

# Women in the Parliaments of Visegrad Group Countries: Descriptive and Substantive Representation

PhD Research Proposal

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## INSTITUTIONAL VS. CULTURAL FACTORS

- Since the pioneering work of Duverger (1955) on women and politics various studies have sought to identify the key factors that affect the inclusion of women in the political landscape.
- Research on the connection between institutional factors and the percentage of women in national legislatures is vast (Norris – Krook, 2011; Norris, 1999; Lovenduski, 1993; Matland, 1993). However, certain studies assume that only institutional factors by themselves may not provide an appropriate explanation for women’s representation.
- As a result, the literature of descriptive representation of women extends this approach by attempting to link institutional ties with cultural dimensions (Inglehart – Norris, 2003). This prevalent new trend attributes a more significant impact of cultural factors on women political participation.
- Lately, many scholars (Stockemer, 2012, Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Hughes and Paxton, 2008) argue that **female representation increasingly depends on social, economic and regional factors if the analytical framework is extended beyond the limits of the western world.**
- Krook (2009) and Dahlerup (2006) claim that **the electoral system or the quota, which appear to be significant factors in shaping women’s representation, have no real effect on the number of female deputies in emerging countries.**
- These scholars assume that **the political participation of women is strongly context-dependent** (Stockemer, 2012). For example, Schwindt-Bayer (2010) pointed out that the implementation of democracy did not lead to an increase of women’s representation in Latin America.

## AIM OF THE RESEARCH

- The common background and shared roots enable us to investigate the factors affecting female’s descriptive and substantive representation in this region. Moreover, the research opportunities in the political participation of women in this region are yet to be exploited. **The main aim of my research is to shed light on the factors that explain the low level of women’s representation in Visegrad countries despite their democratic transition.**
- My goal is to bridge the main **institutional factors** (e.g. election forms, quotas), that are traditionally determined as factors that have the most significant and positive impact on women’s representation with the distinct **cultural and regional context of the Visegrad Group** (e.g. the consolidation of democracy, the country’s level of development) that might play greater importance as it attributed to them.

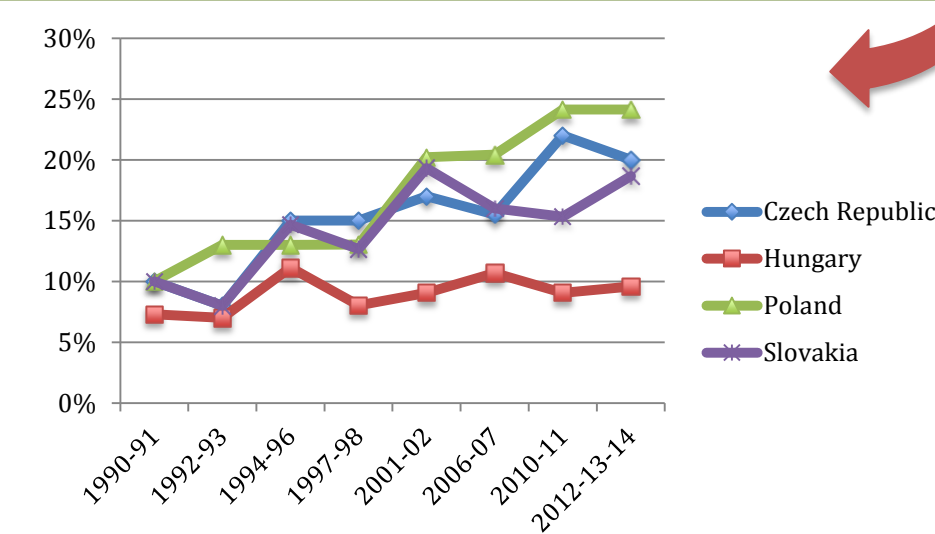
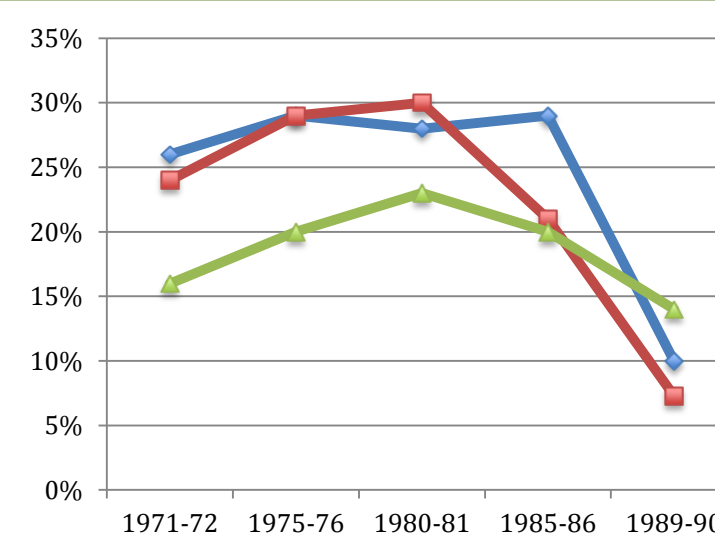
## DATA AND METHOD

