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Underrepresentation of women in the parliament of the Republic of Moldova

A gender perspective on democratic development in the country

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Abstract

Women's participation in politics is an interesting subject to study. The value of the study is even more meaningful if it considers the gender perspective. Of course, the representation of women in politics is not a new issue to make one's research on, yet now it is very up to date when new democratic states emerge and higher numbers of women tend to become politically active. At the same time just a very small amount of them are actually enjoying the possibility of being elected.

This study presents a gender perspective on women's representation in the national parliament in the Republic of Moldova – the poorest country in Europe. In the study I try to give a comprehensive view on the issue of underrepresentation in connection with democratic development of the country.

Key words: women's underrepresentation, parliament, democratic development, the Republic of Moldova

Word count: 17 128

List of abbreviations

AIE – Alliance for European Integration

PLDM – Liberal Democrat Party of Moldova

PDM – Democrat Party of Moldova

PL – Liberal Party

AMN – Alliance "Moldova Noastră"

IRI – International Republican Institute

MP – member of the parliament

IPU – Inter-Parliamentary Union

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

IDEA – the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

IOM – International Organization for Migration

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency

UN – the United Nations

US – the United States

PCRM – Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova

ABA/CEELI – the American Bar Association Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative

OSCE – the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

USAID – the United States Agency for International Development

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1 Introduction

1.1 Women's political participation around the world

The twentieth century was a century of visible changes in gender roles in Europe and the United States. Women got access to education, the labor market, opportunities to participate in civil and political life in a lot of countries around the world. Even though a considerable progress was achieved in some of the countries, gender equality in all spheres of life still remains a huge problem for others. Some oppressive regimes in such countries deny women's rights to education and participation in the labor market, as well as economic- and self-independence. In the worst cases women also barely have access to health care, which in most cases is quite limited, sometimes even in accordance to laws stipulating that women can be treated only by female doctors, etc. (Inglehart and Norris 2003, pp.3-4). Of course, these are just limited number of countries with such severe political regimes and in the rest of the countries women can enjoy their rights and freedoms more or less.

Constant growth of democracies around the world influenced a lot on how the gender roles have been changing. Even though the gender gap is still present in most of societies, it is not as big as it used to be before. Women can almost equally participate in most spheres in everyday life. However, the area of politics remains one of those where women are heavily underrepresented, even though they constitute half of the world's population with voting rights. Statistical data by IPU (Women in Parliaments, situation as for 31 January 2005, cited in Ballington 1998, p.25) suggests that in 1995 women constituted only 11.3 percent of members of parliament. In 10 years – in 2005 – this percentage has increased to

15.8 percent. According to the IPU statistics as of May 31, 2011 it is 19.3 percent of women are currently serving as members of parliament. Despite the fact that some regions of the world have made a noticeable progress (mainly Nordic countries where the percentage equals 42.1), most of the regions haven't reached the number of at least 30 percent of women in parliament yet.

Equal representation of women in parliament represents itself a part of the political rights of both men and women. Political rights in its turn belong to a larger category of human rights, which should be fully respected in order to consider a regime democratic. As Ballington (2005, p.24) states:

> 'The development of any political agenda that does not include the perspectives, views and experiences of those who will be affected is not credible'.

Taking these words into consideration, the issue of equal representation of men and women is particularly important for countries finding themselves in the process of democratic transition. Gender perspective in politics is ones that are not to be ignored if the state strives for being a democracy:

> 'Decision making and priority setting continue to be largely in hands of men. Taking into account gendered perspectives and involving both women and men in decision-making process are a sine qua non of any democratic framework. Hence democracy, by definition, cannot afford to be gender-blind' (Ballington 2005, p24).

1.2 Choice of subject and aim of the research.

My choice of the research subject was made for several reasons. First of all I come from the Republic of Moldova and I feel passionately about this country with good and hardworking people, who every day live on the brink of survival. Shedding light on what is happening in Moldova I see as my contribution to the development of the Moldovan society.

Secondly, my interest in the subject was dictated by the process of democratic transition in the country, which was not as successful as it was expected to be. In these conditions the seriousness of the constant talks about

European integration of Moldova, which are very popular among Moldovan politicians, seem to be much exaggerated, especially since the characteristics of the Moldovan democratic development continuously worsened. Considering this, a gender perspective on the analysis of the situation would be a worthy contribution for the existing research about Republic of Moldova. However, I have chosen to focus on representation of women in the national parliament, as part of the democratic development of the country.

Thus the aim of the research is to analyze the situation with the women's representation in the national parliament of Republic of Moldova. With the help of my analysis I would like to understand what role women play as MPs in the national legislative body and how their work influence the society as a whole. At the same time I would like to give an insight on whether there are any changes in perception of women by politicians, and whether they use their power in order to facilitate women's entrance on political arena.

1.3 Previous research

In this part of the work I would like to give a brief overview of the research about representation of women in national parliaments. However it is worth mentioning that the subject of the research is not new. The first studies about the representation of women in parliaments appeared in 1980s. Since that time this subject didn't lose its attractiveness for researchers all over the world and was among those topics on the top of the research agenda. Due to this fact, the amount of literature that analyzes the representation of women in parliaments is enormous. My goal therefore is not to present all the possible works, but to limit myself to those studies that I found useful and which I have addressed in my thesis.

The first work I would like to pay attention to is the article by Wilma Rule (1987) *Electoral Systems, Contextual Factors and Women's Opportunity for Election to Parliament in Twenty-Three Democracies*. The study presents a cross-

country research with the aim to analyze how electoral systems, parties and socioeconomic reality of the country affect women's opportunities to be elected in parliament. It also analyzes the mechanisms which enable women's recruitment. The most substantial conclusion of the study was that the type of electoral system plays the most significant role in women's possibilities to be elected. The most favorable conditions for women exist under the party list/proportional representation system. (Rule 1987, p.477, p.494) One of the most useful conclusions from this work as to my research I consider the one about women's political activity:

> '[…] women's political activity is very important for increasing women's recruitment in various electoral systems. Negative electoral system features have been overcome by women's political mobilization' (Rule 1987:495).

This suggests that women's political activism triggers an effective "mechanism" of women's parliamentary recruitment, which is an important feature when women are found to be underrepresented.

The picture would be incomplete if I wouldn't comment on her choice of samples. The countries the research was done on are all well-developed. In this respect the study is lacking the variety in samples that would include countries with different socioeconomic level of development, thus affecting the results of the study and making them less applicable to developing countries.

However, studies done during the 1990's compensate this lack. The variation in sampling and the number of countries chosen grew steadily. Thus the *Electoral Systems in Comparative Perspective* under the edition by Rule and Zimmerman (1994) presents an analysis of 20 countries around the world. Even though the number of countries is lower than in the study discussed above, the choice is more diverse. The samples are then divided among the four regions: Europe and the US; Middle East and Africa; Asia; Latin America, Australia and New Zealand. Such division allows taking into consideration such aspects as culture, religion, democratic development of the countries etc. However, the countries were also grouped in accordance to developmental level, so in each big group the countries were more or less similar. The analysis is done through the prism of the impact which the electoral system exerts upon women and minorities. Since the Republic of Moldova is a multi-national country in state of democratic

transition, the experience of other countries with similar conditions may give some clues as of how to resolve the present days' problems in Moldovan society.

The next substantial study was done by Kentworthy and Malami (1999). In their article *Gender Inequality in Political Representation: A Worldwide Comparative Analysis* they present the research on 146 countries around the world. The main distinction of this study is the number of states, which included countries with different level of development. As authors suggest (Kentworthy and Malami 1999, p.236) their study is aimed to provide more consistent results as to previous studies done (Rule 1981, 1987, 1994; Norris 1985, 1987; Darcy, Welch, & Clark 1994; Lovenduski & Norris 1993; Paxton 1997; Matland 1998; Moore & Shackman 1996, Oakes & Almquist 1993)[1], since the latter brought some controversial results. As Kentworthy and Malami (1999, pp.259-260) state:

> 'Our findings indicate that political, socioeconomic, and cultural factors each play a role in accounting for cross-national variation in the degree of gender inequality in political representation. In this respect, women's political representation appears to be similar to many other important societal phenomena… It is worth emphasizing, however, that socioeconomic factors seem less important than theoretical perspectives on gender political inequality sometimes presume'.

The findings by Norris (1987) as cited in Kentworthy and Malami (1999, p.240) suggest that even though participation of women in the labor market is important, a greater importance has a particular occupation a woman has:

> '…elected political officials frequently are drawn from professional occupations. Lawyers, educators, journalists, and business professionals tend to be heavily overrepresented in parliaments compared with their numbers in the general population'.

Thus Kentworthy and Malami (1999, p.240) come to the conclusion that increase in the amount of women who work in higher status professional occupation should result in increased number of women elected to parliament. Among the other key determinants that affect the equality in political representation of women, Kentworthy and Malami (1999, p.260) name the

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[1]The researchers are enumerated as Kentworthy and Malami mention them in their article.

structure of the electoral system, the party composition of government, the timing of women's suffrage, and cultural attitudes.

Another comparative study was done by Matland (1998a) – *Women's Representation in National Legislatures: Developed and Developing Countries*. I found this study interesting because of the way the research is done. Matland (1998a) first performes the research on 24 "advanced industrialized democracies" and then applies the received pattern on 16 developing democracies. The research revealed that all the important factors for developed democracies had no high impact in developing democracies. As the result Matland (1998a, p.120) suggests that "a minimum development level is needed to create the foundation for other variables to have an effect". Only after that the representation of women can reach the critical mass (the critical mass theory will be discussed later on in the paper). However it was never mentioned in the study what that minimal level of democratic development is, and when the pattern of developed countries starts working on the developing countries as well. One more downside of the research is that considering religion, Matland (1998a) actually explores the influence of Catholic religion in particular, which makes it harder to apply the results in case where Catholics are minority in the country.

Another study that I find particularly useful is the book by Inglehart and Norris (2003) *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World*. Although the authors acknowledge the importance of economic growth and legal-institutional reforms for the promotion of gender equality in politics, they pay most of their attention to such determinant as culture. This approach reveals the importance of – as Inglehart and Norris (2003, p.8) name it – "predominant culture", since it lies in the basis of all the norms, beliefs and values that prevail in society. It seems reasonable to examine the problem of gender equality through the prism of culture, as

> 'Gender' refers to the socially constructed roles and learned behavior of women and men associated with the biological characteristics of females and males. (Alvarez, 2000 cited in Inglehart and Norris, 2003, p.8)

Inglehart and Norris (2003, p.159) argue that though economic development matters, there is "a wide range of other indicators of human development […] are about equally good predictors of support for gender equality." In this regard,

constant cultural changes that take place in any society combined with institutional reforms that would control the recruitment process would influence positively the possibility of women to be elected. (Inglehart and Norris 2003, p.162) This conclusion is especially useful for my work since it gives a specific insight on problems in Moldova. Besides, it is one of few studies that include Moldova as a sample country.

Politikens andra sida: Om kvinnorepresentation I Sveriges riksdag[2] by Lena Wängnerud (1998) is another research that inspired me a lot. Even though it is not directly connected to my research on the Republic of Moldova, it gave me a lot of ideas of how I should elaborate on my subject. It also helped me understand better some of the concepts, such as male and female domains in politics etc.

Representing women? Female legislators in west European parliaments by Mateo Diaz (2005) is a substantial study on women's representation in Sweden and Belgium. I enjoyed in particular the structure of the work, which helps a lot to understanding the connections between different theories and concepts on representation of women in legislative bodies. The study addresses such questions as underrepresentation of women in parliaments, the number of women in parliament, descriptive and substantive representation, which are also valuable for my thesis.

To summarize, I need to say that all the authors agree that electoral system, socio-cultural, and economic conditions are the most important factors in achieving equal representation of women, however some of them attach more importance to either electoral system (Rule 1978; Rule and Zimmerman1994;), social and/or cultural factors (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Kentworthy and Malami 1999), or economic development of the country (Matland 1998a). Furthermore, scientists who have done comparative studies on countries with different economic development, agree that the lower the development of the country is, the more impact cultural factor has on how women are perceived by society and which gender roles they are assigned.

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[2] Title in English (as stated in the abstract to the work) is The Second Face of Democracy. Women's Represenation in the Swedish Parliament.

