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Mexican migration to Portugal: Challenges and prospects.

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Declaration of Honour

I hereby declare that this dissertation is of my authorship and has not been used previously in another course, degree, curricular unit or subject, at this or any other institution. References to other authors (statements, ideas, thoughts) scrupulously respect the rules of attribution and are duly indicated in the text and bibliographical references, in accordance with the rules of referencing. I am aware that the practice of plagiarism and self-plagiarism is an academic offence.

I further declare that I have not used artificial intelligence tools to carry out parts of this dissertation, and that all interactions (prompts and responses) have been transcribed in the annex.

28th of May / Porto, Portugal

Giulia Filippucci

Abstract

This thesis analyzes the historical and political dynamics of Mexican immigration in Portugal, especially before and after the Covid-19 pandemic. The research reconstructs the reasons that lead the Mexican population to emigrate and how the hosting country, Portugal, in the course of history has elaborated policies of reception and integration according to the migratory flows in the country. The paper concludes with an analysis of recent Mexican foreign policy and how it promises a revival in the activity of diplomatic institutions abroad and bilateral ties, offering better prospects for the Mexican emigrant community. My internship experience at the Mexican embassy in Portugal allowed me to observe the crucial role of cultural diplomacy in integrating citizens in the host country, and strengthening political and economic ties with Portugal.

Key-words: Migration, Mexican migration, Embassy, Diplomacy, Bilateral relations

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Lista de abreviaturas e siglas

FLUP	FACULDADE DE LETRAS DA UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO
U.P	UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO
UN.....	UNITED NATIONS
IOM.....	INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION
INEGI	INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE ESTADÍSTICA Y GEOGRAFÍA
PALOP	PAÍSES AFRICANOS DE LÍNGUA OFICIAL PORTUGUESA
ACM	ALTO COMISSARIADO PARA AS MIGRAÇÕES
RIFA	RELATÓRIO DE IMIGRAÇÃO, FRONTEIRAS E ASILO
INE	INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE ESTATÍSTICA
SEF	SERVIÇO DE ESTRANGEIROS E FRONTEIRAS
AIMA	AGÊNCIA PARA A IMIGRAÇÃO, MOBILIDADE E ASILO
PCM	PRESIDÊNCIA DO CONSELHO DE MINISTROS
MNE	MINISTÉRIO DOS NEGÓCIOS ESTRANGEIROS
DGACCP	DIREÇÃO-GERAL DOS ASSUNTOS CONSULARES E COMUNIDADES PORTUGUESAS
MJ	MINISTÉRIO DA JUSTIÇA
IRN	INSTITUTO DOS REGISTOS E NOTARIADO -
MTSS.....	MINISTÉRIO DO TRABALHO, SOLIDARIEDADE E SEGURANÇA SOCIAL
IEFP	INSTITUTO DO EMPREGO E FORMAÇÃO PROFISSIONAL
ACT	AUTORIDADE PARA AS CONDIÇÕES DO TRABALHO
SGMEC	<i>SECRETARIA-GERAL DO MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO E CIÊNCIA</i>
ICT	INTRA-CORPORATE TRANSFEREE
CPLP.....	COMUNIDADE DOS PAÍSES DE LÍNGUA PORTUGUESA
GEE	GABINETE DE ESTRATÉGIA E ESTUDOS
IME	INSTITUTO DE LOS MEXICANOS EN EL EXTERIOR
CAL	CASA DA AMÉRICA LATINA
UNAM	UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÓNOMA DE MÉXICO
AMLO.....	ANDRÉS MANUEL LÓPEZ OBRADOR

Introduction

International migration is a central issue on the global agenda, constituting one of the most complex challenges of our time. Human mobility mainly reflects the imbalances and aspirations at the individual and community levels. Sometimes it is a matter of survival; at other times, it is a desire to improve living conditions or pursue personal goals. Migration flows change the structural characteristics of a region, affecting its demographics, economy, politics and culture. The effects of outflows are not only felt in the countries of origin but also have a significant impact on the countries of destination. Migration gives rise to cooperative dynamics between host and recipient states, with government institutions taking a central role in managing bilateral relations between states, to ensure both the integration of the arrivals and facilitate broader exchanges. Diplomatic institutions play a key role in guaranteeing and promoting the proper management of these relations, thereby influencing public policies and migratory flows.

In recent years, the flow from Latin America to Europe has taken new forms, including the presence of Mexicans in Portugal. As this is a particularly recent phenomenon that intensified during the Covid-19 pandemic and has received little academic attention, I decided to address this gap in the literature through this research, which draws on my experience of interning at the Mexican embassy in Lisbon. Direct observation of diplomatic activity raised questions about the characteristics and implications of the Mexican presence in Portugal, as well as the need to investigate how mobility, history, demography and diplomatic influence affect the consolidation of bilateral relations between the two countries.

This thesis focuses particularly on cultural diplomacy, which is underrepresented in academic literature despite being a key aspect of the Mexican diaspora and identity abroad. My three-month internship at the Secretariat of Cultural Affairs was part of my studies in history, international relations and cooperation. The work is divided into two

sections: the internship report and the dissertation. In the first section, I explored the departments and their respective functions in detail before describing the professional context in which I worked with the cultural section. I also explain how I was integrated into the work I was expected to carry out and the OGN partners with which we collaborated in event management, for example for the famous Día de Muertos festival. I will then explain in detail the activities carried out, which involved the organization and promotion of cultural and educational events, contextualizing these within the annual diplomatic agenda. The cultural department of an embassy promotes culture and education by organizing national artistic, musical and historical events. Its functions include establishing and maintaining links with educational and cultural institutions in the host country to foster intercultural exchange and strengthen political relations. It should be noted that my internship took place at a significant time, coinciding with the 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Mexico and Portugal, for which many activities were organized, as well as the election of Claudia Sheinbaum as president. Subsequently, I will describe further activities, which, as in the previous sub-chapters, are analyzed and contextualized within the broader diplomatic strategy and the development of my skills. Finally, the aim of the report is to demonstrate how the meticulous organization of events, together with collaboration with NMOs, proves to be a fundamental strategy for integrating the Mexican community in Portugal and spreading its image abroad.

The dissertation, on the other hand, studies the Mexican migration in Portugal and is structured in three different chapters, each addressing a different aspect of the research topic.

The first chapter discusses contemporary migration theories by examining the reasons why many Latin Americans, especially Mexicans, emigrate. Europe is not the first choice of destination, as migration flows from Mexico tend to be directed towards the United States. This explains the lack of sufficient literature on the subject. The main causes of the Mexican diaspora, exacerbated by the pandemic, are explored.

In the second chapter, I will reconstruct the political and historical context of immigration in Portugal from the early twentieth century onwards, identifying the characteristics of the different migratory waves and their influence on entry and stay policies in the country. I will also present the various Portuguese institutional entities involved in migration, describing how they function and highlighting the emergency measures they implemented during the pandemic. These measures included the simplification and digitalization of bureaucratic processes, which offered support and guaranteed rights to migrants regardless of their background.

The third and final chapter will describe the conditions for entry and residence in Portugal, its historical relations with Mexico, and the presence of Mexicans in Portugal before, during, and after the pandemic. Having discussed the 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries, I will examine the role of embassies and NGOs in supporting migrants locally and internationally, and in serving as a bridge between them and their home and host governments. Finally, I will focus on the election of the new president, Claudia Sheinbaum, and how her political ideals regarding foreign policy promise to strengthen international ties through diplomatic activities.

This thesis takes a qualitative methodological approach based on a dual perspective: direct and indirect. The former refers to the observations and experiences gained during my internship at the Mexican Embassy in Lisbon, while the latter is an analysis of the topic of migration, which I studied during my master's degree in history, International Relations and Cooperation. The knowledge I acquired during my first year of the master's degree determined the interpretive nature of my research and motivated me to investigate a topic which, as previously mentioned, has not been widely explored in academic literature. The methodology also incorporates quantitative data through the analysis of tables, diagrams, government reports and institutional documents. Integrating different approaches has enabled me to gain a more detailed understanding of migration from practical, theoretical, historical, economic and political perspectives.

PART 1: Internship report - Cultural department, Embassy of Mexico in Portugal

From September 18, 2024, to December 13, 2024, I undertook my curricular internship at the Embassy of Mexico in Portugal, headquartered in Benfica, Lisbon, at Estrada de Monsanto, 78 (1500-462). The diplomatic institution is sent from Mexico to Portugal to regulate the bilateral relations of the two countries in economic, political and administrative terms. Its role is to manage communication with the host country, and Ambassador Bruno Figueroa (in charge since 05/12/2022) is the highest representative of the Mexican state in Portugal nowadays. The embassy consists of two large buildings, one being the diplomatic residence and the other the various departments of the Secretary of the Foreign Affairs: cultural, economic, political, administrative and tourism, and then proceeding to the chancery and secretariat.

I chose to do my internship here because I am interested in understanding how diplomacy and international relations work day-to-day. This institution is ideal in the context of my studies in History and International Relations, as during the previous year of classes I focused my academic research on Latin American sociology, politics and history. Having lived in Mexico before and with Hispano American countries being a significant interest of mine, I exclusively applied to embassies in this geographical area. What I hoped to learn were the actual functions of an embassy, especially since they change depending on the type of country and from the bilateral relationships. I wanted to have direct experience of collaborating in the mission and cooperation between the two countries have and to contribute within the administrative offices. I didn't have a clear idea of how an embassy was structured on a capillary level, nor precisely what each diplomat's duties were. However, by the end of the experience I can say that I learned them and that I will consider diplomacy as an option for my future. I also wanted to see if everything I had learned in my master's studies could be applied in this field, and possibly improve my skills in these areas

R.1 The embassy and its departments

First, I think it is useful to describe the different parts of the Embassy of Mexico in Portugal and briefly explain how they work: this is important to understand their specific functions and how they depend on one another.

The ambassador's offices: where he and his secretaries work. He embodies the highest representative authority of the state abroad and holds ultimate responsibility for managing interactions between different heads of state or governments. Being the head of the mission and office, he coordinates, supervises, and manages the secretaries under him, but most importantly, he is responsible for making decisions in times of crisis or emergency, all while navigating the changes in politics from the native and host country. The ambassador normally has a secretary, who is a native of the host country, to assist him with the more day-to-day tasks such as receptions, phone calls, e-mails, but most importantly she helps him with special documents in terms of the language of the host country.

The chancellor's job is to handle official correspondence between the two governments during the diplomatic mission (both the home and the host countries) by acting as a 'deputy' to the ambassador. In addition, his job is to administer all other officials in the office and ensure that diplomatic protocol is adhered to. His administrative responsibilities are quite complex in fact: he must ensure that every document and event comply with both local and home-country laws. The chancellor also organizes official events that the ambassador must attend, or that the embassy itself must organize. All official and most important documents are in his hands. In brief, we can say that the chancellor has the most important administrative role, being at the hierarchical level just below the ambassador in the hierarchy: he faces a high workload and must be extremely careful to avoid the smallest mistake, as these could carry legal and political consequences.

In the consular section, the consul's main role is to assist citizens of his own country who are abroad and need bureaucratic help: these tasks can range from issuing permits or visas, renewing passports, providing legal assistance, issuing certificates (such

as death, birth, marriage, divorce) but also offering services to individual citizens in case of emergency. Often, in larger countries, the consulate has its own office, or there are several in different cities. In the case of Portugal, there is only one honorary representation: a second consul has an office in Porto, but it is mainly telephoning assistance, with the consul visiting the office only a few times a week. In the case of an honorary consul, they refer to the main consul at the embassy in some cases. This role, like the chancellor's, has numerous responsibilities and especially tight deadlines. The consul must manage the bureaucracy of both countries, handling sensitive information, excel at intercultural communication and continuously monitor the evolution of the political situation, as diplomatic operations may change depending on evolving circumstances.

The political affairs secretariat: the department is led by a political secretary who exclusively manages the political relations between the two countries. Together with the Ambassador, they collaborate in crisis management, politically oriented negotiations, or events. This section closely and constantly monitors the political situation in both countries, including political parties, election campaigns and new laws. The political secretary must manage and negotiate political crisis, balance both the political interests of both countries, communicate with both governments, and remain ready to adapt to new circumstances.

The commercial secretary also monitors the situation in both countries, focusing on investment, currency and economic laws. Its main role is to manage bilateral economic agreements and promote them. They must balance the economic interest of both countries, ensuring the home country's priorities are promoted without conflicting with those of the host country. Additionally, they must know and monitor the custom regulations, fiscal policies and negotiate during the trade agreement. This department is also responsible for managing the economic crisis and negotiating with both the private and public sector.

The tourism secretariat also collaborates to foster inversions and investments but focuses more on promoting tourism and the country's image, often working with travel agencies in both countries.

The cultural department, on the other hand, is responsible for promoting various aspects of culture, education and the press. Some examples include the promotion of academic exchanges and scholarships, the organization of events in art, theater, cinema and gastronomy. It collaborates with the tourism secretariat as well, and one of the biggest challenges they face is the lack of funds, as this is the last department to receive financial support. Additionally, they need to adapt communication and marketing strategies for the different audiences that might participate to specific events. Also, constant communication with local and international authorities is essential. The department must promote the home country's language and culture, adapting it to the cultural diversity and political sensibility of the host country.

Finally, we have an administrative area, where officers handle more practical tasks, such as event logistics, embassy organization and security, as well as accounting and other day-to-day fiscal matters. They are the ones who normally recruit staff and assist the other officials in times of need and make sure that every operation runs smoothly. Being mostly composed of local staff, an imbalance in decision-making may arise, but they must be able to manage it effectively in coordination with the external staff.

It is important to mention that each secretary of the department is required to send their reports to the company. This is done annually, monthly, weekly and daily to ensure a constant flow of information about the activity carried out: each report is different, for example, the daily ones are more detailed. The chancery, in turn, sends these reports to the ambassador, who then forwards them to the home country's government after checking that everything is accurate. Each diplomatic official is also supported by an assistant, designated according to the area in which he or she works, who must be a local Portuguese. In the case of the Mexican embassy in Portugal, there was one local assistant per official, primarily responsible for helping their area head with

matters related the host country: they provide great help, especially in communicating with the local authorities and navigating the cultural challenges. They are key in helping Mexican diplomats informally, as being local they have a deep understanding of the cultural and political nuances of the country. Of course, it is not them who make the decisions, even if they must provide their own input.

R.2 Professional setting:

From the beginning of my stage, I was assigned relevant tasks: creating banners, posts, flyers and promoting events of the embassy itself. There was no shortage of assignments throughout the three months, including preparing diplomatic documentation to be sent to the Mexican government and translations from Spanish to Portuguese. Each of my activities was, of course, then checked by my head office and the chancellor. From the very beginning, my supervisor included me in all activities and assignments in which she participated, except, of course, for official meetings or events reserved exclusively for government bodies. Right from the start, and constantly throughout the three months, the different processes within the institution were explained to me in detail. It was explained to me why and how certain procedures were to be accomplished, and I was made to observe how colleagues in other departments carried out their tasks. Employees of the cultural department often go on many trips both in the city and in the country, and I accompanied them on all those in Lisbon. This department is very involved in the organization of events and their logistics: they make follow-up visits after organizing community celebrations, official events, conferences, art, film and sports exhibitions. It is the department that tends to work most outside its office. During this time, I acquired various technical skills, such as image editing for advertising with Canva, using photoshop for drawings, graphics design tools, video editing and how to use various other Microsoft tools, including Excel or questionnaires. Mainly, however, I have done advanced research in historical, cultural, or print databases and helped in organizing events. On a theoretical level, I gained experience of the daily operations of an embassy, in its hierarchy. I learned about the diplomacy of cultural

exchanges between the two countries by observing the cultural initiatives organized by the institution. I became familiar with the functions of its different departments, and its internal and external policies. As for the professional skills I acquired, I learned a lot about diplomatic communication, protocol, event and publicity management, collaboration with other organizational entities. On the other hand, regarding personal skills, I learned to manage my time better, summarize long texts more effectively into a few lines for official press releases, adapt to new situations, and know how to react in case of unexpected events. I have been fortunate to have attended many different events: those for diplomatic personnel, for the President, charity events, and those for the Mexican public or community.

As the following dissertation will have to do with Mexican immigration to Portugal after COVID-19 pandemic, the Latin American and Mexican cultural and governmental associations (in particular) that have developed over time in Portugal and how they play a very important role of collaborating with the embassy, not only on cultural and political issues. These associations, particularly RedGlobalMX-Capitulo Portugal, which is governmental and formed by professionals (Red Global de Mexicanos Calificados en el Exterior) are fundamental because they provide initial support for those who emigrate, and they almost always collaborate with the embassy, creating a very important reference point for the immigrant community, but I will further elaborate on this topic later in the report. This experience impacted my career because I had never had an experience specific to my field of study. It was a fundamental experience for the continuation of my thesis and future opportunities, as I aim to seek employment in international organizations and, in the future, perhaps in diplomacy. The first day of the internship consisted of a brief introductory interview with my official coordinator, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs: after a brief introduction about myself and what exactly my area of study (specific courses and chosen curriculum), as well as my future prospects and expectations were from the experience, I was assigned to the area of cultural relations and event organization, because my master course involved history. After being shown around the embassy and its departments, I had an interview with the head of cultural affairs to better understand how I could assist.

