



International Conference on Humanities, Education, and Social Sciences

15 May, 2026
Paris, France



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Parity In The Election Of Portuguese Mayors In 2025: Upstream Obstacles

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Despite Portugal having a legal parity system, certain powers are not subject to this legal regime. As a result, they form as if no parity or quota system exists. Research by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) suggests that the absence of legislative quotas may prolong the achievement of gender-balanced powers (European Commission, 2024). In previous studies, we have found that in fact women are heavily underrepresented in Portuguese local government bodies (Macedo, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2024). Various international bodies recommend that research into the political representation of women ought to be substantiated by empirical evidence. Therefore, the article aims to ascertain, through empirical data, whether the underrepresentation of women in the office of Mayor is a consequence of a correspondingly low number of female candidates or, conversely, whether the candidate pool reflects a gender-balanced distribution. To this end, a comprehensive analysis was conducted on all 1.571 candidates who participated in the Local Elections held on October 12, 2025, across the 308 municipalities of Portugal, specifically categorizing them by gender, municipality and political party. According to the collected empirical data, only 15% of elected Mayors were female. It was also determined that merely 21,58% of candidates were women, indicating the existence of adverse factors that obstruct women's participation in political power during the period leading up to the election.

Keywords: Parity, political rights, elections, mayor, candidates

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