Whereas there is a lot of literature dedicated to political representation of women, and in particular to representation of women in parliaments, it was especially hard to find any information on the Republic of Moldova. Eastern European countries (mainly those which were part of the Soviet Union) became the matter of the closer attention of studies in late 1990's due to absence of statistics for analysis, and therefore there is not many studies dedicated to these countries. As an example, Romania and Ukraine got a better coverage in the scientific literature, while the Republic of Moldova remains an 'unexplored spot on Europe's map'. Those few studies that mention Moldova, use quite old data – mainly from the beginning of 1990's, just after Moldova became independent. However, the situation in the country has changed a lot since that time, and therefore a more systematic study is needed.

1.4 Research questions

There is an opinion that a better representation of women in parliament might influence the quality of democracy in the country. (i.g. Mateo Diaz 2005, p.154-156) Since Moldova is a country in the process of democratic transition, it would be interesting to see if there is a way to speed up this process. It is especially important if considering the general line of Moldovan international politics aimed at European integration. However, before making any conclusions on this issue, an analysis should be done in order to ascertain the existence of any relation between the number of female MPs and the democratic development. Considering this the first research question is:

Does the existing gender composition of Moldovan parliament influence the democratic development?

The second research question is related to the underrepresentation of women in national parliament in Moldova and the impact of their work on social development, with the emphasis on women as social group.

Whose interests do women MPs represent in Moldovan parliament?

The third research question addresses the *Law on ensuring equal opportunities for women and men* No. 5-XVI of 9 February 2006. Since it is the most recent law aimed at providing equal opportunities to men and women in Moldovan society, its analysis might help in understanding, whether the situation on gender inequality is really changing in Moldova. In this regards the third research question would be:

To what extent the Law on ensuring equal opportunities for women and men has power to positively influence the underrepresentation of women in the parliament?

1.5 Disposition

The first chapter of the work, which the disposition is part of, is introductory and is dedicated to the brief insight on the positions of women in politics, and especially on their representation in parliaments. It also contains the overview of previous research done on the matters elaborated further in thesis.

The second chapter presents the theoretical framework for the research. It discusses a number of arguments for representation of women in parliament and the outcomes of their presence. The emphasis here is on theory of descriptive and substantive representation, as well as on the 'critical mass' theory. Then the obstacles that women face on their way to be elected as MPs are discussed. The final part of this chapter is dedicated to the discussion about quota mechanisms.

The third chapter describes the research design and methodology. Besides the argumentation for chosen methods, possible methodological concerns and problems with application of methods are discussed.

The forth chapter gives the reader insight on contemporaneous socio-political and economic situation in the Republic of Moldova and presents a retrospective overview of women's political activism under the years of independence of the country. This part of the work is aimed to give a

comprehensive background for further analysis and for better understanding of current situation in the Republic of Moldova.

The fifth chapter presents the actual analysis and explanations of the findings. In this chapter the research questions are also being answered.

The sixth chapter of the thesis presents the final discussion and conclusions in regards to the issues elaborated in the previous chapters.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Equal gender representation in parliament. Why should it be?

The question of equal gender representation in politics is not only the matter of scientific researches. Gender equality is also deeply rooted in the essence of democracy, and therefore if a society strives to be democratic, it cannot ignore this problem. As it is stipulated in the *Beijing Platform for Acton* (1995, art.181):

> 'The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his/her country. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life. […] Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning.'

As Karam and Lovenduski (2005, p.188) mention in their article *Women in Parliament: Making a Difference* "in parliament, women enter a male domain", meaning that parliaments were structured and arranged by males and for males. It was an organization developed through history, and thus traditionally male-dominated due to the historical development of societies. If it wasn't an issue before, now it is absolutely necessary to bring women into this domain. Different authors single out different number of arguments for gender-equal representation. In this case I will use the typology by Mateo Diaz (2005) who marks out two main categories of arguments for equal representation of women in legislature: the *rights* argument and the *utility* argument, where the latter has several sub-categories.

2.1.1 The rights argument

One of the most widespread arguments for the gender-equal representation in parliaments is the argument of law, or in other words *rights*. According to the Article 25 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1976, cited in Audiovisual Library of International Law):

> 'Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in Article 2 (which are race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status) and without unreasonable restrictions:
>
> (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;
>
> (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;
>
> (c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.'

Even though the rights to elect and be elected are guaranteed to citizens, it does not automatically result in ability of eligible women to get the mandate. This, as Galligan and Tremblay (2005, p.2) write, "eligibility is [not] free from the influence of systemic discrimination". Thus even if men and women are provided equal opportunities, discrimination still can occur due to other factors. Mateo Diaz (2005, p.1) writes that there is two approaches to equality: the first one considers that providing equal opportunities will be sufficient for eliminating discrimination, whilst the second approach pays attention not only on the equality of opportunities, but also to equality of possibilities of using these opportunities. In regard to this the Article 23 *Equality between men and women* stipulates:

> 'Equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay.
>
> The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the under-represented sex.'

As Mateo Diaz (2005, p.2) argues, Article 23 not only protects the equality between men and women, but also stands for positive discrimination in cases when one of the genders is underrepresented. Thus the *rights* argument for gender equality, enclosed into framework of international laws, provides legal basis for bringing more women into legislation.

2.1.2 The utility argument

The utility argument stands for equal representation of women due to usefulness of it for the whole society. Mateo Diaz (2005, p.116) distinguishes five different forms of utility arguments: "*symbolic importance, profit of competences, legitimacy, substantive impact,* and *political renewal*" (italics as in original).

As Phillips (1995, cited in Mateo Diaz 2005, p.116) suggests, a regular removal from power of a certain group of people, makes another group constantly predominant and the first group thus becomes a political minority. On the other hand, improved access to politics for women results in changes of views about women as capable politicians within society, while also increasing women's self-confidence. (Mateo Diaz 2005, p.116)

Next form of utility argument – *profit of competences* – takes into consideration the possibility of women to contribute to the societal development and politics due to different experiences they have. Despite the fact that half of the population is women they are underrepresented in parliaments, and their beneficial skills and abilities are thus not used. (ibid.) This idea is expressed very well in the words by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as cited in Mateo Diaz (2005, p.117):

> 'When women are fully involved, the benefits can be seen immediately: families are healthier and better fed; their income, savings and reinvestment go up. And what is true of families is also true of communities and, in the long run, of whole country.'

The third form of utility argument according to Mateo Diaz (2005) is *legitimacy*. Constant underrepresentation of individuals from certain groups of

society may lead to decreasing of legitimacy of the legislative body, which in its turn can provoke lower levels of satisfaction with the system and trust in it. Phillips (1998, p.40) in *The Politics of Presence* suggests that the legitimacy argument is linked with the argument of symbolic importance:

> 'This more symbolic element in representation is sometimes linked to arguments about making political institutions more legitimate, more obviously and visibly representative of those they pretend to represent.'

According to Norris (1999) as cited in Mateo Diaz (2005), a shortage of legitimacy at representative level influences not only the faith of people in institution, but also their faith in democratic processes. Therefore the increase of women's representation in the parliament should positively affect peoples rust in democracy.

The forth form of utility argument is *substantive impact*. This argument means that women, by virtue of their experiences, entering the parliament bring new issues to its political agenda. (Mateo Diaz 2005, p.117) This happens due to different priority order that male and female MPs adhere to. Irrespective of the opinion that male and female MPs in general have the same agenda, "[f]or the majority of respondents, women's and men's concerns and priorities do differ on most basic issues", says IPU's research. (*Equality in Politics*, p.31)

The fifth form of utility argument is *political renewal*, which is based on the interaction between men and women, where women are new actors. Being a new actor means that person does not know exactly how the existing system functions and therefore is free from existing habits and codes. Of course, the socialization may happen in a while. (Mateo Diaz 2005, p.118) According to the feminists, first women to be elected to parliament (if constituting minority) acquire "male" characteristics during the process of socialization into legislation. As the result of this socialization women change their opinions so much that they become "indistinguishable from the man they replaced". (Karam and Lovenduski 1998, p.189)

The sixth utility argument is based on the assumption that women better represent interests of their gender. Moreover their distant position relative to legislature makes them less "spoiled" and closer to ordinary citizens. As the result increasing amount of women in parliament should result in a politics of a better

quality. However, this way of thinking may lead to essentialist point of view that due to exceptional suitability of women for politics all MPs should be women, which would result in reversed discrimination. For these reasons this argument was criticized by several authors, i.e. Bridgeman and Millns (1998) and Drakoupoulou (2000) as cited in Mateo Diaz (2005, p.118)

To conclude, the arguments for equal representation of women and men in parliaments are mostly promoting the difference of women from men and how the politics can benefit from this difference. It is no doubt that different people have different life experience, and from this point of view, might have different perspectives on same issues, thus enhancing the variety of opinions. However, this close concentration on the difference of women, as Mateo Diaz (2005, p.118) suggests, may create an expectation that women must act differently, which puts them in quite rigid borders. This pattern, if followed, might not only limit women's options, but also complicate the process of collaboration within parliament.

Increasing the number of women (if taking into consideration all the arguments) will inevitably result in increased equality within the institution itself, change of priorities and widening of political agenda, which will mirror the interests of wider groups in society. In this case the quality of parliamentarian work should gradually improve and positively affect the democratic development, which is especially important for developing countries.

2.2 Whose interests women represent in parliament?

This part of my research is dedicated to a brief insight into representation theories. Since participation of all citizens in decision-making process is impossible, the practice of representation was adopted. However, when talking about representation, it is important to mention that today's society demands equal representation of men and women. This constitutes one of the principles in accordance to which democratic systems are evaluated. Equal representation

affects such qualities of democratic system as *inclusiveness* and *pluralism*, where inclusiveness answer for openness of system and inclusion of people from different backgrounds and pluralism guarantees that the decisions are based on the plurality of options. (Mateo Diaz 2005, p.13)

2.2.1 Theories of descriptive and substantive representation

Legislative bodies which resemble the population of the country in regard to such basic features as sex and race tends to be more legitimate. According to the theories of descriptive representation, not a single group should be excluded from access to power, because it will negatively affect the outcome of the politics. At the same time descriptive representation can be quite problematic due to how the representation itself is defined. (Pitkin ,1967 cited in Clark, 1991, p.99) According to Pitkin (1967 cited in Mateo Diaz, 2005, p.14) there are theoretical and empirical dimensions of representation. Theoretical dimension in this terms stands for the ideal picture of legislative body, thus presenting "what a representative legislature should, by its very nature, be like" (Pitkin, 1967 cited in Mateo Diaz, 2005, p.14). Empirical dimension, on the other hand, stands for the actual activity of legislators, which is representation as action. However, in these dimensions there is not special attention placed on who should represent and what (Mateo Diaz 2005, p.14). This pitfall, Clark (1991, p.99) argues, was the cause for women's underrepresentation; since women were considered to have the same opinions as men, and therefore don't need to be represented. In another words, gender was not considered a distinguishing and important social characteristic for political representation.

Systematic underrepresentation of women in legislature and the women movement of 1960s resulted in change of opinion about representation. Sapiro (1981, cited in Clark, 1991, p.100) argues that "women do form a distinct political group that has a distinct position and shared set of problems". This brings the idea of not only social representation, but also the representation of different ideas and/or opinions to political agenda (Wängnerud 1998, p.14).

To better understand the concepts of representation in this research I will use the terms proposed by Björkman (1979, cited in Mateo Diaz 2005, p.14) – descriptive representation and substantive representation, where the first one means that "an agent shares one or several significant characteristics with the citizens whom he or she represents", and the second one stands for the representation based on community of interests with the group of citizens he or she represents irrespectively of sharing any physical or other characteristics.

In this respect, advocates of substantive representation suggest that as long as the interests of the citizens are represented it is not important who represent them. Yet Phillips (1995), as cited in Wängnerund (1998, p.15), disputes this assertion and argues that:

> "New problems and issues always emerge alongside unanticipated constraints, and in the subsequent weighing of interpretations and priorities it can matter immensely who the representatives are. When there is a significant under-representation of disadvantaged groups at the point of final decision, this can and does have serious consequences."

The questions of descriptive and substantive representation and how a parliament should look like still remain unresolved (Wängnerud 1998, p.13). Even though some may see degree of descriptive representation as an indicator of political system's inclusiveness, others suggest that that "democratic representation is not about *descriptive representation*, but about *substantive representation*", where the representatives would speak for the community as whole and not a certain group (Mateo Diaz 2005, p.17). Along these lines, the argument for descriptive representation also feels quite reasonable, if taking into consideration that women constitute 50 percent of the population, but constantly form minority in parliaments. This situation is contradicting the democratic inclusiveness and pluralism of opinions. (Ibid.)

