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## Political Representation of Ethnic Minorities and Socio-Demographic Groups in the Romanian Parliament

The paper explores the effects that different institutional mechanisms for legislative representation have on ethnic and social diversity in national legislatures. It uses an original data set on the Romanian parliament between 1990 and 2016 to examine representational outcomes generated by a combination of specific types of electoral mechanisms such as list proportional representation and reserved seats. The paper's findings highlight potential adverse effects that the use of communal representation mechanisms can have on the ethnic inclusiveness of main political parties. The findings also point to substantial differences in the social profile of representatives elected through different institutional channels.

**Keywords:** political representation, ethnic minorities, social profile.

## Politično predstavništvo narodnih manjšin in sociodemografskih skupin v romunskem parlamentu

*Članek obravnava učinke različnih institucionalnih mehanizmov pravne zastopanosti na etnično in družbeno raznolikost v državnih zakonodajah. Na osnovi podatkov o delovanju romunskega parlamenta v obdobju med 1990 in 2016 proučuje rezultate politične zastopanosti, povezane s kombinacijo specifičnih volilnih mehanizmov, kot so proporcionalna zastopanost na listah in rezervirani sedeži v predstavniških telesih. Avtorja v zaključku osvetlita potencialno negativne učinke, ki bi jih lahko imela raba mehanizmov skupnostne zastopanosti na etnično inkluzivnost glavnih političnih strank. Članek opozarja tudi na znatne razlike v socialnih profilih predstavnikov, izvoljenih na osnovi različnih institucionalnih kanalov.*

**Ključne besede:** politična zastopanost, narodne manjšine, socialni profil.

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## 1. Introduction

Ethnic and socio-demographic representation are important issues that must be addressed by every democracy that cares about the wellbeing of its population, as well as political fairness. There are multiple strategies for ensuring political representation, but one of the most important challenges is to identify the most efficient electoral mechanisms. Romania is a multiethnic society that combines multiple channels of access in the national representative body and so has become an interesting case study for researchers in social studies that want to analyze and understand the political representation of ethnic and social groups.

In order to ensure that the electoral mechanisms encourage the political representation of ethnic minorities, the main focus of this paper will be legislative representation in Romania. Alternative institutional arrangements that aim to secure a minority presence in legislative institutions have already been discussed extensively in the academic literature (Reilly 2001, Norris 2007, Diamond & Plattner 2006, Protysk & Matichescu 2010).

Some scholars believe that each communal group should have its own political representation guaranteed by the state, on a proportional basis (Lijphart 1968). Others argue that institutions should promote political parties that represent the common interests of the state's citizens, dissipating cultural differences (Horowitz 1985, Reilly 2001). The effect that each electoral system has on ethnic representation is an issue that has been addressed by researchers that argue in favor of proportional representation (PR) when it comes to fair ethnic representation, even though there is little empirical evidence to show that PR is more effective than Single-Member District (SMD) systems when it comes to the issue at hand (Moser 2008).

Other scholars argue that the main role of provisions is to guarantee the survival of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious minorities, to provide each individual with the right to participate in their own culture without disadvantage or prejudice, and to ensure that each member of any minority can use their native language in public or in private (King & Marian 2012). Reserved seat (RS) electoral mechanisms extend the notion of positive rights to the political arena, providing affirmative action in order to provide minority voice, access and political representation (King & Marian 2012).

The history of post-communist Romania makes the country interesting for researchers because it is an ethnically plural state (Reynolds et al. 2005). In this context, because we are dealing with a new concept for transitional democracies, there are few evidence-based studies that outline the effectiveness of institutional arrangements. This issue makes it more difficult for even those politicians that pursue an equal representation of all ethnic groups, because there is little foundation to build upon. Nevertheless, a recent analysis of reserved seat provisions (a targeted electoral mechanism) illustrates that the issue of reserved

seats is very common and yet simultaneously, an insufficiently studied aspect of electoral mechanisms (Reynolds 2005).

When analyzing ethnic representation, Romania is an interesting case, because its electoral rules provide minorities with the opportunity to reach parliament through different institutional channels. Encouragement of ethnic representation in the parliament began in the 1990s, which represents the start of the transition to democracy for Romania. Starting with the aforementioned period, Romania's electoral system has combined closed-list PR with special provisions for minority reserved seats. This makes closed-list proportional representation the key feature of the electoral system (Popescu 2002, Roper 2004, Crowther 2004). The PR system, along with the RS provisions, were implemented during Romania's transition to democracy, in order to ensure fair representation for the country's multiple ethnic groups. The group that benefited the most from the RS provisions, beginning in the 1990s, was the Hungarians (Birnir 2004, 2007).

