

June  
2019



**AALBORG UNIVERSITET**

**Department of The Board of Studies for International Affairs**  
Master programme Development and International Relations / Global Gender Studies

# International norms hit Portuguese organizations work on domestic violence against women

MASTER THESIS

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## **Abstract**

This paper analyses how international norms have influenced Portuguese civil society organizations to work on the domestic violence issue. This is a fundamental research to give a new perspective about the influence of international order in domestic spheres towards international relations. The thesis research question to reach these findings is “How have international norms influenced civil society organizations’ work on domestic violence against women?” To answer this, the thesis presents the work and perspective of three NGOs that apply international norms to promote the end of this social problem in Portugal. The analysis is built based on the Europeanization process, which is the theoretical concept that explains how international norms spread on the member states of the European Union. This process will be considered, in this investigation as the framework to explain the international norms diffusion and to sustain the conclusions about its impact in Portuguese NGOs' work on domestic violence. The findings stress that international cooperation positively allowed progress at a national level and created a system that protects, prevents, and tries to stop domestic violent behaviours. This study also emphasises that education should be a priority countermeasure to substitute a patriarchal culture and its traditional social norms, still very present in this European country. By the end of this paper, the reader will gain awareness about how civil society organizations construct their work to fight domestic violence, how states have been collaborating about it and what may be missing to do, to be possible to understand what is falling to this worldwide issue continues to hit Portugal deeply.

**Keywords:** domestic violence against women; Europeanization; social norms; international relations; Portugal; channels; norms diffusion; discourses; humanitarian norms; social development

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## 1. Introduction

Domestic violence has been considered societies' most epidemic social problem. In Portugal, every year, that's how most women are murdered, normally by an intimate partner. In this paper, this thesis aims to understand how Portuguese civil society organizations have been fighting domestic violence against women, and in what extent international norms have influenced their work, as this has become an issue treat with similar measures all around the globe.

Worldwide, domestic violence against women is still very problematic, and, in the past years, there was very few progresses on its elimination. Africa is by far the most dangerous continent for the female population, with 3.1% victims per 100,000 women; followed by the Americas with 1.6%; then Europe with 0.7% of victims. Even though the Old Continent has the lowest rate, we can't neglect the problem. After years of campaigns, establishing several laws and measures to protect the victims, we still have, in Europe, one in three women suffering some form of violence. Where are countermeasures failing? Is this issue being fought from its causes?

In Portugal, despite having a domestic violence law since 1992, the numbers of incidents are still high. As countermeasures, gender equality is promoted but hardly respected from state institutions to private companies, and even less in private life. On the private sphere, women are still the ones more responsible for domestic tasks; and in the workplace, many of them receive much lower wages than their male partners.

In this thesis, I observed how international norms have become part of Portuguese NGOs' work on domestic violence against women; and examined to what extent this establishment has helped to promote a change in this Portuguese issue. Furthermore, I analysed to what extent their work might have neglected critical elements of this problem at a national level, such as the persistence of a patriarchal culture.

Hence, to reach my findings, my research question was:

*How have international norms influenced civil society organizations' work on domestic violence against women?*

I believe the fact that Portugal is part of the European Union has facilitated the diffusion of international norms and expedited many funds to promote social development to fight gender inequality and violence against women in the domestic sphere. The NGOs work were consequently influenced by the new international rules changing actors spread.

To reach these findings, the analysis will be based on theories of social constructivism and international norms influence on the domestic sphere through the Europeanization process. Furthermore, this thesis explains the causes of domestic violence, presenting the concept of Patriarchy and Intimate Partner Violence. Even though domestic violence it is not a focus in analysis, it is important to clarify these concepts for a better understanding of the countermeasures created to fight this issue. Therefore, it will be analysed three feminist Portuguese NGOs work on domestic violence from the last years. The data collected was from primary sources (interviews of development employees of these organizations) and secondary sources (reports, news, press releases, speeches and media debates, internal documents, and studies they had divulgated).

The study will be presented in this paper in three main chapters, besides the introduction, methodology and conclusion. The theoretical section is divided into two parts: the first examines the international norms constructions, and the second one is about domestic violence. The analysis extends over four main points: the background context; the presentation of the main international norms; how they have been applied on Portuguese NGOs work; and the influences' main similarities and differences between these social partners. Lastly, the discussion will summarise the principal findings and conclude what I believe is the most relevant of all the thesis discovers.

Throughout this paper, the reader will learn to what extent international norms have influenced Portuguese civil society organizations' work on domestic violence and which have been the consequences of this cooperation to the effects being felt nationally in Portugal.

## 2. Methodology

The purpose of the thesis is to understand how international norms have influenced Portuguese civil society organizations' work on domestic violence. I defend that it is important to ask this question as the research will contribute to understanding to what extent international relations are responsible for shifting domestic norms and actions on this social problem.

Firstly, to reach this, the philosophy adopted was Relativism, as my ontological standpoint, and Social Constructivism, as my epistemology. Relativist because I am aware that knowledge is subjective and distinctions such as right and wrong or true and false depend on context. As this thesis purpose is to analyse in which way norms are adopted and diffused, I also assume that my choices of norms and conducts have social constructions. In fact, we are only aware of them because they are spread in the society to which we belong, as the right approaches to follow. The process of building knowledge has social causes (Castañon, 2015) and, thus, all beliefs are social constructions. As such, I will consider these beliefs spread by international norms as mainly correct to fight domestic violence against women. Further, I will also use this philosophical theory in the next chapter (theoretical section) to be able to recognise how norms have been defined as the better suitable ones to fight domestic violence in all societies.

My research began with a literature review in which I acquired the theoretical concepts that sustain the creation of norms and, additionally, explain the domestic violence against women as a transversal social problem. Based on this, I structured this chapter in two main parts. The first will present frameworks that define and explain how beliefs are defined in societies and have social origins (basing the explanation on Social Constructivism), and in what way they are diffuse by international changing actors and through processes such as Europeanization. In the second part of this chapter, I'll provide insight into how domestic violence develops in societies, by defining Intimate Partner Violence and Domestic Violence scholars thinking. This is pertinent in this thesis as it allows to acknowledge the mechanism created to fight the issue, as norms have been defined to try to stop it.

The choice to do this research in Portugal relates to the fact that it is a European country where domestic violence is a transversal social problem where measures to prevent it has not had many results. Further, in the last years, we assisted to a uniform campaign strategy promoted by the government and NGOs and based on international norms. I believe this represents the way how EU values and norms became part of the domestic sphere in members' states. Thus, I consider this thesis relevant to understand the significance of international influence and, more specifically, Europeanization in the shift to fight this social problem in Portugal.

I completed my literature review by reading Conventions, news, reports, action plans, and campaigns promoted by the United Nations, Council of Europe, EU, and feminists organizations from Portugal and all over the world. I realised that the discourses are similar, becoming the strategy adopted to fight domestic violence mostly based on international norms.

Consequently, I selected my sample by choosing three NGOs that together characterise the standard method that civil society operates about domestic violence in Portugal. Movimento Democrático das Mulheres (MDM) is an organization that works for prevention and awareness; Associação de Mulheres Contra a Violência (AMCV) represent the way work is developed to protect victims, and Plataforma Portuguesa para os Direitos das Mulheres (PpDM) promote the horizontal cooperation to reach the implementation of international directions.

Furthermore, these three NGOs also represent the times when civil societies organizations gain an important role in Portugal. In this country, we have assisted to three wings of the emergence of feminists civil society organizations. The first, close to the end of a long dictatorship regime, in which voices started to command a democracy and human rights respect. Then some years after Portugal had entered the EU, a boom of development funds helped them rise in the middle of the 1990s; and, finally, a few others in the new millennium, when strong worldwide discourses were asking for an urgent response to promote women's rights in all countries. MDM was created in 1967, AMCV in 1995, and PpDM in 2004.

However, these secondary sources based on literature review, media information, and NGOs communication released in their websites were not enough to understand the reason why they follow international norms as a guide to their work on domestic violence. Thus, by interviewing them, I tried to obtain more data about that. The main questions, done in semi-structured questionnaire, were about how they were able to cooperate internationally and nationally with the government and other civil society organizations, what is the main thinking behind their campaigns and what are the main obstacles they face and that they feel may be undermining their measures to fight domestic violence against women.

After this, I noted that education is not the main point of their work, not in preventive campaigns or even by a bottom-up tentative to influence a change in the education system, something crucial to combat social behaviours that reflect discrimination against women. Therefore, I tried to go deeper in this matter and interviewed two NGOs that work with teenagers to prevent gender-based violence, promote gender equality, and discuss sexuality: Associação para o Planeamento Familiar (AFP) and Graal. My findings of this point will be presented in my discussion, as they are not the main research aspect of this thesis.

List of interviewees:

<b>Name</b>	<b>NGO</b>
Sandra Barata	MDM (Appendix I)
Albertina Silva and Maria Macedo	AMCV (Appendix II)
Sónia Duarte Lopes	AFP (Appendix V)
Eliana Madeira	Graal (Appendix IV)

Besides this, I would like to stress that I encountered obstacles and some limitations in reaching these NGOs. The initial goal was to interview six, but that was not possible as most of them did not show availability to book an interview, and others did not even answer emails or phone calls. I contacted them for three months, and the primary data that I was able to collect was the above interviews. Further, AMCV and AFP shared



internal documents that I used on this thesis as a complement to the rest of the secondary data collected. This thesis data is mainly qualitative, but quantitative material was used to show the degree to which gender inequality, domestic violence, and traditional social norms perforate in Portuguese society. This portrait of patriarchal features will be presented in the background context.

The information in the documents was selected based on the main theoretical concepts used for understanding how international norms operate as well as to guide the structure of the analysis. The interview data presented in this thesis was selected from the information required to perform a more comprehensive analysis of the beliefs and the work social partners construct. Besides this, the data displayed represent the main norms and frameworks these NGOs develop, and subsequently, the references are examples of their usual work.

I believe the strength of this research is to present a new perspective about the effort developed to combat domestic violence by civil society organizations at the national level and how positive is the international influence for its progress. Additionally, rethink what is assumed as the right approach to fight this worldwide social issue, and to what extent different cultural societies should work together to fight it.

### **3. Theoretical chapter**

The aim of this research is to understand how international norms have influenced the work of Portuguese civil society organizations in fighting domestic violence against women. To this end, as explained in the methodology chapter, it is fundamental to develop the concepts that explain the choices and interests of both national and international organizations. Decision-making actors work towards a range of beliefs and norms that influence the way organizations create their approach.

This selection is shaped by social constructivism, the process of building knowledge by the emergence and reproduction of social norms values and responsibilities.