R.3 Detailed analysis of the activities

An initial plan was established to collaborate on social media for enhancing the Instagram, Facebook and X pages, by sharing cultural, historical, informative and tourism posts aimed at both the Mexican community in Portugal and individuals living in Portugal interested in Mexican culture. Keeping social networks active, whether Facebook, Instagram or X, is important for the Mexican expatriate community and the local population interested in visiting Mexico. Indeed, my job during these months has been to take photos at official events so that they can be uploaded to the networks. In addition to documenting the Ambassador's presence at the various events, it is essential to publish weekly posts on social media regarding culture, tourism, possible contests or scholarships, or important announcements to travelers or the Mexican community (such as instructions for participating in elections, for example). On the following days they had me writing feedback on the embassy's social media, discussing how it could be improved and how I could contribute. I made a list of suggestions for each of the most used social media platforms, dividing them according to the types of audiences that tend to follow them and the formats in which they are allowed to disseminate information. For example, Instagram is a platform typically used by younger people and has a strong visual component, so it's better to invest in how the page presents itself at first glance, and how important it is to reorganize information. Facebook, on the other hand, is followed by a more adult audience and therefore it is better to prefer longer and more detailed texts in posts. On X, I suggested more reposts to share news about the Mexican nation that also been published by third parties.

The next activity was to search auction sites for antiques that could hypothetically have come from Mexico and might be stolen archaeological pieces. Many pre-Columbian, Mayan, or Aztec items are circulating in European second-hand markets at very high prices and were originally stolen. I consulted various auction and sale sites for vintage or used items, and found items (vases, plates or figurines) that could be presumed archaeological pieces from the Mayan or pre-Columbian era. In an Excel document, I recorded the item type, date, provenance, place of sale, price, seller, and photo of the item, along with the posting link: so that they could be all together and

ready to be sent to the chancery. This research was extremely important because there are many original Mayan, Aztec, or pre-Columbian objects that were stolen from archeological sites and are now circulating in vintage shops, market, illegal trades or simply marketplaces, as well as eBay or similar websites for second-hand decoration. Image shows the items that were retrieved by the embassy: the personnel of the cultural department note every suspicious Mexican item present online for sale, and then, after having sent the Excel list with the details such as name of the seller, city, price and website to the chancery and the Mexican Government, the report is sent to the Portuguese police. In fact, in the Facebook post for the recuperation of two ancient artifacts (*Figure R3.1* and *Figure R3.2*) it is stated:

Graças ao extraordinário trabalho da Polícia Judiciária portuguesa, são hoje recuperadas três peças mexicanas pré-hispânicas. Depois de um processo legal em Portugal, este património arqueológico regressará em breve ao nosso país. A colaboração com as autoridades portuguesas dá frutos: a Embajada de México en Portugal localizou estas duas peças na internet no ano passado e a pronta intervenção da Brigada de Obras de Arte da Polícia Judiciária tornou possível o seu resgate (Embajada de México em Portugal, 2024, 7th March).

Figure R1: Original Mayan divinatory artifacts retrieved from the auction market



Source: Embajada de México en Portugal, 7th of March 2024.

Another activity I undertook was helping the cultural affairs assistant with the translation of texts from Spanish to Portuguese. The texts were advertisements of cultural events featuring Mexican participants, aimed at both the Mexican and national communities. Then, I had to draft a post for social media advertising the event of Mexican writer Jorge Volpi, who was going to participate in a *Portuguese Noite da Literatura festival*, a literary event organized by *EUNIC Portugal-European Union National Institutes for Culture* and attended by various cultural institutions and embassies. This event is financed by the European Union, and it is a night in which European contemporary authors are read in various public places of Lisbon, such as parks and libraries. Embassies tend to invite also non-European authors and artists to promote intercultural dialogue and different topics, but also to reinforce bilateral ties with the host country and generally, to enrich the audience's experience.

Another task I was assigned was to summarize texts or messages into posts. I received emails that contained messages from the Mexican government, in which they advertised contests (e.g., 3er. Concurso de Literatura para la Diáspora Mexicana: Voces de Mujeres y Niñas Migrantes and the Convocatoria prepa en Linea - a literary initiative and a context to carry out online high schools, respectively), which I would need to summarize to create a post. In some cases, I was required to record the responses received via email from the participants in another Excel document. This was another daily activity the cultural department must fulfil to promote the Mexican government's activities for the emigrated population. Many of those initiatives are for children or the young population, this is done to reinforce the connection with their culture, to engage the expatriate community and, for cultural diplomacy.

Figure R2: Flyer for the writing contest

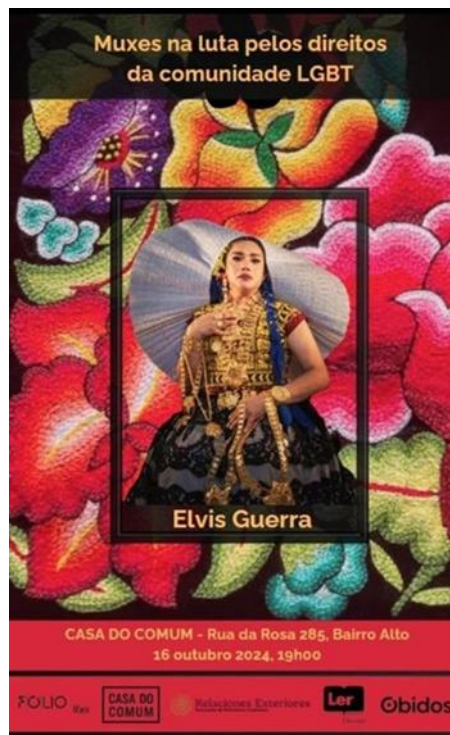


Source : Embajada de México en Portugal, 8th of October 2024.

The following week is mainly set up like the first: I continue researching information about Portuguese cultural events in which Mexican artists participated. In an Excel file, I list them, noting the name, place, dates, links, and finally if there is any news about the participants. I have completed this task several times, which is normally done towards the end of the year or when most of the events have been held. It serves the Mexican government to understand how effectively the embassy's cultural programs are working to bring representation of the country abroad. Not only that but also helps facilitate future opportunities and strengthen bilateral ties.

Another interesting event the Cultural department organized was *Muxes en la lucha por los derechos de la comunidad LGBT*, within the framework of the international literary festival Folio. In the library of *Casa do Comum*, the Embassy presented the Oaxacan poet Elvis Guerra. The poet, a member of the Muxe community, fascinated the audience with his poems, and shared the reality of the Muxes, as well as the progress and challenges they face. It was an extraordinarily engaging event that witnessed the enthusiastic participation of about 50 people. Muxes have existed since the Mayan civilization and today would be considered belonging to the non-binary gender. They are assigned male at birth but later adopt a female identity, even if they do not always identify as women. Muxes are characterized by their roles as caregiver or housewife and are known for embroidering traditional Zapotec clothing.

Figure R3: Flyer for the Muxe event



Source : Embajada de México en Portugal , 14th of October 2024.

Another activity I often carried out was summarizing press notes: I researched news published by the Portuguese press on the Internet about politics, economics, society and reports in Mexico. This task is routinely done about any Portuguese newspaper or official website. Since much of the content is private or accessible only with prior subscription to view the full article, the embassy has access to all sources, being an official institution. On piece of paper, I would write title and a small description of the news, translating it into Spanish, and then include a summary. This activity is fundamental for the Mexican government to supervise what kind of news Portugal is spreading about it, and thus what image it is projecting and what aspects are primarily being highlighted. In foreign policy, this also helps the Mexican government to identify potential false information, if there were any.

Another related activity was the final press analysis: at the end of the month, we created a table divided by genre of news reported (social, political, economic, culture, and other) and categorized according to positive, neutral, negative ratings. Referring to

the press summaries, we categorized all the articles there, inserting the links into the table, to determine on average what types of topics are most discussed and in what manner, with the same aim as the previous activity. Those tasks helped me understand how countries monitor their international image through what is published in the media and how it affects their diplomatic relations. It is fundamental to be able to interpret qualitative data, so that the foreign policy in bilateral affairs can be responsive in any situation. By completing this classification during fall, the first period of the government of the new president Claudia Sheinbaum, there were many Portuguese articles reporting, positively, that Mexico had its first woman president in history. In fact, after having been elected in June 2024, she officially took office on October 1st, succeeding President López Obrador, who was the founder of the party she belonged to. President Sheinbaum will now be in charge for 6 years and will continue with the political agenda of his predecessor. During the first days of her charge, the main news reported on medias and press was her being the first woman president in Mexico, marking a symbolical moment in the country's history. During my internship, there have been no changes for the embassy and the diplomatic bodies in Portugal, as she had recently been elected. Moreover, migratory policies and embassy activities still had to be established. Further analysis on this topic will be discussed in chapter 3.5, where I will examine the new national plans, her engagement to migrant protection and future scenarios for foreign policy.

R.4 160° anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Mexico and Portugal

October was not only the month of the government change, but it was also an important anniversary for Portugal and Mexico: on the 24th of October the two countries celebrated the 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations. As we can read in the Portuguese government's website :

Em outubro de 2024, Portugal e México celebram 160 anos de relações diplomáticas. A efeméride reflete uma amizade historicamente duradoura, assente na pertença à família ibero- americana e construída sobre valores partilhados e a visão de um caminho comum. Num ano já marcado pela

participação do Ministro de Estado e dos Negócios Estrangeiros Paulo Rangel na tomada de posse da Presidente Claudia Sheinbaum, as celebrações em ambos os países seguirão uma programação, até outubro de 2025, homenageando o caminho comum já percorrido e destacando a vitalidade e a diversidade dos laços luso-mexicanos em todos os planos (Governo de Portugal, 2024).

In honor of the anniversary, more events and meetings were organized than usual, including the inauguration of the *Exposición México y Portugal - 160 años de Amistad*. In fact, an exposition was organized for the inauguration on the 17th of October in the *Archivo Nacional Torre do Tombo* that was called *160 años de amistad México-Portugal: testimonios de nuestra historia común*. In this occasion, I only had the task to advertise the event in the social medias through posts, and I was not present in the event. The exhibition presented an interesting and brief documentary and photographic overview of these 160 years of diplomatic, political, social, and cultural relations between the two countries and the first visitor was the President of Portugal, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. This exhibition, which covers the history of diplomatic relations between the two nations, was made possible through the combined efforts of the Historical Diplomatic Acquisition, the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal and various Portuguese institutions.

In the Portuguese government's website, we can also read some of the documents exposed in the National Archive: between them the 1864 credential card signed by the emperor Maximiliano I, the 1910 commercial relations report and the air transport agreement.

Resultado de uma parceria com a Embaixada do México, os visitantes podem nesta mostra conhecer documentos históricos que revelam as relações diplomáticas, comerciais e de amizade entre os dois países. A exposição destaca marcos importantes dessa ligação, como a Carta Credencial assinada pelo Imperador Maximiliano I, em 27 de junho de 1864, que nomeou D. Francisco Sanchez Facio como Ministro Plenipotenciário do México em Portugal, assim como o Relatório das Relações Comerciais entre Portugal e México, de 1910, e

ainda, o Acordo sobre o Transporte Aéreo Civil, assinado entre os dois governos, em outubro de 1948. A exposição também destaca a transmissão televisiva do Campeonato Mundial de Futebol de 1986, realizado no México, com imagens da fototeca da Direção-Geral da Comunicação Social, relembrando o jogo entre Portugal e Inglaterra. Esta é uma oportunidade única de revisitar momentos marcantes que fortaleceram os laços de amizade entre Portugal e México, explorando documentos e imagens que testemunham a história partilhada pelos dois países (Presidencia do conselho de ministros, 2024)

In *chapter 3.3* I will analyze the historical relations between Portugal and Mexico and how the political, commercial and cultural ties evolved until now.

Another activity related to the 160th anniversary was *México en Redondo*, in which I was not involved in the organization, where celebrations in the village of Redondo were held from Friday through Sunday. The festival involved food, piñata, dancing, music and, for the first time, a bullfight dedicated to Mexico. Before the event, there was an exhibition and a conference dedicated to the rich taurine connection between Mexico and Portugal, which has helped strengthen the sentiments of sympathy toward each other's country and people for over a hundred years. Mexican artists Pablo Juan and Karla Lamadrid were invited by the Embassy to perform, as well as Karla Mañé, a Yucatecan chef who gave cooking classes, along with an authentic Mexican food stall. This was the first event (before the inauguration itself) in the series of 160th anniversary and has been heartfelt by both communities.

There have also been other events organized by the Embassy for the anniversary: the film projection *Uma Dança para a Música do Tempo - Retrospectiva*, during the DocLisboa Festival, which is the most important international film festival in Portugal. The festival has dedicated a retrospective - the first in Europe and the largest abroad - to the filmmaker Paul Leduc, one of the most important directors of the indie cinema in Mexico. On 18 October, the Ambassador, together with the director of DocLisboa, Paula Astorga, and the director of the film library, Nuno Sena, opened this retrospective, accompanied by the Mexican director Andrés Maximiliano Cruz Gutiérrez, as an expert

in the subject. Two of Leduc's films were screened in the cinema art room of the iconic *Cinemateca Portuguesa*, with 92 people taking part. The works of Paul Leduc were shown for 10 days, in the same room, until 28 October. A few days before, us of the cultural section visited the restaurant to manage the organization of this event with the owners, and I collaborated by sending invitations and registering participants, but I was not present during the event.

The last significant events in the context of the 160 years anniversary were an inauguration, exhibition and conference that was *entitled Estela de un mar en llamas - Versiones mexicanas de Fernando Pessoa*. The cultural section, including myself, along with the art curator, arranged the room for the exhibition of both books and plastic/visual works. On October 20, in the presence of the Ambassador, with a presentation by writer Rafael Toriz, and the artist Edgar Orlaineta the *Estela de um mar em llamas* were inaugurated. This exhibition, open to the public at the Biblioteca Palacio Galveias until November 20, 2024, shows the works of the Mexican translators that interpreted and spread the literary works of Fernando Pessoa during the years. Alongside the exposition of the books, renowned visual artist Édgar Orlaineta presented several artworks, inspired by concepts of Pessoa's books and the Japanese plastic arts. The opening ceremony featured speeches from the Mexican ambassador, the president of the municipal library and the two artists: they all highlighted the long historical friendship between Portugal and Mexico, and the cultural bridges that grow stronger every year. The exhibition was organized by us from the cultural section: from the logistics of shipping the art pieces, their assembly, renovation of the exhibition room, to coordination with the library manager and welcome buffet. The participants were mainly ambassadors and diplomats from various Latin American institutions. The exhibition's curator, who also provided the literary discourse was a critic and translator of Fernando Pessoa, and his books were included in the one-month exhibition, alongside Orlaineta's artworks. the end of this last one, towards the end of November, with the cultural section we dismantled everything and reorganized the return to Mexico of the curator's books and the artist's sculptures.

On 22 October, the conference *Pessoa, os seus tradutores mexicanos e sua relação com as artes visuais* was held at the Casa de Fernando Pessoa, attended by the Ambassador and Clara Riso, director of the museum. This conversation between the writer Rafael Toriz and the plastic artist Édgar Orlaineta explored the creative processes of visual arts and literature alongside the various aesthetic ideas present in some of the Portuguese writer's ethereal works. The program included a presentation of an anthology with prose texts and verses by Fernando de Pessoa, translated by several Mexican authors who have engaged with the poet's work throughout history, including the Nobel Prize laureated Octavio Paz. During the event, there were presentations by experts in the fields of translation and visual arts, who discussed the influence of Pessoa on various forms of art.

This was a special occasion to promote a cultural and artistic exchange between Portugal and Mexico. The cultural section, including myself and the curator, set up the room for the exhibition of both books and visual artworks during the morning shift, I then created the flyers and posters of the two events, and in the afternoon. The event was held in the evening, and in the morning, I created a document to be sent to schools with artistic addresses so that they could attend the conference. Lastly, I oversaw taking pictures for those last two events, in order to have the official photos to insert in the final monthly report of the cultural department's activities.

Those cultural exchanges are, after all, a form of soft power that includes the promotion of the Mexican culture abroad and are financed by the Mexican Government. International relations are also established by cultural cooperation, and even through small events, this opens the door to future collaborations. Events organized in honor of the 160° anniversary were also a way to reinforce the ties between Mexican citizenships abroad, their own country and the host one. As a part of the public diplomacy strategy to share the news of the event and encourage participation, invitations were sent to art and literature high schools and university faculties, so to engage Portuguese students and bring them closer to the cultural connection with Mexico.

