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Women's Political Representation in Romania: Institutional Gaps, Cultural Barriers and Shifting Political Landscape

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Abstract

Romania continues to face structural, legal, and cultural barriers to gender equality in politics. Despite modest gains in women's parliamentary representation, the country lacks binding quota legislation, and political parties remain resistant to reform. Legal provisions are vague and poorly enforced, while public commitments often remain symbolic. Civil society plays a key role, though with limited institutional support, focusing primarily on substantive representation. Isolated good practices exist but are largely informal, under-institutionalised, and confined to smaller or newer parties. The rise of far-right parties further threatens progress through anti-gender discourse and efforts to delegitimise civil society (Băluță O, Băluță I 2025; Băluță 2020). In this context, the electoral support for women candidates, the presence of female MPs, and even female leadership in some parties call for critical reflection on strategies, framings, and narratives used to advance women's political representation.

1. Relevant country context

1.1 Relevant Data: Descriptive Representation

According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Romania ranks last among EU Member States in the 2024 Gender Equality Index, with a score of 57.5 – 13.5 points below the EU average. Despite a modest increase of 1.4 points since 2021, its position remains unchanged due to slower progress. The weakest domain is Power, scoring 32.8 overall and 32.6 in Political Power. Women's representation in the European Parliament shows a declining trend: 12 of 35 seats in 2007, 12 of 33 in 2009, 11 of 32 in 2014, and only 6 of 33 in both 2019 and 2024, indicating persistent underrepresentation despite EU commitments to gender parity. At the **local level**, only 14.6% of officials elected in 2020 were women (Pârvu, 2023), mostly as local councillors (89.4%). Fewer serve as county councillors (4%), mayors (2.6%), or deputy mayors (3-4%), reflecting limited access to executive roles. Women's presence in national government remains low. After the fall of communism in 1989, the first two **female ministers** were appointed in 1999, followed by five in the Năstase government (2000). The Cioloș government (2015) was the first to reach 30%. Romania has had one female prime minister – Viorica Dăncilă (PSD, 2018–2019),

whose cabinet included 8 women and 19 men. In 2023, the Ciolacu government had 5 women and 15 men; by 2024, this dropped to just 2 women ministers, drawing criticism from civil society over the gap between rhetoric and practice (Mihăiescu 2023). Following the 2024 **parliamentary** elections (Annex Table 1), women hold 21.7% of seats, placing Romania 109th globally, in a year marked by a dense electoral cycle (local, national, European, and presidential elections). Annex Table 1 shows a gradual increase in women's descriptive representation in the Romanian Parliament. Romania lacks legislative gender quotas, and while some parties adopt voluntary quotas, these remain largely symbolic (Băluță and Tufiş, 2021, p. 6). Despite gains, representation remains uneven, especially as far-right parties with anti-gender agendas gain ground. After the 2024 elections, AUR, SOS, and POT – two of them breakaways from AUR – secured 32.45% of Senate seats and 31.83% in the Chamber. Their records vary: in the Chamber, SOS (35.71%) and POT (37.5%) surpass 30%, while AUR falls short. In the Senate, women's presence drops: POT (14.29%), AUR (17.86%), SOS (25%) (see Annex Tables 2–3). Increased representation in 2024 is partly due to women candidates promoted by these parties, that display anti-gender rhetoric and opposition to equality policies. In May 2025, AUR, SOS, and POT opposed HPV vaccination, despite Romania's high cervical cancer incidence. Between 2020 and 2024, AUR repeatedly opposed the introduction of sex education in Parliament, amid persistent rates of adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (Băluță 2025, forthcoming). Mainstream parties (PSD, PNL, USR, UDMR) and minority organisations remain below parity. None exceed 30% women; only USR surpasses 25% in the Senate. PNL and UDMR are particularly male dominated. The National Minorities Group has the lowest rate – only one woman (5.26%) among 19 deputies. These trends underscore the need for structural reforms such as gender quotas, parity, or zipper rules. Female leadership in Romanian political parties remains rare and often short-lived. PNL had female leaders between 2014 and 2017; PSD was led by Romania's only female prime minister for five months in 2019. USR was briefly headed by Elena Lasconi (June 2024 – May 2025), who resigned after failing to advance in the 2025 presidential elections. As of 2025, the far-right parties POT and SOS are led by women.

