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A HISTORY OF CHILD LABOUR IN PORTUGAL

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses historical and current data covering the period 1850 to 2001 to provide a history of child labour in Portugal. The Portuguese experience is set against the backdrop of the country's changing economic structure, changes in education and minimum working age policies and the changing norms espoused by its people. The paper highlights the rapid post-1986 decline in child labour which is interpreted in terms of the cascading effect of policies that operated synchronously. Our assessment of the Portuguese experience suggests that while legal measures such as minimum working age requirements and compulsory schooling laws do help reduce child labour, no single legislation or policy is likely to be effective unless the various pieces come together. The use of children in the labour market appears to be driven mainly by the needs of the economic structure of the country, which in turn may be reflected in the norms and values espoused by its political leaders and their willingness to pass and implement legal measures.

Keywords

child labour, history, Portugal

A HISTORY OF CHILD LABOUR IN PORTUGAL¹

1 INTRODUCTION

Children in Portugal have provided labour contributions for many centuries. While Portugal has experienced a decline in child labour during the 20th century, it still persists in some parts of the country. The progressive decline and yet the persistence of child labour reflect the dual social and economic structures that characterize modern-day Portugal. Child labour in Portugal appears to be rooted in the partial backwardness of the country and is a shadow from the past.

While child labour is still substantial in some parts of the country the character of such labour has changed. In the past, a substantial share of the labour was provided in the context of an employer-employee relationship. Currently, however, the bulk of child labour is carried out within a household and under the supervision of household members. Most children who work also attend school. In contrast with these changes, the sectors which employ child labour are still basically the same. Children still continue to work mostly in agriculture, in the textile, and footwear industries, construction, commerce, hotels, restaurants and domestic service.

While the nature of labour may have changed it is by no means harmless. In fact, existing evidence supports the detrimental nature of the prevailing pattern of Portuguese child labour. IAC/CNASTI (1996) denounces the strenuous nature of household work,

Not only regarding the physical effort required, but also with regard to the number of hours demanded. For example, agricultural activity occurs regardless of the school timetable; the cadence of sewing shoes is subjected to the demands of those who supply the work; the schedule in construction is the schedule of the father, of the relative or of the employer.

Chagas Lopes and Goulart (2005) report high rates of injuries and accidents, while Goulart and Bedi (2007) and Chagas Lopes and Goulart (2005) find a negative impact of child work on school success. Furthermore, household surveys conducted in 1998 and 2001 reveal that most child workers are unpaid and, when paid, children earn considerably less than other workers.² The evidence available from these recent surveys and other sources shows that a fraction of the population has lagged behind. Children in certain households have fewer opportunities, less time for studying, learning or playing and seem to be destined for lower school achievement—see Goulart and Bedi (2007).

¹ The authors thank Tiago Mata, Hugh Hindman, Hugh Cunningham, Colin Heywood and other participants at the Child Labour's Global Past (1500-2000) Conference for helpful comments. The authors also thank an anonymous referee for comments and Catarina Grilo for assistance.

² Williams (1992) reports children's work in low-paid sectors: the shoes, for example, are sold for 100 times the price paid to the workers. Eaton and Pereira da Silva (1998) cite information suggesting that children earn about ten per cent of an adult's pay.

This paper is motivated by the progress made on child labour the setting of a relatively developed economy, but also by its enduring nature. Based on an analysis of data drawn from various sources this paper puts together a picture of the evolution of child labour in Portugal. It analyses the intergenerational pattern of child labour and identifies policies that may be used to reduce its incidence in Portugal and in developing countries.

The article is organised as follows. Based on two industrial surveys conducted in the latter half of the 19th century the next section of the paper provides an account of child labour in Portugal before 1926. Section three covers the period of the dictatorship—1926-74 —, distinguishing between the inward-looking period—until 1950—and a later, more open period. Section four examines child labour in the post-1974 period drawing a distinction between the period till the mid-1990s and the present day situation. Based on this material, the final section presents some policy suggestions.

2 EARLY ACCOUNTS

2.1 Background and early legislation

After being one of the richest countries in Europe, by the beginning of the 20th century Portugal had become one of the poorest—Candeias et al. (2004). It had a late industrial take-off and for the 19th and most of the 20th century—see Reis (1993a)—made limited economic progress—see table one.³ In terms of literacy the situation did not differ much. In 1850, Portugal had a 15 per cent literacy rate which rose to 55 per cent by 1950. Despite this increase, by the 1950s Portugal lagged even further behind its European counterparts—see table two. In a country where the Inquisition had had a long history,⁴ the fall of the Absolute Monarchy and the rise of the Constitutional Monarchy—1820-1910—led to periods of greater intellectual openness, but its power took decades to consolidate—Mónica (1978). Accordingly, modern legislation approved at the beginning of the 1800s was poorly enforced. In the context of education, in spite of timely diagnoses of the need for teachers and schools, the state lacked the will and capacity to fulfil the requirements.⁵ The

³ Alternatively, some authors suggest a gradual slow growth also through the 20th Century, opposed to a strong surge implied by “take-off”. See Manuel Lisboa in Valério (2001).

⁴ Upto 1770, books by authors such as Hobbes, Diderot, Rousseau, Voltaire, La Fontaine, Espinosa and others were still burnt in Lisbon due to alleged heretic thought—Carvalho (2001).

⁵ Reis (1993c) estimates that in the period 1864-1910, the necessary increase in expenditure to catch up with leading European countries in terms of literacy standards would have been negligible. It would have amounted to 0.5 to 0.75 per cent of the State’s expenditure—0.1 per cent of GNP—in the 1864-90 period and 2.8 per cent—0.5 per cent of GNP—in the 1890-1910. This author further cites Maria Eugénia Mata that in both periods the State’s expenditure in education varied between 3 to 5 per cent of the budget while defence and repayment of the debt absorbed 15-19 and 29-54

Republican period between 1910 and 1926 would see the creation of a Ministry of Public Instruction and of other important educational measures. However, instability in the government—45 changes—compromised major changes in policy enforcement.⁶

After rejecting a proposal on containing child labour in 1881, modern legislation designed to prevent child labour in industry was adopted only in 1891, much later than in other European countries.⁷ After centuries of ‘natural’ work contribution by children, Campinho (1995) attributes the need to regulate child labour in Portugal to rising social unrest. Proximate causes included a workers revolt in Porto, demanding better working conditions. With a view to pacifying workers and demonstrating support for their needs the decree passed in 1891 included sentences such as, ‘the legislative care in favour of workers continues’—IEFP (1992) —, the decree intends to protect both women and children ‘as society has an obligation to protect the weak...’—IGT (1991). As a result of this legislation, the minimum working age for industrial employment was set at 12 years—agriculture was excluded —, with an exception of 10 years with completed primary education for metallurgists.

