

## The Presence of Women on the Romanian Political Scene

Costel Marian DALBAN<sup>1</sup>

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### **Abstract**

This article aims to present a picture of the representation of women within the Romanian Parliament from 1990 to 2020, their ascension to the positions of the Romanian governments in the post-December period or to positions obtained by electoral ballot in local councils, county councils, territorial administrative units. Women's participation and political representation varies dramatically within a country, depending on institutions and social context. In this article we selectively analyze gender literature in politics, highlighting women's formal political participation. We also expose a number of traditional explanations for the political participation and representation of women, their presence on the electoral lists and the motivation to run, the drawing up of Romania's gender political architecture in recent years and the role of institutions in supporting their participation. We will note that the equal representation of women and men in political decision-making is an aspect of human rights and social justice, as well as an essential requirement of the functioning of a democratic society, but it is noted that Romania is under-representing women and thus a democratic deficit that undermines the legitimacy of decision-making makes itself present. Supply and demand factors will be a solid benchmark in the research of the identified domain, as well as the analysis of national and international reports and databases.

**Keywords:** gender representation, political parties, women.

### **Résumé**

Cet article vise à présenter une image de la représentation des femmes au sein du Parlement roumain de 1990 à 2020, leur ascension aux postes des gouvernements roumains dans la période post-décembre ou à des postes obtenus par scrutin électoral dans les conseils locaux, les conseils départementaux, unités administratives territoriales. La participation et la représentation politique des femmes varient considérablement au sein d'un pays, en fonction des institutions et du contexte social. Dans cet article, nous analysons de manière sélective la littérature sur le genre en politique, mettant en évidence la participation politique formelle des femmes. Nous exposons également un certain nombre d'explications traditionnelles de la participation politique et de la représentation des femmes, de leur présence sur les listes électorales et de la motivation à se présenter, la rédaction de Architecture politique de genre en Roumanie au cours des dernières

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<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. student, Department of Sociology and Social Work, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania; e-mail: marian.dalban@gmail.com

années et rôle des institutions dans le soutien de leur participation. Nous noterons que l'égalité de représentation des femmes et des hommes dans la prise de décision politique est un aspect des droits de l'homme et de la justice sociale, ainsi qu'une condition essentielle du fonctionnement d'une société démocratique, mais il est à noter que la Roumanie est sous-représentée. Les femmes et donc un déficit démocratique qui sape la légitimité de la prise de décision se fait présent. Les facteurs d'offre et de demande constitueront une solide référence dans la recherche du domaine identifié, ainsi que dans l'analyse des rapports et bases de données nationaux et internationaux.

**Mots-clés:** représentation des sexes, partis politiques, femmes.

### **Rezumat**

Acest articol își propune să prezinte o imagine a reprezentării femeilor în Parlamentul României din 1990 până în 2020, ascensiunea lor la pozițiile guvernelor române în perioada post-decembrie sau la posturile obținute prin vot electoral în consiliile locale, consiliile județene, unitățile administrativ teritoriale. Participarea femeilor și reprezentarea politică variază dramatic într-o țară, în funcție de instituții și de contextul social. În acest articol analizăm selectiv literatura de gen în politică, evidențiind participarea politică formală a femeilor. Expunem și o serie de explicații tradiționale pentru participarea și reprezentarea politică a femeilor, prezența lor pe listele electorale și motivația de a candida, întocmirea Arhitectura politică de gen din România în ultimii ani și rolul instituțiilor în sprijinirea participării lor. Vom observa că reprezentarea egală a femeilor și bărbaților în procesul decizional politic este un aspect al drepturilor omului și al justiției sociale, precum și o cerință esențială a funcționării unei societăți democratice, dar se observă că România este subreprezentată femeile și astfel un deficit democratic care subminează legitimitatea luării deciziilor se face prezent. Factorii de ofertă și cerere vor fi un reper solid în cercetarea domeniului identificat, precum și în analiza rapoartelor și bazelor de date naționale și internaționale.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** reprezentare de gen, partide politice, femei.

