

## The role of electoral system on women's representation in parliament. Albanian European Union Integration's challenge

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### Abstract:

*This publication, present findings regarding the effect of electoral system in gender equality representation in parliaments in a comparative approach between European countries and also worldwide. In the same time this effect is analyzed in Albanian situation specially connected with the European integration challenge, taking in consideration also the Albania Progress Report 2013 states that: "Women continue to be underrepresented in public position. In the 2013 parliamentary elections, the three major parties were fined for not respecting the gender quota in the list of candidates for deputies".*

*The paper is based on theoretical and empirical analysis of quantitative data, in a broader chronological view.*

*Analyzing the statistical data in different European countries and also between two main groups in world contexts, regarding the type of electoral system used, it is clearly evidenced that in countries or group of countries with proportional system or mixed electoral system, the figures of women representation in parliaments are much higher as in countries with majority electoral systems.*

*The paper concluded that is a strong correlation between the electoral system and the level of representation of women in parliament. Majoritarian systems are seen to be unfair to women, while the proportional systems or mixed are more advantageous for women.*

**Keywords:** Gender Balance, electoral system, proportional, majoritarian, mixed. Albania, Europe.

### Introduction

This paper analyses the different electoral systems in European countries but also worldwide, in terms of their impact on gender balance. The increasing of the representation of women in parliament is a matter of political agenda for many European governments. This is a challenge for Albanian society also and specially connected to the European integration. For the first time the

establishment of the legislative neutral gender quotes system at 2008, provides a novelty in Albanian legislation regarding women's rights. A year later, in 2009 for the first time Albania changed the electoral system from a majority and system, which had accompanied the whole period after the 90 - to, into a proportional system. The Electoral Code for the first set of gender quota obligation of 30% for the less represented gender.

Despite the above legislative changes, the real representation of women in parliament remains low and is one of the challenges of Albania's EU integration.

While the European Parliament resolution of 13 March 2012 on women in political decision-making – quality and equality (2011/2295(INI), article 28, calls on the Commission and Member States “*to assess the impact of the various electoral systems at national, local and European levels, and also of the measures and good practice implemented at the various levels, on the balance of women's representation*”, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe encourages:

- “*Reforms in electoral systems to make them favorable to women's representation*”, asking clearly the European countries for reforms in electoral systems.

Electoral system is one of the many factors that impact gender balance in parliament. Evaluation of the effective system is of particular importance, not only in academic view, but also in practical view, because can serve as a valuable suggestion for gender policies.

This paper aims to evaluate the role of electoral systems in women representation in parliaments and to conclude about the system that has greatest positive effect on this indicator.

## **Subject and Methods**

This paper is based on data analysis of the women representation in parliaments in different countries, associated in each case with the respective electoral system used. The data used are taken from different the reports of various national or international organizations as well as from studies in the field. The paper is based on theoretical and empirical analysis of quantitative data.

The Hypotheses of this paper are:

- 1) Electoral systems affect the representation of women in parliament.
- 2) Majoritarian electoral system has a positive impact in the representation of women in parliament.
- 3) Proportional or mixed system has a positive impact in the representation of women in parliament.

The paper is based on theoretical but most empirical analysis of quantitative data. The conclusions are clear and accurate, since they are based in data comparing.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **<sup>1</sup>The history of the Albanian state legislatures and representation of women in parliament.**

The origins of parliamentarism in Albania dates in 1920 by Lushnja Congress. Lushnja Congress elected the High Council composed from 4 persons which had the Head of State's functions and the National Council composed from 37 persons, performed the functions of the Parliament. In this first Albanian parliament was not chosen any woman. Also in three next others legislatures, respectively in 1921, 1925 and 1928, the Albanian parliament was composed 100% of men deputies.

Albania during that time was a featured dominant patriarchal society, where women were not allowed even to vote, without pretending to be elected in the legislative body. The first elections after the Second War were the election for the Constitutional Assembly of 2 December 1945. For the first time in this process took part women. They were entitled to vote and to be elected. Part of the demagogic ideology of the ex-dictatorial system was also the presumed rights of women. For the first time in this parliament sat 6 women from 82 deputy sits in total. The number of women formally increased from one legislature to the next one, reached the record of 35% during the 1974-1978's legislature. While the number of deputy's women deputies increased by one legislature to another, the role and their voice was nonexistent. National Assembly of the dictatorship was a formal body that meets only twice a year. The role of the Assembly and in this sense the women deputies who were formally members of this structure, was entirely formal, serving the dictatorial power. As in every dictatorship, the free elections didn't exist and neither could speak for democratic pluralism.