2.2 Child labour prior to 1926

As may be expected, systematic detailed accounts of the existence and practice of child labour for the pre-1926 period are scarce. The earliest mention of children working comes from ships’ logs that report children being an important part of vessels’ crews during the 16th century—Kassouf and Santos (2006). The most reliable quantitative accounts of the extent of child labour are provided by two industrial surveys conducted in 1852 and 1881, a time of a rather incipient industry—see Reis (1993b).⁸ The 1852 industrial survey reported that 3,147 children below the age of 16 corresponding to about 25 per cent of the surveyed workers were working in an industrial enterprise. In 1881, the absolute number of working children rose to 5,998 while children as a percentage of surveyed workers fell to 7 per cent. In terms of their distribution, data from both the surveys shows that about 50-55 per cent of the minors

per cent, respectively. The small amount needed suggests that criteria other than affordability prevailed.

⁶ The Ministry of Public Instruction had 49 ministers in 14 years and as a consequence zigzag reforms were quite common.

⁷ For instance, England introduced legislation in 1802, which was followed by more important and effective legislation in 1833—Pinto (1997). France introduced legislation in 1841 and Spain, Denmark and The Netherlands in the 1870’s—Williams (1992).

⁸ While it is likely that both surveys underestimate the use of child labour they are the best sources available. The 1852 survey was an indirect survey—questionnaires were sent to firms—and included factories with ten or more workers. The 1881 survey used a direct and indirect approach and included factories regardless of the number of workers. While the 1881 survey was an improvement over the 1852 survey, some firms did not respond to the queries while others provided responses without always distinguishing between minors and adults or minors and women.

worked in the textile and weaving industry—cotton, wool and silk. Other important sectors employing minors were metallurgy with 13 per cent and carpentry with 10 per cent—see table three. The dangerous pyrotechnics industry was the most “minor intensive” with minors representing almost 63 per cent of its labour force. Most of the reported child workers were concentrated in Porto district indicating its early industrial development. In addition to Porto, districts specializing in specific products, such as, Guarda—Covilhã—in wool weaving, Portalegre in cork, Leiria—Marinha Grande—in glass and Santarém in paper, relied heavily on children—see table three. In terms of working conditions, minors received considerably less than other male workers. In public works in 1883-84 the salary ratio between male adults and children was around two to one, while minors’ salary was similar to that of women—Anuário Estatístico (1884).

In addition to these industrial surveys, reports by labour inspectors and lawyers are additional sources of information on the work contribution of children in industry. A participant at a national congress of jurists in 1898, Sebastião Centeno, denounced child labour in the industrial centres, especially faraway from Lisbon. He pointed out that male and female children as young as seven worked for nine or ten hours per day, or three or four hours per night—Cardoso (2001). To illustrate the widespread use of child labour Campinho (1995) cites a labour inspector from 1904:

it is enough to enter, by surprise, any factory, even humble (and maybe even more in small industrial establishments) to recognize the falseness of the reports; (...) in some of the employment registers of each of the establishments, appear minors who are less than ten years and in one registry there was even the naïve observation: ‘In addition to the registered individuals, when there is need of work some women and minors are temporarily called’.

Data on children working in agriculture and services is not readily available; however, several reports suggest the widespread use of children in these sectors. Henriques Carneiro (2003) presents insightful reports from educational inspectors, which help to further characterize child labour in the mid 19th century. According to António Carvalho, a school inspector in the Centro region, low school attendance is

related to the students’ parents poverty and in part to their negligence, very often they see the need of occupying their children in services, either domestic, or rural.

In 1863, school inspector Manuel Barradas, on an inspection in Alentejo is surprised to find zero enrolment:

The teacher assured me that after the harvest [of grapes] is finished, maybe some students will apply to come to school (...); before that it would be impossible, because their own mothers would beat them up if they want to attend school.

Francisco Dinis, inspector in a county in Centro also noted changes in the school timetable as ‘the children needed to walk the cattle’.

The limited educational enrolment of children maybe attributed to child work as well as to the quality of schooling. The latter was often said to be very poor and its usefulness doubtful, both motives to skip school. The literature

offers several reasons for this aspect of schooling in Portugal, including poor qualifications of teachers—the primary criteria of choice was moral integrity —, low remuneration—several teachers performed other activities—and lack of infrastructure.

3 THE PERIOD OF THE DICTATORSHIP

3.1 Background and legislation, 1926-1950

A military coup in 1926 led to an extremely conservative dictatorship that kept the country under tight control until 1974. The regime idolized a rural and modest life style, and feared economic development. The conservative philosophy was summed up in the motto ‘God, Fatherland and Family’. Accordingly, the Portuguese economy tended to be one of subsistence and closed to external markets.⁹ Industrialization slowed down leading to economic stagnation and the strengthening of rural lobbies—Mónica (1978).¹⁰ The industry that did develop was characterized by unsophisticated consumer goods. The mode of production was predominantly artisanal with reduced use of physical capital and intensive use of low-skilled labour—Aguiar and Martins (2005).

On the education front there were several changes. In the first instance, education was perceived as a threat and therefore reduced to a minimum. In 1926, schools that trained secondary school teachers were closed, in 1929, compulsory education was reduced from five to three years, and co-educational schools were forbidden. More enlightening than laws were the opinions expressed by some supporters of the regime:

The more beautiful, stronger and healthier part of the Portuguese soul resides in the 75 per cent of the illiterate; [referring to the rural inhabitants] What advantages did they get in school? None. Nothing won. Everything lost.

(...) knowing how to read and write they create ambitions: they want to go to the cities, apprentice store clerk, sales clerk, gentlemen; they want to go to Brazil. They learned to read! What do they read? Criminal relationships; wrong notions of politics; bad books; leaflets of subversive propaganda. They leave the hoe, become uninterested in the land and only have an ambition: to become civil servants—Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, writer (1927);

Portugal does not need schools—João Ameal, writer and historian.