Furthermore, the definition of states' interests is influenced by the international order, which helps in understanding how norms are diffuse between different spheres. This thesis will explain this from the perspective of Martha Finnemore, complimented

through the logic of the appropriateness of the scholars March & Olsen. Finally, the first part of this chapter will end with a discussion about Europeanization, a concept that explains the influence, adoption and transformation of governance in national and international politics between European countries. These concepts will help to lay the groundwork to an analysis about how international norms reach the national level and influence the work of domestic social organizations on domestic violence.

To achieve this and to understand the approaches and norms adopted to fight this social issue, it is equally important to know how domestic violence operates and what are its causes. Therefore, the second part of this theoretical chapter goes deeper into studies that examine the causes behind domestic violence against women. I will start presenting the definition of domestic violence and what are considered to be the causes of why it exists and persists worldwide in all societies, which leads to the explanation of the concept of patriarchy, the final conceptual part of this chapter.

### 3.1. The adoption of international norms by states and organizations

Sociologists started to explain that the process of building knowledge, even when it is scientific, has social causes. Social constructivism theory, rejects objectivism, which defends the idea that scientific results are the consequences of the natural; and, instead, defends an approach that considers the process of gaining knowledge as a consequence of social construction. Social constructivism is a postmodernist theory, firstly defined in the 1970s by Barry Barnes and David Bloor in the sociology of knowledge field. They explain that all knowledge is built socially, and that it is dynamic. This means that it can change depending on the time and space where it is constructed. Nonetheless, natural facts are also considered, but the authors give less importance to them, viewing this type of fact as a social product as well, this means that their creation is a result of beliefs (Castañón, 2015: 230). Thus, social constructivism explains that all individual beliefs are socially built. This means that changing norms does not depend on one individual as this process is based on social constructions. The authors argue that actors follow the rules passively in societies - the subject is not active. This perception it is called the “new objectivism” (Castañón<sup>2</sup>, 2005: 47).

Further, Keaton & Bodie explain that an object/knowledge is socially constructed when the ideas that define it are part of a context, this means that the perception of that object will change depending on the extent of the meaning it has in that society (Keaton & Bodie, 2011: 192).

Barnes (1973) criticises modern societies as being very passive about what they believe, simply taking for granted the norms that rule them. If they think about it, the majority end up following that belief arguing that it is “how things are” (Barnes, 1973: 1).

Normally, there is a distinction between two types of beliefs, and both are assumed as being real, part of reality. There are the world of objects, facts and events; and the sphere of institutional norms, values and responsibilities. The general idea that a society believes is that both spheres are considered natural because we can see it, it exists independently of how we experience them. Physical and spiritual beliefs have become unquestioned and accepted as real and valid (ibid: 2).

Barnes also states that is not clear that individuals act consciously in this process of acceptance, and science plays an important role in this, as it should show the truth and error in each belief, defining which are the natural and institutional norms. Though “the peculiarly high level of rationality in science and the peculiar reliability of its beliefs” (Barnes, 1973: 5). He continues saying that a sociologist when accepting this philosophical view becomes a naturalist and what he will consider is the “naturalness” of the beliefs about the world. Our perception of the world is formed by facts, observations and views, that we gain by our senses. This awareness is usually the same between all individuals, and normally induction is the process which monitors naturally, the acquisition of this procedure. Barnes argues that “it is impossible to imagine any institutionalised pattern of human belief and action which does not involve inductively generated expectation” (ibid: 8). Thus, inductive thinking is the natural processes and acknowledged beliefs, such as, night follows day, that are based on inductive thinking, where we pass from a particular situation to a generalisation. It is present in all societies as part of the previous development of beliefs, which exists at all levels. Barnes calls this, the process the institutionalization of beliefs and concludes that “the greater part of the beliefs which constitute our accepted knowledge are readily shown to derive from theories rather than being entirely the product of experience” (ibid: 9).

All states are made of people who have several common beliefs, which are usually shared with other countries. Martha Finnemore presents the definition of a states' identities and interests, more precisely she analyses the norms of international society, the role of international organizations to diffuse them, and how this affects state identities and interests, which she calls the state behaviour (Jackson, 2006).

Finnemore is the first author to sustain the thesis that international norms structures influence the behaviour and decisions of states. In her book, *National Interests in International Society*, she argues that "states are socialised to accept new norms, values and perceptions" that are in their interests via international organizations (Finnemore, 1996: 5). This happens because states interests are defined in the context of international environments, where norms and values are discussed and organised. Thus, Interests are constructed by social interaction. She underlines that the international system can change what states want, even more consequently from the fact that "states do not always know what they want" (ibid: 128). The author argues that international organizations create spaces where understandings, norms and decisions about what states should do, are presented and discussed, creating channels of diffusion of what should be their policy direction.

We live in a globalised world, where all states and organizations work together to connect markets and governance. They influence each other's conduct, guiding interests, social norms and rules so that the end up following the same path. In fact, international society and social norms shape or contribute to, the main policies of International Relations, influencing what states want and what states are. Thus, social norms uniformize behaviours and realities, which will create a dominant paradigm. Finnemore gives as example of how humanitarian norms are created and spread by organizations. The norms are seen as needing to create and provide justice and a safe world. However, implementing these norms may create challenges for international politics. Transnational organizations, such as the United Nations or Red Cross, for example, organize Committees to create Conventions that they use to promulgate and transmit the humanitarian norms (ibid: 70). Usually, they claim that states must respect the well-being of individuals and defend them at domestic level. As we live in an international society and in an international social life, there is an easiest diffusion and appropriation of the norms and its understandings on national level (ibid: 130).

March & Olsen (2009) define this perspective as “the logic of appropriateness”, which explain the adoption of international norms of national organizations and politics.

The authors underline that human actions and policy making follow rules of appropriation or behaviourism, considered as an example to be repeated by organizations. “Rules are followed because they are seen as natural, rightful, expected, and legitimate” (March & Olsen, 2009: 3). In democracies, the political sphere is organised by institutions in the sense that policy making is shaped by the established norms defined by formal organizations. These are legitimate institutions where rules and behaviours are structured in all spheres – financial, skilled staff, and “causal and normative beliefs” (ibid: 5). The authors also explain that institutions connect roles and identities, predict situations, form rules and practises. They have an important role not only to create actors but also to make them work in creating relations and interactions between all the policy making individuals. “They guide behaviour and stabilize expectations” (ibid: 5). Besides this, institutions train actors, invest resources to empower them and to they act following the rules established. These resources are also allocated to create channels of diffusion through which the actors, who are part of the institutions and spaces that institutions organise, promote their norms, such as conventions, conferences and meetings between changing actors.

Rules of appropriateness are very present within contemporary democracies to make sure that all humans construct their behaviour based on common rules, which are considered a fundamental part of the processes of democratization and civilization.

Furthermore, they state that,

“A democratic identity also includes accepting responsibility for providing an institutional context within which continuous political discourse and change can take place and the roles, identities, accounts, rules, practices, and capabilities that construct political life can be crafted” (ibid: 6)

The democratic system is built by several institutions. The more automatic the relations between rules and action, the more likely these rules and norms will be considered “legitimate, stable well defined” and then implemented (ibid: 8). Thus, actions are oriented by the dominant institution, the one which provides the resources needed for the successful adoption of the norm.

Building a common identity is done by following the rules that are considered the legitimate ones. This process will involve change and the adoption of new rules, depending on the situation in question. Therefore, an important characteristic of the rules is their “possible consequences for the development of a community of rule, based on a common identity and sense of belonging” (ibid: 11).

As a matter of fact, the goal is to have a cooperative system. Thus, rules are adopted because they tend to represent the community identity. They go towards peoples’ values and moral principles. “Rules spread through social networks and their diffusion is constrained by borders and distances” (ibid: 13). Usually, social rules are transmitted from one generation to another or from education, training, socialization and cultural habits. The authors argue that democratic institutions are also responsible to “speed up and slow down learning from experience and adaptation” and they state that democracies “value continuity and predictability as well as flexibility and change”; this process when accepted will provide us with a new experience (ibid). Rules are appropriated because they are viewed as normal and part of the learning process. This means that life experiences are usually common to all in different stages and spheres. Rules guide our principles and principles become part of the system.

However, rules are not stable determinedly. They may be changed, challenged, doubted and then accepted or not. In democracies this should be even more evident as it is supposed to be a system where debate and the expression of different opinions are part of an open system. As March & Olsen state “democracies are at best only partly communities of shared experiences, communication, interpretative traditions and memory that give direction and meaning to citizens” (ibid: 15). The authors give, as example, the integration of different countries into the European Union. Several challenges have occurred after, year by year, nations from distinct cultures, social norms and traditions, decided to become part of a one whole community with the same political beliefs, following similar rules for different national issues. This process was more notorious in the economic market, where rules were adopted defining production quotas, for example, but this has happened in other spheres of society (ibid: 16). The process of integration in European Union is, in fact, mainly based on the adoption of rules and legal procedures. Besides this, in global politics this uniformization of rules tend to be part of a process promoting human rights. Thus, March & Olsen conclude

that “it is easier to rationalize behaviour in terms of one interest or another, than to interpret behaviour as appropriate, simply because rules of appropriateness are collective, publicly known and fairly stable” (ibid: 22).

This process that uniformized the governance and political measures between European countries affected domestic policies in several spheres, social norms included. Some scholars studied this, defining how this occur, calling it Europeanization.

### **3.1.2. The Europeanization of domestic norms**

The concept of Europeanization started to be discussed among scholars at the end of the 1990s. It defines several phenomena and processes relative to the transformations in policy-making and governance in and between European countries politics (Luukkoven, 2017). Several studies have analysed how time and space have been important for a process of Europeanization to arise. The main conclusions point to the changes in decision-making on domestic policies which are made during a certain time where locations increased the opportunity of the process to be successful. In these studies, space and time were considered fundamental dimensions of Europeanization in the sense that “locations and relations of particular power centres and occasions” were the key to this process happen. Luukkoven gives as example conferences, summits, policy organizations, places where decision-making actors from different countries meet and discuss future policies. Here, studies conclude that time conceptualised Europeanization as an evolutionary and successive process whose causes have been originated by practices in a certain period, where by practice “is understood as routinised contextual behaviour which consists of several interconnected elements” (Luukkoven, 2017: 9). Besides this, it is also considered as practices, speeches, decisions, thoughts, spread on public sphere and that conduct behaviours, knowledge, understandings of EU’s policy between member states and institutions. Thus, this concept of spatial planning shows that while policy practices “have the times when and spaces where they occur, they also have the existential temporal and spatial dimensions which are opened in the activities constituting the practices” (Luukkoven, 2017: 9). In summary, in this theoretical point of view about Europeanization, “Europe is the spatial entity and European spaces the object” for making policies happen (ibid).