The first five electoral elections held in Romania were characterized by the stability of the closed-list proportional representation system (Popescu 2002). The benefits of this stability were that parties had time to develop and adjust their strategies and that voters had time to analyze the effect of their choices and make better judgements when it came to voting. The system was changed in 2008 and 2012, being replaced by a mixed electoral system.

The present paper examines the impact that electoral mechanism had throughout the 1990–2016 period on the political representation of minorities in the national legislature. We also consider if political parties run by the majority ethnic population are inclined to recruit minority candidates. Moreover, we shall attempt to identify a *modus operandi* of minority politicians that pursue electoral office. The latter is important because there are two ways a minority politician can reach parliament: being a member of a mainstream political party or profiting from the RS provisions as part of a minority organization.

This paper proceeds by providing a descriptive analysis of the impact of Romania's electoral rules on ethnic representation during the 1990–2012 election campaigns. In doing so, we address the fairness of group-defined minority issues from a liberal-democratic standpoint and examine why that produced representational outcomes. The main focus of this paper is to analyze the mechanisms behind minority recruitment, with an emphasis on the ethnic Hungarian party. The paper concludes by drawing some lessons from the Romanian experience of combining PR and reserved seats provisions for future minority representation research.

The reserved seat provisions, intended to benefit minorities numerically smaller than the Hungarians, were first introduced for the 1990 parliamentary elections. Since then, the number of reserved seats has been extended to cover all minorities on a 'one ethnic group-one reserved seat' basis. All these features

of the Romanian electoral system could be conceptualized as providing three distinct routes for entering the parliament for ethnic minorities. Firstly, minority group members could be included in the winning portion of electoral lists of mainstream political parties; secondly, they could enter on the ticket of the ethnic Hungarian party, which has been consistently represented in the Romanian parliament; or, thirdly, they can become members of parliament by winning elections to one of the specially reserved seats for smaller minorities.

This paper compares how different institutional mechanisms for legislative representation affect the ethnic and social composition of the national legislature. It provides a systematic analysis of how groups of parliamentary members defined by the type of electoral mechanism that enabled their entrance into parliament vary on key indicators of social inclusiveness. The paper thus generates a number of insights into both majority and minority parties' recruitment preferences and practices. With rare exceptions (Moser 2008, Edinger & Kuklys 2007), these issues remain largely overlooked in the otherwise rich literature on minority issues in party politics in the post-communist region (Barany & Moser 2005, Birnir 2007, Ishiyama & Breuning 1998, Stein 2000, Bugajski 1995). The paper helps to start filling this gap by combining analysis of the ethnic and social backgrounds of members of parliament.

The final section of the paper examines how inclusive the groups of deputies elected through different institutional channels are in terms of gender, age and education level. The paper concludes by summarizing what the Romanian data on ethnic and social representation tells us about the effects of alternative electoral mechanisms on social inclusion, as well as what further evidence is needed to corroborate or refute hypotheses generated by studying the Romanian experience.

## 2. Data and Measurement

The social and political background data were collected for all the deputies elected to the Romanian parliament, including the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, over the past seven consecutive parliamentary terms during the 1990–2012 period. The dataset includes observations both on deputies that served a full parliamentary term and those that served part of the term. The dataset thus includes all deputies that entered the parliament through the 2012–2016 period. The dataset has 3,815 observations, where the unit of observation is a deputy/parliamentary term.

The coding of data was based primarily on information that was self-reported by the deputies and published in the official publications of the Romanian parliament.<sup>1</sup> These data were supplemented by information from a scholarly work (Ștefan 2004, Protysk & Matichescu 2010) and other published sources

produced by a number of corporate and non-governmental organizations (Rompres 1994, Asociația Pro Democrația 2006). The information on the ethnic affiliation of deputies was compiled in cooperation with Romanian institutions specializing in minority issues, whose experts were recruited to help ensure the accuracy of ethnic affiliation data.<sup>2</sup> While the coding of demographic variables such as age and gender is self-explanatory, education and other social variables can be more difficult to operationalize. The rationale for coding decisions made with respect to the latter variables is discussed in the text when the data on these variables is presented.

