

WHY DOES ROMANIA HAVE A NEGATIVE SELECTION IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS? AN ANALYSIS OF THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION SYSTEM DURING THE LAST THREE LEGISLATIVE TERMS

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Abstract

This paper considers theoretical perspectives on the recruitment and selection of political party candidates, in order to analyze the recruitment and selection process of Romanian MPs during the last three legislative terms. The Romanian proportional closed-list electoral system was replaced in 2008 by a majoritarian one, with single-member districts. In the wake of this change, party selectorates have loosened the admission criteria for candidates in parliamentary elections. Selectorates started considering candidates mostly because of their financial power and notoriety, while their education was overlooked. Our analysis shows that the quality of MPs' diplomas has decreased significantly since 2008. Romanian MPs complete their education, most frequently technical, with MA or PhD degrees. Some get a second BA in fields complementary to their activity in Parliament – such as political, administrative or social sciences. These courses are usually taken later in life, at private universities, which are characterized by easy admission and graduation. Since there is no general rule for submitting their CVs, some MPs omit mentioning the information regarding the educational bodies that issued their diplomas. Romania continues to be characterized by a heterogeneous parliamentary elite, as opposed to solid democracies, where the elite is formed in renowned universities. The latter also share a common background and are thus rather homogenous. We consider that a successful political reform in Romania should start within the party selectorates and their selection criteria of candidates for parliamentary elections.

Keywords: parliamentary elites, elections, selectorates, candidates, negative selection, recruitment, selection criteria, competencies, education, political reform.

1. Introduction

We aim to prove that, according to the public opinion, there is a negative selection in the Romanian election process, and that the voting system, as well as the recruitment criteria of candidates, have led to low quality MPs.

After revising the models and theories regarding political elections we analyze the recruitment and selection processes of Romanian MPs during the last three legislative terms: 2004, 2008 and 2012. We highlight the consequences that stem from the 2008 change of the voting system for general elections – from the party-list proportional representation voting system, to the majoritarian voting system with single member districts. The MPs formal competence level is evaluated by analyzing the diplomas mentioned in their official CVs which are available on the Parliament's website¹. Next, the diplomas were ranked according to the 2011 Romanian official university classification. Our research is mainly focused on the selection of individuals promoted as election candidates, as well as on election results, without analyzing the election process.

2. Theoretical perspectives on the recruitment and selection of political party candidates

Recruiting and training the parliamentary elite are aspects specific to democracies and one of the functions of the political parties that propose and support candidates. The selection of candidates is an essential step for any party, as the influence of the party, as well as the quality of the future policies promoted by parliaments, all depend on the success of these candidates. This stage usually takes place within the parties and it does not depend on national laws, with a few exceptions – United States, Germany, Finland, Norway, Turkey and Argentina (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995, p. 28).

The recruitment of MPs is a mix of political opportunities, usually managed by political parties, an individual's traits at a particular moment, and their social background. The result of the interaction between the structure (the rules of the political establishment, the class structures, the power structures, etc.) and the agency (the candidates' ability to act within these constraints, to break the resistance of the system's structure, to impose themselves in the internal selection process, up until their names appear on the electoral lists) is then put to public vote.

Hazan and Rahat (2006) propose that the selection of candidates should be analyzed considering four dimensions: (1) candidacy (who is eligible to be a candidate?); (2) selectorate (who chooses/selects the candidates?); (3) centralization vs. decentralization (are selectorates on a national or local level?); (4) appointing candidates vs. voting candidates. These four dimensions are situated on a continuum which starts at an inclusive point and goes all the way to an exclusive point; the selectorate (Figure

¹ We were only able to analyze the deputies' CVs, since only a very small number of senators had submitted their details to the public. However, we do not expect any relevant differences.

1) may include the whole population of a state, particularly those who have the right to vote, or a single person, usually the president of a party. Obviously, the latter represents an exclusive electorate.

A different political recruitment model for candidates is proposed by Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski (1995). The supply and demand model studies the recruitment process as the interaction between something supplied (the ones who wish to candidate) and something demanded (from the gatekeepers of the parties). Norris and Lovenduski (1995) also developed a comparative model of recruiting candidates (Figure 1), which can be applied in several political systems. Thus, the MPs recruitment and selection process analysis is carried out while taking into consideration three categories of factors. Firstly, any country places great importance on both the system factors in a broader sense (political system, electoral system, legal system) and the structure of opportunities (context structure). Secondly, there are factors related to the party, from organization to ideology. Thirdly, there are process factors which dynamically and directly influence the election process, the candidates' motivations and resources in particular, as well as the party's important decision-makers' or the gatekeepers' attitudes (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995, p. 183).

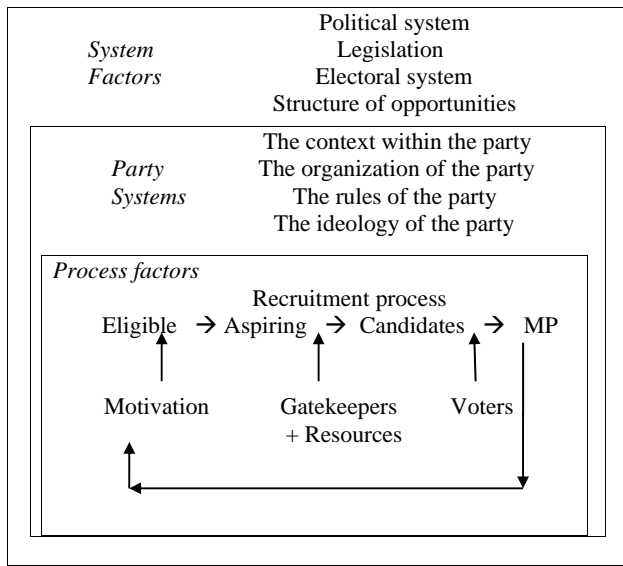


Figure 1: Factors which influence the recruitment process.
A comparative model (adapted after Norris and Lovenduski, 1995, p. 184)

