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Implementing Gender Quotas in Portugal – A Success Story?

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1. Introduction

The so-called Portuguese Parity Law adopted in 2006 determined that candidate lists presented for national, European and local elections must include a 33.3 percent minimum representation of each sex, and neither sex should occupy more than two consecutive positions on the list. Parties that did not comply with this minimum were fined. This version of the law was in force between 2009 and 2017. Following its revision in 2019, the minimum percentage required for each sex increased to 40 percent and, although the placement mandates remained unchanged, non-compliant party lists are now rejected.

The implementation of the Portuguese Parity Law has succeeded in meeting the direct goals of the policy. Not only is compliance with the quota requirements always fulfilled (with extremely rare exceptions in local level elections), but it has also had a clear effect on the growth trend of women in political office across levels of government (Espírito-Santo and Santos 2020; Santos et al. 2018). With regard to national elections, women's presence in Parliament increased from 21.3 percent in

2005 to 27.8 percent in 2009 – the first election in which quotas were implemented. Although the 33 percent share of women’s seats was only reached in 2015, it had risen to 40 percent by 2019. , Given the law design, the general descriptive outcomes of the law can therefore be considered successful. However, can the same be said for all stages of implementation? Moreover, even when the numbers tell a success story, what practices and resistance do they conceal? And, finally, has the law contributed to gender empowerment that goes beyond the direct scope of the law?

This chapter aims to answer these questions by focusing on national elections. Portugal has a proportional electoral system with closed-list ballots and is therefore a party-dominated setting in which “party organisations are key gatekeepers in the selection of parliamentarians and in holding them accountable” (Borghetto and Lisi 2018: 872). The chapter concentrates on the two major Portuguese parties, the Socialist Party (PS) (center-left party) and the Social Democratic Party (PSD) (center-right party), which have traditionally held about 80 percent of seats in parliament (currently 81.3 percent).

The chapter draws on the figures for candidates and MPs in the last five elections as well as seven semi-directive interviews conducted in November 2020 with relevant party stakeholders in the election processes. In addition to an interview with the president of the PS women’s section, hence directed at the national level, interviewees come from two electoral districts, namely Lisbon and Portalegre (see list of interviews in the Appendix). The former is Portugal’s largest district (with 47 MPs), is a predominantly urban area (63 percent of the parishes are classified as such¹), and its list is usually headed by the prime-minister candidate. In contrast, Portalegre is one of the country’s smallest districts (with just 2 MPs) and is predominantly rural (70 percent of the parishes have this classification). The rationale behind this choice was to collect narratives from different party structures and from two dissimilar districts in order to have access to a more complete range of the

obstacles potentially faced when implementing quotas, thus providing a more reliable picture of the Portuguese landscape.

2. Unveiling the Implementation Stages

In this section, we assess four stages of implementation: first, the moment of recruitment and selection (candidates); second, the election rate (elected); third, the percentage of women holding a seat once the election dust has settled (one year after), and fourth whether the figures are maintained until the end of the mandate (four years after). Whereas the first two stages have been common in the literature on the effect of the quota laws since the seminal works of Lovenduski and Norris (e.g. Norris and Lovenduski 1995), the third and fourth are seldom tackled by scholars. However, they are crucial since they provide a deeper understanding of parties' commitment to the law. It is not rare for MPs to be substituted during their mandate: on average a quarter of active MPs in Portugal are substitutes (Borghetto and Lisi 2018: 874). We argue that whereas the assessment of the first and second stages gives us a sense of the intensity of a party's commitment to the law, the third and fourth demonstrate the robustness of that commitment.

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 present the percentages and numbers of female candidates and MPs in the abovementioned stages of implementation for the PS and the PSD, respectively. Several previous studies have shown that the Portuguese Parity Law produced changes as early as 2009, particularly on the lists of political parties to the right of the political spectrum (e.g. Teixeira 2016; see Table 1). In fact, Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show that the PS registered no increase in the percentages either of women standing or elected between 2005 and 2009¹. As for the PSD, abiding by the law resulted

¹ In fact, the number of female PS MPs even decreased in 2009, but it is important to note that the size of the PS parliamentary group declined significantly between 2005 and 2009 (from 121 to 97 MPs).