Soon after these changes, and coinciding with the rise of António Salazar to Prime Minister, additional measures were introduced to use the school system as a way of controlling the population.¹¹ The regime “purified” the

⁹ At that time, the internal market also included Portugal’s colonial territories.

¹⁰ In a famous movie song of that time a “typical” Portuguese sang: ‘[I am] poor but honest/owing to Providence the grace of being born poor’.

¹¹ Salazar, a well-known professor of economics at Coimbra University, was finance minister between 1928 and 1932 and was given sweeping powers to manage and

public system from oppositionists and specially communists—1935. The Ministry of Public Instruction became the Ministry of National Education—1936—and gave emphasis to nationalism and Christian teaching, namely with the creation of the Portuguese Youth and the reintroduction of the crucifix in classrooms.¹² In the same year, the old official school books were decreed outdated, with new ones based on the example of fascist Italy. The compulsory introduction of 113 sentences from Salazar and Mussolini to Goethe and Comte for the official manuals—1932—is illustrative—for more details, see Carvalho (2001):

‘Obey and you will know how to command’; ‘In the family the chief is the Father, in school the chief is the Teacher, in the State the chief is the Government’; ‘To command is not to enslave: it is to direct. The easier the obedience is, the softer is the command’; ‘Your motherland is the most beautiful of all: it deserves all your sacrifices’; ‘Do not envy your superiors, as they have responsibilities and duties you ignore’; ‘If you knew how difficult it is to command, you would gladly obey all your life’.

A parliamentary discussion of education laws in 1938 provides compelling information on how education was feared and despised while work and family were praised—Mónica (1978); Carvalho (2001); Henriques Carneiro (2003). For example,

Achieving primary schooling through highly intellectualized agents has very serious inconveniences. (...) It would be preferable that it would be good and simple; but, when it is not possible to be good, at least that it is not very scholarly;

The teachings of abstract things are absolutely in discordance with the environment the student lives in. In a village a boy that becomes distinguished in primary schooling is a boy lost to his family. I can cite an example of a family of my hometown, traditionally dedicated to the craft of locksmith, but where a boy distinguished himself in the primary schooling. This boy had to go to Brazil after committing two embezzlements—Teixeira de Abreu;

Is compulsory schooling commendable to support, in principle? Observe the case of USA, where all know how to read and write, but there are also so many crimes.”; “Looking over our history for the three most brilliant periods of our past, when our nationalist cause rose the highest: the [Christian] reconquering [of Iberia peninsula], the [overseas] discoveries and of restoration [of independence]. The mass of men that was then mobilized was composed by literate or illiterate?

transform the Portuguese economy. In 1932 he became prime minister, a position that he held for 36 years.

¹² Portuguese youth or “Mocidade Portuguesa” was created in the image of other fascist youth organizations—Carvalho (2001). It included youngsters from 7 to 26 years old divided in the following age groups: ‘lusitos’—7 to 10 years old —, ‘infantes’—10-14 —, ‘vanguardistas’—14-17—and ‘cadetes’—17-26. Enrolment was compulsory for primary and secondary school students, although implementation was poor in the former, while the latter had a low enrolment and only existed in district capitals. In practice, the organization included youth from the middle and upper classes.

Did the companions of [Vasco da] Gama know how to read and write? (...) I have a certain fear of this fetishism of the alphabet (...)—Querubim Guimarães;

(...) I would try to reproduce today the environment that I met fifty years ago in the rural school of my village. (...) We have to take many steps backwards to free the school from the encyclopaedism that distresses the several educational reforms of primary schooling, maybe since 1878—Fernando Borges;

Child labour is a good school of responsibility—Pacheco de Amorim.

As is apparent from this discussion, during the period 1926 to 1950, education was reserved for a minority, which included urban and rural elites and a growing urban middle class. Mónica (1978) suggests that the opportunity cost of education was high while the perceived future benefits of schooling were low. The rationale was that the family could not afford to spare children's work or salary and there was no room for upward mobility in the regime's rigid social structure: '[i]n an illiterate society, ignorance does not constitute (...) a disadvantage; and it is also not a stigma because illiteracy is the rule, not the exception.'

Given this attitude, it is no surprise that new legislation on child labour, introduced in 1934 and 1936, simply confirmed the 1891 law. The minimum working age for industrial employment remained at 12 years—excluding agricultural work —, with some exceptions, e.g. 10 years for metallurgists with fourth grade education—Campinho (1995).

3.2 Child labour between 1926 and 1950

As may be inferred from the attitude towards schooling and the idealization of a rural and simple life, during this period child work was looked upon favourably, especially when performed within the household or in a rural setting, as opposed to the “cruel” industrial working conditions—Mónica, (1978).

Information on the labour force participation of minors during this period is available in the 1940 and 1950 census.¹³ As shown in Table four, in industry, labour force participation amongst children in the age group 10-14 was about two per cent in 1940 and rose to five per cent in 1950. Similarly, LFP for minors in the age range 15-19 rose from 9.1 in 1940 to 14.5 per cent in 1950. While LFP rose for children during this period, their share in the industrial labour force may have fallen. Although direct comparisons are hindered by the different age ranges, as mentioned earlier, in 1881 minors accounted for about seven per cent of the industrial labour force, while in 1950, 12-14 year olds accounted for about three per cent of the labour force. In terms of their industrial affiliation, by 1950 about 70-75 per cent of the minors were involved in the manufacturing of shoes and clothes, textiles, furniture, construction and metals and machines. During this period their contribution to hazardous industries like chemicals was relatively minor.

¹³ The 1940 and the 1950 census were conducted by INE, the National Statistics Institute which had been set up in 1935.

In terms of payment, earnings of minors' remained lower than adults and the difference may have even widened. These poor working conditions of children are highlighted by newspaper articles in *Diário de Notícias* which highlighted cases of 'children of 10/12 years that earned 11 escudos per week, underfed, and working excessively long hours'—Mónica (1978). Specific details are available for the glass industry where the salary ratio between adults and children was of three to one. The adult to child ratios of salary per day are slightly higher than the salary per hour, suggesting that minors may have worked more days than adults. Table five presents data on accident rates in the glass industry. As the data show, minors were almost three times more likely to get hurt at work than adults and about two to three times more likely to be incapacitated.

