

## Media Representation of Female Politicians in Russia, Romania, and the Republic of Moldova

Mirela GANDRAMAN<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** This study examines the media representation of female politicians in Russia, Romania, and the Republic of Moldova, synthesizing the theoretical, legal, ethical frameworks relevant for journalistic work, complemented by the resume of empirical findings of a broader study. It explores how gendered narratives persist within post-communist media systems despite formal commitments to equality. The theoretical section traces the evolution of women's political roles from communism to modern democracies, presenting the influence of framing and gender bias in political communication. The legal and ethical analysis compares national media laws, codes of conduct, and international standards, evaluating each country's adherence to principles of fairness, proportionality, and non-discrimination. The empirical research performed through content analysis of over 150 media articles assessed the degree of compliance with the nationally relevant ethical and legal norms. The findings reveal distinct national patterns: Russian outlets frequently emphasize appearance and intrude into private lives; Moldovan publications often fail to maintain proportionality; Romanian media demonstrate higher compliance yet face challenges related to balance and transparency. The study concludes that, while progress toward ethical journalism and gender-sensitive reporting is evident, systemic inequalities and uneven law enforcement continue to shape the portrayal of women in politics across Eastern Europe.

**Keywords:** Media representation; Female politicians; Gender bias in media; Political communication; Comparative analysis; Russia; Eastern Europe; Media legislation, Media Ethics

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<sup>1</sup> BA Journalism, Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, mirela.gandraman1@gmail.com



## 1. Introduction

During communism, media portrayed women as equals, because of the communist ideology that promotes gender equality. This portrayal was heavily controlled by the State to align with the ideological goals of gender equality in the socialist system. In post-communist times, however, the media landscape differs and the Western influence brought about new representations, although traditional and stereotypical views persisted.

In Russia, the transition from the Soviet to the post-Soviet period saw newspapers shifting from state-controlled and centralized driven portrayals to more varied and independent representations of gender roles, though stereotypes continued to dominate (Tartakovskaya, 2012, pg. 128-146). In Romania, despite efforts by European institutions to promote gender equality, media continues to reflect gender stereotypes, with limited support for female politicians both from their parties and the public (Râpeanu, 2014, pg. 943-949). With the end of the communist period and the transition to the modern-day democracies in these countries, a considerable amount of changes had been made in the field of gender and the image of women politicians in the media. Women in this period were presented equally because of the ideological goal of communism. However, while the post-communist era has seen more variation, media representations still seem, in most cases, to use traditional stereotypes, even if efforts were made to promote gender equality. The framework of the framing theory helps demonstrate how the media is used and abused to influence public perception of female politicians, usually by reinforcing existing social stereotypes regarding their status.

A study issued in 2021 by Bălăbuță and Tufiş presents that Romania has a low level of political representation both at the national and at European standards (Bălăbuță & Tufiş, 2021). This is influenced by the patriarchal values that still exist within political parties. While women are proportionately represented in Parliament, their representation is low in local elections. Only 5.4% of mayors in 2020 were women. The study also highlights that women hold only 20% of seats in Parliament, despite comprising 47% of the population; this is due to limited opportunities for women to occupy eligible positions (Bălăbuță & Tufiş, 2021, p. 2-6).

In Russia, there are several issues related to the representation of women in general in the political sphere. The Russian Constitution guarantees equal rights regardless of gender, but it doesn't mandate specific quotas or measures to ensure women's representation in government. According to the Russian Constitution article 19, 19.1, 19.2, 19.3, the Constitution grants the right for every citizen to participate in the political life regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion and language. To go further on, one must analyze the role of women in society during previous times that influenced how women are perceived in the social, economic, and political life nowadays.

According to the report *State Discrimination Against Women in Russia* from 1995, various gender stereotypes were promoted during the Soviet Union, such as the traditional values of woman being the caretaker in the family and being less active in the political sphere. The Soviet government's stance on women's work fluctuated, but state policies and societal expectations always prioritized motherhood as a woman's key duty (Women's Rights Project & Human Rights Watch/Helsinki Organization, 1995, p. 3). This was made clear in 1981 when the Communist Party declared the need to strengthen traditional motherhood for the good of the state. This focus on a woman's "biological destiny" as a mother impacted her legal rights and hindered progress towards gender equality. Soviet women faced a double burden: working outside the home while holding primary responsibility for childcare and housework.

