

EDUCATION AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN: THE CASE OF PORTUGAL

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Abstract

This research aims to analyse the women's participation in Portugal politics in consequence of its educational attainment. On the one hand, the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic of April 2, 1976, gives women (and men) a right to equal opportunities for school success, to access to the higher education and to better working conditions. On the other hand, the same Constitution defends, in article 9, that fundamental task of the State is to promote equality between men and women and, in article 109, refers the citizens' rights to political participation. However, despite the expansion of the education system, showing the rapid progress in improving baseline qualifications, women's educational attainment in certain working areas remains a challenge. Thus, methodologically, this research relied on a two-track approach. The first approach takes the form of a literature review, based, primarily in the legal regime of Portuguese higher education system and, in addition, on the gender parity law, considering that, according to Decree-Law n° 402/73 of August 11, Portugal promoted the democratization of education that was consolidated in the expansion and diversification of higher education to match the need to ensure economic development of the country. The second approach takes the form of an empirical research based on a descriptive statistical analysis, supported on the statistical information provided by Portuguese Ministry of Education and Science that show the increases of the Portuguese' qualifications as well as the Portuguese Assembly of the Republic that provides important insights on the adoption of gender quotas in Portugal. In this sense, the research provides empirical evidence about the role of women's education in advancing their interests at the Government and politics.

Keywords: Education system, Politic participation, Parity law, Women, Portugal.

1 INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is, currently, presented as a complex question and covered numerous interpretations: some who consider achieved; others do not recognize her importance; and still others who consider it far and hard to reach [1]. However, since it was founded the European Union (EU), the promotion of gender equality has been present in its proposals and programs, notably in the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999), the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) and other legislative acts who have been promoting equality between men and women at different levels, as for example the access to education and employment [2]. In Portugal, equality between men and women in all areas has been established through the entry into force on April 2, 1976 the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic [3], and a year later was institutionalized the Commission of Women Condition (in Portuguese, *Comissão da Condição Feminina* - CCF), approved by Decree-Law n° 485/77 of 17 November [4]. In 1979 it is published the Decree-Law n° 392/79 of 20 September [5], which aimed to guarantee women equality with men in opportunities and treatment at work and employment, as proposed by the CCF. This Decree-Law was promoted through the creation in this same year, the Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment (in Portuguese, *Comissão para a Igualdade no Trabalho e no Emprego* - CITE).

This research follows two methodological research approaches. The theoretical framework is based on literature review of, on the one hand, the legal regime of Portuguese higher education system (HES) and, on the other hand, on the gender parity law, considering that, according to Decree-Law n° 402/73 of August 11 [6]. Portugal promoted the democratization of education that was consolidated in the expansion and diversification of higher education to match the need to ensure economic development of the country. The empirical framework is based on exploratory and descriptive statistical analysis, supported on the statistical information provided by Portuguese Ministry of Education and Science that shows the increase of the Portuguese' qualifications, as well as, the Portuguese Assembly of the Republic that provides important insights on the adoption of gender quotas. Through the connection of both frameworks and research findings, higher education

institutions (HEI) are able to improve their contribution to society in result of the role of women's education in advancing their interests at the Government and politics.

The structure of the research is organized as follows. Section 2 focuses on Portuguese higher education system, reviewing major public initiatives on education, which have been the result of core social measures taken by successive governments. Section 3 gives an overview of the implementation of the Organic Law 3/2006, of 21 August (gender parity law) which establishes that the candidates' lists for Parliament, the European Parliament and the local authorities shall ensure a minimum representation of 33 per cent of components from each gender. Finally, in the section 4 the authors summarize the principal conclusions.

2 PORTUGAL AND THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

The implementation and development of the HEI are centred in a society of intensive knowledge that the demands in relation to the landing of qualifications and competences grew considerably, and in that the formation of higher level carries out a strategic function. Effectively, the strategic function of higher education demands a constant adaptation of the conceptual field, especially in the social, economic and technological perspectives that will bring sustainable development [7]. The Portuguese higher education consists of a binary system which includes university and polytechnic education that can be public or private. The university and polytechnic subsystems are mainly differentiated by their formative role in research: the polytechnics are vocationally or professionally oriented and do not carry out fundamental research as the universities do; and the universities conducted applied research [8]. Specifically, the polytechnics institutions have as main objectives the regional development and a close interaction with its operational environment that provided a flexible reaction to changes in its environment [9].

