Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to analyze how the transformations emerged from the transition process from a non-democratic political regime to a democratic one, influenced Romanian women’s political participation as representatives. In the attempt to understand the impact of the political transition on women’s participation to the decision making process, first of all, I will make an incursion in the previous period, of the totalitarian regime. I will continue identifying and analyzing the structural factors that influenced women’s participation in politics during the transition period, and I will conclude with a critical look to the form taken by women’s political representation, from transition towards a consolidated democracy.

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Keywords: Women; political participation; representation; transition; Romania.

1. Introduction

I chose to write about women as representatives and the concern of this research is to emphasize women’s access to politics because this is an elite position, in which they could intervene in public life to advance gender equality throughout politics and policies, and could change the laws to their benefit. The variables that I consider relevant in explaining women’s presence or absence in politics, can be classified in two major categories: internal and external factors. The internal factors category, in its turn, can be divided in two main subcategories: the social factors (including culture, religion and traditions) and the structural factors - such as: political regime, party system and electoral system - belonging to the institutional and legislative sphere. Moreover, another important variable is the education, which I consider to be a “border factor”, between social and structural factors, because the formal education is mainly provided by the state and it is institutionalized, therefore represents a structural factor, and the
informal education is provided by society and family, and therefore has the characteristics of a social factor. The external factors are represented by the historical and geopolitical contexts - among the most determinant actors being the European Union (EU), especially due to the changes occurred during the negotiation process, the transnational NGOs and UN’s influence. The factors I have chosen to discuss regarding the internal level are three structural factors, specifically the electoral system, gender equality legislation and the electoral quotas for women. Considering the external level, I will emphasize EU’s influence, because I consider it as having an undeniable positive impact on the improvement of women’s status under many aspects. A detailed analysis of all the factors of influence identified and listed above needs the space of a wider research, therefore, in the limited space of this study, certain factors will be inevitably explored in more depth than others. As I have already announced my intention to discuss the political aspects of the transition, the analysis of the economic factors of influence will not be comprised in this study, even if some necessary references will be made. Regarding the level of representation, I will refer to the women in the National Parliament (NP), the Government and the European Parliament (EP), therefore at national and supranational levels. Although the analysis of women’s situation in politics at regional level is also important, this does not frame in this study’s objectives and space. I will sustain my analysis with the help of certain empirical data: number and percentage of women in the NP, Government and the EP. I consider also important for the understanding of my approach and study’s findings to delimit the period to which I will refer as “transition to democracy”, as the period between the fall of the dictatorship and the accession to the EU, while the period after the accession can be (still) considered as the democratic consolidation phase. I chose the transition because this kind of changing periods are generally offering a multitude of possibilities for the societies that are undergoing them. Despite this, in the East and Central European post-communist societies, in this period, which can be called of “post-communism - pre-democracy”, women were living their opportunity of autonomy and self affirmation, mostly without neither having its conscience, more as “victims” than competitors. In brief, identifying the key factors and their interrelation, I hope that I can obtain a framework to explain the discreet levels of women in politics in a period when everything in the society changed and could have been negotiated, and therefore it could have provided such an ampleness of chances of improvement for women.

2. Romanian women in politics during the communist period

During the Communist period women were involved in politics, accounting for one third of the parliamentary seats in the 1980s. Female percentage in the Parliament rose to 35% in 1985 and kept on until 1989, and at the same time, women represented 17% of the Grand National Assembly membership and 23% of the membership in the Communist Party. Unfortunately, the “high percentage” of women in politics (comparing with the transition and current figures) was not necessarily positive, being just a quantitative value. Actually, women’s percentage in a political or administrative structure was inversely proportional with the importance and power of that structure (Fischer and Pasca Harsanyi in Rueschemeyer ed., 1994, p. 204). For example, in the 1980s, as the Grand National Assembly was losing power and the Central Committee of the Communist Party has been the place where the most important decisions were taken, the percentage of women in the Grand National Assembly was higher than the one in the Central Committee (Fischer in Wolchik and Meyer, eds. 1985). Although women were present in politics, being encouraged and sometimes even coerced into party membership, their involvement in politics was in most cases role-playing and all decisions were made by the men in the top positions of the Communist Party (Turcu, 2009). Therefore, as the advancement of women in politics and in other professional areas was imposed by the communist regime, sometimes women were promoted without having the necessary experience for certain posts. In

