ORDEM DOS ENFERMEIROS

SURVEY ON THE PROFESSIONAL SITUATION OF YOUNG NURSES IN PORTUGAL
2010

Young Nurses Group
Title: Survey on the Professional Situation of Young Nurses in Portugal

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Edition: Ordem dos Enfermeiros - 2010

Translator: Tradioma

English revision: António Manuel Silva e Raul Fernandes

Image: OE Young Nurses Group and OE Image and Communication Office

Photos: Ordem dos Enfermeiros database


The results of this survey were originally published in Portuguese. This English version is a reduced one as it excludes the analysis per regional section. If you are interested in this information (only available in Portuguese) please send an e-mail to gri@ordemenfermeiros.pt.

The Portuguese original is accessible at http://www.ordemenfermeiros.pt/projectos/Paginas/grupointeressejovensenfermeiros.aspx
"There is no doubt that what young people strive for is the chance of a decent and productive job from which to build a better future. Take away that hope and you are left with a disillusioned youth trapped in a cycle of working poverty or in danger of detaching from the labour market altogether – thus representing a vast waste of economic potential."
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**FOREWORD**

Dear Reader,

The Ordem dos Enfermeiros (OE) is a public association, as specified in its Statutes, which aims to “supervise the social role, dignity and reputation of the nursing profession”, and has always been concerned with the integration of newly graduates into the profession.

However, the OE is aware of the changes taking place in the labour market in the past few years that have delayed the start of the professional activity, and has therefore focused on this issue in various ways, for example, conducting studies on the professional situation of young nurses. One of the commitments assumed by the OE in 2009 involves monitoring this area, based on the above mentioned studies as the preferred instrument for an evidence-based policy.

Given the nursing care needs, felt by the population and the indicators of which are known to the decision makers, we would expect the start of the professional activity of nurses to be faced as a priority issue to provide the best healthcare offer possible.

It is difficult to understand how the Ministry of Health has identified the need of human resources and still every year young nurses feel it is more and more difficult to find jobs in healthcare units. It does not make any sense that these young people, their families and the State invest in their training and then have to face the torment of unemployment or have to work abroad in order to practice in the profession for which they are wholly qualified.

In order to fully grasp the situation of these young people, the OE conducted a survey on the nurses who registered in the Ordem between 1 January 2007 and 31 December 2009. As we have mentioned, the answers obtained lead to the following conclusions:

- Of the total sample, 19% of respondents are not practicing.

- As the OE had alerted a while ago, the time elapsing between the end of the course and the entry into the labour market has increased, standing now at six months to a year.

- The number of young nurses finding jobs outside Portugal has also increased, with figures tripling compared to 2009.

At a time when human resources in health care are a general concern and the new National Health Plan is under discussion, the OE hopes that this data can trigger the support needed for policy making. The survey conducted by the Group of Young Nurses of the OE – to whom I am ever so grateful – shows that the data is extremely relevant to follow a proper human resource policy in Nursing.

We need to shed new light on employment in Health – more specifically in Nursing – and not simply address the matter on a work basis. This should be an overarching approach involving a strategic analysis.

I therefore feel that this study – namely its findings – is an invitation to action. The OE will do everything within its reach to spread the message and to alert the decision makers to the reality shown here.

Maria Augusta Sousa

The President of the Ordem dos Enfermeiros
INTRODUCTION

The assessment of young nurses’ professional status is recent in Portugal and at its onset is the establishment, in 2008, within the Ordem dos Enfermeiros, of a group focused mostly on the challenges and struggles affecting nurses with less professional experience. This study runs on an annual basis, this being its second edition and its main purpose is to monitor the professional situation of young nurses.

As we will mention in the context chapter of this review, the definition of the age group according to the expression «youth» depends on the aim of the review. In our case, we chose «professional youth», in other words, the nurses with less than two years of registration in the OE. This is why we have answers from older nurses, concerning age.

The methodology used was adapted from the questionnaire used in 2009 in the first survey, validated by the Board of Directors and the Board of Jurisdiction of the Ordem dos Enfermeiros. The next step involved transferring the questionnaire to online software, to receive and compile statistically the answers given by the nurses.

With this in mind, an invitation to answer was sent by e-mail with a hyperlink to the questionnaire, to all nurses registered in the OE from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2009 with a valid e-mail registered in the database.

In the course of June 2010, 10 401 invitations were sent.