Table 1 presents the distribution of the higher education institutions by subsystem and type of education in the academic year of 2014/15 (last year with data available), in which Madeira and Azores Autonomous Region had the lowest number of these HEI. The region of Lisbon city, possibly for being the Portugal's capital and largest city, presents in terms of universities the greater number, focusing on the whole (public and private), about 41.4 per cent, which justify a representative sample of 66.0 per cent of public institutions and 34.0 per cent of private institutions. In turn, the region of North presents in terms of polytechnic the greater number, focusing on the whole (public and private), about 35.4 per cent, which justify a representative sample of 43.1 per cent of public institutions and 56.9 per cent of private institutions.

Table 1. Higher education institutions, by subsystem and type of education (2014/15).

	Total	University			Polytechnic		
		Total	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private
Continent	284	124	74	50	160	95	65
North	100	42	19	23	58	25	33
Centre	57	19	12	7	38	32	6
Lisbon city	95	53	35	18	42	19	23
Alentejo	20	4	4	-	16	14	2
Algarve	12	6	4	2	6	5	1
Azores	5	3	3	-	2	2	-
Madeira	4	1	1	-	3	1	2
Portugal	293	128	78	50	164	98	67

Source: Adaptation of [10]

On the north of the country (North region) the representation of HEI in the regional universe is higher (corresponding to 100 institutions, being 42.0 per cent and 58.0 per cent, respectively in university and polytechnic) while in the south of the country (Alentejo and Algarve) HEI representation in the regional universe is lower (corresponding to 32 institutions, 31.3 per cent and 68.7 per cent, respectively in university and polytechnic). However, Lisbon city and the south region concentrate the highest percentage of HEI in national total (32.4 per cent and 10.9 per cent, respectively), justifying the rationalizing of regional educational system and the discrepancy in the distribution of institutions.

Following this question the OECD [11] argues that “the economic crisis has reinforced the value of education. While educational attainment has always had a huge impact on employability, the financial crisis has strengthened this effect even further.”

Table 2 reflects the annual number of students enrolled on Portuguese higher education by subsystem and type of education from the academic year of 2004/05 to 2014/15 (last decade). In Portugal, the HES is based on three-cycle diplomas: first cycle - license (*Licenciatura*), second cycle - master (*Mestrado*), and third-cycle - doctor (*Doutoramento*). The duration of these levels change according with the degree and field of study. On average, the license degree has 3 years (or 180 credits), but in fields of study such as engineering, law and architecture could be 5 years and in medicine till 6 years; the master degree has 2 years and doctor degree has 3 years [3]. Between the academic year of 2004/05 and the academic year of 2014/15, the number of students enrolled on Portuguese higher education decreased 8.2 per cent (corresponding to 31,279 individuals at an annual average decrease of about 2,840 individuals), in direct consequence of the significant fall of annual number of students enrolled on private subsystem, which decreased more than 41.9 per cent in the period. Moreover, the public subsystem grown 3.6 per cent in the period, justified by the largest increase of the university subsystem (10.2 per cent, corresponding to 17,810 individuals), while the polytechnic subsystem has registered a decrease of 7.1 per cent (corresponding to 7,724 individuals).

Table 2. Higher education enrolled, by subsystem and type of education (2004/05 to 2014/15).

Subsystem	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Public	282,273	275,521	275,321	284,333	282,438	293,828	307 978	311,574	303,710	301,654	292,359
University	173,897	171,575	169,449	175,998	175,465	183,806	193,106	197,912	197,036	198,380	191,707
Polytechnic	108,376	103,946	105,872	108,335	106,973	110,022	114,872	113,662	106,674	103,274	100,652
Private	98,664	91,791	91,408	92,584	90,564	89,799	88,290	78,699	67,290	60,546	57,299
University	66,478	61,197	60,094	60,732	60,230	60,174	60,452	55,147	48,716	44,495	42,666
Polytechnic	32,186	30,594	31,314	31,852	30,334	29,625	27,838	23,552	18,574	16,051	14,633
Total	380,937	367,312	366,729	376,917	373,002	383,627	396,268	390,273	371,000	362,200	349,658

Source: Adaptation of [10]

Table 3 presents the annual number enrolled on Portuguese higher education by level of education from the academic year of 2004/05 to 2014/15. In the period, the third cycle (corresponding to doctoral courses) presents the most significant growth (corresponding to 12,872 individuals at an annual average growth of about 1,170 individuals), while annual number enrolled on the second cycle was down 54.5 per cent (corresponding to 140,527 individuals at an annual average decrease of about 12,775 individuals), compared with an increase of 83.0 per cent in the first cycle (corresponding to 96,376 individuals at an annual average growth of about 8,760 individuals).