In Republic of Moldova, there are no recent studies and available studies related to political representation or media representation of female politicians. This study is aiming to provide more insights on the female politician coverage in this particular country.

## **2. Media Law Pertaining to the Representation of Politicians**

To set the key indicators for the further empirical study of the paper, the research explores how legislation in **Moldova, Romania, and Russia** shapes media portrayal of political figures, particularly focusing on equality, fairness, and gender representation.

### ***2.1 Media Law & Representation of Politicians in Republic of Moldova***

In Moldova, the Constitution guarantees equality before the law regardless of nationality, sex, or political opinion (Art.16.1). The Electoral Code No. 325/2022 mandates that at least 40% of parliamentary and local council seats be held by either gender, setting a legal precedent for gender balance. Media activity is regulated by the Penal Code No. 985/2002, which penalizes extortion, defamation, and the dissemination of false or damaging information. The Audiovisual Code No. 174/2018 introduces provisions for fairness, impartiality, and gender equality in media, forbidding sexist language and hate speech. Violations are sanctioned by the Audiovisual Council, which can impose fines and suspensions.

However, the enforcement of these principles remains uneven. This issue has been reflected in cases such as *Manole v. Republic of Moldova* (ECHR, 2009), where the European Court of Human Rights found that state interference in the public broadcaster undermined pluralism and media independence. This precedent demonstrates how Moldova's formal legal framework is often not matched by institutional autonomy, a factor that affects how female politicians are represented in practice.

### ***2.2 Media Law & Representation of Politicians in Romania***

In Romania, the main legislative framework governing the representation of politicians is the Audiovisual Law No. 504/2002, which enforces the principles of accuracy, impartiality, and political pluralism. The National Audiovisual Council (CNA) monitors compliance, ensuring that broadcasts respect human dignity and avoid incitement to hatred or discrimination. The law guarantees equal airtime for political parties during election campaigns and prohibits paid political advertising outside election periods. Complementary regulations include the Civil Code No. 287/2009, which protects a person's image (Art.74), and the Criminal Code No. 286/2009, which punishes defamation and extortion through the press.

Additionally, the Law No. 115/2015 ensures gender representation on electoral lists and prohibits discriminatory or hate-based messages during political campaigns.

These legal protections have been tested in practice through cases such as *Cumpăna and Mazăre v. Romania* (ECtHR, 2004), where the Court emphasized that while the media act as a public watchdog, freedom of expression must not violate the dignity or reputation of others. The ruling highlighted the importance of proportionality when reporting on political figures — a principle directly relevant to the portrayal of female politicians, who are often subjected to personal rather than professional scrutiny.

### ***2.3 Media Law & Representation of Politicians in Russia***

In Russia, the Federal Law on Mass Media No. 2124/1991 formally guarantees the right to free expression and access to information, but extensive oversight by Roskomnadzor restricts editorial freedom. Additional provisions, such as the Law on Electoral Rights No. 67/2002 and the Criminal Code No. 63/1996 (Art.137), regulate election coverage and protect private life, though their application is often selective. European jurisprudence illustrates how these principles fail in practice. In *Ibragimova v. Russia* (ECtHR, 2021), the Court found violations of Article 10 (freedom of expression) due to disproportionate state interference in journalistic work. Similarly, *Mariya Alekhina and Others v. Russia* (ECtHR, 2018) - the case concerning the members of Pussy Riot—demonstrated systemic constraints on political and artistic expression, particularly affecting women critical of state institutions. These examples underline how Russian legislation prioritizes state control over fair and balanced media representation.

### ***2.4 International Context and Case Law in Practice***

At the international level, the European Convention on Human Rights remains the central legal instrument guiding responsible journalism. Article 10 protects freedom of expression, Article 8 safeguards private life and dignity, and Article 6 ensures fairness and due process. The practical

application of these principles through ECHR case law—such as *Cumpănă and Mazăre v. Romania*, *Manole v. Moldova*, and *Ibragimova v. Russia*—illustrates how European legal standards function as corrective mechanisms when national frameworks fail to uphold democratic and gender-equal media representation.

Main findings across these three countries are: Romania aligns most closely with EU media standards, offering structured mechanisms for complaints and enforcement through the CNA. Moldova demonstrates progress toward gender equality and fair representation but struggles with implementation and enforcement due to limited institutional capacity. Russia maintains a restrictive and state-controlled media system, which limits the free and fair representation of politicians, particularly women. While all three countries have legal frameworks addressing privacy, defamation, and discrimination, gender balance in political media coverage remains weakly protected in practice.