We received 945 replies and 541 non-delivery notices, giving us a response percentage of 9.58%. Compared to the first survey, we received 215 more replies, although there are no significant changes to the percentage bearing in mind the total number of e-mails sent (about one thousand more messages). We also received two blank questionnaires.

The first part of this document provides a general outline of the employment of young professionals in Portugal and abroad. Then we reveal the results obtained according to the responses to the questionnaire. To expedite the organization of data, the results were split into four sub-chapters, as follows: characterization of the sample, access to the labour market, characterization of the professional situation and experiences in the employment process.

The final part contains the conclusion of the survey, with particular focus on the key findings.

To understand some specific items of the data, it is important to understand part of the OE internal organization. The organization is formed by five regional sections: North, Centre, South, Madeira and Azores. The North Regional Section covers the districts of Braga, Bragança, Porto, Viana do Castelo and Vila Real. The Centre Regional Section covers the districts of Aveiro, Castelo Branco, Coimbra, Guarda, Leiria and Viseu. The South Regional Section covers the districts of Beja, Évora, Faro, Lisboa, Portalegre, Santarém and Setúbal. The Azores and Madeira Regional Sections apply to the relevant autonomous regions.

We hope this document sheds new light on the problems affecting the sector. In this edition, you will find responses from nurses graduated in 2007, 2008 and 2009. It should be noted that the 2007 and 2008 graduates were also included in the previous year’s survey, which means that, in some items, we can compare responses from one year to the next, the only limitation being that the data collection for 2009 took place in January, whereas in this survey data were collected in June.

This survey was published in Portuguese and English. The English version is smaller, having excluded the analysis per regional section. If you are interested in this information please send an e-mail to gri@ordemenfermeiros.pt.

We hope the continuous monitoring will provide us with the trends for the sector.
CONTEXT

In a changing environment, it has been a concern of the Ordem dos Enfermeiros (OE) to equip itself with reliable data to backup its positions. Considering this, the OE carried out in 2009 the first young nurses professional status survey in Portugal, and in 2010 re-edited this survey.

We should explain that the term «youth» is vague and many times unclear, even when it refers to the issue of age groups. The International Labour Organization (hereinafter ILO) defines «youth» in its report “Global Employment Trends for Youth – 2010” as follows:

«“Youth” in this report are defined as the age group 15 to 24 years. Differences continue to exist in the way national statistics programmes define and measure youth. Definitions of “youth” are based in part on the end use of the measurement. If one aims to measure, for example, the age span at which one is expected to enter the labour market then the statistical definition of 15 to 24 years may no longer be valid, given that today more and more young people postpone their entry into labour markets to well beyond the age of 25. Alternatively, there are numerous situations, especially in the developing world, where the typical age of entry into the labour market may be below that of 15 years, in which case the delineation between youth and child labour become blurred. »

Global Employment Trends for Youth, page.1, overview

This OE survey adopts this concept of youth, adapting the age group to the purpose of the survey: to define the professional status of newly-graduate nurses.

ILO feels that youth unemployment and situations in which young people give up on the job search or work under inadequate conditions incur costs to the economy, to society and to the individual and their family. In fact, according to the organization, the lack of decent work, if experienced at an early age, often permanently compromises a person’s future employment prospects and frequently leads to unsuitable labour behaviour patterns that last a lifetime.

When we apply this concept to the health sector, we draw close to the speech and decision making assumed by the OE on the risk of underutilizing the nurses, namely:

«The significant investment in the profession and in nurses (...) does not tally with the full use of their growing and diversified abilities to intervene (...). The consequent effects of this underutilization (...) represent a waste of the potential qualifications and competences of nurses. »

Translation of OE Position Statement on Policy Measures for the Recognition and Consolidation of Nursing – May 2010

According to the main findings of the ILO report, the youth unemployment rate rose to an historical figure in 2009 – 13%, that is, 81 million people – and this number is bound to increase this year. These figures will have significant and more serious consequences as new candidates enter into the labour market and add to the number of already unemployed young people.

The ILO has also delivered the following important findings:
- The youth unemployment rates show they are more sensitive to economic shocks than adult rates;
- Youth unemployment was shrinking before the economy crisis, but was nevertheless three times higher than adult unemployment;
- Young women find it more difficult to find a job than young men;
- The impact of the economy crisis differs according to the regions;
- The impact on developed economies was much stronger than in developing ones;
- Temporary employment was not sensitive to the crisis, yet more and more young people took on part-time jobs in the European Union countries under study.
Similarly, the European Commission (hereinafter EC) published in 2010 the document “EU Youth Report” which focused particularly on this age group. The data are similar to those revealed by the ILO, showing that young people (< 30 years) are more exposed to low salaries, unstable jobs and unemployment, despite having better education and computer skills (see Chart 1).