This Europeanization process has affected several countries, where the impact provoked by integration into the European Union was notorious by the adoption of European norms on domestic political and social processes of the new members states. Thus, we are presented with a top-down perspective (Börzel & Risse, 2000: 2).

Europeanization can occur in domestic processes, policies and institutions and gives new opportunities and limitations to all states that follow the same direction. “Whether such changes in the political opportunity structure leads to a domestic redistribution of power, depends on the capacity of actors to exploit these opportunities and avoid the constraints” (ibid). Additionally, Börzel & Risse defend that:

“If European norms, rules, and the collective understandings attached to them are largely compatible with those at the domestic level, they do not give rise to problems of compliance or effective implementation more generally speaking. Nor do they provide new opportunities and constraints to domestic actors which could lead to a redistribution of power resources at the domestic level.” (ibid: 5)

For the process of Europeanization to be theoretically understand, there are two logics that explain it: the logic of rationalist institutionalism and the logic of sociological institutionalism. The first perspective explains that Europeanization occurs through the empowerment of the actors responsible for the application of the European norms on the national level and, consequently, the skills and resources gained are spread in the country where the norms are applied. On the other hand, the second perspective ensures that European norms are adopted because of processes of persuasion where policies and norms are taken as part of the collective ideas and so accepted on the national level. Thus, this logic “leads to domestic change through a socialisation and collective learning process resulting in norm internalisation and the development of new identities” (ibid: 9). Furthermore, as these logics occur they may have mediating factors. Firstly, the authors define “change agents” for a rationalist perspective and then “a political culture” for a sociologist one. These two will “influence the degree to which such misfit results in the internalization of new norms and the development of new identities” (ibid: 9). Change actors, the main mediator from rationalist act at the national level trying to influence others to accept the European interests and identities they are promoting; by political culture the authors mean the existence of informal institutions



which play this role of guiding towards a “consensus-building and cost-sharing”. These two logics are present and ensue normally at the same time, as they are part of the different stages of an adaptational change process.

Therefore, “Europeanization is the independent variable which impacts upon domestic processes, policies, and institutions” but also it stimulates a re-orientation and shaping of politics into a European view. This is a process of political and social change on practises, rules, procedures and norms of member-states institutions.

However, it is important to state that there may occur a bottom-up process that also influences the states adoption of new norms. From societal organizations to political power, norms may be promoted to create a change in the system. But, as this thesis is focused on international norms influencing domestic level organizations, I will not conceptualise the bottom-up perspective.

Börzel & Risse underline that Europeanization is only possible when there are formal institutions which promote it and domestic actors must have the skills to embrace the new opportunities and ideas. These institutions will give the necessary resources to European norms be adapted and adopted the best way possible on nationals’ levels. However, institutions are not able to organise channels of diffusion if there is not a necessity for the new norms be implemented. Besides that, if the Europeanization involves “high redistribution costs, a socialisation process might be necessary to overcome stalemate and to develop new rules of fairness on the basis of which actors can then bargain over the distribution of costs” (ibid: 13). This socialisation and learning relate to Europeanization when it is a mandatory process and so institutions suffer more pressure to accept it; as the authors state “the more Europeanization exerts adaptational pressures on constitutive and deeply embedded institutions (such as citizenship rules) and collective identities, the more the socialization/learning pathway is necessary to induce constitutive change” (ibid).

In summary, this process was generally an innate procedure after members states became part of European Union or even before that, when international debates, events and conferences were part of the geopolitical concerns between European countries, and these had influenced countries to adopt new measures and policies that they were not

following. Such a case can be the gender equality political measures where statistics of inequality were extremely high. Besides this, there are an overall perspective about these measures, with UN making sure all the states actuate towards a human rights approach.

The aim of this thesis is to understand how international norms have influenced Portuguese NGOs work on domestic violence, analysing it to see the extent to which this has been positive and negative for promoting the end of this social problem in Portugal. Before this will be discussed in the next chapter, it is important to clarify the theoretical framework which explains how domestic violence and intimate partner violence operates within societies, which are the main factors for this to happen and what is the genesis of the problem. For this, I will present the concepts of domestic violence, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and patriarchy.

### **3.2. Domestic Violence: a worldwide social problem**

Michael Freeman (2008) argues that “domestic violence is primarily about violence against women, wives, cohabitants and others in close emotional relationships”. This type of violence has always existed but lately it has gained a definition and a detailed analysis of its causes, now being considered as one of the most acute worldwide social problems. Freeman underlines that it was only in the 1970’ domestic violence started to be discussed and defining it took time. Firstly, it was common to see it as a wife problem, like violence only happens in marriage; also, it was associated with exclusively physical attacks; but now it is accepted that violence is several types of behaviour, even though there is not a common definition of it.

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." Domestic violence includes violence perpetrated by intimate partners and other family members, and manifested through physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse or/and economic abuse (UNICEF, 2000: 2).

It is important to underline that men are also victims of this type of violence (around 20% of victims). However, domestic violence as a social problem is domestic violence against women (Freeman, 2008: 17). There are four different forms of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) - common couple violence, intimate terrorism, violence resistance and mutual violence control. However, the most characteristically present in domestic violence against women is intimate terrorism, where violence is perpetuated from one member to the other one, to control, intimidate and usually increases during the years (ibid).

Why this happen? It is important to understand the origins of this social problem to recognise the countermeasures adopted by international and national actors that intend to fight against it. During many years, or even still today, the causes generally defined to explain domestic violence have been largely misunderstood or reductive, in Freeman opinion. There were known three main causes: men pathology, men who beat their partner were probably mentally sick; frustration, men who were aggressive were probably unhappy with their lives, stressed and disappointed and the result is throw it into their relationship and, thus, in crisis situations such as unemployment for example, violence may increase; or even about blaming the victim, stating that “victims are addicted to violence, so that they seek out violent relationships”, or that they are “bad housewives”, “provoke violence” and some “deserve it” (Freeman, 2008: 16). These enlightenments may clarify some violent relationships, but they exclude an important factor: patriarchy. Freeman continues his explanation stressing that “domestic violence is about power” and in a patriarchal society, male dominance must be kept, and that sex-roles and socialization processes are “effective strategies” that were taken “into right in marriages”.

Understanding the causes why domestic violence occurs is important and fundamental to act against it, yet it is as important know how victims react to it; and here responses “are by no means uniform” (ibid: 18). Some leave home, many stay silent without seeking outside help. The author sums up four reasons that influence domestic violence victims conduct: the less violent the aggression is, more they stay; the more women’s childhood has been restricted, the more these women stay in abused relationships; the less economic power they have, the harder it is for them to leave; and finally, the more institutions (police and courts) fail in the process after victims speak out, for example,

they fear they won't believe them, the harder it is to women get out of a crisis situation (ibid). Though, it is relevant to state that domestic violence is transversal to all social classes.

Malcolm Gordon (2000) underlines the importance of these definitions about IPV to the possibility of creating suitable countermeasures against this social problem. These conceptions have helped to develop mechanisms and advocacy movements of organisations and states at the national and international level based on "sampling issues" which allowed an overview perspective about domestic violence (Gordon, 2000: 748). Many measures focused on sanctioning the aggressors and a protective control of victims. Gordon criticises this approach for being general and asks how can a societal level explanation explain individuals' behaviours? (ibid: 764). He defends that it is fundamental to analyse attitudes and find a standard about males adoption of violent conduct against their partner, as what has been done; but also, it misses an understanding to what extent "coercion in relationships reflects gender-determined attitudes and behaviour, and the extent to which gender differences in relationship power derive from patriarchal societal norms" (ibid: 765).

### **3.3. Patriarchy as a social system that leads to violence against women**

Scholars argue that patriarchy is the cause for gender inequality and violence against women that persists in many societies until today; it is an important tool to understand gender relations. In the beginning, patriarchy was a term which defined the religious social order that imposed a privileged group, men, over another group, women (Babst, xxxx: 14). Lately, patriarchy defines the "form of rule by a privileged person or a group over others who are subordinate to that one person or group" (ibid).

Gerda Lerner in her book "The Creation of Patriarchy" explains that there is not only one reason why women are subordinate to men and patriarchy is still present in contemporary societies. During the centuries, several processes of social order operated towards a patriarchy organization in most parts of the world.

While men gained their role in economy, in education and in politics, women were pushed to stay in the home sphere, following their maternal role and housewife function, being dependent on the men's income, who was for many years the only

financial labour force of the family. As the author states, to understand how we reach the different status between men and women in contemporary societies, we must be aware of the concept of patriarchy because it is very present on most people's thoughts and believes (Lerner, 1986: 36).

The author starts explaining the different historical factors which provoked that system of patriarchy born and arrived until today. The first characteristic was the "necessity" of women to follow a social role which allows them to have time for motherhood. In primitive times, life conditions were worse than nowadays in the Western world, many children died, and women had more pregnancies and new-born children. Besides this, the nursery period was longer, as a mother's breast feeding was the main children's meal. From this perspective, it was necessary and normal to dedicate women's time to taking care of their children (ibid: 41). Since the latter twenty centuries, the motherhood role became less and less a full-time job, though it still plays an important role in labour market and women tend to choose jobs where they can have time for their family. Additionally, the labour market and other economic and political spheres tend to privilege men's availability as a work force over women. Secondary, boys and girls are educated and raised differently, and roles taught to each other have perpetuated this social tendency. Boys are more prepared for public life, at the same time girls are more attached to their mother. Thus, "gender-defined boys and girls prepared within the sphere of reproduction in sexually unequal society" (ibid: 44).

Further, the biological determinism influenced many scholars to think this is a cause behind women's oppression and exploitation in the labour market, which has perpetuated women's dependency on their partner. The result of an unequal division of labour, was intensified by the capitalist perspective, where domestic tasks are not considered work, and working life commands time invested in it. This resulted in the domination of male force, that gave them power to be the leader in a relationship where the women will always depend of her partner to sustain the house (Mies, 2014: 45). Social origins are very important to the division of labour, and further one of the causes of domestic violence against women.

Collins & Rothe (2017) reinforce this idea that patriarchy is spread in societies by a cultural and hegemonic discourse, where a dominant belief is presented, which is then

accepted as the truth and common sense. These discourses “represent the dominant ideology (patriarchy), justifying the social, political, and economic status quo” (ibid: 162). As example, the authors underline the speeches and discourses that we consume daily from media, society, labour market or even social groups. The romanticising of Intimate Partner Violence, where it is spread the idea that IPV happens because someone is jealous or too protective about his/her partner, the dependence of women or the need for men’s protection, or even the “normal” dominance of men by women, has been a normalised fact. People tend to accept this ideas and myths as a reality (ibid: 163). In fact, “the commodification of patriarchy is present every day and has come to be seen as a fact of life that ‘nicely captures the dominant social meaning of banal goods” (ibid: 164). Thus, we consume a disconnected reality that we believe in, a reality that is subjective as it is built by social stereotypes and social constructions. Hence, women’s oppression is reproduced by culture and its representation; “consumption therefore, becomes pathological” (ibid: 165) and is a social obstacle to end all forms of violence against women.