Women's access to political power is essential for gender equality and democratic quality. It is both a matter of justice and a condition for inclusive, legitimate institutions. However, the limits of descriptive representation must be critically assessed, especially under illiberal conditions where representation risks co-optation, complicating efforts toward mobilisation and policy reform.

1.2 Regulation and legal provisions: weak legislative framework for women's political representation in Romania

Romania's legal framework remains limited and largely ineffective. Article 16(3) of the **Constitution** guarantees equal opportunities for public office, and **Law No. 202/2002** on Equal Opportunities and Treatment for Women and Men mandates “balanced representation” in candidate nominations. However, the law lacks definitions or

enforcement mechanisms. **Electoral laws** for local (Law 115/2015), national (Law 208/2015), and European (Law 33/2007) elections each include a single, vaguely formulated provision requiring gender representation on party lists, with no penalties for non-compliance. Law 208/2015 explicitly exempts single-candidate lists. Since 2006, Law 334/2006 on **party financing provides** increased public subsidies for parties placing women in electable positions, with funding doubling based on seats won by women (art. 18(2)). The 2016 increase in party funding raised the stakes, yet qualitative evidence shows this incentive is rarely factored into candidate selection (Băluță an Tufiş 2021, p. 4). Overall, Romania's legislation lacks clarity, enforcement, and institutional follow-through (Băluță & Dumitru 2023, p. 11). All attempts to introduce legislative gender quotas have been rejected, often triggering ideological backlash – developed further in the next section.

1.3 Policy measures to promote women in politics

The **National Strategy for Gender Equality (2022–2027)**, coordinated by ANES, recognises women's underrepresentation in leadership as a structural issue. However, actions under the “Participation in Decision-Making” area – such as gender analyses, leadership training, and support for zipper quotas (Objective 5.1) – remain non-binding. The reliance on soft tools without enforcement mechanisms limits the Strategy's transformative potential and reinforces the symbolic nature of gender equality policy. Between 2020 and 2024, three legislative proposals aimed at strengthening gender representation were introduced but failed to advance, revealing a persistent gap between symbolic commitments and substantive reform: **PL-x 308/2022 – Gender Quotas in Parliamentary Elections**: Proposed by 61 MPs, this amendment to Law 208/2015 introduced a mandatory 33% gender quota and zipper system. Though adopted by the Senate in May 2022, it stalled in the Chamber of Deputies after April 2023. Despite cross-party support, parties like PNL and PSD failed to formally endorse it, with internal opposition – especially in PNL – highlighting deep ideological resistance (Andrei 2023). **PL-x 473/2022 – Party Financing and Gender Equality**: Amending Law 334/2006, this proposal linked subsidies to the number of women and youth elected, earmarking 20% of funds for women's participation and 10% for youth. Though tacitly adopted by the Senate in September 2022, it remains blocked in the Chamber, reflecting reluctance to institutionalise gender-responsive financing. **L756/2022 – Gender Quotas in Local and Corporate Governance**: This proposal mandates 30% gender quotas on local/county council candidate lists and public enterprise boards. Adopted by the Senate in February 2023, it remains under parliamentary review. As of April 2025, the Government deferred action, signalling continued hesitation to legislate gender parity.