The relation between unemployment and education level is well known, where those holding a higher education course have, according to the EC study, an unemployment risk three times less than those with a secondary education course.

Nevertheless, regardless of the level of education, for most young people the time spent in the transition period into employment is significant. The more demanding young people are as to salaries or work conditions, for example, the harder it will be for them to find a job, which in some cases proves the inadequacy of tertiary education in relation to the labour market.

On this matter, the newspaper I (August 18th – 2010) published an article on an all time record of youth drainage out of labour market in Portugal. Based on data analysis of employability provided by the National Institute of Statistics, this newspaper showed that the number of employed youth in Portugal had fallen to about half compared to 10 years before, that is, from 746 thousand in 1998 to 426 thousand in 2010, and has dropped in the past eight consecutive quarters.

Once the transition to employment is completed, another problem arises – finding a stable job that will bring personal stability, will allow the young worker to buy a house and/or start his/her own family. According to the EC report, the use of temporary employment contracts is increasing, standing at a 5% increase in the period between 2000 and 2007.

Portugal is drawing closer to becoming a leader in all unemployment rates per age group. For the 25-29 year age group, countries like Greece, Portugal, Italy, Spain, France, Poland and Slovakia have exceeded the 10% unemployment figure. Youth unemployment (15-24 years), on the other hand, has declined, in general, 3% in Europe from 2000 to 2007. Only Portugal, Sweden, Hungary and Luxembourg have shown a significant increase of unemployment in this age group and for this period (see Chart 2).
As more young people enter the labour markets under temporary work contracts, they are also more subject to part-time jobs. These two conditions are sometimes complementary to one another: a young worker can have a part-time job under a temporary work contract.

As shown in Chart 3, Portugal leads jointly with Greece in terms of young people in temporary jobs (more than 70%).

Source: Eurostat (Labor Force Survey)

Equally important is the statement made by MEP Emilie Turunen in an interview to the European Parliament website on the report on youth employment, in which she states that «the number of internships has gone up in countries like France and Germany, while in the same period of time, the number of jobs has gone down. So there is a good indication that internships are actually replacing real jobs. And it’s not just a few, it’s millions. It’s absolutely crucial to ensure that internships are educational; they should not replace real jobs. »

In the report presented to the European Parliament in June 2010, Turunen asked for the creation of a «European Quality Charter on Internships» to ensure the educational approach to professional internships.

In Portugal, regarding nurses, the previous OE survey (2009) points to the fact that 10% of young nurses had already practiced in the professional internship and of these 33% had no learning programmes included in the internship.

Recently, the Government amended the order governing the Programme of Professional Internships Programme, excluding doctors and nurses from it (Order 681/2010, of 12 August). Francisco Madelino, President of the Portuguese Institute of Employment and Vocational Training, justified the measure in an interview to the Portuguese newspaper Diário Económico, dated August 13th 2010, considering that hiring doctors and nurses does not change according to whether the Government supports the process or not.

Although the Government considers that the internships «facilitates the integration in the labour market», as stated in Portaria 681/2010, of August 12th, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (hereinafter OECD) in the document «Rising Youth Unemployment During The Crisis: How To Prevent Negative Long-Term Consequences On A Generation? », of April 2010, mentions that «while for many these contracts are stepping stones into permanent jobs, for others they tend to be dead ends».

This is also defended by the EC study, which reveals the risk of a young professional being trapped in a transition cycle between unstable contracts. This context has underpinned and motivated the increase of emigration among young nurses. The OE survey of 2009 revealed that 5% of young Portuguese nurses were working outside Portugal. The number could be underestimated if we consider that the nurses practicing outside Portugal are likely to find it more difficult to reply to surveys conducted inside the country. This awareness is
heightened with the various media clippings who alert to the hiring of hundreds of nurses to Spain, United Kingdom and Switzerland through employment agencies.