Besides this, Mary Becker (xxxx) explains a controversial perspective stating that the patriarchy culture is not only about women’s subordination, but also their role to help the valorisation of men in a dominant male society. Here, women play an important role and are supporters, a trophy, an object that men use when needed. Women are dependent, vulnerable, available to their partner; they are there to make the men’s role stronger and real. “Women assure men that they are real men by deferring to them, by allowing them to set the agenda and do most of the talking, and by stroking their egos in countless other ways (Becker, xxxx: 27). The author continues underlining that patriarchy is a social structure, a structure that “accommodates some women into positions of power, provided that the women are male-identified, male-centered, and act according to patriarchal values” (ibid: 34). Accordingly, in this social system, when does the oppression become violence? Becker defends that the fear men feel by the possibility of women’s action being “rebel and retaliate” and their love and need to have one in their lives, assured a dangerous emotional mix that when it is broken can take us towards a distortion of feelings which may explain some behaviour behind domestic violence (ibid: 29).

However, these explanations of patriarchy have been strongly criticised for being reductive as an argument why women are undermined in societies. Sylvia Walby (1989) proposed “six-partially interdependent structures” that explain all the main foundations of the patriarchy concept, where this means “a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (Walby, 1989: 214). The author defines the six structures as “the patriarchal mode of production, the patriarchal relations in paid work, the patriarchal relations in the state male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in culture institutions, such as religion, the media and education” (ibid).

First, she starts her argumentation stating that patriarchy is not only related to capitalism because it has existed before and after this economic system reached our societies. Even though capitalism changes the nature of work towards a system favourable to men over women, patriarchy was already part of societies. Besides this, the patriarchy concept also fails to include an explanation about the differences of gender inequality within time, space, races and classes. Walby tries to provide a complete definition of the concept by explaining the six structures mentioned above.

The first structure, the patriarchal mode of production, is about the economic level of a couple. Usually, she argues, women perform most of the domestic work for men and this defines a relation of labour power because the man “has possession” of what their wife/partner provides for them. This means that women produce for men and they are the owners of the products, then if they are not satisfied, they can reject these products and the labour force – women (ibid: 221). Also, this division of domestic work is one of the main causes of inequality because have consequences in differentiate men and women in social relations as women are in disadvantage when it comes to conciliate working life and domestic working tasks.

Secondly, patriarchal relations in paid work is what the author defines as “the exclusion of women from paid work or the segregation of women within it”, which undermines women’s work and provokes women’s having lower salaries than men. This segregation occurs by women being excluded from jobs positions which provide higher salaries and better careers (ibid: 223).

Furthermore, another patriarchal structure is the state. Walby argues that women are excluded from access to state institutions because of their lack of power which is part of being on a patriarchal society. This structure includes not only women's presence itself in states as a decision-maker force, but also the state institutions measures towards a perspective of male dominance perspective and defence. The author gives as an example the decisions of judicial courts' in cases of male violence, that very often tend to protect the aggressor instead of believing the victim, usually a woman.

Connecting to this last point is the fourth structure – male violence. A patriarchal system influences men's behaviour to maintain their leadership and some use violence “as a form of power over women” (ibid: 224). Further, the author underlines the fact that this violence influences women's actions for fear of male violence and a patriarchal state contributes to the maintenance of this this structure, as its intervention tolerates to some extent, the violence perpetuated against women. This violence can be rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment at work, father-daughter incest or domestic violence. It is a social problem and can not be analysed or seen as an individual issue. It is a structure that maintains the women's domain in the private and public sphere as it has a casual effect of changing women's behaviour and actions as they are being undermined at different social levels.

Patriarchal relations in sexuality structures define that patriarchal practices happen mainly in heterosexual relations. “Its major causal significance is in orienting women towards marriage as a desirable goal” (ibid: 225). And here, sexuality reflects social practices: men control women dominating and objectify them through the sexual part of their lives. In this sense, women's subordination is not by the act itself, but the social constructions applied to differentiate sexuality between men and women, as “sexuality is the way in which genders are socially identified and constructed” (ibid: 226).

Finally, the last structure presented is patriarchal culture, which is about the several discourses intrinsic culturally in certain society, being part of the general conscience. Patriarchal discourses have been spread historically by religious institutions, and lately by the education system and media. Patriarchal ways of thinking are institutionalised and influence people's perceptions about men and women roles, becoming part of culture and social life as a common norm (ibid: 227).



In summary, the six structures show that patriarchy can be represented in one society by different forms and some are more important and notorious than others, being the cause of different levels of women's subordination. Patriarchy can be manifested in private and public life: women are excluded from social life and stay subordinated at home, and/or women are subordinate collectively in the social system (ibid: 228). Both types of patriarchy are part of the state and society of many countries and still "few legal penalties wait the vast majority of men who are violent against women" (ibid: 229); many against women they were meant to share their life with.

Although, Walby's conceptual work about patriarchy is the base for explaining the phenomenon to many scholars, it is still not enough to understand how this structure operates in contemporary societies. Thus, I presented it from different points of view that together show that this may be visible from labour market through intimate partner relations sphere.

This concept is important to be defined, so as to understand the reasons why domestic violence is a worldwide problem that originates a common countermeasure to fight it. Furthermore, the causes of this social problem also help to analyse and understand the direction and approaches adopted by civil society organizations internationally and nationally, in Portugal. The perspective behind the creation of international norms to fight domestic violence in all countries has been uniformized and I will analyse how this happens. In fact, several development programmes towards the fight against domestic violence have been applied in Europe.

This thesis will attempt to analyse how civil society organizations are fighting this issue in Portugal, using this country as a case study to understand to what extent the countermeasures adopted have international influence, how positive is this Europeanization and what is missing in the approaches promoted through social patterns. To achieve this, I will base my analysis within the theoretical explanations of the process of acceptance, institutionalization of beliefs; logic of appropriateness and Europeanization. This is to try and discover which are the legitimate rules that are spread and how are the channels of diffusion operating in the Portuguese context. In the end, I would like to understand the role of international norms and its importance to

guide and help Portuguese civil society organizations to fight domestic violence against women at national level.

## **4. Analysis**

### **4.1. Background context**

In the last century, Portugal has suffered a big range of political, economic and social changes. After 41 years of a dictatorship where human rights were violated, education undervalued, and freedom of speech inexistent, the country got free in the Revolution of 25th April 1974, and ready to a restart. Salazar's leadership make sure the country would not develop its citizens' critical thinking. Agriculture was the main working field: in 1974, 1290,5 million of 3694 million active population, compared with 294,2 million who work in the primary sector in 2018 (Pordata, 2018). Primary education the main school level completed, when finished, as one-third of the population, especially women, were analphabetic. In 1960, 26% of men and 39% of women, which decreased for 3,5% of men to 6,8% of women in 2011 (Portada2, 2018); and conservatorium values were spread like the ones to believe. "God, Nation and Family", was the main discourse to follow from school lessons into home walls. In this trio of values, religion was Catholic church, nation the New State Regime; and family was the traditional model, where men should protect all and be the labour force, women should take care of the children, house leads and be respectful wives, and children should go to school and start helping their parents as soon as they finish the basic education (Torgal & Homem, 1982).

After the April Revolution, Portugal was ready to open boundaries to international order and Europe. In 1986, this country entered the European Union (EU) and its development start to be notorious. Population educated increased significantly and general living conditions as well.

The southwestern European country population is around 10.200.000 million and most of the population live in the littoral, being the interior more underdeveloped, with lack of services. Unemployment rate is 6,8% and PIB 1,7% (INE, 2019). Most of the active population works in the third sector (3363,3 million of 4866,7 million) and the average of monthly salary is around 812 euros, being the house rents the biggest expense as it

costs in the main cities between 800 to 1100 euros per month (for a 3 rooms apartment) (Numbeo, 2019).

Though compared with 50 years ago, the country changed positively, it is still one of the lowest PIBs of EU (it is on position 14° of shared PIB of the 28° EU members states), and the economy is, in fact, fragile (Jornal Económico, 2019). Crisis are cycling happening. The last one, in 2010, put the country behind in some social developments, such as labour market conditions. The degradation of work conditions and the proliferation of precarious jobs<sup>1</sup> have been one of the consequences felt until today. Compared with the beginning of the crisis in 2011, the number of this type of jobs increases 73 million, being the total in 2018 of 900 million precarious jobs. Between this, the most hit were women, who have the biggest number of precarious jobs: 458 million against 433 million of men; further, from 2017 to 2018, women have gained 3% more precarious jobs than men (Dinheiro Vivo, 2019).

Furthermore, the gender pay gap is worse than the averaged of European countries (16%), reaching the 17,5% (Eurostat, 2018), being getting worse during the years: from 2011 to 2016 increased 4,6% of points (ibid). Even though women are higher educated than men, being the school abandon rate bigger for men, with 38% than for women, with 23% (Sapo, 2018), salaries differences are significant.

Inequality is present more in the private sphere than the public as Portugal is good in laws that promote equality and assume several international commitments. However, the problem is in applying them. In the OECD gender inequality ranking, Portugal occupies the fifth place of 120 countries. Legally it treats women and men equally, but after this is not reflected in practices and attitudes, such as there are lack of security to women walk alone at night, a high discrimination on the domestic sphere, being house tasks unequal split between couples, and only one third of women occupy leadership positions in companies (PUBLICO, 2018).

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<sup>1</sup> Precarious jobs are a concept widely used in Latin countries (France, Italy, Spain and Portugal) and means a labour situation of precariousness, which is the opposite of the traditional contract of employment, where employees have a full-time contract, with indefinite duration and with social protection (retirement, unemployment, vacations, etc.). Despite the difficulty in finding a common and rigorous definition of precarious ", sociologists associate it with four characteristics: i) Job insecurity; ii) Loss of social benefits; iii) Low wages; iv) Discontinuity in working hours (Sá, 2019: 2).