1.4 Challenges and obstacles for women in politics or to enter politics

Despite formal commitments to gender equality, women in Romania face persistent structural, institutional, and cultural barriers to political participation and influence. These are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

Gender-conservative norms continue to frame politics as a masculine domain, positioning women in caregiving roles and questioning their legitimacy in leadership (Vlase and Băluță 2022; Bucur and Miroiu 2019; Băluță I. 2015; Băluță O. 2017; Miroiu 2004). While public attitudes have improved, structural bias persists: support for female candidates rose modestly – from under 5% in 2000 to 10% in 2018 – while preference for male presidents declined from 73% to 47%, and for male mayors from 55% to 37% (Barometrul de Gen 2018; Băluță and Tufiş 2021). Nonetheless, preference for male leadership remains. Media coverage often reinforces these biases by focusing on women’s appearance, family roles, or emotional tone, rather than political competence (Băluță 2015, 2018b, c).

Political parties as gendered institutions: institutional disincentives. As key gatekeepers to elected office, Romanian political parties lack transparent selection processes and effective gender equality measures (Băluță and Tufiş 2021; Chiru and Popescu 2016; Chiva 2005, 2018). Women are often placed in non-eligible positions, limiting access to decision-making roles (ANES 2024; Băluță 2017). Parties reproduce gendered hierarchies through both formal rules and informal norms (Verge 2015, 2023). Qualitative research highlights persistent barriers: full-time availability norms disproportionately burden women, gendered expectations limit women’s visibility and influence; late-night and prolonged meetings hinder participation; informal decision-making reinforces male-dominated “homosocial capital” (Băluță 2018a). VAWP, inherently gender-motivated (Krook 2020) – increasingly visible since 2016 and particularly in 2022 – has contributed to a hostile environment. Anti-gender campaigns have intensified VAWP, particularly during legislative debates on sex education, abortion, and HPV vaccination. These dynamics reveal how Romanian political parties remain structurally and culturally gendered, reinforcing exclusionary norms and acting as institutional barriers to women’s representation.

Digital platforms. While offering visibility and access to voters, social media also amplifies gender inequality. Interviews reveal that online hostility deters political participation, especially for younger women or those without party support. It fosters self-censorship, discourages engagement with sensitive issues, and undermines women’s legitimacy.

Policy gaps and political will. Despite the permissive framework of Law 202/2002, Romania lacks binding quotas. Between 2020 and 2024, all quota-related proposals stalled or were rejected, often triggering ideological backlash. Financial incentives for gender inclusion remain underused, and parties resist internal reform, maintaining exclusionary structures.

These dynamics highlight the need for **intersectional analysis**, as overlapping inequalities shape women’s access to and experience in political life.

2. Good practice examples

Despite structural resistance to gender equality, several recent initiatives illustrate potential emerging models of inclusive political practice in Romania. **PLUS –**

Candidate Selection (2019 European Elections): PLUS implemented a transparent selection process, the final score integrated member votes (30%), a competence assessment of a civil society selection committee (40%), and the National Bureau evaluation of diversity and organisational merit (30%). Out of 152 candidates, 43 advanced (22 women, 21 men). (Redacția Hotnews 2019) **USR – “Women in Politics” Group:** Formed after the party’s failure to nominate women ministers in 2020, this informal group – led by the Diaspora branch – advocated for quotas, organised debates. Though not formally institutionalised, it reflects a bottom-up push for change in a party often seen as technocratic and gender-neutral (Gîrbea 2022). **Parliamentary Support Group (2020–2024):** Coordinated by FILIA, this cross-party group of MPs promoted women’s rights through training, policy dialogue, and civil society engagement. In a context of anti-gender backlash, it exemplified informal feminist alliance-building (FILIA, 2024). While promising, these initiatives risk remaining isolated without stronger institutionalisation and binding commitments.

3. Transferability aspects

Annex Table 4 explores the transferability of measures to enhance women’s descriptive representation, focusing on gender quotas, awareness campaigns, political violence, and support mechanisms, with comparative insights from Belgium, Lithuania, and Romania.

