

PORTUGAL

Date of Elections: 25 April 1983

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament following the premature dissolution of this body on 4 February 1983. General elections had previously been held in October 1980.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Portugal, the Assembly of the Republic, consists of 250 Deputies elected to represent metropolitan Portugal and electors residing abroad. The latter are represented by 4 Deputies. The normal term of the legislature is 4 years.

Electoral System

All Portuguese citizens, even if residing abroad, are entitled to vote if at least 18 years old and registered as electors. Disqualified are the insane and mentally infirm, persons incompetent to manage their own affairs, persons serving their sentences following conviction for crime, those deprived of their political rights and certain categories of persons who held important public positions prior to 25 April 1974 and did not clearly repudiate before this date the political regime then in power.

Electoral registers are permanent and revised annually. Voting is not compulsory.

All qualified electors are eligible for membership of Parliament. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with membership of the Government and active service in the military and police forces, as well as with the post of magistrate, diplomat, and certain public and ecclesiastical offices. Portuguese citizens who have a second nationality may not stand as candidates in the constituency which is adjacent to the territory of this nationality. Deputies who are civil servants or members of public corporations may not exercise the latter functions during the term of the legislature.

Candidates are nominated by political parties. The lists may bear names of persons who are not party members.

Deputies are elected in 22 constituencies by party-list system, with proportional representation based on the d'Hondt method. The lists must bear as many names as there are seats to be filled in the constituency. Electors may only vote for one list.

Assembly seats which fall vacant between general elections are filled by the first of the "next-in-line" candidates appearing on the same party list.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

On 19 December 1982, Prime Minister Francisco Pinto Balsemao announced his resignation a week after his Social Democratic Party (PSD) - ruling in coalition with the Centre Democratic Party (CDS) and the People's Monarchist Party (the three together known as the Democratic Alliance) - suffered significant losses in local elections. The resulting Government crisis led to President Eanes' decision to hold early elections. On 4 February 1983, Parliament was prematurely dissolved and the April polling date announced.

Altogether, 12 parties and two alliances fielded candidates in the fifth general elections since the coup d'Etat of April 1974. This time, the PSD and CDS ran separately. During the three-week campaign, greatest emphasis was put on Portugal's financial and economic problems (foreign debt, inflation, industrial stagnation, unemployment). The Socialist Party (PS), led by former Prime Minister Mario Soares, adopted the slogan "100 measures in 100 days" and promised that its first priority would be to introduce austerity programmes in order to confront these difficulties.

Polling results re-established the PS as the country's largest party (a position lost in 1979), but failed to give it an absolute majority in Parliament. On 9 June, Mr. Soares was again sworn in as Prime Minister at the head of a coalition Government made up of his own party and the PSD, which was led by Mr. Carlos Mota Pinto. The 17-member Cabinet included nine PS and seven PSD members, as well as one independent.

Statistics

1. *Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Assembly of the Republic*

Number of registered electors		7,200,000 (approx.)
Voters		78.6%
	%	
Political Group	of votes	Number
	obtained	of Seats
Socialist Party (PS)	36.3	101
Social Democratic Party (PSD)	27	75
Communist Party (PCP)	18.2	44
Centre Democratic Party (CDS).	12.4	30
Others	6.1	20
		250