

Balancing women's family and professional lives. The Substantive Representation of Women's Interests in the Romanian Parliament

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Fertility policies can take various forms, ranging from strict control of reproduction, as seen during the communist period, to providing financial support for assisted reproduction. However, not all these policies account for women's interests stemming from the dual breadwinner family model, some focus exclusively on supporting medical procedures, while others consider work-life balance. The literature on women's political representation suggests that their presence in decision-making forums leads to the adoption of measures prioritizing women's economic, social, and personal interests.

This study examines the substantive representation of women's interests in the Romanian Parliament during the 2012-2016 and 2016-2020 legislatures. It explores how the increased presence of women parliamentarians influenced legislative initiatives related to improving birth rate. The analysis reveals a shift from financial incentives to measures promoting work-life balance, reflecting a greater focus on reconciling women's professional and family lives during the second legislature when the descriptive representation of women parliamentarians almost doubled. Using content analysis and logistic regression models, the study highlights the correlation between descriptive and substantive representation, emphasizing the need for policies that support women's autonomy and gender equality. The findings suggest that while the increased presence of women led to more legislative proposals adopted, the political affiliation with the party of liberal doctrine and initiation during the second legislature, in conjunction with the mandate of the social-democratic Government led by a woman, are significant predictors for their adoption. Although the presence of women in Parliament is crucial for improving the substantive representation of women's interests, it does not guarantee legislative success. Further studies should analyse, using complementary research methods, what factors blocked the adoption of these initiatives and how the transformation of initiatives that promote women's interests into laws can be facilitated in the future.

Keywords: work-life balance policies, women-friendly policies, substantive representation, descriptive representation, legislative initiatives, political parties, women's interests