Turning to agriculture and domestic services, given the regime's rural bent and the lack of attention devoted to spreading education, it is no surprise that during this period children remained an important part of the rural labour force—table four. In 1940, labour force participation among children aged 10-14 was about 10 per cent while in 1950 it was 16 per cent amongst children aged 12-14. While the LFP of children in agriculture was three times that of industry, the bulk of the children worked as domestics, where the pay was very often in meals. Thus, in 1950, labour force participation of children in the age group 12-14 was at least 60 per cent, with agriculture accounting for 16.1 per cent, domestic services for 38.1 per cent, and industry for 5.1 per cent.

While working conditions in agriculture may not have been as poor as they were in industry, they were probably not harmless. Soeiro Pereira Gomes published his book "Esteiros" in 1941, where he described the harsh life of 'the children of the men who had never been children'. "Colectivo 9º ano" (2006) presents the life stories of men and women who lived in Alentejo from 1920 to 1974 and had migrated to Setúbal, a town in the coastal area. According to these life histories,

children did not stay long in school and girls were worse off because of prejudice and of their usefulness for other tasks. Most children started working when they reached nine years, sometimes sooner. The ones who did not go to school used to work full time while those who did attend school worked after school hours. Girls worked in domestic services for the big landowners, or would go to the nearest village, city or even Lisbon. Often there was no remuneration and the work only assured their meals. Boys started by taking care of cattle, chicken and pigs and by twelve or thirteen, they could try to work in the fields. The tasks were plucking olives and harvesting wheat, and children were always included in large groups of workers, but earned less. The money would go to the family or more likely to the father. Children would usually get up at five o'clock in the morning, eat something before work and then walk many miles to the fields. The work finished at sunset and they reached home nine, ten o'clock in the evening. Girls could still have domestic chores to do.

While children provided agricultural labour throughout the country, there were regional differences. The Northern region was characterized by ownership of small plots of land, land inheritance from parents to children and high emigration. Typically, such farms drew on labour from their own family or from children in nearby farms. In the South, where farm plots were larger, children were less hierarchically dependent on their household as they rarely

worked under parental supervision and also did not expect to inherit land in the future. As a consequence, in 1940, the Northern districts of Bragança, Braga, Vila Real and Viseu had a high incidence of child labour, while Lisbon had the lowest incidence—Mónica (1978).¹⁴

3.3 Background and legislation, 1950-1974

In 1950, after years of fearing economic growth and education and promoting a rural way of life the regime began promoting economic and social reforms, with a view to sustaining itself. After an initial rejection of the Marshall Plan, the regime formalized a development plan for the 1949-51 period—Garoupa and Rossi (2005). Key aspects of this plan included internationalization and industrial development through upgrading of production technology. Rather than supporting agriculture, industrial development was promoted and low agricultural wages and low cereal prices were used to transfer surpluses from agriculture to industry—see Confraria (2005) and Soares (2005).

According to Afonso and Aguiar (2005), this period was characterized by increases in international trade, the inflow of foreign direct investment, a massive outflow of labour and increased reliance of the economy on remittances. Set in the context of a post-WWII European boom, key economic events during this period were Portugal's entry into the European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) in 1960 and the signing of bilateral labour supply agreements with France and The Netherlands in 1963 and the German Federal Republic in 1964—Veiga (2005). Estimates set emigration figures between 1950 to 1974 at more than 1.7 million or about 18-20 per cent of the Portuguese population—Valério (2001).¹⁵

The increase in exports to European countries led to industrial specialization and increases in imports of investment goods led to the adoption of more advanced production technologies—Mateus (2005).¹⁶ Driven by these reforms, Portugal recorded rapid economic growth during this period—see table one. Although agriculture stagnated—see Soares (2005), industry prospered and annual industrial growth rates were between seven to nine per cent in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁷ Income, however, was extremely unevenly

¹⁴ The first three belong to the region called Norte, while Viseu has counties belonging to Norte and Centro.

¹⁵ This mass migration that led people from the countryside to urban areas or from Portugal to the exterior was mainly to escape from starvation and in search of a better life. Some also had political motives—opposition to the regime—or wanted to escape army conscription that from 1961 on would lead them to fight the colonial war. The destination of emigrants was mainly Europe. While in 1957 more than 10% of the legal immigrants went there, by 1963 they had increased to 59%. Most emigration was illegal.

¹⁶ For example, the textile industry a key employer of children began to modernize and become more capital intensive after the 1960's—Afonso and Aguiar (2005).

¹⁷ See Soares (2005) for an analysis of the misallocation of resources within different agricultural sectors and other agricultural problems as the small average land ownership and low land use for grazing.

distributed and was concentrated in a few families which were allowed to build powerful economic groups. By 1971, 0.4 per cent of the companies owned 53 per cent of the capital—Williams (1992).

Despite this growth the regime did not last. Costly colonial wars that were internationally deplored and domestically unpopular exhausted the country and marked the decline of the regime. In 1968 the dictator literally fell from his chair. While part of the ruling elite saw an opportunity to maintain the regime through new reforms, it was already too late.

On the education front, the requirements of the modernization strategy led to an increase in educational expenditure, although its share remained at about a third or a fourth of the expenditure on defence. The focus was on increasing investments in primary schooling and the training of technicians—see Carvalho (2001). In 1956 and 1960, compulsory education was increased from three to four years of schooling first for boys and later for girls. In 1964 it was raised to six years. In 1969, the minimum legal working age was raised to 14 years—Campinho (1995).

3.4 Child labour between 1950 and 1974

To examine the evolution of child labour in this period we rely on a household survey which was conducted by the Portuguese Government in co-operation with the International Labour Organization in 2001. This survey provides credible and comprehensive information for 26,429 youngsters aged 6 to 15 years old and their families. In addition to enquiring about the work practices of children the survey gathers information on the labour market experience of children's parents and their age of entry into the labour market. Using information on these adults and their working patterns while they were children we are able to sketch a picture of the patterns of child labour during the second half of the 20th century.¹⁸

Figure one depicts the children's activity rate in specific age groups.¹⁹ As shown in the figure, children below nine had low rates of labour force participation—below six per cent—which declined throughout this period and reached zero by about 1964-66. In 1960, the LFP rate of children aged 10-12 was about 22 per cent. It then declined until 1974, when it had fallen to about ten per cent. During this period the proportion of the labour force in agriculture began to decline. The reduction was probably driven by increased mechanization made possible by the greater access to machines and technology which accompanied the new policy environment. The reduction in overall demand for agricultural labour is likely to be associated with the decline in the LFP rate of 10-12 year old children. In addition, increases in the minimum

¹⁸ The database is nationally representative for families with children in the school going age—6-15 years old.