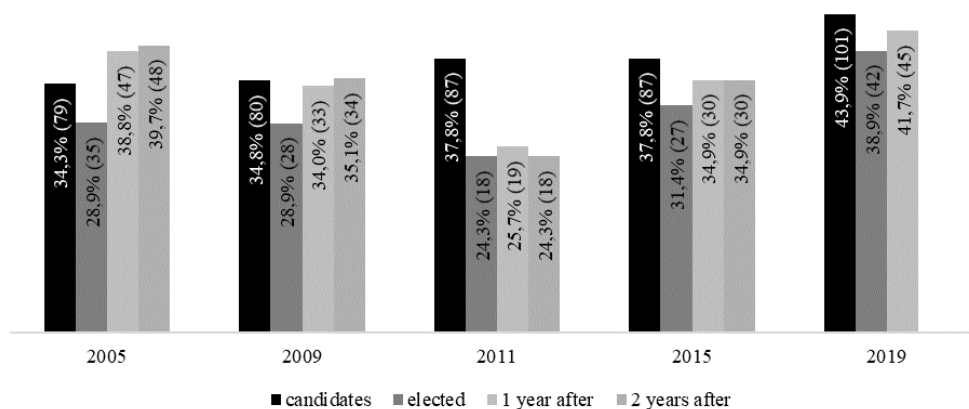
in a marked increase of both indicators in 2009 (compared to 2005): around 14 percentage points (pp) for candidates and around 19pp for those elected.

Table 1 – Number of women candidates and elected at national elections within major political party (2002-2019)

	2002		2005		2009		2011		2015		2019	
	C	E (W/total)	C	E (W/total)	C	E (W/total)	C	E (W/total)	C	E (W/total)	C	E (W/total)
Left Block (BE)	92	0/3	92	4/8	95	6/16	92	4/8	104	6/19	115	9/19
Portuguese Communist Party & Greens (CDU)	73	4/12	77	3/14	98	3/15	100	3/16	97	7/17	117	5/12
Socialist Party (PS)	57	22/96	79	35/121	80	28/97	87	18/74	87	8/86	101	42/108
Social Democratic Party (PSD)	34	18/105	39	6/75	72	22/81	77	31/108	95	36/107	98	26/79
Christian Democrats (CDS-PP)	30	1/14	41	1/12	83	4/21	82	5/24			98	3/5

Note: C: candidates; E: elected; W: women; Each party has a total of 230 candidates; The number of elected MPs corresponds to the number of elected candidates at the time of the election.

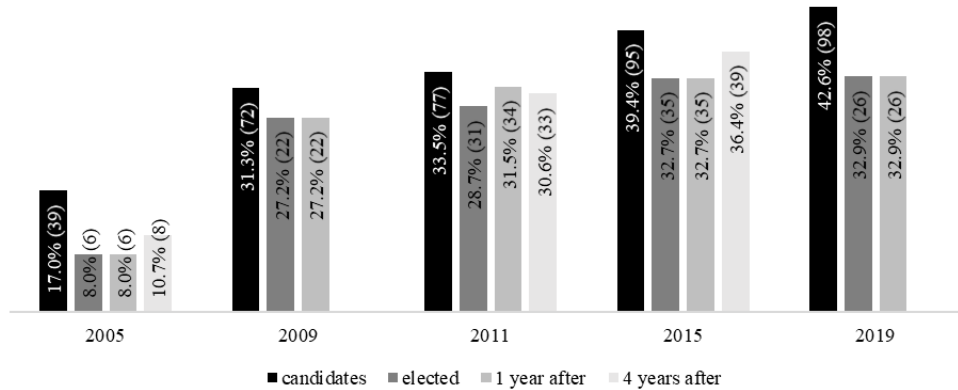
Figure 2.1: Proportion of women on the Socialist Party (PS) candidate lists, elected, and MPs one and four years after national elections since 2005 (% / number)



Source: Authors' elaboration. Candidates and elected: Ministry of Internal Affairs²; 1 and 4 years after: National Parliament³.