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1 According to Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996), democracy is consolidated when it becomes the “only game in town”. In other words, political democratization criteria are: the rule of law, a well defined constitutional system, the respect of fundamental rights and freedoms, representative government based on free and contested elections and a functional civil society which can have an significant impact on political decision making.

this way, by the end of the communist period, women politicians were seen as the symbol of an aggressively pursued communist propaganda (Turcu, 2009). During the communist period, we could not talk about feminist movements, the emergence of a women’s movement having been made impossible by the control that the Communist Party exercised over the political system and the civil society, women having been unable to group in a movement or in organizations other than the ones strictly connected with state’s ideology promotion. On the other side, if the male political actors easily and largely reconvered in the 1990s, female representation totally collapsed.

3. Romanian Women and the Transition

The “third wave” of transitions from non-democratic rule has been one of the most important political developments that took place in the late twentieth century (Huntington, 1991, p. xiii). It begun in Southern Europe, continued in Latin America in the late 1970s and 1980s, and culminated in the collapse of state socialism in Eastern and Central Europe in 1989, before continuing in parts of Africa and Asia. The transitions have transformed the states and the societies completely: changing the political, economic and social landscape. There were only 39 electoral democracies in 1974 and by 1998 the figure had reached 117 (and had only increased to 119 in 2005, as most transitions took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s) (Puddington, 2013). Therefore, on the background of this huge social and political experiment, when everything in the state and society’s organization changed, gender’s issues situation had the chance to improve. Not representing their interests in the form of organized groups, women lost their chances of improvement in a re-negotiation period. The most visible and substantial changes took place under the EU accession negotiations (Miroiu, 2004, p. 217) and through international organizations involvement, and, as all of these kind of “reforms from above”, it was an imposed, and not a natural phenomenon. Romania, as other Central and Eastern European states, in its exit from totalitarianism, faced not only a new type of political system, but also a profoundly different economic and social system. The Communist Party was replaced by multiparty system and the command economy was dismantled and substituted by the free market. Among the new challenges brought by the transition, the political, interrelated with the economic changes were some of the most decisive: free elections, market economy, new social needs, the rising risk of discontinuous jobs and unemployment. Transition did not favour women’s advancement in politics as representatives, and they gained more terrain in the private sector. An explanation regarding this situation is offered by Şerban Cerkez (in Băluţă ed., 2006, p.71-92) who argues that the gender discrimination of the transition period policies could have been caused by some groups of interests already formed before 1989, and which have adapted to the new regime. The best example is Workers Syndicate, formed for the workers’ rights defense. The workers in the industry most affected during transition, the heavy one, were mainly men, and these syndicates were formed mostly at state level, with an extended negotiating power, through which they could influence political decisions. Thus, men obtained economic advantages from the state, meanwhile women had to adapt to the new economical situation, orienting towards the market.

4. The Structural Factors

4.1. The Electoral System

After the fall of communism in 1989 the entire society was reshaping and important decisions had to be taken, mainly at political and economic level. One of these aspects was the legislative framework. The Decree-Law no. 8/1989 established political pluralism and free formation of political parties, and this imposed the organization of periodic free and fair elections, which involved to set a new electoral system too. Since 1990 the electoral system was subjected to certain changes that had effects on both the political parties system and on the voting behaviour. The first legislative elections were held in 1990 and the type of ballot used for parliamentary elections was proportional representation. Considering the fact that the political parties’ ideologies were still catching form, this type of ballot was maybe the most appropriate for the political spectrum at the time (Cîncea, 2012). In 1992 was set a legislative framework regarding all the three levels of elections: local level (local councils, county councils, city halls and General Council of Bucharest Municipality, regulated by Law no. 70/1992); general level (for the
Parliament of Romania, regulated by Law no. 68/1992) and presidential level (Law no. 69/1992). The system for electing the president was during this entire period based on uninominal majority vote with two ballots.