¹⁹ Activity rate was calculated using the reported age at which an individual started working and assuming that the child continued to work till he/she was 16. The chosen threshold ages correspond to the age at which children should be in different school levels.

number of years of compulsory schooling—6 years in 1964—and increases in the minimum working age laws—14 years in 1969—probably provided additional impetus to reduce the labour contribution of children in the age group 10-12.

In contrast, for youngsters in the age group 13-15, the increase in LFP in the 1950's continued well into the 1960's, with their participation rate lying at about 43-46 per cent in the period 1965 to 1973. Several factors are likely to have caused this increase. First, while increasing compulsory schooling and raising the minimum working age are likely to have reduced the participation rate of children aged 10-12 it is likely to have increased the LFP of 13-15 year old children. Second, labour shortages due to emigration and army conscription to fight colonial wars—from 1962—are likely to have raised demand for children in this age group. Third, the availability of official secondary schools only in district capitals may have prolonged the labour contribution of 13-15 year olds.

4 THE POST-DICTATORSHIP PERIOD

4.1 Background and legislation

The overthrow of the dictatorship introduced political changes that led to democratization and to decolonization and ended Portugal's international isolation. In the early years of the post-dictatorship period the economy experienced a resurgence of specialization in labour intensive and low-skilled sectors. The currency experienced a sliding devaluation from 1977—Aguiar and Martins (2005)—and trade agreements with EEC in 1973 and 1977—Lains (2003) —, made exports and subcontracting from European companies more attractive leading to an economic boom in some regions. In 1986, after 9 years of negotiations, Portugal joined the European Economic Community (EEC). The country received substantial flows of European funds which allowed increases in public expenditure and supported a restructuring of the economy, as investments in infrastructure, machines, technology and training.

During this period the importance attributed to education increased and in 1976 the educational budget finally surpassed the military budget. School conditions improved and accessibility at all levels of the education system was enhanced, while a school milk programme became a powerful weapon against absenteeism and hunger—Silva (1991). Compliance with EEC norms led to an increase in compulsory education from six to nine years of schooling in 1986.

Consistent with these educational requirements, currently, minors are only allowed to work under three conditions – they must be at least 16 years old, they must have completed compulsory school and there must be medical confirmation of their physical and psychological capabilities for that job. There are some exceptions, and at 14 and 15 “light work” is allowed, some additional activities are permitted when the child is 16 and 17 years old and at 18 all types of work are allowed.

The sharp increase in educational attainment due to these changes is evident in figure two. In spite of the progress, Portugal still lags behind most of its European counterparts. For instance, while at 47 per cent the school

completion rate for youth aged 20-24 is higher amongst more recent generations, it is still quite low as compared to the EU average of 75 per cent and New Member States (NMS) average of 88.3 per cent.²⁰ A comparison of achievement scores in reading and mathematics leaves Portugal at the bottom of the table—OECD (2003). It seems that in the process of increasing educational coverage, Portugal has failed to pay attention to quality standards which may be preventing further increases in productivity and hindering the movement away from low-skilled and labour intensive sectors.

4.2 Child labour, 1974 to the present

Continuing with the analysis of figure one, we see that the LFP of children in the age group 10-12 which had begun to decline in 1965-66 continues to exhibit a downward trend. By 1986, the year of EEC accession, the LFP of this age group was almost negligible. In contrast, between 1977 and 1981, the LFP of children in the age group 13-15 increased from 35 to 40 per cent. This increase is consistent with the increase in demand for Portugal's traditional labour intensive products and child labour demanding industries—textiles, clothes and shoes. This increased demand is likely to have been induced by the trade agreements and the currency devaluation, discussed above. The export share of these traditional sectors increased from 2.86 per cent between 1970-80 to 7.32 in 1980-90, and between 1988-92, their 25 per cent share in exports was as large as the share of Port wine in the previous century—see Afonso and Aguiar (2005).

While demand for child labour increased during this period, supply-side factors also played a role. Silva (1991) suggests that the second oil crisis and the government's restructuring policies coordinated with the IMF increased child poverty and labour around 1980. For example, even the school milk scheme was considerably reduced, while the share of social expenditures that had more than tripled since 1974, and had its peak in 1979, declined thereafter until 1982.²¹ Stable estimates of returns to education from 1977 to 1985—Santos (1995)—and a polarization of education premiums from mid-1970's to 1980's—Amaral (2005), citing Sérgio Grácio—may have led to a reduction of interest in secondary education, which in turn may have favoured child labour in the 13-15 age group.

However, after this interruption child labour fell sharply. This trend was most likely driven by EEC accession. On the supply side the extension of compulsory schooling from six to nine years is likely to have prompted a decline in LFP. At the same time increasing returns to education between 1985 and 1991—Santos (1995)—or between 1982 and 1995 according to Pereira and Martins (2001) probably provided a strong incentive to acquire

²⁰ The level of early school leavers, *i.e.* the share of the population aged 18-24 with less than upper secondary education and not in education or training, is 41.1 per cent in Portugal. This is much higher than the EU average of 18.1 per cent or the NMS average of 7.5 per cent.

²¹ Authors' calculations based on Valério (2001).

education.²² Maybe more importantly, during the 1980s and 1990s, a now more demanding and internationally aware society began denouncing child labour. Unions and catholic organizations highlighted and disparaged child labour. In marked contrast to the views expressed by parliamentarians in 1938, in 1989, the Portuguese President referred to child labour as a “true scourge”—Williams, 1992).²³

The cascading effects of these changes in attitudes and demand and supply factors led to rapid changes in the LFP rate of children and by 1991 only about ten per cent of children in the 13-15 age group were providing labour contributions. Figures supporting the lower rate of child labour displayed in figure one are also provided by Antunes (1996). Using labour survey data he reports that in 1992-93, the LFP rate amongst 12-16 year old children was about 16 per cent. To enhance comparability we excluded 16 year olds from the labour force survey data and find that LFP for 12-15 year olds was 8.6 per cent. Thus, regardless of data sources the LFP of children in the age range 12-15 lies in range of about eight to ten per cent. Based on a narrower concept of work that includes only children working for an employer, table eight reports employment rates of about 3 per cent in 1992 and 1.5 per cent in 1993 for children aged 12-15.

