



The Political System and the Exercise of Democracy in Cabo Verde – an African case study

20th – 21st April 2018

Praia, Cabo Verde

FEPS Activity Report



FEPS

ACTIVITY REPORT
April 2018

S&D

**GLOBAL
PROGRESSIVE
FORUM**

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG**

Jean Jaurès
Fondation



FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES
FONDATION EUROPÉENNE
D'ÉTUDES PROGRESSISTES



INTRODUCTION

The Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) in close cooperation with the Institute for Democracy and Progress (IDP), and with the support of The Global Progressive Forum (GPF), the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament, Fondation Jean-Jaurès and Friederich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) held a joint conference around the topic of “The Political System and the Exercise of Democracy in Cabo Verde – an African case study” on 20th – 21st April 2018 at the Hotel Oásis-Atlântico in Praia, in order to analyse the various dimensions on the political participation of citizens in Cabo Verde and the functioning of the country’s democratic processes as an outstanding example in Western Africa.



The program was structured in three panels and counted with a total of 12 presentations, that tackled local examples of democratic participation, the role of the European Union in fostering African democracies and last but not least the importance of local communities and young people in political and decision-making processes. Speakers dealt with issues related to the reform of the State and political and administrative organization of the national territory, debated the role of political parties and in which way trust can be restored in them, the size and constitution of elected bodies, their functioning, citizen participation in suffrage, models of suffrage and adaptation needs.

A moderator was assigned for each panel, with the key role of coordinating the interventions and guaranteeing the widest possible participation of the audience.

SESSION I: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY

The presentations addressed the topic of the adequacy of the Cape Verdean political system and its constitutional framework to the current democratic aspirations of Cape Verdean society. The issue of the role of political parties, the size and constitution of elected bodies, their functioning, citizens’ participation, and especially youth and Cape Verdean emigrant communities, was addressed.

The example of European countries was also addressed, emphasizing that democracy cannot yet be considered as granted, and consequently the struggle for democracy must be continuous and persistent.

SESSION II: REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY S. PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY

Issues related to systems of representative democracy and participatory democracy, such as the forms of representation, types of election, forms of choice and representation, etc., were addressed, bringing to the debate other forms of citizens' engagement. The experience of the European Union was presented, with emphasis to the right to a petition as an expression of the development of democracy at EU level and the effective participation of citizens in the European Parliament's activity.

The general focus was on the effective involvement of citizens as a way to improve democratic participation and the quality and efficiency of governance practices.



SESSION III: RETHINKING THE POLITICAL SYSTEM - REFORM OF THE STATE AND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN CABO VERDE

In this panel the process of institutionalization of municipalities in Cabo Verde was highlighted, with decentralization appearing as one of the greatest gains of Cape Verdean democracy. However, it has been recognized that the Cape Verdean state needs deep and broad reform so that it can gain in effectiveness and greater legitimacy in pursuing such change. It is in this framework that proposals for the reform of the Cape Verdean political system were presented - the reduction of the state apparatus, the alteration of the electoral system and regionalization.

The French example of attempts to respond to the problems of divorce between citizens and their elected representatives was also addressed, as well as its experience of participatory democracy at the local level.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The issues surrounding the state reform of Cabo Verde and citizens' participation in democratic processes was debated among experts, policy-makers and participants, which participated actively in the discussions held at the end of each panel, presenting their views and contributions on how to increase the efficiency and legitimacy of the institutions of the Cape Verdean democracy and our democracies in general.