The system factors practically generate the rules of the game or the conditions established before the actual selection process. For instance, according to the Romanian laws in force², the minimum age for the members of the Chamber of Deputies is 23

² Article no. 37 of the Romanian Constitution.

years, while for the members of the Senate, it is 33. Moreover, the internal regulations of the Parliament and a series of laws stipulate the incompatibilities of being an MP. All these preliminary conditions established by the system, as well as the inherent difficulties of being an independent candidate, practically exclude potential candidates (aged 18-22, respectively 18-32,) from the very beginning or drastically reduce other people's chances (those who are not supported by a registered party).

The system and context factors, especially the structure of opportunities, have strongly individualized the parliamentary elections that took place in 2012. That moment had a great symbolic significance. The challengers of the old majority, the alliance called Social Liberal Union (USL/Uniunea Social Liberală), which also governed before the elections, seemed a good alternative, a new beginning for a large part of Romania's population. This population segment had been fully affected by the crisis, the austerity and economic recovery measures adopted by the previous PDL (Democratic Liberal Party) government. The electoral victory was almost formal³ (Ionașc, 2012), with many seats 'secured' for the USL candidates. Thus, the leaders of the parties which formed USL could have used that moment in order to attract new and competent people to the parties and to the parliament, as the process factors had an insignificant role regarding the final results.

Apart from the possible shocks of an offer, the results of the selection are also influenced by the attitude of the party's gatekeepers and by the suspicion regarding possible biases, in particular. Theories and research on the topic of selecting candidates (Hazan and Rahat, 2006; Norris and Lovenduski, 1995) show that the factors which influence the candidature in itself are found especially in the area of the system (in a broader sense) and depend more on structure rather than on agency. We have also noticed that the selection process does not include – at least not in Romania – rational elements, according to the opinions of our subjects and the empirical data used in our research. These elements refer to how suitable the candidate is for ulterior tasks (regarding their role as an MP, as a member of different commissions, etc.) and are similar to the way in which, in business, the compatibility between a candidate's competences and their future job tasks mentioned in *the job description* are correlated.

3. The role of educational background in the selection of parliamentary elite in consolidated democracies

In strong Western democracies, most members of the political elite have a clearly defined educational background, having studied at prestigious universities. For instance, in France, most members of the political elite and those of the administrative elite are trained by reputable schools, like Ecole Polytechnique and Ecole Nationale d'Administration. Candidates are admitted based on a strict examination process that

3 2012 Parliamentary Elections. The most optimistic polls: USL - 62%, ARD (Right Romania Alliance) – 24%, PPDD (People's Party – Dan Diaconescu).

certifies that they have superior intellectual abilities compared to the general population. Bauer and Bertin-Mourot (*apud* Coenen-Huther, 2007, p. 172) claim that there is an impressive correlation between successful careers regarding high positions in the administrative, political and economic fields, and academic results. Boudon claims that those who do not have a degree from a prestigious university can still have access to leading circles by taking a different route: 'The political route is the choice that best allows members of the sub-elite to enter the group of the elites, even by indirect means of militancy and elections' (Boudon, 1973 *apud* Coenen-Huther, 2007, p. 174). According to Boudon, those with limited specializations or technical training will end up being a part of the intermediate level, because they lack the possibilities of inter-sectorial mobility. They will form the sub-elite, responsible for providing the elite with 'observations, proposals and suggestions'.

Mattei Dogan (1999), referring to the particular case of France, describes two paths of access to the French political elite: an endogenous one and a lateral one, or through osmosis. The first route describes the road of young people, who get a paid job within a party, without neglecting the professional aspect, 'in order to ensure a stable situation, before launching themselves on a random political trajectory. Thus, at any moment, the party has several potential candidates, internally trained as militants, and recruited in an endogenous manner' (Dogan, 1999, p. 32). The osmosis version – 'a lateral loan from the civil society' – cannot be applied in a similar manner to all social categories. Thus, the permeability is higher for 'the few professional categories, where work presupposes the necessity of having the same qualities as those of politicians. This is especially true in the case of professors, mandarins, lawyers, journalists, unionists.' (Dogan, 1999, p. 33) Political absorption through loan is accomplished by taking into consideration the proximity of those fields and a clear affinity among the professions, as Dogan claims (1999). This also shows that, although the professional change or osmosis is a valid route, it will never be the one chosen by the most important representatives in the field, as politics require time, which would translate in abandoning professions and business, with rare exceptions. In Romania, however, there is a mutual dependence between the top managerial elite⁴ and the political environment. This dependence can be noticed through the direct or indirect involvement of businessmen, especially those handling projects funded with public money, in the political world. Because of unclear property rights and an unsecure business environment, businessmen search either for the MPs' protection in exchange for their support, or for a seat in the Parliament, in order to personally protect their business (Protsyk and Matichescu, 2011).

4 It is the well-known case of the richest Romanian, the late Dinu Patriciu, who was involved in politics since 1990 and was a deputy during several legislative terms. Other examples can be found in the article available at <http://www.ziare.com/stiri/bugetari/5-la-suta-dintre-milionarii-romani-din-topul-forbes-sunt-angajati-la-stat-1048054> (Ziare.com, 2010).