Belgium offers a robust institutional model, but its transferability to Romania is limited by structural and cultural constraints. Romania lacks binding gender quota laws; past reforms have been blocked by political resistance and ideological backlash. Party systems are centralised and male-dominated, with opaque candidate selection and weak internal commitment to gender equality. Support structures – such as mentoring, awareness campaigns, and contact points – are minimal or absent. Civil society is active but underfunded and poorly integrated into policymaking. Feminist NGOs engage in advocacy, research, and service provision, yet without institutional support, their impact remains limited. Without comprehensive legal, institutional, and cultural reform, such practices risk remaining symbolic. Given the current political climate, renewed mobilisation for quotas or legislative change is unlikely. The **Lithuanian** case aligns more closely with Romania. While Lithuania has implemented temporary special measures, awareness campaigns, ethical media coverage, and data monitoring, structural barriers persist. Party resistance, weak institutional capacity, and fragmented data systems limit reform. Most awareness efforts depend on civil society and external funding. Academic–NGO collaboration exists but is not well integrated into policymaking. Advancing similar measures in Romania would require coordinated advocacy, legal reform, and stronger institutional inclusion of civil society and research actors.

4. Conclusions and recommendations: Reflecting on national and European measures to support women in politics

Framing women's underrepresentation as a legitimate political issue is itself a political struggle (Băluță 2015). Addressing it requires more than isolated measures – it demands coordinated, multi-level strategies to confront structural inequalities in political systems.

National-Level Recommendations:

- 1. Recognise systemic barriers:** Acknowledge that women's underrepresentation stems from institutional and cultural obstacles – not individual deficits – including gendered party norms, biased candidate selection, and weak enforcement mechanisms;
- 2. Adopt binding quotas:** Implement legal gender quotas for electoral lists and executive bodies, with placement mandates and sanctions to ensure compliance;
- 3. Strengthen institutional frameworks:** Empower gender equality and electoral oversight bodies with authority, resources, and independence to monitor participation and enforce reforms;
- 4. Reform political parties:** Require internal quotas, transparent selection procedures, and gender-sensitive practices. The mainstream parties' poor performance in the 2024–2025 elections presents a window for democratisation linked to gender reform;
- 5. Combat VAWP:** Legally define and sanction violence against women in politics, including online abuse. Introduce party-level complaint mechanisms, parliamentary codes of conduct, and toolkits for addressing VAWP across contexts;
- 6. Support cross-party women's networks:** Encourage peer networks at all levels to foster solidarity, mentorship, and collective action;
- 7. Build strategic coalitions:** Unite feminist NGOs, gender scholars, professional associations, and electoral experts to push for parity, monitor reforms, and hold parties accountable;
- 8. Improve data and monitoring:** Create centralised, publicly accessible databases to track representation and monitor compliance;
- 9. Promote gender in media and education:** Support ethical media coverage, journalist training, and gender-inclusive curricula.

European-Level Recommendations:

- 1. Set normative standards:** European political families should promote minimum standards for gender parity and encourage national parties to adopt quotas and parity measures;
- 2. Fund transnational learning:** Expand EU programmes for cross-border training, knowledge exchange, and good practice transfer;
- 3. Support civil society and independent media:** Ensure stable funding for feminist NGOs, watchdog organisations, and media outlets promoting women's political participation.

Contextual Considerations in Romania: Political volatility and the rise of far-right parties opposing gender equality have intensified resistance to reform, shrinking space for progress. Advancing women's representation requires strategic reframing and adaptation in increasingly hostile political contexts.

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ANNEX

Abbreviations

ANES: National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men/ Agenția Națională Pentru Egalitate de Șanse pentru Femei și Bărbați

AUR: Alliance for the Union of Romanians/ Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor

POT: Young People's Party/ Partidul Oamenilor Tineri

PSD - Social Democratic Party/ Partidul Social Democrat

PNL: National Liberal Party/ Partidul Național Liberal

PLUS: Freedom, Unity and Solidarity Party/ Partidul Libertate, Unitate și Solidaritate

REPER: Renew Romania's European Project/ Reînnoim Proiectul European al României

SOS: SOS Romania/ S.O.S. România

USR: Save Romania Union/ Uniunea Salvați România

UDMR: Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania/ Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România

