



Presidential Election in Portugal, 23rd January 2011

from **Corinne Deloy**
Translated by Helen Levy



RESULTS

Anibal Cavaco Silva is easily re-elected as President of the Republic of Portugal

Outgoing President of the Republic Anibal Cavaco Silva, (Social Democratic Party, PSD), did not go against the tradition whereby Heads of the Portuguese State are elected in the first round of the election. On 23rd January he was re-elected for a second five year mandate as head of the country with 52.94% of the vote i.e. a higher result than the one he achieved in the previous presidential election on 22nd January 2006 (+2.6 points). He came out ahead of Manuel Alegre (PS) supported by the Left Bloc (BE) and the Atlantic Democratic Party (PDA) who won 19.75% of the vote (1 point less in comparison with 2006).

They were followed by Fernando Nobre, independent candidate, founder of the International Medical Assistance Group (AMI) who won 14.10%, Francisco Lopes, the Communist Party's candidate (PCP) supported by the ecologists of the "Os Verdes" (The Greens), 7.14%, José Maneul Coelho, member of the New Democracy Party, 4.5% and Defensor de Moura 1.57%.

Turn out in this election was exceptionally low: only 46.63% of the electorate went to ballot – a record since the country's return to democracy in 1974. The issue at stake in this presidential election seemed of little importance to the Portuguese who are concerned about the rise of unemployment and poverty and who since the start of the year are suffering their third austerity plan in 12 months. The election was also not very exciting since the Head of State's executive powers are limited (he can however dissolve government). Finally the size of the victory was the only issue at stake in this presidential election.

"I shall be a point of reference in terms of confidence, stability and solidarity without relinquishing the powers the Constitution provides me with," declared Anibal Cavaco Silva. The President of the Republic, who stands at the "defender of political stability" and who has promised to "be impartial and above all political parties," put his experience forward as

being his main advantage in the campaign given the concern caused by the financial crisis that has affected Portugal very badly. He called on the electorate to "vote responsibly". *"Never has the situation of our country been so critical. It is not the time for adventure: others are watching us and Portugal needs credibility,"* he declared adding, *"I will be demanding of the government and I shall look carefully at the parliament's and executive's proposals"*

Socialist candidate Manuel Alegre admitted and assumed his personal defeat. Prime Minister José Socrates stressed that the Portuguese had voted *"in support of no change, for continuity and political stability."* The head of government promised to work *"towards institutional cooperation,"* with the Head of State.

However the President of the Republic's success can undeniably be considered as a rejection of the Socialist government's policy. *"Voters will take the opportunity to punish the Socialist Party in office because of the country's economic difficulties,"* forecast Antonio Barroso, an analyst of the Eurasia Group just before the election. Manuel Alegre also took great care in repeating during the campaign that he was not the government's candidate.

"I am expecting Anibal Cavaco Silva and the Socialists maintain their habit of institutional stability, it

is the tradition," declared Adelino Maltez, a political scientist from the University of Lisbon. Political expert Antonio Costa Pinto said that Anibal Cavaco Silva's victory would not change political life in Portugal. *"The government needs stability to continue to counter the crisis and financial turbulence. One thing is certain, the President of the Republic will play a greater role after the election than before it. Not only because of the crisis but also because we have a minority government and the Head of State has room to manoeuvre."*

Some analysts have indeed expressed the idea that since he has been re-elected by a wide majority the President of the Republic may dissolve parliament. Prime Minister José Socrates does not have a majority in parliament which is sometimes deemed dangerous in times of economic crisis and whilst the country, heavily in debt, may very well have to ask for international aid. Some of the outgoing President's adversaries have also accused him of wanting to precipitate the fall of the Socialist government. During the electoral campaign the Social Democratic leader Pedro Passos Coelho insisted on saying that his support to Anibal Cavaco Silva was not intended to regain power. *"If one day we get back into government in Portugal it will be because the Portuguese want it and not because of the president,"* he said.

The economic results of the first quarter of the year expected in April or the debate over the next State budget may provide opportunities for political crises. *"If the government does not succeed in reducing the budgetary deficit it will lose its credibility and the probability of it having to face a verdict from the ballot box will increase,"* declared political analyst of the University of Lisbon, André Freire. *"If no agreement is found for the approval of the 2012 budget we may witness a vote of defiance on the part of parliament which will bring the present government down. In that case the President of the Republic will not need to dissolve the government but encourage the formation of a consensus of the parties on a vote against the government,"* stressed Joao Cantiga Esteves, an economist from the Technical University of Lisbon who did say however that he did not believe this would happen. *"The Presidents of the Republic tend to intervene more in their second mandate since*

they have nothing to lose," declared political analyst José Miguel Judice adding, *"Anibal Cavaco Silva is a careful man. He will not take any initiative against the government except if there is a crisis."*

Anibal Cavaco Silva, who is 71 years old, is a trained economist and has worked as a teacher of economy at the Higher Institute for Economic and Financial Science in Lisbon and at the Faculty of Economy at the Catholic University of Portugal. He has also been a researcher at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and at the Central Bank of Portugal.

After becoming a member of the Social Democratic Party in 1974 he rose rapidly amongst the party's ranks and was Planning and Finance Minister from 1980 to 1981. After having helped greatly to overthrow the Social Democratic Party-Socialist Party in power at the time he was re-elected president of the PSD and as its head he won the general elections in 1985. Anibal Cavaco Silva was then appointed Prime Minister, a post he occupied for 10 years. In 1996 he lost the Presidential election against Jorge Fernando Branco de Sampaio and withdrew from Portuguese political life returning to his job as a teacher of economy and advisor to the Central Bank of Portugal. Ten years later on 22nd January 2006 he made his come-back and was finally elected as head of State.

Anibal Cavaco Silva will start his second presidential mandate on 9th March.

Results of the first round of the presidential election on 23rd January in Portugal

Turnout: 46.63%

Candidates	Number of Votes Won	% of votes won
Anibal Cavaco Silva (Social Democratic Party, PSD)	2 230 104	52,94
Manuel Alegre (Socialist Party, PS)	831 959	19,75
Fernando Nobre	593 868	14,10
Francisco Lopes (Communist Party PCP)	300 840	7,14
José Manuel Coelho (New Democracy Party)	189 340	4,50
Defensor de Moura (Socialist Party), dissident	66 091	1,57

Source : <http://www.presidenciais.mj.pt/>

THE FOUNDATION'S LATEST PUBLICATIONS

How do we re-create a predictable European economic environment?

European Issue n°191 - 17/01/2011 - Jean-François Jamet

European Interview with Pascale Perrineau on the Rise of National Populism in Europe

European Interview n°53 - 24/01/2011 - Pascal Perrineau

For Europe - 1st Edition - Editor : Nagel

You can read all of our publications on our site:

www.robert-schuman.eu

Publishing Director: Pascale JOANNIN

THE FONDATION ROBERT SCHUMAN, created in 1991 and acknowledged by State decree in 1992, is the main French research centre on Europe. It develops research on the European Union and its policies and promotes the content of these in France , Europe and abroad. It encourages, enriches and stimulates European debate thanks to its research, publications and the organisation of conferences. The Foundation is presided over by Mr. Jean-Dominique Giuliani.