

# From precarious work to an uncertain tomorrow

The case of young people in Portugal

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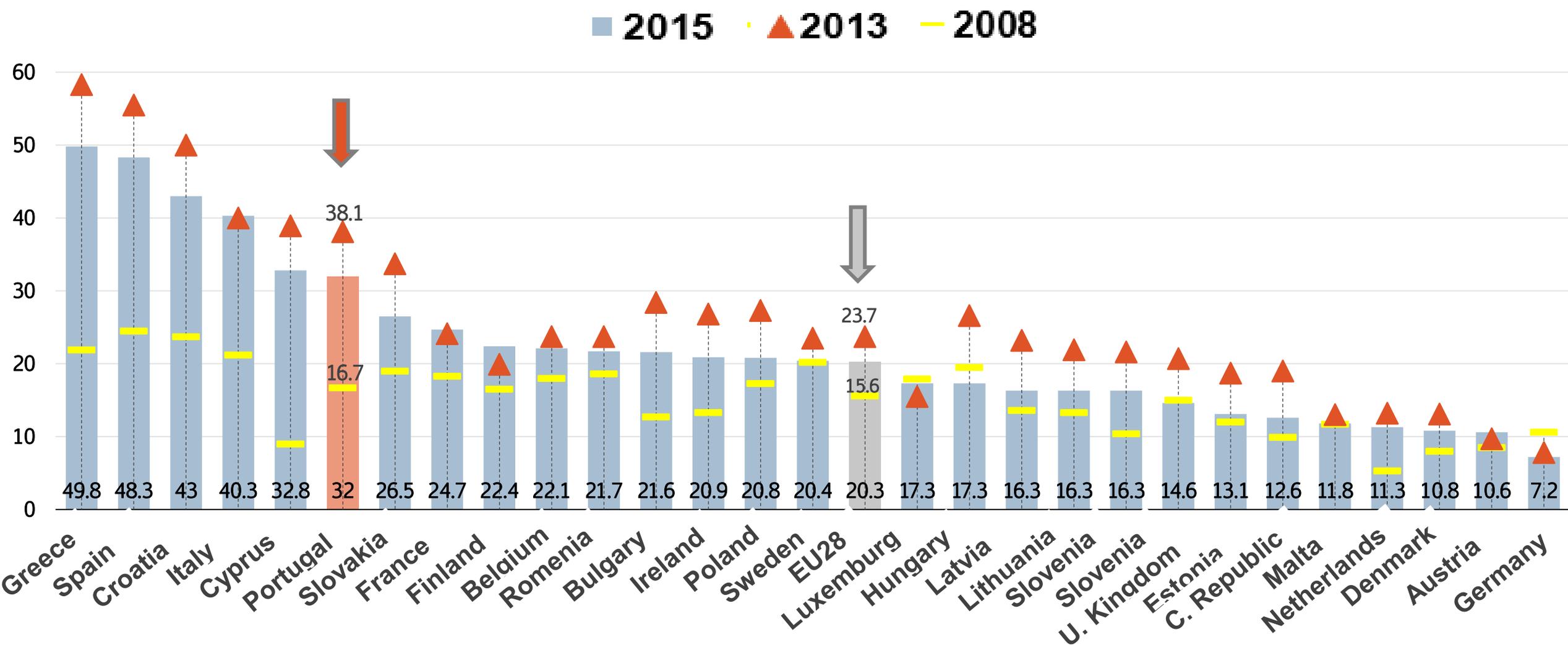
ISCTE-IUL, CIES-IUL, Inequality Observatory