The Law no. 68/1992 provided closed party list system and distribution of seats according to the principle of proportional representation. Some aspects of the electoral system set in 1992 were changed in 2000 through a series of emergency ordinances, and among the most important changes was the one of the electoral threshold. The electoral system did not undergo other significant changes until 2008. I will mention just the amendments brought to the Constitution in 2003, in order to ensure its compatibility with the EU, and the electoral law adopted in 2004 regarding the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate election (Law 373/2004), but they were just an adjustment of the previous provisions in accordance with the new realities. Romania joined the EU in 2007, and the elections for the EP were regulated by the Law no. 33/2007, which provides that the representatives in the EP are elected through a closed-list proportional representation system. In 2008, Law no. 35/2008 created a new electoral framework and the uninominal vote was introduced for designating the members of Parliament and the County Council President. In accordance with the article 5 of the mentioned law, the deputies and senators are elected in uninominal districts by single vote, based on the principle of proportional representation. The switch from the proportional representation to the single-constituency system was brought about by a national referendum, and was intended to increase the public exposure and accountability of individual legislators. This change was also “aimed to encourage political parties to choose candidates on the basis of attractiveness to voters rather than loyalty to party leaders” (Cîncea, 2012). The impact of the new electoral system on women in the national legislative was clearly negative. The percentage of women elected to the Senate in 2008 was lower than in 2004 and stayed in the single digits. For the Chamber of Deputies, the percentage was in the lower double digits and barely changed between the two elections (see Tables 1 and 2). Studies on transition and women’s political participation (Matland, 1998; Waylen, 2007 and Băluță, 2012) show that, usually, women tend to fare better in proportional representation systems than in first-past-the-post systems, and therefore the decrease in the percentage of women should not have been seen as a surprise. Moreover, parties maintained total control over choosing candidates for both the constituencies and the proportional representation lists. Thus party listing habits of the old electoral system were transplanted to the new one, and women’s representation was once more defeated. On the other side, early surveys in East European ex-communist states suggest that post-communists citizens did not see the decline in female faces as a real loss in terms of women’s effective voice in politics (Buckley, 1992; Einhorn, 1993; Lapidus, 1993 in Matland and Montgomery eds., 2003, p. 3).

4.2. Gender Equality Legislation

During Romanian transition, gender equality was not one of the top priorities. An explanation for the ignorance of such an important theme could be the futility of such legislation during the previous regime. As I have already mentioned above, during the communist regime gender equality being only a tool of the propaganda and women’s representation in politics, only role playing. Gender equality became a topic of public awareness only in the mid to late 1990s, under the influence of the EU accession negotiations. The 1991 Constitution contained minimal provisions regarding gender equality, and only in the 2003 Constitution, under EU’s influence, was introduced a special mention (article 16) regarding state’s responsibility to guarantee equal opportunities for men and women to occupy public, civil, or military positions or dignities. Another example of legislative achievement under EU’s pressure** is the Law for Equal Opportunity between Women and Men, 202/2002, which contains the most numerous and significant provisions regarding equal opportunities. It was drafted with the help of the Parliamentary Subcommittee for Equal Opportunities between Genders (with a membership of five legislators: three men and two

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1 In 1990 was not provided any threshold, and the consequence was an excessive number of political parties in the elections and in the parliament. The electoral threshold of 3% for the political parties, introduced in 1992, was raised to 5% in 2000 (for the political alliances it is 8-10%, depending on the number of members) and this decreased the number of the political parties in general, and of the parliamentary parties, especially.

** The use of the term “pressure” regarding this law is not accidental, the reason which determined me to use it is the delay with which it was passed, compared with other provisions of the Acquis Communautaire.
women) along with members of regional and national non-governmental organizations. Among other equality provisions, it outlaws gender-based discrimination and incriminates domestic violence. Chapter IV regards explicitly the equality between women and men in decision making positions. It contains two articles: Article 21. (1) mentions: “Central and local public authorities, economic and social unities as well as political parties and other non profit entities, which develop their activities on the strength of their own statutes, promote and support equal participation of women and men in leadership and decision-making. (2) The provisions of paragraph (1) are applied to members and/or participants nomination in any council, group of experts and other lucrative management and/or consulting structures” and Article 22: “In order to accelerate the effective achievement of equal opportunities between women and men, central and local public authorities will adopt incentive measures of fair and equal representation of women and men inside social partners decisional authorities, respecting the competence criteria.”