2.2.2 'Critical mass' theory

How many women should be elected to the parliament, so that they can make difference? According to Karam and Lovenduski (1998, p.189) "[m]en are

known to behave differently when women are absent. Because it upsets gender boundaries, the presence of even one woman will alter male behavior; the presence of several women will alter it even further". Considering this statement I would say, that even though change might occur, it is not guaranteed at all. The examples of South Asian countries demonstrate that the presence of women in legislation might be quite ostentatious (Dahlerup 1998, p149). In this regard Karam and Lovenduski (1998, p.189) suggest that a certain number of women is needed in order to significant long-term changes would occur. This substantial number of women is known as critical mass.

According to the classification by Dahlerup (1988, cited in Mateo Diaz, 2005, p.119) several groups can be distinguished in parliament in regard to sex distribution: uniform groups, skewed groups, tilted groups and balanced groups. The groups are characterized by percentage of genders present in each group. The uniform group is the group, which totally dominates and there is no presence of other gender in it. The skewed groups appear, when women constitute less than 15 percent of the MPs. The category of tilted groups includes the groups with percentage of women ranging from 15 to 40 percent. The last category is balanced groups, where both genders constitute ratios of 40-60 percent. In accordance to this classification, the changes in political culture will take place when the percentage of women would constitute 30-40 percent, or in other words when the shift from skewed to tilted groups occur. Dahlerup (1988, cited in Karam and Lovenduski, 1998, p.189) also suggests that

> "the test that the critical mass of women is present is the acceleration of the development of women's representation through acts that improve the situation for themselves and for women in general".

Even though Mateo Diaz (2005, p.119) criticizes Dahlerup for employing the classification of groups in parliament, initially designed for classification of groups in corporations, without testing it in political environment, she also acknowledges the fact that once the critical mass has been reached, the working conditions for the minority group improve. Both Dahlerup (1988) and Mateo Diaz (2005), as cited in Karam and Lovenduski (1998, p.189) pinpoint the fact that while the number of women in parliament increases, they tend to become more socially representative. In another words, greater number of women in parliament

allow women to be not just representatives of ideas[3] (substantive representation), but also represent women as a social group (descriptive representation). At the same time, a substantial amount of women in parliament are able to withstand political socialization and assimilation and change institution itself (Mateo Diaz 2005, p.122), as well as "recruit other women and develop new legislation and institutions to benefit women" (Dahlerup 1988, cited in Karam and Lovenduski 1998, p.189).

So, whose interests' do women represent in parliaments? The answer to this question posed in the beginning of this sub-chapter cannot be answered unambiguously. It is highly dependent on a whole bunch of factors, such as political and cultural development, level of democratization, number of women in parliament etc. However, in most favorable conditions women tend to distinguish from men in parliament and contribute sufficiently to political agenda due to their different priorities and interests. A number of 30 percent at this point should not be seen as a final aim, but as a worthy milestone on the way to parity.

2.2.3 Women as MPs and the outcome of their presence

"We can say that one of the qualitative effects of women's political action is greater awareness among men of the role of women. Women are now players and sometimes even major players." (Respondent from West Africa, Politics:Women's insight, p.30)

As Galligan and Tremblay (2005, p.237-238) suggest that "female MPs are conscious of their gender as well as their political affiliation and constituency duties". What they also point out to, is that the capacity of the outcome is highly dependent on the number of women present in parliament. When women constitute more than 30 percent (Scandinavia, the Netherlands) women are more accepted and seen as an equal, rather than an "exotic addition". In these conditions women also get support from men in promoting women's issues –

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[3] By 'ideas' I mean here general ideas, which are common for community.

gender related issues and gender-sensitive policies – because gender-awareness became a firm practice. With smaller amount of women in parliament – more than one-fifth (Africa, Switzerland, Spain, Australia, New Zealand) – they concentrate their efforts on such issues and women's health, anti-discrimination policies, reproductive rights, different types of violence against women. If women form less than one-fifth in parliament, their influence is less visible.

According to the survey *Politics: Women's Insight* (p.30) by IPU women's impact on politics is much wider than described above; "women have talents for working effectively in politics and […] women's contributions change the nature of political processes and procedures". Norris and Lovenduski (1995, cited in Mateo Diaz 2005, p.124) suggest that "women tended to give slightly more support for feminist and left-wing values, to express stronger concern about social policy issues, and to give higher priority to constituency casework".

Wängnerud's research (1998, p.53-58) is in line with this idea. Based on research on the Swedish parliament, she argues that gender patterns in political areas exist and women tend to choose/be appointed to areas such as social welfare and culture/justice, while economics and technical area were left for men. The report *Equality and Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments* by IPU (2008, p.45) support this categorization of areas. Mateo Diaz (2005) in her research on Sweden and Belgium uses the categories of committees by Wängnerud (1998): social welfare, culture/justice, basic functions, and economy/technology, which proved to be true. Moreover, talking about changes in political agenda, Mateo Diaz (2005, p.136) suggests that women enhance political agenda and bring innovative approaches to solutions.

Mateo Diaz (2005, p.144-145) also suggests that with increased an number of women in parliament, the institution itself changes. Even though there are strict rules, which secure the adaptation and political socialization processes, the parliamentary process had changed. Thus the decision-making process became more formal:

> "I think women have changed something here. Men are more willing to go out in the evening to have dinner, etc. We, women, have already changed that here. As we are here, we want to have the most efficient planning for the day, and then we go home to our family." (Belgian female MP from the Flemish Liberal Party, cited in Mateo Diaz, 2005, p.145)

At the same time the parliamentary procedures change to comply with women's requirements, the institution itself becomes more women-friendly. A nice example of this statement would be the Swedish Riksdag, which provides childcare for its members from 1995 – an initiative started by Birgitta Dahl. Another change is in attitudes, the parliamentary mandate is no longer seen as a life-time activity, and it significantly changes the atmosphere, making it more relaxed. Women, who enter parliament, make it easier not only for other women to enter the parliament, but also for young people, immigrants, new parties, thus bringing new actors to the political arena. The latter tend to have higher levels of education and have less respect for the existing rules. If group of these newcomers would be big enough it would give possibility to change the rules and overcome the institutional socialization and adaptation. (Mateo Diaz, 2005, p. 144-146)

While earlier the impact women have on parliament as institution and policies as the outcome of parliamentarian work was described, the next paragraph is dedicated to the question whether women have an impact on democratic system as a whole, when they are present in parliament. The study by Mateo Diaz (2005) is trying to give insight on this question.

Some of the respondents expressed a skeptical opinion that even if changes take place in parliament itself, they do not affect the general citizens. However, there are quite many supporters of the opposite point of view as well. According to them democratic system is "not static and it is constantly changing" (Mateo Diaz, p.154). One of the respondents (ibid.) mentioned that for Sweden these changes meant the process of decentralization and switch from voting for party to voting for person, thus making the electoral system more person-oriented:

> "When a lot of people are personally elected and promoting their own ideas, it will change the parliament. […] It improves the democratic system because people no longer choose just a party but also the individuals who represent that party" (Swedish male MP from the Conservative Party, cited in Mateo Diaz 2005, p. 155)

Another respondent in the same study, but from Belgian parliament, suggests that with increased amount of women in parliament and subsequent changes in perception of MP's mandate as temporary, MPs became less bound to it, and as the result have more freedom in making suitable choses:

> "I think that new actors can bring a more human contact to citizens. […] Women hold onto the political mandate less strongly. A too strong dependency sometimes forces one to make choices with which one does not necessarily agree" (Belgian female MP from Francophone Christian Democratic Party, cited in Mateo Diaz 2005, p.155).

In the study *Politics: Women's Insight* (2008, p.45) by IPU, respondents all over the world support the idea of improvement of democratic system as the result of the enhancement of women's participation in legislation. However, depending on where the respondents are coming from, they pinpoint different "forms" the improvements may take. Thus respondents from Africa pay more attention on the increasing transparency and unbiased justice, which often become problematic areas in newly established democratic regimes. Presence of many armed conflicts on African territories makes it important to find other approaches to resolving them; therefore such quality as "softness" in approaching problems is highly valued.

Besides the development of a democratic system on the national level respondents pay attention that participation of women (and ideally other underrepresented groups) benefits global society on international level:

> "[…] A greater representation of all constituents of society contributes to global competitiveness for the country and a worldwide global solution base for increasingly interconnected problems, such as environment, economy, peace and development; in short, to better governance." (a respondent from North America, cited in *Politics: Women's Insight*, p.45)

Women's willingness to compromise and their different approach to being a politician are also noted constantly by respondents:

> "Women are, all in all, less adversarial and more consensus-driven [than men], seeking solutions to problems rather than scoring political points. Most women I know in politics are radical and passionate about politics. They are engaged in politics to "make a difference". It might be the environment, a justice issue or a childcare issue. Few women are enrolled just for the sake of it, although there are some who fit into that motiveless category. The notion of public service is one frequently cited by women. Women are less likely to seek to use influence for their personal gain. Most women find it difficult to get elected and stay elected; to do so they have to be very good. Mediocrity is acceptable in male politicians but not amongst women politicians" (a respondent from Western Europe, cited in *Politics: Women's Insight*, p.46).

Thus, taking into consideration mentioned above studies, it is possible to make the conclusion that women make a difference when they enter the parliament. It was also proven that not only policies are changed, but also the

institution itself is up to change under the influence of female MPs. What is worth mentioning is that number of women also matters, and the higher the representation of women is, the easier it is for them to demonstrate their specific knowledge and share their experiences. It was noticed that for larger numbers of female MPs taking their mandates at the same time it is easier to resist institutional socialization, and thus they are more eager to stand for large-scale changes. As regards to improvements of democracy, the question remains highly controversial, and to some extent provocative. Constant underrepresentation of a large part of society in the decision-making process makes it hard to believe that this kind of democracy provides equally for everyone, thus undermining the legitimacy of democracy itself. In this context enhancement of women's presence in parliament makes democratic regime more representative. However, the scale of such enhancement should be taken into consideration, since women have to oppose political socialization within the institution, and with insufficient number of new actors – in this case women – it is hard to predict whether the changes will occur.

2.3 Hindrances to women's participation

On their way to being elected to parliament, women face a number of hindrances. In her article *Obstacles to women's participation in parliament* Shvedova (1998, pp.33-34) categorizes the obstacles into three different groups – "political, socio-economic, and ideological and psychological (or socio-cultural)". Darcy, Welch and Clark (1987, p.89) in the article *Women, Elections, and Representation* names similar obstacles for enhancing of women's participation: fear of losing, patterns of women's socialization, occupational segregation, electoral systems, voters' and political parties' discrimination against women, and incumbency effect. However I will use the categories suggested by Shvedova, because I find it more comprehensive.

Within political obstacles, Shvedova (1998, pp.35-36) pays attention to the prevailing masculine model of politics, which results in establishing the rules in accordance to male lifestyles. These lifestyles do not take in consideration women's different way of participating in politics, based on consensus and collaboration, and not "competition and confrontation". The only way for women to get into politics is to adapt male behavior to the detriment of their own values and norms. This makes them less eager to even start a political career. Birgitta Dahl, former Speaker of the Swedish Riksdag speaks about how ideally it should be:

> "[…] Neither men nor women have to conform to a traditional role. Women do not have to behave like men to have power; men do not have to behave likewomen to be allowed to care for their children. When this pattern becomes the norm then we will see real change."

Whether women will be able to be elected or not depends a lot on party support. Shvedova (1998, p.37) suggests that women are those suffering from biased attitudes within the parties when it concerns nomination process, and they also are not provided enough resources for conducting election campaigns. Though, to improve this situation quotas system would be a good solution. Within these lines it is also important that women get good support from women's organization to increase women's confidence and provide information.