### **Introduction**

Any scientific approach aims to produce knowledge and provide new results, as well as new hypotheses in the universe of the researched field, connected to the social reality studied. Theoretical-empirical approaches to the analysis of gender balance (Varikas, 2016) imply a knowledge of key dimensions and areas in the process of recruiting and making electoral lists by gender, social determinants and socio-cultural elements of the Romanian space. Interest in such a study becomes a major one as we witness a series of social movements to support feminist ideology. The central objective of the research is to build an overview of the degree of representation of women in Romanian politics and the factors that influence the whole process. Manon Tremblay (2007) stated that there are several factors that determine the presence or absence of women in the political space: the cultural factor, the social and economic factor and, finally, the political factor. The cultural factor is represented by the values, standards, beliefs

and attitudes that form the basis of a community and its institutions, and it is the one that animates the ways of being, speaking and manifestation of the population. Among the main cultural factors that are based on gender one should mention religion, education and social norms regarding gender roles and identify them as determinants of the proportion of women in political institutions. Socio-economic factors shape the conditions that cause women to think about careers in politics. As Norris and Lovenduski note, we are talking here about the offer of candidates (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995). Political factors change the demand for candidates and influence the selection, the choice of candidates, and the representation of women will always be made taking into account two fields of analysis: the political regime and the legislation present in that state.

Despite the recognition of formally equal political rights of women and men, participation in the political process, including membership of political parties, candidacies, election and holding a position in legislative or administrative bodies are still dominated by men. In any society, over the centuries, the gender gap has played an important role, from defining hierarchies and rights to changing male-female relationships.

Gender is ubiquitous in our societies and therefore also influences political life. The relationship between political life and gender representation on the power stage is an issue discussed with the emergence of modernity and democratization of the world's states (Băluță et al. , 2007). From this perspective, women and men could be distinguished according to their natural or acquired ability to gain political power. The male monopoly on the power scene throughout history and the non-involvement of women were initially seen as important factors for maintaining inequalities and creating new imbalances between the two sexes (Bencivenga et al., 2015).

Even if history does not present us with a favourable situation regarding the representation of women in political life, the legal status of women has been improved, yet inequalities still exist in the community and, even if they have the same rights as men, access to opportunities differs. Women's emancipation was a lengthy process, and the change in status-roles (Bonea, 2018) was influenced by the racial, geographical, cultural and educational specificities of each nation state.

The limited space of an article does not allow a diversified presentation of the types of theoretical approaches regarding the position of women in Romanian politics. However, there have been numerous studies that may act as a starting point for further analysis. Democracy is a complex phenomenon, and the identification of partisan space, the way of recruiting political elites, stereotypes, political roles, gender social identity are part of the social complexity that presents itself in the gender architecture of a political regime (Băluță, 2012).

### **Women and political power**

The fascination of politics stems from power relations, pointing out that of all the social, financial, military, scientific powers, political power presents that „vertige du pouvoir”, a drink of power to the person who owns it (Frigioiu, 2007).

Whether we are talking about a fog of hunters or extremely powerful societies, power will always manifest itself, and man will perceive it as a fatality. One can discuss a natural manifestation of power, but also an institutionalized form of power. Institutions generated by a set of rules and norms, retain power in a certain normative manner. On the other hand, power also has a custom component. In the case of this paper, political power is the result of holding a political office, and it is the subject that holds power that demonstrates a number of capacities and manages to make effective use of its capital.

The political function as a result of the manifestation of political power is a contractualist approach and comes as a result of the existence of a direct link between the politician and the state. The link between the two elements is supported and mediated by what we call **today's function**. The theory has a continuity or represents an effect of the theory of social contract supported by several prominent representatives, such as J.J. Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes or John Locke, aiming to identify a way of government that ensures the freedom of citizens, through the pact they sign with the state. The contractual approach to the politician is positioned, not for the survival of society, but rather for the politician. It may exist, as long as the state exists. One serves the interests of another, one ensures the exercise of power, the other the platform for carrying out this exercise, all mediated through political office.