## In this presentation...

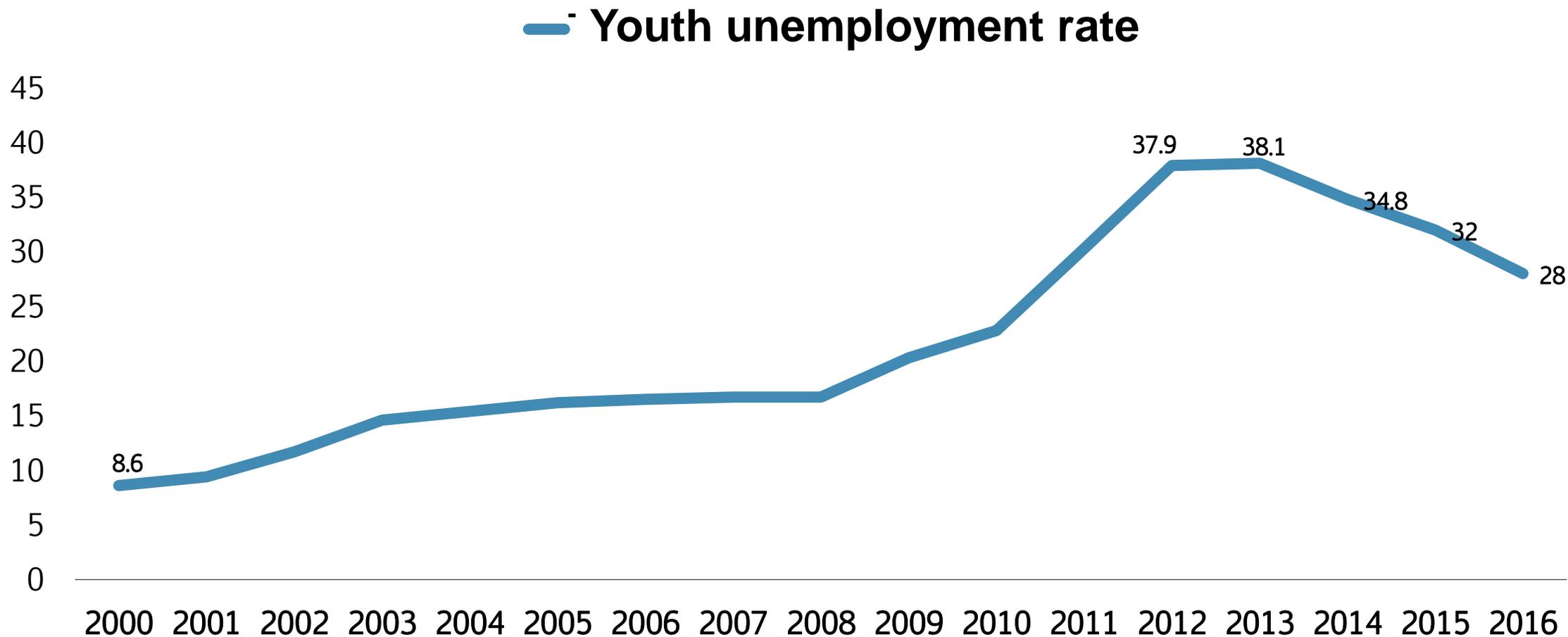
- Statistical framework about youth and the labor market;
- Presentation of a qualitative study:
  - 24 interviews with young people in situations of professional precariousness, with training in different scientific areas, living in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (from 22 to 30 years);
  - Content analysis using MAXqda;
  - Presentation of preliminary results;