Based on the observed legislative terms, the Romanian parliamentary elite is heterogeneous in terms of the MPs' education and training. As opposed to consolidated democracies, where there is an educational and cultural similarity between the members of the legislative term, a fact which certifies a pre-selection of candidates for political positions based on intellectual competences, already accomplished through the higher education system, before the electoral process, the Romanian political elites are not pre-selected and are not structurally united at the level of abilities supplied by the formal educational system. In Great Britain, the political elites are trained at Oxbridge⁵; in the United States, they are trained at Ivy League universities; and in France, at Ecole Polytechnique and Ecole Nationale d'Administration. As we shall demonstrate in the following pages, Romania is very different from these models.

4. Methodology

In order to understand whether Romania truly has a negative selection in the Parliament and whether the occurrence of this potential phenomenon has increased during the last legislative terms, we have formulated three research questions:

1. If and how the quality of Romanian MPs' education, measured according to the quality of their diplomas, decreased from one term to the other? For the terms 2004-2008, 2008-2012 and 2012-2016, we have analyzed the percentages of deputies with first class BA, MA or PhD diplomas – issued by universities focused on advanced research and education – second class BA, MA or PhD diplomas – issued by universities focused on scientific research and education – and third class BA, MA or PhD diplomas – issued by universities focused on education.
2. Has the percentage of MPs who are not part of the elite of their generation increased? Has the number of those who completed their 'normal' studies at a later age than usual increased?
3. How important is their suitability to the electoral competition, including the short-term interests of the party, compared to their suitability for the future MP position, during the selection process?

In order to properly answer these questions, we have carried out both qualitative and quantitative research⁶. The qualitative research focuses on the recruitment and selection process of candidates within the party. The result of the process and the way in which our MPs' CVs look were analyzed by means of quantitative research.

5 Oxbridge is a collective name for the elite universities Oxford and Cambridge, which Great Britain uses to differentiate from other universities. Based on the same principle, Ivy League is the name of eight top universities of the United States of America, considered together (Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Pennsylvania, Princeton and Yale).

6 As research methods, we have used document analysis (analysing the content of the Curriculum Vitae which the deputies published on the website of the Chamber of Deputies) and individual interviews.

At first, the quantitative research included a longitudinal analysis of 981 CVs published on the website of the Chamber of Deputies⁷, taking into account all deputies from three legislative terms: 2004-2008, 2008-2012 and 2012 up to now. From the total number of deputies, we excluded the minority deputies, who benefit from a specific selection and recruitment process, different from other MPs.

While carrying out the quantitative research, we faced difficulties due to the rather high number of those who supplied incomplete information about their studies in their CVs. We cannot prove a negative significance of incomplete data, but we believe that no graduate with a diploma awarded by a prestigious national or international university would want to omit details about their studies from their CVs. Moreover, in the private sector, an incomplete CV is usually not taken into account when someone applies for a job.

The interviews for qualitative research were carried out with three categories of experts: current MPs with broad political experience, human resources experts, and political systems experts from the academic environment⁸. The interviews were conducted in person, between May 1st and May 30th, 2014, based on a semi-structured interview guide. We chose to do the interviews face to face in order to capture better the complexity of the participants' verbal and non-verbal reactions. Overall, 15 individuals were chosen. Some were members of political parties, some were not. The MPs were selected as follows: three from each important parliamentary party, PSD (Social Democratic Party), PDL (Democratic Liberal Party) and PNL (National Liberal Party).

5. Financial power and notoriety – the main selection criteria for candidates during the latest parliamentary elections in Romania

According to the results obtained in the qualitative research, the selection of candidates is not institutionalized and does not really follow a model or a constant procedure; it follows flexible rules which are adapted to the political conditions specific to each ballot. Thus, the selection criteria for the 2004 elections, based on lists, are different from the criteria used by selectorates in the 2008 or 2012 elections, when candidates were chosen by the uninominal voting system. In none of the electoral cycles were the criteria institutionalized, not even theoretically, in any public document which could clearly illustrate the steps one should follow in order to go to the polls.

When they were asked about the criteria used in selecting candidates for the parliamentary elections, the parties' respondents generally nominated the same attri-

⁷ www.cdep.ro.

⁸ Along with the MPs, we have interviewed a head hunter, the HR manager of a large bank, and the HR manager of a large multinational corporation. We also chose to discuss with a former chief of a large party and university professor, a former president of the Chamber of Deputies who is also retired from politics, and a former finance minister, an important leader of a large party and university professor who no longer holds any positions in the party. They were each decision makers in their own parties at one point in their careers and we found their input valuable.

butes: notoriety, a good reputation, integrity, competence, communication abilities and support offered to the party. However, when they were asked how the selection criteria changed following the new election system, all respondents agreed that the importance of these criteria was classified differently starting with 2008, when the main criteria were financial power and notoriety.

We shall mention only a few examples of opinions, which mention financial power and notoriety: 'the criteria disappeared, as the focus was on financial power (...) we have X constituencies and we need X rich candidates to win' or 'the parties' identity has weakened a lot (...) when someone is chosen independently, he has no responsibilities towards a party, but maybe only towards his own conscience. Everyone is looking for notoriety, even if it isn't always notoriety regarding competence' or 'they have become weak in terms of what an eligible candidate means. The fundamental resources are quite limited and the criteria had to be less strict in order to attract people' or 'It's a step back, because the list helped to select better the value, in my opinion, as compared to the uninominal vote, when the material potential of the candidate may replace both competence and morality'.