- 1st year**
  - Developing mixed research method
  - Qualitative comparative analysis (see Krook 2010)
  - Latin America as a possible comparison (masculinization of politics)
- 2nd year**
  - Fieldwork
  - Semi-structured interviews with female (and also male) candidates and members of parliaments
- 3rd year**
  - Content analysis
  - Analysis of interpellations and parliamentary speeches of women

**Selected references:** Duverger, M. (1955) The Political Role of Women, Paris: UNESCO, Dahlerup, D. (1988) From a Small to a Large Minority: Women in Scandinavian Politics, Scandinavian Political Studies, 11(4): 275–97., Inglehart, R. – Norris, P. (2003) Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change around the World, New York: Cambridge University Press, Inter-Parliamentary Union (2014) Women in national parliaments, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>, Lovenduski, J. (1993): Introduction: The Dynamics of Gender and Party, in Lovenduski, J. & Norris, P. eds., Gender and Party Politics, London: Sage Publications, Kanter, R. M. (1977) Some Effects of Proportions on Group Life: Skewed Sex Ratios and Responses to Token Women, The American Journal of Sociology, 82(5): 965-990., Krook, M. L. (2009) Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide, New York: Oxford University Press., Matland, R. E. (1993) Institutional Variables Affecting Female Representation in National Legislatures: The Case of Norway, The Journal of Politics, 55(3): 737-755, Norris, P. (1999) Women’s Representation and Electoral Systems, in: Richard Rose (ed), Encyclopedia of Electoral Systems, Washington DC: CQ Press., Schwindt – Bayer, L. (2010) Political Power and Women’s Representation in Latin America, New York: Oxford University Press., Women Suffrage and Beyond (2015), [http://womensuffrage.org/?page\\_id=97](http://womensuffrage.org/?page_id=97)

## WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS

- Women gained the right to stand for elections in Hungary and Poland in 1918, and in 1920 in Slovakia and the Czech Republic (Women Suffrage and Beyond).
- Henceforth, **the percentage of parliamentary seats in national parliaments held by women has grown significantly in national legislatures until the late 1980s.**
- **After the political changes brought about the transition into market economy in 1989-90, the proportion of women in the parliaments have strongly decreased in the Visegrad countries.**
- By joining the European Union, gender equality has become one of the greatest challenges in all of the Visegrad countries, as the representation of women in the national parliaments of these countries is significantly lower (19,7 percent) compared to the EU average, which is 26,35 percent (IPU, 2014).
- **The proportion of women in most European national parliaments is increasing, while it is falling in Hungary, stagnating in Slovakia and slowly increasing in the Czech Republic and Poland.**
  - Thus, the striking difference between the ratio of women in society and the proportion of women in politics proves the relevance and legitimacy of the research question of the thesis.
- Poland has legal quota, while the other three countries have only voluntary party quotas.



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- Are the institutional variables the driving factors behind the growth of women’s representation (in Poland) or the cultural explanations play significant role in shaping gender equality in the V4 countries?
- Do women legislatures represent „women issues” in parliaments?
- In what public policy issues are women engaged?
- Why do less women participate in politics in Hungary than in the other three Visegrad countries?

## THE BACKGROUND OF VISEGRAD 4 (V4) – SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Apart from the many similarities, the four Visegrad countries have many differences, even though they have been sharing the same cultural values and similar economic trends over a long time. The four countries had slightly different trends of convergence in the last 25 years, albeit they currently have similar levels of development (e.g. the average GDP per capita in 2013 among the V4 was 11000€). However, in terms of economic development they fall behind the EU average. The similarities extend to the involvement of women in the labor market and education that are key variables beyond the institutional variables (Ubrežiová, I. – Moravčíková, 2014). Furthermore, the percentage of women elected to national parliaments is fairly similar in the Visegrad countries, except in Hungary, where this ratio is much lower. In the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia, this ratio is around 20 percent, while in Hungary the percentage of women in the parliament barely reach 10 percent in 2014 (IPU, 2014). This is far from what Kanter (1977) or Dahlerup (1988) would call the appropriate level of representation, where women as a minority group are able to represent their interests in decision-making.