

# Outgoing President of the Republic Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, the main favourite in the presidential election on 24th January next in Portugal

On 24 November last, the Portuguese authorities announced that the next presidential election would be held on 24 January 2021. Outgoing head of State, Marcelo Rebelo De Sousa, is the main favourite for this election. All opinion polls show him to be the clear winner in the first round, a tradition in Portugal, where, with the exception of Mario Soares (Socialist Party, PS) in 1986, all the presidents of the Republic have been elected in the first round since the Carnation Revolution in 1974, which put an end to the dictatorship instituted by Antonio Salazar in 1933.

According to the latest opinion poll carried out by the Eurosondagem institute at the beginning of January, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa is set to win with 60.20% of the vote. He would precede Anna Gomes (PS) who would take 14.80% of the vote, André Ventura (Chega, CH) 10.10%, Marisa Matias (Left Bloc, BE) 6.60% and Joao Ferreira (Communist Party, PCP), 5.20%. The other two candidates are expected to gain under 2% of the vote.

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa announced that he was running for office on 7 December at a renowned bakery in Lisbon. The announcement was originally intended to take place in a bookshop but this was rendered impossible because of the health rules adopted by Portugal to combat the coronavirus pandemic. "I am running for the presidency of the Republic because we have a pandemic to tackle and an economic and social crisis to overcome," he said. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa has been criticised for some of this conservative views, especially on social issues such as his opposition to abortion. He was criticised for not reacting to the political agreement reached by the Social Democratic Party with the right-wing populist Chega (CH) party in the Azores archipelago.

The Socialist Party (PS) of Prime Minister Antonio Costa decided not to present a candidate for the presidential election. But Anna Gomes nevertheless decided to compete without the party's support.

## THE CANDIDATES RUNNING

Seven people are official candidates for the supreme office in Portugal, three fewer than in the last presidential election on 24 January 2016, which recorded a record number of candidates:

- Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, outgoing President of the Republic, former leader of the Social Democratic Party (1996-1999), former Minister of Parliamentary Affairs (1982-1983) and professor of law. The Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the People's Party (PP) support him;
- Ana Gomes (Socialist Party), former member of the European Parliament (2014-2019), anti-corruption activist, committed to the computer hacker Rui Pinto who was behind the Football Leaks and the Luanda Leaks, revelations that exposed the excesses of international football business and questioned the origin of the fortune of Angolan billionaire Isabel dos Santos;
- André Ventura, leader of the populist Chega party (CH), deputy, sports commentator for the television channel Correio da Manha TV (CMTV) and columnist for the daily Correio da Manha;
- Marisa Matias (Left Bloc, BE), Member of the European Parliament since 2009, sociologist, unsuccessful candidate in the last presidential election of 24 January 2016 (where she came in third place with 10.12% of the votes);
- Joao Ferreira (Communist Party, PCP), MEP since 2009, biologist;

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- Tiago Mayan Gonçalves (Liberal Initiative, IL), lawyer, who worked alongside the mayor of Porto (since 2013) Rui Moreira during the last municipal elections of 1 October 2017;

- Vitorino Silva (better known as Tino de Rans), leader of React, Include, Recycle (RIR), unsuccessful candidate in the last presidential election of 2016 (he came sixth with 3.28% of the vote).

The presidential election campaign will take place between 10 and 22 January.

On 6 January, Portugal announced that it had reported a record number of 10,027 new coronavirus infections in 24 hours, the highest number since the start of the pandemic, which has killed around 7,400 people in the country, and the government stressed that the country's hospitals were under "strong pressure". President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa was considered a contact case after a member of his entourage tested positive for the coronavirus and was placed in isolation with less than three weeks to go before the first round of the election. The outgoing head of State had already begun a series of televised debates pitting the seven candidates against each other (two candidates debate face to face). Tested negative, he was finally able to attend the televised debate in which he faced André Ventura on 6 January.

### THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE IN PORTUGAL

The President of the Portuguese Republic is elected every five years by direct universal suffrage. Anyone who wants to stand for the supreme office must be at least 35 years of age and has to have the signatures of a minimum of 7,500 voters, which are then validated by the Constitutional Court.

The office of head of State in Portugal is mainly an honorary one. As a moral authority, the President has two essential powers: he appoints the Prime Minister and he may dissolve parliament (Article 172 of the Constitution) six months after taking office, a dissolution which effectively leads to new parliamentary elections.

The President of the Republic is the head of the armies, whose chiefs of staff he appoints. On the proposal of the government, he appoints the ambassadors. He may declare a state of emergency or a state of siege, or even war in the event of real or imminent aggression. He signs the laws and decrees passed by parliament over which he has a right of veto. At the proposal of the government or parliament, he or she decides on the organisation of referendums.

The head of State may not hold office for more than two consecutive terms.

Reminder of the results of the presidential election of 24 January 2016 in Portugal

Turnout: 48.66%

Candidates	Number of votes won	% of votes won
Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa (Social Democratic Party- People's Party, PSD-PP)	2 413 956	52
Antonio Sampaio da Novoa (LIVRE/Tempo de Avançar (Free/It is time to move forward, L/TDA and the Communist Workers Party, PCTP/MRPP)	1 062 138	22,88
Marisa Matias (Left Bloc BE)	469 814	10,12
Maria de Belem (independent)	196 765	4,24
Edgar Silva (Portuguese Communist Party, PCP)	183 051	3,94
Vitorino Silva (independent)	152 374	3,28
Paulo de Morais (independent)	100 191	2,16
Henrique Neto (Socialist Party, PS)	39 163	0,84
Jorge Sequeira (independent)	13 954	0,30
Candido Ferreira (independent)	10 609	0,23

Source : <https://www.eleicoes.mai.gov.pt/presidenciais2016/index.html>

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