



Project “More Women in European Politics – More Women in 2014”

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Base Line Study

Partner 9

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Romania

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WOMEN IN POLITICS

- BASELINE STUDY FOR ROMANIA -

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1. Introduction

Romania is a country located at the intersection of Central and South-eastern Europe, sharing its borders with the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in the east and north, with Bulgaria in the south and Serbia and Hungary in the west and northwest. It joined the European Union in 2007, becoming the 9th largest country of the E.U. with 238,391 square kilometres and the 7th largest in terms of population with 20.121.641 people¹. From the total population, 10,424,000 were men (accounting for 48.7% in total population) and 10,990,000 were women (51.3%).

Romania is a semi-presidential republic where executive functions are held both by the government and the president. The President is elected by popular vote for a maximum of two terms of five years. The President designates the Prime Minister who proposes the Government to the approval of the Parliament. The Parliament is bicameral – the Senate with 176 members, and the Chamber of Deputies with 412 members.

The administrative system of Romania is organized into communes, towns and counties. The rural area is covered by the communes (*comune*) that may encompass small villages that don't have an administration of their own. In total there are 12.955 villages within 2856 communes and the latest have their own mayor and local council. At the urban area level there are 217 cities and 103 municipalities (*municipii*). The municipality status is given to larger towns, but it does not imply other administrative privileges. At the county level, there are 41 counties that are administered by a president and a county council. The president of the county council is elected through direct vote. The prefect is the Government's representative at the county level. Bucharest, the national capital, has its own special status in the sense that it has the status of a county, while it is divided into six sectors. Each sector has a mayor and a council while the municipality of Bucharest has a prefect, a general mayor and a general city council.

¹ According to the National Institute of Statistics, last census available from 2011.

2. The electoral system in Romania

Romania has a multi-party system and the elections are organised at local level (communes, cities/municipalities and counties), national (Presidential and Parliamentary) and European level (for the European Parliament).

The Romanian legislature, the Parliament, is elected for a four-year term through the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system. The electoral system was reformed in 2008, when the MMP representation system was introduced over the past List Proportional Representation System. The MMP is a mixed system in which the choices expressed by the voters are used to elect representatives through two different systems—one List PR system and (usually) one plurality/majority system—where the List PR system compensates for the disproportionality in the results from the plurality/majority system. Under the new system, a candidate who obtains over 50% in his/her constituency wins a seat. The unelected seats are then allocated among the political parties in proportion of their share of the votes obtained nationally. Currently, there are additional 18 members representing national minorities and one 'overhang seat' (which parties receive if they win more constituency seats than their share of votes). 5% is the threshold for parties to win parliamentary representation.

Romania elects directly the President in a two round system for a five-year term. If one candidate obtains a majority of 50%+1 of all registered voters in the first round, he or she is declared the winner. If none of the candidates achieve this, then there will be a second round between the two contenders with the top scores in the first round. The candidate who obtains any majority of votes in the second round is declared the winner.

At the local level, Romanian citizens elect directly the mayors for communes, cities/municipalities and the president for the city council, meaning that the candidate who wins most of the votes gets elected for a four years term. For the election of local and county councils, the people vote for the parties list of candidates within the closed party list proportional representation system. The deputy mayors are elected by the local council among

its members. The prefect is nominated by the government and is not allowed to be politically affiliated.

Romanians voted for their members in the European Parliament for the first time in 2007. For the term, 2009 – 2014, Romania had 33 MEPs. Regarding the voting system, for the European elections, Romania is considered a single constituency and the system used is the same with the one for electing the local and county councils, the closed party list proportional representation. A 5% threshold of the votes is required for independent candidates or political parties.