# Participation of young people in the labour market

Fig. 1 – Evolution of the youth unemployment rate, ind. 15-24 years old

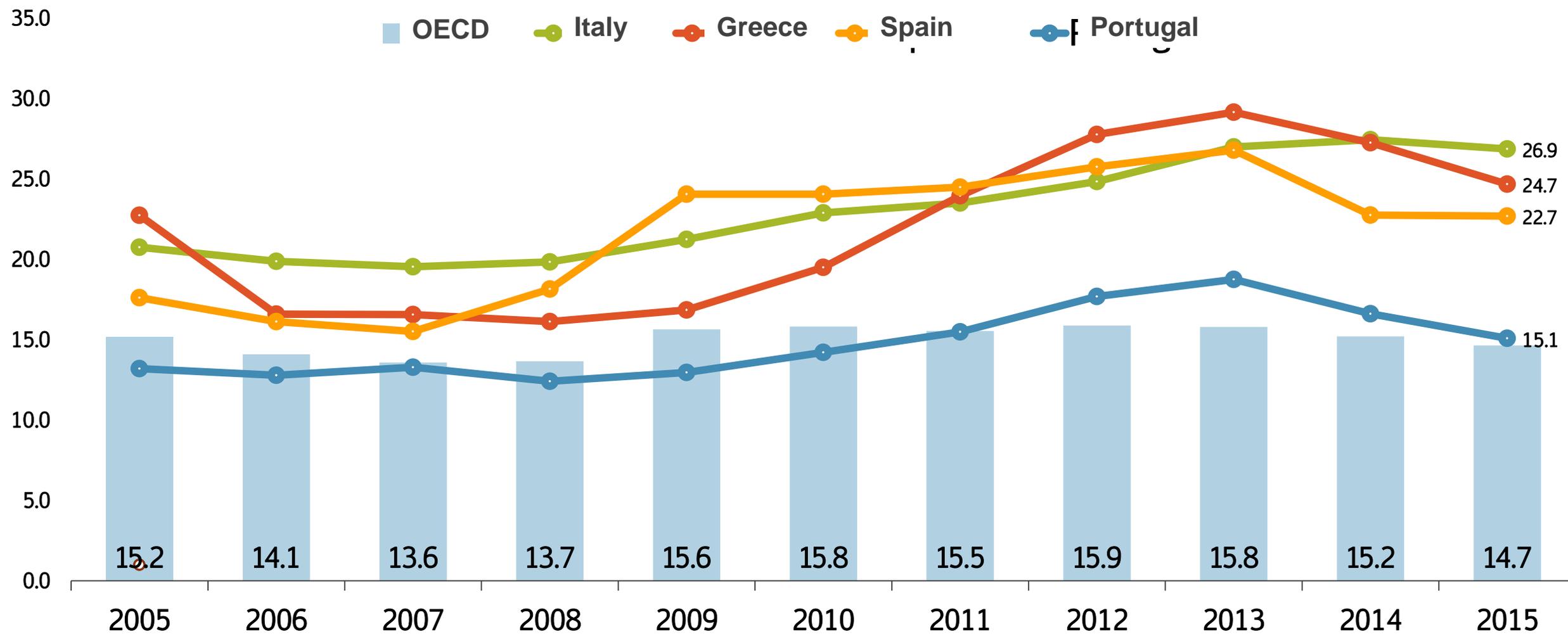


# Fig. 1.1 – Evolution of the youth unemployment rate, ind. 15-24 years in Portugal



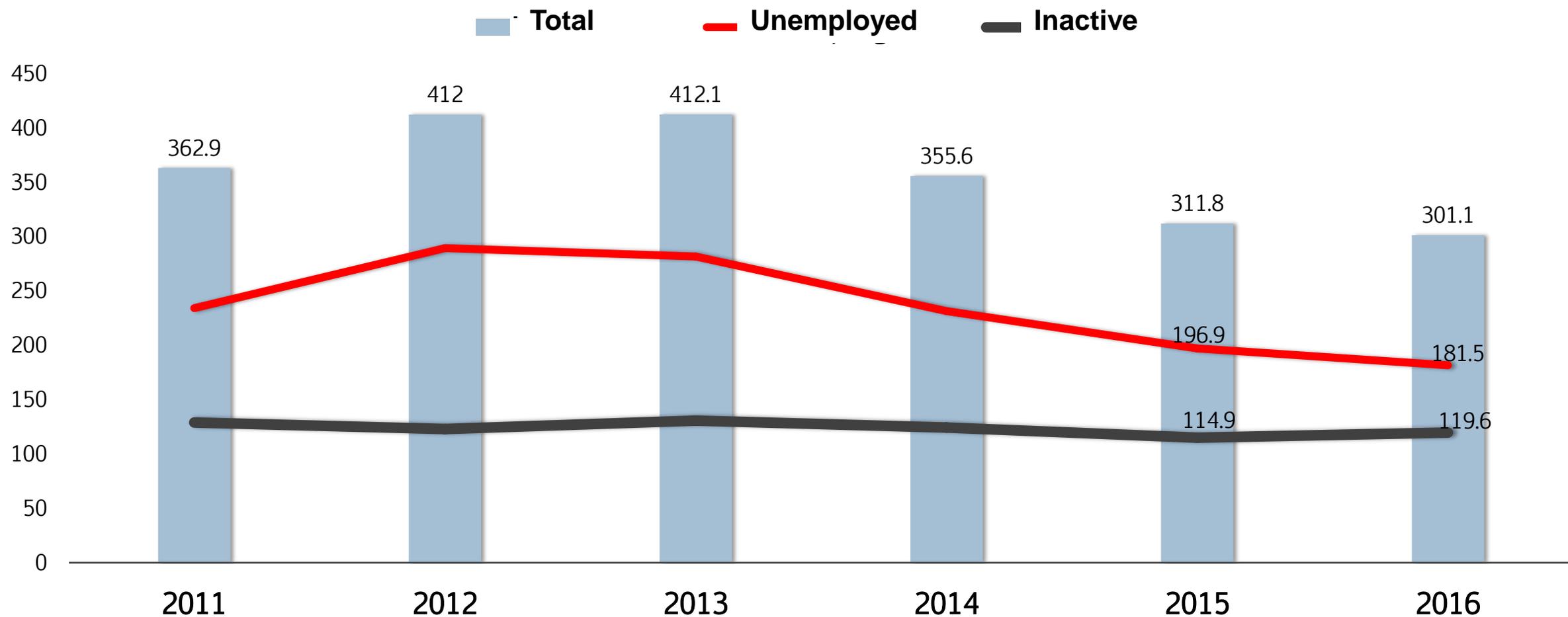
Statistics Portugal (INE)