Another political obstacle mentioned by Shvedova (1998r, p.39) and other scientists (for example Matland 1998a; Rule and Zimmerman 1994) is the electoral system. The differences in representation of women in countries with plurality/majority or proportional representation electoral system are considerable:

Percentage of women MPs: Majoritarian vs PR Electoral Systems

Figure showing two lines (Majoritarian and Proportional) with data points:

Proportional: 1945: 2,93; 1950: 4,73; 1960: 5,47; 1970: 5,86; 1980: 11,89; 1990: 18,13; 1997: 21,93; 2004: 27,49

Majoritarian: 1945: 3,05; 1950: 2,13; 1960: 2,51; 1970: 2,23; 1980: 3,37; 1990: 8,16; 1997: 15,42; 2004: 18,24

Y-axis: Percentage of women in lower houses (0 to 30)
X-axis: Year

Legend: Majoritarian, Proportional
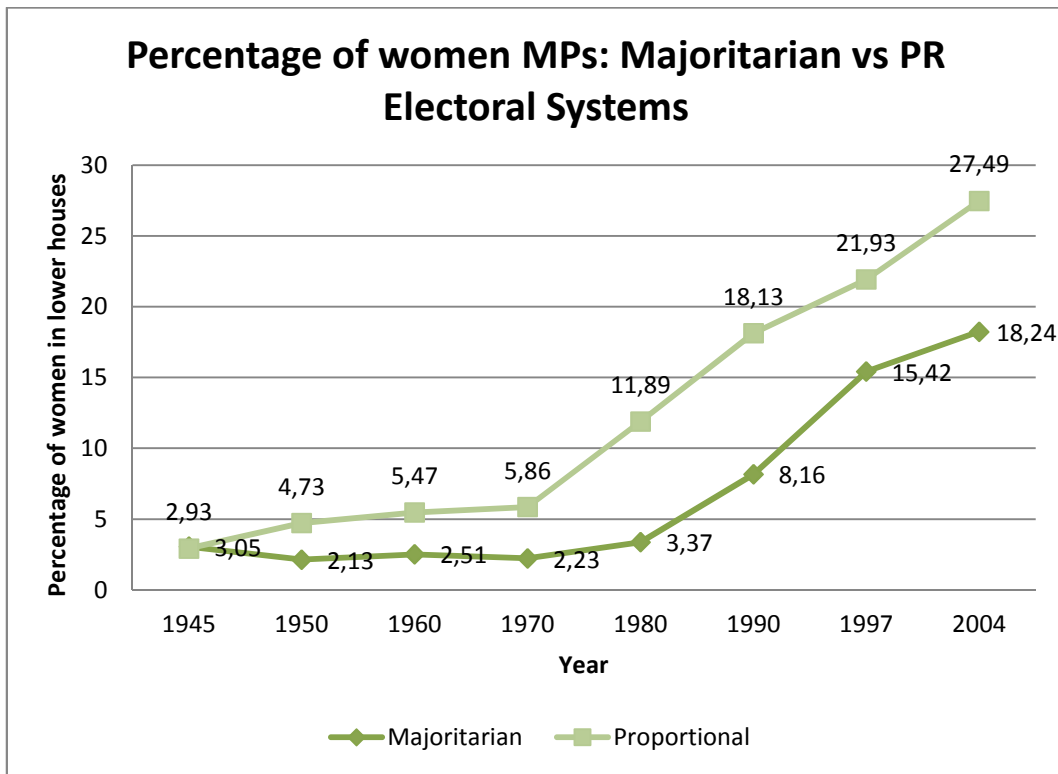
Figure 1: International IDEA 1998 cited in Matland 1998, p.102

Though the graphs demonstrate a small difference in the beginning, starting from 1970 – after the second-wave feminist movements – the difference in numbers became more significant. The demand of greater representation in politics was easier to satisfy in countries with PR electoral systems. (Matland 1998b, p.100) According to Matland (1998, p.101) in PR systems women avoid a direct competition with men for the nomination, and also are seen by party leaders as attracters of larger amounts of voters.

The second group of obstacles is of socio-economic character. These obstacles are "illiteracy and limited access to education and choice of professions; and the dual burden of domestic tasks and professional obligations" (Shvedova 1998, p.41). The situation is harder for developing democracies, where economic crisis favor the process of feminization of poverty. Education also plays a significant role in women's participation in politics. Besides the basic education, special political training would benefit women and increase their chances for success. As Inglehart and Norris (2003, p.103) state it:

> "The expansion of female education and labor for participation should
> influence political activism, since education has been found to increase

cognitive skills, confidence, and practical knowledge that help people make sense of politics, while paid employment allows access to social and organizational networks outside the home."

The third group of hindrances, according to Shvedova (1998, p.44), is ideological and psychological, which include "gender ideology, cultural patterns, and predetermined social roles assigned to women and men; women's lack of the confidence to stand for election; women's perception of politics as a 'dirty' game; and the way in which women are portrayed in the mass media".

Strong patriarchal value system limits women's roles to those of mothers and in better cases 'working mothers', letting men do the politics. (*ibid.)* Inglehart and Norris (2003, p.8) argue though that women in such cultures are not those suffering, since "women as well as men adopt the predominant attitudes, values, and beliefs about the appropriate division of sex roles within any society". Considering this Shvedova (1998, p.44) adds that in such an environment "image of a woman leader requires that she be asexual in her speech and manners, someone who can be identified as a woman only through non-sexual characteristics". Such attitudes make it uncomfortable for women to participate in politics and particularly nominate themselves to candidates to parliament. At the same time lack of confidence in a male-dominated world makes it more difficult for women to engage in politics.

It is quite common for women to perceive politics as a 'dirty' game in those countries where there is high levels of corruption on different levels of officials. Corruption and extortion make everybody dependent on everybody and aggravate the situation for women who want to start a political career. It especially applies to the countries where civil society is not developed enough and the country itself is undergoing the process of democratization. Unstable situations in new democracies create favorable conditions for distortion of the market economy, where "financing of political parties and the survival of an independent press remain major unresolved problems for the development of democratic functions" (Shvedova 1998, p.46).

The mass media is sometimes named the forth branch of power. Indeed, the influence the mass media has on society can be quite big. It is even more powerful, when it pretends to be independent, but in reality is used to propagate

the views of those who have real power in the state. Thus, the mass media can be used to blame women for high divorce rates and work migration in order to conceal shortcuts in social policies and labor legislation. This negative image of women is inevitably influencing the perception of women politicians by the masses and lowers the support they might get (Shvedova 1998, pp.47-48). Kahn (1996) and Norris (1997) as cited in Galligan and Tremblay (2005, p.4) suggest that besides the "sexist depiction of female candidates", they also get less airtime and print coverage, and when it happens it is less favorable.

Shvedova (1998, pp.48-49) suggests that there are some obstacles in every country and for every country they can vary. On the other hand a gender-balanced legislative body can be achieved through some positive actions aimed at elimination of at least some obstacles women face – electoral system and quotas.

2.4 Quotas mechanism

There is a belief that there is no way to reach gender-balance naturally and therefore an artificial mechanism, which would lead to a balanced political representation is needed. The mechanism that is used now by a number of states around the world is quotas. (Iris Marion Young 1997, 1998, cited in Mateo Diaz 2005, p.19)

The understanding of the quotas mechanism is based on an essentialist point of view, and thus only people with similar social characteristics can be representatives for one or another group. In case of women only women can represent women's interests:

> "The representative is not only expected to mirror descriptively the group in the proportion in which it exists in society but also to represent the group substantively." (Mateo Diaz 2005, p.19)

However, some scientists tried to avoid essentialist positions in explaining quotas. Young (cited in Mateo Diaz 2005, p.20) defines women as a group on the basis of their position in society as a constantly disadvantaged group, and supports the use of quotas in order to diversify political representation. Position of Phillips

(cited in Mateo Diaz 2005, pp.19-20) in in some lines alike that of Young, yet she sees quotas as a tool to reach equality, giving opportunity for those who belong to systematically underrepresented groups. At the same time Phillips (1998, pp.82-84) notices that the process of representation may take some time to give results, and even then the expected outcome – that women will represent women – is not guaranteed.

Mateo Diaz (2005, p.26) in her research analyzes the formal and informal nature of the quota mechanisms and how they are translated into practice:

		Formal aspects of the mechanism	
		Soft (e.g. recommendation)	Hard (e.g. binding legislation)
Substantive aspects on the mechanism	Soft (e.g. on the numerical composition of the lists)	Failure in practice	Failure if there is no external pressure
	Hard (e.g. on the final composition of parliament)	Failure if there is no external pressure	Success

Table 1: How the formal and informal nature of mechanisms for equality combine, and translate into possibilities for obtaining a successful output in terms of substantive equality (Mateo Diaz, p.26).

Thus, the table clearly demonstrates that the positive outcome of the reforms depends on its "hard nature". Only binding legislation, which is aimed at final result, i.e. the number of women in parliament, can bring successful results. Indeed, some kind of quota system will have an effect only if a proper supervision exists. Otherwise a change in women's representation cannot be expected.

3 Research design and methodology

3.1 Research design

For my research I have chosen case study research design. There are several reasons for my choice. First of all case study design allows the researcher to make a more complex research, and to "go deeper" into case, which tends to result in a more profound analysis. In my research the case is a country – the Republic of Moldova – which represents itself a *typical case* among the number of developing countries. However, it might also be considered a unique case if taking into account only European countries. Moldova is a developing democracy and recent changes in Moldovan politics make it interesting to analyze it, and what the possible outcome of those changes would be. Thus the introduction of quota system is now on the political agenda. Considering this, I would like to make a deeper insight on women's presence in parliament and their impact on politics. (Bryman 2008, p.55-56)

Another reason to choose case study design is because it allows using both qualitative and quantitative methods. (ibid.) I find it appropriate for my research, since analysis of quantitative data and then qualitative examination of results would give a more comprehensive understanding of Moldovan reality.

The third reason for my choice of case study design is the possibility to continue this study longitudinally. My present research can form a fruitful basis for a larger research in the future.

As the researcher I am aware of drawbacks of the case study design. One of the most criticized shortcomings of the case study design is the impossibility to generalize the results of the study, due to insufficient external validity. (Bryman

2008, p.57; p.33) However, the point of the research is to investigate the situation in a single country. While the theoretical start points are resting on a widely known results and generalized data, the outcome of my research should be a better understanding of local processes in Moldova.

3.2 The overarching theoretical perspective on analysis

In my work I try to evaluate the role of female MPs in Moldovan parliament and find out whether they indeed present women's interests there. These topics are closely related to such questions as gender equality, social justice, and underrepresentation of women in politics etc., which are just some of central issues in feminist theory. Because of this it seems quite logical to address my analysis through the prism of feminist theory. Krause (2011, p.105) writes in the article *Contested Questions, Current Trajectories: Feminism in Political Theory Today* that

> "[…] in some sense, everything that is feminist theory is also political theory. Feminism illuminates gendered relations of power in politics and social life, after all, and it contributes (however indirectly) to the larger project of transforming them."

In this regard, feminist theory seems to be a perfect ground to start the analysis. Within feminist theory I would like to emphasize the importance of such concept as "intersectionality". According to Krause (2011, p.107) understanding the intersectionality contributes to the understanding of how "the multiple aspects of our identities affect our political experience".

I also have as aim to understand to which extent present changes in policies affect women's equal positions within politics and other spheres of life. Thus, combination of feminist thinking and deployment of discourse analysis is a good way to demonstrate the role of the parliament as a legislative body and its relation to the process of women's empowerment in general and within politics, since it presents a more qualitative insight. (Olesen 2000, p.237)

Feminist thinking is inevitably connected to constructionist way of thinking, and as Marshall (2008, p.688) suggests "all varieties of feminism are constructionist on some level", since feminists don't see gender as something natural and constant. In this regards, feminism follows the idea that if something is socially constructed, it cannot be "determined by nature of things, [and] is not determined to be inevitable" (Hacking, 1999 as cited in Marshall, 2008, p.688).

> "Constructionism is an ontological position […] that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors". (Bryman 2008, p.19)

In other words constructionism acknowledges that social reality, as we experience it, is constantly created through the interaction of social actors. Perception of social phenomena as changeable endows it with such characteristics as time and place, implying that with changes in those characteristics and through discourses, actors can change social phenomena as well as their understanding of it. As an example Bryman (2008, p.20) cites Becker (1982) who suggests that

> "[…] people create culture continuously […] No set cultural understandings […] provides a perfectly applicable solution to any problem people have to solve in the course of their day, and they therefore must remake those solutions, adapt their understandings to the new situation in the light of what is different about it".