3. Political representation of women in Romania at local, national and European level

In Romania, the legal framework generally enables an environment with equal opportunities for women and men in the public sphere. Starting with the national Constitution, the state guarantees equal chances between women and men for employment in public positions (Art. 16., Line 3). Romania also has a law regarding equal opportunities and treatment for women and men, law number 202 from 2002. According to this law, the public institutions and public authorities at central and local level, civilian and military, economic entities and social ones, political parties, trade unions and other not for profit organisations that work based on their own statutes, promote and support a balanced participation of women and men in leadership positions and at decision making processes and adopt the necessary measures to ensure this participation (Art. 21, Line 1).

The election law for local public administration also specifies at Art. 6, Line 1 that “the lists of candidates for the election of local and county councils should ensure the representation of both genders”. The Romanian law does not specify though any quotas for women representation at local or national level.

3.1. Local administration

As it was explained above, the local administration encompasses the following decision making bodies:

- *County level:* county councils (elected) and the prefectures (nominated);
- *Local level:* local councils (elected).

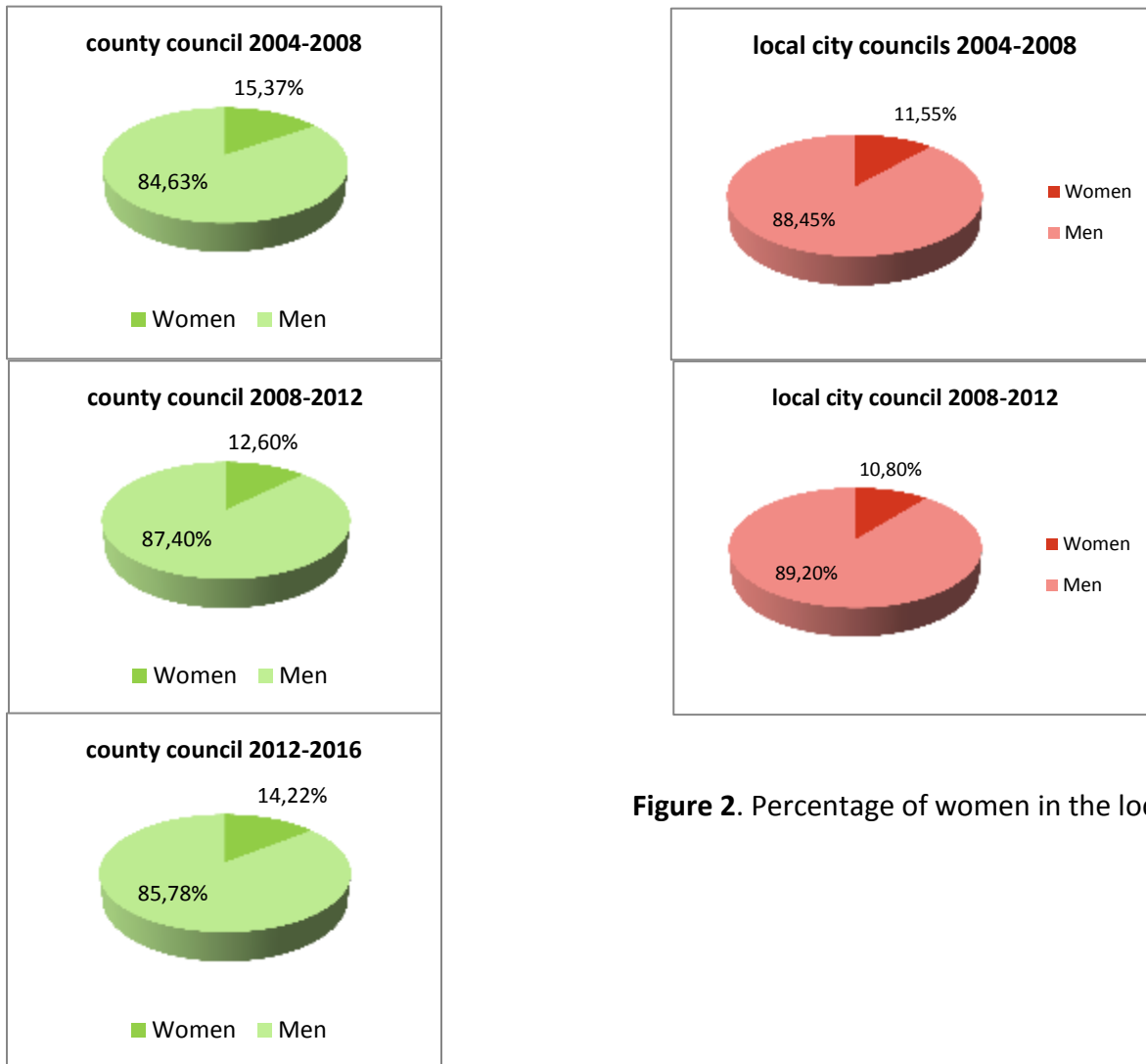


Figure 1. Percentage of women in the county councils in the last three mandates

Figure 2. Percentage of women in the local councils