When we face a Portuguese heterosexual couple situation, the majority, normally women have higher or the same level of education than their partner, but 46% of them earn less than them (Sagnier & Morell, 2019). Most of the Portuguese women live with a man (56%) or have a male partner (15%). Sagnier & Morell presented a statistical study<sup>2</sup> about women's situation in Portugal, where Portuguese' women answer several questions about their life. One of the common responses stated that for them it is very crucial and important to have a partner, and as more the relationship is good, the happiest they are – and vice-versa. At the home sphere, with or without children, women are the ones spending much more hours on house tasks (74% of the tasks women do it, while the men do around 23%). Finally, most of the women have a paid work (71%), and 54% of the couples share the expenses equally; 27% of the cases men contribute more and on 19%, women (ibid).

When we investigate domestic violence cases of 2018, they are transversally in all classes, but the ones who reach the police are 82,5% women as victims, with ages between 25 and 54 years old (39,8%), and most of the victims are married (27,7%) and have one son/daughter (32,9%). Victims are employed (30%), with high education (8,7%) and high school level (5%). Most of the crimes were made at home during years (76%) by their partner (49,2%) or ex-partner (12,6%). Only 47,8% of the cases end up as a complaint on authorities (APAV, 2019).

From these cases, 85% were closed as “coaction” or “attack on physical integrity”, and only 15% continue to the courts as domestic violence crimes, being after also many closed without the aggressor being convicted by lack of proofs (PUBLICO, 2019).

Nonetheless, it is important to phrase that Portugal have advance “half-way” in measures to fight domestic violence (PUBLICO, 20192). In fact, Portugal developed a strong structure to fight domestic violence, such as Domestic Violence Law in 1992, which establish the parameters for making sure this crime will be prevented and victims protected and assisted (AR, 2016). On this, the law aroused to open shelters for victims all over the country and spread campaigns to fight this issue. This was a consequence because the Law defines domestic violence and ensure legally what must be considered

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<sup>2</sup> The study interviewed 2428 women, which represent 2,7 million of women in Portugal, between 18 and 64 years-old, who use internet regularly.

a victim of this crime. Further, it launches mechanisms of prevention, access to the courts, specialised support to the victims, the opening of shelters, access to health welfare, protection measures, and electronic vigilance for the aggressor if needed (ibid).

Here, national NGOs play an important role, as allied with the government, the funding investment, have helped to implement all the prevention and protection measures that had to be applied. In fact, most of the social partners that work on domestic violence born some years after the law be promulgated.

However, the Law has not been enough to combat domestic violence in Portugal because even though the structure is built, its application is not being properly done in many cases, as mentioned before. Patriarchal culture is part of judges, lawyers, and Portuguese society in general.

Nonetheless, the Portuguese Parliament has been discussing more this social issue and has shown to be committed to reducing domestic violence numbers by improving Courts judgments/ processes about these cases (Observador, 2019). Also, it had created a new strategy for equality and non-discrimination (CIG, 2018). These important social concerns may be now originating a new effort for a social development that must be done as soon as possible since in the first trimester of this year, 14 women have already been killed by the hand of their husbands/partners or ex-husbands/partners in Portugal (DN, 2019).

#### **4.2. The beliefs: international norms based on human rights approach**

This thesis aims to understand how we reach the current Portuguese social organizations approach to fight domestic violence and for this it will start stressing the main international social order changes that provoked a global political and social approach that defends women's rights.

We may say that the first big step to this was the building and rectification by United Nation (UN) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 1948, that declares that it is a common ideal to be followed by all individuals in all states and must be respected

without discriminate anyone. Besides this, it should be taught by school and education, in a way to promote the respect for the rights and freedoms stated on it and for the “adoption of progressive measures nationally and internationally” (UN, 1948). The rights and liberties declared are for all human beings because all born free and equal in dignity and rights (ibid: article 1°), and we all must be considered, without distinguishing based on race, colour, gender, language, religion, public opinion, rich or poor (ibid: article 2°). Another fundamental right is that everyone has the right to work, freely, with equal conditions and with social protection in case of unemployment (ibid: article 23°), further, everyone has the right to equal pay for equal work. This underlines the fact that the gender pay gap is against human rights. Also, another right very important for women is that maternity became recognised as a special situation and so it gives the right to receive help and assistance (ibid: article 25°). Finally, I would like to underline the part of the declaration that states we all have the right to education (ibid: article 26°), which was a crucial push to women gain the chance to access to schools and study as much as men.

After the rectification of this Declaration, many states pledge to promote human rights, not only in their countries but also beyond boundaries, trying to influence others. This commitment allowed the process of institutionalisation of these beliefs, of human rights defence, and from here was possible to gain legitimacy this start to be the new discourse promoted by change actors. Other important step towards the definition of worldwide measures that promote women’s rights, which underlined the need to the end discrimination and violence against women, was the creation, in 1979, of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW came into practice not only to stress the importance of the promotion of equal societies, human equal rights of men and women, to nations be able to build and develop their economies and social environment after a long period of transformations in the world (First and Second World Wars, colonisation and decolonisation processes, Cold War) and conscient to the importance of women for the development of a society, which is “so far not fully recognised”; but also to make sure that nations rectified the rights present on the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which mainly defend that states parties must guarantee the implementation of norms, laws, and measures that

prevent the discrimination against women in national level as well as the several types<sup>3</sup> of violence against women, globally part of all societies (CEDAW, 1979). States who signed and ratified the convention must submit every four years regular reports to the Committee, who then analyse them and make recommendations.

Not all countries have been submitting regularly; Portugal is one of these cases as since 2010 do not upload any report to CEDAW – which overlaps with the severe economic crisis that hit the country. However, national NGOs also contribute to the CEDAW committee monitoring team, preparing a report with their feedback and recommendations that the national government should apply to promote better the women's rights on the country. We will see this point in the next part. Nonetheless, it is important to phrase that CEDAW allowed to build legitimate rules, created by a committee of experts, to follow from international order to domestic spheres. The norms established let states with a guide to create a system that would promote the end of violence against women in their countries. CEDAW was a channel to these norms be diffuse in the world.

Another remarkable Convention, organised by the United Nations, that pushed international leaders to respect and promote women's rights and women's empowerment as a priority, has been defined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in 1995 (Beijing, 1995). In this Declaration, nations who rectified it, commit to defending women's rights as being human's rights, and nations must encourage all men to participate actively in all actions towards equality. It also underlines that for prosperity, development and economic growth in all countries, women must be part of this process, and states must promote women's independence and empowerment, guarantee them equal access to education, labour market and economic resources.

Further, all forms of elimination against women and girls must be irradiated and nations must implement legal measures to fight this issue. Finally, states should also secure that all policies have a gender perspective, and national and international cooperation, from governments to civil society organizations, that would adopt this strategy to promote the respect and implementation of this Declaration. This means that at a national level,

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<sup>3</sup> Example of the most common forms of violence against women are domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, exploitation in the sex industry, forced marriages and sexual harassment.

governments should allocate enough resources to implement, analyse and monitor the impact of the adoption of this Declaration. It is stated that “governments should also encourage non-governmental organizations and private-sector and other institutions to mobilise additional resources” (ibid).

Furthermore, the role of the UN in promoting a discussion and a building of agenda-setting to fight gender inequality and violence against women is notorious. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (2016-2030) were fundamental as well to change the perspective and discourse about women’s rights need to be defended universally. These goals guide social partners and governments to create a new action plan, as it was thought to be taken as everyone responsibility: all states must promote a change as there is something to be done in each country (SDG, 2019). These goals came to substitute the 8 Millennium Development Goals, which were more focus in undeveloped countries, where the Global North would act to save them from poverty and unequal societies (MDG, 2019). Besides promoting, the UN have been creating conferences, committees, conventions that allowed the new norms to be diffused.

At European level, different structures help to intensify this institutionalization of beliefs. Several channels have been shaped to promote human rights, democracy and the end of violence against women. The formation of the Council of Europe, in 1949, a council to promote the defence of human rights, democracy and rule of law in Europe was an important step. After, in 1950, it was created the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, also known as the European Human Rights Convention, where all the European countries should obey towards their policies. If not, the European Court of Human Rights would judge and sanctioned who goes against this convention (Council of Europe, 2019). Besides this, later, who does not sign and respect it cannot enter the European Union. In fact, nowadays the Council have 47 states, being part of it all the 28’ EU members and both cooperate as the Council explains:

“the European Union regularly refers to Council of Europe standards and monitoring work in its dealings with neighbouring countries, many of which are Council of Europe member states. (...) The Lisbon Treaty [2009] increased the scope for European Union action in many areas where the Council of Europe



already has significant experience and expertise. This has led to increased cooperation on issues such as fighting human trafficking, the sexual exploitation of children and violence against women. It has also opened the way for the European Union itself to sign up to the European Convention on Human Rights, and to other Council of Europe agreements” (Council of Europe<sup>2</sup>, 2019).

Specifically, about violence against women and domestic violence, the problem resolutions that this thesis analyses, it was created several initiatives since the 1990s. After a conference between members states, in 1996, the EU launched the Daphne Initiative. In 1997, the first one gave one-year funding to NGOs programmes that fight violence against women, children and young people. In total, 3 million euros. The need to continue to fight this type of violence, that is based on discrimination, originate that this initiative continued and more 5 million euros per year were invested in civil societies organizations from 1998 to 1999. The programme sustained until today and from 2000 to 2020 it was given to social partners in EU countries 46,7 million euros (EC, 2019).

During this initiative, the major campaign was done from 2006-2008 and helped to diffuse awareness about how important domestic violence is an issue to fight in all Europe. In the end, the campaign showed to what extent national responses to violence against women and domestic violence varied across Europe and how serious is this problem, as 12% to 15% of European women over 16 have suffered domestic abuse in a relationship – too many have died. Many more continue to suffer physical and sexual violence from former partners, even after the break-up (CE, 2008). The council organised a two days conference to debate domestic violence and how it can be stopped.

The name of the conference is very suggestive of this new focus as it called “Conference of the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence” (CE<sup>2</sup>, 2008). So far, domestic violence was one of the forms of violence against women, but after this campaign, European leaders and NGOs realised that it is important to treat this issue with specific measures. The creation of this new Convention was made by a Committee specialised about domestic violence against women. The need to fight this transversal social issue was the common understanding as it was not being dealt on the same way in most of the countries and violence against

women was being maintained. The belief that states have a structural nature of violence against women, and that this is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men, makes international order to act. It was concluded that exist “the need for harmonised legal standards to ensure that victims benefit from the same level of protection everywhere in Europe (...) and the need to step up protection from domestic violence, in particular, intimate partner violence.” (ibid).

The CAHVIO (Ad Hoc Committee on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence), was responsible for establishing the Istanbul Convention, finalised in 2010 and rectified in 2014, where NGOs contributed for build it, it is since one of the main current instruments for their influence pressures for states and societies. This Convention (Istanbul Convention, 2011) defines the actions to be taken to prevent and fight violence against women in all European countries.

