

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa wins the presidential election in Portugal in the first round

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Results

Abstract:

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, former leader of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) (1996-1999), supported by the PSD and the People's Party (PP) became President of the Portuguese Republic in the first round of the election that took place on 24th January with 52% of the vote. Antonio de Sampaio da Novoa, supported by LIVRE/Tempo de Avançar (Free/Time to move forward) (L/TDA) and the Communist Workers' Party (PCTP/MRPP), came second with 22.89% of the vote. Third place went to MEP Marisa Matias (Left Bloc, BE), who won 10.13% of the vote. She was followed by Maria de Belem, former leader of the Socialist Party (2011-2014), who was standing as an independent candidate; she won 4.24% of the vote. The other six candidates won under 4% of the vote.

Turnout was slightly higher (+2.32 points) than election on 23rd January 2011, lying at 48.84% in the first round of the previous presidential election.

Results of the first round of the presidential election on 24th January in Portugal

Turnout: 48,84%

Candidates	Number of votes won	% of votes won
Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa (Social Democratic Party/People's Party, PSD/PP)	2 410 170	52
Antonio de Sampaio da Novoa	1 060 773	22,89
Marisa Matias (Left Bloc, BE)	469 310	10,13
Maria de Belem (independent)	196 585	4,24
Edgar Silva (Portuguese Communist Party, PCP)	182 906	3,95
Vitorino Silva (independent)	152 045	3,28
Paulo de Moraes (independent)	99 881	2,15
Henrique Neto (PS)	38 910	0,84
Jorge Sequeira (independent)	13 756	0,30
Candido Ferreira (independent)	10 570	0,23

Source : <http://www.presidenciais2016.mai.gov.pt/>

Presidential election in Portugal 24th January 2016

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa did not therefore counter tradition in Portugal which deems that the President of the Republic be elected in the first round. Mr de Sousa, a professor in law, former Parliamentary Affairs Minister (1982-1983) and former commentator on the TV channel TVI, who stands on the "left of the right", undertook a consensual campaign that focused on social justice and the country's financial balance, constantly promoting the non-partisan side of his character. *"I shall be the president of no party,"* he declared promising to *"be a referee above the crowd"*, *"a free, independent president of the Republic"* *"He sought consensus away from his political camp with the aim of winning both votes on the left and right,"* indicated José Antonio Passos Palmeira, a political expert.

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa was also conciliatory regarding Prime Minister Antonio Costa (Socialist Party, PS) and said that he wanted to overcome divisions in Portugal, a country that has been torn apart since the general elections on 4th October last, which were won by the PSD but without an absolute majority. On 24th November the President of the Republic Antonio Cavaco Silva (PSD) had to appoint Antonio Costa as head of government. The latter won the support (without participation) of the parties on the radical left: the United Democratic Coalition (CDU) and the Left Bloc (BE). According to Antonio Costa Pinto, a political expert, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa *"will not be the political enemy of the socialist government."*

"The president of the Republic must not challenge the government in office. I shall do everything to guarantee its duration," declared Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, who deemed *"it absolutely absurd"* to think that he would dissolve parliament as soon as he came into office. *"Stability is vital, we have to avoid having governments that only last six months or a year,"* he maintained, adding *"the priority is to strengthen political stability, the vital entente to govern. It is not the time for division."* *"I want to re-establish national unity as our country is emerging from a deep economic and social crisis,"* declared Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. He said that he would use his influence with the socialist government to

prevent any further downturn in the Portuguese economy.

The head of State can dissolve parliament six months after his entry into office via article 172 of the Constitution – which automatically leads to new general elections. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa would not be able to invoke this article before the month of April next.

Supporters of the left, and notably the socialists, were divided between several candidates Maria de Belem, Antonio de Sampaio de Nova and Henrique Neto. The Socialist Party chose not to support any of the candidates in the first round of the election, which evidently was to the advantage of Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. In spite of his commitments the victory of the Social Democratic candidate is bad news for the socialist Prime Minister.

67 year-old Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, is a graduate in law from the University of Lisbon. He was a professor of law before becoming a journalist. He founded and managed the weekly *Expresso* in 1973. After the Carnation Revolution in April 1974 and when democracy returned to Portugal, he was one of the founders of the PSD and was elected MP of the Assembly of the Republic, the only chamber of parliament, without relinquishing his academic career.

In 1981 he became Secretary of State for the Presidency of the Council in Francisco Pinto Balsemao's government (PSD). In 1982 he was appointed Minister for Parliamentary Affairs. In 1989, he failed in his bid to take Lisbon's town hall, and was beaten in the local election by Jorge Sampaio (PS). In 1996, he was elected Chair of the PSD, a post from which he resigned three years later after the failure of his project to form a coalition with the People's Party.

For a long time Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa hosted a programme on the TV channel TV1 before giving this up to work on the presidential campaign.

During the presidential election the Portuguese usually try to appoint an arbiter of the political playing field rather than a partisan head of State.

This election is therefore more personalised even though paradoxically, the Portuguese heads of State have always been important within their own political party. The Portuguese are not afraid of political co-habitation either. Twice (in 1987 and in 2006 for example), they elected a president from

the opposite end of the political scale from the parliamentary majority that they had brought to office just a few months previously.

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa will be sworn in on 9th March next.

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