Table 3. Higher education enrolled, by level (2004/05 to 2014/15).

Degree	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
First cycle	116,150	108,483	162,448	230,077	244,085	253,316	255,523	246,211	231,528	220,859	212,526
Second cycle	257,799	250,324	194,696	135,496	115,488	113,934	122,452	124,849	120,001	121,096	117,272
Third cycle	6,988	8,505	9,585	11,344	13,429	16,377	18,293	19,213	19,471	20,245	19,860
Total	380,937	367,312	366,729	376,917	373,002	383,627	396,268	390,273	371,000	362,200	349,658

Source: Adaptation of [10]

Table 4 shows the annual number enrolled on Portuguese higher education graduates by gender from the academic year of 2004/05 to 2014/15. Among both men and women, the number of students enrolled in the HES for those years 2004/05 to 2014/15 was decrease 8.2 per cent, reflecting this overall decrease mainly the reduction of women in higher education, which decreased 11.7 per cent (corresponding to 24,718 individuals) since the number of men enrolled showed a slight decrease of 3.9 per cent (corresponding to 6,561 individuals). This decline of women in higher education justifies the decrease in the relative importance of women in the total number of students enrolled annually in

the higher education institutions. However, women are still responsible for the majority of students in the Portuguese HES.

Table 4. Higher education enrolled, by gender (2004/05 to 2014/15).

Gender	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Men	168,884	164,520	168,821	175,177	174,000	179,151	184,627	181,515	173,745	168,252	162,323
Women	212,053	202,792	197,908	201,740	199,002	204,476	211,641	208,758	197,255	193,948	187,335
Total	380,937	367,312	366,729	376,917	373,002	383,627	396,268	390,273	371,000	362,200	349,658

Source: Adaptation of [10]

Table 5 shows the evolution of teachers employed on the HEI by gender from the academic year of 2004/05 to 2014/15, proving the importance of the men teachers' unemployment or retired. Indeed, in the period 2004/05 to 2014/15, the decrease of number men teachers was greater than the decrease of number women teachers, less 15.6 per cent and less 7.1 per cent, respectively in the period. This reality was degraded especially after 2011, confirming the austerity imposed in 2011 by the Memorandum of Understanding negotiated with the Troika (a tripartite committee formed by the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund-EC, ECB and IMF), which had negative impacts on some sectors of the economy, as the education.

Table 5. Teachers employed, by gender (2004/05 to 2014/15).

Gender	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Men	21,319	21,321	20,500	19,973	20,016	20,459	21,414	20,836	19,854	18,783	17,985
Women	15,454	16,113	15,569	15,205	15,364	15,756	16,650	16,242	15,628	14,745	14,361
Total	36,773	37,434	36,069	35,178	35,380	36,215	38,064	37,078	35,482	33,528	32,346

Source: Adaptation of [10]

However, men teachers are still responsible for the majority of teachers' employment in the Portuguese HEI (see Table 5), in contrast with the importance of students enrolled, being the students women who outweigh the students men (see Table 4). This resulted of an improvement in the schooling and the experience profile of employed women, in consequence of the constitutional principle consecrated in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic of April 2, 1976, related to the equality of access opportunities to the higher education and to the school success. According to article 74 [3], the State must "*guarantee to all citizens, according to its capacities, the access to higher education degrees, to scientific research and to artistic creation*".

Table 6 presents the unemployment rate between December 2006 and December 2014 by gender and the main result was the strong increase of unemployment with higher education. One of reasons has been the economic crises, because the HEI, in OECD countries, are mainly publicly funded and State Budget that has been reduced and this faces, in past decades, strong opposition, because education has been given top priority in national budgets [12]. Indeed, Table 6 presents the increase of unemployment with higher education probably due the introduction of the Bologna Process that has improved harmonization among the HES on Europe by shifting away from longer programmes in favour of three-year programmes, that increases the number of graduates in the labour market and, also, the level of unemployment.