While perhaps Moldova and Romania have adopted progressive legal frameworks, their enforcement remains inconsistent. In contrast, Russia's legal environment prioritizes state interests over freedom of expression. Overall, the findings underscore the need for stronger legal enforcement mechanisms, better protection of female politicians against biased representation, and harmonization with international media law standards.

### **3. Media Ethics Pertaining to the Representation of Female Politicians**

Ethical journalism plays a decisive role in influencing public perception and voter behavior, as media representation can either reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes. The paper examines the self-regulatory nature of media ethics, analyzing the evolution of media accountability systems after the fall of communism. Using a comparative approach, it assesses how each country manages complaint procedures, self-regulation, and professional conduct through ethical codes and press councils. The analysis centers on three key elements: the actors involved in enforcing

ethics, the mechanisms for addressing ethical breaches, and the effectiveness of these systems in preventing discrimination and providing balanced reporting.

Moldova's ethical standards are primarily guided by the Code of Ethics for Journalists, which promotes accuracy, plurality of opinions, good faith, and respect for privacy. Journalists are expected to report truthfully, fairly, and impartially, without bias or sensationalism. Romania's ethical framework is governed by the Ethical Code for Journalists (Codul Deontologic al Jurnalistului), adopted by the Convention of Media Organizations in 2010. It covers principles of accuracy (Art.5), separation of facts and opinions (Art.8), privacy (Art.9), and non-discrimination (Art.13). Journalists are obliged to respect human dignity, avoid defamatory language, and ensure transparency in their reporting.

Russia's ethical landscape is shaped by limited self-regulation and extensive state oversight. Ethical journalism is formally guided by the Code of Professional Ethics of Russian Journalists, emphasizing accuracy, impartiality, and the presumption of innocence. However, implementation is weak due to centralized media control. Overall, while there is visible improvement in ethical media conduct across these post-communist states, significant work remains to ensure that coverage of female politicians is balanced, fair, and free of gender bias.

#### **4. Methodology**

The empirical research consists of a qualitative textual analysis examining the linguistic coverage of media representation of female politicians. The main goal is to find the extent to which media publications in Romania, Russia, and the Republic of Moldova adhere to ethical and legal frameworks when reporting on female politicians. Specifically, it analyzes whether these outlets respect non-discrimination, privacy and accuracy as core principles, as well as whether they present balanced points of view or use defamatory language.

The study also seeks to answer the following key questions:

- How has the political representation of female politicians evolved in state institutions such as the Parliament of Romania, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, and the State Duma of Russia over time?
- To what extent do media publications in these three countries follow ethical and legal reporting standards in their coverage of female politicians?
- Do media outlets in these countries comply with national laws and codes as well as international legal frameworks, including the ECHR Articles 8, 10, and 6?

#### ***4.1 Data Collection***

To identify the most relevant female politicians, the study used as criteria:

- The number of laws, projects, and legislative initiatives proposed by each deputy;
- Whether the politician has run for presidential elections or served as a minister;
- Their visibility in media and parliamentary activity.

The data was collected manually from official government websites: [duma.gov.ru](http://duma.gov.ru), [cdep.ro](http://cdep.ro), [alegeri.md](http://alegeri.md), and [parlament.md](http://parlament.md). After collection, the data were cleaned and processed in Excel, resulting in 19 datasets covering parliamentary compositions from 2000 to 2024.

#### ***4.2 Data sample collection for Russia***

The research samples are online news articles selected from Russian Federation online news publications such as Vetsti and Lenta. These outlets were selected based on their popularity and local media consumption, which is presented by official reports published by Statista in 2023. Another online publication selected is Meduza project. This particular outlet is flagged by

Russian Federation because of the spread of “defamatory news” and by including this media outlet in the research, the researcher wants to identify the manner in which censured or blocked media outlets in Russian Federation portray female politicians, as well as whether they follow legal and ethical guidelines. The articles were collected manually based on the relevancy feature that news websites provide. A total of 60 articles were collected, dating from 2001 until 2024 and the article titles were translated to English.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis is performed by using the two analysis grids that include the indicators identified from the previous chapters. One analysis grid will be used to assess compliance with media law requirements, and another analysis grid will be used to assess compliance with media ethics standards. Beyond descriptive indicators, such as the title, article link, politician name, date of publication, the analysis grid developed to study journalists' compliance with media law includes research indicators to assess the compliance with domestic laws such as the Code of Offence of Russian Federation, Law 87/2017 on defamatory news, Law 67/2006. The indicators focus on illegal dissemination of information regarding the private life of the politician mentioned, discrimination based on sex, religion, political beliefs, underrepresentation during election and be protected from defamation during election, or other criteria mentioned in the table.