Following this reasoning, feminists in their analysis of "contemporary social world" present gender relations as relations of inequality and demonstrate how those are "produced, experienced, regulated, and resisted" (Marshall 2008, p.688).

> "The effectiveness of a feminist social constructionism rests not on finding some middle ground between these two poles[4] but on grasping both poles simultaneously. Historicity and contingency do not infer unintelligibility— we can observe how gender is taken up, regularized, institutionalized, policed, resisted, contested, and transformed" (Marshall 2008, p.695).

At the same time, feminist pay a close attention to the construction of power and "the manner in which it constrains and/or enables particular forms of practice"(Marshall 2008, p.696).

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[4] Here the "both poles" refers to the explanation of gender as a "social fact" already existing out there to become one's "social identity" on the other hand, and gender as constantly "constructed anew". (Barrett 1988, cited in Marshall 2008, p.695)

Through the prism of this position I will be able to analyze the present situation with women's representation in politics, as well as give some insight in what changes should be expected in future, considering the historical aspect of the processes taking place in Moldova.

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Bivariate analysis

I have chosen bivariate analysis in order to find out if there is a relation between the changes in gender composition of parliament and changes in *democratization score* provided by Freedom House. According to Bryman (2008, p.325) "[b]ivariate analysis is concerned with the analysis of two variables at a time in order to uncover whether the two variables are related." There are several ways to perform the bivariate analysis and the application of a specific technique depends on what kinds of variables are being analyzed.

In this case I will have to deal with two interval/ratio variables – ratio of female-*MP' in parliament* and *democratization score*[5].

Considering the combination of two variables of interval/ration type Bryman (2008, p.327) suggests using Pearcon's *r* as the main technique for examining the relationship between the variables. Bryman (2008, p. 329) pinpoints the importance of existence of a broadly *linear* relationship between the variables in order to be able to analyze them with the help of Pearson's *r*. In this regard he highly recommends using a scatter diagram, before applying the

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[5] Democracy score is a measurement of democratic progress introduced by Freedom House. The score is an average of ratings for several categories for a given year. The categories are electoral process, civil society, independent media, governance (after 2005 was replaced by two separate ratings for national democratic governance and local governance), judicial framework and independence, corruption. The scale for the democracy score is from 1 to 7, where 1 is the highest and 7 is the lowest level of democracy (Vițu 2011, p.361).

Pearson's *r* method. The scatter diagram will show whether "the nature of the relationship between a pair of variables does not violate the assumptions being made when this method [Pearson's *r*] of correlation is employed" (Bryman 2008, p.329). Basing on the main features of the Pearson's *r* method, the application of this method will allow determining not only the existence of the relationship, but also the direction – whether the relationship is directly or inversely proportional. (Bryman 2008, p.327)

What is important to remember while using bivariate analysis is that it shows the presence or absence of a relationship between the variables. This means that researcher cannot assume automatically that one of the variables causes another. (Bryman 2008, p.326)

3.3.2 Content analysis

I will use content analysis in order to find out the extent to which women MPs represent the interests of women as social group. According to Bruman (2008, p.274):

> "Content analysis is an approach to the analysis of documents and texts (which may be printed or visual) that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in systematic and replicable manner."

As Dahlerup (n.d., cited in Karam and Lovenduski 1998, p.189) suggests, improved representation of women in parliament will result in increased activity of women MPs in areas, which benefit themselves and other women. If using the terms that the study *Equality in Politics* (2008, p.31) by IPU proposes, women will be active in promoting the *women's perspective* on the work of the institution, i.e. parliament, and will also pay more attention to *women's issues*, thus benefiting women as social group. To make it more clear:

> "A *woman's perspective* is her view on all political matters, ranging from economic and labour issues through to national security, which will be shaped by her personal background and lived experience. *Women's issues* or *women's concerns* are issues that mainly affect women, such as physical concerns like reproductive rights and maternal health; social concerns resulting from their reproductive role, such as childcare or parental leave

> policies, or discrimination on the basis of their sex." (*Equality in Politics*,
> 2008, p.31-32)

Since the outcome of a functioning parliament is legislative acts, I will analyze the legislative database for years 1994-2011. I will be looking for the number of acts adopted by parliament of each convocation within the mentioned timeframe concerning *women's perspective* or *women's issues*. Thus the laws will be counted in if they will correspond to certain subjects, and thus the subject will be the unit of analysis.

Analysis should result in a transparent and structured piece of quantitative information. The term transparent here refers to the analytical procedures, i.e. coding and sampling, which easily allow replication of the research or a follow-up study. (Bryman 2008, p.288) It is especially important for me, since I mean to continue this research later on.

Another reason for choosing content analysis for my research is that this research method makes it easier to work with big amounts of data. (Bryman 2008, p.289) In my case, the total number of laws, adopted by parliament under the years of its existence, exceed eight thousands documents, which makes it necessary to organize them first in order to get information from them.

3.3.3 Critical discourse analysis

The choice of critical discourse analysis (CDA) for my research was predetermined by general principles summarized by Wodak (1996, cited in Titcher, *et al.* 2000, p.146):

> "- CDA is concerned with social problems. [...] Accordingly CDA is essentially interdisciplinary.
>
> - Power-relations have to do with discourse (Foucault 1990, Bourdieu 1987), and CDA studies both power in discourse and power over discourse.

- […] society and culture are shaped by discourse, and at the same time constitute discourse. Every single instance of language use reproduces or transforms society and culture, including power relations.

- Discourses are historical and can only be understood in relation to their context. […] Discourses are not only embedded in a particular culture, ideology or history, but also connected intertextually to other discourses.

- Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory.- Discourse is a form of social bihaviour."

In my analysis I will use an approach to CDA developed by Fairclough. Fairclough (1993, cited in Titscher, et al. 2000, p.149) bases his theoretical considerations on the idea that "Language use is always simultaneously constitutive of (i) social identities, (ii) social relations and (iii) systems of knowledge and beliefs". This reasoning suggests that language use, whether written or spoken, as a social practice is mutually connected with discourse practice, presuming that they both are simultaneously subjects and objects of the process of constitution.

According to Fairclough (1993, cited in Titscher, *et al.* 2000, p.149) one institution may produce multiple types of discourses, which may coexist, however, the relationship between them is not linear, and therefore the *order of discourse*[6] have to be considered. Discourse type can be divided into two categories: discourses and genres, where discourses are "way[s] of signifying experience from a particular perspective" and genres are "[usages] of language associated with a particular social activity" (Fairclough 1993, cited in Titscher, *et al.* 2000, pp.148-149).

Fairclough's CDA is three-dimensional: textual level, discursive practice and social practice. At the textual level the content and the form of the text, which are inseparable for Fairclough, are analyzed (Titscher, *et al.* 2000, p.150). The level of discursive practice presents itself as a link between the process of production and interpretation, and it is aimed at revelation of the relationship between them (Titscher, *et al.* 2000, p.150). This dimension is characterized by the concepts of *interdiscursivity* ("that is, the combination of genres and

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[6] Order of discourse is a "totality of discursive practices of an institution and relationship between them" (Fairclough, 1993, cited in Titscher, *et al.* 2000, p.148)

discourses in a text") and *intertextuality* (that incorporate historical and social reality and how they are modified by texts), which are binding "text and context" (*ibid.*). The dimension of social practice connects the analysis to the different levels of social organization, such as "the situation, the institutional context, the wider group or social context" (*ibid.*). On this level Fairclough considers the concept of *hegemony* – "the predominance in and dominance of political, ideological and cultural domains of society" (*ibid.*)

Since the main purpose of applying CDA in my research is to analyze the position of women PMs through analysis of laws adopted, I see CDA as the key for understanding the background context of power and gender relations. The understanding of this processes gives possibility to change existing relations, since Fairclough (cited in Titscher 2000, p.152) argues that "social structures such as class relations, […], are in dialectical relationship with social activities and that texts are a significant form of social activity".

The employment of CDA in this research is also justified due to political foundation of the CDA, which is that texts are used more and more often to exercise social control and power (Titscher 2000, pp.152-153). As van Dijk (2001, p.354) suggests "the power of dominant groups may be integrated in laws, rules, norms and habits", thus having active control over discourses and as result over social practices. Power relations should be taken into consideration when analyzing parliament as institution, through the prism of gender relation.

3.4 Methodological concerns and other possible difficulties

The first possible problem that I see is my research strategy – mixed-method research. As Bryman (2008, p.676) points out, researchers tend to separate the qualitative and quantitative parts of the research, thus undermining the whole idea of a mixed-method research. Therefore one may miss important details of the research. To prevent myself as the researcher from this kind of pitfall, a number of

hypotheses are discussed in the course of analysis, which allows presenting the results "in terms of substantive issues rather than in terms of different methods" (ibid.).

Another consideration might be the use of secondary data for my research. Even though usually it is time and cost effective to use the secondary data, the researcher cannot control the quality of the data and its complexity. Besides some data might be missing, and considering the complexity of data, the researcher will not be able to examine the data properly (Bryman 2008, pp.297-300). For example, for my research I use the democracy scores by Freedom House. However, the data for years 1994-1996 is absent, and it will affect my study to some extent.

In regard to use of secondary sources the question of reliability and validity arises. Bryman (2008, p.306) However, I do not have any concerns about the reliability of the data from such organizations as IPU, Freedom House, or IDEA, whose aim is to monitor development of the countries around the world.

As for methods used, the concerns are as following. When applying bivariate analysis researcher must be aware that the results will show presence or absence of a relationship between the variables. Existing presence does not mean that there are any causal relations, even though it might seem so. The only possible case, when the researcher is able to speak about a causality relationship on the basis of results acquired from bivariate analysis is when the direction of causality relationship is totally determined by characteristics of one of the variables. For example, in the pair "age – voting behaviour", only age can influence the voting behavior and not in any case *vice versa* (Bryman 2008, p326). As to variables in my research – gender of MP and democratization score – the causality relationship may work both ways around[7]. However, my attention will be paid exclusively on the revelation of a relationship.

The shortcutting of content analysis lies mainly within the procedure of coding, which becomes avoidable by application of pilot versions of coding schemes (Bryman 2008, p.288). Content analysis might also be criticized for

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[7] For the detailed explanation see Chapter 5.

being atheoretical. However, in case of my research the application of analysis is embedded in a theoretical frame – the theory of gender structure in areas of specialization in parliamentarian activity (see Wängnerud 1998; Mateo Diaz 2005; Dahlerup 1998).

In regards to employment of CDA the main contradiction will be the one with suggestion by Fairclough (2005, cited in Bryman 2008, p.508) to use critical realism as theoretical framework for studying organizations – where parliament is being one. He asserts that it is especially useful when the emphasis of the study is on organizational change, and criticizes those researchers who use CDA in combination with feminist constructionist perspective (which is the case of my research). Yet, the emphasis of my study is placed not as much on organizational change, as on how with the help of different discourses the discrimination of a social group – women – is created within the organization, which in its turn recreates this kind of discrimination within social reality.

4 Women's participation in politics in Moldova.

4.1 The Republic of Moldova – a country in democratic transition

The Republic of Moldova is a relatively small country situated in Eastern Europe. It has common borders with Romania in the west and Ukraine in the south, east and north. Moldova's history as an independent state began on August 27, 1991, when the declaration of independence was signed. The transformation of the country-'part of the Soviet Union' into an independent state took one day; however, the implications of this instantaneous change are to be dealt even today. According to Ronnås and Orlova (2000, p.10):

> 'Moldova probably holds the unenviable record of having suffered the most
> devastating peacetime decline in economic performance and living standards
> of any country in modern times.'

Indeed, the Republic of Moldova nowadays (after 20 years of transition) is considered the poorest country of Europe, placed 177 on the list of countries of the world with GDP-per capita of 2,500 USD (CIA – The World Factbook, as to July 5, 2011). In spite of minimal improvement of the economic situation it still remains very hard for the country.