### 3. Proportionality of Ethnic Representation

In Romania, minorities are successfully assured representation in parliament. Analyzing the data from all parliamentary terms from 1990 to 2012 inclusive, in the lower and upper chambers of the parliament, ethnic minorities have significant representation. Our data shows an interesting and important finding – that most of the minorities are overrepresented in the legislative body. Table 1 shows, in the first column, the name of all of the minority groups represented in parliament, with column two showing the populations of each ethnic group according to the 2011 census. The third column indicates the percentage of MPs from each ethnic background, and is supplemented in column four by the number of MPs from each ethnicity (from all seven parliamentary terms during the 1990–2012 period). The last column represents the score for the proportionality index which is computed by dividing the legislative share by population share in 2011. This provides a single summary figure where 1.0 symbolizes perfect proportional representation, more than 1.0 designates a degree of over-representation and less than 1.0 indicates under-representation.<sup>3</sup>

As can be seen from Table 1, the majority group, those who are ethnically Romanian, are slightly overrepresented in the Romanian parliament with an index of 1.05. Although data from previous research shows that in the deputies' chamber ethnic Romanians are slightly under-represented with an index of representation at 0.98, (Protysk & Matichescu 2010) our analysis shows that for the entire parliament body, the majority group has a marginal overrepresentation. Among the ethnic groups present in Romanian parliament, the Ukrainian and the Roma ethnics group are the most under-represented. The Ukrainian ethnic group is slightly under-represented in parliament with an index of proportionality of representation of 0.96. The Roma ethnic group is the least represented, with index of only 0.1. This issue has received considerable attention in literature that deals with particular challenges this minority group faces in terms of problems with collective action and social stigmatization (Barany 2004, Vermeersch 2006).

*Table 1. Ethnic Background of Romanian Legislators, 1990-2016*

Ethnicity	Population Count (N) 2011	Population Share (%) 2011	Legislative Share (%) 2016	Legislative Frequency Count (N) 2016	Proportionality of Representation Index 2016
Romanian	16,792,868	83.457	88	3,357	1.05
Hungarian	1,227,623	6.101	7.37	281	1.21
Roma	621,573	3.089	0.31	12(7)	0.10
Ukrainian	50,920	0.253	0.24	9(8*)	0.95
German	36,042	0.179	0.47	18(8*)	2.63
Lipovan Russian	23,487	0.117	0.18	7(7)	1.54
Turk	27,698	0.138	0.21	8(6)	1.52
Tatar	20,282	0.101	0.21	8(8)	2.08
Serb	18,076	0.090	0.18	7(7)	2.00
Czech and Slovak	16,131	0.080	0.18	7(7)	2.25
Bulgarian	7,336	0.036	0.21	8(8*)	5.83
Croat	5,408	0.027	0.10	4(4)	3.70
Greek	3,668	0.018	0.21	8(8*)	11.67
Jewish	3,271	0.016	0.79	30(7)	49.38
Italian	3,203	0.016	0.18	7(6)	11.25
Polish	2,543	0.013	0.21	8(8*)	16.15
Armenian	1,361	0.007	0.29	11(7)	41.43
Macedonian	1,264	0.006	0.42	16(4)	66.86
Albanian	545	0.002	0.13	5(5)	47.99
Ruthenian	262	0.001	0.10	4(4)	76.80
Total		93.75	100	3,815	

Sources: Population data from National census (2011), Authors' calculation.

<sup>a</sup> Numbers in parentheses indicate how many deputies of a given ethnic background were elected through the reserved seats provisions.

<sup>b</sup> \* indicates that two deputies served consecutively in the same reserved seat during a single parliamentary term: 1996-00 – Bulgarian, German minorities reserved seats; 2000-04 – Polish minority; 2004-08 – Ukrainian and Greek.

Reserved seats in the lower chambers of parliament, assure the success of legislative representation of minorities. In Table 1, the numbers in parenthesis from the Legislative Frequency Count (N) 2016 column indicate how many ethnic groups, with the exception of Hungarians, (who are not included because they have their own party and a significant population share) are elected through reserved seats procedure. As a result, seven out of twelve Roma were elected through reserved seats, eight out of nine Ukrainians were elected through this procedure, half of the German representatives, all Lipovan Russians (7 out of 7)



and so on. The information provided in the legislative shares and frequency columns of the table somewhat inflates the legislative share of some ethnic groups, because it includes in the count both the MPs that entered the parliament at the beginning of the term and those who came later in the term as substitutes for parliamentary members who resigned or died. These overestimations – they are indicated in the case of reserved seats deputies with an asterisk sign (\*) – have only a minor effect on the overall picture of ethnic distribution in parliament, presented in Table 1.