Table 6. Unemployment Total and With Higher Education Rate by gender (2006/2015).

Gender	Portugal – December 2006				Portugal - December 2015				December 2015 / December 2006			
	Total of Unemployment		Unemployment with Higher Education		Total of Unemployment		Unemployment with Higher Education		Total of Unemployment		Unemployment with Higher Education	
	N.º	%	N.º	%	N.º	%	N.º	%	N.º	%	N.º	%
Men	181,550	40.1	12,527	30.2	248,600	47.7	23,126	34.3	67,050	97.2	10,599	41.0
Women	271,100	59.9	28,954	69.8	273,000	52.3	44,211	65.7	1,900	2.8	15,257	59.0
Total	452,650	100.0	41,481	100.0	521,600	100.0	67,337	100.0	68,950	100.0	25,856	100.0

Source: Adaptation of [12]

In this context, HEI have strong pressures for fighting unemployment and increase skills-upgrading knowledge, attitudes and broadening contribution, as well as, lifelong learning is moving higher up institutional strategic agendas of the society, in general, and the citizen, in particular. However, the unemployment by gender shows that between December 2006 and December 2014 the women's unemployment decreased of 59.9 per cent of the total of unemployment on December 2006 for 52.3 per cent of the total of unemployment on December 2015, attesting the importance of women in the workforce and providing women with equal economic opportunities and political participation.

3 PORTUGAL AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

The Constitution of the Portuguese Republic of April 2, 1976, states, in article 9, that fundamental task of the State is to promote equality between men and women and, in article 109, refers the citizens' rights to political participation [3]. In this sense, the gender parity law, approved by Organic Law nº 3/2006 of 21 August [13], as amended by Statement of Rectification nº 71/2006 of 4 October [14] provides that the lists for the National Assembly, the European Parliament and Local Authorities are designed to ensure a minimum representation of 33 per cent of components from each gender. Additionally, for the Portuguese and European Parliament, the candidates' lists should not have more than two persons of the same gender successively. As [15] point out the law must promote equality in the exercise of civic and political rights and non-discrimination in terms of gender regarding access to public positions. Thus, despite the issue of gender equality is currently cross the legislation of different areas at national level, the need for political intervention has also become pressing. For [1: 13], the inequalities "are deeply rooted in social systems, political and economic, as well as in institutions and structures that serve them. It follows that a transformation to systemic and structural level so that inequalities do not continue to be reproduced".

Table 7 reflects the number of seats by the different legislatures between 1976 (1st legislature) and 2015 (14th legislature) and gender. Between the legislature of 1976 and the legislature of 2015, the number of seats on the Portuguese Parliament decreased 12.5 per cent (corresponding to 33 seats), as result of the reduction of public expenditure. However, the women representation grown 406.7 per cent in the period (corresponding to 61 seats) while the men representation registered a decrease of 37.9 per cent (corresponding to 94 seats), justified by the gender parity law implementation. Indeed, in the first legislature was where women objective and perceptually worst represented (corresponding to 5.7 per cent of the total seats), although in the last legislature already comply the gender parity law having a 33.0 per cent representation in the total seats.

Table 7. Number of seats by legislature and gender (1976 to 2015).

Legislature	Gender		
	Men	Women	Total
1976	248	15	263
1979	233	17	250
1980	233	17	250
1983	232	18	250
1985	234	16	250

1987	231	19	250
1991	210	20	230
1995	202	28	230
1999	190	40	230
2002	185	45	230
2005	181	49	230
2009	167	63	230
2011	169	61	230
2015	154	76	230

Source: Adaptation of [16]