Note: For more detailed party-disaggregated information, see Table 1.

Figure 2.2: Proportion of women on the Social Democratic Party’s (PSD) candidate lists, elected, and MPs one and four years after national elections since 2005 (% / number)*



* 2015 data includes the Christian Democrats (CDS-PP) which ran in coalition with PSD in the 2015 election.

Source: Authors’ elaboration. See Figure 2.1 sources.

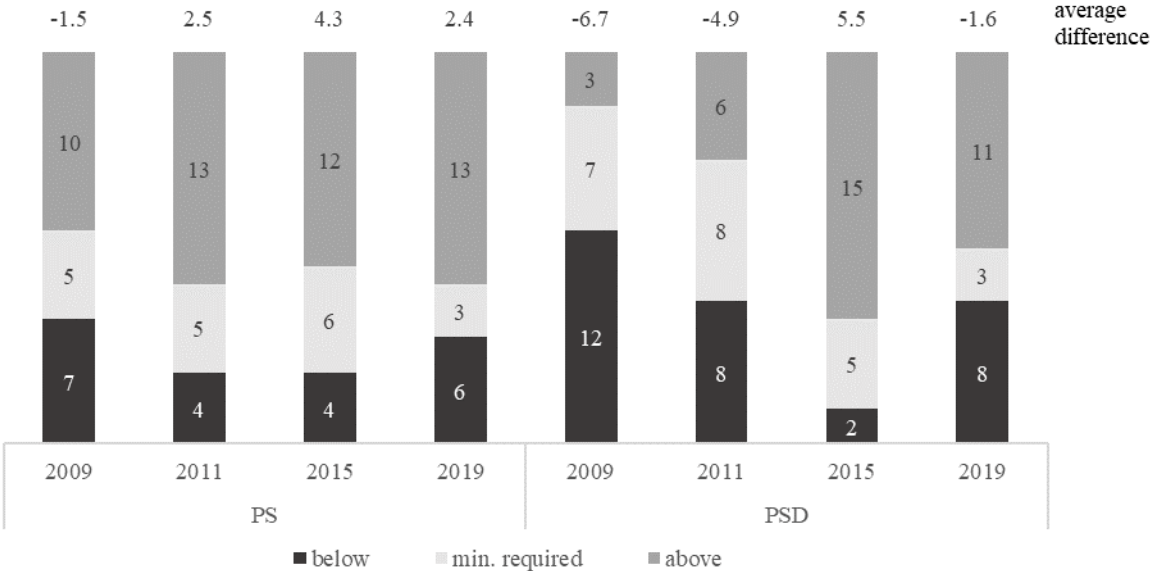
On examining the first two stages, we find that the figures for female candidacies are higher in both parties, i.e. the proportion of elected women is consistently lower than the proportion of the female candidates. This suggests that the parties are more concerned about complying with the law than guaranteeing a larger share of women among MPs; in other words, the level of commitment to the law is not very high.

A more detailed analysis of the candidate lists (first implementation stage) of both parties (Figure 2.3) confirms that they tend to comply only with the minimum requirements of the law in all elections up to the most recent one (2019). This was particularly true of the 2009 elections, in which the districts’ average difference from the threshold (33.3 percent) was -1.5pp for the PS and -6.7pp for the PSD. Furthermore, in all elections and, again, notably in those immediately after the adoption of the law (2009), a large number of districts fell below the threshold: 7 for the PS and 12 for the PSD, out of a total of 22 electoral districts. It should be noted that although the proportion of women in these districts was below 33.3 percent, these lists were considered compliant by the

court who applied the minimum possible interpretation of the law – as argued in the next section, this can be considered a form of resistance.

For now, it is important to emphasize that both parties’ level of commitment to the law, albeit low, increased steadily between 2009 and 2015. In the latter elections, only a very small number of districts remained below 33.3 percent and the districts’ average distance from the threshold was above four pp for both parties – suggesting that the parties were prepared for the upcoming intensification of requirements. Performance again deteriorated in 2019, when the revised Parity Law was already in force, but this was to be expected given that the threshold went up to 40 percent. In general, these figures indicate a slightly lower level of commitment for the PSD.

