

Women and Youth Representation in Parliament: Comparison of Candidate Countries with EU Member States

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INTRODUCTION

The presence of women and young people in national parliaments stands as a crucial metric of a country's commitment to inclusive governance and democracy. While there have been some improvements in women's representation in parliament globally, progress varies significantly across regions. Currently women constitute around 27% of parliamentarians globally. Meanwhile, efforts to enhance youth representation in parliament have encountered significant challenges. In 2023, individuals aged 30 and under account for only approximately 3% of the worldwide parliamentary body.

The objective of this article is to uncover differences in the representativeness of parliament, an attempt to address the following research question: "How does the representation of women and youth in national parliaments differ between European Union (EU) member states and candidate countries?"

By observing parliamentary representativeness, the findings provide insights on the effectiveness of legislative quotas in promoting gender and age diversity in leadership roles. These insights have important implications for policymakers, civil society organizations, and advocates striving to enhance political inclusivity and gender parity.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The paper relies on secondary data sourced from the Inter-Parliamentary Union database (Parline) and Eurostat.

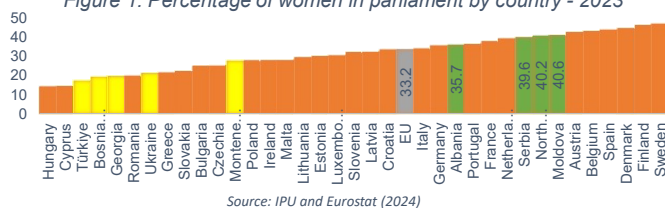
Key indicators are: percentage of women in parliament (2014-2023), average growth rate of women representation during 2014-2023, gender quotas, percentage of young MP-s in parliament (up to 30 years old and up to 40 years old), and average growth rate of young generation representation during 2014-2023.

Through descriptive analysis the paper analyses the data and identifies variations in representation across countries. Furthermore, the paper ranks national parliaments based on their performance in representing women and youth, using a Representation Matrix, with each indicator graded on a 100-point scale.

RESULTS

Four out of nine candidate countries have a larger percentage of women representativeness in their parliaments when compared to EU average (Moldova, N. Macedonia, Serbia and Albania).

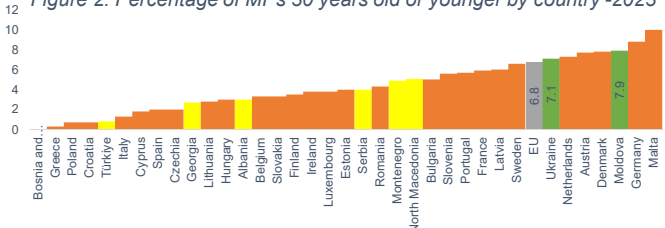
Figure 1: Percentage of women in parliament by country - 2023



Source: IPU and Eurostat (2024)

Two out of nine candidate countries have a larger percentage of youth representativeness in their parliaments when compared to EU average (Moldova and Ukraine).

Figure 2: Percentage of MPs 30 years old or younger by country -2023

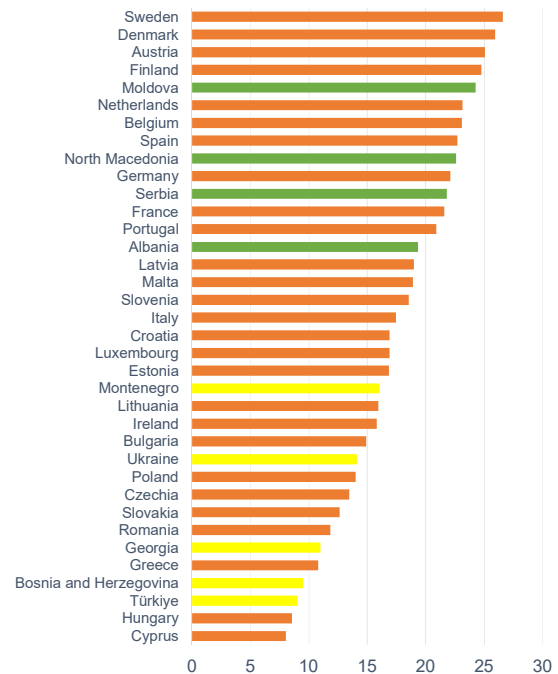


Source: IPU and Eurostat (2024)

RESULTS

According to the designed Representation Matrix, four candidate countries are more representative in terms of women and youth inclusion in parliaments (Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia and Albania).

Figure 3: Results of the Representation Matrix – Women and youth representativeness of national parliaments



Source: Authors own calculations

CONCLUSIONS

The representativeness of women and youth in parliaments is a crucial aspect of democratic governance. While there are some encouraging signs, the overall picture remains concerning. Four out of nine candidate countries have a larger percentage of women representativeness in their parliaments when compared to EU average, with Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Albania showing significant progress. However, the number of young parliamentarians under 30 remains stubbornly low, at 6.8% on average in the EU. This underrepresentation is particularly pronounced in countries with large youth populations, where the problem persists and may even be worsening. To address this issue, proactive solutions such as youth quotas, legal reforms to align eligibility ages with the minimum voting age, and measures to promote youth participation are necessary. Additionally, parliaments and political parties should consider strategies to facilitate the inclusion of young people, such as reserved seats and legislated quotas.

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