The measures that should be done to combat domestic violence are about legal instruments and social countermeasures. All states parties should guarantee that their legislation has fundamental rights with non-discrimination against women; besides, states should guarantee that all institutions work against any form of violence against women. The system should be able to protect all the victims involved in a domestic violence crime (children inclusive), all should receive protection by shelters, telephone helplines, specialist support services, different entities prepare to work on this issue. For this, states must implement measures to ensure that social and cultural norms changes. Further, the Convention also stresses the need to invest in training programmes, inclusive on education field, making sure the curricula in all levels include teaching material on issues such as equality between women and men to end with violent behaviours, gender roles stereotypes and improve interpersonal relationships. Finally, the Convention also underlines that states parties must have programmes to empower women; and the private sector and media should be involved in this fight.

The European Union's defined as a main instrument to combat violence against women. This includes several projects on domestic violence supported financially with a global budget of more than 600 million euros for 2007-2013. The main goal of the programme was to facilitate cooperation and research in different areas of crime against women to

then define a new European strategy. Between this, all EU countries ratified the Istanbul Convention.

The convention also certifies that a group of experts will monitor the implementation of it – the GREVIO. Here, national social society organizations play an important role, as the reports are not only made by state institutions but also with the feedback of NGOs who work on this field, mainly feminists' social partners. The goal is common: create a Europe free from violence against women, domestic violence included. However, even though the Convention was rectified in 2011 in Portugal and put into action in 2014, is still in a beginner stage. Nonetheless, it is a very important guide to states and NGOs, and in fact it is now the main force to fight domestic violence against women.

In fact, as mentioned in the theory chapter, states are socially constructed by international norms, who bring new values and perceptions about a social problem that must be solved, in this case. These international norms have been constructed by civil society organizations and with its contribution and collaboration. The main rules established to fight domestic violence against women at the national level phrase that states must assume responsibility to implement a system where victims are protected, awareness is spread in all society, prevention must be part of the countermeasures and social partners must be supported to help to monitor, researching about this issue and train all the actors that will work on this matter. Conventions and conferences were used as norm diffusion channels between decision-making actors, such as nations political leaders. This part shows the importance of international institutions to define new norms and rules about women's rights, violence against women and gender equality, and to put this into agenda setting on the domestic sphere of different EU' countries, creating a top-down influence. This also shows that international norms structures influence the behaviour and decisions of states. Thus, it was stressed the main marks that orientated states to gain awareness, funds and policies to fight domestic violence against women in the world and, particularly in Europe and EU, where NGOs have been paying an important role.

In the next part, it will be presented how these international norms have been influencing the work of civil society organizations in Portugal on their measures to fight domestic violence against women. Many NGOs gain the voice and a featuring role in

the last years, not only for becoming social partners, who work directly to the society, but also collaborating with political power in some points and trying to promote a change in policy-making, on the other hand. The analysis will be about three main Portuguese feminists' NGOs, who have been on the lead to promote actions against violence against women, and especially domestic violence, the focus of this research. Later, on the discussion subchapter, the findings will be complemented with the view of other two NGOs, who work on the education field, with teenagers about sexuality and interpersonal relationships. At the end of this chapter, I aim to have the whole picture of the diverse forms how domestic violence against women has been treating by NGOs, analysing in what extent have been influenced by international norms positively and negatively.

#### **4.2.1. Feminists' Portuguese NGOs work on domestic violence**

Civil society organizations for development as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been very important actors for societies to promote human rights, political norms changes, awareness for social problems and to give a voice for vulnerable social groups, such as women who suffer domestic violence crimes. Generally, they guide their actions to fight domestic violence by five main pillars: prevent, awareness and education; protect the victims and promote their re-integration; act directly with the aggressors; train professionals; monitoring and research about this issue.

Considering these elements, I selected from the three NGOs I base my analysis, three main actions/programmes they have implemented. First, I present I small summary of their mission and work and then a campaign, that act to prevention; how shelters work, that act for protection and re-integration; and finally, how they are trying to act horizontally – different organizations collaborating for the same goal - towards a decision-making influence, exemplified by the third NGO work, that use research, monitoring and the train of professionals as the technical instrument to reach this goal. The work developed with aggressors will not be presented as there is a lack of information in the sources about this, which let me interpret that their work is not being very significant on this matter.

The first NGO is Movimento Democrático das Mulheres (MDM – Women Democratic Movement), one of the oldest feminists' organizations in Portugal. MDM is a women's association founded in 1968. It assumes itself as a movement of opinion and intervention that “values the historical legacy of the women's movements that have fought against oppression and inequalities between women and men, and defended women's rights in their political, social, economic and cultural aspects” (MDM, 2019).

The MDG is a Portuguese non-profit organization and non-governmental, whose main objective is to fight for the emancipation of women, for peace and human dignity, which is part of the construction of social equality and development (ibid). Though it has a strong political character, working directly with state institutions to suggest and promote change in policies, it is also very focused on society, working in the field in all Portugal. MDM has offices and volunteers in all the districts, trying to be capable to help women for different geographic areas. As mentioned before, rural areas are still with lack of services nearby, and many times are NGOs who help in cases of domestic violence. MDM has been working on that in the domestic violence field. In the interview, MDM underlines that “this type of violence must be worked by the causes and consequences and we try to find transversal answers to it” (MDM interview, 2019: 5', Appendix I).

The most recent initiative MDM has done on domestic violence field was the creation of a campaign and app for domestic violence victims, which can be used to understand violent behaviours, how can the victim be protected and which procedures they may face after going to the police and other authorities – for example, which type of questions they may ask. As mentioned before, the movement provides support to the victims, connecting the necessary institutions to help/solve the cases. The messages spread on the campaign are ironically direct to the main problems that Portuguese society has on inequality. This project was implemented in 2017, outside the big centres, in small cities, mainly rural, with the collaboration of communes and funding of the EU. The “Women who live more here” app and the campaign “All rights in the light of equality” have the main goal to aware vulnerable women in local rural areas about domestic violence, forms of discrimination and human trafficking. The project includes the divulgation of kits with information about these topics. The most common messages spread were “the equality that we have: in Portugal women spent more 13 hours in

domestic tasks than men”, “if there is a victim and an aggressor we are not talking about love”; or even “the king command and the mum authorize are old game that no one obeys to play them anymore”<sup>4</sup> (MDM<sup>2</sup>, 2019). This is the organization where we can see less capacity building based on international order, which is used as extra support for a field they domain already by their years of experience in working for Portuguese society. A point to be better explained in the next part.

Associação de Mulheres Contra a Violência (AMCV – Women Against Violence Association) is a civil society organization, non-governmental, born in 1993, that works mainly to support victims of violence. AMCV work has been developed to promote women’s empowerment towards training and guidance to them be able to build a new life after getting out of their previous violent relationship. Therefore, AMCV intervention model is based on an educational and empowering perspective of Women, Youth and Children following the principles of respect, support, protection, prevention and empowerment of violence victims (AMCV, 2019). They are one of the first civil society organizations in Portugal working exclusively about violence.

On domestic violence, they started to play an important role in 2001 when a co-partnership with the government made them responsible for two shelters in Lisbon to receive victims. Later, training, awareness campaigns and collaboration with other NGOs, nationally and internationally, followed. Now, AMCV is one of the responsible NGOs that contribute to GREVIO, reporting Portugal’s situation and making recommendations about violence against women, as mentioned before.

On their annual reports, the work developed with domestic violence victims is shown as being the procedure through the shelters they have and an attendance centre. In the first, around 50 women per year lived there, in the centres around 500 victims (women and their children, mostly) receive technical support. Empowerment strategy is done by trying to help the victims to build a new life project, giving them support to design their next steps. Telephones helplines and on person support are provided, as well as, help to

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<sup>4</sup> Traditional popular game where a person is against the wall with eyes covered and the rest of players must hit the wall without he/she sees. He sings “King command and mum authorises to move ten times”, and count one to ten, while the others run until he says stop and they must freeze. Who moves, lost and goes back to the starting line.

understand the judicial procedures of a domestic violence case; and finally, protection/security is also assured (AMCV Report 2017, Appendix III). Thus, the main recommendations established by international actors and formalised on conventions mentioned in the first part of this chapter are being followed. This shelters and support done for domestic violence victims are financed by the Portuguese government, who receive European funds to act against this type of violence.

Besides this, AMCV promotes campaigns, usually in a collaboration with other civil society organizations, nationally and internationally. This connection I will analyse in more detail in the next part.

The third organization I based my analysis is Plataforma Portuguesa para os Direitos das Mulheres (PpDM – Portuguese Women’s Rights Platform). This NGO is notoriously influenced and guides by international norms, not only for assuming that on their mission presentation, but also shown as all their discourse is a descriptive implementation of a norm.

PpDM born in 2004 with the aim of building a strategy to promote a collective reflection and action to Portuguese society become more equal on opportunities for women and men, and defending women's rights using different resources, such as research, lobbying, broadcasting, communication, awareness raising and training - as their slogan shows: “respect diversity, unite strengths, make gender equality happen” (PpDM, 2019).

For reach this, PpDM articulate and mobilise several national NGOs, while cooperate with European and International NGOs to “strengthen their actions in society as actors in the process of implementing gender equality in Portugal” (ibid).

This Platform has 28 Portuguese NGOs members and their work is mainly to influence changes on policy-making, promote debates on civil society and make their voice against violation of women’s rights to be considered, many times, about violence against women and domestic violence. Often, they write statements to change policies, making proposals to be presented to decision-making leaders, through the elaboration of petitions and policy analysis and recommendations.

This NGO is influenced and guided by international norms, not only in their mission explanation, but also in their argumentative discourse. They try to apply a bottom-up perspective and work to influence decision-making actors by criticise a missing humanitarian norm, that should have been implemented nationally, norms established on CEDAW or Istanbul Conventions. For example, we can read on their website “Eliminate practices that perpetuate the stereotypes associated with both sexes”, quoting CEDAW (article 5°) and other sentences taken from this convention appear in all pages of their website; also, a project to train other NGOs and/or social institutions about this convention, the “CEDAW4ALL” was prepared and implemented by them. This programme consisted of present the main principles and objectives of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (PpDM, 2019<sup>2</sup>).

Subsequently, they expected that all the national civil society organizations would adopt this convention as a form to make sure the defence of human rights and the promotion of equality between women and men (ibid), as well as, to them be able to influence institutional actors responsible for its implementation. This project was promoted by the PpDM with the support of the Portuguese State, granted under the support of the Regional Information United Nations for Western Europe (ibid).