(2) “All governmental and parliamentary commissions and committees ensure fair and parity representation of women and men in their composition” and (3) “Political parties have the obligation to specify in their internal statutes and regulations positive actions in behalf of the underrepresented sex at decision-making level, as well as to ensure balanced representation of women and men in proposing the candidates for local, general and European Parliament elections.”

Despite the importance of its provisions, the law was criticized for being too vague, and the text considered merely an acknowledgement of a problem that should be corrected. Therefore, certain critics considered that the lack of tools and incentives for improving the situation is the cause which explains why the passing of the law did not bring an increase in women’s participation in decision-making (Turcu, 2009). Personally, I consider that the main cause for the lack of results regarding the legal provisions mentioned above is the fact that they were not rigorously applied in the rest of the legislation and transposed in substantial public policies, which could have brought to a real improvement regarding the equal opportunities in politics. The provisions quoted above define a legal framework in accordance with the Community Acquis, but unfortunately, neither the electoral law of 2004, nor the one of 2008, do not make any reference to the constitutional principle mentioned above, and do not transpose in any way the provisions of the Law 202/2002. In a study regarding women’s political representation, Ionela Băluță (2012) argues (without any claims for gender quotas or the introduction of the parity principle) that the minimum that could have been done at legislative level was the introduction of a simple recommendation to the political parties to ensure certain mechanisms for women’s political representation growth, but neither this has been done in order to improve women’s representation.

4.3. The Electoral Quotas for Women

The legislative background, provided by the Law 202/2002 (discussed above), rigorously applied and transposed in public policies could have contributed to the improvement of equal opportunities between women and men in politics, but that did not happened. Thus, during the transition period, the legislators were not interested to provide for electoral quotas, or electoral parity. The initiative of such quotas came from some left political parties which only publicized them, but did not effectively apply them. At declarative level, the social democrats seemed to be more receptive regarding the feminist issues and they widely publicized the concern for improving women’s representation in politics. In fact, they were opposed to the idea of autonomy and personal development (Miroiu, 2004, p. 223). Mihaela Miroiu considers that left parties were actually conservatism’s representatives in Romania and their ideology was based on the status-quo maintenance and was against changes. Therefore, they were hostile with any emancipation ideology, especially the feminism. They were focused mainly on security, putting freedom on a secondary place, and considering the community more important than the individual. On the other side, the right wing parties made the same mistake as the unique communist party: considering that their politics incorporates through the ideology itself the equality of chances and women’s issues, they did not promote a feminist agenda. In 2001 the Social Democratic Party of Romania (PSDR, later PSD) announced that it would introduce 25% quota for women on its electoral lists and this initiated a sort of electoral competition for the female vote. The Democratic Party (PD) announced a similar measure, but increasing the quota to 30%. Unfortunately, none of these declarations transformed into concrete actions and women continued not to be assigned eligible spots on the electoral lists, despite their increase in the party membership. In 2004, the PSD had a second attempt to implement a party quota.
and announced that 25% of its electoral lists for the parliamentary elections would be reserved for women. PSD declared its concern to improve women’s and young people’s representation but nothing was changed. Comparing with the previous years, more women ran in the internal elections for a spot on the electoral list, but they did not obtain enough votes. More precisely, in PSD’s internal elections participated 220 women, but only 26 were included on official party lists in eligible positions, alongside 151 men. Therefore, the 25% quota was not respected, despite the democratic internal elections and this could be seen as a kind of electoral manipulation (Turcu, 2009).

5. Women’s Political Participation in Figures

I will present women’s political participation as representatives during the transition from a diachronic perspective, providing data regarding the female representation (in numbers and percentages) by legislatures and ministerial cabinets.