In 1930, the first female mayor of Vaslui was elected, Luiza Zavoschi in Buda. In April 1945, the second female mayor of Romania was elected: Alexandrina Georgescu, vice-president of the Patriotic Defence, mayor of the town of Tândăreni. Existing documents show that equality between women and men in the sphere of political life was stipulated for the first time in the Romanian Constitution of 1948 (Bosomitu & Burcea 2012).

90 years later, the presence of women in Romanian political life is much more pronounced, but that is not also the case for access to political power. Today, all political parties in Romania have women's organizations in their structure, the legislative framework offering the freedom to vote and to be elected regardless of gender, and the policies of the European Union encourage women's participation in political life. Some parties, through the rules of the organization, confer a certain share of women's representation on the electoral lists. „De jure”, women have legal, unfettered access, free speech and political action, but „de facto” there are various social, cultural, economic, political factors that prevent access to political power. In order to best understand gender equality and the representation of women in political-administrative structures, a presentation of real data is required.

**Table No.1.** Percentage of women in the Romanian Parliament in the period 1990-2020

Nr.crt.	Mandate	Percentage
1.	1990-1992	4,9%
2.	1992-1996	3,7%
3.	1996-2000	4,7%

Nr.crt.	Mandate	Percentage
4.	2000-2004	10,8%
5.	2004-2008	10,2%
6.	2008-2012	9,8%
7.	2012-2016	20%
8.	2016-2020	19,3%

Sources: [18].

We note that the beginning of Romanian democracy and the transition from one political regime to another was not an example of good practice for the policy of gender representation in the Romanian Parliament, bearing in mind that in the period before 1989 the presence of representative quotas ensured more than 30% of women in representative structures. This was not directly proportional to access to power, as the Communist Party was a totalitarian one. However, the evolution of the percentages is encouraging, with the legislative year 2012-2016 having the most mandates, but it is far from the average of the European Union states, where in 2015, 27% of the parliamentarians of the EU member countries were women.

After 30 years of democracy, the „strengthening” of women's representation in parliamentary politics remains a hard-to-reach goal. The current legislature has 19.35% in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, and access to the red decision-making area is low: the presidents of the two parliamentary chambers are male, the leaders of the parliamentary groups or the vice-leaders are majority male representatives, the permanent office of the Senate has only one woman out of 12 members, and in the Chamber of Deputies there are 2 women out of 13 members. Of the 22 standing committees of the Senate, the position of chairman of the committee is held by only one woman and in the Chamber of Deputies out of 21 standing committees 2 are coordinated by women, including the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

**Table No. 2.** Gender structure of political groups in the Romanian Parliament

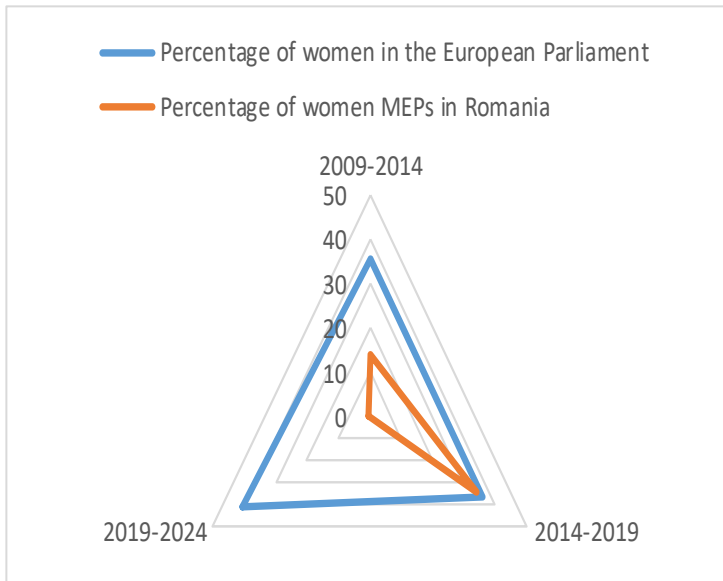
2016-PRESENT	Function	Gender composition of political functions in the Romanian Parliament							
Parliamentary Group		PSD	PNL	USR	PROEUROPA	UDMR	Minorities	PMP	NEAFILIATIONS
Chamber of Deputies	Leader	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	-
	Viceleader	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	-
Senate	Leader	B	B	B	-	B	-	-	-
	Viceleader	3 F 2 B	1 F 4 B	2 F 2 B	-	2 B	-	-	-