R.5 Día de Muertos

Coming instead to the most important event for the Mexican community abroad, the rest of October days were entirely devoted to that: *Día de Muertos*. The Mexican tradition of the Day of the Dead is the product of syncretism between ancient indigenous beliefs (Aztec, Maya, Zapotec) and the Catholic religion, imposed by the Spaniards on the original peoples since the 16th century. Each Mexican state celebrates it in a different way: some go to the cemetery to clean the bones of deceased relatives, others gather at the cemetery, while some come together at home. The holiday lasts a week: The Day of the Dead is celebrated on 1 and 2 November, days in which cemeteries, homes, even schools and work centers in Mexico are filled with flowers, candles and gifts to honor relatives, friends and even deceased animals, whose souls, according to tradition, return from the afterlife to gather and celebrate. To call them this world, the living build a carpet with petals of flowers and erect altars with photographs, food, drinks and favorite goods of the deceased who want to celebrate. They also include religious images; small skulls of sugar or chocolate; the traditional *pan de muerto*; candles; water offerings; salt; incense; copal; and *cempasúchil* flowers (marigolds), which since pre-Hispanic times symbolize the sun, and the cycle of life and death. The purpose of this celebration in Mexico is not to instill fear, but rather to express love for our loved ones and remember them with joy. The Day of the Dead is a celebration of life.

Because of its ancient roots and enormous cultural wealth, UNESCO has inscribed this integrative, representative and community-based Mexican festival on the list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity. The icon of the festival is the Catrina, designed by José G. Posada at the beginning of the 20th century, representing a female skeleton dressed elegantly. The Mexican Embassy has decided to celebrate this event as every year by holding a party at *Fábrica Braço da Prata*, in Marvila, Lisbon, as previously mentioned.

Before this event, the International Day of Mexican Gastronomy was celebrated through a gastronomic meeting at the Hotel Hyatt Regency Lisboa, with the participation of the Portuguese chef Tiago Silva and the Mexican chef Diana Beltrán, with the theme

of the Day of the Dead. The presented menu was a fusion of Portuguese and Mexican gastronomy. The restaurant space in the hotel was decorated with objects related to the Day of the Dead, including an altar dedicated to the poets Luis de Camões and Sister Juana Inês de la Cruz. In the days before the event, we went to the Hall of the Hyatt Hotel and built an *altar de muertos*, and that same evening of dinner, I dressed as Catrina to create a more themed environment and welcomed guests at the entrance. This was the first event where I was made up and dressed as Catrina: on 1, 2 and 3 of November there was the big party. In the previous two weeks, we went almost every day, together with my supervisor and the chancellor, to the Fábrica Braço da Prata, where we began to decorate the hall for the altar of the dead. This was more practical work: we mounted the scaffolding of the altar which must have seven levels.

According to the Christian tradition, there are seven capital sins, and according to the pre-Hispanic beliefs, each level of the altar has its own purpose and meaning: starting from the bottom, the first level must feature an image of a Saint to whom one is devoted, as spiritual guide for the deceased who visit the altar. The second is dedicated to the souls of purgatory, and there one must place the holy water to purify the soul. The third level is where we put bread as an offering, while the fourth level contains food, specifically the favorite dishes of the deceased to whom the altar is dedicated. The fifth level includes the favorite objects belonging to the deceased, while the sixth holds the photo. The final level must have a cross, which can be made of seeds or cempasúchil, the classic orange flower traditional to the celebration.

Every year, the Mexican embassy in Portugal places a photo of a famous or literary figure from Mexico alongside a Portuguese one on the altar. This year, they chose Sister Ines de la Cruz - a 16th century poet who was very important for the development of the Spanish language - and Luis de Camões, a Portuguese writer of the 14th century, important symbol of the Portuguese national identity. The preparation of the altar took many days, along with the creation of the paper flowers that filled the halls of the Fábrica Braço de Prata. During the three days there were stalls of typical food and workshops offered by artists, and the festival concluded with the Sunday Latin American fair. This event was the most emotionally felt by the Mexican expatriate community: many people

came dressed as Catrina, and even the children were very enthusiastic: in many cases this is first approach with their culture of origin.

For most of October, I have been attending with my colleagues of the cultural department, meetings with the managers of the Fábrica Braço da Prata, the venue for the event on November 1, 2 and 3 aimed at the Mexican community. During the meeting, I took notes on various things: cost for participants, who were attending, fees for caterers and artisans who would offer their services at the event, workshops for children, decorations, choices of rooms, and budget cost, along with various estimates. When large, those events are planned for the expatriate community, and it is important that the different parties involved in organizing the event collaborate effectively. The state provides a budget, and so does the host institution. Afterwards, I took the notes back to my head office. This experience allowed me to learn one of the fundamental tasks of the cultural section of an embassy: maintaining and forming relationships with institutions, museums, event venues, and restaurants, to have as many partners as possible for future events. The cultural department had me take photos of skeletons made of paper-mâché representing typical Day of the Dead icons. Using these photos, the staff of the Fábrica Braço da Prata organizers would create flyers. Embassies provided photographic materials and partner institutions edited them for publicity to be disseminated later made by both via social networks. Here is the flyer of the first day of the celebration that was published in the Embassy's social media:

Figure R4: Flyer and program for the first Dia de Muertos' public celebration



Source : Embajada de México en Portugal, 1 November 2024.

For the occasion I had to create a social media post with a description of the celebration, and the same text would be then included on the flyer and posters to be displayed at the party, so that the non-Mexican public would learn the difference between the Día de Muertos and Halloween, which happens on the same days. A few days before the big event, I needed to draft various emails to inform the party attendees about how they could arrange their services, including times when they could sell, the fee to be paid to the host institution, and materials to be brought based on the category of goods sold (crafts or cooking). I worked extensively with Excel to create documents about the participants and what they would bring, along with a calendar and schedule

of activities. These documents were then used by embassy staff, the host institution, and participating retailers to coordinate. I was also responsible for writing emails for the singers and dancers who would be performing at the event and finally calling participants regarding additional questions they had emailed.

The experience of the Día de Muertos was absolutely enriching, personally, professionally and academically. I had the opportunity to see and participate on a large-scale cultural event organized by a government institution abroad and the municipality of a capital. It was interesting to see how caterers, artists and institutions collaborated in an international context. Cultural diplomacy is crucial in strengthening bilateral relations and promoting integration and national identity.

R.6: Last activities of November and December

After the first week of November the number of tasks diminished. The cultural department started the preparations for *Bazar Diplomático 2024*: a charity event organized by the ambassadors' wives to raise funds for institutions supporting the elderly. The embassy would sell the Christmas star, a typical Mexican flower, so I collaborated to create the labels to attach to the plants. Together, with the cultural department, we went to the *Centro de Congressos de Lisboa*, to see the spaces and manage the Mexican artists who would come to sell their products. On the day of this event, I was lucky enough to be able to prepare my stand for the visit of the Portuguese president, who attends this fair every year. The Bazar Diplomático was very interesting: most of the foreign embassies in Lisbon participated, with each selling their own local products at a very reasonable price exclusively for diplomatic staff, as there are no outside visitors. This event was a clear example of how the diplomatic network reinforces multilateral collaboration in an informal and engaging way. The presence of the President of the Republic adds institutional value, showing how the host country's openness to cultural exchange and its engagement in keeping relations with all embassies. The charitable nature of the event highlights how the international context can also meaningfully contribute to the local level.

After the diplomatic bazaar, the workload decreased. Together with the organization RedGlobalMx the embassy organized a conference on the occasion of the day against violence to women, where were invited the president of RedGlobalMx-capítulo Portugal, the 25th of November. This event did not deal with feminism, but rather with the various measures to be taken in case of danger, or in a relationship where violence has been present. The entire conference was publicized and broadcast live on both embassy and global network channels. Such events, often also organized for LGBT rights, or gender equality represent the embassy's active and constant commitment to protect its expatriate citizens abroad. Indeed, the numbers to be called and the methods to be adopted for reporting a given situation or seeking refuge are always made available and reiterated during these conferences. The embassy itself has a number in this case, for women victims of violence, also having the function of protecting the citizen.

Figure R5: Flyer for the international day of the elimination of violence against women



Source : Embajada de México en Portugal, 2024.

The main event we had organized during November was going to be my last one, and it was the *Posada Navideña*, a typical Mexican celebration held ten days before Christmas. The embassy's posada would be held in the garden, and was a public event for Mexican citizens exclusively or members of the diplomatic corps. Therefore, I had to prepare excel spreadsheets and promotional material in advance that would be needed for the invitations and participants' registration. Helping with the planification of this 'more private' event allowed me to consolidate my skills in logistics and the use of digital tools for coordination. The posada is another way the embassy strengthens the community ties and reinforces the cultural identity of those who emigrated. Since this tradition is a Latin American one, also the families of other embassies were present, and this constitutes another occasion to build bridges within the diplomatic community.

In the last weeks of my stage, I undertook a new task which involved subtitling the trailer of *Tan Cerca de las Nubes* a documentary by Manuel Cañibe that highlights the effort of 17 women who filled the Aztec stadium - the sixth largest in the world - before 110,000 spectators. It also pays tribute to their struggle against the social barriers of their time, which would later be shared in profiles from the embassy to promote its release during the *Mostra do Cinema da America Latina* - an event that would take place at the Cinema Sao Jorge from December 15 to 18, organized by the association *Casa da America Latina*. First, I had to listen to the trailer and take note of the subtitles; then I sent them to the cultural assistant for translation into Portuguese, after which I added them to the video.

What we focused on last month were mainly two activities: the first one involved producing reports that the embassy would send to the government at the end of the year, so I wrote a long document specifying the date, the name of the event, and a short description of each. Additionally, I prepared mini videos for each event, assembling the images and then merging all the videos together into one. The video also included footage from inside and outside the embassy.

Lastly, I was doing research on potential topics for social media publications in advance for the cultural office. I then created pictures and short descriptions for posts and sent them to the responsible.

These are the activities I have carried out during these three months. It was not a great variety of activities, as written they were exclusively part of the cultural department, but they clearly marked a watershed in my professional skills. My personal contributions had little to do with diplomacy or international relations, however, there were two main aspects I contributed with: photography and makeup. Thanks to my camera and skills I provided almost all the photography for the quarter's events, and my photos were used on social networks and advertising purposes. Regarding makeup, I dressed as a Catrina several times during the various events of the embassy, and my colleagues were very pleased because my appearance, dressed as a Catrina, added a more traditional touch to the event. Also, the fact that I knew both Spanish and Portuguese, allowed me to contribute to the large volume of translations that were due to the cultural assistant. I must admit, on a personal level, that I have been very well placed and have developed excellent relationships with my colleagues. They were very receptive and kind to me, and my passion for Mexican culture, along with my significant participation in Day of the Dead project and the organization of events, allowed us to really work together very well.

Regarding the challenges I have encountered, I rarely faced language barriers, however there were some specific and dialectal terms that I did not know and sometimes I could not pronounce well accents. Nevertheless, this experience not only helped me improve my Spanish, but also my Portuguese, having been more in contact with formal language. I believe I have accomplished important and constructive tasks that far exceeded my expectations for learning outcomes. The stage covered aspects that were not concretely covered by the courses of the master, but I considered it necessary to implement the theoretical part I learned in classes, to a practical one. Being my master mainly focused on sociology and history, I was already familiar with the history of different countries, or political relations.

This internship was in fact connected to the field of my studies, which is International Relations. The Master program provided me with the theoretical basis to understand the various contexts and mechanisms at the base of cultural and political relations between countries. However, only an experience in the field could show me concretely and daily how tasks were carried out in the diplomatic sphere. Some of courses I attended during my Master, such as Theories and Issues of International Relations, Public Policies, Intercultural communication, gave me the tools to engage and understand my internship experience. Although my academic path focused more on and historical and sociological approach to International Relations, the knowledge base I have acquired gave me an understanding on how states interact and create policies based on their historical relations, on migratory theories and public policies.

I was lucky enough to see how the cultural department of an embassy works daily; how diplomatic personnel deal with both expatriate organizations and the government of the host country. Alias, I have seen and participated in the various activities that make the task of a department of an embassy important not only in the national context but also in the international one. During this experience, I was able to observe how the growing Mexican presence in Portugal, analyzed in the following chapters, has fueled the activity of the embassy, especially the cultural one. In turn, the network of Mexican migrants is a support for those who want to emigrate, encouraging further arrivals. In the following dissertation I will analyze the various migratory theories that explain the flows, the historical development of migration in both Mexico and Portugal, and the situation during the Covid-19, central period of our analysis. I will then categorize the various types of migrants, and the entry and residence permit according to Portuguese legislation. I will subsequently analyze the Mexican presence in Portugal from a numerical point of view and the political perspectives of the newly elected President Claudia Sheinbaum, progressive politician attentive to the migration issues. The connection between practical experience and theoretical analysis aims to demonstrate how diplomatic institutions not only execute political protocols but are also a great tool for supporting the citizens abroad in several ways.

PART 2 : Theoretical perspectives and Mexican migration to Europe

After having described my direct experience at the Embassy of Mexico in Portugal, the analysis section now begins, focusing on the theoretical research that will provide insight into the Mexican migration in Portugal. In this chapter, I will provide a qualitative and quantitative analysis about the history of migration in Mexico, after discussing the different theories of migration, and contextualizing Latin American migration to Europe. The research was very complex because of the lack of data for Mexico and Portugal, not being the Mexican community among the first to migrate to the country and not representing the main community of migrants. Most Mexicans opt to emigrate to the United States, and there is more literature, statistics and data on this, but unfortunately the sources and studies decrease significantly when it comes to Europe, and especially Portugal.

1.1 Definitions and Categories of Migration

Before getting to the theoretical part, I will provide an overview of the various definitions and types of migration given by International Organizations such as IOM - *International Organization for Migration* and UN – *United Nations*. In fact, the study of migration shows its various dimensions: types, stages and theories. Because of the complexity in estimating the numbers, it is a complex, heterogeneous phenomenon that is difficult to generalize (if we consider the numbers of irregular migration), and there is a risk of numerical gaps between theory and reality, which is why it is essential to admit the approximation of these conclusions.

Migration has been a feature of human history from the very beginning: as stated in us: International Migration, online article on the UN website (n.d.), people migrate for many different reasons, but if we could group them into larger categories, we would have causes related to economic opportunities, family reunion, studies, consequences, conflicts and natural disasters. An international migrant is defined by the UN as any person who has changed his or her country of residence: “for statistical purposes, the

United Nations defines an international migrant as any person who has changed his or her country of residence. This includes all migrants, regardless of their legal status, or nature, or motive of their movement (UN, n.d)''.

The IOM identifies various types of movements: internal ones (i.e., the ones from the rural area to the urban one) and the international ones, which involve changing country. The IOM website (n.d) specifies that mostly people migrate internationally because of work, family or study, and in this case normally there are no serious challenges for them to face, contrarily to who is obliged to migrate for conflicts, persecutions and natural disasters: in this case they are called refugees: they are the smallest percentage but the most vulnerable ones.

1.2 Migration Theories

Overall, since migration phenomena have different causes and effects, various theories have been developed throughout history to explain them, and to identify as many common patterns as possible, so to have a few points of view on how and why they happen¹. Migration influences not only the country of origin of who decides to leave, but also the destination one: that is why it is important to consider different theories to understand the deep dynamics that influence the economic, social and political structures that influence the various fluxes.

First, the neoclassical theory², developed in the late 20th century and cited in Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal by Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino and Taylor (1993), states that humans migrate for economic reasons, to take the best advantage when it is impossible to do so in the place of origin. It is no accident, in fact, that flows always go from the low wage countries to the high-wage ones, often leading to rising wages in the country of origin and falling the ones in the destination country. This theory therefore identifies an individual dimension, which

¹ For more on the beginning of migration studies, see also The Laws of Migration (Ravenstein, 1885-1889) and The Polish peasant in Europe and America (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918-1920).

² The theory was originally developed by Lewis (1954), Ranis and Fei (1961), Harris and Todaro (1970).

aims at maximizing personal income, and a collective one, where wages and employment conditions influence migration flows.

Push-pull factor theory, on the other hand, is an outcome of neoclassical factor theory, and its author is Everett S. Lee (1966). Here the factors of the place of origin that constitute a reason for expulsion for its inhabitants (i.e. high cost of living, crisis, repression of various kinds) are compared to those that attract in the destination (i.e. high wages, political freedoms, security). This model focuses more on the personal, subjective motivations of the emigrant, its rationality as well as its preferences: the individual chooses to make a big investment to earn it back later.

The World System Theory, formulated by Wallerstein (1974), explains migration due to the globalization of markets, but also because of imperialism and colonialism. While the latter caused inequalities that persist even after colonization, capitalist expansion causes mobility, offering workers better conditions outside to enlarge and leads migrants from these peripheral countries to find refuge and better living conditions in others. Just think of the simple gap between the global south and the global north:

This division is not merely functional-that is, occupational-but geographical. That is to say, the range of economic tasks is not evenly distributed throughout the world system. In part this is the consequence of ecological considerations, to be sure. But for the most part, it is a function of the social organization of work, one which magnifies and legitimizes the ability of some groups within the system to exploit the labor of others, that is, to receive a larger share of the surplus (Wallerstein, 1974, p. 349).

Then we have the structural-historic theories that adopt Wallerstein's view of the divided world. Based on their own history, countries did not develop all in the same way: those with a colonial past remained underdeveloped to fuel the growth of their colonizing country. According to the academic paper Migration and development: a theoretical perspective by Hein de Haas (2008, p.7):

Historical-structuralists postulate that economic and political power is unequally distributed among developed and underdeveloped countries, that people have unequal access to resources, and that capitalist expansion has the tendency to reinforce these inequalities. Instead of modernizing and gradually progressing towards economic development, underdeveloped countries are trapped by their disadvantaged position within the global geopolitical structure.