VAWP: Violence against Women in Politics

Table 1: Women's Political Representation in the Romanian Parliament, 1990–2024

	1990	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020	2024
% Women in The Chamber of Deputies	4,5%	3,8%	7,3%	11,0%	11,4%	11,4%	13,3%	20,7%	18,5%	22,4%
% Women in the Senate	0,8%	2,1%	1,4%	7,9%	9,5%	5,8%	7,4%	15,4%	18,4%	20,1%
% Women in The Parliament	3,7%	3,3%	5,6%	10,1%	10,9%	9,8%	11,6%	19,1%	18,5%	21,7%

Data source for 1990–2020: Băluță, Tufiş 2021; Data source for 2024¹: <https://data.ipu.org/parliament/RO/RO-LC01/data-on-women/>

Table 2: Representation of Women and Men in the Romanian Chamber of Deputies by Political Party – 2024

Political Party	Total Seats	Women (No.)	Women (%)	Men (No.)	Men (%)
Social Democratic Party (PSD)	86	21	24.42%	65	75.58%
Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR)	63	15	23.81%	48	76.19%
National Liberal Party (PNL)	49	6	12.24%	43	87.76%
Save Romania Union (USR)	40	9	22.5%	31	77.5%
SOS Romania Party	28	10	35.71%	18	64.29%
Young People's Party	24	9	37.5%	15	62.5%
Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)	22	4	18.18%	18	81.82%
National Minorities	19	1	5.26%	18	94.74%

Data source: ANES, 2024, *Women's and Men's Participation in the Parliamentary Elections of 2024* and own calculations.

¹ The data presented in the report by the national ANES differ slightly due to methodological reasons: the total number of deputies does not include members of the national minorities group. According to ANES (2024), women's representation was 23.72% in the Chamber of Deputies and 19.40% in the Senate (see *Women's and Men's Participation in the Parliamentary Elections of 2024*), <https://anes.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Analiza-alegeri-parlamentare-2024.pdf>

Table 3: Representation of Women and Men in the Romanian Senate by Political Party – 2024

Political Party	Total Seats	Women (No.)	Women (%)	Men (No.)	Men (%)
Social Democratic Party (PSD)	36	8	22.22%	28	77.78%
Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR)	28	5	17.86%	23	82.14%
National Liberal Party (PNL)	22	3	13.64%	19	86.36%
Save Romania Union (USR)	19	5	26.32%	14	73.68%
SOS Romania Party	12	3	25%	9	75%
Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)	10	1	10%	9	90%
Young People's Party	7	1	14.29%	6	85.71%

Data source: ANES, 2024, *Women's and Men's Participation in the Parliamentary Elections of 2024* and own calculations.

Table 4. Transferability aspects**Belgium**

Good practice	Possible constraints in Romania	Suggestions to Belgium – insights from Romania
1. Gender quotas, placement mandates, zipper system, disqualification of the candidate list for noncompliance. + Harmonisation and expansion of quotas: Harmonising gender quotas across all policy levels (legislative and executive) is recommended to improve women's representation. The implementation of a triple quota system is suggested as a further step.	<i>Lack of political will:</i> major parties in Romania have consistently blocked or stalled quota legislation, <i>Candidate selection and party reform:</i> parties resist internal reform and use informal mechanisms that exclude women from competitive positions. <i>Ideological backlash:</i> proposals for quotas often trigger political, cultural and ideological opposition, framed as anti-meritocratic and communist. <i>The current political context:</i> disincentive for civil society NGOs	Monitor women's influence in leadership, committees, and policy agendas. Intersectional exclusion remains under-addressed; minority women are nearly invisible in national politics.
2. Peer support and mentoring: peer support mechanisms among women politicians and within women's organisations in some parties are highlighted as a good practice. These include gender-specific training for selectors and candidates, as well as mentoring	<i>Centralized and Male-Dominated Party Leadership:</i> highly hierarchical party systems may resist grassroots or peer-led initiatives, especially those promoting gender equality. <i>Absence of internal political will:</i> parties show limited	