The process of transition resulted in new economic, social and political challenges, which couldn't be addressed at the time the transition started due to insufficient funds and lack of managerial experience , which should have been applied to rebuild all the institutions and re-orient the economy of the state to the

open market economy. (Ronnås and Orlova 2000, p.10) Economic hardship of the country influences its citizens because not enough workplaces can be guaranteed. Thus large groups of people are denied the opportunity to enter the labor market, which in its turn excludes them also from such major areas of everyday life as education, health care and, as a result, social life. (*National Human Development Report* 2010/2011, p.3)

More or less it can be said that the problem of getting jobs (or in other words earning living) was left for the population itself to solve. The outcome of such measures resulted in constantly increasing number of work migrants. According to the International Organization for Migration 64.7 percent of the population lives below the poverty line (IOM-Moldova: Facts and Figures, as to June 2011). Taking into consideration that the level of unemployment is just 2.6 percent (CIA – The World Factbook, as to July 5, 2011), it is possible to say, that even if person is working he/she will be considered a poor one. Thus the conditions for labor migration are extremely favorable. Since 1991 the flow of labor migrants tripled (*Migration in Moldova: A Country Profile*, 2008, p.13), with the percentage of women involved in labor migration equal to 57.8 percent (IOM-Moldova: Facts and Figures, as to June 2011). As Lutz (Work is Elswhere, n.d.) writes in his article *Moldova: A Country on the Road*: "according to the UN's world migration report, in percentage terms Moldova is the planet's second biggest exporter of labor migrants".

Besides the problem with labor migration, the political situation in the country can be characterized as unstable. In 2001 political instability was the basis for the comeback of the PCRM. However, citizens' expectations after a successive two-term rule of the PCRM were not nearly fulfilled, even though the Action Plan with the EU and its extension were signed in 2005 and 2007 respectively. As the result, the parliamentary elections held on April 5, 2009, presented itself a process with multiple violations, which should have guaranteed the PC's victory. Nevertheless that never happened due to the nominee for the presidential post didn't get enough votes, and a reelection of the parliament was assigned on July 29, 2009. (Vițu 2010, p.362) The latest parliamentarian elections

took place on November 28, 2010 and resulted in the 19th Legislature being elected.

4.2 Women in Moldovan politics

The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova guarantees equality to all its citizens, stipulating that:

> "[a]ll citizens of the Republic of Moldova are equal before the law and the public authorities, without any discrimination as to race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, political choice, personal property or social origin" (The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, 1994, Art.16(2),).

However the reality is far from equality. According to the research by ABA/CEELI (2006, cited in INFOTAG, 2006) organized with assistance of USAID and OSCE, every third woman in Moldova would like to be born as man. Women in Moldova are discriminated within labor, financial and judicial systems, as well as within medical care and within families. Almost half of those women[8] who have participated in the survey agreed that they were assaulted verbally or physically, every fifth woman told that she experienced psychological pressure, and every tenth – physical abuse from the part of men. The situation seems even worse if taking into consideration the statistical data presented by Valentina Buliga, Minister of labor, social protection and family, that the population of the Republic of Moldova consists of 52 percent of women and 48 percent of men (Unimedia, 2011).

The legal database for participation of women in politics Moldova includes the *Law on "Electoral Code"* (nr.LPM1381/1997), *The Law on Public Service* (nr.443-XII from 1995-05-04), and *The Law on "parties and other social-political organizations"* (nr.718-XII from 1991-09-17). The first two laws proclaim equal opportunities for being elected to the post, while the third one puts responsibility

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[8] 1122 women from 71 settlements around Moldova have participated in the survey.

for equal representation of women and men in political parties and other social-political organization on organizations themselves. The results of this legal framework can be seen in Table 2, which demonstrates constant underrepresentation of women in Moldovan parliament.

Year of the elections	Male MPs		Female MPs		Total N of MPs
	N	% of Total	N	% of Total	
1994-02-27	99	95.2	5	4.8	104
1998-03-22	92	91.1	9	8.9	101
2001-02-25	91	90.1	10	9.98	101
2005-03-06	80	79.2	21	20.8	101
2009-04-05	77	76.2	24	23.8	101
2009-06-29	76	75.2	25	24.8	101
2010-11-28	82	81.2	19	18.8	101

Table 2: Gender composition of the parliament for each parliament elections (based on processed data from the site www.e-democracy.md)

A warning sign might be the decrease of women's presence in the parliament after the last elections. On the other side, women are present on the top positions of the parliament and in different commissions, though with slight incline to the social welfare area of specialization. The information about the posts to which women are appointed to is presented in the Table 3.

Nr	Position in the parliament	MP's name	PP affiliation
1	Vice president of the parliament	Liliana Palicovici	PLDM
2	Commission for human rights and inter-ethnic relations	Veronica Abramciuc	PCRM
3	Commission for judicial appointments and immunities	Raisa Apolschii	PDM
4	Commission for social protection, public health and family	Galina Balmoş	PCRM
5	Commission for social protection, public health and family	Tatiana Botnariuc	PCRM
6	Commission for economy, budget and finances	Zinaida Chistruga	PCRM

7	Commission for culture, education, research, youth, sport and mass media	Maria Ciobanu	PLDM
8	Commission for social protection, public health and family	Oxana Domenti	PCRM
9	Commission for human rights and inter-ethnic relations	Elena Frumosu	PLDM
10	Commission for culture, education, research, youth, sport and mass media	Corina Fusu	PL
11	Commission for economy, budget and finances	Zinaida Greceanîi	PCRM
12	Commission for foreign politics and European integration	Ana Guțu	PL
13	Commission for environment and climate changes	Violeta Ivanov	PCRM
14	Commission for human rights and inter-ethnic relations	Stella Jantuan	PDM
15	Commission for social protection, public health and family	Alla Mironic	PCRM
16	Commission for social protection, public health and family	Maria Nasu	PLDM
17	Commission for judicial appointments and immunities	Maria Postoico	PCRM
18	Commission for social protection, public health and family	Valentina Stratan	PDM
19	Commission for culture, education, research, youth, sport and mass media	Inna Șupac	PCRM
20	Commission for judicial appointments and immunities	Irina Vlah	PCRM

Table 3: Commission affiliation of women MPs in Moldovan parliament (processed data from www.parlament.md)

In the context of aiming for European integration, the new Moldovan government is quite optimistic about the future. Within the frames of the *UN Millennium Development Goals* a new strategy for representation of women in politics was announced: to increase the number of women up to 40 percent in local councils, up to 25 percent in regional councils, and up to 30 percent in the parliament. These changes should be reached by 2015 (UN in Moldova, 2011).

To achieve these goals more attention was paid to the education of women within some of political parties. For example, during the period of 25-27 March 2011 the final stage of an education program for women was completed. In the program took part women from three political parties – PLDM and two other political parties (members of the AIE). Women were taught how to organize an electoral campaign on a local level, how to elaborate on political discourse, how to transfer political message to the voters in order to maximize the number of votes. The educational program was organized under the sponsorship of the IRI in Moldova (PLDM, 2011, originally in Romanian).

In 2011, the process of revising the *Law on "Electoral Code"* of the Republic of Moldova was initiated with the aim of introducing a binding 30 percent quota system for electoral lists of political parties. At the same time the work on the *Law on Ensuring the Equality between Women and Men* (nr.5-XVI from 2006-02-09) is continuing. (Moldova Anti-Trafficking Network, 2011, originally in Romanian)

5 Analysis

5.1 Bivariate analysis. Is there a relationship between women's representation in the parliament and the democratic development of the country?

This analysis is based on two assumptions. The first assumption by Inglehart and Norris (2003, p.159), is that gender equality is dependent on the level of societal modernization, where "the agrarian nations […] [are] the most traditional […], and postindustrial societies the most egalitarian in their beliefs about the roles of women and men". In the frames of this reasoning I see political participation as one of the domains of socio-political life of society, where the gender equality attitudes should change with the societal modernization. The second assumption is the one presented in Mateo Diaz (2005) that presence of women in parliament will positively affect the democratic system. In this regards I hypothesize that the level of democratic development of the country might depend on number of women in parliament.

For my analysis I use the Democratization Score (see Figure 2) by Freedom House as the indicator of societal modernization, since it includes a variety of indicators of development for all domains of life, including economy, politics, culture etc.

**Changes in Democratization Score for the
Republic of Moldova in 1997-2011**

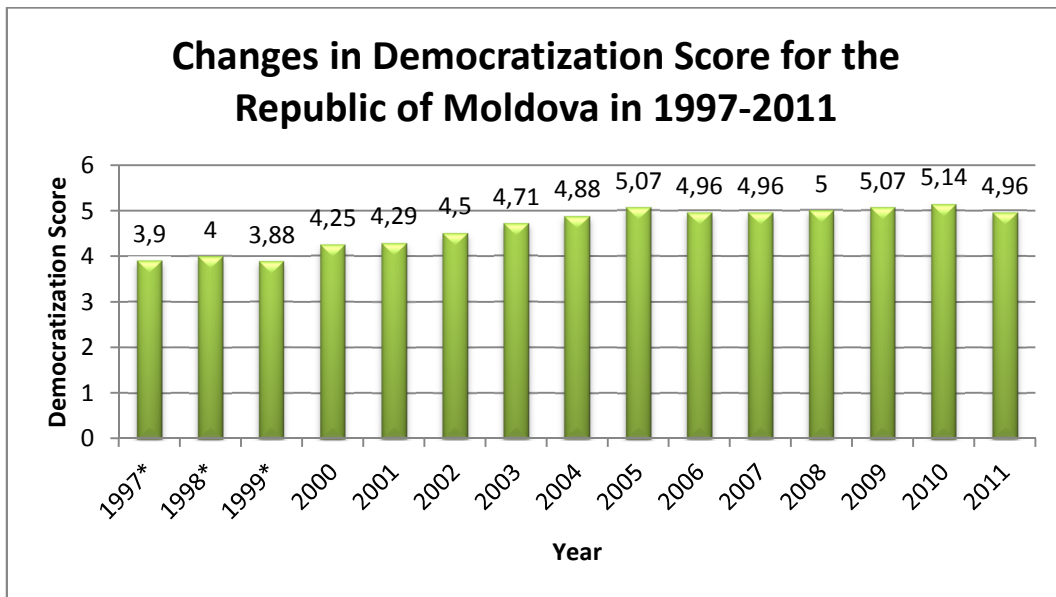Figure 2. Nations in Transit 2011 (processed data, *asterisk stands for data taken from the report NIT 1999-2000)

According to the data presented, the democratic development of the Republic of Moldova had almost constantly worsened from 1997. However, the number of women, according to the Table 2, had increased, which contradicts the idea of Inglehart and Norris (2003). Considering that Moldova is a country in the process of democratic transition, and also the poorest country in Europe, with an ambitious aim for European integration, my second hypothesis would be that there is no connection at all between these two variables. To check this hypothesis I use Scatter diagram and Pearson's *r* methods.
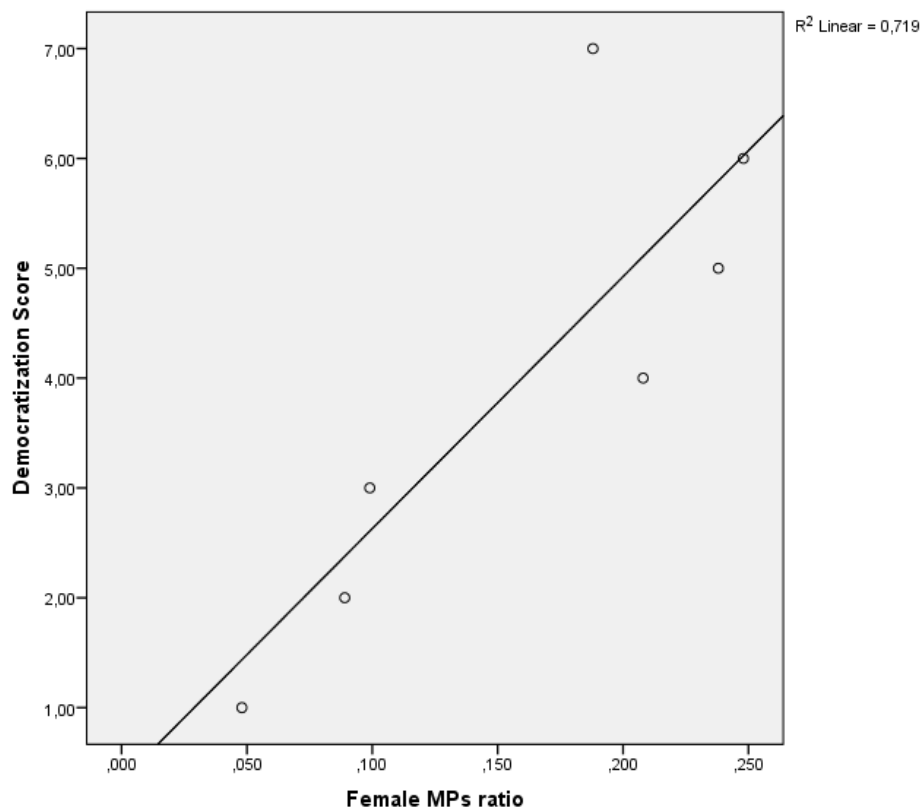
Figure 3. Scatter diagram for Democratization Score and the female MPs ratio.