Surprisingly, none of the interviewees voluntarily mentioned education as a criterion in the selection and recruitment of MPs. When they were asked about the importance of education, most of the respondents stated that it is a necessary criterion, though not a sufficient one, and that the lack of a diploma is 'something sensational'. The ratio regarding the professionalization of the political career versus 'last minute' candidates is estimated at 50/50, based on what an interviewee says, as opposed to other countries, where it is at 80/20, as mentioned by a former party chief, a respondent included in the study. 'The trouble is the clientelism that outweighs professionalism', as stated by the same interviewee.

In cases where the MPs' education is precarious, the interviewees all stated that it was outweighed by financial criteria, the ability to ensure financial support for the campaign, as well as other things. 'The uninominal vote is at fault. The poor system which encourages such situations. Their financial business and the money with which they paid for the vote. You couldn't find such people on the lists, because competition was among professionals'.

Public trust in the Parliament (INSCOP, 2015) is currently at 11%, a very low level even for this institution, after numerous corruption scandals, and the public perception of this body is negative. The professional elites are not interested in running for a MP position. Good professionals would rather hold an executive position in the Government, if they decided to give up their current career plans, as one of our respondents stated. That is because they feel they would not make an impact and would only 'waste time' in the Parliament. The same respondent continued by pointing out that the Parliament does no longer pass important/qualitative bills, but rather approves the bills 'of the Government'. In fact, as Hințea (2011, p. 188) shows, the relation between the executive and the legislative bodies in Romania is 'dominated by the aggressive legislative activity undertaken by the Government', through Emergency Governmental Ordinances.

As shown in the previous section, the system factors in the 2012 ballot were on the side of USL, the former opposition during the previous election cycle, which gained power in the year when the elections took place. The former governing party, PDL, was considered to be guilty of unpopular measures regarding the budget balance, so that, with the exception of the Hungarian circumscriptions, as well as of one from the diaspora, all candidates of USL's former opposition were placed first among the election options, most of them reaching over 50% of the votes. However, the chance of this alliance to effortlessly win the elections did not lead to better selection criteria of the candidates. Miroiu (2007, p. 226) talks about the 'rational ignorance' of the voters and also shows that Romanians, similar to other European populations, are insufficiently informed regarding the options they have when voting. In the case of mature democracies, reputation and political platforms are coordinated, but there is no correlation between reputation and actions in the emerging economies. According to this theory, it appears that, at least in Romania, people will continue to vote for lists and candidate groups as a whole package, regardless of the electoral system in force at the time.

6. The professional structure of the Romanian Parliament: From irrelevant diplomas in engineering to low quality diplomas in legal studies

The structure of professions within the Romanian Parliament does not fit the mission and the role of a parliament belonging to a democratic society. The most frequent specialization of deputies during all three legislative terms is engineering. Younger MPs finish their studies at private universities, where admission and graduation standards are relatively low. Overall, most MPs are graduates of universities found at the bottom of the classification chart⁹. The data show that this tendency became more emphasized after the introduction of the uninominal voting system.

The number of MPs with no higher education is small and constant, while the ratio of graduates from low quality universities is high and growing. This structure proves that the quality of the candidate's education is not an important criterion for party selectorates. Professions such as engineers, economists and legal professionals represent the dominant profile of an MP. The literature in this field (Jakob, 1962; Weber, 1992; King, 1987) considers 'a legal professional' to be a profession complemen-

⁹ The universities in Romania were classified in 2011 (Law no. 1/2011 on national education) in three groups: the first includes the most renowned universities in Romania, the 'advanced research and education' universities, state owned; the second group includes the 'education and scientific research' universities or 'education and artistic work' universities, also state owned, but less acknowledged; the third group is made of private universities 'education-oriented', with easy access. Higher quality diplomas are those issued by universities belonging to the first category and less competitive diplomas are those from 'education and scientific research' universities or 'education and artistic work' universities. The diplomas issued by universities belonging to the 'education-oriented' category have been considered rather low quality.

tary to that of an MP, along with professions such as journalist, writer or professor. In contrast with this pattern, most MPs in Romania are engineers, followed closely by economists and, next, by legal professionals. Other specializations are at a significant distance from the first three. As an explanation, we may consider the educational profile of the communist elite and of the graduates from that period. Before the fall of the former communist system, engineers were very sought after. The fact that engineering dominates the educational structure of the Parliament shows that the technical and managerial elite of the former socialist economy became the new political elite of the market economy. Some of these engineers later completed their studies, following specializations and courses that they considered useful for their career: economist, legal professional, political science expert, administrative expert, sociologist, etc.

Deputies specialized in fields incompatible with their new careers, as well as those who do not finish their studies on time, try to advance their education. In this sense, they either eventually enroll in tertiary education, they go for a second degree, or for an MA program. Generally, the quality of these studies is quite low. Deputies turn to educational institutions where both access and graduation are easy. A conclusive example is that of legal professionals from our current legislative term. The 'parliament of legal professionals' really is the parliament of legal professionals who graduated from faculties holding lower positions in the academic classification of universities.

We expected that, at least in the case of their later BA studies, those choosing to become MPs would go for the complementary, so-called 'brokerage occupations' (Jacob, 1962), meaning law, administrative and political studies or communication. Regarding their second BA degree, the top specializations are: engineer, economist and legal professional. Our expectations are confirmed only regarding the MA studies, where the most frequent specialization in all researched legislative terms is administrative sciences, and political sciences is third. MBA degrees in economy rank second, while communication and journalism specializations are absent.