Figure 2.3: Number of districts with a percentage of female candidates below, equal, and above the minimum required by the Parity Law (33.3% until 2015 and 40% in 2019) (N), and average difference from the threshold (pp), by party and election



Source: Authors’ elaboration. See Figure 2.1 sources.

The third stage of implementation is particularly critical since it is when the lion share of substitutions – which usually take place immediately after the elections – have been completed. More specifically, it reveals whether the effort to comply with the law in stage two is reversed after the elections, bringing the old power structures back. In Portugal, this practice was seen primarily in local elections (Santos and Amâncio 2012), where the winners sometimes renounced their positions and were replaced by the next candidate on the list, but it is also quite common in Latin American countries (Krook 2016: 276-77).

As can be seen in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 (third stage), this trend is not found in national elections. Many of the MP substitutions are a consequence of the call for some MPs to join the government, and both the PS and the PSD have ruled the country during the period under study, notably the PS (PS: 2009, 2015 and 2019; PSD: 2011). However, neither party's proportion of female MPs declined during the year following the election. By contrast, the substitution of parliamentarians either had a positive effect on the feminization of parliament – with the proportion of female MPs in stage three being higher than in stage two – or no effect at all. Whereas the former situation is more common for the PS, the latter is more frequent for the PSD.

Finally, the observed pattern is exactly the same when analyzing the fourth stage of implementation: the PS yet again registers a slight increase in the share of women among its parliamentary group, whereas the PSD remains almost unchanged. The outcomes we reach for the last two stages can have both a positive and negative interpretation. On the positive side, no tricks are used to circumvent the law at the national level – a result confirmed by all our interviewees – which demonstrates that the parties' commitment to the law is serious, albeit moderate. On the other hand, the fact that the substitutions even led sometimes to a slight increase in the share of women implies that the further down the lists we go, the more women there are. In fact, there is a

higher percentage of women placed in ineligible than eligible positions (calculated on the basis of the previous elections results). For example, in the 2019 elections the PSD had 34.6 percent female candidates in eligible positions and 49.6 percent in ineligible positions, while the figures for the PS are 41.9 percent and 45.1 percent respectively. Hence, even though the Parity Law includes placement mandates and that they are always fulfilled for national elections, there is still a slight tendency for a gendered allocation of places whenever legally possible.

3. Practices and Resistances

The previous section suggested that the most important political parties in Portugal (PS and PSD) have a moderate yet serious commitment to the Parity Law, with the PS slightly outperforming the PSD. In this section, we aim to go beyond the numbers to disentangle some practices and resistance, based largely on evidence collected from the interviews. In this and the following section, reference is also made to the current party statutes, approved in 2012 (PSD)² and in 2018 (PS)³. We found that both explicit and implicit forms of individual resistance, as well as passive institutional resistance – to use Lombardo and Mergaert’s (2013) terms – take place at the national level for both the PS or the PSD, with a somewhat higher incidence in the latter.

The PSD has always been very heterogeneous when it comes to gender quotas; whereas some people within the party are strictly opposed to them, many others (mostly women) see them as the only way to correct the unequal numbers of women and men among politicians (Espírito-Santo 2018: 220). There has been a marked evolution in the way the party has voted in parliament on

² https://www.psd.pt/sites/default/files/2020-09/Estatutos%20Nacionais%20do%20PSD_0.pdf (accessed 3/9/2021).

³ <https://ps.pt/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Estatutos-PS-1.pdf> (accessed 3/9/2021).

related proposals over the years. Between 1998 and 2006, the PSD voted against all bills regarding quota system implementation in the political sphere, including the one that resulted in the Parity Law (Baum and Espírito-Santo 2012). However, it abstained in 2017 when a bill proposing a formal gender quota law for the economic sphere was approved. And finally, it voted to amend the Parity Law in 2019. Does this evolution of roll call voting behavior imply that the resistance to gender quotas within the party has decreased? This is suggested not only by the figures in the previous section but also, to some extent, by our interviews.