Fig. 2 – Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET)



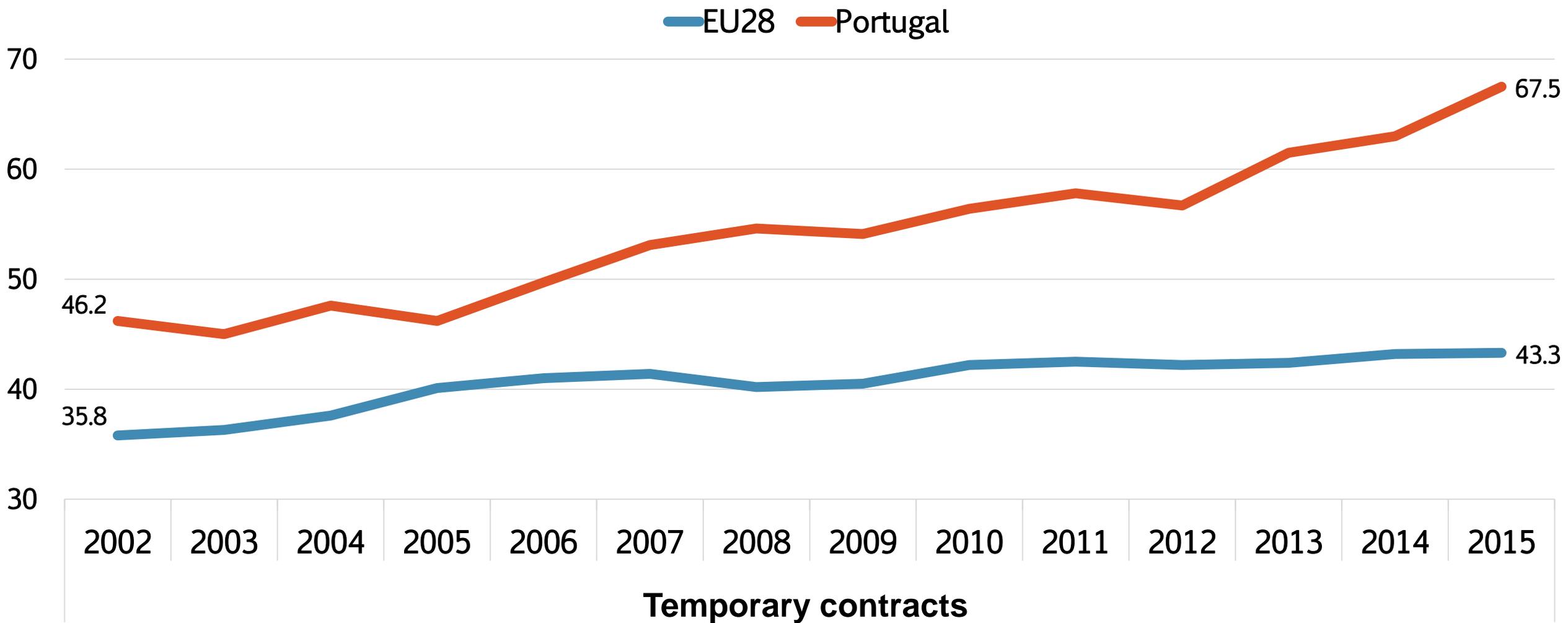
OECD (2015), Youth not in education or employment (NEET)