Notwithstanding the sharp declines in child labour since 1986 and the low employment rates reported in 1992 and 1993, several reports in the popular press continued to highlight the plight of working children. A 1992 report by Anti-Slavery International—Williams (1992) estimated that there were 200,000 working children in Portugal employed mainly in the export-oriented shoe, garment, ceramics and stone-breaking industries in the Northern districts of Oporto and Braga. Under increasing national and international scrutiny the government undertook several measures, including increased labour inspections—see figure three—and the collection of information to place the child labour debate on an informed footing. In co-operation with the ILO, two household surveys especially designed to gather information on working children were conducted in 1998 and 2001.

²² Several studies have shown that there is a high rate of return to education in Portugal—for example, Kiker and Santos (1991), Kiker, Santos and Oliveira (1997), Vieira (1999), Hartog *et al.* (2001). In the 1990’s, Pereira and Martins (2001) estimate a rate of return to education of nine per cent. This is at the upper end of the range of educational returns for developed countries.

²³ Despite the change in norms some of the more traditional views on child labour also continued to persist. In 1990, a member of the local Town Hall in Amarante—FENPROF (1990)—remarked,

child labour...is still treated by many good people as a school of virtues in that for a child it is enough to know basic reading and math because the sooner [the child] starts to work, the sooner the instincts of vagrancy will be curbed and [the child] will prepare for life.

In 1989, a study of the Education Ministry involving more than 17,000 students suggested dropping out of school is driven by the need to enter the labour market due to economic difficulties—Williams (1992). This author also reports his local contact in Vizela was beaten up as punishment for denouncing child labour.

Based on these household surveys, Table seven provides the most recent figures on child labour in Portugal. For both years, about four per cent or between 43,000 and 49,000 children in the age group 6 to 15 are involved in some form of economic work.²⁴ While this is far lower than the figure reported by Williams (1992), it is clearly not negligible. The table also provides figures on the incidence of work for different age groups. While these figures are not directly comparable with the figures from the LFS they show that between 1992 and 1998, the number of children working for an employer declined and in 1998 and 2001 most working children worked for family members.²⁵

While the total number of working children is about the same in 1998 and 2001, the increase in the incidence of work done for a family member suggests that, through subcontracting or even sub-subcontracting, part of the illegal labour may have been transferred from factories to families.²⁶ This substitution pattern is consistent with the information displayed in figure three. Between 1996 and 2000 labour inspections of firms increased and after an initial increase in the number of working children detected in these companies, there has been a rapid decline. Since the labour inspectorate confines its visits to firms, the increased scrutiny may have prompted the transfer of work to households.

While the main story during this period is the rapid decline since mid-1980's, the latest available data inform us that there are still about 40,000 working children. Thus, despite economic growth, child labour continues to persist in some areas of the country, especially the North and the Centre (see table 9). These are areas of small farms and small firms which have proved difficult to modernize, psychically and physically.²⁷ Sarmiento et al. (2005) suggest that in these areas the opportunities for subcontracting are merely an extension of small-land ownership, often in surroundings where the urban and the rural meet. Within certain families in these regions work is considered natural (IAC/CNASTI, 1996) and there are strong intergenerational patterns, with children of former child workers at least three times more likely to work than children whose parents did not work (see Table ten). Pinto (1997) stresses

²⁴ In 2001, the average economically active child in Portugal was male, between 12 and 13 years old and worked 14 hours of work per week – Table eight. The standard seasonal worker was also male, but older. Economic labour focused on agriculture—47 per cent —, while other important sectors include commerce, restaurant and hotels, industry and construction. The results of a study by 5th and 6th graders in 1986 suggested that sectors of child labour had not changed much—CISEP (1987).

²⁵ The LFS referred to the primary activity of the minor, while the 1998 and 2001 household surveys also include other activities.

²⁶ There are frequent reports of such cases. The most recent report regards children sewing shoes for Zara, a Spanish multinational—Eaton (forthcoming).

²⁷ In the north, the traditional sector prevails under different forms and the informal economy has more weight. Technology is low and production units—farms, industries or other companies—have often failed to upgrade the process and the product. The population is also more dispersed which makes enforcement difficult. In contrast, in the south, the population is more concentrated in villages and towns.

the importance of cultural determinants of child labour, namely the family tradition of child labour, where work is more valued than education. As recently as 2001, at a conference against child labour, Barroso, a representative of CAP, said that working would²⁸

avoid the [children] wandering without anything to do, or spending the money they don't have, gaining addictions, some of them very serious, (...) on which the State spends millions in prevention (that prevents few or none) and in treatment (with very doubtful results).

5 SYNTHESIS AND DISCUSSION

Looking back over the course of the last 150 years there are several points about the Portuguese experience with child labour that should be highlighted. As the data presented in the paper show, there has been a decline in the overall incidence of child labour since 1850. However, this decline was by no means monotonic and should not be viewed as an inevitable outcome of economic growth. There were periods after 1850 where child participation in the labour market increased and periods where it declined. As summarized in table 11, although laws on compulsory schooling and minimum working age were passed in 1891, between 1891 and 1950 the involvement of children in the labour force continued unabated. It was only in the 1950s and 1960s, after a long period of limited economic growth—see table 1—and impelled by the desire to modernize and industrialize the economy, that the demand for child labour began to abate (see table 11). At the same time the need for more educated workers to support industrialization prompted additional educational expenditure, and led to increases in minimum years of schooling in 1956, 1960 and 1964, and increases in the minimum working age to 14. After an increase in labour force participation among 13-15 year olds in the 1970s, the involvement of children in the labour force has displayed a sharp, and hopefully permanent, decline since 1986.

As a recently developed country, Portugal offers some lessons for developing countries facing child labour. Setting the changes in patterns of child labour between 1850 and the present against the backdrop of the structure of economic growth, educational legislation and quality, labour legislation and the prevailing norms and attitudes towards working children, shows that child labour is amenable to policy. However, the patterns also suggest that, similar to other social issues, no single legislation or policy is likely to be effective unless the various pieces come together.

As the post-1986 Portuguese experience shows, when the various pieces are “in sync”, the pace of reduction in the incidence of child labour may be viewed as nothing short of astounding. The cascading effects of changing norms, which in turn may have been driven by national and international pressure and the need to be seen as a modern European nation as well as the needs of the country's economy, changes in the economic structure which

²⁸ CAP is the farmers' association connected mostly to large and medium land owners.

demanded a more educated workforce, changes in educational and labour legislation which promoted education and increases in educational quality coupled with labour inspections all contributed to the rapid reduction in child labour.