Fragmented labor market theory is also part of the structural-historic ones, and states that emigration is demand-driven and is constructed by the economic structure of advanced societies themselves, because of capitalism. Various sectors of employment are created in advanced societies in which there are worker shortages, and this represents a call for emigrants (Piore, 1979, as cited in Massey et al., 1993). Piore (1979) suggests that advanced societies, by not raising wages, primarily find migrants who are willing to accept those jobs (which are tendentially refused by natives) to meet the labor demand.

The new economics of labor migration theory (Stark and Bloom 1985; Stark 1991), on the other hand, is like the neoclassical one because it considers migration as a family choice rather than an individual one. Because, if migration takes place in the family there is less potential for failure in terms of economic resources, statistically there would be less uncertainty, but also at the starting level, there would be more funds. Thus, older family members who stay in the country can enjoy remittances.

Last, we have the Institutional Theory cited by Massey and Douglas (1993). They support the idea that it is public and private institutions that, by offering support (such as humanitarian institutions), make communities grow, and the more they grow, the more these institutions are formed.

As I have demonstrated, there are various theoretical approaches that try to explain migrations and provide us with interpretive tools to analyze the topic of our thesis. But before exploring the Mexican migration trends in Europe, I will consider the Latin American one.

1.3 Latin American migration to Europe

In *Europa como nuevo destino de las migraciones latinoamericanas y caribeñas*, Bayona-i-Carrasco, Rúbies and Avila Tàpies (2018) analyze Latin American emigration with destination to Europe. It is mentioned how in reality flows were mainly directed to Spain, followed by Italy and Portugal (the latter is a destination mainly of Brazilians). According to Bayona (2018) the choice is influenced by reasons such as cultural and linguistic affinity and family roots, which help a lot in the acquisition of citizenship, and as to the numbers, there has been an increase in southern Europe, from 365 thousand Latin American immigrants in 1990 to an estimated 3,199,522 in 2010. Around 2015, however, there is a loss of 209 thousand, while in the rest of Europe they seem to have increased by 139 mil (including returns). Ruiz Sandoval (2006) analyzes Latin American migration patterns to Europe in the decade of 2005. Also mentioned here is how this type of flow is recently, beginning only in the 1990s, and how there are external factors causing it:

Por otra parte, los empleos en AL tienden a ser precarios y los mercados laborales, poco flexibles. Las actividades agrícolas poco productivas y el sector informal urbano absorben más de la mitad de la fuerza laboral de la región. Asimismo, AL es cada vez más urbana; quienes emigran del campo a la ciudad y no encuentran oportunidades para garantizar su supervivencia pueden convertirse en migrantes internacionales. (Ruiz Sandoval, 2006, p.6)

Among the various causes, according to Sandoval, we also find inequality in the distribution of inputs, slow development and delayed distribution of progress earnings due to corruption, public policies that leave something to be desired, gap between rich and poor, underdeveloped financial markets, and in general, an underdeveloped condition.

The arrival in Europe is tendentially characterized by expectations. Those who migrate, as mentioned above, seek better conditions, but it is also important to talk about the implications that might not be so pleasant for the migrant. As mentioned in *Género, Familia y Migración Transnacional México-Europa* by Fernández-Topetea

(2021), migrants may face discrimination, problems with the local language, integration, religious beliefs, reestablishment of gender roles, and family separation. *Re-imaginar la migración: Entre el sueño y el desencanto de ser o no migrante* is an article by López García (2015), which specifically concerns the experience of Mexican migrants in Murcia, discusses the expectations Mexicans have about Europe, which are frequently unmet.

In fact, Europe is mythicized just like the American Dream: in the collective imagination it represents the ultimate solution to the socio-economic difficulties in Mexico. More and more migrants come to Europe with great hopes, fueled by the success stories of those who left before them, ignoring the challenges and believing that every experience will be equally prosperous. The European dream is often seen as more ambitious than the American one: Europe has culture and prestige, while the United States tends to be seen as a money-making destination:

...en el imaginario mexicano, Europa se encuentra rodeada por una especie de prestigio, glamur y esnobismo, infundidos desde situaciones históricas por las predilecciones de algunos actores políticos y de las clases sociales acomodadas; marcando así las diferencias sociales en el país, el ritmo en la cultura y el nivel de vida. La idolatría y las imitaciones de los modelos políticos, económicos y sociales que prometían la modernización y el progreso a la nación mexicana según los estándares de las naciones europeas...La menor tradición migratoria a Europa, vislumbra al continente como más lejano, sensación influenciada tanto por el acceso de las elites mexicanas, así como la difusión de imaginarios literarios y mediáticos (López García, 2011, as cited in López García, 2015, p.66).

Simply having been to Europe for a trip, for studies or better yet to work, gives the Mexican a higher social status when they return to their country. Europe opens prospects, ensures an education and unlike the United States, has public health care. In short, there are many guarantees. Most Mexicans in Europe decide to land or settle in Spain, for various reasons. One of them is the passport, having had distant Spanish relatives that allows them to acquire citizenship more easily. Also, due to the idea of Europe being precisely a more glamorous and prestigious destination, it is especially Mexicans of the middle/upper and upper class who go there (Lopez Garcia, 2015).

Latin American migrations began largely as an escape from dictatorial regimes in the second half of the XX century, then continued to consolidate by creating communities in the different countries, support network that fostered the multiplication of the phenomenon. Southern European countries are normally favored as a destination because the market tends to be less controlled, and there has been an increase in demand in the agricultural and domestic sectors, along with the touristic and construction ones. The personal services sector (domestic helpers, caregivers, babysitters, maids) has also increased its demand, providing employment for Latin American immigrant women.

1.4 Mexican Migration to Europe

We have seen Latin American migration to Europe as a wide-ranging phenomenon that is mostly shaped by the economic and attractive factors, but now it is important to zoom on the Mexican trends. Mexican immigration to Europe is a rather complex case to analyze, since most Mexicans emigrate to the U.S. and there are as many inflows, in general, as there are outflows. Although, it is also useful to make a small comparison with the exit flows of previous years, and we will do so. The Library of Congress (n.d) website mentions how this flow to the US began in the early 20th century and proceeded in waves. After the Mexican Revolution, economic conditions in the United States were more promising and this led to massive immigration to the neighboring country:

Between 1910 and 1930, the number of Mexican immigrants counted by the U.S. census tripled from 200,000 to 600,000. The actual number was probably far greater. El Paso, Texas, served as the Mexican Ellis Island--a gateway to a different life for Mexican immigrants and a powerful symbol of change and survival for their children and grandchildren.

The advantage was always the small distance that separated the two countries, this allowed the Mexican migrants to return to their country in a short time. But according to the source, the fact of earning more generous sums led them to settle in the United

States. The article *La migración México-Estados Unidos* by Valenzuela Montoya (2008) confirms that Mexico has a long history of migrations especially with the US, and this has always been due to its geographical proximity, of the former belonging of the southern territories to Mexico and above all the great economic differences between the two countries. The inclusion of Mexicans in the state labor market, as it is today, represents for them a huge change in quality of life both for working conditions and earnings. The Mexican Government's secretary states in their website : "Del total de mexicanas y mexicanos que residen en el exterior, 97.8% se ubica en Estados Unidos" (Secretaría de Gobernación, n.d). In fact, it is also stated that the Mexican diaspora has been one of the biggest after the Indian one, and it is characterized by the construction of networks that could connect groups and individuals from both countries.

Migration towards Mexico is also an important aspect to analyze from the 90s, a lot of central Americans were fleeing to Mexico because of humanitarian crisis and armed conflicts (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and now also Venezuela). The mainly crossed Mexico to access the USA, and they would cross the country in caravans of migrants, illegally, because they would not have the documents to travel abroad. In the Mexican Government's website we read :

Al menos desde 2010, 9 de cada 10 personas migrantes en tránsito irregular han sido nacio-nales de alguno de esos países. En la mayoría de los casos, se trata de población sin documentos migratorios, lo cual la expone a diversos riesgos, aumenta sus vulnerabilidades y obstaculiza el ejercicio de sus derechos (Secretaría de Gobernación, n.d)

This makes it difficult to estimate the numbers, and, this flux was characterized by the strong presence of unaccompanied minors and teenagers, which would be later detected and then expelled in mass when they reached the US. Apart from this kind of migration, we have the regular one which includes tourists, workers, retired people, humanitarian staff, and the Mexican government has implemented some measures to make them obtain the visas easily.

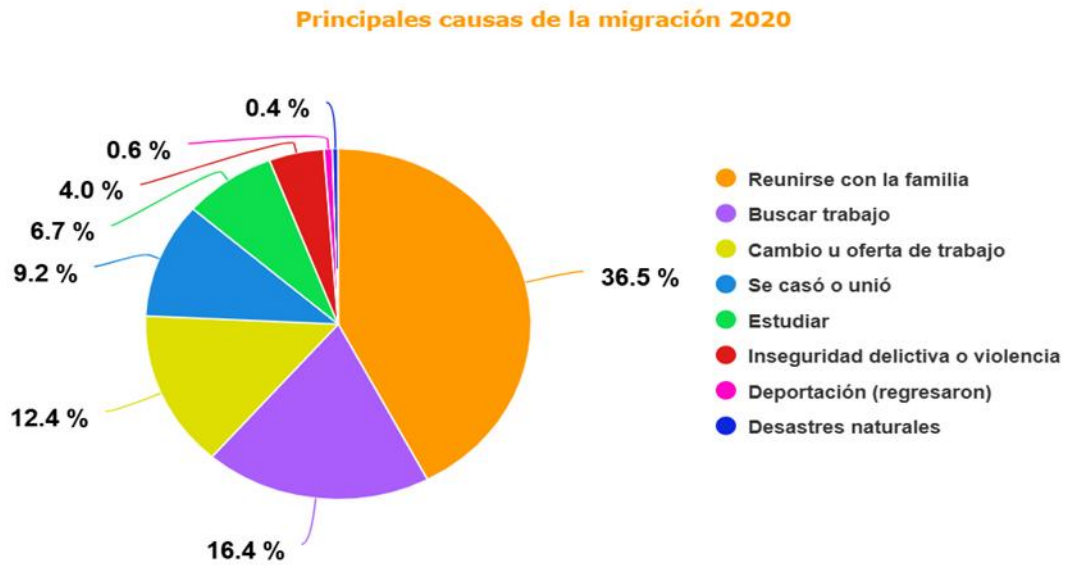
Figure 1.1



Source: BID, 2023

According to Banca Interamericana de Desarrollo – BID - (2023) the countries in green with positive net migration, they tend to receive migrants and have more income than outputs. Those are Quintana Roo, Baja California Sur and Querétaro. The states with a more negative balance, or the ones with most emigrants, were Veracruz, Tabasco and Guerrero.

Figure 1.2



Source: Nevvia, n.d.

As we can see in Figure 2, these are the main causes of emigration: 36.5% emigrate to reach family members previously emigrated, 16.4% seek work and 12.3% always change jobs. Finally, 9.2% emigrate for unions or marriages, 6.7% for studies, 0.6% for the insecurity of the place of origin and 0.4% due to natural disasters. (Nevvia ,n.d.). The report *Perfiles sociodemograficos de las poblaciones migrantes desde y hacia México: 2000, 2010, 2020* (Gobierno de México, 2024) compares the profiles of migrants in three different decades:

Actualmente, México es el segundo país más importante a nivel mundial en términos del volumen de sus connacionales que radican en un país distinto. El primer lugar lo ocupa la India (17.9 millones) Datos de Naciones Unidas indican que, en 2020, México sumó un total de 11.2 millones de personas mexicanas fuera del país. El país a donde se dirige la migración Mexicana continúa siendo principalmente Estados Unidos.

Also in 2020, before and during the onset of the pandemic, the report mentions that among the top countries, alternative to the United States, of emigration for women were Spain, Germany, and France. The table shows that the Mexican region with the most emigrants in 2020 was the center, followed by the north and then the south. However, it should be mentioned that the years with the most emigration were the five-year period from 1995 to 2000.

Table 1.1: Migratory region of origin and destination

Población / Destino	1995-2000			2005-2010			2015-2020		
	Total	Mujer	Hombre	Total	Mujer	Hombre	Total	Mujer	Hombre
Histórica	551 848	125 583	412 822	279 658	67 097	212 561	200 261	58 454	141 807
Estados Unidos (%)	99.3	98.6	99.5	96.8	94.1	97.6	91.9	87.6	93.7
Otro país (%)	0.7	1.4	0.5	3.2	5.9	2.4	8.1	12.4	6.3
Fronteriza	152 934	53 611	95 876	85 364	34 040	51 324	118 085	50 187	67 898
Estados Unidos (%)	98.0	97.1	98.4	94.4	92.6	95.5	90.5	88.3	92.1
Otro país (%)	2.0	2.9	1.6	5.6	7.4	4.5	9.5	11.8	7.9
Centro	326 586	81 228	238 730	286 584	69 799	216 785	183 375	56 287	127 088
Estados Unidos (%)	95.4	91.4	96.8	94.0	88.0	95.6	80.7	69.7	85.5
Otro país (%)	4.6	8.6	3.2	6.0	12.0	4.4	19.3	30.3	14.5
Sureste	191 533	45 512	141 131	70 609	14 954	55 655	53 317	15 127	38 190
Estados Unidos (%)	98.4	96.9	98.9	92.7	86.6	94.6	79.4	69.2	83.5
Otro país (%)	1.6	3.1	1.1	7.3	13.4	5.4	20.6	30.8	16.5

Fuente: Estimaciones del Consejo Nacional de Población con base en microdatos de los Cuestionarios Ampliados del XII Censo General de Población y Vivienda 2000, Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010, y del Censo de Población y Vivienda 2020.

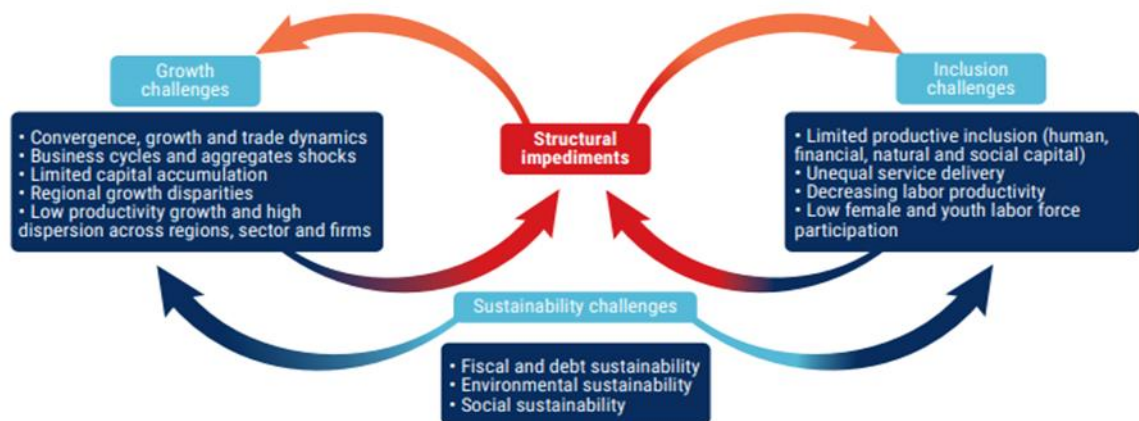
Source: Gobierno de México, 2024

Figure 3 is very useful because it identifies the percentage of emigrants over the different decades and shows which are the main regions of origin. If we analyze the years 2015-2020, we'll have a total of 200,261, the majority of which come from the center of Mexico (183,375), followed by the North (118,085) (Gobierno de México, 2024)

If we look more detail at the reasons why Mexicans emigrate, it is interesting to refer to the World Bank's *Mexico Systematic Country Diagnostic report* (2019), which provides an insight about the general economic situation in Mexico before the pandemic, to understand the most recent background before emigration in the last 5 years. The document discusses fiscal policies and Mexico's stable position in the

international market, especially with liberalization. So, all in all, Mexico is an emerging economy that is slowly introducing social and educational policies, as well as medical ones. However, the diagnostic lists structural impediments that impact welfare growth.

Figure 1.3: Structural impediments for growth



Source: World Bank, 2019, p.40.

There are, in general, problems of growth, inclusion and sustainability. We are mainly interested in the first two, and regarding the first, we see that the causes are dynamic, cycles, inequality and low production rates are well rooted in the country. For the second, there are problems of inclusion, productivity and mainly inequality. All of this represents a country that does not have capital, market, welfare and fair policies; rather, the situation is very diverse, which creates polarization.

1.5 Covid-19 pandemic and its effects

The arrival of the pandemic in 2020 worsened this pre-existing situation, going so far as to create large-scale unemployment. And that is why it is important to contextualize why so many Mexicans migrated during and after the pandemic. The article *Los impactos económicos de la pandemia en México*, by Esquivel (2020), focuses on the impact of the pandemic in the country, on economic activity, poverty, consumption, employment and unemployment, explaining the initial phase of the economic crisis. Regarding the economic impact, the text states that it was very significant and was divided into three stages, starting in the first quarter of 2020. After the cancellation of flights, the regions that lived mostly from tourism were impacted, and then the lockdown in both Europe and Asia disrupted important trade relations in some sectors. Here, the global economic productivity indicator of March 2020 fell within a month by -1.3 %. Subsequently, other activities not deemed “strictly necessary” by the government were shut down, such as services or sales or manufacturing. Esquivel (2020, p. 2) mentions that : “Es importante señalar que a fines de mayo algunos sectores importantes como la minería, la construcción y las industrias automotriz y aeroespacial pasaron de ser considerados como actividades no esenciales a ser definidas como esenciales”.