**Table 1:** *Media representation of female politicians in Russia, legislation*

The Deontological Code of Journalists in Russia																
Publication	Article link	Politician Name	Article title	Date	Art. 3 the journalist respects accuracy and fairness in reporting			Art. 5. Awareness and Duties: oppose from extremism and the infringement of civil rights based on sex, race, language, religion, political views, and social or national origin.			Art. 5 (2) the journalist adheres to the principal of innocent until proven guilty in the article			Art. 5(4) Interference in private life		
					Respected	Not Respected	Comments	Respected	Not Respected	Comments	Respected	Not Respected	Comments	Respected	Not Respected	Comments

The second analysis grid, designed to assess the ethical aspect of media representation of female politicians in Russia, derived from the clauses related to representation of politician from the Ethical Code of Conduct for Journalists in Russian Federation, a total 4 indicators. The

indicators, included in the analysis grid, are ethical representation adhering to fairness and accuracy in reporting, awareness and impartiality to extremist language and statements, the presumption of innocence and intrusion into privacy. To assess journalist's compliance with media ethics regarding media representation of female politicians in Russia, the following indicators were analyzed: Art. 3 the journalist respects accuracy and fairness in reporting, Art.5 Awareness and Duties (limits), Art. 5 (2) the journalist adheres to the principle of innocent until proven guilty, Art. 5(4) Interference in private life.

**Table 2: Media representation of female politicians in Russia, ethics**

					Russian Federation Code of Offence No. 195-Fz/ 2001			Law No. 87-FZ/ 2017 Defamatory News			Law 67/2006 the right to access the media						
Publication	Link	Politician Name	Article Title (translated)	Date	Art.137 Illegal dissemination of information about the private life of a person, constituting his personal or family life, without consent			Art. 18.5 Clause 12: Prohibit the dissemination of news that defames individuals based on gender, age, race, nationality, language, religion, profession, place of residence, or political beliefs.			Art. 18.4 Legitimate Interest of publishing the information			Express their views, and have the right to be protected from defamation during elections			
					Respected	Not respected	comment	Respected	Not respected	comment	Legitimate	Non-legitimate	Comment	Respected	Not respected	comment	Does not apply

### 4.3 Data samples collection for Moldova

The research samples are online news articles; they were taken from local online publications such as Agora.md, Ziarul de Gradă, Newsmaker. These outlets were selected based on the relevancy feature in the dashboard when searching for the name of the politician, and the most relevant results were selected. The articles were collected manually based on the relevancy feature that news websites provide. A total of 63 articles were collected, dating from 2001 until 2024 and the article titles were translated to English.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis is performed by using the two analysis grids that include the indicators identified from the previous chapters. One analysis grid will be used to assess compliance with media law requirements, and another analysis grid will be used to assess compliance with media ethics standards. Beyond descriptive indicators, such as the title, article link, politician name, and date of publication, the analysis grid developed to study journalists' compliance with media law includes research

indicators to assess compliance with domestic laws. The indicators used to analyze the good practice of media law in Moldova are found in the Audiovisual Code art.11, matters of taking certain photos, for instance, in private or public surroundings. Art.11 discrimination based on gender, religion, political beliefs, or race. Art.10 objectivity and accountable transmission of information. Art. 11 Intrusion into privacy. Art. 7 balanced opinions and reflections of politicians, in our case, and international laws adhering to ECHR art.10; art.8; art.6.

**Table 3: Media representation of female politicians  
in Republic of Moldova, legislation**

Art. 11 the surroundings of the photo or video taken			Art.10 Discrimination based on gender, religion or race (photo)			Art. 10 examples, objectivity, and accountable transmission information (photo)			Art. 11 Intrusion into personal life (photo)			Art. 7 balanced, balanced reflection of political conditions			Art. 11 objectivity and balance of professional and personal dignity			Freedom of expression art.10			Right to a fair trial process art.6 ECHR			Right to a fair trial process art.6 ECHR, "innocent until proven guilty according to law"			Art.8 ECHR right to privacy, which is essential in a democratic society to safeguard the rights and freedoms of others		
Public space	Private space	Does not affect rights of others to access	Consistent	Respected	Not respected	Consistent	Respected	Not respected	Example	Respected	Not respected	Consistent	Not balanced	Not balanced	Example	Respected	Not respected	Example	Yes	No	Observations and example	Respected	Not respected	Not applicable	Observations and example	Respected	Not respected	Not applicable	Observations and example