Other retainable key data on youth employability in Europe based on the EU Youth Report 2010:
- 57.5% of young Europeans (15 - 29 years) considered economically active (meaning that they are either employed or actively seeking employment);
- More than one third of young people in this age group have left the educational, employment or training system;
- In 2008, youth unemployment among economically active European youth (15 – 29 years) stood at 15.4%, about four times more than the older active population;
- Half of young people aged 20 are on the labour market;
- 26% of the unemployed aged 15 to 24 years and 35% of the unemployed aged 25 to 29 years have been in this situation for more than 12 months;
- One third of the employed aged 15 to 24 years are students or apprentices;
- Half of the employed in this age group are in a low skilled or elementary occupation;
- 40% of the employed aged 15 to 24 years work on a temporary contract and 25% work part-time;
- 4% of the employed aged 15 to 24 years are self-employed, a percentage which rises to 9% in the age group 25-29 years.

The education system it’s not apart of this phenomenon and has a preponderant role in what regards nursing employability phenomena in Portugal, that should not be disregarded. The Directorate General for Higher Education (hereinafter DGESup) published a report in June 2010 entitled «Ten years of National Contest – 2000 -2010» regarding the admission process to Higher Education in Portugal. The report stated that in 2009 Nursing was the course with the highest number of places available in Portuguese Higher Education, totalling 1 807 places, ahead of Civil Engineering, Management and Medicine. This translates a very significant increase of available places which in 2000 stood at 1 272. In Portugal, applicants to Higher Education can choose from six course options. The demand for a specific course is calculated through the number of candidates marking the course as their first option. In 2009, Nursing was the second course with the best demand rate in Portugal, followed by Medicine. The current labour market now has inverted the trend, showing a reduction in terms of demand for Nursing courses (from 4 114 to 2 579) and an increase in relation to Medicine (2 522 to 3 170). In 2000, the positions in this ranking were quite the opposite, Nursing being the most sought after course in Portugal. When we analyse the number of successful candidates instead of the number of applicants, that is, the number of places filled in the course, Nursing is once again at the top of the list, with 1 778 successful applicants, followed by Management and Medicine, with 1 547 and 1 422 respectively. Looking at nursing course applicants in terms of Secondary Education last student average final score we observe a decrease over the past few years. According to the data provided by DGESup, on a scale of 0 to 200 marks, the average in 2007, 2008 and 2009 were, respectively, 146.2; 134.5 and 136.1.

The increasing gap between school to work in Nursing and the constant news about unemployment in the sector, as well as emigration trends, may be influencing the demand for the course. This survey aims to increase our knowledge at this level. However, based on the data regarding applications to higher education, the nursing course is still much regarded and desired by Portuguese students.
FINDINGS

Characterization of the national sample

The number of nurses that answered the inquiry was 945, aged between 21 and 49 years, with a mean age of 24 years and 6 months, 24 years being the most common age (see Table 1). The sample consists of 79% female nurses and 21% male nurses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number Nurses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 30</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 – Frequency and percentage of nurses per age – national data

We received responses from 27% nurses who graduated in 2007; 30% in 2008; and 43% in 2009. Similarly to the previous survey, the nurses who graduated more recently responded the most to our questionnaire (see Chart 4).

With regard to the month in which most students graduated (74.5%), the majority graduated in June or July, followed by January and February (10.5 of the total sample).

In Portugal, some Nursing schools still operate with two courses in each academic year, one ending in February and one in July, which explains this distribution. Still, we see that this type of system is becoming rarer. The remaining months refer to students who for some reason have postponed the end of their courses (see Chart 5).

The majority of responses (46%) were from nurses registered in the North Regional Section of the OE – see table. 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Section</th>
<th>Number of nurses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Azores</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madeira</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tabla n.º 2 – Distribuição e percentagem de respostas por Secção Regional

This data tallies with the schools in which these nurses graduated, being the predominant district of answer Porto (25%), followed by Lisboa (16%) (see Chart 6).
Access to the labour market

Of the total sample, 19% of the nurses are not practicing, 14% of them are not active in any activity and 5% are working in other activity besides Nursing, as shown in Chart 7.

When we analyse the young nurses professional status according to the year of graduation, we observe that the highest percentage (29%) of nurses not practicing are those who graduated more recently (2009); 23% of them (93 nurses) have no activity and 6% (27 nurses) are working in another profession.

As to the nurses who graduated in 2007 and 2008, only 8.5% and 12.28% are not yet practicing. The majority have already been absorbed by health institutions (Chart 8).

Unemployment strikes the North region the hardest, with 71% of all unemployed nurses registered in this section of the Ordem dos Enfermeiros. Although this data is influenced by the higher number of responses obtained in this regional section, the analysis per Section, shown in the Portuguese version of this survey is coherent with this result.