Finally, during the timid reopening phase there were further difficulties because of the slow pace at which the distance was slowly being removed, for fear that contagions would increase again. The index fell by a further -2.6 percent. Activities, in short, could not return to previous levels and many, because of this, ceased, and this phase was the longest of all. At the level of consumption, expenditures were significantly reduced by both supply (closed or redundant activities) and demand (a consequence of unemployment):

La contracción del gasto alcanzó su punto más bajo a mediados de abril, cuando alcanzó una tasa mínima de crecimiento anual de -30%. En el periodo que va de marzo a junio de 2020 se perdieron poco más de 1.1 millones de empleos formales, una reducción de 5.4% de todos los empleos formales registrados ante

el IMSS. El grueso de la pérdida ocurrió en los meses de abril y mayo, en los cuales se perdieron 900 mil empleos. La pérdida de empleos formales ha sido de tal rapidez y magnitud que ya incluso excedió a la ocurrida en el punto más bajo de la crisis de 2008-09 (G. Esquivel, 2020, p.4).

According to Esquivel (2020), those losses have been heterogeneous in all the country. The impact on poverty, on the other hand, appeared to be significant, because of lowering inputs for a good portion of the population for an extended period, especially for those who worked with sales or the public.

Ramírez y Vanek's statistical report *El impacto de la COVID-19 en el empleo en México, 2020-2023* (2023) also states that the greatest impacts were felt in the second half of 2020, and only in the following six months were sectors declared non-core reopened:

Entre los primeros trimestres de 2020 y de 2021, se perdieron 2,1 millones de empleos en México, de los que la gran mayoría eran informales: el 76 % a nivel nacional, el 61 % en las zonas urbanas y el 62 % en la Ciudad de México... Sin embargo, en 2022, el empleo se recuperó a niveles más altos que los del primer trimestre de 2020, tanto para las mujeres como para los hombres. Las mujeres lideraron la recuperación hasta 2023 con avances mucho mayores en el empleo informal que los hombres. El empleo formal también aumentó y, en 2023, alcanzó niveles que superaron los de 2020. (Ramírez and Vanek, 2023, p.1)

In the paper *La pandemia del COVID-19 y la pobreza en México en 2020*, Nájera and Huffman (2020), from the Universidad Autónoma de México, have some final statements about the poverty trend in 2020: even with the reopening of the activities during the summer and autumn after the pandemic, poverty got progressively worse. In fact, between the first and third trimesters of 2020, extreme poverty rate grew from 17% to 22% and the income poverty grew from 49% to 56%, resulting in poor people being even poorer than 2018.

Finally, we saw in the beginning of this first chapter how the Mexican economic situation was not convenient for its inhabitants, and how Covid made the situation

worse: this led to broader migratory fluxes. Europe was a rather secondary destination, for the reasons listed above. In the following chapter we will investigate numerical and legislative terms at the presence of Mexicans in Portugal, and how the receiving country is handling the reception and integration processes, that became difficult during the pandemic because of the large number of migrants.

Migration dynamics in Portugal and the policies implemented during COVID-19

2.1 Historical and political context of the migration in Portugal

After presenting the historical and political context of Mexico that led to the migratory flows abroad, I will now focus on the Portuguese one, giving an overview of the history of its inbound migration. I will lastly explain the legal migratory framework, the difficulties during COVID-19 and the changes introduced to face the situation guaranteeing basic human rights for new arrivals. The various texts I have been able to find on migration trends in Portugal refer to the last century to our days.

The country is today a multicultural reality, with a diverse and complex migrant presence. But to reach the society it is today, it has received various waves of migration from different parts of the world throughout its history, which has led to changes in its reception and integration policies.

In *A Realidade da Imigração em Portugal*, Rocha-Trindade (n.d) mentions that among the first foreign presences on Portuguese territory there were at first Galicians workers, together with British in the north of the country, who moved for the important supply of work in the agricultural and industrial sector at the beginning of the 20th century. After the World Wars, there was an influx of refugees of various nationalities. In the 1950s, the inhabitants of the former Portuguese colonies in Africa and India who returned to the mainland, mainly to pursue their studies. Thus, immigration to Portugal did not have a significant demographic dimension until the 1970s, when after the end of the dictatorship flows from the newly independent African ex colonies started to be massive. This is because, as cited in Cerqueira (2002) the Law 308-A/75 (Assembleia da República, 1975) established the conditions of the right to the Portuguese nationality for the overseas ex colonies, who could not get it. As we can also read in the article “Nós e os outros: as migrações no Portugal contemporâneo” :

Entre 1975 e 1980 a população estrangeira passou de 32.000 para 58.000, passando a ser constituída maioritariamente por cidadãos de origem africana (48%), grande parte dos quais (98%) provenientes das antigas colónias

ultramarinas portuguesas em África (Angola, Cabo Verde, Guiné--Bissau, Moçambique e São Tomé e Príncipe). O número de estrangeiros a residir em território nacional correspondia, em 1981, a apenas 0,6% do total da população residente (Baganha and Góis, 1998/1999, as cited in Góis, 2020, p.35).

According to the same source, in the 1980s the foreign population reached 1% of the population, achieving 1.9% in 1990s. As noted by Trindade (n.d), the flows in the 80s decade were sustained and had a working character: she defines this type of immigration as "historical" since its cause was indeed the colonial background, together with the cultural and language closeness.

What caused a shift in the migration and legislative terms was the entry of Portugal into the European Economic Community in 1986 : before that, there was only the Law 37/81 of 1981 (Assembleia da República, 1981) that allowed the entrance in the country only through a short stay visa for professional reasons but there was not still a structured migration policy in the country. In 1986 instead the European fundings led to further public investments which created new job vacancies especially in the urban, commercial and public sector, that attracted particularly citizens from Cabo Verde (Cerqueira, 2002).

Table 2.1

Quadro 1 - População estrangeira legalmente residente em Portugal
Principais origens – 1989

Países de Origem	Efectivos
Cabo Verde	27 972
Brasil	10 520
Reino Unido	7 761
Espanha	7 294
Estados Unidos da América	6 438
Venezuela	4 886
Angola	4 842
Alemanha Federal	4 482
Guiné-Bissau	3 347
França	3 019
Outros	20 450
TOTAL GERAL	101 011

Fonte: “Residentes Estrangeiros em Portugal, 1980-1989”, Lisboa, MAI / SEF, 2001

Source: Trindade, n.d, p.174

As we can see in the chart, in 1989, of a total of 101,011 foreigners in the territory, the majority was from Guinea, Brazil and the United Kingdom (Trindade, n.d). In the nineties and two thousand, on the other hand, the flows became more intense. In the article *Retrato de um Portugal migrante: a evolução da emigração, da imigração e do seu estudo nos últimos 40 anos*, it is stated that during the 90s there was a change in the geographical origin of migrants in Portugal, with an increase of the Asian and Brazilian foreigners, and this changed Portugal’s position in the global scene, making it a receiving country in Europe:

Entre 1980 e 1999, observou-se uma alteração na origem geográfica dos imigrantes, com a redução da proporção de imigrantes europeus e africanos no total de imigrantes e com o aumento importante da percentagem de asiáticos e brasileiros (que passaram de 2% e 7,4%, em 1980, para 4,1% e 10,9%, em 1999). A dinâmica e diversidade das origens dos migrantes para Portugal representa um primeiro sinal de alteração do posicionamento do país no sistema migratório global que passa de periferia (na Europa) para “porta de entrada” no sistema

migratório europeu (Góis and Marques, 2011, as cited in Góis and Marques, 2018, p.128).

The same article mentions how in the beginning of the 21st century, there was a large influx of migrants in a short period of time, accompanied by a change in their countries of origin, with the main nationalities being from Eastern Europe (mainly Ukraine) and Brazil. Ukrainians at first only needed a short stay visa and the Brazilians none: this meant they did not need any permit to enter and work in Portugal, but also lacked rights, protections and integration policies. The Decreto-Lei 4/2001 of the 10th of January, particularly article 55, was created to regularize their status and manage the future flows. This opening of the Portuguese labor market to international workers led to further fluxes that made the Ukrainians, Brazilians and Cape Verdeans the main foreign nationalities in the country (Góis and Marques, 2018).

In the dissertation *O diferencial salarial entre trabalhadores nacionais e imigrantes em Portugal* by Nuno Miguel de Sousa Pereira (2020) the author explains the same trends, referring to further official sources such as the Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (SEF) and Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE).

The following graph 2.2, gives us a view on how the trends has evolved in twenty years, after Portugal entered in the European Union.

Table 2.2

Tabela 6- População residente estrangeira por origem continental (indivíduos)

	1990	2000	2010	2018
Europa	31 412	61 678	176 834	202 298
África	45 255	98 769	107 079	89 771
América	26 369	37 590	127 872	117 965
Ásia	4 152	8 746	30 961	66 941
Oceânia		526	253	453
Apátrida		273	21	30
Desconhecida		5	29	9
Total	107 767	207 587	443 055	477 472

Fonte: INE; SEF (elaboração própria)

Source: Pereira, 2020, p.23

As we can see, from the nineties to two thousand, the main flow came from Africa (45,255 and 98,769), but after that flows prevailed the migrants that came from Europe (176,834 to 2018) and America (127,872 to 2018) and so remained until the pandemic.

The article *Imigrantes em Portugal: uma síntese histórica* (Baganha, Marques and Góis, 2009) explains the reasons of this human mobility to Portugal. Firstly, there was a large supply of work in the county and there was a minimum salary for unqualified workers and third sector jobs that was highly superior to the one of countries such as Brazil and Easter Europe. Secondly, countries that belonged to the Soviet Union had less legal barriers to emigration. Lastly, because in some regions – especially PALOP ones – African countries with Portuguese as the official language (*Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa*), a strong culture of emigration was established for the better conditions of life that Portugal could guarantee, even if the country itself had not yet implemented any kind of active policy for recruitment.

As stated by Cerqueira (2002), between 2010 and 2014 many immigrants came back to their countries of origins due to the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis, and in 2012 the Law No. 29/2012 modified the entrance conditions according to the European union guidelines and introduced new measures for the admission of foreign international students. In 2015 the asylum applications grew further because of the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East and continued until the pre-pandemic period.

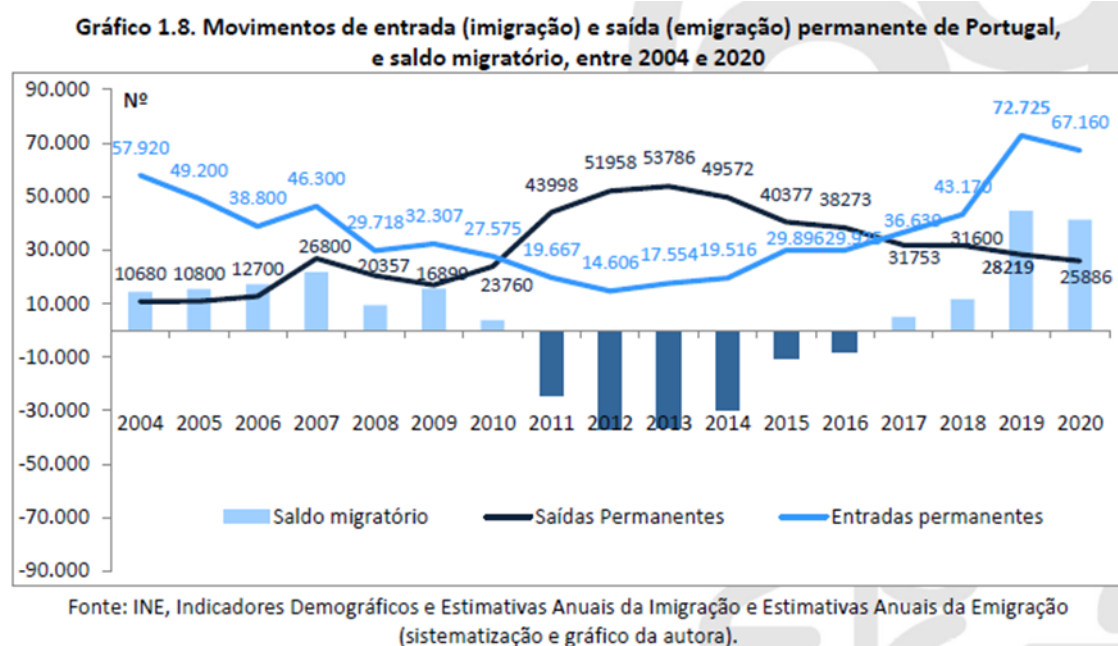
To see more in detail the migratory trends of the last twenty years, I will refer to the *Relatório Estatístico Anual* (Annual Statistical Report) of the ACM (Alto Comissariado para as Migrações) - High Commission for Migration (2021) and the annual reports published by the SEF-the institution managing the flows. The RIFAs – *Relatório de Imigração, Fronteiras e Asilo* (annual report on integration and asylum) provides a detailed overview of the migration situation through the analysis of various aspects concerning the migrant population, more specifically from the 2000s onwards, when immigration became significant for the country. The documents are remarkably interesting in our analysis because they also mention the legislation, the institutions dedicated to the management of immigration and even the types of permits and Visas

that have been promoted over the years. The distribution and composition of the flows, their employment, health, and housing situation are also analyzed. This data is also compared with government censuses to have a more complete picture, which can be used by agencies and government for public policies. It should be mentioned that the indicators used today for demographic and analytical purposes are therefore stock - that is, the total number of foreigners present in a territory at a given time; flow, then the total of receipts and payments, and the balance, which is the ratio of outflows to inputs: if there are more inputs it will be positive, if there are more outputs then it will be negative (UN, 2024).

Starting with the ACM report (2021) we will see that immigration matters is important for the country for two main reasons statistically: the proportion between immigrants and residents and the evolution of the migratory balance. I chose the ACM report of 2021 to show the data of the post-pandemic, which can better highlight and predict how immigration would be in the next two years. It is stated that, in the last decade, Portugal has taken only the eighteenth position as to the importance of migrants in the total number of residents. Apart from the growing positive balance in the early 2000s, there was a change between 2010 and 2015, as we also saw above, which made it fall to a lower position and below the European average, showing a negative balance between 2011 and 2016, causing significant outflows especially in 2012, due to the economic crisis that impacted the country. The positive migration balance returns in 2017 instead, when the law n. 102/2017, that allowed the application of residence through an employment contract, is enacted. In the same year, changes were also made to the expulsion laws, favoring the protection of those who have already been on national territory since they were under 10 years old, who had minor children or had given birth in the country. The entry for seasonal work was also favored, through other European legislation, and this allowed entries for volunteer, seasonal or au pair purposes. The effects of the last law are however reflected in the significant increase of applications for residence visas: in 2018 applications were 243; in 2019 5,853; and in 2020 6852 (ACM, 2021). The trend continues until 2020, when due to the blockages imposed by most countries, people could not travel, but still the rate does not decrease

significantly. The graphic below shows exactly this: the trend between 2004 and 2020. The permanent revenue in 2004 was 57,920, while in 2020 it was 67,160. Between 2010 and 2015/2016 all trends reversed, until they recovered completely later, until the beginning of the pandemic. In 2010, revenue was 27,575 and in 2017 it was 36,639.

Figure 2.1



Source: ACM, 2021, p.29

From 2019 to 2020, there is a decrease in incoming flows again due to the pandemic and restrictions on mobility between countries, as new ways of managing the entries are defined. The ACM (2021) report estimates that the main causes of migration were family reunions, study and retirement until 2021, but still, being a very heterogeneous migration it is difficult to generalize all the causes.

As razões de entrada em Portugal não são idênticas para todos os fluxos imigratórios. Enquanto as razões de estudo predominam nos vistos de residência atribuídos aos nacionais do Brasil (53,8% em 2018, 54,1% em 2019 e 64,5% em 2020), de Angola (84,6% em 2018, 66,4% em 2019 e 59,5% em 2020), de Cabo Verde (78,7% em 2018, 71,9% em 2019 e 75,2% em 2020) e da Guiné-Bissau (70,3% em 2018, 84,3% em 2019 e 84,2% em 2020); no caso dos nacionais da

Índia (77,8% em 2018, 78,4% em 2019 e 95% em 2020), do Paquistão (91,3% em 2020) e, também antes, do Nepal (99,1% em 2018 e 98,5% em 2019), é o reagrupamento familiar a principal razão para a concessão de vistos de residência nos postos consulares Portugueses (ACM, 2021, p.37).