Year	Male	Female	Male %	Female %
1920	37	0	100	0
1921	78	0	100	0
1925	75	0	100	0
1928	57	0	100	0
1945	76	6	93	7
1950	104	17	86	14
1954	118	16	88	12
1958	171	17	91	9
1962	189	25	88	12
1966	201	39	84	16

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<sup>1</sup> Data processed by the author based on:

- Lamani, Merita. (2003). *Gratë në Kuvend*. Tiranë: Kuvendi i Shqipërisë.

1970	192	72	73	27
1974	162	88	65	35
1978	169	81	68	32
1982	172	78	69	31
1987	175	75	70	30
1991	240	10	96	4
1992	132	8	94	6
1996	119	21	85	15
1997	144	11	93	7
2001	132	8	94	6
2005	130	10	93	7
2009	117	23	84	16
2013	113	27	80.7	19.3

<sup>2</sup>*Table 1. Composition of the Albanian parliament since 1920.*

### **<sup>3</sup> Types of electoral systems in Albania after 90-s and their impact on women's representation in parliament.**

Albania is a country that has experimented with electoral systems in its years of democracy. There are eight general elections processes in terms of political pluralism in Albania. The elections for the Parliament in the year 1991, 1992, 1996, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009 and 2013. The elections of the year 1992 and 1997 are considered premature and parliament's mandates were very short, not more than a year. The type of the Electoral systems applied in these electoral processes has changed from process to process.

In the first pluralist election on 31 March 1991, the electoral system was Majoritarian system, applied in two rounds. The elections of 1992 brought two important and fundamental changes to the electoral scheme; First the number of parliament's member changed from 250 to 140 deputies and secondly the content of the electoral system from majoritarian to a mixed dependent electoral system. In the 1996 parliamentary elections was applied again a mixed electoral system but this time, independent, different from the mixed system of the year 1992. The mandate of the 1996's Parliament was short, only a year, following by the election of the year 1997. In this election

<sup>2</sup> Data processed by the author based on:

- Lamani, Merita. (2003). *Gratë në Kuvend*. Tiranë: Kuvendi i Shqipërisë.
- Berberi, Albana. Çausi, Nurie. Elezi, Anila. Galanxhi, Ermira. Gorçe, Isida. Jahja, Teranda. Kasneci, Anila. Mehmeti, Pranvera. Nesturi, Majlinda. Subashi, Blerina. (2013). *Women and men in Albania 2013*. Tiranë: Instituti i Statistikave. p 56.

<sup>3</sup> Data processed by the author based on:

- Krasniqi, Afrim. (2009). *Zgjedhjet në Shqipëri 1991 – 2008*. Tiranë: Konica Color.
- Krasniqi Afrim. *Sjellja zgjedhore dhe identifikimi i votës në Shqipëri*. [https://www.academia.edu/4420863/Sjellja\\_zgjedhore\\_dhe\\_identifikimi\\_i\\_votes\\_ne\\_Shqi\\_peri](https://www.academia.edu/4420863/Sjellja_zgjedhore_dhe_identifikimi_i_votes_ne_Shqi_peri) - seen on 8 October 2014
- (2001, 2005, 2009, 2013). *Raportet e misionit të vlerësimit të nevojave*. Varshavë: OSBE/ODIHR ( Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe) <http://shhjetweb.org/zgjedhjet-ne-shqipëri/> - seen on 3 October 2014

process the type of electoral system used, it was again a mix of semi-independent system. The electoral system used during the 2001 elections it was mixed dependent again, being repeated, with minor changes in 2005. It was the year 2009 when, after the approval by the Albanian parliament of the Law "On Gender Equality in Society " in July 2008 and in the same time the introduction of gender quotas in this law as well as in the Electoral Code, brought innovations in the electoral system. For the first time this year in the election process was implemented the regional proportional system with closed-list, which was repeated in the parliamentary elections of the year 2013. If we look at the above table of the parliament's compositions from one legislature to another one , we will notice that since 2009 when the electoral system changed from a mixed system, Majoritarian dominated to a proportional system with closed lists, the number of women in parliament increased by multiplying. <sup>4</sup>From 6% that it was in the year 2001 and 7% in the year 2005, went to 16% in the year 2009 and 20%<sup>5</sup> in the year 2014.

### **The role of electoral system in women representation worldwide.**

In many countries of the world after World War II, gender issues were not in political agendas. Time for women began in the 1970s, when the United Nations launched the United Nations Decade for Women and culminated in 1979, with the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) together with the Additional Protocol. Anyway the first elections after the war, registered women as members of parliament, despite the low level of presentation. Different types of electoral systems resulted in different percentage of women in national parliaments.