Fig. 2.1 – Young people aged 15 to 34 years who are not in education or training (in number thousands), in Portugal



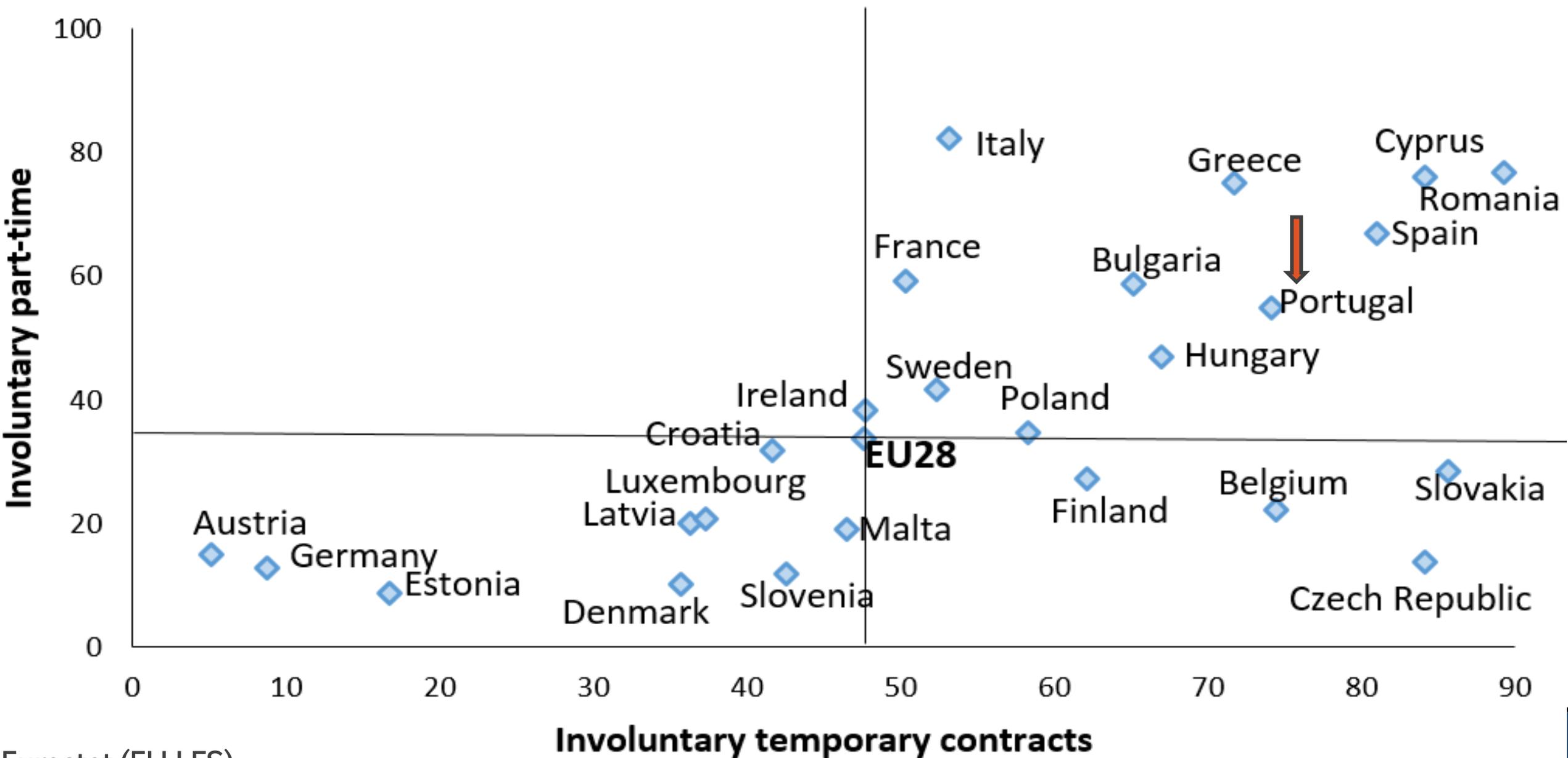
Statistics Portugal (INE)

