Extracts of the candidatures of the Prizewinners of the “Gender Equality Prize” 2009

- 1st Prizewinner: The Socialist Party of Portugal


Since that time, the majority of women MPs have been socialists. The rule adopted in 1995 was a 25% quota, a figure raised to 33% in 2001. In the current Portuguese Parliament, over 70% of the female MPs are socialists. As a result of this participation by women in the Portuguese Parliament, it is the Socialist Party which will be putting forward the largest number of female candidates in the forthcoming municipal elections for the presidency of local assemblies. This is a major improvement in the quality of Portuguese democracy.

The Socialist Party's experience enabled the candidate for the post of Prime Minister at the time of the last legislative elections, in 2005, José Socrates, to set himself the aim of bringing a parity bill before Parliament. The Socialist Party won those elections and had the Parity Act passed, a law which requires each list to contain a minimum of 33% of candidates from the under-represented sex. In the 2009 European elections, for the first time, all the parties standing were obliged to have a minimum of 33% of women on their lists of candidates. The same will apply at the time of the forthcoming legislative and municipal elections, scheduled for September and October this year.”

- 2nd Prizewinner: The Labour Party of United Kingdom

"(...)In order to deal with the under representation of women elected to the House of Commons, the Labour Party, in 1993, adopted a policy of all women shortlists following a recommendation from the National Executive Committee (the ruling body of the Labour Party), to the Annual Conference of the Labour Party. (At the 1992 general election there were 37 Labour women MPs out of 60 women in the House of Commons representing just 9.2% of all MPs). The Labour Party then embarked on a series of training courses for potential women candidates offering them mentoring, support, and advice as well as training in public speaking and media presentation. (...) At the General election of 1997, 101 Labour women were elected to the House of Commons, out of a total of 120 women MPs, the largest number of women ever elected (18% of the total). At the 2001 general election, the Labour Party was unable to use all women shortlists because of the industrial tribunal decision, but pledged to bring forward legislation if elected in the following general election. Labour was re-elected at the 2001 general election and it stood by its commitment by passing the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002.

This Act legalised all women shortlists, although the Act was permissive rather than compulsory allowing a political party to decide for itself whether, or not to use the legislation. By the 2005 general election Labour once again adopted all women shortlists, using the Act. To date the Labour Party is the only political party to have used this legislation. The 2005 general election proved decisive. Of the 26 new Labour women MPs elected for the first time, 23 were selected from all women short lists. For this first time ever, of the newly elected Labour MPs there were more women than men elected. At this election, 128 women were elected (of all parties); the largest number ever, 20% of the total. Of these, 98 were Labour women. Within the current Labour government, women account for one third of ministers. (...)"

In order to deal with the under representation of women holding office in the Labour Party, a system of quotas was agreed to by the Labour Party in the late 1980s. Previously at all levels of the Labour Party, male members predominately held office, whether at local or national level. Rule changes to ensure that quotas would be used, was written into the Labour Party Rule Book in the late 1980s. The system of quotas was implemented at all levels of the Labour Party organisation (...)"

Labour Governments from the late 1960’s to the present day have passed legislation in favour of women to address the imbalance of equal pay, the under representation in political and public life, and a raft of equality measures. These laws have made life better for women, bringing about greater opportunities, and helping them achieve their full potential. (…)"
3rd Prizewinner: The Swedish Left Party (Vänsterpartiet)

“The first reason for this is that the party adopted a constitution in 1990 that demands that at least 50 % of any board in the party should consist of women. This has led to the current party board consisting of 60% women. The second reason is that the party adopted a feminist policy and strategy which led to a more deepened understanding of the situation of women in 1996. The third reason is that the three of the top four candidates to the European Parliament election this summer are women.

§ 21 of the Party Constitution: Women should be represented in elected bodies and commissions of trust of at least 50 percent, unless exceptional circumstances prevent this. In cases where there are deputies, both the number of full members by the Board as the whole Board itself shall consist of at least 50 percent women. If exceptional circumstances are given, particular decision has to be made and the reasons recorded in the minutes.”