Since the start of the post communist transition, Romanian electoral law contains liberal provisions for minority groups to gain legislative representation. The 1990 law on the organization of elections granted one seat in the lower chamber of parliament for each minority group that failed to obtain representation through the regular electoral procedure. Non-governmental organizations of ethnic minorities can participate in elections and can send their representative to parliament provided they receive at least 5 per cent of the average number of votes needed for the election of one deputy. Since 2004 the percentage was raised to 10 per cent of the average number of votes for the election of one deputy (Popescu 2002, Alionescu 2004). Although the electoral rules changed in 2008 from a proportional representation system to a mixed system where candidates run in single-member districts and are elected either by obtaining an absolute majority of votes or through mandated allocation designed to ensure proportional representation at the national and county levels (OSCE/ODIHR 2012,)), no change was carried out on terms of ethnic minority representation. Each ethnic minority group continues to have a reserved seat in the Chamber of Deputies.

#### 4. Minority Inclusion in Political Parties

Candidate recruitment and selection are complex issues that receive a considerable amount of attention in the literature (Hazan & Rahat 2005, Norris 2005). The presence of minorities in the winning portions of the electoral lists of the main political parties or nominated as candidates in a single member district is a strong indicator of willingness to recruit ethnic minority representatives. In the case of the closed-list PR electoral system, which was in place in Romania from 1990 until 2008 and even after (between 2008 and 2012 under a mixed representation system), the party leadership exercises considerable power over who is put on the list or who is nominated as a candidate in a single member district (Ștefan 2004).

To evaluate the level of inclusiveness of minorities in the party list, we provide evidence of how institutional channels contribute to the election of ethnic minorities to parliament. We distinguish between the three aforementioned channels: Romanian party seats, reserved seats and seats within the minority

party (UDMR). The UDMR, as previously mentioned, is the main party of ethnic Hungarians in Romania and identifies as an exclusive Hungarian minority group (Birbir 2007, Shafir 2000, Jenne 2007). The label Romanian party seats is used to distinguish clearly between the other kinds of seats: Reserved Seats (minorities other than Hungarian) and Minority Party, which is the UDMR. Each of the MPs for all seven parliamentary terms is found in only one out of the three categories described below, in Table 2.

Table 2: Ethnic Background of Romanian Legislators, by Type of Legislative Seat, 1990–2016

		Type of seat			
		Romanian Party Seats	Reserved Seats	Minority Party (UDMR)	Total
Ethnicity	Romanian	97.81%	0%	0%	88.1%
		(3,357)	(0)	(0)	(3,361)
	Hungarian	0.5%	0%	100%	7.36%
		(17)	(0)	(264)	(281)
	Roma	0.15%	5.88%	0%	0.31%
		(5)	(7)	(0)	(12)
	Germans	0.23%	6.72%	0%	0.42%
		(8)	(8)	(0)	(16)
	Other	1.31%	87.39%	0%	3.9%
		(45)	(104)	(0)	(149)
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(N)	(3,432)	(119)	(264)	(3,815)

Source: Authors' calculations.

The data in Table 2 indicates that Romanian parties rarely nominate winning candidates from non-Romanian ethnic backgrounds. It can be observed from the first column of the table that about 2 percent of MPs from regular seats (Romanian Party Seats) came from other ethnic backgrounds than Romanian, such as Hungarian, German, Roma and so on.

Seventy-five minority deputies from the Romanian party seats column of Table 2 were distributed fairly equally among seven parliamentary terms, which indicates minor variations between legislatures in terms of minority recruiting. Nor has there been significant variation in terms of minority recruitment between parties of different ideological orientation. While the comparative literature's expectation is that left parties would be more minority friendly, the Romanian data does not match this expectation, which can be partly attributed to the nationalist affinities of the post-communist left in Romania (Pop-Elecheş 1998).