Fig. 3 – Young people with temporary contracts in Portugal and the EU28, 2002-2015



Eurostat (EU LFS)

Fig. 4 – Young people (15-29 yrs old) in involuntary temporary and part-time contracts in the EU28 in 2015



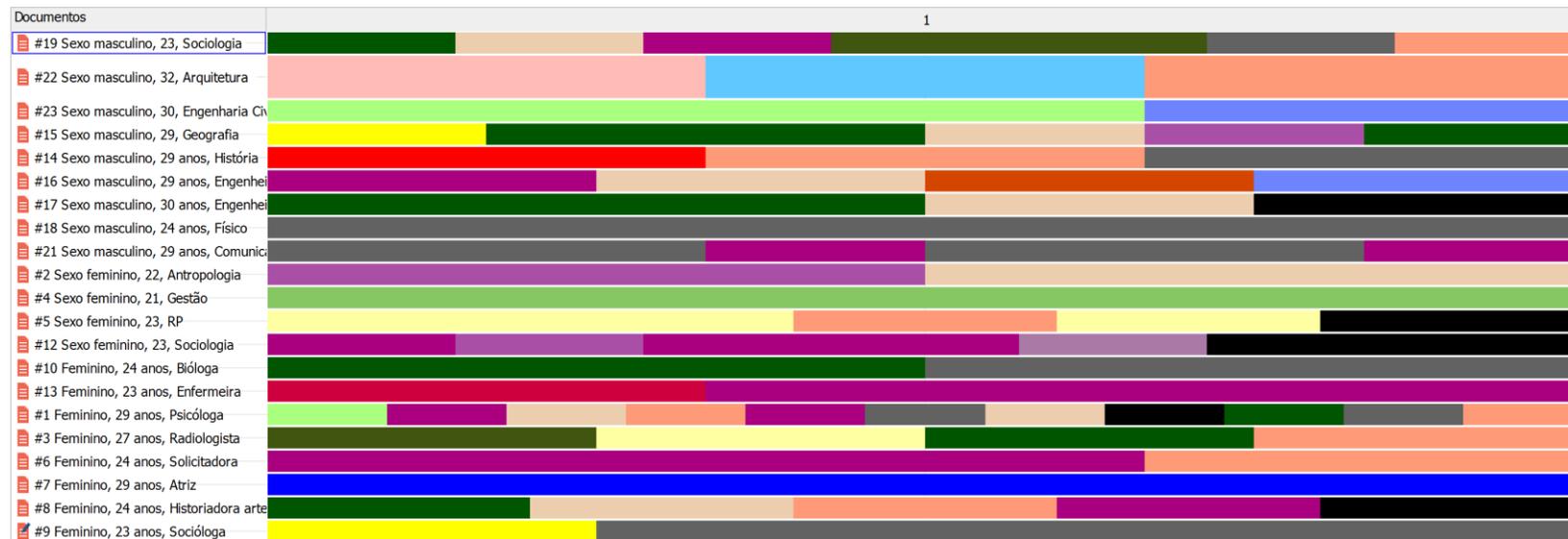
# Precariousness as a way of life

Overall, precarity is generally associated with a professional situation where there is a higher risk of socio-economic instability. It includes atypical forms of work such as: temporary work, part-time, fixed-term work, but also internships (Kesisoglou, 2015; Bartolini, 2015; Carmo et al, 2014)

- Young people are the group of population most likely to fall into precarious work situations:
  - **Objective dimension** - permanence in atypical contractual situations, with limited social benefits, low-paid professional insecurity;
  - **Subjective dimension** – The combination between instability and unpredictable risks associated with precarity have consequences in the definition of life and future plans

**Trajectories of precariousness:** The analysis of the (still short) professional paths of the interviewees allowed to verify the existence of a multiplicity of contractual situations. Entry into the labor market occurs through precarious work, which perpetuates, regardless of the type of work or activity.