Further, PpDM submits their ideas, commands and recommendations about CEDAW and Istanbul Convention. These Conventions let civil society express their perceptions before or after each country submits their report. PpDM sent one report – called Shadow report - for CEDAW in 2015 and for GREVIO in 2018 (Shadow report, 2018). Both had the collaboration of different Portuguese NGOs, who worked as a network to give their concerns about the countermeasures for violence against women in Portugal, taking both Conventions directrices as a guide.

On the most recent one, for GREVIO, we can see a strong use of international norms as a direction. The convention’s articles are used to command more action from the Portuguese state. The main complaints and objections underlined are the different degrees of protection to women across the country, the punishment of aggressors that are not being properly applied - as mentioned in the background context, many get free without severe or even any penalisation -, and recommend that the judicial system



should adopt more measures to protect victims, given priority to prevention actions, as the Convention states on articles 12° to 17° (Istanbul Convention, 2011).

#### **4.2.2 The role of international norms in national sphere**

Discourses have become uniform between national and international organizations. The belief that the defence of human rights must be on the top priorities of political leaders, social partners and public opinion is the main acceptance. This assumption has been the norm in Portugal since a push from a Europeanization gave the country means to develop itself as a democracy with open boundaries. There have been many positives changes from this cooperation.

The first point I would like to stress is the fact that all programmes implemented by Portuguese civil society organizations are co-financed by European Union funds and Portuguese state institutions, such as CIG (Gender and Citizenship Commission) and the programme Portugal 2020, which is from the government but also financed by EU<sup>5</sup>.

This represents an important point to perceive that there is an intrinsic connection between EU investments on member states, which apply on social partners, who also follow the international order ideas about domestic violence forms to eradicate it. Looks an interesting and complex cycle where is ambiguous to state who influenced whom in the national level, but notorious that international norms defined are the ones able to invest and promote the social development in Portugal. Therefore, I can argue that the first main pillar of international institutions and norms influence is that they allow national organizations to be able to implement their programmes, giving them the financial resources to be possible to apply countermeasures against domestic violence.

Furthermore, most of the national NGOs share and/or gain their knowledge by the cooperation with international organizations, which influence them to establish a similar direction. Recently, AMCV participated in the European campaign of WAVE, Women

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<sup>5</sup> Portugal 2020 is a cooperation programme part of the European Strategy 2020 from the European Commission to the Portuguese state, financed by five different funds to be invested in policies of economy, social and territorial/ regional development between 2014 and 2020. In total, Portugal will receive until the last year of the programme 25 billion euros (Portugal 2020, 2019).

Against Violence Europe (2016 and 2017), which permit this NGO to be trained in Austria about the campaign, goals and objectives for the future and AMCV is the Portuguese member of European Women's Lobby. Moreover, PpDM and AMCV participate very often in UN conferences and European Women's Lobby seminars, where they are trained and oriented to implement strategies to fight domestic violence against women based on CEDAW (PpDM, 2019) an incentive to spread the word nationally that violence must not be tolerated. The United Nations has assigned the PpDM a consultative status to the Economic and Social Council, thus they have the possibility to send representatives to participate in UN meetings in New York (ibid).

MDM is the most independent social partner about this international's direct cooperation, but we cannot deny that international norms acquisition is part of their framework too. In their strategy, they consider Istanbul Convention as a guide to be put into action by state institutions and NGOs (MDM Strategy, 2014) and they commit to promote awareness actions for all forms of violence underlined on the Convention, which are domestic violence and gender-based violence. Further, MDM goals follow human rights approach, rights defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), as this NGO commit to fighting to equality, reporting cases of any discrimination based on gender, race, religion or sexual orientation; fight to promote the right to work with dignity conditions; fight against violence against women, promoting women's rights and the special care they should receive through maternity (MDM, 2019).

Additionally, AMCV also uses an international declaration about violence against women and that should be ended – CEDAW - to justify that violence against women must not be permitted. In their developed campaigns to promote awareness about violence against women, and what Portuguese society can do to change the inequality on it (Report AMCV, 2017: Appendix III). Here, the Istanbul Convention was the base of the construction of seminars, speeches and messages spread in this “Step up” campaign (ibid).

Besides this, having specialised instruments and humanitarian norms about domestic violence, such as the conventions CEDAW and Istanbul present, is very helpful not only as an intervention guide, but also as a legitimate argument to civil society use in their

programmes, from the design of them, to applications for funding and to justification of its relevance. Further, the horizontal cooperation between international and national level NGOs help to create channels of diffusion, such as conferences, that allowed the norms to be passed to the domestic sphere. Then, on implementation at the national level, the acceptance process by change actors was facilitated as there are legitimate rules done by important international actors (such as, UN and Council of Europe). The appropriation of these norms has already been defined by the commitments of the Portuguese state since he entered the EU. Appropriate these norms was what should be done to the health of Portuguese social development and of International Relations between members states. Thus, national organizations have their work facilitated.

In fact, there are many changes at the national level since Portugal is part of the European Union. Not only to ensure states behaviour would be towards a domestic violence fight, but also the cooperation between countries have allowed NGOs easier access to training, international conferences, meetings and exchange programmes.

All these NGOs have a connection with some European organizations and the change of knowledge through these areas have been very remarkable to uniformized speeches, actions and norms. AMCV confesses that European organizations help them to become a specialist on violence against women issues (AMCV interview, Appendix II: 7'). Back when they start, the awareness about this topic was just in the beginning to develop and the domestic sphere was not capable and prepared to adapt and develop the new order of finding strategies to defend women's rights. The commitments that Portugal was doing since his entry in the European Union was an important impulse to start this new political direction, and AMCV assumes that their strategy was always followed carefully the international new approaches about violence against women and gain knowledge to understand the norms and laws that were being implemented (ibid: 13'). Further, they believe that horizontal connection is very important because "alone with do not change anything" (ibid: 5'). In fact, feminist movements are spread all over Europe and we assist to a uniformization of discourses.

Yet, I wonder if the application of the same interventive way in all countries may undermine the culture and social context differences part of each nation, and, thus, it can be affecting the impact and effectiveness of the implementation of all these domestic violence countermeasures. My question is if to pass to the next step, to prevent domestic violence not to continue as a social problem year after year in different houses, social classes and generations, it is not fundamental to give more and concrete priority to create structural measures to change the patriarchal culture existent in Portugal.

Looking at the three organizations work, I noticed that there is a consensus of denouncing gender inequality in Portuguese civil society and the necessity of women's empowerment. However, when analysing the design and implementation of the programmes it seems that theoretically this is considered but not as the main point of most of the campaigns and countermeasures to end domestic violence.

I would interpret as a matter of fact that domestic violence is a crime spread on the society and the first need is an intervention to protect victims and stop aggressors. These victims are already fragile and empowerment effects are hard to get immediate results.

The Portuguese labour market is extremely unequal and, as mentioned in the background context, part of it structured by precarious jobs as women being the main force working with bad conditions. How can women victims of violence restart their life with so many hard opportunities they face? The immediate solution has been providing them with a place on shelters and to permanence there if her security is needing to be kept; sometimes they stay long periods (Observador<sup>2</sup>, 2019). This shows that even when we are dealing with solutions, women, the main victims, are the ones that suffer the main transformations in their lives from the first moment they gain the courage to get out of their violent relationship. Civil society support is influenced by the social context and, in this case, it is conditionally influenced by the lack of women independence and consequently subordination to men. As stated in the theory chapter, a patriarchal society involves the existence of a male force dominance and to go against this, more specific gender equality solutions must be implemented. It seems that the countermeasures are very like to be conducted by some sort of harm for the victims instead of going against the aggressor first. On the other hand, it is also hard for Portuguese civil society

organizations to fight this tendency as victims have generally less economic power than men, and for this is harder for them to leave home.

Another important point is the efficiency of state institutions (police and courts) who are responsible to judge these cases. Many victims see themselves on unlimited crisis situations, even after they speak out, because the law is not always being correctly applied, and processes failed in protecting victims. Law is established but who applied is misjudging many cases, based on stereotypes they have. AMCV has promoted training for judges, social assistants, health care professionals, to try to fight this tendency, but the effects are not significant as most of the judgments of the cases end with the aggressor absolution (PUBLICO, 2019). It is what has originated the deaths of domestic violence victims – many were already signalised. Here, like AMCV, civil society organizations have tried to fight this tendency by the complaint about courts lack of efficiency in apply the law as should be: for victims' protection and aggressor's conviction. Prevention is seen as a protective measure to victims, and it is the easiest way and more visible to apply countermeasures. However, this is not enough to solve the existence of violence against them and social partners are aware of it. Thus, why this has been undermined?

Even though national NGOs are not completely ignoring culture importance to fight domestic violence against women, we can see that culture is still on the second level of intervention, as it is not the main priority way to solve this type of crime. Usually, campaigns try to contradict women's subordination or promote the protection to victims, by not only boost victim's courage to do not stay silent but also to society become more involved in helping to report cases they know, as it is a public crime (CIG, 2018<sup>2</sup>). Later, most of the work and funds are invested in shelters, specialised support to victims and their re-integration. Few investments are being done on education.

It is hard to deny that patriarchal culture is part of all spheres, as the causes for domestic violence continue are perceived on the way law and norms are applied. Change actors – civil society and state institutions- manifest themselves to be aware of this stating that “we did not give conditions for ending the cycles of violence” (Interview MDM, Appendix I: 59') or even “awareness campaigns are not enough to end this type of

crime” (Interview AMCV, Appendix II: 29’). Structural changes in the education system must be done to the prevention be effective. They believe it must come from up, as school curriculums must give a space to address properly human rights, gender equality, violence against women issues (ibid). In fact, to end stereotypes, prevention must start on early ages, as culture behaviours and beliefs are passed generation to generation, as explained in the theory.

Finally, I would argue that international norms also influenced this tendency and direction, as based on the Conventions they created as a norm guide, prevention comes mainly as to protect victims, training professionals and jailed aggressors. Education is considered in one article (article 5) as well in a total of 30 articles on CEDAW, and another one (article 14) in a total of 81 on the Istanbul Convention. Although, these articles stress that “states must ensure that changes in the social and cultural patterns of behaviour of women and men” are promoted (Istanbul Convention, 2011: 5), the relevance given to it is undermined by all the rest of measures defined on the rest of the conventions and that states parties should adopt to fight domestic violence against women. International and national speeches on campaigns sound the same and even thought, causes of the existence of domestic violence are similar in different societies, the degree that persists of this problem on distinct cultures may be different and such it is probably damaging the way norms are being implemented. It should be time for Portugal to focus increasingly on education matter.