The Scatter diagram shows a positive linear relationship between the two variables, thus the application of Pearson's *r* method is possible.

Correlations[a]

		Democratization Score	Female MPs ratio
Democratization Score	Pearson Correlation	1	,848[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,016
Female MPs ratio	Pearson Correlation	,848[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,016	
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			
a. Listwise N=7			

Figure 4. Pearson's *r* for *democratization score* and *female MPs ratio*

The analysis shows that the correlation between the *democratization score* and the *female MPs ratio* is statistically significant, thus the hypothesis that there

is no relationship between the variables proved to be wrong. However the correlation is positive, and considering that *democratization score's* scale is revers, it suggests that lower democratic development is associated with higher numbers of women in parliament. A significant value of Pearson's *r* suggest that the *coefficient of determination* is 71,9 percent – it is that 71,9 percent of the changes in the democratization score accounts for changes in presence of women in parliament.

There might be three possible explanations for these controversial results. My first hypothesis would be that since Moldovan politicians see the European integration as their primary aim, they would strive to comply with the requirements that states must achieve in their development in order to be accepted into the EU. As economically Moldova is not capable of achieving the necessary level of development, Moldovan politicians would probably be eager to achieve some progress within the socio-political area.

One more hypothesis (though in need of detailed exemining) would be that with worsening of socio-political situation in the country political parties were more eager to call women into political participation. This seems to me very close to the idea of blaming women for inadequate social politics (if mothers consider labor migration, they are bad mothers, because they leave their children without their mother's care). If it is really so, then the involvement of women into politics is just a clever strategy of sharing the responsibilities for the regress in development of the country. Another explanatory hypothesis within this context is that with aggravation of the situation political parties understand that new perspectives on the existing problems might help resolving them. This results in political recruitment of women and increasing of their presence in the parliament. The third possible explanation is not as much about the interpretation of the results of the analysis as about the methodological considerations: the cause of such results might also be a small amount of data.

Whether the results of the analysis are due to insufficient data or one of the above mentioned hypotheses is right, a further research is needed to find out if the relationship between democratic development and representation of women in the parliament in Moldova indeed exists.

5.2 Content analysis. Whose interests do women MPs present in the Republic of Moldova?

In order to answer this question the method of content analysis was used. With the help of the analysis the online State Legislation database (Registrul de Stat al actelor juridice al Republicii Moldova, http://lex.justice.md/) was used. According to the database, total amount of legislative acts adopted by parliament under all the years of its existence equals to 8016 acts. This amount includes four types of acts[9]: constitution (constituția), laws (legile), resolutions (hotărîrilee), and codes (codurile).

According to the theory of descriptive and substantive representation the hypothesis for this analysis was that with increased amount of women in parliament they will be more eager to present women not only descriptively, but also substantively. In other words, an improved representation of women in parliament should result in an improved outcome – women will promote *women's issues* and will be able to give *women's perspectives* on facilitating their presence in parliament through the means of legislative acts. In regards to this analysis I understand *women's issues* as the legislative acts, in which *women's concerns* are the main subject. As to *women's perspectives*, they are presented by the legislative acts aimed at changes in the parliament as institution. The notions of *women's issues* and *women's perspectives* in this analysis are addressed through a cohesive term of *'nature' of the legislative acts.*

The sampling of the legislative acts was performed through the search through the database of the legislative acts adopted by parliament in accordance to

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[9] In order to avoid inaccuracy of translation the original terms in Romanian are given in parentheses.

the keywords. The keywords were chosen to reflect the 'nature' of the legislative acts[10]. The samples were then coded in accordance to the coding manual[11]. The results of the analysis can be seen in the following tables and figures.

		Type of the adopted legislative acts			Total
		Law	**Resolution**	**Code**	
Period of convocation of the parliament	1994-1997	7	11	0	18
	1998-2000	7	21	1	29
	2001-2004	28	28	0	56
	2005-2008	26	22	0	48
	July 2009-Oct. 2010	3	0	0	3
	Nov. 2010-pres.	3	1	0	4
Total		**74**	**83**	**1**	**158**

Table 4. Crosstabulation: Period of convocation of the parliament * Type of the adopted legislative acts (processed data from www.lex.justice.md)

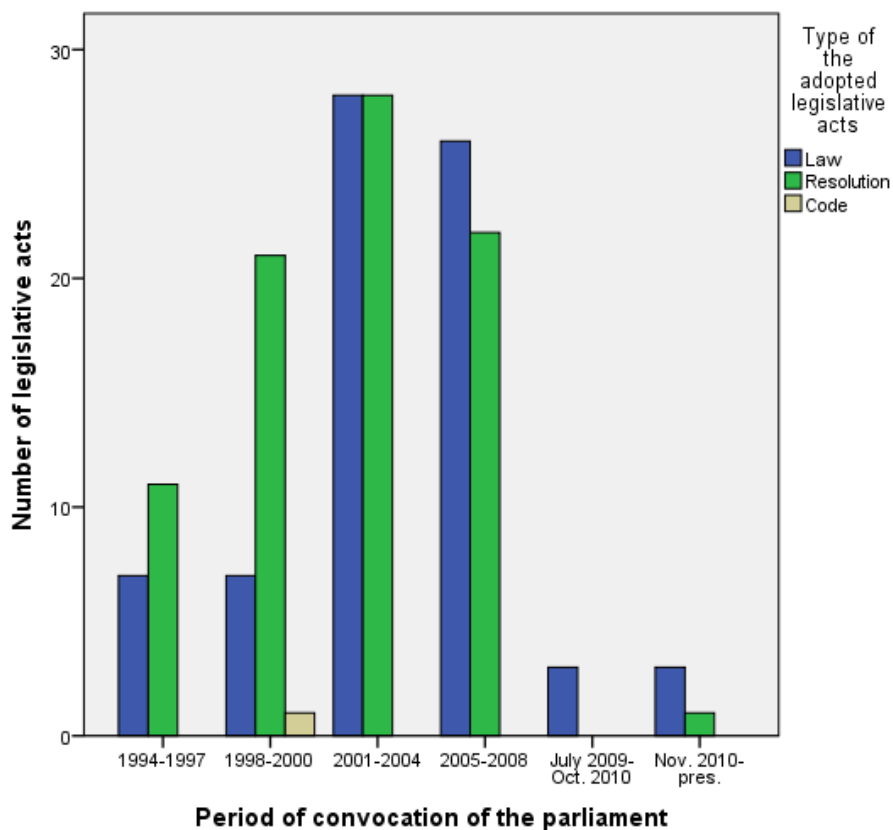[10] See the list of keywords in Appendix 2.
[11] See the coding manual in Appendix 1.

Figure 5. Period of convocation of the parliament * Type of the adopted legislative acts (processed data from www.lex.justice.md)

The table and figure above present different types of documents adopted on *women's issues* and *women's perspective*. There is a visible increase of these kinds of acts adopted under years 2001-2004 and 2005-2008. This increase in number of legislative acts adopted coincided with the increase of number of women in the parliament. However, the number of women who entered the parliament in 2001 was just with one more then the number of women who were elected in 1998, i.e. 9 and 8 women respectively. In order to understand this situation it is good to pay attention to the parliamentarian election that took place in 1994. The number of women MPs then was just 5 or 4.8 percent, and the increase in women's presence in 1998 to 8.9 percent seems quite significant. Under the years 1998-2000 a considerable increase of resolutions occurred, which anticipated the increase in laws adopted in 2001. Considering this, my conclusion will be that women elected in 2001 successfully continued the initiative started by women elected in 1998.

An enormous decrease in legislative activity under 2009[12] can be explained by the unstable political situation, and thus an inadequate functioning of the parliament. Moreover the re-elections took place, because the parliament failed to elect the president. Thus the present parliament I expect to be more indicative in its outcome from gender perspective.

		'Nature' of the legislative acts		Total
		Women's issues	Women's perspective	
Period of convocation of the parliament	1994-1997	15	3	18
	1998-2000	18	11	29
	2001-2004	37	19	56
	2005-2008	41	7	48
	July 2009-Oct. 2010	0	3	3
	Nov. 2010-pres.	4	0	4
Total		115	43	158

Table 5. Crosstabulation: Period of convocation of the parliament * 'Nature' of the legislative acts (processed data from www.lex.justice.md)

In Table 5 the number of legislative acts adopted as to *women's issues* and *women's perspective* are presented. The visual representation of this table is presented in Figure 6. The bigger amount of legislative acts adopted in regards to women's issues confirms the idea mentioned by Mateo Diaz (2005) that the organizational structure of parliament is quite rigid and is hard to change it. At the same time, changes do take place, which can be seen as a positive trend.

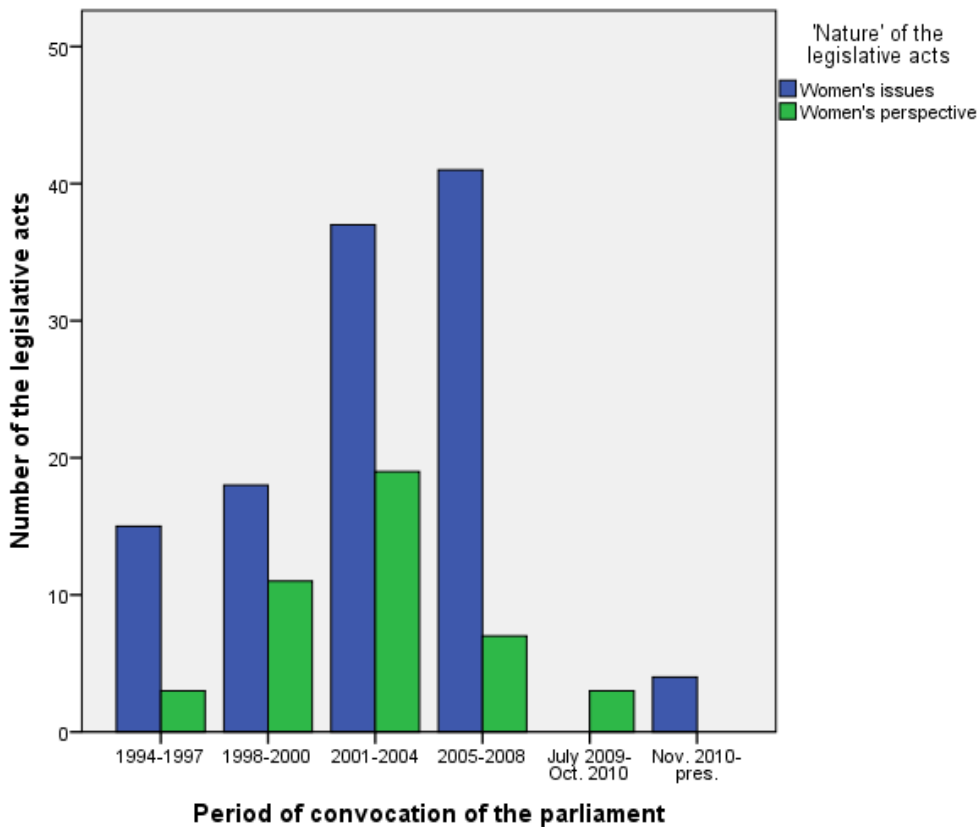[12] One convocation of the parliament is not included in the table and figure, because there were no acts adopted during that time.

Figure 6. Period of convocation of the parliament * 'Nature' of the legislative acts (processed data from www.lex.justice.md)

In Figure 7 the variation of areas of women's issues for every convocation of parliament is presented.

The data from Figure 7 suggests that the most problematic area within the women's issues is social welfare, which cannot be surprising, considering that the Republic of Moldova is the poorest country of Europe. It is inevitable, that attention of female MPs will be attracted to this kind of problems in the country. In the conditions of low rates of labor market proposals and high rates of labor migration, the welfare system is balancing on the edge, and thus requires a lot of management. At the same time the human rights issues seem to interest MPs.