The second analysis grid, designed to assess the ethical aspect of media representation of female politicians in Moldova, derived from the clauses related to representation of politicians from the Ethical Code of Conduct for Journalists in Republic of Moldova, in total 7 indicators were included related to ethical representation adhering to fairness and accuracy in reporting, awareness and impartiality to extremist language and statements, the principal of innocence, and intrusion into privacy. The following indicators are analysed in the research grid Art. 2 the journalist respects accuracy in reporting, Art.2.9 The journalist follows plurality of opinions, Art. 2.22 The journalist expresses his opinion honestly and ethically, without deliberately misrepresenting facts or data, Art. 2.24 The journalist ensures a balance between society's right to receive information of public interest and the media's right that does not present opinions that shock, offend or disturb someone, Art. 3.1 The journalist respects the right to private life and the dignity of the people mentioned, Art. 3.6 The journalist respects the privacy of the person and asks for permission to photograph/film them, unless they are in a public place Art. 3.10.

**Table 4: Media representation of female politicians in Republic of Moldova, ethics**

Publication	Article link	Politician Name	Article title	Date	Art. 2 the journalist respects accuracy and fairness in reporting			Art.2.8 The journalist follows plurality of opinions			2.22 The journalist expresses his opinion honestly and ethically, without deliberately misrepresenting facts or data.			2.24 the journalist ensures a balance between society's right to receive information of public interest and the media's right that does not present opinions that shock, offend or disturb someone.			3.1 The journalist respects the right to private life and dignity of people mentioned			3.6 The journalist respects the privacy of the person and asks for permission to photograph like them, unless they are in a public place.			3.10 The journalist respects the presumption of innocence and considers that any person is innocent until a final proven guilty by the court		
					Respected	Not respected	Comments	Respected	Not respected	Comments	Respected	Not respected	Comments	Respected	Not respected	Comments	Respected	Not respected	Comments	Respected	Not respected	Comments	Respected	Not respected	Comments

#### 4.4 Data sample collection Romania

The research samples are online news articles; they were taken from local online publications such as Digi24, Antena 1, Mediafax. These outlets were selected based on their relevance assessed by website search, which is identified in a report issued in 2023 by Reuters, related to press in Romania and other countries. The articles were collected manually based on the relevancy feature that news websites provide. A total of 42 articles were collected, dating from 2001 until 2024 and the article titles were translated to English. The quantitative and qualitative analysis is performed by using the two analysis grids that include the indicators identified from the previous chapters.

One analysis grid will be used to assess compliance with media law requirements, and another analysis grid will be used to assess compliance with media ethics standards. Beyond descriptive indicators, such as the title, article link, politician name, date of publication, the analysis grid developed to study journalists' compliance with media law includes research indicators to assess compliance with domestic laws, such as Civil code nr. 287/2009 art. 74, and art. 8, art. 10, art. 6 form ECHR The indicators focus on illegal dissemination of information regarding the private life of the politician mentioned, discrimination based on sex, religion, political beliefs, underrepresentation, and other criteria mentioned in the table. art.74 from Civil Code nr.287/2009 regarding privacy. Other indicators are assessed from Audiovisual Code art. 74, art. 30 covering respect to privacy and

respect to one's own image, art. 33 covering consent, art. 40 regarding information, art. 42 regarding transmission of information related to court cases and detention, art. 47 defamatory and discriminatory statements, art. 64 factual Page 43 of 129 information, art. 66 and art.69 impartiality regarding news presentation of politicians. Art. 34 surroundings of the video taken, and international laws adhering to ECHR art.10, art. 8, art. 6.