In 2021 new measures are introduced to amend the legal regime of entry, residence, exit and removal from the national territory and to promote residence to those who invest in urban regeneration and cultural heritage (purchase of real estate) or investment in job creation (for the establishment of companies offering employment to at least 5 people for a minimum of 3 years), or capital transfer from 500,000 for scientific research activities. This reform was very fundamental in strengthening the incoming flow in 2021, especially increased the number of foreigners staying in the country for study (ACM, 2021). It is notable how the foreign population is not concentrated in a homogeneous way but rather depends very much on the migratory network and the job opportunities. It is clear that, at least until 2020, the foreigners were mostly established in the country south, which is the most touristic area. In the central area of Lisbon, not counting the whole metropolitan district, foreigners represented 16.2% of residents in 2020, with an increase of more 8.5% during the year. This trend has been homogeneous and similar in Sintra and Cascais, considering the proportion of residents and the urban area. Porto, Almada and Albufeira, although, have a ratio between foreigners and resident population more reduced, presented respectively a growth of +12.7% for Porto, and for Almada and Albufeira well +16, 3% and +16% in the year 2019/2020. So, in the overall balance, before the pandemic, in the ten municipalities with more foreigners, foreigner's presence increased 12.2% (ACM, 2021).

Table 2.3: Foreign resident population in Portugal in the 10 municipalities with the highest number of foreign residents, in 2020.

Municípios (top 10)	Número de Estrangeiros 2020	% face ao total de estrangeiros residentes em Portugal 2020	Variação 2019-2020 (%)
Lisboa	107.238	16,2	+8,5
Sintra	41.155	6,2	+8,8
Cascais	32.939	5,0	+8,6
Amadora	23.458	3,5	+9,3
Loures	21.077	3,2	+7,3
Odivelas	19.946	3,0	+12,7
Loulé	18.892	2,9	+8,3
Albufeira	17.177	2,6	+16,0
Porto	16.405	2,5	+12,7
Almada	15.471	2,3	+16,3
Total	662.095	100	+12,2

Fonte: Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (SEF) (sistematização e cálculos da autora).

Source: ACM, 2021, p.47

The INE - Instituto Nacional de Estatística (National Statistical Institute) report provides us with further data about the migration trends during and shortly after the pandemic:

Estima-se que, durante 2021, tenham entrado 97 119 imigrantes permanentes em Portugal, o que corresponde a uma taxa de variação anual de 16,1%. Do total dos imigrantes permanentes, 63,4% eram homens e 69,1% eram pessoas em idade ativa (15 a 64 anos) (INE, 2021, p.16).

In the 2022 report it is stated “um total de 117 843 imigrantes permanentes (97 119 em 2021) e de 30 954 emigrantes permanentes ” (INE,2023).

In 2023, instead there have been 189.367 new permanent entries, so 13,3% more compared to 2022:

do total dos imigrantes permanentes: 53,4% eram homens; 62,3% eram nacionais de um país fora da União Europeia (UE); 75,2% nasceram num país Extra-UE; 81,7% residiam anteriormente num país Extra-UE; e 80,8% eram pessoas em idade ativa (15 a 64 anos) (SEF, 2022, p.16).

If we also briefly consider the socio-demographic characteristics of the resident foreign population, migrants appear in reports to be younger than the Portuguese population, and this plays an important role in a rapidly ageing country. As a large part of the foreign population is of working age, the state must also prioritize integration

measures, such as learning the local language, which is a fundamental requirement for integration, both at work and in society. As also stated in the ACM report (2021), learning the language allows them to get a job faster, especially in sectors that are usually avoided by the locals. The last modifications to the entry conditions have been made in 2024, where the *manifestação de interesse* - modality that allowed the permanence in the country even without a Visa - was eliminated, the entry and stay conditions have been tightened, and the newly developed AIMA has more functions than SEF.

2.2 Risks for migrants

In the book *Migrações Internacionais sob múltiplas perspectivas*, Ramos (2021) adds that both the reception and the insertion of migrants into host societies create the need for important political strategies in different sectors. The fact that there are legislations in the European Union does not automatically translate into their application in different countries. Foreign groups are more vulnerable to hardships than locals, and it is important that information and communication is managed by the governments. As stated below, the presence of foreigners in the national territory is crucial for the demography, especially if we consider a country where the average age is rising more: it is essential that they are legally well protected.

In the report *Migrants, Minorities and Employment in Portugal* it is discussed how the intensification of migration flows from the 21st century changed the structure of the labor market and the composition of the workforce. In the early 2000s, there was the need to elaborate an integration policy that could protect foreign workers from the emerging negative attitudes of the natives, that according to Dias, Oliveira, Marques and Góis (2002) was particularly present in poor work conditions and low wages sectors. This attitude grew with the presence and visibility of migrants in the territory and mostly in the labor market: not knowing the language, the cultural skills, and the legal ways to protect themselves, even the most qualified foreign workers are more prone to be exploited and underpaid. The success of migrants in finding employment depends on

numerous factors such as sex, age, education, and experience. However, sometimes even the educational and academic qualifications may not be recognized, forcing them to accept low-wage jobs or become self-employed.

The book *Migration Control, Logics and Strategies in Europe* by Finotelli and Ponzo (2023) mentions also how having kept the law n° 23/2007 of the 4th of July (Assembleia da República, 2007) for the need of a short stay visa clearly shows the inefficiency of the migration system and a normalization of irregularity in Portugal. This system was a way to eliminate competition between the locals and the foreign workforce: the irregularity of some was an opportunity for unscrupulous recruiters to exploit employees. Ramos (2021, p. 161) states that the precarious status of many migrants, instead of integrating them, reinforced negative stereotypes among the Portuguese natives:

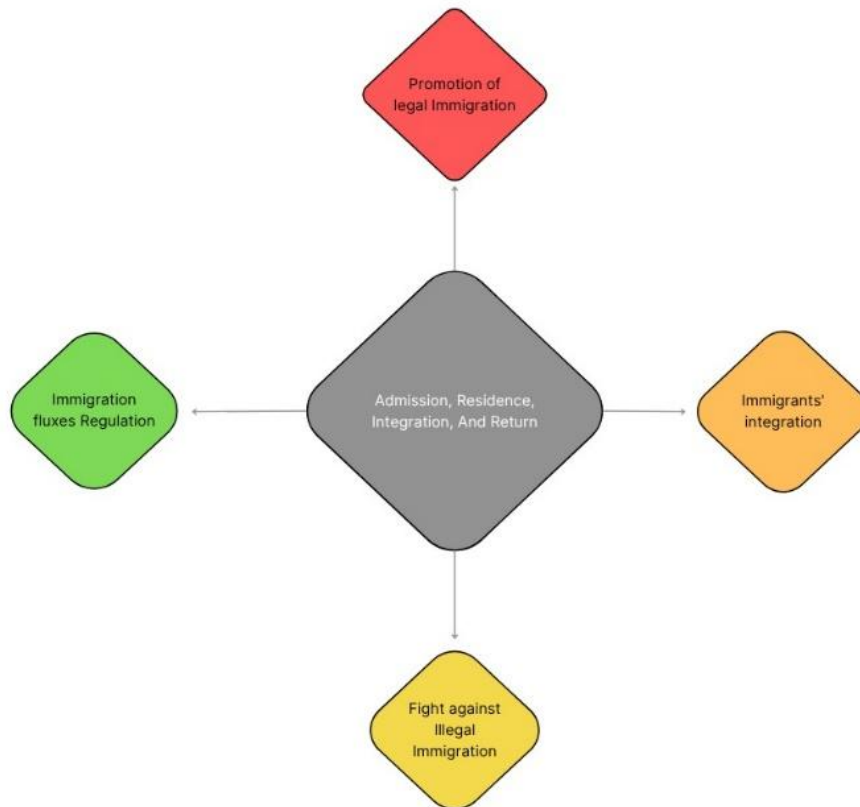
A situação de clandestinidade/irregular migratória, a fraca escolarização,o desenraizamento, isolamento social e precariedade económica, condições de trabalho difíceis, a falta de informação, os problemas administrativos, linguísticos, culturais e comunicacionais e as dificuldades em adotar as normas socioculturais da sociedade receptora e em adaptar-se a um novo estilo de vida vêm reforçar atitudes de preconceito, racismo e discriminação, bem como as desigualdades de oportunidades e a exclusão social dos migrantes, reduzir as possibilidades de integração.

Most of the time, migrants are grouped with compatriots, in the most extreme conditions in illegal areas with precarious conditions that will lead them to social isolation. The pandemic has made existing problems worse, among those: unemployment, poverty and isolation. This does not mean that they tend to be less educated, because as many people in recent flows have said, they come for business and study purposes, but those who do not have qualifications risk falling into very precarious conditions, particularly during the pandemic (Ramos, 2021).

2.3 Annual reports and legal framework

Before going into the various government measures taken during the pandemic in more detail, I will refer to SEF - Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras' (Foreigners and Borders Service) migration reports for the years 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 to explain the governmental organigram for immigration management. Those reports are published every year to review the migrant situation of the country and to take stock of the points to be improved. It is established that national policies are made based on European policies, and it is important to note that the RIFA of the years following the pandemic differ from the previous ones for the different measures introduced. The RIFA report aims to strengthen statistical data given by the SEF, collecting the official numbers of entries and exits, as well as the issuing of the documents (SEF, 2020). In general, through the annual publication we are offered an important overview of the operation of the *Política Nacional de Imigração e Asilo* – National Politics of Immigration and Asylum, which is then mainly managed by the SEF, which has now been replaced by AIMA - *Agência para a Imigração, Mobilidade e Asilo* (Agency for Migration and Mobility) from October 2023. In this case we will analyze the tasks of the then SEF, because it is the authority that has acted during the years taken by us in analysis.

Figure 2.4: Main functions of the SEF

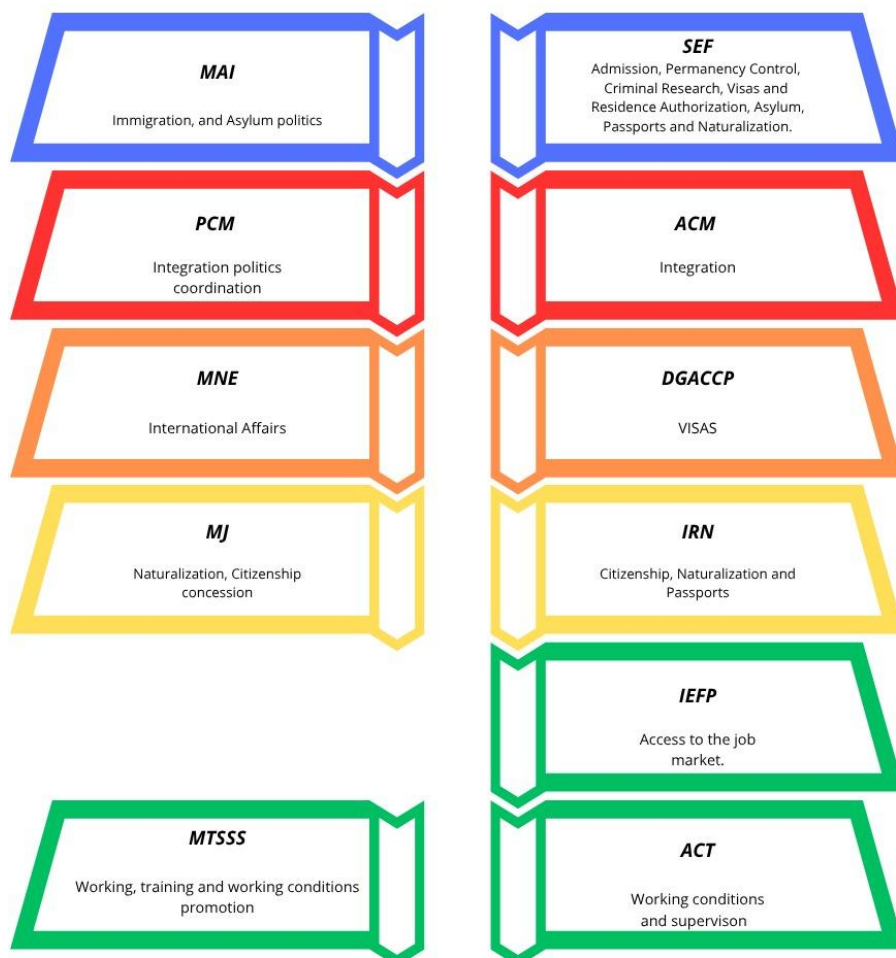


Source: Elaborated by the author based on data from SEF, 2020.

As we can see, what the SEF was concerned with was broadly the attraction, admission, permanence, integration and return or expulsion of foreigners. There were also other areas of intervention, for example the promotion of legal immigration, carried out through the facilitation of visas and permits or cooperation with different international institutions; the regulation of flows, then the monitoring of these and management of entry and exit policies; the fight against illegal immigration, then controls and sanctions at the borders together with a monitoring of stays; and finally the integration: various types of support and collaboration with specialized migration institutes. It is also specified that the monitoring of migration policies in Portugal and asylum is the responsibility of the Ministry of Internal Administration, whose task is to

manage the entry, stay, exit and removal from the national territory. SEF intervenes in the same fields, but it is still a separate body that manages the first 3 aspects. Below we can see the bodies responsible for 2020:

Figure 2.5: Main institutions involved in migration governance in Portugal.



Source: Elaborated by the author based on data from SEF, 2020.

The Ministério da Administração Interna - Ministry of Internal Administration is responsible to implement immigration policies; the SEF instead oversees the admission, staying, criminal investigation, expulsion, emission of Visa and Residence permits, asylums, passports and nationality. The PCM (Presidência do Conselho de Ministros) - Prime Minister's Office coordinates integration policies; the Alto Comissariado para a Imigração - High Commission for Migration (ACM) deals specifically with Integration

policies; Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros - Foreign Affairs Minister (MNE) is accountable for regulating foreign trade; The Direção-Geral dos Assuntos Consulares e Comunidades Portuguesas – Directorate/ General of Consular Affairs and Communities (DGACCP) manages the issuing of Visas; the Ministério da Justiça - Ministry of Justice (MJ) instead grants Portuguese nationality to foreigners, and then the *Instituto dos Registos e Notariado* - Notary registration Office (IRN) whose task is to release passports.

The Ministério do Trabalho, Solidariedade e Segurança Social - Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MTSS) is responsible for all matters related to work. It is divided into Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional - Institute of Labor and professional education (IEFP) and the Autoridade para as Condições do Trabalho - authority of work conditions (ACT) finally handle the most bureaucratic aspects of the employment regulations.

2.4 Impact of the pandemic on migration

The three RIFA documents also present the legislation developed for each political body, so before proceeding with the annual data of foreigners per country, we will see a legislative framework to better understand the report. In the next chapter, we see several indicators representing, for example, the annual stock of resident foreigners, new residences obtained, taxation, voluntary abandonment, deportations and removals, trafficking in persons and fraudulent documents. As stated above, compared to 2019 in 2020 there was an increase of +12.2% reaching a total of 662,095 foreigners' residents on national territory (SEF, 2020). It is interesting how the trends are also presented: for example, it is mentioned that the Brazilian nationality is the first foreign community present (27.8% of the total); how flows have increased for the country's reputation of being one of the safest in Europe; and how flows from India and Italy have increased.

In 2020, various measures were introduced in Europe and Portugal to promote integration, even with a distance modality due to the restrictions. Among them, the *E-Balcão* and *MySEF* digital platforms, to simplify bureaucratic processes and being able

to get administrative tasks online. Moreover, the mobile application *SEFMOBILE* was created to improve the monitoring of the regular entries in the country, while the App *SEF em movimento*, was developed to help and assist the most vulnerable foreign citizens to avoid potentially risky situations. Another online initiative was *SEF vai à escola*, which was aimed at children of undocumented immigrants and guaranteed them access to education. The government strengthened also language and translation support services through services such as *linha sns24* and *linha de apoio ao migrante*. They both proved to be essential to address migrant's support for any social, health and legal question they might have had. Furthermore, practical solutions were established to facilitate the obtaining of a user number to access the national health service. These measures reflected the government's effort to ensure support for migrant communities by adapting traditional procedures to a digital format due to the pandemic restrictions.

In the repository of practices on the website of the UN, the exceptional measures taken by Portugal have guaranteed not only health rights but also civil rights. In fact, the procedures for renewing online permits have accelerated the process of obtaining citizenship and issuing entry and residence permits. The vaccine has been guaranteed to anyone, even undocumented people, thus demonstrating a fair treatment for all the population on the territory. In addition, the allocation of the online health user number has given access to care to many new migrants who have been caught out by the pandemic. In summary, fundamental rights have been fully respected through the innovation of new online methods for exercise. These measures are still in place, although their function has mainly been resumed in presence: nevertheless, they have represented for the country a step further in terms of migration policy, allowing it to welcome even more foreigners. (United Nations Network on Migration, 2020)

On the website of the European Commission, more than 356,000 migrants were provisionally legalized during 2020 in Portugal, by issuing two decrees:

The first decree - published on 27 March 2020 - allowed approximately 260 000 immigrants with processes ongoing at SEF to be temporarily granted settled status. The Government then ordered the extension of this process through a

second decree on 8 November 2020, allowing the temporary settlement of 116 700 more immigrants who had submitted their requests between 18 March and 15 October 2020. In total, these two orders resulted in the temporary regularization of 356 700 immigrants (European Commission, 2021)

The European Union agency for asylum in fact talks about how the European Union, faced with the emergency of Covid-19 had to reorganize the ways in which countries admitted foreigners on their territory. European countries have therefore found ways to access information on applicants for permits and visas, as well as different entry procedures (quarantine of newly arrived residents, reduced physical mobility in institutions, hygiene measures) to avoid infection. The presence support services were reduced but their efficiency was increased due to the digitalization of services, thanks to which the foreign presence in Portugal continued to grow despite the pandemic. (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2021)

The analysis of migrations in Portugal highlights the importance of adequate laws for the different migratory flows that the country experienced throughout its history. Migration is a complex phenomenon to be managed, especially during emergencies: fortunately, Portugal has been able to guarantee the protection and rights of newcomers, Being innovative and receptive towards foreigners. Although the country has made progress in history, it is always good to formulate policies according to the needs of the moment, so that newcomers do not face difficulties in obtaining their rights and integration.