6.1. MPs with second and third class diplomas

We analyzed the diplomas¹⁰ obtained by MPs on several study levels. Thus, we analyzed the quality of the BA diplomas¹¹ obtained at the first and second graduated faculty, the MA and PhD diplomas, according to the university they graduated from. As part of our analysis, we excluded MPs who obtained their diplomas before 1994. They were admitted to a faculty during the former system, before private universities

10 The analysis included 981 CVs, published on the website of the Chamber of Deputies, with deputies from three legislative terms: 2004-2008, 2008-2012 and 2012-present. From the total number of deputies, we have excluded the minority deputies, who benefit from a specific selection and recruitment process, differently than other MPs, and whom we considered irrelevant for our research. Thus, we did not use the sampling method. Instead, we analysed the whole population of relevant subjects.

11 According to the classification of universities in Romania as provided by Law no. 1/2011.

emerged in 1990. As one needs at least four years to complete their academic studies, we considered those who graduated in 1994 to be the first generation taught according to the new post-communist educational system. The deputies who did not post their CVs on the website of the Chamber of Deputies were also excluded. The reason behind this decision was our desire to obtain results which will exclusively cover the population comprised of deputies who graduated from universities referred to in the classification made according to the Law no. 1/2011, proposed by the Ministry of National Education. Separately, we focused on deputies who graduated from a university before 1989, in order not to distort the data, meaning an artificial increase of the percentage of advanced research and scientific research universities, considering that the first private universities emerged in Romania in 1990.

All private universities belong to the category of ‘education-oriented universities’. Starting with 1990, those who wished to graduate from a faculty could choose from a wider range of study programs, including private universities¹². In fact, the dynamics regarding the deputies’ higher education preferences after 1990 is quite clear. The private universities were preferred by an increasing number of individuals.

During the last two legislative terms (2008 and 2012), the quality of the BA degree diplomas decreased dramatically, as compared to the 2004 legislative term. The data do show a clear increase in the percentage of low quality diplomas, issued by education-oriented universities (third class), when we compare legislatures. Third class diplomas registered the highest increase: 13% more in 2008 and 17.7% more in 2012, as compared to 2004. The percentage of deputies with first class diplomas dropped from 46.4% in the 2004 legislature to 34.2% in the 2012 legislature.

Table 1: BA diploma quality for the MPs elected in 2004, 2008 and 2012

Specializations	Year when the parliamentary legislative term (L) began			Changes as compared to the previous legislative term (pp)		
	2004	2008	2012	2008 vs. 2004	2012 vs. 2008	2012 vs. 2004
I. Advanced research and education universities	46.4	30.5	34.2	-15.9	3.7	-12.2
II. Education and scientific research or education and artistic work universities	20.2	21.2	23.2	0.9	2.0	2.9
III. Education-oriented universities	10.7	23.7	28.4	13.0	4.7	17.7
Graduated from a foreign universities	1.2	1.7	1.1	0.5	-0.6	-0.1
Not listed in the classification	2.4	3.4	3.2	1.0	-0.2	0.8
Data not included in the CV	19.0	19.5	10.0	0.4	-9.5	-9.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	-	-	-

12 Although these educational institutions were involved in several scandals during the last 25 years, some students still choose to follow their study programmes, because the admission does not involve any exam and the diplomas can be obtained more easily than in the case of state-owned universities.

The quality of MPs' MA diplomas is even lower than the quality of their BA diplomas, and lower than the whole population of MA graduates. With reference to their MA diplomas, most deputies from the 2004 legislative term (39%) received their MA diplomas from advanced research universities, followed closely by those who graduated from education-oriented universities.

In 2008 and 2012, 60% and 61%, respectively, of the MPs graduated from second and third class universities, while a few graduated from 'ghost' universities which cannot be found by either using Google search or in the Ministry's classification.

Table 2: The quality of MA diplomas

Quality of MA diplomas	Year when the parliamentary legislative term (L) began			Changes as compared to the previous legislative term (pp)		
	2004	2008	2012	2008/2004	2012/2008	2012/2004
I. Advanced research and education universities	38.8	24.7	22.1	-14.0	-2.7	-16.7
II. Education and scientific research or education and artistic work universities	14.3	27.8	30.9	13.5	3.0	16.6
III. Education-oriented universities	24.5	32.0	30.1	7.5	-1.8	5.7
Graduated from a foreign universities	4.1	3.1	6.6	-1.0	3.5	2.5
Not identified/not listed in the classification	6.1	2.1	2.9	-4.1	0.9	-3.2
Data not included in the CV	12.2	10.3	7.4	-1.9	-3.0	-4.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100	-	-	-

If we compare the MP's diplomas with the national results, we can observe that the quality of MPs' MA diplomas is lower than the whole population of MA graduates (Table 3).

Table 3: The distribution of Romanian MPs' MA diplomas, as compared to the general population of MA graduates in Romania

Category of universities	Alma Mater based distribution of deputies' MA diplomas*			Alma Mater based distribution of MA diplomas at national level 2012/2013**
	Legislative term, percentage of deputies			
	2004	2008	2012	
	%	%	%	%
I. Advanced research education universities	50.0	29.3	26.5	41
II. Education and scientific research or education and artistic work universities	18.4	32.9	37.2	43
III. Education-oriented universities	31.6	37.8	36.3	16
Total	100	100	100	100

*Authors' calculations based on CV analysis

** Authors' calculations based on data obtained from the Ministry of Education

After 2008, first class universities started being underrepresented in the Parliament by their MA graduates, while third class diplomas seem to have always been

two times more frequent than in the general population of graduates. Even in this category we can see an increase in legislatures elected in single member districts, from 31.6% in 2004 to 36.3% in 2012. The number of diplomas that come from second class universities just catch up with national levels, although in the 2012 legislature they are twice as many as compared to the 2004 legislature.

