
Portugal: Rebelo de Sousa re-elected president by absolute majority. “Fighting the pandemic, stopping xenophobia”. Populists get 12% of the votes

The Portuguese who went to vote, on the days the country is in virtually in total lockdown to stop an extremely fierce wave of Covid, have chosen continuity without a shadow of a doubt: Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa (Social Democratic Party, a centre-right party) has been re-elected for a second term with 60.7% of the votes (the turnout was 39.50%). Of the seven nominees that stood for election, the second most voted one was Ana Gomes (Socialist Party) who received 12.7% of votes. André Ventura, leader of the Chega! party (the Portuguese for “Enough!”), a racist and xenophobic party, received no more than 11.9% of votes, so he was quite far from threatening de Sousa, though his numbers are growing. “Marcelo strengthens power in the night of the political storm”, the newspaper Politico has written on its headlines this morning. Because, while Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa has been re-elected thus increasing the result of the vote of his first term in 2016 by about eight per cent points (52%), the entry of Ventura, who has beaten so many other nominees, still reshapes the identity and priorities of the right wing. “What is most urgent now is fighting the pandemic”, the winner stated in the night. “We must do all we can to stop and then reverse a process that is putting dramatic pressure on our healthcare facilities”, as well as “finding again what we have lost in the pandemic”: “overcoming multiplied loneliness”, “making people forget xenophobia”, exclusion, the fears that have taken root. As well as “the citizens devastated by poverty”, by starting “as soon as possible”, so we can manage “to keep hope from vanishing” in time.

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