Women participation in these bodies varies from one mandate to another, but generally stays below 15%. The period 2004 – 2008 had the biggest percentage of women councillors in the county councils, 15.37%. Counties with lowest representation of women were Caras-Severin with 3.2% and Bistrita-Nasaud with 5.7%. At the local councils level for the same mandate there were only 11.55% women councillors. Counties with lowest representation of women were Caras-Severin with 6.8%, Bistrita-Nasaud with 7.2% and Bihor with 7.5%.

In the 2008 – 2012 mandate the percentage of women councillors in the county councils decreased to 12.6%, with the lowest representation in the counties Neamt (0%), Brasov (2.8%) and Caras-Severin (3.3%). At the local councils level there were 10.8% women councillors.

In the current mandate, 2012-2016 there are 14.22% women councillors in the county councils (190 out of the 1336 councillors). No data was found regarding the representation of women in the local councils.

In the local administration the most important leadership positions are:

- *County level:* President of the county councils (directly elected by citizens) and prefect and sub-prefect (nominated by the central government);
- *Local level:* Mayor (directly elected by citizens).

Vice-presidents of county councils and vice-mayors, are also important and are elected among the counsellors.

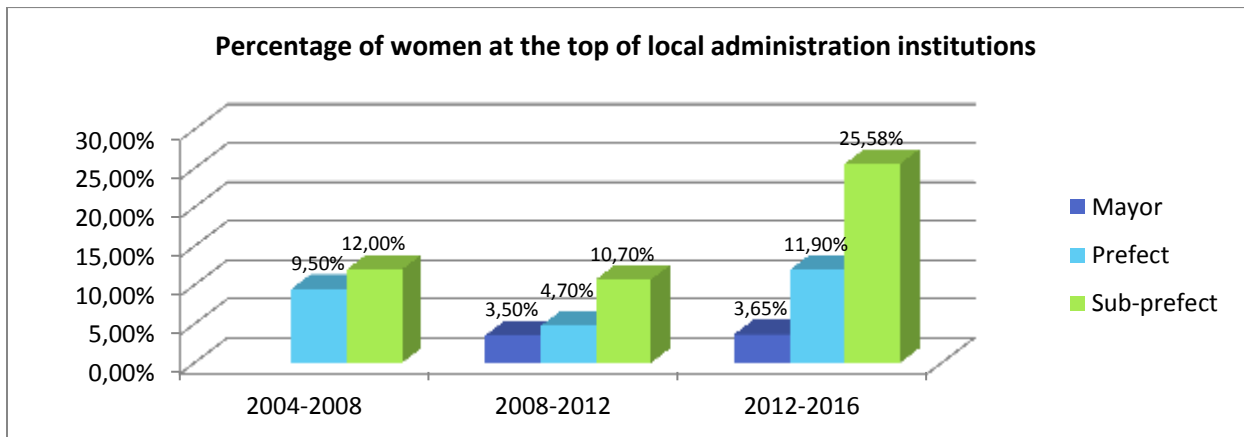


Figure 3. Percentage of women at the top of local administration institutions

The current administration has no woman president for any of the 41 county councils. When it comes to women mayors, the percentages are also very small, only 3.5% during the mandate 2008 – 2012 and a slight increase of 3.65% (116 out of 3179 mayors) for the mandate 2012 – 2016. However, there is no county with a percentage of women mayors exceeding 12%. When it comes to the prefectures, the percentages show an increasing trend, from 4.7% women prefects and 10.7% sub-prefects during the mandate 2008 – 2012 to 11.9% women prefects and 25.58% sub-prefects starting with 2012.