Nineteen MPs, out of seventy-five minority legislators, which is the largest subset of minority MPs belonging to the same party, come from the main non-successor of the communist party, the National Liberal Party (PNL). The second largest subset of MPs with an ethnic minority background, come from the main communist successor, the Social Democratic Party (PSD)<sup>4</sup>, which has sixteen MPs with different ethnic backgrounds than Romanian. Yet, given that the members of parliament from the PSD (PDSR) constitute the largest group in parliament numerically (1,136 out of 3,815 members of parliament in our dataset), the share of minority deputies is only about 1.4 per cent (16 out of 1,136). In the case of the National Liberal Party (PNL) and its main political splinters (PAC (Civic Alliance Party) and PNL 93) (545 out of 3,815 members of parliament in our dataset), the share of minority deputies is about 3.5 percent (19 out of 545 legislators). Based on this data, we can assume that with the exception of the PNL, whose situation necessitates more specific research, Romanian parties are veritable mono-ethnic organizations.

Similarly, as the third column in Table 2 indicates, none of the 264 UDMR deputies or senators belong to minority ethnic groups other than the Hungarian ethnic group. This suggests that the party chooses not to campaign in support of other minority groups. Overall, the data on the ethnic composition of the UDMR's faction over two decades of the party's presence in the legislature indicates no attempts on the part of the party to break out of its status as a strict mono-ethnic organization.

As the data from Table 2 shows, the most efficient channel in recruiting ethnic minority representatives to the Romanian parliament is the Reserved Seats provision. Based on that channel, 119 MPs that officially represent ethnic minority groups were elected to the parliament. Given that the costs of maintaining reserved seats provisions entail only a small degree of the ethnic majority's underrepresentation in parliament, while at the same time assuring a higher number of entries for ethnic minorities representatives to the legislative body, the likelihood of long-term viability of these provisions is quite high (Kelley 2004).

## 5. Socio-Demographic Representation (Gender, Age, Education)

Comparatively, the Romanian parliament does relatively badly of gender parity: the percentage of women members is very low. This is despite the presence of some institutional and structural factors consistently associated with higher levels of female representation, such as a PR electoral system (with medium district magnitude), welfare state socialism, and leftist parties in parliament (Siaroff 2000, Rule 1987, Shugart 1994). Yet in the case of Romania, these underlying factors have not been translated into gender-related affirmative action

policies that are often the most immediate cause of high female representation in parliament. Romania’s electoral laws do not have any gender related provisions and its political parties have not committed themselves to the internal regulation of these provisions through the use of gender quotas in their parliamentary lists.

*Table 3a. Gender of Romanian Legislators, by Type of Legislative Seat*

	Romanian Party Seats	Reserved Seats	Minority Party (UDMR)	Total
Male	91.52%	90.76%	97.73%	91.93%
Female	8.48%	9.24%	2.27%	8.07%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
(N)	(3,432)	(119)	(264)	(3,815)

Source: Authors' calculation.

Table 3a indicates that the Hungarian ethnic minority party, the UDMR, scores the worst in terms of gender inclusion, resulting in only 2.27 per cent women. In addition, only 8.07 per cent of the members that served in the Romanian parliament since 1990 have been women. The share of women in the group of UDMR members of parliament is only 2.27 per cent, compared to 9.24 per cent in case of the reserved seats for minorities other than Hungarian and 8.48 per cent in the case of Romanian party seats. As the chi-square test results provided at the bottom of the table indicate, gender share differences are statistically significant both when minority party deputies are compared with the deputies from the other parliamentary parties and when minority party deputies are compared with reserved seat deputies.

Minority party gender exclusiveness could be a product of the ethnic type of voter linkage that the party cultivates. A substantial amount of recent research points to the relative stability of electoral support enjoyed by minority parties and to their ability to survive performance failures without losing the support of their ethnically defined electorate (Birnie 2007, Alonso 2007, Chandra 2004). The ethnic nature of a minority party’s appeal to the voters might allow the party not only to survive bad policy performance, but also to ignore social inclusion requirements to a substantially larger extent than other parties in the political system can afford to. If minority parties are forgiven by their voters for their policy failures on issues such as the economy or social welfare, than minority parties can also be expected to have an easier ride in terms of voter dissatisfaction with the lack of social inclusivity within the party.