3. Migration and strategic diplomacy between Portugal and Mexico in the international context

Having examined the historical and political context of migration in Portugal, the risks faced by migrants and the bodies responsible for managing migration flows in the previous chapter, I will now demonstrate the ways how non-European citizens enter to Portugal, categorizing them by the types of visas and bureaucratic processes required. I will then show the number of Mexicans residing in Portuguese territory just after the pandemic and explain how the bilateral relations between Portugal and Mexico have developed over time. The anniversary of 160 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries – an event in which I took part as a contributor during my internship at the Mexican embassy in Portugal – was an opportunity to reflect on the diplomatic ties between the two countries, and the current state of their cooperation. Additionally, Claudia Sheinbaum's rise to power in Mexico has generated political adjustments and promised social changes, affecting the migratory and diplomatic landscape. Although these recent changes mentioned by the president will not have to do with the migration of Mexicans to Europe and even less, let alone Portugal, they highlight the importance of diplomacy at a global level and thus the role of diplomatic institutions and partner organizations of migrant networks.

3.1 Legal entry to Portugal: visas and categories of migrants

First, I will introduce the various ways to enter and stay in Portugal. These are influenced by the European Union regulations, although they are not the same for all countries. Each country has its own conditions of entry according to the migrant's nationality and reason for travel. The European Commission website (n.d.) states that tourists can stay for up to 90 days out of every 180 without a visa. For any type of longer stay, however, there are different migratory profiles for Portugal. I will briefly describe the entry and stay conditions for each profile.

Employees: If they wish to stay for less than one year, they must necessarily be in possession of a seasonal work visa; if they wish to stay for a period exceeding 90 days, they must have a temporary stay visa. For stays of more than one year, however, they must apply on the spot for a *temporary residence permit* at AIMA (formerly SEF). This does not guarantee a permanent permit but rather allows them to work and live in Portugal for longer. Visas must be requested from consulates or embassies in the country of origin. The IEFP (Institute for Employment and Professional Training), mentioned in the previous chapter evaluates visa applications and ensures that applicants have an employment contract, qualifications, or sufficient funds to support themselves during their desired period of stay. They must also not have been banned from the country or the European Union. If the workers wish to travel to Portugal to stay for a long time and look for work on site, they must then apply for the *Residence visa*, which allows them to stay in the country for up to four months find employment.

Highly qualified workers: these applicants must undergo the same procedures and provide the same documents as the above category. However, in this case, it is the Ministry of Education and Science that approves their professional qualifications of the visa applicants. The length of stay depends on the period stipulated in the contract, with the possibility of renewal. Skilled workers must apply for a permit from the General Secretariat of the Ministry of Education and Science (SGMEC - *Secretaria-Geral do Ministério da Educação e Ciência*).

Intra-corporate transferees (ICTs): this category of workers is simply transferred to work elsewhere. Normally, ICTs are managers, specialists or trainees and only require the permission of AIMA, a criminal record check, proof of funds, a prior employment contract and insurance. This type of permit is valid for up to three years.

International service providers: only need to apply for a residence visa, depending on the type of service provided, together with the various documents and contract.

Seasonal workers only require the seasonal visa and therefore apply under the same conditions as regular employees.

Self-employed workers need a temporary stay visa for short periods; otherwise, they require a residence visa, as do regular employees. Family members already present in the destination country may apply for family reunification if they are legally resident there. All applications must be made to the AIMA offices, and the required documents vary according to the type of family member (e.g. minor, spouse or parent).

Researchers: they have the same entry conditions as employees, and depending on length of their stay, they will choose a residence or temporary stay visa.

Students: On the other hand, as the periods of stay are longer, they opt for a visa or residence permit for longer periods of stay, provided they can demonstrate that they have been accepted by an educational institution.

Various sub-categories of migratory profiles also exist, but I have decided to report on the main ones mentioned by the European Commission which refer to the main categories of foreign nationals present in different European countries. The only exceptions imposed by Portugal are for nationals of member countries of the community of Portuguese language countries (*Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa - CPLP*)³: Brazil, Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique e Sao Tomé and Príncipe (European Commission, n.d).

3.2 Mexican migratory dynamics in Portugal

Having shown the entry conditions for Portugal, it is useful to revisit the RIFA documents of the SEF (now AIMA) analyzed in the second chapter to see in detail the numbers of the Mexican population living in the country just after the pandemic. The last pages of all SEF reports are all devoted to tables of indicators on the number immigrants at air, sea and land borders. There is also data on asylum seekers (applications, refugees, children, humanitarian aid). Overall, AIMA's contribution to European and international politics can be summarized as a verification of the alignment

³ For detailed requirements and procedures refer to: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal. (n.d.). CPLP visa documentation. Retrieved from <https://vistos.mne.gov.pt/pt/vistos-nacionais/documentacao-instrutoria/cplp>

of yearly objectives. The final appendices of the documents contain a table showing the resident population by nationality and sex. Since I previously showed the general entry and exit numbers for the country, I will now refer exclusively to Mexicans. In 2020, only 640 Mexicans were registered as regular foreign residents, while 106 Mexicans were registered as regular foreign residents in transit (SEF, 2021). In 2021, the stock figure increased slightly to 699, while the flow figure increased to 148 (SEF, 2022). In 2022, the stock increased significantly to 826 and the flow to 221 (SEF, 2023). The RIFA document for 2023 records a stock of 955 and a flow of 225 (AIMA, 2024).

Based on previous data, we can see that the number of Mexicans has increased considerably between 2020 and 2023. I will now provide further details about their presence in Portugal in 2021 through the document *População Estrangeira Residente em Portugal 2021 - México* by the Strategy and Research office - *Gabinete de Estratégia e Estudos* (GEE, 2023).

Table 3.1

Gabinete de Estratégia e Estudos

População Estrangeira Residente em Portugal

Resident Foreign Population in Portugal

México

Mexico

Ranking na comunidade imigrante em 2021

Ranking in the immigrant community in 2021

55

População do país ou agregado de países residente em Portugal e seu peso relativo

Population of the country (or aggregate of countries) resident in Portugal and its relative weight

	2000	2005	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
População do país ou agregado de países residente em Portugal (n°)	196	266	331	245	281	310	311	326	385	413	433	474	516	520	595	640	699
Population of the country (or aggregate of countries) resident in Portugal (n.)																	
Homens / Men	82	103	125	108	126	132	140	136	167	179	177	183	212	208	238	241	289
Mulheres / Women	114	163	206	137	155	178	171	190	218	234	256	291	304	312	357	399	410
Rácio Homens/Mulheres Men/Women Ratio	71,9	63,2	60,7	78,8	81,3	74,2	81,9	71,6	76,6	76,5	68,7	62,9	69,7	66,7	66,7	60,4	70,5
- Variação (%)	-	-	-	-26,8	14,7	10,3	0,3	4,8	18,1	7,3	4,8	9,5	8,9	0,8	14,4	7,6	9,2
Percentage change																	
- Percentagem da população estrangeira residente	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1
Percentage of foreign resident population																	
- Percentagem da população residente total	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Percentage of total resident population																	
Por memória:																	
Mens:																	
População estrangeira residente (milhares)	207,6	274,6	436,0	440,3	454,2	445,3	436,8	417,0	401,3	395,2	388,7	397,7	421,7	480,3	590,3	662,1	698,9
Foreign resident population (thousands)																	
População residente de Portugal (milhões)	10 330,8	10 512,0	10 553,3	10 563,0	10 573,5	10 572,7	10 542,4	10 487,3	10 427,3	10 374,8	10 341,3	10 309,6	10 291,0	10 276,6	10 295,9	10 298,3	10 421,1
Resident population of Portugal (millions)																	
População residente de Portugal (thousands)																	

Source: GEE, 2023.

As we can see in Table 3.1, Mexicans are not among the largest ethnic groups in Portugal, occupying the 55th place. Its presence has increased very gradually and slowly over the years. In 2021, Mexican residents represented only 0,18% of all other foreign

nationalities. Consistent with the data reported in RIFA 2021 (SEF, 2022), the most prevalent foreign nationalities in the territory were Brazil, the United Kingdom, Cape Verde and Italy. The chart above shows that Mexican immigration decreased in the years following the 2008 economic crisis, and recovered in 2013. It is also notable that there have consistently been more Mexican women than men arriving in Portugal, at least until 2021. Unfortunately, I was unable to find the same data for subsequent years.

As already highlighted in Chapter 1, *Figure 2*, the main reasons for migration during the pandemic years were family reunion (36.5%), job search (16.4%) and job change (12.3%). Other reasons included marriage (9.2%), studies (6.7%), insecurity (0.6%) and natural disasters (0.4%). Considering the reasons for migration of the majority of the Mexican population, we see that they are primarily due to family reunification (including marriage unions) and because of work (including job searches). The same migration theories described in Chapter 1.2 cannot be excluded from each other, but they are complementary and we certainly cannot draw generalised conclusions about the complexity of the Mexican migratory phenomenon in Portugal. However, we have the interpretative context to understand the simultaneity of reasons.

However, migration dynamics are shaped by the bilateral diplomatic relations between Portugal and Mexico. In this context, it is important to examine the evolution of the relationship between countries, to demonstrate the active role that embassies have played in fostering economic and cultural dialogue between the two nations. The effects of these relations are not limited to the national scene; at a global level, this type of cooperation serves the greater purpose, which is that of creating migration policies even between larger areas, such as the Latin America and the European Union. We will then examine how these relationships have evolved over time and how, in recent years, they have led to an increasing number of agreements being created.

3.3 Trade Relations between Portugal and Mexico

In the text *A evolução das relações entre o México e Portugal* by Zárate (n.d) mentions how the trade relations between Portugal and Mexico have strengthened since

1986, when Portugal joined the European Union. Meanwhile the trade relations between Mexico and Europe have intensified since 2000. The author states that there is a further need of more cultural exchange between the two countries :

O México é, por isso, um velho parceiro de Portugal. No entanto, o vulgo dos portugueses ainda atribui pouca relevância ao país asteca. A tequilla, os mariachis, Cancun, os Maias e o piripiri continuam a ser as principais referências que os portugueses têm do México. Por outro lado, Portugal no México também não é muito bem conhecido. As personagens do futebol como Cristiano Ronaldo, Figo e Mourinho, o vinho do Porto, os romances de José Saramago e a história dos grandes descobridores portugueses são as primeiras ideias que vêm à memória. Não obstante, ambos os países querem concretizar o potencial das suas relações em todos os âmbitos (Zárate ,n.d).

In fact, the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs website mentions Mexico as a strategic partner in Latin America, with which Portugal shares many affinities. Regarding the beginning of relations between the two countries, it states that the first contact occurred in 1843 when the crown first approached Mexico. However, the first Portuguese diplomatic representation on Mexican soil did not occur until 1865. The website also refers that relations with Mexico have been regulated by the more general framework of the Ibero-American community framework, covering diplomatic, political, economic, cultural and tourist fields (Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, n.d.)

Mexico is a country that is very well integrated into world trade. It is the 15th biggest economy in the world and offers fertile ground for both national and international investments. According to the official website of the Mexican Embassy, Mexico is Portugal's second trading partner in Latin America after Brazil. In fact, trade between the two countries reached 853.3 million dollars in 2018. On a global scale, Portugal was Mexico's 50th trading partner and 15th in Europe. The site adds that the main products imported from Portugal are cars, turbojets, gas turbines and natural abrasives. Conversely, Mexico mainly imports oil, paper, and tractor accessories from Portugal. Trade mainly takes place between private parties in strategic sectors, and the

treaties concluded follow the same lines as those with the European Union. In Portugal, some Mexican food companies are present, such as Grupo Bimbo (a bakery company) and Grupo Nobre. In terms of Portuguese investment in Mexico, there are at least 173 companies. As stated in the Embassy of Mexico's website :

La inversión portuguesa directa acumulada se ha concentrado en los servicios profesionales, científicos y técnicos (58.4% del total); generación, transmisión y distribución de energía (10.4%), e industrias manufactureras (9.7%). Se tiene registro de 173 empresas con capital luso en México, las cuales están distribuidas en Veracruz, Ciudad de México y Coahuila (Embajada de México en Portugal, n.d.).

Over time, there have been several opportunities for dialogue, further promotion and agreements between the two countries. In a communiqué from the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores) in 2023, it was revealed that the Mexican Secretary, Ibarra, had met with the Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs, João Cravinho, in Mexico City, on the occasion of the meeting between the Portuguese President, António Costa, and Andrés Manuel López Obrador. The two sides agreed to intensify trade between the two countries by diversifying their agendas to obtain mutual benefits. They also discussed revising bilateral legal agreements to update or respect previous ones. The important role of Portuguese enterprises in major Mexican state projects, particularly in the energy and harbour sectors, was also recognised: “Destacaron el buen nivel de las inversiones y los intercambios económicos; así como la necesidad de hacerlos más dinámicos frente al amplio potencial de complementariedad existente entre México y Portugal”(Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, 2023). It was emphasised that the upcoming 160 years of diplomatic relations between Mexico and Portugal would be a good opportunity to strengthen bilateral political dialogue and increase cooperation and contribute to the a rules-based international system, global governance and sustainable development. The joint agenda includes agreements on fighting climate change, the energy transition, migration, and solidarity with the Ukrainian population.

In 2019, the Mexican subsecretary for North America, Julián Ventura, and the Portuguese secretary of state for foreign affairs and cooperation, Teresa Ribeiro, discussed issues of mutual interest between the two countries in order to strengthen collaboration for mutual benefit. According according to Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (2019), Portugal and Mexico have social affinities and linguistic closeness, facilitating academic, educational and cultural exchange. In addition to these aspects, , plans were made to strengthen relations between the private commercial, tourism and reverse sectors. Furthermore, they implemented the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The website also states that:

El Mecanismo de Consultas entre México y Portugal se creó en 1996. Las primeras dos reuniones se llevaron a cabo en Lisboa en 2003 y 2008. El comercio bilateral ascendió a 853.3 millones de dólares en 2018, y la inversión acumulada de Portugal en México entre 1999 y 2018 fue de \$182.4 millones de dólares.

This is why Mexico has increased its cultural initiatives over the years: these initiatives, together with economic ones, represent a strong connection between the two cultures, and celebrations have been held to mark this long-standing relationship. A concrete example of the friendship binding the two countries is the celebratio of the 160 years of diplomatic relations between Mexico and Portugal, which I analysed in my final report. The Mexican Embassy in Portugal has played a central role in promoting bilateral cooperation and encouraging dialogue between the two countries on cultural, economic, and political issues. The anniversary, which was celebrated with a photographic and documentary exhibition at the National Archives of Torre do Tombo on 17 October. Attended by the Mexican Ambassador and the Portuguese President, it provided an opportunity for reflection and relaunched of the initiatives both in progress and in planning. This demonstrates the pivotal role of embassies in the international arena and in supporting compatriots living abroad.

3.4 The role of the embassies and NGOs in the international context

Embassies and consulates, as well as chambers of commerce and institutions dedicated to language and culture, play a fundamental role in protecting citizens abroad. They are also centres of political, commercial, legal and cultural exchange. These institutions provide a bridge between the two countries. The support they offer, in addition to state representation (as discussed in detail in the *Embassy departments R.1* section of the stage report), is very comprehensive, providing a reference point for expatriate citizens and anyone interested in travelling to the represented country. As demonstrated throughout this work, embassies play a crucial role in dialogue and the formulation of public and foreign policies, not to mention the dissemination of culture between countries.

At the same time, partner organisations formed in connection with the embassy or created by networks of migrants abroad provide additional support for expatriates. These organisations act at a more local level by organising events, competitions, celebrations and investments and may cover different areas, collaborating to provide mutual support. Often non-profit, they are real spaces of solidarity that can mobilize resources and facilitate a better integration of citizens in foreign countries. These organisations complement the work of diplomatic institutes, and in their mutual collaboration improve the quality of life of expatriate citizens.

The first important Mexican government agency for mexicans abroad is the *Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior* (IME) – Institute for Mexicans abroad and it's a political body of the the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and mostly helps with the initiatives and needs of the mexicans that live and work abroad. Its mission is to promote strategies and programs through partner associations so that the community abroad can be better integrated in the host societies. In the official website we read that IME's tasks are :

Promover estrategias, integrar programas, recoger propuestas y recomendaciones de las comunidades, sus miembros, sus organizaciones y órganos consultivos, tendientes a fortalecer sus vínculos con su país de origen y

a fomentar su integración en las sociedades en las que residen e interactúan (Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior, n.d).

Through the delegations abroad, IME directly collaborates with the consulates by promoting scholarships, educational programs, and electoral participation.