As the **Figure 4** shows, the percentage of women is higher on the lists of candidates than among elected officials, but the difference is not considerably higher. For the position of counsellor in the county councils there are 14.22% women elected out of 22.62% of women candidates, comparing with no women elected out of 5.16% candidates for the position of president of the county councils and 3.82% elected mayors out of 6.96% candidates. It should be mentioned that the counsellor positions are obtained via voting a party list of candidates while the positions of mayor and president of county councils are voted directly by citizens, in a one round system.

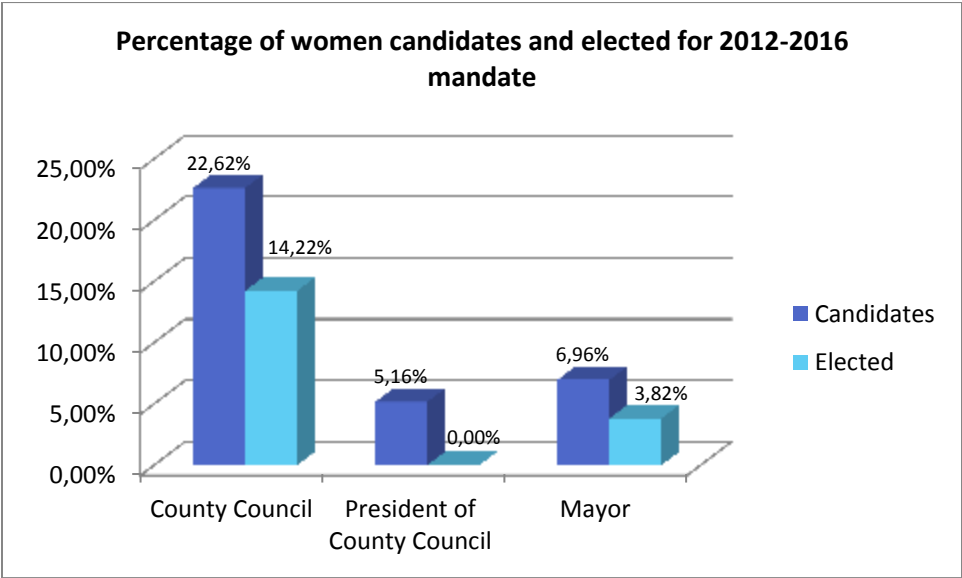


Figure 4. Percentage of women candidates and elected in the current mandate

3.2. Romanian Parliament

The women representation in the Parliament has been rather low in the post-communist Romania. While Romania stays at an average of 11%, the European average is of about 20%.

	Total	men	%	women	%
Senate	176	162	92,0	14	8,0
Chamber of Deputies	412	359	87,14	53	12,86
Total	588	521	88,60	67	11,40

Table 1. Number of women and men Members of Parliament during the current legislature, 2012 - 2016²

As we can see in Table 1, the representation of women during the legislature 2012 – 2016 is 8% in the Senate and 12.86% in the Chamber of Deputies, comprising a total of 11.4%. By comparison, in 2008 – 2012 legislature there were 5.83% in the Senate and 11.3% in the Chamber of Deputies. In 2004-2008 legislatures there were 9.48% women in the Senate and 10.54% women in the Chamber of Deputies.