5.1. Women in the National Parliament

The percentage of women in the legislative suffered a collapse after the fall of the Communist regime, remaining for a decade in the single digits and not surpassing 5%. Only in the year 2000 was attained a significant growth, touching 10.8%. This percentage did not undergo remarkable variations in the next legislatures, and after 12 years, in the 2012 elections, still remained almost unchanged (11.5%, corresponding to 67 women MNPs). The number of women members of the National Parliament (MNPs) has increased from 4.9% in the early 1990s (24 women in the Parliament in the legislature 1990-1992) to 10.8% in 2000-2004 and 10.2% in 2004-2008. The lowest level of female representation in the Parliament was during the 1992-1996 legislature, 3.7%, respectively 18 women MNP (see Table 1). If the percentage of men MNPs has been always considerably higher than the one of women, the same could be said about the percentage of women members of the Chamber of Deputies comparing with the women members of the Senate (see Table 2). The percentage of women elected to office in the upper chamber stayed in the single digits during the entire transition period, and in the last elections, of 2012, it still did not surpass the single digits. Regarding the legislative committees, they were rarely headed by a woman and when that happened, it was in an area traditionally associated with women, as: Health, Family, Culture and the Arts.

Table 1. Percentage of Women MNPs (1990-2012)†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>Women percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990-1992</td>
<td>4,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-1996</td>
<td>3,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-2000</td>
<td>4,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2004</td>
<td>10,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2008</td>
<td>10,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2012</td>
<td>9,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2016</td>
<td>11,5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Number and Percentage of Women and Men in the Romanian Chamber of Deputies and Senate (1990-2008)‡

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chamber of Deputies</th>
<th>Senate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2. Women in the Government

During the entire transition, women were underrepresented at the executive level as well and no woman was appointed to the first six Ministerial Cabinets. The first two women appointed to head a ministry were in the Isărescu Government, in charge of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family and the Ministry of Transport. Since then, to women were always given ministries corresponding to traditional female professional categories: Education, Family and Social Protection, Youth, Justice, Tourism and Environment. Regarding lower ranking posts within the cabinets (as secretaries of state and vice-ministers), women received usually the same typology of charges: Education and Health Ministry.

Table 3. Women and Men in the Government (1990-2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cabinet</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman I</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman II</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stolojan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Văcăroiu</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciorbea</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasile</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isărescu</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Năstase</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tăriceanu</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boc</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. External Factors: The European Union

The European Union (EU) accession process was an important factor of influence for many former state socialist states. It helped to determine the nature of the legislative changes and in some cases, certain policy outcomes. In Romania, the most significant changes achieved through political decision during the transition, were under the intervention of international bodies, and especially in the context of the EU accession process. As candidate state, Romania had, during the EU accession process, to adopt the European legislation (Acquis Communautaire). Most pro-women laws, concerning gender equity and the improvement of women’s condition, were prevalently adopted after the year 2000 under the EU’s initiative, this being more convincing than the Romanian NGOs. The most significant achievements were: The Parental Leave Law, The Law regarding the Prevention and the Control of All Forms of Discrimination, The Law regarding Equal Opportunities between Women and Men and the Law for the

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Prevention and Control of Violence in the Family. Marital rape and sexual harassment were recognized as offences. Moreover, as already mentioned above, in the 2003 Constitution the principle of equal opportunities was recognized. There were also created two agencies: The National Council for the Prevention and Control of All Forms of Discrimination and the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men. Since the accession of Romania to the EU, the percentage of women in the EP was always higher than in the NP, and the number of women members of the EP (MEPs) elected in 2009 was higher than in 2007. In the 2009-2014 European legislature, Romania had 36% (twelve out of thirty-three) women among the MEPs, a percentage slightly higher than the overall European average of women MEPs, of 35%.

Table 4. Percentage of Romanian Women MEPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>Women percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-2009</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2014</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A clear observation is that Romanian parties were more interested to promote women for the EP elections than for local or national elections. The reasons for this electoral strategy on behalf of Romanian parties could have to do with “image” issues. Women’s access to and the participation in politics represent an excellent indicator of the extent to which a society is modernised and a state democratic, and the EU is commonly perceived as a major gender equality promoter. In this context, the promotion of women on eligible spots for the EP elections could be considered as an image strategy of the Romanian political parties. Another possible explanation could be related to the fact that Romania is new at the European elections, and the incumbency, in opposition with the internal elections, did not play any role. Thereby, the race was for open seats.