In Portugal there are only two official non-profit organizations, which are the *RedGlobal México - Capitulo Portugal* and the *Casa da América Latina*, representing the entire Latin American region.

The Red Global México is an independent organization of highly qualified professionals founded and financed by the IME, whose aim is to contribute to the development of the country through collaboration with business, technological and cultural institutions. The institution's community promotes educational and business opportunities between home and host countries, in cooperation with embassies. Through the online platform and informal social networks, it organises events for both cultural and academic promotion as well as business project management. RedGlobalMx collaborates with INE and the various Mexican representations abroad and is divided into chapters by country or region, and each direction (democratically elected) adapts the activity according to the needs of the territory and the community, but always respecting the mission of the government:

La RGMX se han enriquecido y los programas de trabajo se han diversificado de acuerdo a los intereses e impulso local de sus miembros. Cada Capítulo es responsable de promover la generación de sus propios recursos y puede optar por participar en diferentes iniciativas o fondos nacionales o internacionales para proponer proyectos que vinculen la transferencia de conocimientos a México. Algunos Capítulos tienen, además de los proyectos, otros programas en apoyo de la calidad de vida de los mexicanos en el exterior o para la promoción de la cultura mexicana en el exterior. (RedGlobalMX, n.d)

Another institution is *Casa da América Latina* (CAL) in Lisbon, founded in 1998 and aims at promoting the cooperation between Portugal and LatinAmerican countries on a cultural, economic and political level. The CAL organizes events in collaboration with

other ONGs, diplomatic institutes and the Foreign Affairs portuguese ministry in order to promote the exchanges. It was founded and financed by portuguese municipalities, Embassies, foreign affairs ministry and eventually companies (Casa da América Latina, n.d).

A concrete example of the collaboration between these organizations and the Mexican Embassy, as mentioned in my report, is the public event of *Día de Muertos 2024*, held on 1, 2 and 3 November at *Fabrica Braço da Prata*. The Mexican government provided funding for the event and the Cultural Department has researched and collaborated with Portuguese institutions in the capital to find a suitable venue. RedGlobalMX collaborated by sending artists, artisans, animators, and restaurants who could sell traditional food at the event. The CAL instead inserted the event in its agenda and helped with its promotion. This collaboration strengthens the cultural link between Mexico and Portugal and demonstrates the global importance of these entities, which operate locally within expatriate communities as partners of official institutions that promote culture and international ties.

3.5 The election of President Claudia Sheinbaum and future prospects

The arrival of the new President, Claudia Sheinbaum, is also seen as strengthening the key role of Mexican diplomatic institutions. She is the first woman to lead the Mexican United States. Her election signalled a change in the Latin American landscape, with potential repercussions for the country's future, particularly given her immediate commitment to migration and the country's economic development. Firstly, however, it is important to contextualise the new political scenario that has emerged following her election: the change also promises to be both programmatic and symbolic in the light of her political and social vision. I will briefly analyse her profile and the main development policy guidelines she has promoted in the field of the humanitarian management of migration crises. I will show how, in an international context, she is highlighting the pivotal role of consular and diplomatic networks in safeguarding

Mexican citizens abroad. Furthermore, I will illustrate her commitment to implementing local development policies that address the underlying causes of emigration in Mexico.

In this newspaper article, Dr. Guinot (2023), coordinator of the UNAM - *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* gender critical studies doctorate, stresses that the election of a woman was a highly symbolic event. As already mentioned in the final report of the internship, many newspapers, including those in Portugal, covered the news of Mexico's first female president as a sign of imminent great change. Historically and culturally, it was men have largely dominated public offices. Nonetheless, in recent years this dynamic has begun to change. However, this does not mean that things have actually changed at a grassroots level. Therefore, according to the author, the gender of the president should not automatically be compared with progress, as is reported at an international level. It will actually be necessary to observe how she exercises her policy in favour of women and equality through a progressive agenda.

The article *La primera presidenta de México: un hito para todas* also confirms the historical importance of its elections, and highlights that equal democratic participation is one of its objectives: “El futuro ya llegó. México, con su primera mujer presidenta, demuestra que el cambio es posible. Pero este hito, aunque monumental, es solo el inicio de un largo camino hacia un mundo justo, seguro y en igualdad” (Vaeza, 2024). She plans to combine economic development and social justice, following former president Lopez Obrador. The 65th Mexico’s head of state had in fact started a national plan which was meant to be historic and transformative (*Quarta transformación*), according to CNN, such as the three previous transformations the country had undergone in the Independence war (1810-1821), the Guerra de reforma (1858-1861) and the Revolución (1917). Between the principles he wanted to follow there were: protection to the indigenous population, fight against the corruption, social justice, equal wealth distribution and anti-poverty measures (CNN Espanol, 2024). President Sheinbaum is now, at the beginning of her term, programming on how to implement Obrador’s principles in her political agenda and development plans.

To demonstrate this, a communiqué from the Presidency of the Republic states that, after her election, President Sheinbaum immediately presented the national development plan for the five-year period 2025-2030. This plan aims to amplify country's democratic power, by listening people's proposals through forums organised in various cities across the country in January 2025. She stated:

Nosotros creemos que con el Plan México y el Plan de Desarrollo que tenemos vamos a impulsar el crecimiento económico. Ahora, no es suficiente el crecimiento económico. Un país debe medirse no solamente por cuánto aumenta el Producto Interno Bruto, sino cómo se distribuyen los recursos, cuánto ganan sus ciudadanos, cuál es el salario que perciben, a qué derechos tienen acceso, y no solamente los grandes indicadores del desarrollo o de la economía (Presidencia de la República, 2025)

The main objective of the development plan is to improve the economy, not only through economic growth but also through distribution. This plan is based on four key areas: governance with justice and citizen participation; development with welfare and humanism; moral economy; and work, sustainable development. Other issues on which the new government will also focus include gender equality, technological development, and the rights of indigenous communities (Presidencia de la República, 2025).

The national plan, informally called *Plan México*, involves regional development, increased domestic production and exports, higher minimum wage and a green economy. The goals include re-entering the top 10 world economies by 2030, increasing the proportion of investment in relation to GDP, generating an additional 1.5 million jobs and ensuring that 50% of national consumption comes from the country's own strategic sectors. There should also be 15% growth in the global value chains of specific sectors, as well as the development of technologies and biotechnology, environmental sustainability, growth in tourism, and a reduction in inequality and poverty. These are the main measures that have been under discussion since January 2025. With the aim of taking a gradual and balanced approach so that the economic, political and social problems of the country can be reduced by 2030. (Gobierno de México, 2025).

The book *La política exterior de México 2024-2030: Diagnóstico y propuestas* (Velázquez Flores, Schiavon and Sletza Ortega, 2024) offers a detailed analysis on the external policy during the ex-president's mandate and explores the potential developments for the next six years.

In the first chapter, *Capacidades institucionales, recursos humanos y financieros para una política exterior renovada (2024-2030)* (2024), the focus is on the administrative restructuring policy of the former president, that effectively cut fundings for tourism, economic and commercial promotion activity, although the pre-existing relations of this latter area did not really undergo a significant crisis. The international departments of the state government were considerably reduced, with their responsibilities entrusted to the chancelleries, who saw their workload increased but without the necessary allocation of resources. Similarly, embassies had to take over tasks previously assigned to 69 other specialized offices: in cultural diplomacy, funding in 2024 was 10% less below the normal amount to carry out activities. The same year, the number of Mexican diplomats abroad was comparable to the level of 1970, despite now having a larger population and economy. (Figueroa Fischer, Schiavon, 2024)

According to Pellicer (2024, p.30), the lack of attention to foreign policy in the AMLO (Andrés Manuel López Obrador) administration had negative consequences when we consider the potential that the country could have on the global scene. The geopolitical position, national economy and influential relations with the US could give it a very strategic role at international level:

El resultado de tales decisiones no fue positivo. Lo primero y más significativo fue carecer de una visión integral del lugar de México en el mundo. Por su situación geopolítica, por las características de su economía, por la complejidad e intensidad de los vínculos que nos unen con el país del norte, entender a México requiere de una lectura acertada de sus ventajas y vulnerabilidades que provienen de ser vecino de la potencia más poderosa del mundo.

The new government will face new challenges: in fact, the international scene is quite different from that of 6 years ago, first considering the defensive position to which the country has arrived towards the United States.

Although to date no government activity reports have been published, the secretary of external relations de la Fuente, a few days after the taking office of the president, praises the solid position of the new head of state in building bridges with the outside, in the forum *el humanismo en la política exterior de México* (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, April 2025). The Chancellor assures that the foreign policy initiatives to be proposed will be added to the country's national development plan. The federal government and the private sector will work to restore Mexico's leadership at the international level. The main foreign policy interest to date has been for Mexico the management of the flow of Mexican deportees after the election of Donald Trump, and the formulation of bilateral immigration policies with the neighboring country. In addition to strengthening the functions of consular networks in the US and a plan for the reception of *returnees* (*México te abraza*), the focus in foreign policy now remains on dialogue with the US (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, March 2025).

In the context of our analysis, it is interesting to note how the government of President Sheinbaum has immediately shown itself to be so reactive in the face of dramatic events in the United States, such as the mass deportation of Mexicans in early 2025. The Mexican government immediately coordinated actions with national and international organizations to the deported individuals' human rights were respected upon their return home. The Foreign Affairs Secretary said in the communiqué 011:

La prioridad número uno de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores ha sido y seguirá siendo la protección y el cuidado de nuestros paisanos, sobre todo, en los Estados Unidos, en todo el mundo (...) Paisanas, paisanos: No están solos, sus Consulados están con ustedes, no perdamos la calma (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, March 2025).

In the first communiqué, the Chancellor declares, also on behalf of the President, that the highest priority of his foreign policy is the protection of his own citizens abroad.

El canciller compartió las prioridades de política exterior del Gobierno de México, incluyendo, la defensa y la protección de la comunidad mexicana en el exterior. "Estamos aquí para defender la soberanía nacional y los intereses de México y, precisamente, por ello, haremos de la defensa de las comunidades de nuestros connacionales una prioridad de la política exterior de este sexenio", recalcó. (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, October 2024)

He stressed the strengthening of the Mexican External Service, that is the diplomatic officials abroad as well as policy executors and promoters of national interests. So, even if we do not have official reports yet, more staff and more activity at embassies abroad is already announced. The Mexican model of human mobility – *Modelo Mexicano de movilidad humana* - will be improved: it is a strategy initiated by AMLO that aimed to address the structural causes of migration, regularization of Mexican communities abroad and management of regular flows.

In the chapter La imagen de México en el mundo y sobre diplomacia cultural: En búsqueda de la relevancia internacional en el campo simbólico (Villanueva Rivas, 2024) the focus is the importance of cultural diplomacy as an instrument for international promotion and national development. On page 202 we read:

En las últimas décadas, México ha transformado significativamente su imagen internacional. Ha buscado proyectar una imagen de modernidad y progreso económico, destacando su posición como una economía emergente y un destino atractivo para la inversión extranjera. Este cambio se ha complementado con esfuerzos en diplomacia cultural, promoviendo intercambios académicos, exhibiciones culturales y programas de cooperación artística, diseñados para mejorar la comprensión mutua y fortalecer las relaciones internacionales.

Claudia Sheinbaum's policy promises to turn Mexico into an internationally attractive and influential country. The cultural activity of an embassy defines how a country is perceived abroad and has a great influence on bilateral and multilateral relations. Because of the cuts in funds and personnel, the cultural proposals from the central government could never be put into practice. This does not mean that the individual

management of each cultural department abroad has been insufficient: it has been limited by external factors. Greater cultural cooperation could be achieved through more bilateral agreements between universities, better opportunities for educational exchanges and thus more mobility.

This chapter has therefore demonstrated that, although it is contained, Mexican migration to Portugal is constantly increasing and forms part of a broader, more dynamic framework of international relations and public policies. This phenomenon influences and is influenced by the different forms of cooperation between states. Bilateral relations determine the ways in which people can entry and stay in a country, which is why economic exchanges, cultural and educational also cause human mobility and the emergence of migratory networks and non-profit organizations. These organizations are a key element to facilitate the integration of Mexicans abroad and promoting educational, cultural, economic exchange and legal assistance, working as a bridge between countries and building solidarity within the community. The previously mentioned ONGs function as intermediaries between migrants and the government by ensuring that the former would get all the necessary resources to adapt to the host country, enhancing the bilateral cooperation and advocating for the rights of the migrant population. Furthermore, the long-standing friendship between Mexico and Portugal is testament to the two countries' shared commitment to exchange and dialogue. The new Mexican president, Claudia Sheinbaum, has distinguished herself immediately through her commitment to international cooperation and migration challenges, especially towards the neighboring United States. The commitment to the continuation of domestic policy plans promises a gradual social, economic and political recovery of the country, while the change of course that is taking place in terms of foreign policy seems to want to bring Mexico back on the international scene. Changing the approach of AMLO, it aims to reconstitute the Mexican foreign service to assume a strategic role that not only brings benefits to the domestic situation of the country, but also to the Mexican community abroad. This offers insights into the future of Mexican mobility and the strategic role of embassies and partner organizations on the global stage: although concrete policies for the Mexican community abroad have not yet been formulated, the

relaunch of the economy, together with the reconnections with foreign countries seem to promise more trade and therefore more jobs for Mexicans, both at home and abroad. Moreover, a further economic recovery would mean that migration is no longer an obligation for job search and better living conditions. In the end, reconnecting with Europe would mean more funds and greater collaboration with embassies and NGOs, guaranteeing more services and rights to expatriates, essential elements for their regularization and integration in the host country.

Conclusion

The results of the present dissertation showed how migrations can be categorized and interpreted through different theories, highlighting the complexities and multiple facets of contemporary human movement. Typically, there are multiple reasons why populations choose to migrate, and these reasons are not mutually exclusive. After analyzing migratory flows from Latin America to Europe, with a particular focus on Mexico, I found that recent migration from Mexico is primarily influenced by family reunification and job searching. Employment is particularly precarious, especially during the ongoing pandemic. Although quantifying the Mexican presence in Europe, and in Portugal in particular, is difficult, an analysis of the annual migration reports published by the Portuguese government has provided a significant overview. This is precisely because Mexican immigration is mainly directed to the US, meaning that data for Portugal is fragmented.

Portugal has a dense and recent history of migration and has proven to be an attractive destination for migrants. I demonstrated how the different migration flows from various regions have influenced migration policies over time: in fact, the larger the presence of a nationality on the territory, the stronger the bilateral relations become, which in the long run brings modifications in entry and residence laws. But also, the preexisting economic, cultural and political ties influence on its turn the future flows. The anniversary of 160 years of diplomatic relations between Mexico and Portugal showed how the evolution of economic relations influenced migratory trends: the Mexican presence in Portugal has grown slowly and steadily reflecting the growth of relations between the two countries. Like most non-EU nationals, Mexicans can follow different pathways to enter and obtain residence in Portugal. The country has developed a comprehensive migration system comprising departments that address distinct aspects of migration processes. The management of new arrivals during the pandemic presented a challenge, but Portugal handled it effectively by introducing new measures to guarantee migrants' basic human rights.

Another key player in supporting migrants and shaping new policies has been the diplomatic network. My direct experience at the Mexican embassy in Lisbon allowed me to observe how cultural activities can influence economic engagement and, consequently, bilateral policies. Contemporary diplomacy is not only limited to managing international affairs; it is also a means of protecting citizens abroad and promoting one's own country's image, which is fundamental for cooperation. The activities I carried out during my internship confirmed the findings of this dissertation: although the Mexican presence in Portugal is small, it plays an integral role in relations between the two countries and represents an opportunity for future strategic policies. The actions of the new government, although not yet formulated, could contribute to strengthening ties between Mexico and Portugal, increasing trade, and improving the services, rights, and integration of the Mexican community abroad. With the election of Claudia Sheinbaum as president of Mexico, the recovery of Mexican foreign policy, which slowed down under the previous president, opens up new possibilities for economic and political relations. Alongside the country's general recovery through national development plans for 2025–2030, two main consequences for the Mexican population in Portugal would emerge: first, migration would become a choice rather than an obligation, and secondly, new job and business opportunities would arise through strengthened bilateral links. This will also be reflected in increased activity by cultural institutions, which will promote educational and cultural exchange policies, events, and initiatives, bringing the two countries closer together.

Comparing it with professional reality helped me to understand the subject in depth, showing me how important diplomatic activity is for the migrant community. Their interest in participating in cultural events demonstrates how necessary this is for their integration and well-being. I am obviously referring to my experience in the assigned department, but there were certainly political and economic events as well, which I did not participate in. These exchanges demonstrate how diplomacy works to build bridges between countries, no matter how distant, and how it translates cooperation into concrete actions, promoting dialogue between different cultures. Direct experience, together with the conclusions of the academic research, suggests

positive developments following the election of the new president. However, the lack of a formulated foreign policy plan is a limiting factor, and it would be interesting to explore this further to see what concrete effects it may have on the Mexican community in Portugal.

In conclusion, the internship was an excellent opportunity to apply the theory I had learnt in my first year of studies. Combining the skills I acquired at the Mexican Embassy in Portugal with my university course in History, International Relations and Cooperation strengthened my interest in the diplomatic world and migration, helping me define my future goals.

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