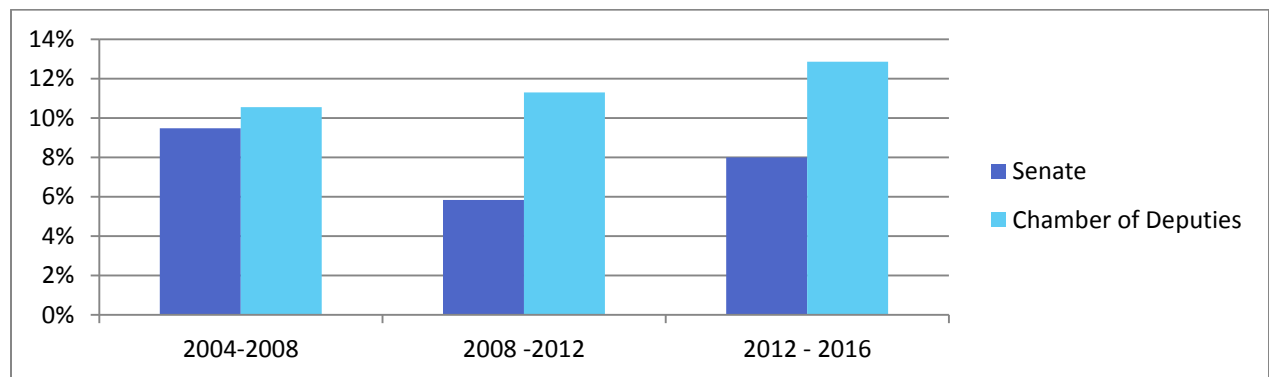


Figure 6. Women representation in the Romanian bicameral Parliament

² Ministry of Labour: http://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Familie/ESFB-StudiiAnalizaRapoarte-2012/Reprezentarea_femeilor_si_a_barbatilor_in_alegerile_parlamentare_din_decembrie_2012.doc

The current legislature was elected in 2012. The number of seats occupied by women in the Parliament is presented by political parties in the table below. There were 12.78% women candidates for Senate (97 out of the 759) and 14.80% women candidates for Chamber of Deputies (251 out of the 1696), out of which 7.95% women were elected for Senate (14 out of the 176) and 12.86% women were elected for Chamber of Deputies (53 out of the 359).

	USL (Alliance of the Social Democrats with Liberals)	ARD (Centre-Right)	PPDD (Populist)	PRM (Populist)	UDMR (Hungarian)	PER (Green)	Minorities group	Total	%
Candidates	47	62	57	53	85	24	-	348	14.18%
Elected	44	10	12	0	1	0	1	68	11.56%

Table 2. Number of women candidates for Parliament in 2012 elections by Political Party

3.3. Romanian Government

At the level of Ministries, while in 2008 there was no woman Minister, in 2009 there were 4 women Ministers (19%) and in 2012 there were 5 women Ministers (19%). Regarding the level of decision at national level, Romania has a pretty good situation among the 27 EU Member States, concerning the degrees of decision 1 and 2. Degree of decision 1 includes the following positions: secretary general, deputy secretary general, director-general, deputy director-general. Degree of decision 2 includes the following positions: director, deputy director, head of unit, and head of office.

	Number of Ministries		Degree of decision 1		Degree of decision 2	
	Total	Data available	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)
EU27 - 2011	426	380	30	70	39	61
Ro. 2011	16	16	51	49	61	39
EU27 -2012	401	372	29	71	37	63
Ro. 2012	17	17	46	54	56	44

Table 3. Percentage of women at different levels of decision at EU and national level

A slight decrease can be noticed in the number of women in decision-making positions in Romania (5% in each degree of decision) as well as at European level in general.

The data is also presented based of the types of Ministries, using the European Commission BEIS typology. According to this typology the Ministries are categorised as follows:

- B – Basic functions: foreign and international affairs, defence, justice... etc.
- E – Economy: finance, trade, industry, agriculture ... etc.
- I – Infrastructure: transport, communication, environment ... etc.
- S – Socio-cultural functions: social affairs labour, health, children, family, youth, elderly, older, people, education, science, culture, labour sports ... etc.