The following table has the dates of some legislatures, immediately after World War II, for two main groups of countries, according to the type of electoral system that they have applied. Such a grouping, clearly highlights through the statistical indicators, the link between the electoral systems and the level of women's representation in the parliament.

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<sup>4</sup> Berberi, Albana. Çausi, Nurie. Elezi, Anila. Galanxhi, Ermira. Gorçe, Isida. Jahja, Teranda. Kasneci, Anila. Mehmeti, Pranvera. Nesturi, Majlinda. Subashi, Blerina. (2013). *Women and men in Albania 2013*. Tiranë: Instituti i Statistikave, pg 56.

<sup>5</sup> Women's representation in parliament after the elections of the year 2013 was 18%. One year later, in 2014 , after the submission of the deputy mandate from the members of the Cabinet, the representation of women in parliament reached 19.3% .

**<sup>6</sup>Table 2. Percentage of women members of parliaments across 24 national legislatures, 1945-2004.**

Plurality/majority (Single-member district systems; only one member is elected in each electoral district - SMD) vs PR/Mixed, Multi-member District Systems; more than one representative is elected in each electoral District (MMD)System.

Year	1945	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	1997	2004
SMD/System	3.05	2.13	2.51	2.23	3.37	8.16	15.42	18.24
MMD/System	2.93	4.73	5.47	5.86	11.89	18.13	21.93	27.49

**Plurality/majority**, SMD systems: Australia, Canada, France (from 1960), Japan (to 1990), New Zealand (to 1990), United Kingdom, United States.

**PR and mixed, MMD** systems: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France (1945 and 1950), Greece\*\*, Iceland, Ireland, Israel\*, Italy, Japan (after 1993), Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand (after 1996), Norway, Portugal\*\*, Spain\*\*, Sweden, Switzerland and Germany (Federal Republic of Germany\* prior to 1990.

\* Israel did not exist, and the Federal Republic of Germany did not hold elections in 1945. They are therefore not included in the 1945 numbers but are included for all years following 1945.

\*\* Greece, Portugal and Spain are only included in the calculations from 1980.

This table contains data up to the year 1996, time when the study was conducted.

As is clearly shown from the results countries with MMD/Systems have almost 10% more women in parliament. That brings the clear conclusion, that proportional system or mixed are friendlier regarding gender balance in parliament.

The first reason is because; party gatekeepers see balance as a way of attracting voters. Candidates with ties to different groups and different sectors of society may help attract voters to their party. A woman candidate can be seen as a benefit to the party by attracting voters without requiring the most powerful intra-party interests represented by men to step aside, as would be required in a plurality/majority system.

A second reason is that within the party balancing the ticket is often seen as a matter of equity. Different factions in the party will argue that it is

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<sup>6</sup> Strauch, Nicolas. and Pogorelis, Robertas .( 2011). *Electoral systems, te link between the governance, elected members and voters..* Brussels. Office for Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy (OPPD) ( European Parliament).p 41

only fair that one of their representatives should be among those candidates who have a genuine chance of winning.

Proportional representation systems can also help women because a process of 'contagion' is more likely to occur in these systems than in plurality/majority systems. The gains may be greater because in PR systems even a small increase in votes, produced by adding women to the party ticket, could result in the party winning more seats.

However, in proportional systems, the selection of candidates for the party list depends on other factors in addition to a candidate's personal appeal. The most important of these is the party's wish to appeal to as many voters as possible, which includes listing female candidates, as the absence or small number of women on a national electoral list could be a negative factor for some of the electorate

### **Types of electoral systems in European Union countries and more. The impact of electoral systems on women's representation in parliaments.**

Representation of women in parliament is an indication of a dependency complex nature, because depends on many factors simultaneously, but a crucial factor is whether the electoral system. It is difficult to analyze the dependence of this indicator from each of the factors, as long as their appear to function in reality all together. However in this section of the analysis it is analyzed will the dependence of this element from the type of electoral system, based on the figures of European Union countries. It is a satisfactory independent analysis, due to the concrete nature of different types of electoral systems and statistical indicators in each country in relation to the representation of women.

Worldwide the Electoral systems today, are find in many combinations, but all of them derive from the two basic electoral systems: majority or plurality systems and proportional (PR) systems. PR systems are currently the most widely used in Europe.

The impact of this factor on women representation is obvious, if we analyze the dates of which European country.

The table below clearly identifies the link between the type of electoral system applied during the elections process in European Union Countries and the appropriate level of representation of women in parliament.

