



Conselho
Nacional de
Ética para as
Ciências da Vida

Position Statement NO. 10

**POSITION STATEMENT BY THE NATIONAL ETHICS COUNCIL
FOR THE LIFE SCIENCES (CNECV) AS A CONTRIBUTION TO
THE SOCIAL DEBATE ON THE PROHIBITION OF MARRIAGE
UNDER THE AGE OF 18 IN PORTUGAL**

April 2025

Position of the CNECV as a contribution to the social debate on the prohibition of the marriage of children under the age of 18 in Portugal

Executive Summary

Following the social and legislative debate generated by the change in the minimum age for marriage in Portugal - from 16 to 18 - the National Council for Ethics in the Life Sciences (CNECV) issued Position Statement no. 10 as an ethical and reflective contribution to this change. The enactment of Law 39/2025, which prohibits the marriage of children under the age of 18 and classifies it as a situation of risk under the terms of the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents in Danger, provides the legal framework for the CNECV's position.

The CNECV recognizes that early marriage, whether formal or informal, can seriously affect young people's mental health, personal development and social performance, and sometimes constitutes a violation of fundamental rights and a form of gender-based violence. It also emphasizes that young people's autonomy develops progressively and is recognized by various legal norms that give them the capacity to make decisions in different areas of life, including sexual and reproductive health.

The CNECV's position emphasizes the importance of ensuring coherence and proportionality in the legal definition of the age of autonomous decision. It considers that the mere raising of the legal age of marriage, without complementary protective and educational measures, could lead to the concealment of informal marriages and therefore will not lead to the eradication of this harmful practice.

In this regard, the CNECV makes three main recommendations:

- 1.** Systematic collection of data on early marriage in order to develop effective public policies;
- 2.** A multidisciplinary and educational approach, combining legislation with awareness-raising activities and educational programs for autonomy and personal development;

- 3.** Strengthening protection mechanisms, including training of professionals and effective access to specialized support, namely educational, psychological and legal.

Lisbon, April 11, 2025.

National Ethics Council for the Life Sciences.

The Chair of the CNECV, Maria do Céu Patrão Neves.

Rapporteurs: Miguel Ricou, André Dias Pereira, Paula Pinto Freitas, Maria do Céu Patrão Neves

The Position Statement was unanimously approved at the CNECV Plenary Meeting on April 11, 2025.