Source: database processing – Senate and Chamber of Deputies

Sources: [29], [14], [30], [31].

The conclusion of this report on the Romanian Parliament concerns two key elements to be debated: although the percentage of women has increased from one legislative mandate to another, their access to political decision-making power in the institution is difficult. Parliamentary legislative mechanisms give power to the Member/Senator in the territory and his representation in political

decisions by a single vote. Issues such as the agenda, political games, the route of a law, are constituted by a majority vote, the power of the parliamentarian being limited to his vote.



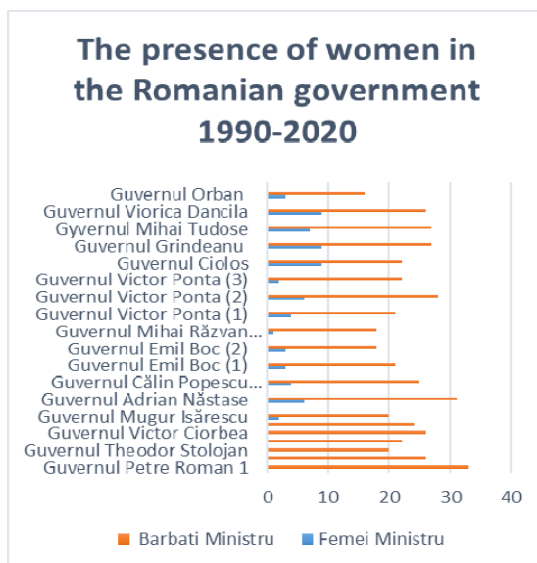
Sources: [10], [23], [24], [22].

**Figure 1.** Gender representation in the European Parliament 2009-2019

The representation of women in the European Parliament is as 'difficult' as that at national level. With the exception of the 2014-2019 legislative mandate, where the percentage of women in the European Parliament (36.4%) is almost equal to that of women occupying a portfolio of representatives of Romania (34.38%) in this decision-making forum, the differences in the rest of the periods are not to be neglected. In January 2019, in an adopted report, Parliament called on European political parties to propose women and men to the bodies governing the European Parliament in the ninth parliamentary term.

As far as the Romanian Government is concerned, after 10 years of democracy it did not yet register any women who had a mandate as ministers and 20 years later we had the first female prime minister in the history of the independent state. This political juncture is not a mirror of civil society; slippages from gender equality still exist and they are increasingly present.

During the technocratic governance, between 2015-2017, women had the highest representativeness, occupying 40.9% of the government's portfolios of ministers, meaning 9 mandates, followed by as many mandates during the 2018-2019 government period, but with a lower percentage of 34.60% compared to men. We can see from the data analysed that there is a sharper presence of women as ministers during the period of left-wing governments.



Source: Database Processing: [9], [13], [14], [19].

**Figure 2.** Gender representation in the Romanian Government

The Romanian town halls were a landmark for this analysis, trying to extend the identification of gender representation to executive institutions. In the institutional hierarchy, town halls will always be the closest institution in relation to citizens. The expression of the vote for this level carries with it cultural, social, economic, political explanations, but also important data about the community. In table No. 3 the percentages of mandates mayors won by gender are specified.