While it is difficult to discern a clear policy sequence from the Portuguese story, our interpretation of the pattern of change in child labour set against the various other economic and social changes suggests that the long-run evolution of child labour is determined mainly by the needs of the economic structure of the country and the consequent pattern of labour demand. The passage of minimum working age laws, compulsory schooling laws and monitoring efforts do provide additional impetus, however, these laws are unlikely to be implemented and to yield sustained reductions in child labour in economies that continue to rely on low-skill and low-wage labour to generate economic value.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 1
Per capita GDP evolution

	1500	1820	1870	1913	1950	1973	2001
Per capita GDP							
Portugal	606	923	975	1250	2086	7063	14229
Spain	661	1008	1207	2056	2189	7661	15659
Greece	433	641	880	1592	1915	7655	12511
	1500-1820	1820-1870	1870-1913	1913-1950	1950-1973	1973-2001	
Rate of growth of per capita GDP							
Portugal		0.13	0.11	0.58	1.39	5.45	2.53
Spain		0.13	0.36	1.25	0.17	5.60	2.59
Greece		0.12	0.64	1.39	0.50	6.21	1.77
Rate of growth of GDP							
Portugal		0.51	0.66	1.34	2.35	5.73	2.95
Spain		0.32	0.93	1.77	1.06	6.60	3.10
Greece		0.39	1.56	2.32	1.41	6.98	2.40

Source: Maddison (2003): Pages 260, 262 and 263 for Portugal and Spain. Figures for Greece are based on pages 54-57 and 66-69.

Notes: Per capita GDP valued at 1990 international Geary-Khamis dollars; Rates of growth are annual average compound growth rates (in percentages).

TABLE 2
Literacy rate in Europe, 1850 – 1950

Countries	1850	1900	1950
Nordic countries, Germany, Scotland, The Netherlands and Switzerland	95%	98%	98%
England and Wales	70%	88%	98%
France, Belgium and Ireland	55%	80%	98%
Austria and Hungary	35%	70%	98%
Spain, Italy and Poland	25%	40%	80%
Russia	15%	25%	Soviet Union 90%
Balkans	15%	25%	Bulgaria, Romania 85% Greece, Yugoslavia 75%
Portugal	15%	25%	55%

Source: Johansson, quoted from Candeias et al.(2004).

Note: Results are approximations using census, literacy rates of conscripted and condemned individuals and matrimonial records.

TABLE 3
Children age 16 and below working in industry, 1881

Industry	Minors in workforce		Predominant district		
	Number	Share of total workers (%)	District	Number	District's share in total no. of child workers (%)
Carpentry	512	10	Porto	473	92.4
Ceramics	180	8.8	Porto	82	45.6
Stone works	207	3.1	Porto	207	100.0
Cork	168	10.4	Portalegre	120	71.4
Metallurgy	680	13	Porto	559	82.2
Paper	105	7.7	Santarém	36	34.3
Pyrotechnics	129	62.6	Porto	128	99.2
Tobacco	354	8.8	Porto	275	77.7
Cotton weaving	1991	5	Porto	667	33.5
Wool weaving	905	10.1	Guarda	479	52.9
Silk weaving	91	10.7	Porto	91	100
Typography	106	17.9	Porto	104	98.1
Clothing	264	5	Porto	236	89.4
Glass	83	9.2	Leiria	38	45.8
Other	223	2.6	Porto	144	64.6
Total	5998	7			

Source: Authors' calculations based on Anuário Estatístico

TABLE 4
Child participation in different sectors, 1940 and 1950

Sectors Years	10-14 years				15-19 years			
	Boys	Girls	Total	Rate %	Boys	Girls	Total	Rate %
Industry								
1940	10864	6151	17015	2.1	43555	24737	68292	9.1
1950†	*17549	*7622	*25171	*5.1	81903	35969	117872	14.5
Agriculture								
1940	63816	17970	81786	10.2	152598	34535	187133	25.0
1950	*65238	*13948	*79186	*16.1	164793	38228	203021	25.0
Domestic services‡								
1940	10460	243079	253539	31.6	15584	273751	289335	38.7
1950	*4325	*183279	*187604	*38.1	8401	295623	304024	37.5

Source: Authors' calculations based on Census.

Notes: Rate is defined as the incidence of child labour in the respective age group;

* The figures in 1950 refer to the 12-14 age group;

† Includes minors in the extractive industry;

‡ The definition of domestic service differs between the 1940 and the 1950 census. However, for the most part domestic services should be thought of as unpaid family work.

TABLE 5
Accident rates in the glass industry, 1941

Location	Harmed per 100 workers		Incapacity days			
			per worker		per 1000 work. days	
	Adults	Minors	Adults	Minors	Adults	Minors
Leiria	21.2	62.7	1	2	4	8
Others	15.0	69.2	1	4	4	15
Total	18.9	64.7	1	3	4	10

Source: Authors' calculations based on Anuário Estatístico.

TABLE 6
Children working for an employer in 1992 and 1993

Age group	12-16 years old		12-15 years old	
	1992	1993	1992	1993
Children (000's)	42,689	28,409	17,508	8,393
Incidence in age group (%)	5.8	4.0	3.0	1.5

Source: Antunes (1996).

TABLE 7
Incidence of child work in Portugal (%)
(absolute number of children working)

	1998	2001
Age group^a		
6 to 12 years old	2.2 (14,656)	2.6 (20,258)
13 to 15 years old	7.0 (28,421)	6.9 (28,655)
(12 to 15 years old)	6.3 (32,432)	6.3 (34,480)
Type of boss^b		
Working for a family member	2.9 (31,590)	3.3 (39,508)
Working for another person	1.1 (11,487)	0.8 (9,626)
Total	4.0 (43,077)	4.1 (49,134)

Source: Own calculations based on DETEFP/SIETI 1998 and 2001 Surveys.

Notes:

a Incidence is defined as the percentage of children in the respective age group who report working at least one hour per week.

b Refers to the 6 to 15 age group. Work refers to paid or unpaid activities performed on the family farm/enterprise or for an employer. Estimates of the absolute number of working children working are based on weighting the sample data to obtain population figures.