Table 8 shows the number of men by the legislatures between 1976 (1st legislature) and 2015 (14th legislature) and political party. The different political parties are: of left-wing (ASDI - Social Democratic Action Independent; BE - Left Bloc Party; PCP - Portuguese Communist Party; PEV - Ecologist Party "The Greens"; PS - Socialist Party; UDP - Popular Democratic Union; and UEDS - Left Union for Socialist Democracy); of right-wing (CDS-PP - Center Social Democracy/Popular Party; MDP/CDE - Portuguese Democratic Movement/Democratic Electoral Commission; PPD/PSD - Social Democratic Party; PPM - Popular Monarchist Party; and parties of causes (PAN - People-Animal-Nature; PRD - Democratic Renewal Party; and PSN - Party of National Solidarity). In the period, the political parties with more men's participation were PPD/PSD, PS, PCP and CDS-PP, corresponding of 95.7 per cent of the global men and 81.9 per cent of all seats since 1976, despite the evolution of the number of men's participation in each party decreased throughout the period, following the global trend of the National Parliament. However, some of these political parties only existed of a few legislature, as for example the ASDI party (3th legislature, during the period 1980, October 5 and 1983, April 25), the PAN (last legislature, begun on 2015, October 4), the PPM (2nd and 3th legislature, between 1980, December 2 and 1983, April, 25), PRD (5th and 6th legislature, between 1985, October 6 and 1991, October 6), PSN (7th legislature, during the period 1991, October 6 and 1995, October 1), UDP (first three legislatures, between 1976, April 25 and 1983, April 25) and UEDS (as the ASDI, only on 3th legislature, between 1980, October 5 and 1983, April 25).

Table 8. Number of men by year of the legislature and political party (1976 to 2015).

Year	ASDI	BE	CDS-PP	MDP/CDE	PAN	PCP	PEV	PPD/PSD	PPM	PRD	PS	PSN	UDP	UEDS	Total
1976	0	0	41	0	0	34	0	71	0	0	101	0	1	0	248
1979	0	0	43	3	0	38	0	73	5	0	70	0	1	0	233
1980	4	0	45	2	0	34	0	73	6	0	65	0	1	3	233
1983	0	0	30	3	0	35	0	68	0	0	96	0	0	0	232
1985	0	0	22	3	0	28	0	83	0	42	56	0	0	0	234
1987	0	0	4	0	0	26	1	138	0	6	56	0	0	0	231
1991	0	0	5	0	0	13	1	125	0	0	65	1	0	0	210
1995	0	0	12	0	0	11	0	81	0	0	98	0	0	0	202
1999	0	2	14	0	0	12	0	70	0	0	92	0	0	0	190
2002	0	3	13	0	0	8	0	87	0	0	74	0	0	0	185
2005	0	4	11	0	0	10	1	69	0	0	86	0	0	0	181
2009	0	10	17	0	0	11	1	59	0	0	69	0	0	0	167
2011	0	4	19	0	0	12	1	77	0	0	56	0	0	0	169
2015	0	13	11	0	1	9	1	60	0	0	59	0	0	0	154

Source: Adaptation of [17]

Table 9 presents the number of women by the different legislatures between 1976 (1st legislature) and 2015 (14th legislature) and political party. In the period, there are political parties with no women participation, as for example the ASDI, the MDP/CDE, the PAN, the PPM, the PSN and the UDP, which are the same political parties with few legislative representations. Nevertheless, the political parties with more women's participation were, respectively, PS, PPD/PSD, PCP and CDS-PP, corresponding of 92.4 per cent of the global of women and 13.3 per cent of all seats since 1976, showing the positive evolution of the number of women's participation on each party throughout the period, confirming the concern to comply the gender parity law. In comparative terms, the BE and the PEV, both left political parties, are those with a higher percentage of women's participation on their seats lists. Effectively, from the beginning the left-wing political parties were more open to discussing the topic of women quotas, offering a favorable setting for feminist advocates of quotas for women [18]. In Portugal, the progress made by women in terms of number of seats won was more distinct in 2009 (12th legislature, which approved the gender parity law), when it increased by 14 seats allocated to women. However, the political parties, whether they declare right-wing or left-wing leanings, have not made an important political issue out of the equality of representation of men and women on the National Parliament.

Table 9. Number of women by year of the legislature and political party (1976 to 2015).

Year	ASDI	BE	CDS-PP	MDP/CDE	PAN	PCP	PEV	PPD/PSD	PPM	PRD	PS	PSN	UDP	UEDS	Total
1976	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	2	0	0	6	0	0	0	15
1979	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	7	0	0	4	0	0	0	17
1980	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	9	0	0	1	0	0	1	17
1983	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	7	0	0	5	0	0	0	18
1985	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	5	0	3	1	0	0	0	16
1987	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	10	0	1	4	0	0	0	19
1991	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	10	0	0	7	0	0	0	20
1995	0	0	3	0	0	2	2	7	0	0	14	0	0	0	28
1999	0	0	1	0	0	3	2	11	0	0	23	0	0	0	40
2002	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	18	0	0	22	0	0	0	45
2005	0	4	1	0	0	2	1	6	0	0	35	0	0	0	49
2009	0	6	4	0	0	2	1	22	0	0	28	0	0	0	63
2011	0	4	5	0	0	2	1	31	0	0	18	0	0	0	61
2015	0	6	7	0	0	6	1	29	0	0	27	0	0	0	76