***Table 3: Women's representation in national parliaments in the EU/EEA countries: level of representation, quota type and electoral system (lower house or unicameral parliament).***

Country	Women's representation (latest election)
<b>Above 40%</b>	
Sweden	45.0% (2010)
Finland	42.5% (2011)
<b>39 – 30%</b>	
Iceland	39.7% (2013)
Norway	39.6% (2009)
Denmark	39.1% (2011)
Netherlands	38.7% (2012)
Belgium	38.0% (2010)
Spain	36.0% (2011)
Germany	32.9% (2009)
Slovenia	32.2% (2011)
<b>29 – 20%</b>	
Portugal	28.7% (2011)
Italy	28.4% (2013)
Austria	27.9% (2008)
France	26.9% (2012)
Lithuania	24.5% (2012)
Poland	23.7% (2011)
Latvia	23.0% (2011)
Bulgaria	22.9% (2009)
United Kingdom	22.5% (2010)
Czech Republic	22.0% (2010)
Luxembourg	21.7% (2009)
Greece	21.0% (2012)
Estonia	20.8% (2011)
Liechtenstein	20.0% (2013)
<b>19 – 10%</b>	
Slovakia	18.7% (2012)
Ireland	15.1% (2011)
Malta	14.3% (2013)

Type of quota	Electoral system
Party quotas	List PR
No quotas	List PR
Party quotas	List PR
Party quotas	List PR
No quotas	List PR
Party quotas	List PR
Legislated quotas	List PR
Legislated quotas	List PR
Party quotas	Mixed
Legislated quotas	List PR

<sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_ (2013) Electoral Gender Quota Systems and their Implementation in Europe Update 2013. Brussels. European Parliament. P.7.



Legislated quotas	List PR
Party quotas	List PR
Party quotas	List PR
Legislated quotas	TRS (S)
Party quotas	Mixed
Legislated quotas	List PR
No quotas	List PR
No quotas	Mixed
Party quotas	FPTP (S)
Party quotas	List PR
Party quotas	List PR
Legislated quotas	List PR
No quotas	List PR
No quotas	List PR
Party quotas	List PR
Legislated quotas	STV (PR)
Party quotas	STV

Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs

Romania	13.3% (2012)	Party quotas	Mixed
Cyprus	10.7% (2011)	Party quotas	List PR
Below 10%			
Hungary	8.8% (2010)	Party quotas	Mixed
Average women's representation	2008: 23.6%		
	2011: 24.7%		
	2013: 25.6%		

As is clearly shown from the table, more member states have some form of proportional representation or weakened mixed systems. There are only few member states applying majority system, United Kingdom and France. Another conclusion from the figures above is the fact that almost all countries in Western Europe where the number of women in Parliament exceeds 20%, have adopted the proportional system. That shows a strong correlation between the level of female representation and the type of electoral system. This correlation is reinforced with the example of Germany, which uses a double or mixed electoral system, with both single member constituencies and a proportional representation system, each of which select half of the members of the Bundestag. However, the majority of female politicians in Germany are elected through the PR list.

<sup>8</sup>Nowdays the situation regarding gender equality within EU and in the European Parliament it selfs is better.

<sup>8</sup> Data processed by the author based on:

\_\_\_\_\_ (2014) *Report on Progress on equality between women and men in 2013*. SWD(2014) 142 final. European Commision. Brusseles  
[https:// ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/swd\\_2014\\_142\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/swd_2014_142_en.pdf) . - seen on 7 October 2014

\_\_\_\_\_ (2014). *Women in politics 2014*. Geneva: Inter – Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The latest figures from 1 –th January 2014 show that women are outnumbered by men by an average of three to one in national parliaments across the EU. The share of women varies between Member States; the majorities have over 30% women and three countries over 40% (Finland, Sweden, and Belgium). The highest levels of gender of gender imbalance are found in Czech Republic, Malta, and Romania where less than one in five MEPs are women.

Meanwhile the representation of women in the European Parliament (2010-2014 legislatures) is significantly higher than in national parliaments. In 2013, 36% of MEPs were women and 64% were men.

## **Conclusions**

The majoritarian system is seen to be unfair to women because with such an electoral practice, the success of the party heavily depends on the single candidate it selects. This candidate will have been selected on tightly defined criteria, as part of what makes a "successful" nominee; the selection process has been criticised for the emphasis given to "male" characteristics. Female candidacy is often questioned on the assumption that the electorate is less likely to vote for a woman. Proportional representation systems are more advantageous for women. In the short term, changing a country's electoral system often represents a far more realistic goal to work towards than dramatically changing the culture's view of women. Finally the electoral system is only one of several factors that have an impact on women's representation, and its effects depend largely on the respective political and social conditions of each country. The electoral system can only facilitate or hamper women's access to parliament, but it does not determine it. The question whether the institutional incentives of the electoral systems are effective, depends largely on women's role in society and politics as well as on the behavior of potential female candidates, political parties and the voters and specially in other effective mechanisms in use, such is quota system.

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