## 1. Trajectories (chronological order) (output MAXqda)



### More frequent professional situation

- Fixed-term contracts, full-time or part-time;
- Research scholarships, full-time;
- “Recibos verdes”, part-time;
- IEFP Internships, full-time;



# Professional experience and low income

- For most young people interviewed, atypical forms of work are a necessity in the absence of alternatives in the labor market. Being in this position, their professional experiences are characterized by the low remuneration and greater vulnerability of the labor relations, based on the uncertainty.
- Individuals circulate through various types of work and activity causing the temporary condition to become a permanent state. This fact generates disappointment, demotivation and anguish.

Rui, 30 yrs old, internship (IEFP), Bachelor em Electrical and Computer Engineering

“But I can say that the company X called - I mean, the company that was recruiting me was the company working for company X - I was going to work directly with them and they were offering me the minimum wage: making shifts, weekends... (...) They said a person is reassessed every six months or every year (...) And I told them “no, raise my salary in at least 200€ and I’ll consider” otherwise it wasn’t worth it, my travel card is 120€! Then, I have expenses with my car, I have expenses with my mobile phone, I have expenses with this and that. What should I do? (...)»

Sílvia, 23 yrs old, internship (IEFP), Publicity Agency  
Bachelor in Public Relations Licenciada em Relações Públicas

“Because I think I had that kind of attitude that spoil the market...I already made three unpaid internships...This was my third (...) now my major fear is that with the current market situation, when you start it seems like you never have enough training to have a normal contract...or it's a IEFP's internship, or it's a first job measure, or it's a unpaid internship of 3/6 months... there's always some kind of a trick (...) My fear is, after my IEFP's internship is finished, what will I do when I return to the labour market?! Will I do a traineeship again, unpaid?! (...) Pretty much everything I done so far has been voluntary work”

Amália, 21 yrs old, Internship, Bachelor in Business

«I have colleagues in my company that are interns and they have, like, 26/27 years old...they receive as much as I do (500 €) – but they have to pay the bills at home (...) and they are jumping from an internship to the next. **The big problem with the internships is primarily the fact that there are no future guarantees (...)** I believe one already enters an internship scared, because, in fact, they need quick, cheap workforce, that do the work (...) it's frustrating, **they don't know what will they do, they get depressed**, maybe they are doing something wrong? Bottom down it's just the companies's policy, having interns and NEXT, here comes another one.»

# Semi-autonomy

- With the low level of income that most of these young people get, it is very difficult to have full economic autonomy.
- From the economic-financial point of view, precarity represents a situation of semi-autonomy that can be perpetuated over the years, regardless of whether one lives outside the parents' home.

Sílvia, 23 yrs old, internship (IEFP), Publicity Agency  
Bachelor in Public Relations Licenciada em Relações Públicas

“At what age can I leave home? **If they make me a contract after my internship, I’ll probably receive 800€ / 900€... that’s the maximum ceiling. With 800€ I can’t live alone in Lisbon (...)** I’ll have to leave home and live like in a frat house or as if I was an university student again and rent a room. What is the regular wage for a person to leave the parents house? **I’d say at least 1000/1200€, a person cannot live in Lisboa and pay a rent. When will I receive 1200€, if maximum I’ll receive 800€ this year?! Or I find someone that wants to join me or else...if that doesn’t happen, I’ll be “stuck” to my mother for how long...I mean, I have 24 yrs old, till I am 28 or 29? That scares me! Dammit, for me, to be at 28 in my mother’s house was completely inconceivable 4 years ago”**

Fernando, 30 yrs old, Math tutor, self-employed status (“recibos verdes”), Master degree in civil engineering

“I always thought I’d have my autonomy and my independence by now, I also feel very ashamed, very guilty for being unemployed. Looking for a job is something very humiliating – at least I speak for myself – it’s quite embarrassing not having a job, maybe it is my fault? Maybe it’s our society’s fault? What is happening? And then of course, I feel like a burden to my parents in a moment when this shouldn’t happen, and on top of that, we’re not rich (...). [In the future] I’d like to leave my parents’ house, have my own space, pay my bills...that was the goal – and it still is!”