Good practice	Possible constraints in Romania	Suggestions to Belgium – insights from Romania
programmes where experienced politicians coach new candidates.	interest in investing resources or political capital into sustained mentoring programmes. <i>Lack of resources and capacity:</i> peer mentoring requires time, funding, and training infrastructure, which many parties—especially smaller or local ones—do not prioritize. <i>Cultural and symbolic resistance:</i> mentoring and support initiatives may be perceived as unnecessary or as "special treatment" in political cultures dominated by meritocratic and masculinist narratives.	
3. Awareness-Raising and Monitoring: awareness-raising campaigns to address sexism, monitoring tools to understand sexism in politics, enabling more effective strategies to combat it	<i>Limited institutional Commitment:</i> Romanian political institutions have not prioritized combating sexism in politics, and “awareness campaigns” are in fact individual intervention of the civil society actors and some women journalists covering these topics. <i>Weak integration of civil society expertise:</i> feminist and equality-focused NGOs have the expertise to lead such initiatives but are rarely engaged in national strategies or supported with public funding. <i>Moderate Power and Resources of ANES</i> (Băluță, Dumitru 2023).	Gender scholar may provide input to developing monitoring tools. Data scientists can automatize tools to further understand sexist narratives in the online ecosystem. Supportive women journalists may help the campaigns/. awareness messages.
4. Combating political violence: media responsibility is emphasised (language), lodge formal complaints on behalf of members who are attacked =, institutional support, signing of a charter outlining concrete actions to prevent	<i>Media resistance:</i> the responsibility will be framed as an attempt to limit the freedom of the press; Media outlets in Romania often sensationalise political conflict and reproduce sexist narratives, with limited professional	The naming of the phenomenon is important, therefore it is relevant to distinguish between political violence and violence against women in politics “similar to violence in politics, its forms may also

Good practice	Possible constraints in Romania	Suggestions to Belgium – insights from Romania
and combat sexism in politics is recommended.	accountability for language use. <i>Absence of institutional protocols:</i> Romanian parties lack internal procedures for addressing political violence or sexism, including formal complaint mechanisms. <i>Lack of political accountability:</i> party leaderships rarely condemn sexist attacks publicly or offer institutional support to affected members, especially women. <i>Weak legal and regulatory framework:</i> existing legislation does not clearly define or sanction political violence, especially when gender-based.	be gendered, like sexual objectification, or non-gendered, like death threats. Its defining feature, therefore, is <i>not gender differentiation but gender motivation</i> to exclude women <i>as women</i> from participating in political life“ (Krook, 2020, p. 65). Institutional party support is important. When a local politician was attacked, the leaders of the party expressed public support, joined the next local council meeting, the women politician lodge a formal complaint. Public support was also important.
5. Empowerment and Support Tools: Information sessions for selectors and (aspiring) candidates, online toolbox, trusted person, generalising peer support among women politicians, ideally across party lines	<i>Low political incentive:</i> parties show limited interest in building internal capacities to promote women’s empowerment. <i>Challenging cross-party collaboration:</i> political polarisation and ideological divides make cross-party peer support among women difficult to initiate or sustain. <i>Absence of safeguarding structures:</i> no roles such as “trusted persons” exist within parties to address discrimination, harassment, or violence confidentially. <i>Cultural resistance and individualisation of risk.</i> empowerment is often framed as an individual responsibility rather than a systemic obligation, discouraging structural interventions.	<i>Informal peer support</i> exists sporadically and lacks structure: in Romania, informal solidarity networks among women politicians—especially in reform-oriented parties (e.g., USR, PLUS)—have emerged, but they remain unstructured, poorly resourced, and rarely cross party lines. <i>Civil society:</i> feminist NGOs in Romania sustain reform efforts but lack formal political access. Institutionalise NGO consultation in gender and electoral policy; support civil society–parliament collaboration.

