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Portugal: Left Bloc

# The meaning of our electoral success

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**In the wake of the Left Bloc's 6.3% vote and 8 MPs won in the national elections, Francisco Louca - the central spokesperson of the Bloc - talked to the French revolutionary paper Rouge.**

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/gif/choicospeaks.gif>]

**Rouge: What does the election result, with its overall Socialist victory and strong vote for the Bloc, mean?**

**Francisco Louçã:** Over the last three years the rightwing coalition government imposed policies which led to a social crisis, the most visible effect of which is the biggest rise in unemployment in the whole EU. The country is socially very vulnerable, about 20% of the population lives under the poverty threshold and most unemployed receive no benefits. This result indicates that the vast majority of the population wanted to defeat a rightwing government with those policies.

**What is the progress made by the Left Bloc?**

In the last general election the Bloc got 2.9% of the vote, which showed a small rise in its influence after 5 years of existence. This time the Bloc got 6.6%, going from 150 000 to 364 000 votes. There are eight MPs elected, four men, four women and perhaps we'll get one more.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/newMps.jpg>]

New Left Bloc MPs

We've got four in Lisbon [Ana Drago, Luis Fazenda, Francisco Louçã and Helena Pinto], two (Alda Macedo and João Lopes Teixeira) in Oporto, the second city and two [Mariana XXX and Fernando Rosas] in Setubal a historical working-class town near Lisbon. This good showing is repeated throughout the country and is particularly strong in the four major centres (Lisbon, Oporto, Cintra and Braga) where the Bloc has a better score than the Portuguese Communist Party. The PCO has overall gone up by half a point and has a national score of 7.5%.

As for the social makeup of the Bloc's voters; it is particularly strong among youth - it is the third most popular party among young voters. Unlike previous elections it has had a working-class and popular vote throughout the country. This shows the impact of the Bloc's campaigns against the war and against the rightwing government's austerity policies.

**What initiatives is the Bloc going to take in the coming weeks?**

On election night we said we had two priorities:

– relaunch the proposals we put forward during the campaign against unemployment, against delocalisations, against fraudulent company bankruptcies, for the fight against corruption and for the abolition of bank secrecy, for a tax policy that is the basis for the redistribution of wealth and social justice;

– take an initiative on the question of abortion which is still illegal in Portugal, which leads to women being put on trial. Even though they are often acquitted, this shows a social vulnerability in relation to a repressive law. We are going to propose a referendum for people to vote on a draft abortion law and we will present it straightaway because

the defeat of the right wing offers a favourable opportunity for such an initiative.