The quality of PhD diplomas. In the case of each type of diploma and in all legislative terms, there are a certain percentage of deputies who do not include sufficient data in their CV. This percentage is very high for doctoral studies. Almost 41.6% of the 2004 legislative term, 24.3% of the 2008 legislative term and 30.8% of the 2012 legislative term use elliptic expressions, such as 'Doctor in sciences', 'PhD diploma in engineering', etc., without mentioning the university or at least the faculty where they obtained their diploma, while a certain percentage in each term did not offer any kind of information.

Table 4: The quality of PhD diplomas

Quality of PhD diplomas	Year when the parliamentary legislative term (L) began			Changes as compared to the previous legislative term (pp)		
	2004	2008	2012	2008/2004	2012/2008	2012/2004
I. Advanced research and education universities	32.5	36.5	32.1	4.0	-4.4	-0.4
II. Education and scientific research or education and artistic work universities	20.8	27.0	24.4	6.2	-2.7	3.6
III. Education-oriented universities	3.9	9.5	10.3	5.6	0.8	6.4
Graduated from a foreign universities	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Not listed in the classification	1.3	2.7	2.6	1.4	-0.1	1.3
Data not included in the CV	41.6	24.3	30.8	-17.2	6.4	-10.8
Total (%)	100	100	100	-	-	-

Considering those who display usable data, the PhD diplomas of deputies from all analyzed legislative terms were obtained mainly from advanced research universities in the following comparable percentages: 32.5% in 2004, 36.5% in 2008 and 32.1% in 2012. The advanced research universities are the ones that have the right to hold doctoral studies in any specializations, while only the very advanced specializations of the other universities can hold doctoral studies. However, the percentage of deputies who do not name their alma maters is significantly high in all legislatures studied.

The data show a surprisingly large and increasing number of deputies that obtain their diplomas from third class universities, as compared to the general population of graduates. When we compare legislatures, we find twice as many 2012 deputies that have graduated from third class universities, as compared to the general population and 2004 legislature. While the number of second class diplomas seems to have been stable over time, even if larger than the number of graduates at national level, PhD diplomas from first class universities have become largely underrepresented in the Parliament. The decrease is of 8% from 2004 to 2012 and of 20% as compared to the general population of graduates.

Table 5: The distribution of Romanian MPs' PhD diplomas, as compared to the general population of PhD graduates in Romania (academic year 2012/2013)

Category of universities	Alma Mater based distribution of deputies' PhD diplomas*			Alma Mater based distribution of PhD diplomas at national level** 2012/2013
	Legislative term, percentage of deputies			
	2004	2008	2012	
	%	%	%	%
I. Advanced research and education universities	56.82	50.00	48.08	68.30
II. Education and scientific research or education and artistic work universities	36.36	37.04	36.54	24.86
III. Education-oriented universities	6.82	12.96	15.38	6.85
Total	100	100	100	100

*Authors' calculations based on CV analysis

** Authors' calculations based on data obtained from the Romanian Ministry of Education

Third class legal professionals are the lawmakers of Romania

Since the legal profession is the most relevant specialization of the MPs, as it allows them to act as promoters and makers of the law, this section presents the results of analyzing diploma quality for the 'legal sciences' specialization.

Predictably, the quality of legal professionals has decreased dramatically. From 43.6% of law graduates before 1994, plus 12.8% of graduates from foreign universities and 20.5% of graduates from first class universities after 1994, an approximate total of 77%, we now have a percentage of only 29% legal professionals with high quality studies (before 1994 or after, but having graduated from first class or foreign universities), while the rest graduated from low quality universities or did not even mention the universities they graduated from.

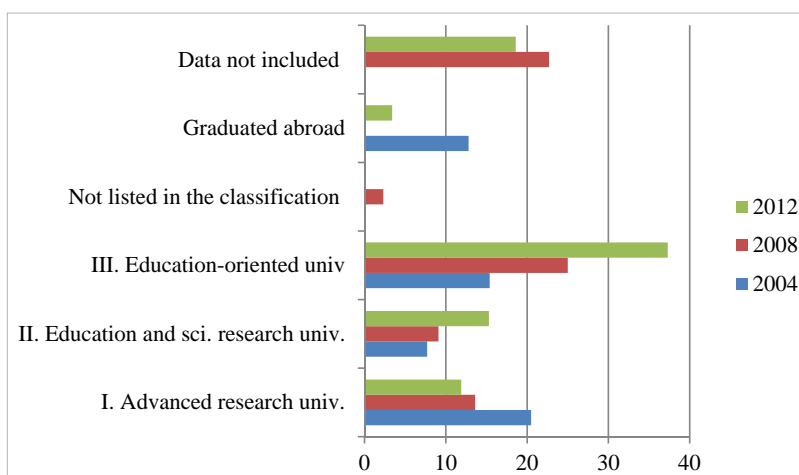


Figure 2: The quality of diplomas obtained by legal professionals at BA level (except graduates before 1994)

In other words, the legal professionals who are elected in order to propose better laws or improve the existing ones are mainly graduates of universities from the third category. In the 2012 legislature, more MP's are BA graduates of universities in the third category – 37.3%, than MPs that had graduated from universities in the first two categories or from universities abroad (30.6% all together). It is evident that a majority of Romanian legal professional MP's are 'third category' university graduates.

6.2. Substitute diplomas obtained later, as proof of substitute capacities of the MPs

Not only do deputies choose faculties where they can easily obtain a diploma, but an increasingly high percentage of deputies do not complete their studies when they should, graduating much later from various study programs.