On one hand, compliance with the law is never questioned within the PSD. Even the lists that go beyond quota requirements do not face direct opposition (as expressed in interviews I2 and I3). On the other hand, resistance is explicitly expressed by some people in the PSD, namely those who see quotas as a rather exaggerated measure – “It is important to look at the great imbalances, but then it does not seem so fundamental to me to see symmetry by symmetry (...) We are no longer in the scandalous 10 percent” (I2) – or those who set quotas against merit: “It is not that people are against it, nor that it gives anyone a sleepless night. But the point is: we function a lot on merit” (I1), ignoring the fact that this argument has already been deconstructed various times in the literature (e.g. Besley et al. 2017; Murray 2010).

Although the merit argument was common in the PS when quotas were adopted (between 2006 and 2009), it is no longer heard (I6); this suggests the party started and remains slightly ahead of the PSD on this matter, at least in national elections. In fact, the PS was the first party in Portugal that tried to introduce a gender quota law in Parliament; this struggle began in 1998 and continued until the passage of the Parity Law in 2006. Furthermore, the PS has had voluntary gender party quotas for its electoral lists and national party organs since 1988 (Baum and Espírito-Santo 2012: 326). In short, for decades it has been one of the strongest voices defending gender equality in the

institutional political sphere, at some point influenced by the Left Block (BE), which appeared in 1999 as a strategic competitor on its left flank (Baum and Espírito-Santo 2012: 335; Weeks 2018). Nevertheless, the level of compliance with the spirit of the law, understood as producing parity representation, was until recently quite poor (Verge and Espírito-Santo 2016: 434). The figures from the previous section and our interviews show an evolution at this level within the PS. Judging by the responses we received, there was no individual resistance to the inclusion of women on the lists for the 2019 elections, even in cases where ‘zipping’ was adopted (as in Lisbon up to the 20th position) – 50 percent for either sex, with strict alternation of women and men (I4, I5 and I6). Instead, “the issue of gender equality (...) is not only present in political discourse, it is quite internalized even among male leaders” (I6).

However, other testimonies show that this is not always the case. A common discourse in both political parties – mainly at the local level of government but also emerging spontaneously in our talks on national elections – is the belief that there are not always enough women available for the lists (I1, I2, I6 and I7), particularly in rural and conservative areas. This old argument is obviously one way political parties can excuse potential poor results and therefore be perceived as an implicit resistance towards gender equality.

Thus far, we have referred to individual resistance. However, institutional resistance that occurs at a collective level and is connected to policy decisions taken in the higher ranks of an organization (Lombardo and Mergaert 2013: 301) is also likely to take place. Institutional hurdles sometimes take on a passive form, consisting of non-actions “indirectly leading to inertia and evasion of responsibilities” (Verge and Lombardo 2019: 3). This applies to our two parties since both reveal an absence of institutionalized mechanisms to supervise compliance with the law. Instead, this responsibility is said to be distributed across different structures in both parties (I2, I3, I4, I5 and

I7), implying that nobody is really responsible. This result is particularly surprising in the case of the PS, whose statutes state that the women's section is in charge of supervising quota implementation (PS statutes 2018, article 69, 6). Yet, in fact, the women's section has little influence in candidate selection (I4; Verge & Espírito-Santo 2016: 432), and some leaders of the district-level women's section are not even aware that the supervision of quota implementation is one of the section's functions (Espírito-Santo and Santos 2020: 10). The absence of a *de facto* body responsible for supervising the Law at the party level leads to inertia, evasion of responsibility and, hence, passive institutional resistance.