This regional phenomenon benefits from the highest number of schools and places available in the north region of Portugal.

The autonomous regions (Azores e Madeira) and the south region show the lower correspondence for the percentage of nurses not practicing the profession, completing just 8% of the total number of nurses in this situation in Portugal (see Chart 9).
Regarding the gap (in months) between graduation to the first job, the percentage of nurses who said they found a job in the first three months after completing the course has dropped when compared to the previous year survey. In the 2009 survey, more than half (57%) had found a job within three months after completing the course, compared to just 43% in the 2010 survey.

In its turn, the percentage of nurses starting their activity 6 to 12 months after graduation has increased since the 2009 survey – 14% in 2009 and 24% in 2010. A similar increase is visible in the number of nurses who found their first job within 1 to 2 years after completing the course (see Chart 10).

Although 46% of respondents are registered in the North Regional Section of the OE, the majority (52%) find the first job in the south region. Regarding the nurses employed 13% of them found their first nursing post outside Portugal.

**Characterization of the professional situation**

Portugal follows the international trend of instability regarding youth professional contracts. Of all respondents 39.6% had a fixed term contract (CTC, as in chart) or a provision of services contract (CPS, as in chart).

However, 29.6% replied that they already had a contract for an indefinite period (CTI, as in chart); 5.3% of nurses were in a paid professional internship (EPR, as in chart).

Under the item “Other”, we have responses such as Liberal Profession, Non-paid Professional Internship or Volunteer Work, and even professionals working under no contract at all.

The remaining 18.9% correspond to the nurses who are not practicing (Chart 12).

When asked about the number weekly work hours contracted the highest percentage (35.6%) of responses stated they work 35 hours. With percentage proximity arise the nurses working 40 weekly hours (34%). A small part of nurses (9%) are working in part-time with schedules varying between less than 10 hours a week till close to 30 hours. Similarly to the previous topic, the remaining 18% corresponds to the nurses who are not practicing (see Chart 13).
Regarding the practice in more than one institution by the same nurse, 12.7% of respondents mention working double jobs and 1.2% work in three different places. If we cross-analyse the data according to the double or triple jobs with the weekly hours, we can see that 10% of nurses hold more than one part-time job, and no full job. In average, about 41% work 60h a week; the remain did not mention the number of hours spent in the second job. No nurses were identified that had two full-time jobs in different places.

In the analysis per Regional Section, we see more clearly that it is in the South where double jobs are more relevant, but the data still shows that this is a residual situation and that the majority of nurses do not hold more than one professional activity.

Experiences in the employment process

Chart 15 represents the responses from nurses with no activity in Nursing to whether they had received or not a job offer as nurses. Half of the unemployed nurses have never received a job offer and 36% have accepted a job offer, but are currently unemployed.

Considering the nurses who refused job offers (14%) they did it because it implied professional internships, low salaries or poor work conditions.

Curiously, we couldn’t identify nurses refusing job offers on grounds of having to move to another region. In fact, the analysis shown in Chart 11 is quite clear on that. Nevertheless, as we observed in the analysis per Section (only available in the Portuguese version), most nurses find a job in the regions where they studied.

There is a significant increase in the number of nurses who found their first job outside Portugal, just about tripling the 5% shown in the previous survey (2009) to 13% in this year’s survey. The majority of nurses move to Spain, but England, Switzerland, Ireland and France are also favourite destinations (see Chart 16).
Nowadays, 9.1% of nurses say they still work abroad, with 5% of the total sample working in Spain (see Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of nurses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andorra</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 – Frequency and percentage of nurses per country of work – national data

There is a considerable increase in the number of nurses in professional internships, increasing from 10% in the previous survey (in 2009) to 14.4% in 2010 – Chart 17. However, the deregulation of this employment scheme is still very clear, as shown below.

Of the nurses who have worked in professional internship, 62% were supervised by a nursing tutor, 11% were supervised by a tutor from a different profession and 27% had no tutor at all.

With regard to the objectives of the traineeship, 68% referred that the objectives were defined at the beginning of the traineeship and 32% said no objectives were set out.

Regarding the training plan, 32% mentioned that the plan was defined and had been or is being followed through; 1% mentioned that although the training plan was defined, it was not followed through; 21% said that there was no training plan, but they received training during the internship hours; and about half the responses (46%) mentioned that there was no training plan nor training at all in the traineeship.