**Table 5: Media representation of female politicians in Romania, legislation**

art.38 respect privacy, honor and reputation and the right to one's own image	art.39 publication of press and family life of the person unless he/she consents	art.40 The algorithm made against the politician on website's based on information	art.41 Images containing or revealing a person's intimate area, unless he/she consents	art.42 A politician's statement against a person based on the authenticity of a person's statement, identity, gender, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, level of education, social status, political affiliation or physical characteristics.	art.43 The information presented, linked, stored and following the principle of good faith	art.44 and 45 Impartiality and balance should be ensured when reporting on political figures in order not to offend	art. 46 The recording of the place or the date	Freedom of expression art.33 ECHR in accordance to law, legitimate aim, necessary in a democratic society	Right to a fair trial press and art.33 ECHR	Right to a fair trial press and art.33 ECHR "honor and private life" meaning what?	art.33 ECHR Right to privacy, consent to a democratic society for the protection of the rights and freedom of others										
Respected	Not respected	Comment	Respected	Not respected	Not applicable	Comment	Respected	Not respected	Comment	Respected	Not respected	Comment	Respected	Not respected	Comment	Respected	Not respected	Comment	Respected	Not respected	Comment

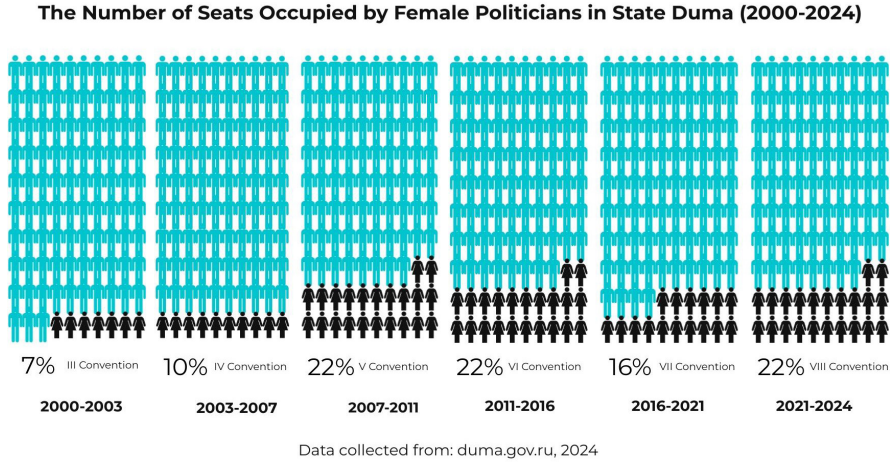
The second analysis grid, designed to assess the ethical aspect of media representation of female politicians in Russia, derived from the clauses related to representation of politicians from the Ethical Code of Conduct in Romania, pertaining accuracy and transparency art.5, Accuracy and transparency art.5 regarding video and image, materials (polls, infographics, others) published, Art. 8 separation from opinions and presenting a factual reporting, Art.9 unnecessary Intrusion into privacy, Art. 13 the journalist used discriminatory or defamatory language in the article.

**Table 6: Media representation of female politicians in Romania, legislation**

Romanian Journalist Ethical Code														
Accuracy and transparency art.5			Accuracy and transparency art.5 regarding video and image, materials(polls, infographics, others) published			Art. 8 separation from opinions and presenting a factual reporting			Art.9 unnecessary Intrusion into privacy			Art. 13 the journalist used discriminatory or defamatory language in the article		
Respected	Not respected	Comment	Respected	Not respected	Comment	Respected	Not respected	Comment	Respected	Not respected	Comment	Respected	Not respected	Comment

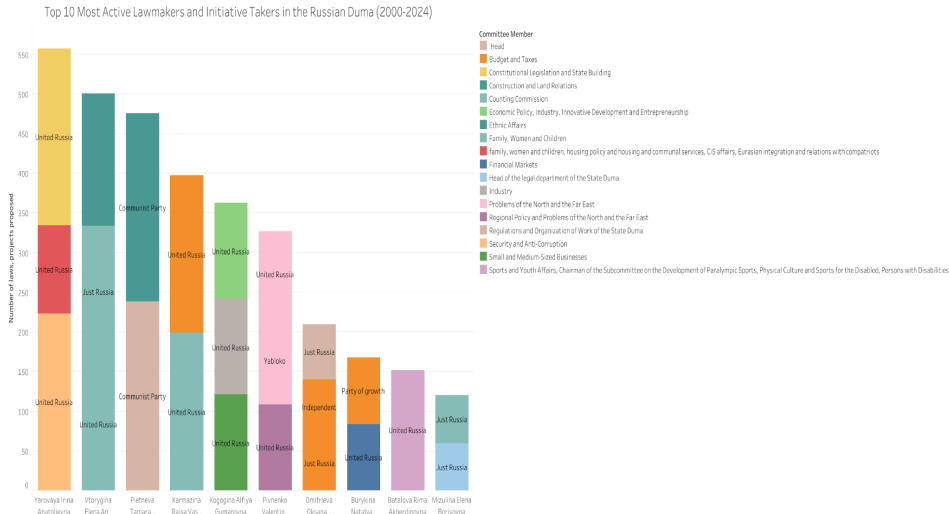
## 4.5 Assessment criteria for choosing certain female politicians

After collecting the data regarding political representation of female politicians in parliament, the following graphics were obtained using data visualization tools such as Tableau Public and Visme.



