
Women's participation in higher education in Portugal is usually presented as a successful case. Despite this increasing participation by women, horizontal and vertical segregation remains. Women are under-represented in top decision-making positions and only two of the 15 public universities have had, until now, a woman rector. This chapter presents a case study of a new university which has had two woman rectors in its 40 years' existence. It analyses whether institutional reasons enabled these women to become rectors, if their presence in top positions fostered gender awareness, and the reasons for this exceptionalism and its effects on gender awareness. Using interviews and document analysis, it concludes that organisational and personal dimensions can explain this exceptionalism, but that having women in top positions is not enough to improve gender awareness.