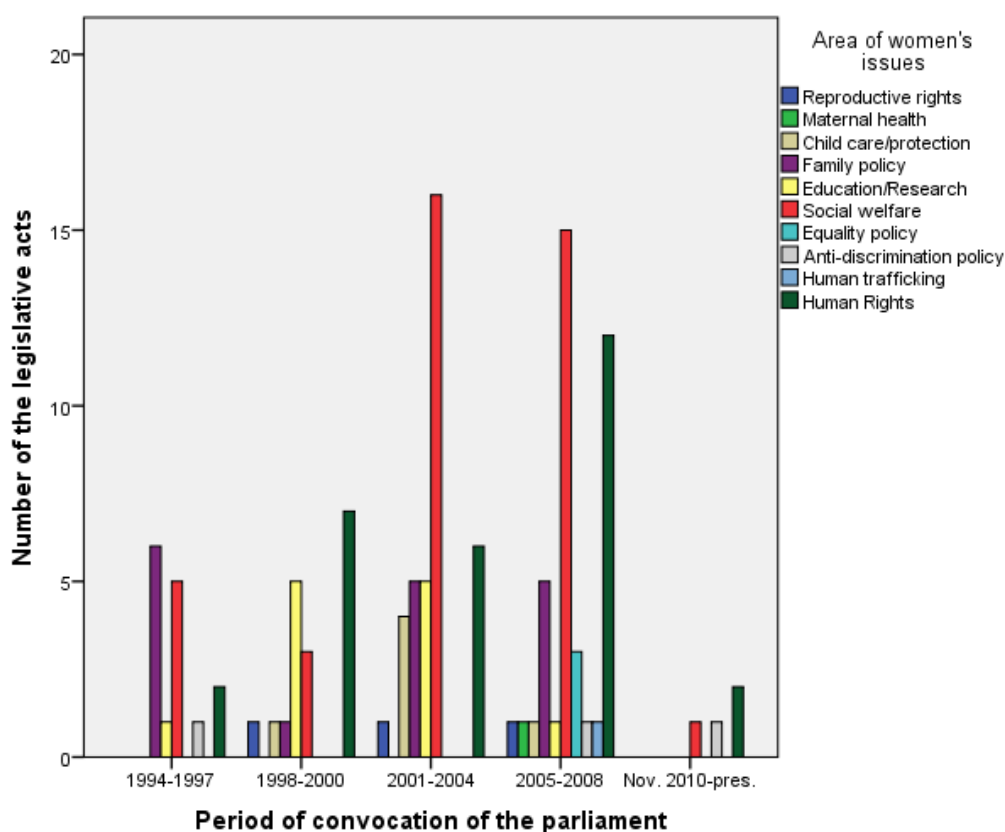**Figure 7. Period of convocation of the parliament * Area of women's issues (processed data from www.lex.justice.md)**

To summarize, women in the Moldovan parliament tend to make women's voices heard, representing them substantively, rather than just descriptively. Of course, not all the issues are equally attracting attention of women MPs, but considering the number of women in parliament – lower than 30 percent – the outcome is quite impressive. Decrease of women's presence in the parliament after the last elections makes me think though that the positive outcome of women's presence might decrease. Nevertheless considering the collaboration of the Republic of Moldova with different international foundations and its direction to the European integration might contribute to the better representation of women's issues, if not women themselves, on political agenda.

5.3 Critical discourse analysis. Are equal opportunities for men and women real in the Republic of Moldova?

According to the report *Preliminary Answers to the Questionnaire on Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995 and the Outcome of the 23rd Special Session of General Assembly 2000* (National Reports – Gender – UNECE, n.d.) describing the progress in this area done by the Republic of Moldova, the Law on Ensuring the Equality between Women and Men from 2006 is the latest legislative act, which addresses the issues of gender equality within politics. In this context it is interesting to analyze it in order to find out if it will positively influence the underrepresentation of women in the parliament.

I will omit the description of the background and social context the law was adopted in, since it has already been described in the fourth chapter. I also will limit my analysis of the law to Chapter I *General provisions* and Chapter II *Ensuring equal opportunities between women and men in the public domain*, since they regulate the sphere of politics, and thus might affect the representation of women in parliament, and Chapter V *Institutional framework for ensuring equal opportunities between women and men*, because it announces the responsible bodies.

I am starting the analysis with the identification of discourses present in the text of the law. The obvious discourses would be political discourse and gender discrimination discourse. However there are also international discourse, gender discourse, and power relations discourse, which are less visible and easy to overlook. The latter is present in several different 'forms'.

The power relation discourse is present in its first 'form' in Chapter V – *Institutional framework for ensuring equal opportunities between women and men.* The chapter specifies the power relationships between the authorities, which are responsible for implementation of the law – "(a) Parliament; (b) Government; (c) Governmental Committee for equality between women and men; (d) Ministry

of Health and Social Protection (specialized body); (e) ministries and other central administrative authorities (gender units); (f) local public administration authorities (gender units)" (Unofficial translation prepared by OSCE Mission to Moldova). The order, in which the authorities are listed consolidate the leading role of the parliament in the question of gender discrimination. Considering this, it is the parliament, which excerpts its powers over other authorities and the citizens.

In Chapter I, Article 1 of the law is stated that

> "The scope of this Law pertains to ensuring the exercise by women and men of their equal rights in the political, economic, social, cultural, and other spheres of life, rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, with a view to preventing and eliminating all forms of discrimination based on the criterion of sex."

The order of the mentioned areas, where the gender equality should be ensured suggests that politics is seen as the main one. Thus the power relations also exist in between the areas the law is applied to. Considering this reasoning, the implementation of the gender equality policy should be started from the sphere of politics. In other words the political discourse determines the strategy for the changes in society, where the main concept is a *'top-down' change*. The notion of the *complex approach* is also aimed at the leading role of politics and presupposes that the:

> "[…] complex approach to equality between women and men [results in] integration of the principle of equality between women and men into policies and programs from all spheres and at all levels of adoption and implementation of decisions" (Chapter I, article 2).

Within the frames of the political discourse affirmative actions are allowed, however their temporary character is specially mentioned:

> "[…] affirmative actions – special temporary actions to speed up the attainment of real equality between women and men, intended to eliminate and prevent discrimination or disadvantages that emanate from existent attitudes, behaviors and structures" (Chapter I, article 2).

The controversial gender discourse also appears in the Chapter I (Article 2) of the law when the terms of *gender* and *sex* are explained. Even though the law distinguishes the biological nature of the term *sex* and the social of *gender*, the explanations of both terms are narrowed to men and women only. This makes the rights of LGBT people absent in the law. Considering the power of political

discourse to create social practice, the law makes the LGBT community in the Republic of Moldova an invisible social group.

The most controversial part of the law, in my opinion, is the Article 5 in Chapter I:

> "The promotion of a policy or the performance of actions that do not ensure equal opportunities between women and men shall be deemed discriminatory and shall be removed by the competent public authorities, in accordance with the legislation." (Chapter I, Art.5 (2))

The provision seems to be reasonable, since that would be logical to eliminate the gender discrimination. The next passage, however, creates contradiction:

> "The following shall not be deemed discriminatory: […]
>
> b) qualification requirements for activities in which special characteristics based on sex constitute a decisive factor, given the specific conditions and way of carrying out the respective activities;
>
> c) special advertisements for employment of persons of a certain sex in the work place where, given the nature or special conditions of performing the job, as provided by law, special characteristics based on sex are decisive; […]." (Chapter I, Article 5 (6b, 6c))

Mentioning of "special characteristics based on sex", which can have a decisive role presents itself an approach in lines of biological determinism, which is strongly criticized by feminism. The idea that lies behind the provisions of the law is that women and men have different qualities and that makes them not suitable for one or another work place, which is already constitute discrimination, yet according to the law "the following shall not be deemed discriminatory".
In this regards the discussion within the lines of discrimination discourse is not aimed at elimination of discrimination, but at consolidation of existing traditional gender roles. Moreover, these provisions are quite vague and therefore present a way to justify gender discrimination.

As to Chapter II of the law, the above mentioned provisions are applicable to it as well. This means, that the division of areas of specialization considering the gender of the MPs will be more likely to occur. However, the attention is paid to the work of mass-media, which are expected to create a positive image of politician regardless of the politician's gender. The same is said about the access

of politicians to the equal mass-media use, though nothing is told about the distribution of the, so called "prime time", which is a potential threat to equal treatment of male and female politicians.

To conclude, the discourses present in the law are not promoting the equality within social practices. On the opposite, they keep traditional views and favor them. Considering that the law was adopted in the conditions of underrepresentation of women in parliament, the law became the mirror of those relations existing in the parliament, where women are mostly involved in commissions for social issues. Unequal distribution of power within the parliament resulted in its unequal distribution in the provisions of the law. If considering the institutional power of the parliament, the law (and unequal representation of power in it) was imposed on society, thus creating the social reality. This makes me think that a wider presence of women in the parliament would affect the discriminative nature of the law and would result in a better outcome.

6 Final discussion. What is the future?

Representation of women in the parliament of the Republic of Moldova is following the general trends around the world. First of all, women are underrepresented, and the situation had worsened with the last parliamentarian elections, when the percentage of female MPs had dropped from 24.8 percent to 18.8 percent. Secondly, the distribution of genders within the different areas of specialization follows the rule of gender patterns, mentioned by Mateo Diaz (2005) and Wängnerud (1998).

The study found out that even though the percentage of women in the parliament is lower than 30 percent – the 'critical' mass – the outcome of their presence can be described as both descriptive and substantive, since a lot of legislative acts have women's issues as their main concern. The number of such acts was also increasing with the increasing representation of women in the parliament.

At the same time, female MPs in Moldova are subject to institutional socialization. In this regards, the inversely oriented relationship between the democratic score for the Republic of Moldova and the representation of women in the parliament can also be explained as part of this process. In spite of the theory that growing number of female MPs will positively influence the democratic system (Mateo Diaz, 2005), the situation in the Republic in Moldova had proved to be *vice versa*.

Considering this, the *Law on ensuring equal opportunities for women and men* fits the trend for the Republic of Moldova. In the situation when a law is aimed at the improvement of social positions of a constantly discriminated social group – women – by the institution, where they are constantly underrepresented, the law cannot provide a comprehensive decision for the issue. In this regards, the reality for women is constructed without participation of women in this constructive process, which inevitably leads to fail (at least a partial one).

So, what is the future of the Republic of Moldova? It is quite hard to answer this question, because the future depends on multiple variables. One of such variables is the financial support. On the other hand, the advisory activity is also

important, both at international and national levels. It helps a lot, when it concerns the issues, in which the country has no personal experience.

The initiative on introducing the quota system in Moldova can be mentioned as the first positive step towards a more equal representation of women in the parliament. However, using the typology on the nature of quota policies by Mateo Dias (2005) the success will be guaranteed when the policy will be binding on 'both ends' – the party lists and the final composition of the parliament. As to Moldovan initiative, it is aimed only at the political parties' lists, which is just one of the structural barriers on their way to equal presence in the parliament. Therefore, I wouldn't expect a significant change in women's representation in the parliament of the Republic of Moldova in the near future.

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Appendix 1. The keywords used for the search of legislative acts.

- Reproductiv (reproductive)
- Maternitate (maternal)
- Mamă (mother)
- Copil (child)
- Copii (children)
- Familie (family)
- Cercetare științifică (scientiific research)
- Alocație (benefit)
- Indemnizație (benefit)
- Drepturile omului (human rights)
- Egalitate (equality)
- Discriminare (discrimination)
- Regulamentul parlamentului (parliament regulations)

Appendix 2. The coding manual.

Date:

(1) 1994 – 1997

(2) 1998 – 2000

(3) 2001 – 2004

(4) 2005 – 2008

(5) April – June 2009

(6) July 2009 – October 2010

(7) November 2010 – present

Type of acts:

(1) Constitution

(2) Law

(3) Resolution

(4) Code

Nature of acts:

(1) Women's issues

(2) Women's perspective

Areas of women's issues:

(0) N/A

(1) Reproductive rights

(2) Maternal health

(3) Child care and protection

(4) Paternal leave policy

(5) Family policy

(6) Education/Research

(7) Benifits and pensions

(8) Equality policy

(9) Anti-discrimination policy

(10) Human trafficking

(11) Human rights