

Decree nº 66/XIII –

**“Establishing the obligation of an existing vegetarian option in the
menus of public canteens and refectories”**

The petition text

Dear President of the Portuguese Republic

Dear President of the Portuguese Republic Assembly

Dear Prime Minister

Dear Party Delegates

We are in the year 2016 and there are many Portuguese individuals whom, due to personal choice or necessity, and motivated by ethical, ecological or health reasons, have adopted dietary lifestyles that differ from the norm, namely those who follow ovo-lacto-vegetarian or strictly vegetarian diets.

According to a study developed and published by the company Nielsen and promoted by Centro Vegetariano, there were at least 30.000 vegetarians in 2007. Furthermore, at least 5% from the Portuguese population excluded one of the traditional foods (e.g. meat, fish, dairy, eggs) from their diets.

This number is supposed to have grown largely in the last decade, as we're observing an increased market offer of vegetarian products, in particular in wide commercial areas.

In 2015, the Health General Directory, coordinated by the Ministry of Health, has published a guideline handbook recognizing that there wide evidence of the benefits of an increased plant intake in our diets, and that a plant-based diet fulfills all nutritional requirements of a human being, in any stage of his/ler lifecycle, as long as its well planned.

The availability of a vegetarian option would reflect the liberal principles of our republic constitution, in accordance with international directives and democratic principles.

However, the Portuguese Government currently does not predict the existence of wide demographics that follow different dietary lifestyles (e.g. vegetarian), nor does it promote dietary diversity in public institutions such as schools and hospitals, which would attend to the needs of thousands of people who otherwise feel frustrated in accessing a vegetarian option, which is rarely available.

In the face of this democratic gap, we urge the Portuguese parliament to pass new laws that assure the diversity of dietary regimes in the public canteens, by implementing a mandatory strict vegetarian option in all public institutions, such as schools, universities, hospitals and so on.

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