Lithuania

Good practice	Possible constraints in Romania	Suggestions to Lithuania – insights from Romania
Temporary special measures: recommendation of temporary special measures, such as gender quotas, to accelerate women's political participation, amending the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men to introduce the concept of special temporary measures and revising the Electoral Code to implement a 40% gender quota for political party candidate lists.	See constraints from Belgium Case. <i>Reframing quotas</i> explicitly as “temporary special measures” may reduce public and political backlash by emphasizing their corrective and time-bound nature. However, success would depend on strong advocacy coalitions, legal clarity, and alignment across the Law on Equal Opportunities and the Electoral Code.	Insights from Romania are not encouraging. Despite occasional pro-equality rhetoric – often voiced before elections – party resistance to gender quotas remains high, and so is the public backlash. The gap between discourse and action is evident, with three recent legislative initiatives stalled in Parliament and others rejected over the past three decades. In this context, a strategic discursive repackaging of quotas – as temporary, corrective measures – may offer a more effective pathway for advancing reform.
Awareness and education campaigns, research focused on women's experiences	See section 3 in the Belgium Case. <i>Academic contributions exist but remain marginalized:</i> Romanian gender scholars produce valuable research, yet their work is not so often integrated into policymaking or public discourse. <i>Increasing visibility of sexism in politics:</i> high-profile cases and media scandals have helped raise public awareness, but institutional follow-up remains weak.	<i>Potential in cross-sector collaboration:</i> collaborations between NGOs, academics, and international donors show promise but require structural support. The most recent national studies on gender equality were conducted by academics within a project coordinated by feminist and women's rights NGOs. <i>Civil society drives awareness efforts:</i> feminist NGOs, some gender scholars, and few women journalists are the main drivers of awareness, often outside formal political channels.
Data collection and monitoring	This is a common and highly sensitive issue in Romania as well. <i>Lack of centralized and publicly accessible data:</i> no comprehensive, up-to-	Data collection driven by civil society and academia: Most recent and relevant gender-disaggregated data have been generated by NGOs and academic projects, not by state

Good practice	Possible constraints in Romania	Suggestions to Lithuania – insights from Romania
	date database exists to track women's political participation across levels and institutions. <i>Lack of continuity:</i> data collection efforts are often one-off and donor-driven, lacking sustained funding or state integration. <i>Transparency gaps undermine accountability:</i> the absence of reliable data hinders public oversight of gender equality commitments, obstructs the assessment of policy impact, and makes it difficult to monitor compliance with existing legislation.	institutions. However, reports on local, parliamentary elections have also been collected and published by ANES.
Mentorship and leadership development:	See section 2 in the Belgium Case.	
Media engagement : the aim is to non-stereotypical, objective coverage of women and men in politics (especially through education initiatives and trainings).	See section 4 in the Belgium Case that addressed <i>Media resistance</i>.	Ethical media coverage: independent journalists, alternative media platforms have ethically covered gender related topics, changing the narrative or confronting hegemonic narratives in traditional media. However, they have been supported by dedicated grants offered, for instance, by women dedicate companies in their CSO programmes. Some types of media genre may be more open to such endeavours, narrative journalism, for instance. Partnership between journalist and NGOs are important. Courses in academic programmes dedicated to journalist and other communicators.

Good practice	Possible constraints in Romania	Suggestions to Lithuania – insights from Romania
		Ethical media coverage: Independent journalists and alternative media platforms have played a key role in ethically reporting on gender-related issues, challenging dominant narratives and shifting public discourse. These efforts have often been made possible through targeted funding, such as grants offered by women-focused companies through their CSR programmes. Certain media genres—particularly narrative journalism—tend to be more receptive to such approaches. Partnerships between journalists and feminist NGOs are essential for sustaining this work. Integrating gender-sensitive reporting into journalism and communication curricula is crucial for shaping future media professionals.