An ethnic minority party’s relatively high level of confidence in the loyalty of its voters can thus be seen as an important factor in party decisions with regard to candidate selection. This confidence weakens the incentives for the party to be more gender inclusive. Given the demographic size of the ethnic Hungarian

community, the electoral rules and the structure of party competition permit the existence of only one electorally successful ethnic Hungarian party. An ethnic Hungarian voter, who prefers to vote for an ethnic party but dislikes the UDMR's economic policies or recruitment decisions, faces the vote-wasting dilemma in supporting smaller Hungarian parties. This points to the problems regarding the supply of political alternatives for voters, rather than to the lack of societal demand for more inclusive representation. The recent increase in public opinion polls of the popularity of another ethnic Hungarian party, the Hungarian Civic Party (HCP), can serve as one indicator of ethnic Hungarian voters' growing dissatisfaction with the incumbent minority party (Caluser 2008).

The share of female deputies was the highest in the reserved seat category. The relative success of women in these races might be attributed to their competitive advantages in projecting competence and authority on the types of issues that are salient in the reserved seat segment of the electoral competition. The reserved seats competition tends to revolve around the cultural needs of territorially dispersed communities and the minority organizations' ability to ensure the minority group's symbolic visibility on the national stage. Typical educational and occupational backgrounds that women acquire tend to make them more competitive in winning races defined by these issues, rather than by competence in bringing some tangible and, usually, economically defined benefits to territorially concentrated communities. The prospect of being successful therefore allows women to win the minority organizations' nomination in the first place.

*Table 3b: Age Interval of Romanian Legislators, 1990–2016*

	Type of Seat			
	Romanian Party Seats	Reserved Seats	Minority Party (UDMR)	Total
34 years or less	7.72%	8.4%	12.69%	8.09%
Between 35 and 54 years	64.66%	52.94%	63.85%	64.24%
55 years or older	27.62%	38.66%	23.46%	27.68%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
(N)	(3,393)	(119)	(260)	(3,772)

Source: Authors' calculation.

The pattern of gender differences amongst the minority parties, and specifically the gender exclusiveness of minority party representation, is not replicated in the distribution of another important demographic variable, age. The summary measure of age distribution points to moderate differences amongst the three different types of seat categories: the median age varies between 48 years for the Hungarian minority party (UDMR), 49 for the Romanian parties' seats, and 51

for the reserved seats. Age is classified into three categories – younger deputies (34 years or less), middle-aged (35–54 years) and older (55 years or older). As can be seen from Table 3b, a majority of almost 64 per cent of MPs from all three types of seats, belongs to the middle age category. The UDMR, however, has a much higher share of young legislators: about 12.79 per cent, compared to 7.92 per cent for the Romanian party seats and 8.47 per cent for the reserved seats. Close examination of data reveals that the reason for a higher share of younger MPs in the minority party cannot be attributed to the effects of many young deputies entering parliament at the start of transition (when the UDMR was just being formed) and then retaining the seat due to the higher incumbency rate for minority party deputies. In fact, the UDMR continued to select candidates from the younger cohort to represent the party in the parliament throughout all the subsequent parliamentary terms included into this study. The observed differences in the minority party’s willingness to include women and young people into the winning portion of the electoral list might be attributed to the different weight that youth and women’s organizations play in the party’s internal politics.

There are also substantial differences among MP groups on such paramount social characteristics as education level. As in other European parliaments, university-trained politicians have taken over parliamentary representation in Romania. As can be seen from Table 4, almost all (98.1 per cent) of MPs are at least bachelor-level university graduates. In addition, a significant proportion of MPs hold doctoral degrees. This is a very high percentage in comparison to most European parliaments, where, according to a recent study, the share of deputies with a university education varied during the most recent time period between 65 and 85 per cent (Gaxie & Godmer 2007).

*Table 3c: Educational Level of Romanian Legislators, 1990–2016*

	Type of Seat			
	Romanian Party Seats	Reserved Seats	Minority Party (UDMR)	Total
Secondary	1.95%	3.39%	0.8%	1.92%
Higher education	69.28%	66.10%	83.6%	70.16%
Ph.D.	28.77%	30.51%	15.6%	27.92%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
(N)	(3,285)	(118)	(250)	(3,653)

Source: Authors' calculation.

<sup>a</sup> The table reports education level distribution for non-missing data. The percentage of missing data is 4.2 per cent.

Table 4 compares the levels of education achieved by the deputies and senators with respect to the seat type to which they are elected. According to the data, the highest proportion of representatives with higher education is found in the UDMR, with 83.6 per cent of its members.