Age categories for graduates. For this analysis, we took into account five age categories. The first includes deputies who completed their studies on time, meaning by the age of 25, which is the case of the BA diplomas. The second category includes deputies who graduated at ages between 26 and 30. This category shall be named 'late BA graduates'. The category 'quite late graduates' includes those who obtained their BA at ages between 31 and 35. 'Very late graduates' are those who obtained their BA diplomas aged from 36 and 40 and 'extremely late graduates', those who got their BA diploma after the age of 41¹³.

Regarding the age when deputies complete their first degree, we notice that only 54-60% completed their first degree 'on time', with an important percentage being late or quite late graduates. As for the second degree, only a third of the relatively small number of graduates (48 during 2008-2012 and 62 during 2012-2016) graduated 'on time', while the others were late or even quite late graduates. Practically, if in the latest legislative term only 29% had graduated on time from a second degree, before 30, 60% graduated later, after being 30, with 29% having graduated after the age of 40.

Table 6: Age categories in terms of graduation from the first degree, BA level

Age	Legislative term					
	2004-2008		2008-2012		2012-present	
	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%
1 Normal age graduates (≤25 years)	164	53.8	173	60.3	215	56.1
2 Late (26-30 years)	71	23.3	56	19.5	86	22.5
3 Quite late (31-35 years)	16	5.2	18	6.3	20	5.2
4 Very late (36-40 years)	5	1.6	5	1.7	11	2.9
5 Extremely late (≥41 years)	5	1.6	11	3.8	12	3.1
0 (no data)	44	14.4	24	8.4	39	10.2
Total deputies	305	100	287	100	383	100

13 Throughout this paper, we shall use the same categories, while the intervals shall be changed in accordance with the age when a second degree, an MA degree and doctoral studies are usually completed.

The situation is similar regarding MA degrees: only 20% of the 2004/2008 and 2008/2012 legislative terms and only 30% of the 2012/2016 legislative term obtained their MA diploma ‘on time’, while the rest are either late or quite late graduates (Table 7).

Table 7: Age categories in terms of MA graduation

Age	Legislative term					
	2004-2008		2008-2012		2012-present	
	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%
1 Normal age graduates (≤ 30 years)	10	20	20	20.4	41	30.1
2 Late (31-35 years)	4	8	10	10.2	20	14.7
3 Quite late (36-40 years)	8	16	20	20.4	23	16.9
4 Very late (41-45 years)	7	14	14	14.3	17	12.5
5 Extremely late (≥46 years)	13	26	28	28.6	29	21.3
0 (no data)	8	16	6	6.1	6	4.4
Total deputies	50	100	98	100	136	100

Clearly, MPs do not complete this study cycles on time, following the normal process of continuing their studies after a BA degree. MA degrees are completed much later after the BA graduation, probably to compensate for the lack of field-related studies, relevant for the position of an MP.

PhD diplomas have a different function from other diplomas: they prove more excellence than competence in a particular field. From this point of view, the PhD diploma is not a substitute for competence, but a form of legitimating or, rather, substituting excellence. While several politicians, including MPs, obtained their PhD diploma through fraudulent means (which were proved), including plagiarism, we cannot generalize these exceptions. Over 80 MPs from each analyzed legislative term, who have a PhD diploma, might have been interested in the past in the 15% bonus added to the salary of public employees that held a PhD degree (measure abrogated in 2009¹⁴) and/or in obtaining/maintaining a position in the higher education field, which is one of the few sources of income compatible with being an MP. Data from Table 8 show that most diplomas were obtained late or quite late, as is the case of the other MPs’ diplomas.

The first or second BA degree for some, or an MA degree with a ‘proper’ title, but which was obtained later, often by paying tuition or by attending a low quality university for others, were the solutions chosen by some MPs in order to compensate for their lack of relevant competences. They are some kind of substitute diplomas standing as proof of substitute competences obtained according to the saying ‘better late than never’.

¹⁴ See Law no. 330/2009, regarding a unitary wage system.

Table 8: Age categories in terms of graduation from a doctoral program

Age	Legislative term					
	2004-2008		2008-2012		2012 - present	
	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%
1 Normal age graduates (≤ 35 years)	15	17.2	15	18.3	17	20.7
2 Late (36-40 years)	14	16.1	12	14.6	13	15.9
3 Quite late (41-45 years)	12	13.8	12	14.6	14	17.1
4 Very late (46-50 years)	9	10.3	12	14.6	14	17.1
5 Extremely late (≥ 51 years)	12	13.8	10	12.2	7	8.5
0 (no data)	25	28.7	21	25.6	17	20.7
Total deputies	87	100	82	100	82	100

6.3. In order to hide the insufficient, improper education, low quality diplomas or diplomas obtained later, some MPs word the information in their CVs in an ambiguous manner

The press presented several cases of MPs who completed their BA studies very late as compared to an average student, thus we wanted to clearly see how deputies wrote their CVs in these particular cases. Deputy G.V., a member of the 2004 and 2008 legislative terms, obtained his first and only BA degree during his mandate, being over 40 years old. All that was written in his CV is '2008, Faculty of Political Sciences', with no information regarding the admission year or the university he graduated¹⁵.