Another form of institutional passive resistance appears in the case of PSD. According to the party statutes of both political parties, the National Political Commission approves the criteria for the elaboration of the candidate lists before each election. Our analysis showed that in the case of the PSD, these criteria did not address gender equality at all. The interviewees even reacted with some surprise to the question, stating that the issue is already adequately covered by the Parity Law. They claimed it would be redundant to include gender equality as a criterion since the party always complies with laws (I1, I2 and I3). This attitude suggests that the party sticks to the letter of the law at the institutional level but does not interiorize its spirit. By contrast, the PS leader (António Costa) asked the presidents of the district-level branches to build lists tending towards real parity (50 percent) and to ensure the presence of both sexes in the first two places on the lists (I4, I5, I6 and I7). The party had unsuccessfully tried to introduce the latter measure in the 2019 revision of the law. This attitude strived to convey a message of coherence and example (I6)⁴. It should also be noted that 40 percent of the cabinet formed by Costa in 2019 were female ministers, equaling the quota threshold for the first time ever. This was up from 23.5 percent in the cabinet formed by Costa in 2015.

Finally, although the various forms of resistance mentioned above are clearly gender-specific, the allocation of candidates to lists is a sensitive topic that generates considerable intra-party competition (Rahat et al. 2008). The entry of women into this race caused strong negative reactions from the outset (I1 and I6), largely because of their gender, but possibly also due to the fact that they were new candidates (Cutts et al. 2008), whose arrival implies dismissing old candidates. This situation was reported by a relatively unknown PSD member who occupied the first position on the Lisbon list in 2019 – a place that is usually occupied by the candidate to prime minister⁵. In fact, this candidate was a woman but she is convinced that the negative reactions were due to her being an outsider rather than to her gender (I2). Political recruitment is an area where resistance extends to processes of change generally and is not limited to gender-specific issues. The extremely high levels of reselection among MPs, also in Portugal serves as proof of this (Borghetto and Lisi 2018: 875).

There are two final examples of passive institutional resistance which have helped weaken the implementation of the quota policy. In our opinion, the Parity Law clearly requires compliance with two rules: 1) candidate lists must guarantee a minimum representation of 33.3 percent (or 40 percent since 2019) for both men and women, and 2) they must follow a sequence rule: neither sex shall occupy more than two consecutive positions. However, the courts have in fact considered it to be sufficient to comply with only the second rule (placement mandate), whenever the inclusion of another woman on the list results in exceeding the threshold. For instance, in a district with a magnitude of four MPs, parties have to decide whether to stay clearly below (one in four, 25 percent) or visibly above (two in four, 50 percent) the threshold. Even though they often decide to stay below, hence complying only with the second rule, the lists are considered valid by the judges.

Prior to the 2019 revision, the Parity Law included an article making the National Electoral Commission responsible for publishing the non-compliant candidate lists for all elections on its website. However, this was not done systematically. For instance, for the 2015 parliamentary election and for the 2009 and the 2014 European Parliament elections, the website did not provide any kind of information on compliance with the Parity Law. To add insult to injury, this article was completely removed in the 2019 revision of the law. Non-compliant lists are now rejected and the parties are notified and given the opportunity to correct the list in question; as a result, the names of non-compliant parties will hardly ever become public, thus impairing the transparency of the monitoring process and doing away with a further incentive to comply with the law. As political parties are responsible for the policy design, they are to blame for unnecessarily weakening the policy.

Overall, the reported resistances are not intended to prevent compliance with the law, but rather to make it difficult for compliance to go beyond what is strictly necessary.

4. Explanatory Factors

Having identified some similarities and differences between the political parties under analysis, the aim of this section is to reflect on the intra-party factors that contribute to the dissimilarities found between them – notably ideology and aspects of the recruitment process. We also seek to shed light on key institutional (electoral system) and cultural (gendered norms) factors that are likely to interact with quota efficiency across parties.

Ideology is undoubtedly an intra-party factor that explains why the PS has always been ahead of the PSD on this matter. There is a tendency for left-wing parties to adhere more frequently to

gender quotas (Caul 2001) and, in Portugal, the left remains more linked to gender equality than the right. As a center-left party member of the Party of European Socialists and of the Socialist International, the PS has been more exposed to these issues. MPs from the PS referred in particular to the Socialist International as being crucial for the party's decision to pursue this agenda (Baum and Espírito-Santo 2012: 330; Verge 2013: 445). By contrast, the center-right liberal PSD has steered clear of this agenda. The weight of ideology was particularly visible up until the adoption of the quota law in 2006. In the last decade, the PSD has become progressively more supportive of gender quotas as demonstrated by the evolution of its roll call voting behavior on proposals related to the quota law, as described in Section 3.

