



Women Can Do It! (Na política, as mulheres são capazes!)

Portugal

2007-2010

A toolkit, training and an awareness campaign

Summary

In Portugal, the share of elected political posts held by women is respectable at European level (38%), rather low nationally (26%) and abysmal locally (only 7.5% of mayors).

To counter this, in 2008 the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) republished a tried and tested training toolkit, *Na Política, As Mulheres são Capazes! (In Politics Women Can Do It!)*, organised a series of 11 training sessions around the country which reached 242 women, and drew up agreements with the regional governments of the Azores and Madeira to enable actions on those islands.

In 2009 CIG followed up with the nationwide *Women make democracy better* campaign, which used television, radio, posters and cards to encourage women to be politically active. In 2010 CIG undertook an innovative action in education, by publishing a handbook for teachers, the *Education Guide: Gender and Citizenship – 3rd cycle*, which suggests practical activities to tackle gender stereotypes.

Waiting for parity

Although the number of Portuguese women holding political posts is increasing, progress towards equality is slow and uneven. There is a particular difficulty at local level, where since the most recent elections in 2013, only 7.5% of the mayors elected have been women. The situation is somewhat better at national level, with the 2011 elections returning 26.5% of women to parliament and 17% to government posts.¹ At European level the gender balance is even better, and since 2014 38.1% of Portuguese MEPs have been female.²

Deeply ingrained stereotypes regarding gender and leadership are particularly noticeable when it comes to electing mayors, who are called on to be father figures to their communities and are much more visible politically than their colleagues on local councils. Elections centred on one person are less open to women's participation – as in the case of presidential elections, at which there have been no female candidates since the 1980s – than collegial or plural decision-making bodies such as the national or European parliaments, which operate a list system.



¹ CIG – Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality, *Report – Beijing + 20 – Portugal, 2014*, http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/59/National_reviews/Portugal_review_Beijing20.pdf

² http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/politics/eu-parliament/index_en.htm



This unbalanced situation persists despite the adoption of the Parity Law in 2006. This law lays down that any list of three or more candidates (for parliament, the European Parliament or local authorities) must contain at least 33% of each sex, and that for the Portuguese and European parliaments the lists should not include more than two persons of the same sex successively. If lists do not comply with these requirements, public financing for election campaigns is reduced.

A nationwide awareness-raising campaign

In order to promote the participation of women in politics, the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) launched a nationwide awareness-raising campaign. In 2008, the Commission decided to reprint the *Na Política, As Mulheres são Capazes! (In Politics Women Can Do It!)* toolkit,³ originally published in 2001, and to disseminate it widely. The toolkit, which was translated from a publication of the same name produced by the Norwegian Labour Party's Women Network, supports awareness-raising and training sessions by describing practical activities that trainers can implement. These improve women's communication and leadership skills and give them the self-confidence to raise their voices, put over their points of view and take the lead in public interventions.

Eleven awareness-raising sessions took place across the country between 2007 and 2010, each lasting six hours. Taken together, they reached 242 participants. Generally, their main aim was to support women to actively participate in public life, by addressing topics such as how to communicate effectively to a large audience? How to be assertive and self-confident in communication?⁴

In addition to these activities on the mainland, CIG signed agreements with the governments of the Azores and Madeira, which led to several training sessions taking place on the islands to raise awareness of the importance of women's participation in organisations and in political life.

CIG also established close cooperation with the National Youth Council to gain the support of youth associations and of the Portuguese Youth Institute in encouraging young women to take part in public life and particularly political life.

Women make democracy better

Following these awareness-raising events, a nationwide campaign called *Women make democracy better* was launched in 2009.⁵ It was broadcast on national television and cable TV 111 times and on radio 180 times. It was advertised at 600 sites outdoors, in 380 trains and on 2,439 ATMs as well as through cards distributed in restaurants, cinemas, theatres, cultural centres, etc.

Moreover, for the first time education guides were produced to promote citizenship and gender equality. The *Guide for the 3rd cycle*,⁶ launched in 2010, covers the issue of decision-making and suggests practical activities to tackle gender stereotypes and induce equal attitudes towards leadership among female and male students. Its main purpose is to provide teachers with a pedagogical support for teaching and developing projects and other activities. The primary target

³ CIG – Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality, *Na Política, As Mulheres são Capazes (In Politics Women Can Do It)*, 2008 (2nd ed.): ISBN: 972-597217-1

⁴ See reports of training sessions: <http://www.umaracores.org/images/anexos/82-2.pdf>, <http://www.ps-baixoalentejo.com/images/mps.pdf>

⁵ See <http://www.cig.gov.pt/campanhas/as-mulheres-fazem-a-democracia-melhor-a-diferenca-faz-a-igualdade/>

⁶ CIG – Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality, *Education Guide: Gender and Citizenship – 3rd cycle* (coordinated by Teresa Pinto; other authors: Conceição Nogueira, Cristina Vieira, Isabel Silva, Luísa Saavedra, Maria João Duarte Silva, Paula Silva, Teresa-Cláudia Tavares and Vasco Prazeres), 2009, http://www.cig.gov.pt/pdf/2014/Education_Guide_3rd_Cycle.pdf



group of the Guide are students 13 years upwards, but it is also possible to carry out almost all of the activities with some adjustments in other age groups.

The Guide presents a useful resource for school teachers as it supports them in two ways: by providing a clear theoretical framework and by practical advice for classroom activities.

Practical suggestions for “Gender and Leadership”, for instance, focus on exploring and discussing inequalities between women and men in power-related and decision-making positions. Through group work and structured class discussions students are asked to reflect on the variety of reasons for the asymmetry between women and men in positions of power and decision-making. A particular focus is placed on the constraints derived from the reconciliation of work and family life and the role of gender as determining factor influencing the amount of time dedicated to different life spheres, particularly domestic life. The Guide also seeks to demystify the idea of a “born leader” while demonstrating that behaviours associated with “leadership” can be developed through active training. A further emphasis of the Guide is “Gender and Vocational Choices”. It addresses the issue of gender asymmetries in the choice of professions by students and gives practical suggestions how teachers and psychologists could make students aware of gender stereotypes associated with professions and support them in vocational decision-making. Gender stereotypes are also often transmitted via different media products, computer games, etc. The Guide focusses on these aspects and gives concrete examples of exercises, group sessions and tests that could make students more aware and empower them.

The Guide was commissioned by CIG and the General Directorate for Innovation and Curriculum Development.

A spin-off effect was that the action strengthened the relationship between CIG, municipalities and regional governments.

Contact:

Fátima Duarte, President
Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality
Av. da República, 32, 1º
1050-193 Lisbon
Portugal
Tel.: +351 217 983 000
Fax: +351 217 983 098
cig@cig.gov.pt

Further information:

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