Source: Adaptation of [19]

Table 10 illustrates the seats number by the six political parties with more women participation on the National Parliament through the different legislatures between 1976 (1st legislature) and 2015 (14th legislature). As expected, between the first legislature (begun on 1976, April 25) and the last on (begun on 2015, October 4) the left-wing political parties are those with a higher percentage of women's participation on their seats lists.

Table 10. Seats Number by year of the legislature, political party and gender (1976 to 2015).

Year	BE		CDS-PP		PCP		PEV		PPD/PSD		PS		Others	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
1976	0	0	1	41	6	34	0	0	2	71	6	101	0	1
1979	0	0	0	43	6	38	0	0	7	73	4	70	0	9
1980	0	0	1	45	5	34	0	0	9	73	1	65	1	16
1983	0	0	0	30	6	35	0	0	7	68	5	96	0	3
1985	0	0	0	22	7	28	0	0	5	83	1	56	3	45
1987	0	0	0	4	3	26	1	1	10	138	4	56	1	6
1991	0	0	0	5	2	13	1	1	10	125	7	65	0	1
1995	0	0	3	12	2	11	2	0	7	81	14	98	0	0
1999	0	2	1	14	3	12	2	0	11	70	23	92	0	0
2002	0	3	1	13	2	8	2	0	18	87	22	74	0	0
2005	4	4	1	11	2	10	1	1	6	69	35	86	0	0
2009	6	10	4	17	2	11	1	1	22	59	28	69	0	0
2011	4	4	5	19	2	12	1	1	31	77	18	56	0	0
2015	6	13	7	11	6	9	1	1	29	60	27	59	0	1

Source: Adaptation of [16]

In sum, this new reality of the Portuguese Parliament is consequence of the gender parity law approved in 2006, because the lists for the National Assembly, the European Parliament and Local Authorities shall be composed in such a way as to ensure a minimum representation of 33 per cent from each gender, whereby the multi-member lists presented cannot contain in consecutive order more than two candidates of the same gender. However, the influence of ideology was already evident at the beginning of the democratic period, in the 1976, when the topic of women's political representation was far from reaching the visibility that it has at the moment, the Communist Party already had the highest proportion of women elected representatives among the parties. The remaining parties are the PS, the PSD and the CDS-PP [20].

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In Portugal, women have achieved high levels of education and strong presence in the employment market. In consequence of the constitutional right of equal opportunities for school success, to access to the higher education and to better working conditions. Following this, women's education and participation in the labour market, preceded the incremental changes in women's political representation. Nevertheless, the level of women's participation on the National Parliament, European Parliament and Local Authorities is very low, because gender stereotypes persist. In this sense, the national strategy of education responds to gender concerns, shares values and principles of the education for gender equality and integrates among its main principles the fight against gender stereotypes [21].

The research provides empirical evidence about the social dimension of the Portuguese HES. At the same time, it highlighting this influence in the increasing enrolment of the number of students in the HEI, as well as, their graduates, being that women still have lower employment rates than men; and women with higher education earn less money of their male peers' earnings. In consequence of the under-representation of women in some fields of higher education, which are highly rewarded by the labour market. However, Portugal, along with numerous countries in the world, has assumed various commitments on education promotion development and gender equality. Effectively, equal opportunities between men and women are a theme presents in many national and international programs, being undeniable the role of education and training in its promotion.

In this sense, the research results provided important insights related with gender party law implementation: (1) in the XIII Legislature (after October 4, 2015), there is, for the first time, a

representative of 33 per cent of women, i.e., in a total of 230 members, 76 are represented by women; (2) the earliest legislature date from 1976, 25 April (1976-1979); (3) in the year 1976, of the 263 members included on the I Legislature, only 15 are women (5.7 per cent of the total); and (4) the evolution of the women's representation in Portuguese legislatures shows the continued primacy of men. Nevertheless, the parity law advances special measures of positive discrimination to ensure the political participation of women, should political parties and other stakeholders develop tools for gender monitoring.

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