#### **4.2.3. Differences and similarities**

The discourse uniformization is a positive way to create a strong direction to obtain the same goal, here to the fight for women’s rights to be respected, the end of violence against women and especially in the intimate sphere, the most dangerous place to women in the world – and Portugal is no exception (TIME, 2018). For reach these results, to all civil society organizations adopt a human’s rights approach – that are women’s rights -, international changing actors, such as UN, Council of Europe, European Commission, influenced the political sphere move to approaches, laws and decision-making policies towards investments for fight domestic violence in all European countries. Civil society organizations gain importance for being the specialised actors that do the bridge between state institutions and society. Generally,

there is, in fact, a top-down perspective applied directly and/or indirectly in all Portuguese organizations, even if social partners intervention tries to promote a change in state institutions too – a bottom-up perspective.

MDM is an NGO focused on promoting human rights and democracy, trying to influence a change in the domestic sphere, distinguishing itself from others by working more with local power. Besides this, this movement invests the funds gained from the government and EU in projects that promote awareness about the causes of domestic violence, while, try to help victims to leave violent situations.

AMCV invest their working time to gain skills to fight and promote awareness in Portugal about violence against women crimes and on protecting domestic violence victims, helping them to re-integrate in society. They assume that international norms help them to grow during the 25 years of existence. Vertical – governments to society - and horizontal cooperation was the main push to this happen, which is also the way AMCV believes changes will be done (AMCV interview, Appendix II: 37’).

Apart from this, PpDM appear has a network that connects several Portuguese NGOs to work together to create strategies, papers and statements that ill to influence a change on political decisions. Nonetheless, firstly has been the opposite to happen, as their direction and fundamentals are based on international conventions that are divulged by cooperation international agreements that they can be part of it. Another similar aspect is that all are co-financed by EU funds.

Finally, though these NGOs specialised their approaches trifle different, having distinct field works, all directions and discourses go towards inequality and violence against women in Portugal. In the end, all tend to fight for the same in the best way they believe will be effective to end domestic violence against women, the main cause of murders of Portuguese women.

### **4.3. Discussion**

I start this research with the main question: how international norms influence Portuguese civil society organizations to work on domestic violence. During this

investigation, it was meant to be understood as well how national NGOs operate and, further, what is missing to do for this social problem become less common in this southern west society.

The first main point I would like to underline is the fact that being part of the European Union gave to Portuguese political and social spheres a big advantage to be possible to have the resources needed to fight this issue. Governance directions have been influenced by international actors who promoted the diffusion of norms to fight violence against women in Europe. Portugal as an EU' member state rectified two main Conventions (CEDAW and Istanbul) that gave me the opportunity to adopt a new strategy towards a better resolution about domestic violence and other forms of violence and discrimination against women. This also means the injection of millions of euros, that the national state should invest in domestic civil societies organizations. This awareness about the importance to have social partners to work directly with the victims and that help to promote women's rights and empowerment was a huge push to NGOs such as MDM, AMCV and PpDM become part of the responsibility and role agents to diffuse the international norms and fight domestic violence against women.

The structure and mechanisms adopted are based on the belief that this social problem must be fought in all societies in five spheres: prevent, through awareness campaigns, victims must be supported and protected, having the right to stay in a shelter, aggressors should be punished by law and treat to prevent their behaviour to be repeat again, and professionals must be prepared to work on this issue, by gaining knowledge about the procedures they should follow, through training, research and monitoring.

Further, organizations should collaborate between them and state institutions, to this structure be able to function articulating the different spheres of society involved in this combat. We may say it is a two-way influence as both spheres work together, being NGOs not only a channel to bring the norms into action but also a reminder to this be in the political agenda setting. However, I would argue that the top-down perspective has been the most relevant to this nation build the whole countermeasures system for fight domestic violence against women, as the Law, rectification of international Conventions and the investments done were the main forces to the implementation of measures and national awareness about this issue be possible to happen.



In summary, I would claim that the structure created to fight domestic violence against women by the influence of international order is very positive for Portuguese society social development, and to encourage NGOs to work to end domestic violence nationally be considered a priority. I am aware that strategies must be combined to the effect be more sustainable and broader. Only, it appears that we reach a point where protection measures to victims, awareness campaigns and law changing are mostly restricted into solving the problem after it happens. It misses to pass to the next level – end it from the premier cause: the existence of a patriarchal culture at all social levels.

In fact, this violent scenario is still very present and starts at early ages, even today. Violence between dating is becoming evident in Portuguese young people relationships. Every year, numbers of reports to police are increasing and 58% of young adults confess that they have already suffered at least one act of violence during dating (PUBLICO, 2019).

Education is the main way to end stereotypes, change social behaviours and beliefs. Social rules are spread from generations to generations, or in socialisation, by culture habits and myths. Shift these standard actions must be done by deconstructions and the institutionalisation of new rules.

In Portugal, sexual education is mandatory to teach at schools until high school since 2009. Before that, AFP (Association for Family Plan) was responsible to train teachers and students about contraception, sexuality, and interpersonal relations. From 2000 to 2010, they trained per year around 900 school teachers (AFP, 2009: Appendix VI). After here, when the economic crisis spread in the country, the extra-curricular training that these professionals could do to gain a promotion in their career, like this course, were frozen. In 2011, AFP was not able to train any teacher (AFP, 2009: Appendix VII). AFP believes that since this time sexual education is becoming lost and a second plan in the middle of all the other lectures students must attend, and there is any control about it (AFP Interview, Appendix V: 8’).

On the other hand, Graal, an NGO who works with teenagers about these issues, agrees that there are still a lot of work to do in education as many people are still not aware what is a violent behaviour, and most of the youngers she works with when suffering a

violent act, do not consider it as such (Graal interview: Appendix IV). The main problem can be that there is yet social toleration of these types of behaviour, romanticising abusive actions in dating (ibid). For example, most Portuguese young adults believe sexual violence in some extent is “normal” in a relationship (PUBLICO, 2018) and jealous is a proof that the partner loves them (PUBLICO, 20193).

Regarding these social aspects and tendencies of violent behaviour being passing from generations to generations, I believe this is a consequence of a missing part in the countermeasures to fight domestic violence against women in Portugal. Patriarchal culture is not being stopped and the scenario continues to be the same in all ages. Furthermore, feminism must be more diffuse in this society as in many situations, women are discriminated against by all genders when they are in a violent relationship and their voice is put in doubt. The idea that she may “deserve it” or domestic violence victims stay because they are “masochist” persists (ibid). Also, the belief on a popular idiomatic expression such as “between wife and husband you do not put your spoon”, which means that it is not your concern, you must stay out of it, it is still common in Portugal.

On the other hand, women’s empowerment in Portugal should be promoted by the end of social myths and should stimulate the ability to give skills and self-esteem to women to be psychological independent of the ideology of having a lifetime relationship as the only way to achieve happiness. I stress this matter because, as explained in the background context, most Portuguese women believe that to be happy they must find the right partner or even just have one. This seems a very relevant matter when we face a domestic violence case. Empower is not only about the economic independence, but also it should be about the intellectual and spiritual one, the capacity to be alone without the person you once believed you would build your life with. This is still a feature of patriarchal culture, as this idea is passed in the socialisation process and it may be undermining many feminists’ measures of empowerment. Stereotypes gained force when facing a crisis not only to the women who are the victim, but, further, to the social reaction about it, as many times people know cases and they do not report it to authorities (OMA, 2019).

Thus, I believe that social mentality and norms should be the current priority to fight domestic violence in Portugal and to continue it for the next years. National change actors are the ones that must be able to adapt for their social context the best way international norms, defining what is the most important to fight on domestic sphere. It seems that promoting a new shift in the education system and school curricula should be done shortly, as this country is still half-way to all the laws, rules and norms approved and implemented to be respected and followed correctly when putting in practice.

## **5. Conclusion**

This thesis aimed to understand what extent international norms have influenced Portuguese civil society organizations to work on domestic violence against women. I believe it helped to create a system aware of the need to implement countermeasures that try to solve this social problem. However, mostly by protecting victims and punctual campaigns to alert the population about this issue.

Social norms became political concerns since human's rights were an important part to be promoted by political agenda. The world is aware that the way we treat others is a public crime. This belief was diffuse by mass campaigns, discourses, speeches that were part of leaders, media news and civil society work. Here, the idea that women are discriminated worldwide and suffer from multiple forms of violence gain criteria with statistics proving that is one big issue in all countries. Human's rights are women's rights and the necessity of fight this was defined in international Declarations, such as the CEDAW and Istanbul Conventions, the main instruments used to end all forms of violence against women, domestic violence included.

In Portugal, these norms were largely applied as a need for domestic violence to be stop. This issue is still the main cause of homicides of Portuguese women. Since 1992, the Law rectified assume this problem as a public crime that must be fought in all spheres and by all. Civil society organizations started to be more active in diffuse campaigns in collaboration with the Portuguese government to alert the country about this matter, trying to encourage the victims to speak out and who knows about crisis situations denounce to authorities. At the same time, shelters born all over the country and judicial

cases open too. However, yet many end up closed before going to court by the lack of proofs.

On the other hand, Portuguese women suffer for a range of discriminations from the public to the private sphere that may be influencing their response when facing this type of crime against them. Gender inequality is high, from wages differences between men and women to the unequal split of domestic tasks. Their empowerment is urgent to happen in all spheres, not only by access to the labour market and high education, as it is happening.

Further, the patriarchal structure must be fought to change cultural habits and some social beliefs. Teenagers and young adults still have the idea that some forms of violence are not, and, in a relationship, some control behaviours are normal to happen. Traditional gender roles must be deconstructed by a new education curriculum, where socialisation processes start to occur and interpersonal relations. Discuss and promote gender equality must become part of school programmes and a priority, rather than explain to students how to prevent teenagers' pregnancies. A school must prepare them to a profession, to be critical thinkers and good future citizens.

Finally, based on my research, I believe Portugal is in a good way to promote gender equality and the fight domestic violence by the State and NGOs. Nonetheless, the end of domestic violence against women seems to be a long-distance resolution because every day new cases happen, and the traditional social roles are still being taught, seen as common and natural, from education at home and schools to the labour market. Male dominance is in Portuguese women's and men's way of thinking, in all social classes and ages. This should be a more visible part of civil society organizations work on domestic violence, and it is not with more information about this issue that the problem will end; it is by all society effort and involvement, that so far it is not a reality.

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## 7.Appendix

### 7.1.Appendix I



Interview MDM.m4a

### 7.2. Appendix II



Interview  
AMCV.mp4

### 7.3.Appendix III



AMCV\_RA\_2017.pdf

### 7.4.Appendix IV



Graal interview.pdf

### 7.5.Appendix V



Interview APF.mp4

### 7.6. Appendix VI



RA2009.pdf

### 7.7. Appendix VII



RA2011.pdf