The table distinguishes between three educational levels. In each of the three types of seats, the great majority has higher education, which consists of a bachelor or master's degree. The most important difference between the groups is the share of doctoral degrees, which range from 15.6 per cent in the UDMR, to 30.51 per cent in the case of other minorities.

The lower percentage of doctorates in the Hungarian minority party (UDMR) in comparison to both the reserved seats legislators and those from ethnically Romanian parties in parliament is an indicator of the criteria of selection of candidates by the leadership of the respective party. Therefore we can deduce that, when choosing candidates for parliamentary representation, the leadership of the UDMR might prefer selecting candidates with political experience rather than those with a doctoral degree. This finding is consistent with the earlier reported data on higher levels of professionalization in minority party representation as measured by the incumbency rate. The low numbers of doctorates in the party does not, however, assume that education level is insignificant for a career in a minority party. Having a higher education, as the literature suggests, is increasingly perceived as a type of informal requirement one needs to qualify to serve as a party representative in the Romanian parliament. The virtual absence of representatives with non-university education in the roster of the UDMR's deputies suggests that the party's behaviour conforms to this requirement.

The share of reserved seat deputies with a Ph.D. is 30.51 per cent, which puts this group on the same level as deputies from parliaments with the highest reported shares of Ph.D.s (Gaxie & Godmer 2007). The proposition that the reserved seats competition favours candidates whose background helps to project competence on issues related to the cultural needs of communities is also supported by the data on the type of education that deputies receive. 37.8 per cent of reserved seat deputies had a humanities/social science education, with the same percentage as those with exact/natural sciences, as compared to 17.0 per cent for Romanian party members of parliament and 22.7 per cent for the UDMR minority party. Although for all three groups, the main category of education type distribution was science, the high share of legislators with a humanities/social science educational background in case of reserved seats points to important social differences in the composition of the reserved seats deputy group.

## 6. Conclusion

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The main purpose of this paper is to offer a systematic analysis of how groups of members of parliament behave depending on important indicators of social inclusiveness and with respect to electoral mechanisms. It examines how groups of MPs vary with respect to ethnic composition, gender and age characteristics or educational background. The results suggest a set of rules for minorities that have to be complied with in order for these minorities to be included in party lists for electoral competitions.

After 1990, in order to ensure that minorities, regardless of their share of the national population, are represented in parliament, the electoral law introduced several provisions that facilitated this. In the absence of these provisions, minority representation would be improbable. If the aim of the drafters of the reserved seats provision was to satisfy minority groups' needs for a public and legislative presence, then the authors conclude that they have accomplished their aim. The popularity of reserved seats has increased among other nations, as well. For this particular reason, the authors advise that further research is necessary on this topic in order to understand both electoral competition and the legislative behaviour of reserved seats representatives. This research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of these provisions in promoting the representation of minorities in public office, and to monitor the performance of these legislative provisions in ensuring the accurate representation of minority groups.

According to our findings, the reserved seats provision may be a contributing factor to the lack of ethnic minorities present in Romanian political parties. From this study, the Romanian political parties can be seen as mono-ethnic organizations. Although this paper provides some evidence that the mono-ethnicity of political parties results in decreased interest in recruiting minorities, further research on parties' legislative behaviour is needed to substantiate this claim. The aim of this research is to provide an answer as to why minorities are represented through the reserved seats rather than main political parties.

Another aim of this paper was to study the mechanisms regulating the political representation of demographically large minority groups. Electoral regulations might encourage ethnic representations by trading-off other social characteristics. From our analysis, we conclude that the minority party the UDMR was the least inclusive of other minorities, compared to the other two types of parties represented in parliament (Romanian parties and reserved seats).



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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Official parliamentary data was accessed from Camera deputatilor, *Structurile altor legislature*.
- <sup>2</sup> Experts represented the following institutions: Centrul de Resurse pentru Diversitate Etnoculturala/Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center, Cluj, Romania; Liga Pro Europa/ Pro Europe League, Târgu Mureș, Romania.
- <sup>3</sup> Political support for maintaining these provisions is also based on the perception that reserved seats signal a continuing commitment to ethnic minority inclusion, a normatively important issue in the European context (Kelley 2004).
- <sup>4</sup> The party has changed its name several times throughout the post-communist period.