**Table 3.** Gender representation in Romanian cities, municipalities and municipalities

Crt. No.	TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS	Mandate 2004-2008		Mandate 2008-2012		Mandate 2012-2016		Mandate 2016-2020	
		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
1.	UNITS								
2.	City/municipality	1,94%	98,06%	2,20%	97,80%	2,50%	97,50%	2,19%	97,81%
3.	Communes	4,23%	95,77%	4,04%	95,96%	3,92%	96,08%	4,75%	95,25%

Source: The Permanent Electoral Authority in Romania- database processing: [1], [2], [3], [4].

The traditional system still shapes rural statistical data as the presence of women is very low and the statistical picture is about the same in local councils. In 2000, there were only two women vice-presidents of county councils, and at the level of county council presidents, 2012 presents an enlightening situation, namely men won the electoral race by 100%, women not getting even an office of president of the County Council.

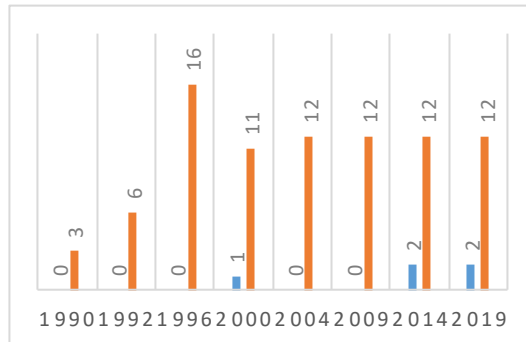
In 2016, a member of the Liberal National Party, Daniela Câmpean was voted president of the Sibiu County Council, making her the only woman in this position in Romania. Daniela Câmpean won the vote of 22 out of a total of 32

councillors. She heads the County Council with a majority secured by THE COUNCILORS of the NLP and those of the Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania (FDGR).

Regarding the level of applications, for 2012 at the national level, the total number of candidates registered for the position of chairman of the county council was 368, of which 19 women (5.16%) and 349 men (94.84%).

In the analysis of democratic institutions, we must not omit the Presidential Administration. Romania has not yet had a female president and in its 30 years of democracy there have been 5 women and 84 male candidates for the highest position in the state. The year 2000 comes with the first candidacy for the highest position in Romania represented by a woman, Graziela-Elena Bârla, independent candidate, who obtained 61,455 votes (0.55%). In absolute figures, 61,455 votes, which placed her in 9th place out of 12, well behind Ion Iliescu, but still in front of Prince Paul.

After this event it would take another 10 years (2010) until we would see the presence of women on the electoral lists for the presidential elections again. Elena Udrea, supported at the time by former President Traian Basescu, ranked 4th in the first round of the elections with 493,376 votes (5.20%), and Monica Macovei was an independent candidate who received 421,648 votes (4.44%). The year 2019 surprised the voting citizens of Romania with the presence of two women candidates for the parliamentary elections: Viorica Dancilă and Ramona Bruynseels. The Social Democratic Party placed, for the first time in Romanian history, a female candidate in the second round of elections who managed to obtain the confidence of 3,339,922 voters, representing 33.91% of all voters.



Source: Personal processing databases

**Figure 3.** Candidates for President of Romania

Certain qualities such as honesty, compassion, morality and the ability to manage social issues are associated with gender equality. According to a U.S. study (Ross-Sheriff, 2009) the voter associates these latter attributes, considered necessary for a president, exclusively with the male sex.



### Supply-side factors

Traditionally, we need to distinguish between supply-side factors and demand-side factors when explaining the levels of women's political representation in one country or around the world (Kunovich et al., 2007). Supply-side factors represent the range of women with willpower and experience who want and can compete against men for political office. Demand factors are represented by the characteristics of countries, electoral systems or political parties that affect the likelihood of women winning, or not running for a political position.