# The uncertainty of the future

- The precariousness associated with the contractual instability of being in temporary situation in a given work or activity, generates a feeling of uncertainty that surpasses the labor situation and extends through several sectors and other dimensions of everyday life, such as the capacity to make future projects.

André, 29 yrs old, Researcher, self-employed status (“recibos verdes”), PhD in Social Communication

“I’ve an aversion to long term financial commitments without having a minimum of security. Right now, this’s what most concerns me, having money to pay my share of the rent and my expenses (...) We’re speaking of a total dissolution of the way I live. We’re speaking of the possibility of arriving to 30/31 yrs old and, I don’t know, maybe returning to my parents house because I don’t have any money... and It ins’t because I haven’t been working, because my CV is in great shape and grows every day... It just don’t translate into direct economic benefit (...)”

Raquel, 29 anos, master in Psychology, Fixed-term contract

«[Having kids] it's a present plan...in times I thought "I have to wait till I have a secure contract somewhere", but since then I no longer think that way. I mean, c'mon, it isn't worth it, it's not worth it to wait for someone to decide for me when should I have **children (...)** Also, If I knew my boyfriend was in a super unstable situation, if that was the case, now we'd have to consider better (...) I'm not thinking about having 4 children, but at least 1 child, but **I don't think that having a child should depend on what your boss thinks, it'll depend on what you feel and on what you want.** I already thought like that, but not anymore. **If professional life does not keep up, I know I'm going to find a way, so far I've always done that.»**

Fernando, 30 yrs old, Math tutor, self-employed status (“recibos verdes”),  
Master degree in civil engineering

**“A friend of mine told me once: “look, we arrived late to everything” – and I think this is the slogan of a generation, this generation at least. Maybe if we were a bit older, before the crisis burst, and having our higher education, things would have worked out much better. And now, is like “Entrepreneurship! Temporary employment agencies! Crisis! Precarious contracts! Competitiveness in the labour market - many candidates for a single offer!”. All this moves us away from our dreams of having a decent life. My parents’ generation fought – and we are speaking of middle class – and we [him and his brother] are the first to have a college degree – there was that hope of “you’re going to live better than...” and now we’re confronted with the opposite situation. There was some expectation on us, we had our own expectations and we arrived late to them”**

# Is there an alternative to precariousness?

- In most cases, the alternatives are thought to be systemic, with references to social justice issues that require a greater redistribution of income and regulation of the labor market.

Alice, 23 anos, Desempregada,  
Mestre Ciências da Comunicação

“[Do you think precarity will exist forever?] I hope not! You know what I think? We should end with “work”, I think the point is to reform work, the idea of work. Nowadays “work” occupies the centre of our lives. Maybe the point is to start thinking that work doesn’t need to have this large dimension in our lives (...) we need new ways of organization, new ways of living, beyond of this centrality that work occupies, there are new ways of living! We never worked so much as nowadays, and there never was – and this is paradoxical – so much unemployment like today”

André, 29 yrs old, Researcher, self-employed status (“recibos verdes”), PhD in Social Communication

“There is an absolute need to increase the concept of social responsibility (...) we need regulation and we need accountability so that we are not constantly democratizing risk, but privatizing the gain (...) There are medium and short term measures that can be implemented and that go through more inspection, through laws, profound changes to the labor law, changes in minimum income, etc. (...) **Capitalism by definition lives on the basis of optimizing resources, and there is nothing more optimal than having an overqualified workforce willing to do anything by absolute despair of survival (...)** What is needed to be tempted is to realize how one can optimize the current system not for maximum profit but for maximum welfare”

# Final Notes

- The interviews carried out reveal a dimension not always statistically captured: the profound impact that the recursion of precarity can have on the social and personal life of young people, which goes beyond the objective dimension of the work sphere.
- We advance with the notion of precariousness as way of life characterized by situations of "semi-autonomy", which are often translated into a dependence on the family network, the postponement of life plans and a relationship with the future of a great uncertainty.
- The conditions under which many young people are currently in the labour market may be contributing to the intensification of social inequalities. Besides the materialization of these inequalities in obstacles to access resources (e.g.: income, skills, etc.), there's a greater necessity to deepen our understanding to the effects of precarity on a more existential dimension.



**25 of April forever!**

Thank you