TABLE 8
Child workers in Portugal – a profile (standard deviation)

	1998	2001
Economic work		
Male (%)	72.4	73.5
Age	13.0	12.54
Weekly hours of work	n.a.	14.05 (13.96)
Sector of Work (%)		
Agriculture	55.7	46.73
Industry	12.0	11.15
Restaurants and Hotels	10.5	12.40
Commerce	9.9	14.34
Construction	6.4	10.68
Others	5.5	4.7
Domestic work		
Male (%)	28.8	26.0
Age	12.3	12.23
Weekly hours of work	n.a.	8.36 (8.77)

Source: Own calculations based on DETEFP/SIETI 1998 and 2001 Surveys.

TABLE 9
Incidence of child work by regions (%)

Year	North	Centre	Lisbon	Alentejo	Algarve	Azores	Madeira
1998	4.3	4.7	1	1.5	1.5	n.a.	n.a.
2001	4.8	5.8	1.4	2.8	2.3	3.4	1.06

Source: Own calculations based on DETEFP/SIETI 1998 and 2001 Surveys.

Note: The 1998 survey did not cover the Azores and the Madeira regions.

TABLE 10
Working children according to parents' labour status when children (%)

Type of labour	Father child labourer		Mother child labourer	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Domestic	5.3	3.7	6.8	3.8
Economic	7.4	2.8	8.6	3.1
Both	0.7	0.4	1.3	0.3
Total	13.4	6.9	16.6	7.3

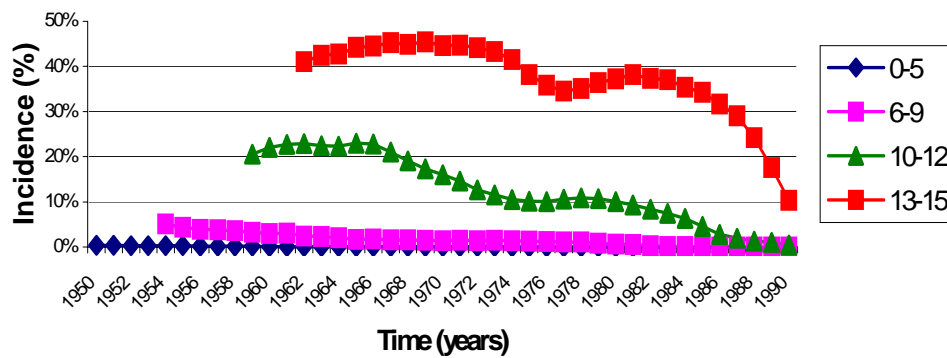
Source: Own calculations based on DETEFP/SIETI 2001 Survey.

TABLE 11
A summary of laws, economic changes and child labour force participation

Year/ Period	Compulsory schooling in years	Minimum working age in years	Employment in (%)		Labour force participation rate	
			Agriculture	Industry	10-12	13-15
1890s	5	1891:12	61	18	.	.
1900s	5	12	61	19	.	.
1910s	1911:3	12	57	22	.	.
	1919:5	12				
1920s	1929:3	12				
1930s	3	12	49	19	.	.
1940s	3	12	51	20	44‡	73‡
1950s	1956:4 (boys)	12	48	24	59‡	77‡
1960s	1960:4 (girls)	12	42	28	22	37
	1964:6	1969:14				
1970s	6	14	32	33	16	45
1980s	1986:9	14	18	39	10	37
1990s	9	1991:16	10	38	0.4	10

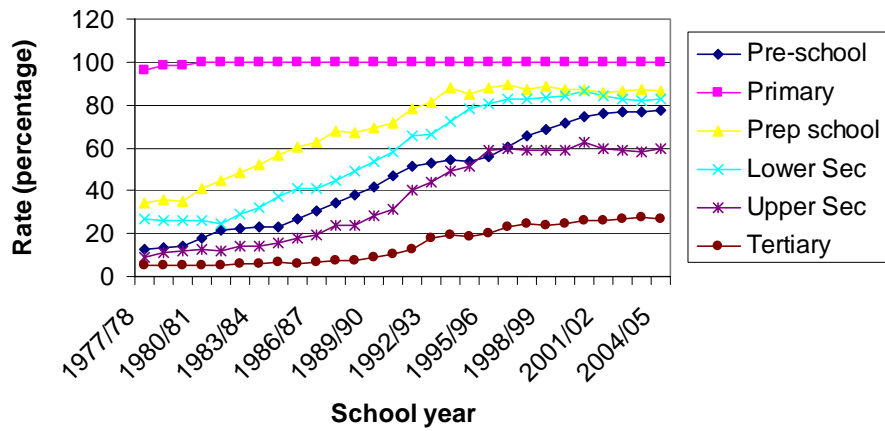
Notes: The child labour force participation rate for 1940 and 1950 are for the age groups 10-14 (‡) and 15-19 (†).

FIGURE 1
Child labour incidence rate



Source: Own calculations based on DETEFP/SIETI 2001 Survey.

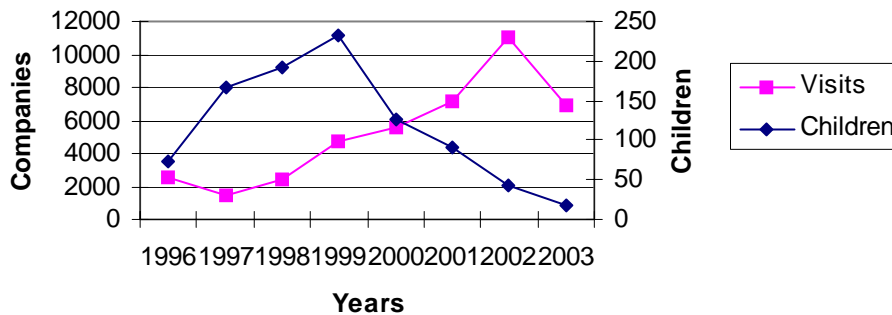
FIGURE 2
Real school enrolment, 1977-2005



Source: GIASE, Education Ministry.

Notes: Pre-school regards three years prior to the official schooling (3-5 years old); primary school regards the first four schooling years (6-9 years old); preparatory school regards the fifth and sixth grade (10-11 years old); lower secondary regards the seventh to ninth grade (12-14 years old); upper secondary regards the tenth to twelfth grade (15-17 years old); tertiary education.

FIGURE 3
Visits from labour inspection and children found illegally working



Source: Labour Inspectorate

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