da República.
- Machado, F. L. (2003), “Etnicidade e sociabilidades dos guineenses em Portugal”, in Cordeiro, G. I., Baptista, L. V., & Costa, A. F. (orgs.) (2003), *Etnografias Urbanas*, Celta Editora, pp. 131-142.
- Martins, I. (2015). Políticas de imigração e integração: intervenção do Serviço Social. *Intervenção Social*, Lisbon, n. 46 (2.º semestre 2015). [http://repositorio.ulsiada.pt/bitstream/11067/4317/1/is\\_46\\_2015\\_4.pdf](http://repositorio.ulsiada.pt/bitstream/11067/4317/1/is_46_2015_4.pdf)
- Oliveira, C. R. (2020). Indicadores de integração de imigrantes: relatório estatístico anual 2019. *Imigração em Números. Relatórios Anuais 5*. Observatório das Migrações. <https://www.om.acm.gov.pt/documents/58428/383402/Relat%C3%B3rio+Estat%C3%ADstico+Anual+2020+-+Indicadores+de+Integra%C3%A7%C3%A3o+de+Imigrantes/472e60e5-bfff-0eeb104-5e364f4d6a63>

- Oliveira, C. R. (2020). Indicadores de integração de imigrantes: relatório estatístico anual 2019. 1ª ed. Imigração em Números. Relatórios Anuais 5. Observatório das Migrações. 29 January 2021.  
<https://www.om.acm.gov.pt/documents/58428/383402/Relat%C3%B3rio+Estat%C3%ADstico+Anual+2020+-+Indicadores+de+Integra%C3%A7%C3%A3o+de+Imigrantes/472e60e5-bfff-40ee-b104-5e364f4d6a63>.
- Pordata (25 January 2021). Migrações. Base de Dados Portugal Contemporâneo.  
<https://www.pordata.pt/Subtema/Portugal/Migra%C3%A7%C3%B5es-34>.
- Portaria n.º 99/2019. Diário da República n.º 67/2019, Série I de 2019-04-04. Administração Interna e Adjunto e Economia.
- Quintino, A. (2018). Efeitos demográficos e económicos das migrações em Portugal: o caso da Segurança Social. Dissertação de mestrado. Universidade de Lisboa.
- Reis, J.; Pereira, T. S.; Tolda, J. & Serra, N. (2011). Imigrantes em Portugal: Economia, Pessoas, Qualificações e Territórios. Série Trabalho e Sociedade. Almedina.
- Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 12-B/2015, de 20 março. Plano Estratégico para as Migrações (2015-2020). Diário da República n.º 56/2015, 1º Suplemento, Série I de 2015-03-20. Presidência do Conselho de Ministros.
- Santinho, M. C. (2013). Afinal, que asilo é este que não nos protege? *Etnográfica*, 17(1), 5-29.  
[http://www.scielo.mec.pt/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0873-65612013000100001&lng=pt&tlng=pt](http://www.scielo.mec.pt/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0873-65612013000100001&lng=pt&tlng=pt).
- SEF. Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras. (2020). Relatórios de Imigração Fronteiras e Asilo. Acesso em 29 de janeiro de 2021. <https://www.sef.pt/pt/pages/conteudo-detalhe.aspx?nID=92>.
- Solano, G. and Huddleston, T. (2020). Measuring policies to integrate migrants across five continents. Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIDEX). 29 January 2021.  
<https://www.mipex.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/pdf/files/custom/a4/2021.01.24-17.03.10-mipex-2020-custom-book-a4.pdf>.