Even if they have access, not all people can participate in political life. The arguments on the side of supply factors have highlighted certain characteristics such as ambition, interest, knowledge, certain civic skills, education and vocational training, economic resources and time available. Inevitably, all these characteristics will be identified by applying for a political position. For an objective analysis it is important to consider several indicators: the current state of affairs, the motivation of gender candidates to occupy a position and the analysis of the prejudices, the gender policies achieved and the legal framework, and finally the values on which the electorate is based. A first picture of motivation is recognized by observing and identifying the percentages of female candidates in Romania within a public institution. We analysed the most representative institutions of Romanian democracy, the candidacies of women for one of the positions in the Romanian legislature in the period 2000-2020 (Table 4) or the presence of women as candidates for the office of mayors in Romanian cities and municipalities for the mandates of 2008-2020 (Table No. 5).

**Table 4.** Candidates for elections to the Romanian Parliament

Legislative-candidate mandate (Parliament)	2000-2004		2004-2008		2008-2012		2012-2016		2016-2020	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Percentage - %	10-15% of all candidates on party lists.		26,9%	73,1%	11,78%	88,22%	14,11%	85,89%	<b>27,7%</b>	72,3%
Number of applications	There's no data!		3693	9985	1015	7597	349	2124	<b>1797</b>	4679

Source: database processing 2000-2020: [6], [12], [15], [21].

Regrettably, the increase in the number of women on the candidate lists is not reflected in the composition of the elected Parliaments. In 2016, the Social Democratic Party had the most women on the electoral lists for parliament (182, or 28.5% of all candidates), followed by the National Liberal Party. A smaller number of applications were registered in 2012, but this is explained by the presence of the USL alliance which had joint lists of parliamentarians in this election. The analysis of the candidacies for each of the two houses of Parliament reveals that women are better represented at the level of the Chamber of Deputies.

There are two political formations of minorities: The Association of Albanian leagues of Romania and the Association of Macedonians of Romania which submit a list of only 315 female candidates for the Chamber of Deputies, while at the opposite pole is the Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania who propose to voters a total list of 315 candidates for the Chamber of Deputies of which all are men.

In 2004 we find an impressive number of applications for a position in the Romanian legislative institution. Article 1 shall be replaced by the 16. Paragraph 1 shall be replaced by the following: (3) of the Romanian Constitution presents and guarantees equal opportunities between women and men. The lists of candidates for the election of deputies and senators have been drawn up in such a way as to ensure, according to the statutes, the representation of both sexes. In this respect, out of a total of 9997 candidates for the Chamber of Deputies, 2724 are women, while out of 3,681 candidates for the Senate, 969 are women. The increase in the number of women who ran in the election seems to be due in part to the fact that, under the new Electoral Law, the lists of candidates for Parliament must ensure the representation of both sexes. In the 2000 elections, the share of women elected to Parliament was quite low (10.4% of MPs and 7% of senators) and the share of women on the lists of candidates submitted by the main parties in 2000 ranged between 10 and 15%.

On the motivation of women to occupy a portfolio of MEPs, 688 persons were registered in 2019, of whom 213 (30.96%) women and 475 (69.04%) men. Of the 23 political parties that have submitted lists of candidates, 13 have female percentages above 30, and 10 parties have percentages below 30.

**Table 5.** Candidates for local elections for mayor

Rural/Urban		Candidates	Elected mayors	The relationship between the people chosen and the people who have applied
2008-2012	Women	1334	122	9,1%
	Men	17822	3406	19,1%
2012-2016	Women	978	120	12,2%
	Men	13160	3060	23,2%
2016-2020	Women	1181	143	12,1%
	Men	12860	3038	23,6%

Source: Database Processing **2008-2020**: [5], [7], [8].

At the level of administrative-territorial units, although the number of women's applications is much lower than that of men, we see an increase of about 3.5% in the ratio between applications and positions won. The increase in the number of applications has inevitably led to an almost directly proportional increase in the number of mandates won: from 978 applications in 2012 to 1181 in 2016. This is also visible in the 23 additional mandates won. However, the office of mayor remains one of the male gender, although we do find in Romania

examples of good practice of effective management of local institutions by women.

Looking at the supply factors only in the light of the number of candidates submitted for one of the positions stated, we can identify that, due to the consolidation of democracy in Romania and the feminist social movements, the number of applications has increased almost every year.