When we analyse the data per Regional Section, we observe that the data from the North and Centre Regional Section show the highest number of professional internships – Chart 18. However, if the analysis is based on the percentage per section, the Centre Section leads the list (20.2%), followed by the North (12.5%). The Azores show an even higher number (35.1%), but given the small sample, it is difficult to understand whether this data is real.

The job seeking is not an easy task for young nurses. Respondents have identified conditions/criteria used by the institutions to filter the applicants. In this case, 48.5% of nurses mention having been subject to these criteria, which is slightly higher than the numbers shown in the 2009 survey (47%) – Table 4. In the Portuguese version of this survey, when we analyse the data per Regional Section we identify the types of criteria used by employers.

Table 4 – Distribution per frequency and percentage of responses as to whether conditions were imposed to applicants other than the legal requirements when applying for a job – national data
When we address the issue of discrimination in the process of seeking for a job the problems increase, with 34% of nurses referring to have been discriminated or affected in their professional dignity in the this process. Most respondents report how they are treated by the health institutions. In the previous survey, 26% of nurses mentioned this feeling, an increase which shows the growing difficulties in accessing a job.

It is in this context we find a new and unusual situation in Portugal, but which is already common in other European countries – 41.5% of young nurses consider, or have already considered abandoning the profession (see Chart 19).
CONCLUSION

The ILO report on Global Employment Trends for Youth 2010, mentioned above, refer that young people suffer disproportionately from decent work deficit, measured in terms of poverty and employability. It also foresees that youth unemployment, brought by the economy crisis, will be harder to overcome than unemployment in the rest of the population.

Along these same lines, the Ordem dos Enfermeiros approved a position statement in a General Meeting on 15 March 2008 on this topic, as quoted below:

«The definition of an effective human resource management policy to respond properly to the health care needs of the population, and to avoid the waste of nursing skills available, namely in CSP and CCI contracts. It is not acceptable to have unemployed young graduates when the needs are not covered and the quality and safety of health care is not guaranteed. »

The 2010 survey, compared to the 2009 one, has provided us with a number of key indicators:

- 19% of young nurses are not working in the profession.

- This percentage increases to 29% if we take into consideration only the nurses who graduated in 2009. These are the ones who represent the majority of nurses currently not working in Nursing;

- There has been a significant increase of the time gap between graduation and the first professional experience;

- Despite the above increase, the percentage of nurses without a job one year after nursing graduation is residual in just about the whole country, except in the North region where the percentage is still significant;

- The emigration of nurses has practically tripled since the previous survey (5% to 13%), with a greater impact on nurses from the North of Portugal;

- There has been a significant increase of professional internships compared to the previous survey (10% to 14.4%) and the deregulation of these programs, namely due to the lack of training purposes and skills development plans;

- The institutions are still applying criteria to eliminate nurses that are not related to academic or professional performance, namely the region of origin;

- The institutions also limit the entry of nurses with not professional experience, and this is quite clear in the North and Centre regions;

- There has been a significant increase of discrimination awareness (26% to 34%) by nurses looking for a first job, when compared to the previous survey;

- 41.5% of young professionals consider, or has considered abandoning the profession.

The percentage of nurses who have responded to this survey is relatively small, about 10% of the population, which limits the survey. The number of responses (945) is nevertheless significant and shows trends that should not be ignored.

Article 5.6 of the new Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers, published by the World Health Organization, states that «Member States should consider adopting and implementing effective measures aimed at strengthening health systems, continuous monitoring of the health labour market, and coordination among all stakeholders in order to develop and retain a sustainable health workforce responsive to their population’s health needs. »

These monitoring and action measures in the management of healthcare workforce are most urgent and essential to avoid the loss of control and worsening of these key indicators of the professional situation of young nurses.

The maintenance of the number of graduates in Portuguese Nursing schools each year is a crucial indicator when we cross-analyse this number with the current economy crisis and the difficulty in absorbing
these professionals in the labour market.

In its turn, the OECD reminds us that this crisis can be an opportunity to change the factors that affect the transition between school and work.

Again quoting the ILO report «Young people might lack experience but they tend to be highly motivated and capable of offering new ideas or insights. They are the drivers of economic development in a country. Foregoing this potential is an economic waste».

We end this document on this note, and feel that this information can support a more precise assessment of the difficulties that young professionals face and be the driver for changes.
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