The level of centralization of the recruitment process is another intra-party factor that is likely to intervene in quota efficiency. Whereas the PSD statutes do not grant the party president any special role in the selection of candidates, the PS statutes state that the secretary-general can nominate candidates for 30 percent of the winnable positions in each district and also indicate their rank order (PS statutes 2018, article 67, 5) – a right that all party leaders have up to now systematically exercised (I5, I6 and I7). Previous research has shown that the PSD's level of centralization depends on the president and that it is far from marginal (Freire and Teixeira 2011; Lobo 2003). Our interviews suggest that the current PSD president (Rui Rio) played a less active role in choosing candidates for the 2019 elections than the PS general secretary. For instance, while the head of the Portalegre list was put forward by the party leader in the case of the PS (I7), that name was decided at the district level in the case of the PSD (I1 and I3).

Recent studies have revealed that centralization is not always an added value since it depends on whether or not party leaders are sympathetic to increasing women's representation (Kenny and Verge 2013; Murray 2010). A key point concerning the 2019 Portuguese national elections is that

the PS leader decided to intervene in the gender composition of the lists by sending a clear recommendation to the districts to include women beyond the Parity Law. In other words, he chose to have a centralized and active role on this specific issue which produced positive results.

A last relevant aspect of the political recruitment is the composition of the selectorate. According to the PS statutes, it is mandatory to consult the women's sections in the candidate selection process (PS statutes 2018, article 67, 8). Although the PSD also has a women's section, it is much less institutionalized and is not mentioned in the party statutes. All PS interviewees confirm that the women's sections were in fact consulted, though only at a later stage of the recruitment process (I4, I5, I6 and I7) when changes to the lists are less common. They are not included in the informal contacts that are made between district-level branches and the central party leaders throughout the process. Accordingly, the PS president of the women's section considers that "the weight of *their* decision is very weak" (I4) – confirming previous outcomes (Verge and Espírito-Santo 2016; Espírito-Santo and Santos 2020). Nevertheless, the simple fact that they are present and that they are able to express their dissatisfaction, as they did for example with regards to the Portalegre list (I7), is symbolically important.

As regards the electoral system, which is an important institutional factor, the magnitude of the 22 plurinominal electoral districts varies between two and 47 MPs and this variation has implications for the election of women. Taking all four national elections that took place since the implementation of the Parity Law (2009 to 2019) together, the figures for the proportion of elected women for the PS are as follows: district magnitude (DM) 2 to 3 MPs = 2.4 percent; DM 4 to 9 MPs = 24.5 percent; DM 10 to 16 MPs = 31.6 percent; DM 17 or more MPs = 32.6 percent. This pattern recurs for the PSD: DM 2 to 3 = 7.5 percent; DM 4 to 9 = 28.4 percent; DM 10 to 16 = 38.4 percent; DM 17+ = 34.0 percent. Thus, the larger the district magnitude, the clearer the gain

in the percentage of women elected. This demonstrates that district size has clear consequences for quota efficiency in Portugal even though the law is the same for all districts regardless of size. This is because the placement mandate rule prevails and the parties tend to follow the minimum legal requirements (as mentioned above). For example, in a small district of 3MPs, the first two places will be occupied by a man and the third by a woman. Hence, only in the improbable case of a party winning all of the district's three seats will a woman enter Parliament.

Finally, the implementation of the quota law is informed by subtle cultural factors, notably embedded gender norms; as noted above, these translate into a gendered allocation of places whenever legally possible, a compliance with only the minimum legal requirements, or succumbing to passive institutional forms of resistance, to give just a few examples.

5. Contribution to Gender Empowerment

This section provides an assessment of the indirect effects of the Parity Law. More specifically, it looks at whether or not gender empowerment has increased, i.e. whether or not the implementation of the Parity Law translated into a more egalitarian distribution of power between women and men in Parliament. The most important positions still seem to be reserved for men as illustrated by the four following examples. First, since 1976 only one woman has served as the President of the Assembly of the Republic, the second most important statesperson in the country: Maria da Assunção Esteves was president during the 2011 to 2015 legislative term.