The Ministries with the lowest percentage of women in decision-making positions, at both degrees of decision are the ones with basic functions (23% women in 2011 and 22% women in 2012 at degree of decision 1 and 54% women and 50% women at degree of decision 2). On all the other three categories of Ministries, the percentage of women in both degrees of decision is over 50%.

BEIS Typology	2011				2012			
	Degree of decision 1		Degree of decision 2		Degree of decision 1		Degree of decision 2	
	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)
B Basic functions	23	77	54	46	22	78	50	50
E Economy	55	45	67	33	51	49	62	48
I Infrastructure	51	49	65	35	53	47	55	45
S Socio-cultural functions	60	40	59	41	70	30	60	40

Table 4. Percentage of women in at different levels of decision based on types of Ministries

As compared to 2011, the percentage of women in decision-making positions has increased in 2012 in the Socio-cultural Ministries and Infrastructure Ministries. There are 10% more women at degree of decision 1 and 1% more women at degree of decision 2 in the Socio-cultural Ministries, while in the Infrastructure Ministries there are 2% more women in degree of decision 1, but 10% less women in degree of decision 2. In the other two categories of Ministries (Basic functions and Economy) the percentage of women in both degrees of decision has dropped (between 1 and 5%).

3.4. European Parliament

In the legislature 2009-2014, the percentage of Romanian women in the European Parliament is 37%: 3 from EPP, 5 from S&D and 4 from ALDE. While the representation of women in the National Parliament is very low, the representation of women in the European Parliament is higher than the global women representation in the European Parliament, 34%.

4. Quotas in political parties

Currently in Romania there are only two parties that have introduced in their statutes quotas for women representation, the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Democratic Party.

The Social Democratic Party (PSD) status says, at Art. 43, Line 3, that *“in the leadership positions of the party at all levels it is recommended to have a leadership representation of women, youth and elders proportional with their membership in the party, meaning 30% for women, 25% for youth and 10% for the elders”*. However, this is only a recommendation that doesn't meet the reality. Currently, women cover only 15% (5 out of 33)³ positions in the National Permanent Bureau of PSD, the decision making body of the party.

In the Democratic Liberal Party (PDL) the situation is more or less the same. Its status, at Article 13, Line 1, says that *“with the aim at contributing actively for equal opportunities of women against men regarding their political engagement, the party adopts a share system for women participation to a quota of minimum 30% in all its activity areas”*. In practice, the National Permanent Bureau of PDL has a women membership of 16% (8 out of 49)⁴.

5. Practices, projects, initiatives regarding the presence of women in politics

One of the most active initiatives is the website created by Andreea Paul Vass, a public consultation initiative for the improvement of the representation of women in politics:

<http://www.femeileinpolitica.ro/>

³ <http://www.psd.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/BPN-PSD.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.pdl.org.ro/echipa/biroul-permanent-national>

This initiative brings to the public debate topics that more often than not are omitted by the media, which in general present the woman as beneficiary of public policies mainly in relation to policies to increase birth rates. The woman as a “political subject” is rarely a topic of interest. About 70 women accepted the invitation to write about their professional and political career, answering the following question: “Is there any difference between women involved in politics and men in similar situations? Their reflections were published in a volume coordinated by Andreea Paul Vass, along with a few reflections of notorious men involved in politics.

One of the most debated subjects regarding involvement of women in politics is related to the „quota of women” or “gender quota”. There are many voices against this possible practice, voices that ignore the stipulations in the Constitution that affirms „equal rights for all citizens, regardless of their sex, religion, etc.” and voices that fail to understand or to admit that there is actually discrimination in Romania against women.

Even when certain practices are put into place to promote the involvement of women in politics, they are mainly tokenistic. For example, the elections are based on lists of candidates per party and women often find themselves at the bottom of the list. When women are promoted at the forefront of political parties or public institutions they are often seen as obedient spokespersons, not as decision-makers, they are a “front image” than has a group of men in the background.