### **„Demand-side factors”**

Through the definition of demand factors we find that political systems have a number of characteristics that shape the rules of the game and greatly influence whether women can achieve and how they can gain political power. A wide range of policy makers lead to some differences in the demand for women's political incorporation. Broadly speaking, the level of democracy of a country is broadly established by the manner in which women challenge places or are placed in political positions. Specific characteristics of the political system also affect demand, including the electoral system, as well as the presence and structure of gender quotas (Rosen, 2013).

At the European level, there is a legislative framework that ensures equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women through the European Convention on Human Rights: Article 14 – Prohibition of discrimination. The equal participation of women and men in all power structures and decision-making is promoted and supported at international level by Articles 7 and 8 of the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which employs Member States to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life, article 4, which allows for the adoption of 'special temporary measures aimed at accelerating the establishment of equality in fact between men and women'. In Romania, the protection of women's rights is found in Art. 16. paragraph 1 which shall be replaced by the following: (3) of the Romanian Constitution guaranteeing equal opportunities for women and men.

At the legislative level we see support for gender equality and the involvement of women in political life. Unfortunately, the legislative effects do not make their presence felt in social life as in the area of involvement in political life there is a recommendation to respect certain gender principles. Political parties may recruit, select and nominate candidates, regardless of the type of electoral system (Ponce & Scarrow, 2020). Theories examine that the low presence of women in politics is due to the fact that women are underrepresented in the environments from which parties identify and recruit their potential candidates. Virgil Stoica (2003) presents an interesting analysis and conclusive documentation on public policies in the field of equal opportunities, focusing on three aspects: the visibility in the media of the issue of equal opportunities, the way this issue is inserted in the public agenda of political parties, while the third aspect concerns the opportunities to promote women in politics in election campaigns.

There is currently a legislative initiative blocked in the Chamber of Deputies as a decision-making chamber, but approved by the Senate (PL-x no. 275/2016) which aims to introduce gender quotas for the creation of electoral lists for the election of parliamentarians, with a 30% percentage of gender representation. Declaratively many political parties have assumed these gender quotas, but in practice things are different (Băluță, 2010).

Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski in their study of how to recruit in political parties found that there are several relevant factors: systematic factors represented by the general context in which the recruitment of all political candidates in a country will take place and will also include the legal system, electoral system, party system and opportunity structure, as well as political party factors represented by party organizations, rules and ideology.

### **Speeches and perspectives on the presence of women in politics**

The political under-representation of women is an increasingly common subject in the area of social sciences, the main theoretical landmarks and analyses being sociological analyses of partisan systems, the professionalization of the political space, gender equality and access to the political scene.

One of the main indicators of a society with gender equality is women's participation in political structures and processes (Terzi-Barbaroșie, 2013). The reshaping of feminist politics (Kelly, 2017) is captured by many social emancipation movements that position gender equality on the open stage. Women's suffrage was earned through social actions such as those represented by Ammeline Pankhurst. Once these political rights were won, it was years before they had access to political power through elected representatives.

In many societies, the dominant cultural patterns are the traditional ones, which assign predetermined social roles (the woman being responsible for care, the house, the children, the private space in general, and the man being responsible in the public space).

In the Romanian space, the movements of emancipation and representation of women in politics have been diminished and an important role has been played by the social context. The first traditional explanation is that beliefs and attitudes influenced both supply and demand for female candidates (Norris & Inglehart, 2003). Interest or ambition underlines that women have fewer resources to participate in politics. Time to participate in political life is a critical resource and studies conducted by researchers in relation to a representative sample from around the world show that women have less time than men.

The low presence of women in political life can also be explained by the socio-political obstacles they face in the race to a portfolio of political representatives. This explanation is also reinforced by a number of stereotypes that can be found, traditional behaviours and prejudices, such as: the predominance of a male model associated with political success and life; the appointment of men as the „head of the family” in relation to all social, economic and political fields (Paxton et al., 2007); limited support from political parties,

which is determined by the limited financial and human resources allocated to the campaign and by the low degree of trust; reduced willingness of political parties to collaborate with different women's organizations; the interest of men in women not to compete with them for some leadership positions.