7. The representation

Representation is usually classified in descriptive - concerned with “who our representatives are” - , symbolic - focused on legislator’s predispositions that may or may not lead to make an active representation of their electors, it is an attitudinal approach to the concept of political representation -, and substantive - according to Pitkin’s definition: “acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them” (Pitkin 1972, p. 209), or briefly, “acting for”. Nevertheless, once placed in a decision making position, does not mean that a woman always represents her gender specific interests (more than a man does), because a representative does not have to look like the represented in order to act in their interests (Celis, 2008). The figures in the previous tables are the clear proof for women’s inferiority in decision making positions. The male dominant representation in state’s top positions, on one side, together with the patriarchal system of values, traditionally inherited, strengthened by the return of neo-traditionalist ideologies and socially promoted as a cultural model, are not only creating favourable opportunities for male domination, but even more, are legitimating it. The political class is numerically dominated by men (descriptive representation), who represent their interests (substantive representation), therefore the political class is ideologically too, male dominated. The very few women in politics, that succeeded to overpass the social and structural obstacles, are commonly adopting male political behaviour, speeches, values and attitudes, and are representing the interests of their political party. As Vladimir Pasti (2003, p. 217) explains, women in politics adopt the patriarchal ideology supplementary to the political ideology to which they belong. Pasti (2003, p. 218) gives also two relevant examples for the female “masculinization” in politics: during the Romanian transition, first, women were those who proposed prostitution’s enactment and secondly, despite the female numerical domination in the Education Ministry, gender education in Romania remained patriarchal. Therefore, men in politics are masculine, and women, in order to be accepted, should try to identify as much as they can with men too, but anyway, they will never be accepted as equal of their male colleagues, therefore they will be neutral. Pasti (2003, p. 218) argues in this

sense, that in politics women are determined to be “people” and men remain men. During transition, women in politics just exceptionally represented gender interests, one of this example is the Justice Minister during Năstase governance. In brief, once arrived to the government, in the few cases when this happened, women did not represent their gender interest, but the ones of the party that promoted them. The explanation for this kind of attitudes is that women accept and follow the patriarchal ideology in politics and are obedient, in order not to be disregarded and to be accepted as political partners (Miroiu, 2004, p. 221).

8. Conclusions

This paper is by no means exhaustive, as for reasons of brevity I could only tackle a selection of issues on Romanian women’s political participation as representatives during the transition period, and the structural factors that could have influenced it. Despite the relevance of topics as women party leaders, and local and regional level representatives, the analysis in this paper does not comprise them, tackling only NP, Government and EP membership. In both NP and Government, women were and are underrepresented. Regarding the NP, the percentage in the lower house was during the entire discussed period higher than the one in the upper house. The EU accession had an undeniable positive impact and influenced the increase of women in politics, considering especially that the highest percentage of women in politics (36% in the legislature 2009-2014) was in the EP. The low percentage of women in politics during transition was a fall, comparing with the last years of the Communist period, when women accounted for one third of the parliamentary seats, but the higher percentage of women in politics during Communism was not necessarily positive, being just a quantitative value. Therefore, the fall during the transition was just a numerical one, and the disappearance of the remarkable female presence in politics after the first democratic elections attested the profound failure of the communist government to cultivate legitimate and social sustained gender equality. Considering the legislative proposals and specific interests’ materialization in policies of the Romanian women politicians during the transition period, we could certainly talk about low substantive representation. Thereby, as I have argued previously, the active involvement in politics is not enough, transcending the electorate phase, and arriving in a decision making position, does not mean that women would also represent their interests. A more rigorous application of the legislation regarding women’s promotion and equal opportunities for leadership positions, including a better promotion of women inside the political parties, are among the actions which could help the growth of both quantitative and qualitative female representation in decision making positions. Women’s organizations could be more interested in women’s political participation, ensuring to their members a political education, and in the same time, showing more interest regarding the way in which women’s problems are resolved by the political leadership. An improvement of women’s general situation, and of the political participation especially, was not achieved during transition also because of the lack of a feminist active movement, aware of its important role, with motivated members, precise targets and a common voice. In conclusion, I hope that this approach allows us to extend our current understanding about the factors that influence or interfere with female representation and to enhance our account of women’s political participation in societies that are undergoing profound social, economic and political transformations. Moreover, the recent evidence of political transformations emerged from Africa, Asia and the former Soviet Union proof that transitions and democratizations represent noteworthy contemporary topics.

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