As mentioned above, even the parties that mention the “gender quota” in their official documents do not comply with this commitment. Indeed, the quota is a recommendation rather than an obligation, with no sanctions foreseen in case the recommendation is not respected (which is the case for all parties).

Over the years there have been several proposals for laws that would set a quota of representation of women in the Parliament (in 2003, 2004 and in 2010) and in the local administration (in 2004), none of which managed to pass the vote.

More recently, in March 2013, a man Senator from Constanta, Marian Vasiliev from the populist PP-DD party, declared that his party will initiate a bill that would compel political

parties to have at least 20% women candidates on their lists for the next Parliamentary elections.

At the beginning of 2013, Romanian Centre for European Policies published a policy memo entitled “Romania needs a competitive electoral system for European Parliament” which makes no reference to the involvement of women in politics or women voting pattern in general.

Nevertheless, a simple web search regarding “women in politics” leads to media articles like: top 5 most beautiful women in politics, top 7 poorly dressed women in politics, etc. And it is not only media that abounds of stereotypes and prejudices; recently a man Senator promoted the idea to initiate a Miss Parliament contest. His proposal was publicly criticized by women MPs.

At institutional level, the main initiative to promote equal changes was taken in 2005 when the National Agency for Equal Chances was set to function. The main attributions of this Agency are:

- Development of policies and national action plans of the Government in the field of equality of chances between women and men and coordination of their implementation;
- Receiving complaints about breaking the laws and regulations regarding equal chances principle, non-discrimination based on sex
- Elaboration of reports and studies regarding the application of equal chances principle in all fields of activity;
- Exchange of information with European bodies and other international bodies in the field of equal chances between men and women.

A significant part of the information in this paper is based on studies published by the Agency for Equal Chances.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, the percentage of women in politics in Romania, compared to European average is quite low. The average representation of women in the National Parliament is around 11%, slightly higher in the Chamber of Deputies and a bit lower in the Senate. At the level of the local administration, there have been no major changes in the last three mandates that were analysed. Also at the local level, the percentage is quite similar with the national situation, an average of around 10% women councillors in city councils and around 14-15% women councils in the county councils. However, the percentage of women at the top of local and regional institutions is even lower. There are currently 3.5% women mayors, 0% women presidents of the city councils and 12% women prefect.

At Ministry level the percentage of women ministers is 19, while at the decision levels, there are 46% women at the degree of decision 1 (compared to the average of 29% at EU level) and 56% women at the degree of decision 2 (compared to the average of 37% at EU level). The highest percentage is found in Ministries in the category of socio-cultural functions, while the lowest percentage is found in Ministries in the category of basic functions.

The highest percentage of women is found at the level of European Parliament, 37% women in current legislature, higher than the level of representation in the European Parliament.

Unfortunately very few initiatives are taken both at institutional level as well as at the level of civil society to increase the representation of women in politics. Not only is the percentage of representation of women in institutions at national level quite low, but also there is no trend of increasing the percentage can be noticed in the last decade.

Quotas have been known as a method to increase political representation of women, but as we can see in the Romanian case, quotas are not THE answer. In the case of the two parties that have a 30% quotas for women in their official statuses this are filled only by half, 15% in one case and 16% in the other case.

The laws do not mention anything about quotas when it comes to public decision making bodies. However, another important factor that influence the political representation of women is the voting system used. According to relevant studies⁵ in the field, the most advantageous voting system for women is the List Proportional Representation and the least advantageous is the majoritarian system in one tour. Romania currently has a Mixed Member Proportional System, partially majoritarian, partial proportional.

The legal framework is in general supportive when it comes to equal representation of women and men, but it lacks in specifying how the equality of chances or the balanced participation of women and men are guaranteed. The laws do not have implementing norms or sanctions in this regard.

⁵ [*Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior*](#) by Pippa Norris, pg. 192