### **Stage findings**

This paper integrated four elements of analysis on the representation of women in Romanian politics: the image of the current context, the motivation and interest of women to occupy such a political position, the legal framework through demand factors, but also an analysis of the cultural spectrum. Instead of conclusions we can identify a series of milestone findings on the identified phenomenon.

We are now seeing an imbalance between the participation of women and men in political and public decision-making and a clear under-representation of women in political positions, occupied by choice or appointment, both at European Union level and in its Member States. Although „de jure” states present cultural strategies, models and attitudes aimed at combating discrepancies, the de facto lack of parity is predominant, and, while the representation of women in political decision-making in recent years has evolved, although not enough, things are developing at a pace far too slowly and traditional society presents certain stereotypes that prevail in the Romanian space.

It was noted that in executive positions, such as the Romanian Government, where people are appointed, men are privileged over their female counterparts, and they also choose males in decision-making positions. This system is not official, but it is nevertheless an organized and very deep-rooted culture linked to the preferential treatment of men. The analysis of women's ministries in governments from 1990 to 2020 found that due to persistent gender stereotypes, at the level of the highest political decision-making functions there is a profound segregation, positions involving different care and distribution tasks (such as health, social welfare and the environment) being entrusted mainly to women, while strong positions related to resources (such as economic and monetary affairs, trade, budget, defence and foreign affairs) are allocated to men, leading to disruptions in the power structure and allocation of resources. However, there is a high presence of women at the second and third administrative levels, represented by undersecretaries of state and members in departments of ministries. The explanation bears the imprint of expertise, the presence of professionalism and the stability of a position, but also a security against the political war often waged between top functions. However, the democratic deficit is still represented by the low number of women in administrative positions and leadership positions.

The „supply” theorists pointed out that there is a range of women's selection for political positions and the number of applications increases from year to year. We also find a picture of the failure in the „political market” of women in Romania. It is interesting to note the image of the most important

women in Romanian politics in the last twenty years and their presence in the media: Elena Udrea is investigated in a corruption case and associated as a close figure to former President Traian Basescu, Monica Macovei is an obscure character with interests beyond the national space, Elena Basescu is associated with the idea of the politician's career based on nepotisms, Viorica Dăncilă represents the image of poor preparation and lack of professionalism, Ecaterina Andronescu is proof of failed repetitions to reform Romanian education, etc. Added to this is the legacy of Elena Ceaușescu, the wife of the state president with questionable professional training. There is a pressing atmosphere in civil society and the presence of gender stereotypes does not encourage the presence of women in politics.

In an attempt to produce various reforms in electoral systems, in order to make them more open to the representation of women, we see that there are legislative initiatives blocked on the parliamentary route, which are not voted on, such as the introduction of 30% gender representation on the electoral lists. It should be noted that political parties are primarily responsible for the selection, classification and nomination of candidates for all leadership positions and play a key role in ensuring equal representation of women and men in politics and should support good practices, such as quotas voluntarily adopted by them for elections. Unfortunately, declaratively the political parties in Romania support these steps, but in the processes of recruiting, selecting candidates and making the final lists we note that this is no longer the case. To the extent that political parties act as 'guardians' for women who want to participate in the decision-making process, it is also necessary to recognize the role of other actors as a relevant part of the democratic process more broadly.

All the measures presented by the Legislative Framework of Romania are not binding, underlining here the specific objectives and quotas voluntarily adopted by the parties, and gender education, mentoring and awareness campaigns do not have the necessary strength to produce immediate effects within political parties. It is necessary to adopt measures with binding legal personality, such as gender electoral quotas, bearing in mind that mandatory measures, which are compatible with the institutional and electoral system and which involve rules on electoral order, monitoring and effective sanctions in the event of non-compliance, have proved to be the most effective at the European Union level.

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