Second, committee membership – a valuable resource for MPs in a legislative chamber (Heath et al. 2005) – still follows embedded gender norms. Between 1983 and 2009, women were systematically overrepresented in social and women's issues committees in all years, particularly

in 2009 when the Parity Law was implemented for the first time, demonstrating that the law did not reverse this trend at all (Espírito-Santo and Sanches 2020). However, some signs of change are also visible. The underrepresentation of women in economic issues and powerful committees visible at the start of the analyzed period has gradually disappeared; no significant underrepresentation of female MPs is now found in these committees after controlling for seniority and expertise (Espírito-Santo and Sanches 2020).

Third, mixed results were found in a study analyzing floor access to legislative debates between 1999 and 2018 (Fernandes et al. 2020). The authors demonstrate that until 2009, women delivered a smaller percentage of words and speeches than would be expected given their presence in National Parliament. Since the implementation of the Parity Law, this gap has disappeared and their participation in speeches is now commensurate with their presence in parliament. However, women are more frequently sidelined from floor access in the most relevant debates, i.e. prime-time debates.

Finally, an analysis of the evolution of the number of women in government again offers mixed results. Up until 2015, the percentage of female ministers was systematically lower than the feminization of Parliament, and no gradual increase was observed. For instance, the PS formed a less feminized government in 2015 than in 2009. However, in 2019, the PS also chose to give a clear sign regarding gender representation in the executive by forming a cabinet with 40 percent female ministers, equaling the current parliament's figure.

To summarize and conclude, in Portugal, we have observed a great resistance to change in the *status quo* at the policy formulation stage, evident in the long struggle (between 1998 and 2006) that finally culminated in the approval of the Parity Law in 2006 (Espírito-Santo 2018; Monteiro 2011). However, once adopted, the implementation itself took place more smoothly in all four

stages of implementation. On the other hand, the two most important political parties have usually gone no further than the minimum quota requirements. Both their actions and discourse demonstrate a moderate but serious commitment to the law. The PS slightly but persistently outperforms the PSD and the quota faces less resistance. The party's tackling of gender equality in candidate lists and the executive in the 2019 elections reveals a higher level of commitment. All in all, the resistance to the electoral quota law is not intended to cause policy failure, but rather to limit policy success. The direct effects of the policy (feminization of candidate lists and parliamentary groups) were more positive than its indirect effects (gender empowerment in Parliament).

¹ Classification provided by TIPAU, an urban-rural typology used to characterize the national territory (<https://smi.ine.pt/Versao/Detalhes/3486>, accessed 3/9/2021).

² <https://www.eleicoes.mai.gov.pt/> (accessed 11 November 2020).

³ <https://www.parlamento.pt/ActividadeParlamentar/Paginas/Relatorios-e-estatisticas.aspx> (accessed 11 November 2020).

⁴ However, even in the case of the PS, the leader's recommendation was not overwhelming given that seven of the 22 districts with a magnitude of four or fewer MPs were exempted from complying with it (17).

⁵ On this occasion, the rule was broken because the leader of the party was from Porto and preferred to be the head of the list of that district.

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Appendix

List of Interviewees

Interviewee	Sex	Party & relevant information	Date of interview (dd/mm/yyyy)
Nr 1	Female	PSD, Portalegre, Candidate (2 nd position)	5/11/2020
Nr 2	Female	PSD, Lisbon, Candidate (1 st position)	6/11/2020
Nr 3	Male	PSD, Portalegre, Candidate (1 st position)	16/11/2020
Nº 4	Female	PS, President of women's section	16/11/2020
Nr 5	Male	PS, Lisbon, Candidate (27 th position)	17/11/2020
Nr 6	Female	PS, Lisbon, Candidate (2 nd position)	18/11/2020
Nr 7	Male	PS, Vice President of the District Federation of Portalegre	19/11/2020