**Figure 1:** The number of seats occupied by female politicians in State Duma (2000-2024)

According to Figure 1, there has been a general increase in female representation from 2000 to 2024, with significant increases in the periods of 2007-2011 and 2021-2024. The percentage of women dropped slightly during the 2016-2021 period before rising again in the 2021-2024 period.

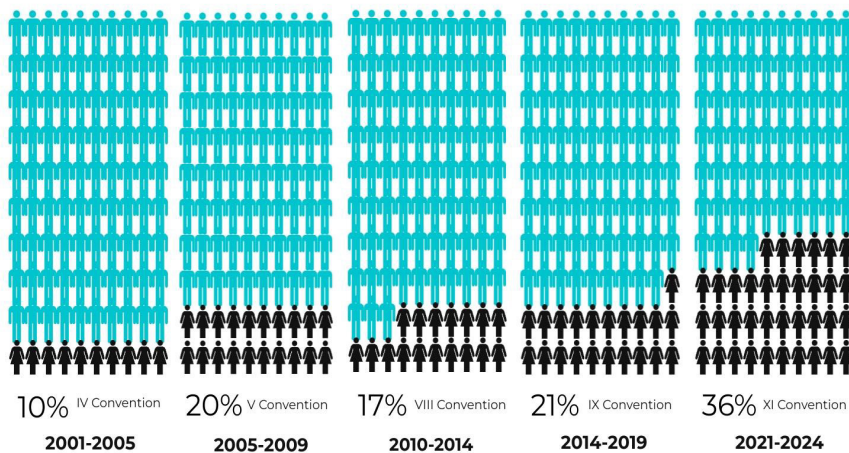


**Figure 2:** Top 10 Most Active Lawmakers and Initiative Takers in the Russian Duma (2000-2024)

The second graphic illustrates the most active female initiators of legislative proposals from 2000-2024. Irina Yarovaya from United Russia tops the list, having proposed over 550 laws and projects, predominantly within the Budget and Taxes committee. Following her, Elena Vtorygina and Alfiya Kogogina, also from United Russia, along with Tamara Pletneva from the Communist Party, show significant legislative activity in diverse committees such as Constitutional Legislation and State Building, and Construction and Land Relations. The lawmakers come from a mix of parties, including United Russia, Just Russia, the Communist Party, Yabloko, and the Party of Growth. By analyzing the top 10 most active politicians, we can get precise insights on how the media in Russia presents female politicians.

Further, we will look into political representation of women in Moldova, as mentioned in the media law chapter, several legislative reforms were implemented, such as the adoption of the Electoral Code that enforces political representation of women both in local councils as well as in The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova.

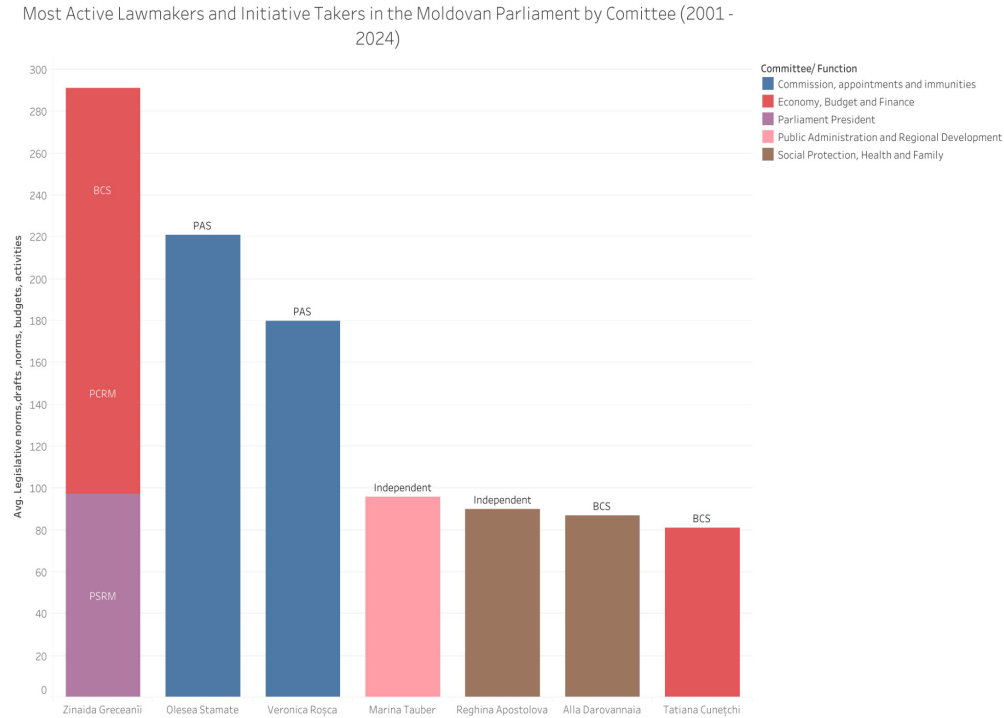
**The Number of Seats Occupied by Female Politicians in The Parliament of The Republic of Moldova (2001-2024)**