Apart from the deputies who, intentionally or not, do not include certain aspects in their CVs, there is another category: deputies who graduated from universities which are not included in the Law no. 1/2011¹⁶ classification. We cannot surely ex-

15 The same case was T.I., an MP of the 2004, 2008 and 2012 legislative terms; the press wrote about him that he had possibly obtained his first BA diploma quite late. In his CV, he wrote that he has a 'BA degree at the West University, Vasile Goldiș, Arad, the Faculty of Law' and that he has an 'MA degree at the Aurel Vlaicu University in Arad, the Faculty of Economic Sciences, specializing in Management and Financing in Public Administration', without mentioning the admission and graduation years in any of the two cases. It should be added that both universities are third class universities and that they are in the city and county, where the subject held political and administration functions and which he has represented in the Parliament. Deputy I.M., a member of the 2012 legislative term, aged 61 years, enrolled at a faculty in the year he became MP. Thus, in 2012 he became a student of the 'Faculty of Public Administration and Economy'. As in the case of many others, he does not mention the university he was supposed to get his diploma from (most probably) in 2015. The list could go on, as there are several examples in all legislative terms.

16 Thus, during the 2008 legislative term, Deputy P.V.S. stated that he graduated from 'Banat University in Timișoara, the Faculty of Law', at 48 years of age; however, there is no such university. Deputy G.A. from the 2012 legislative term says in his CV that he graduated from the 'Agora University in Oradea, Bihor county', a university which was officially accredited in the very same year, 2012. We should also add the case of Deputy A.I. from the present term, who claims that he graduated from 'UUMV Bucharest, as an economic engineer'; however, there were no results regarding this name or abbreviation, not even when searching for it on Google.

plain why, in many cases, MPs' CVs include false or incomplete data. It is unknown if these situations result from wanting to hide embarrassing aspects which would be the delight of the press, or if it is all just lack of attention when writing CVs. However, what is known for sure is that nothing has been done in order to provide correct information to the public opinion regarding the educational background of the MPs. Simple measures, such as a standard mandatory form of completing these documents by deputies and senators, as is the case of CVs used by those who apply for various positions in EU funded projects (the Europass CV), could increase the amount and the quality of information concerning their education.

7. Conclusions

According to theories and research related to the selection of candidates for parliamentary elections (Hazan and Rahat, 2006; Norris and Lovenduski, 1995), the system and the structure influence the elections and their results more than the agency of the actors.

In strong democratic states, the educational background of most members of the political elite is ensured by prestigious universities. This aspect is a type of precondition which guarantees a sufficient level of general MP competences, which ensures a good quality political class. The responsibility of making decisions regarding other criteria, such as specific competences like morality, the ability to act as a politician and as a member of the legislative term, falls upon the parties and the voting population (the selectorates).

In contrast with Western democracies, the Romanian parliamentary elite of the legislative terms we have studied above is a heterogeneous elite in terms of education. Since it is not pre-selected in terms of educational background, it usually lacks the general competences offered by an adequate system of formal education. The structure of professions in the Romanian Parliament is quite inadequate to an MP's mission and role, as the deputies' most frequent specialization in all three legislative terms is that of engineering. Although the number of MPs with no degree is very small in the analyzed legislative terms, the percentage of MPs with low quality diplomas is increasingly high. This proves that the quality of the candidate's education is not an important criterion for party selectorates.

The selection of candidates for parliamentary elections is not institutionalized, it does not follow clear, transparent and constant models or procedures; instead, it follows flexible rules which are adapted with each ballot, based on political circumstances. The already fluid selection criteria were clearly influenced by the 2008 change concerning the voting system – from a party-list voting system to a uninominal voting system. All respondents interviewed stated that, starting with 2008, the main criteria considered when promoting candidates on electoral lists were their financial power and notoriety.

Deputies with specializations in fields that do not correspond to the new career needs, as well as those who do not graduate on time, try to advance their education.

In this sense, they either enroll late, or they take a second BA degree or an MA program. Deputies choose educational institutions where admission and graduation are both easy, usually by paying tuition and at a low quality university; these are substitute diplomas standing as proof of substitute competences.

It can be said that the average quality level of deputies' education during the last three legislative terms is inferior to the average level of education of MA or PhD graduates, who completed state-financed programs in Romania. We also found an unusually high number of false or incomplete information in the CVs analyzed. It is unclear if these situations result from the wish to omit embarrassing aspects, or if it is just lack of attention when writing the CV. What is known for sure is that nothing was done by the Romanian Parliament in order to correctly inform the public regarding educational background of MPs.

The selection and recruitment process of Romanian parliamentary elite is corrupted, mostly due to systemic aspects: the laws, the parties and their functionality, the selection criteria, among which financial power is too important, mostly because parties and electoral campaigns lack public funding. A reform of this system is highly recommended. The selection methods must become transparent, formal, and internal elections must include criteria about general competences and adequate education.

The quality of legal professionals, which could be considered the most relevant specialization for an MP, who acts as a promoter and maker of the law, decreased dramatically. Over the most recent legislative term, only 29% of the quite few legal professionals had 'high quality' higher education. Another result of our research was that the abandoning of the uninominal voting system is one of the solutions proposed by all interviewees, in order to rebuild the reputation of the Romanian Parliament. Returning to a party-list¹⁷ proportional voting system is one of the solutions proposed by the interviewees, along with implementing a mixed voting system. In addition, the salary reform, which could have an impact on the whole public administration, and the reform of the law regarding the financing of political parties are two other proposals made by our respondents.

However, all these conclusions and proposals are conditioned by the existence of a promoter interested in such a change. It is unlikely that the current political class, the parliamentary parties and the actual Parliament would promote and vote laws which would act against them and lead to eliminating most of them from the next Parliament. The possible public pressure coming from the emergent and increasingly active civil society, and from the recent anticorruption actions taken in Romania, could determine a possible system change in the future.

¹⁷ The Electoral Law was amended in 2015. The 2016 parliamentary elections will be held following new rules. The senators and deputies will be elected according to Law no. 208/2015, which means a return to a party-list proportional system, like in the 2004 elections.

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