Data collected from: parlament.md, 2024

**Figure 3:** The number of seats occupied by female politicians in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova from 2001 to 2024

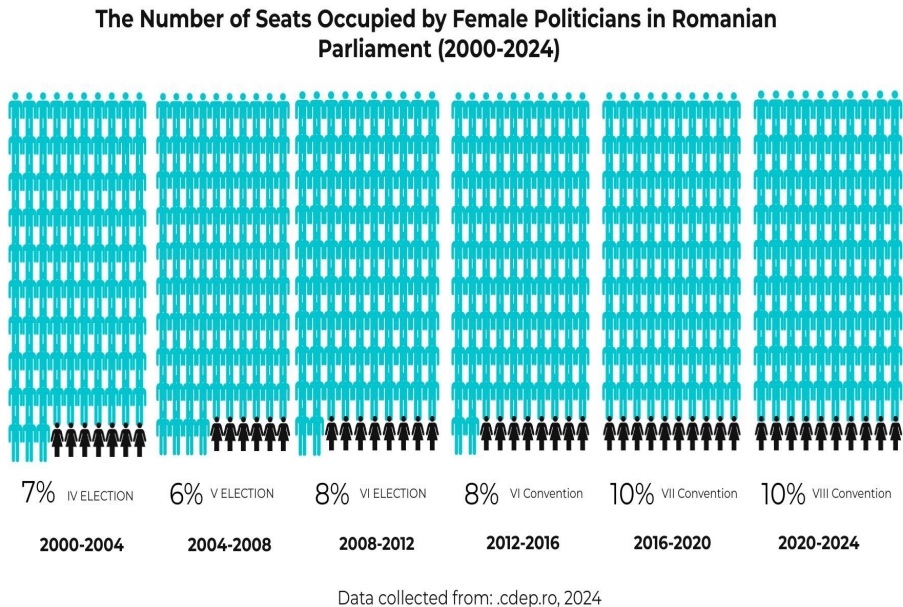
In the infographic presented, we can see a significant increase in the period from 2001 to 2005, women held only 10% of the seats, indicating limited female participation. This number doubled to 20% during the 2005 to 2009 convention, showcasing improvement. However, there was a slight decline to 17% in the 2010 to 2014 period. The representation increased again to 21% between 2014 and 2019, marking a progressive trend. The most remarkable rise occurred in the 2021 to 2024 period, where women occupied 36% of the parliamentary seats, reflecting a significant move towards gender equality, and can be seen as a potential result of having a female president in the Republic of Moldova.



**Figure 4:** Most active lawmakers and initiative takers in the Moldovan Parliament from 2001 to 2024

According to the bar chart fig.4, the most active female deputy is Zinaida Greceanii of the BCS/PCRM parties, leading with nearly 300 activities, followed by Olesea Stamate and Veronica Rosca from the PAS party, with over 200 and 180 activities, respectively, primarily in the Commission on appointments and immunities. Marina Tauber (BCS) and Reghina Apostolova (PCRM) also show significant legislative involvement. By analysing the top 10 most active politicians, we can get precise insights into how the media in the Republic of Moldova presents female politicians.

The next graphic covers the representation of females in the Parliament of Romania, and the female deputies elected in the parliament throughout 2000-2024. Which has the least female deputies elected.

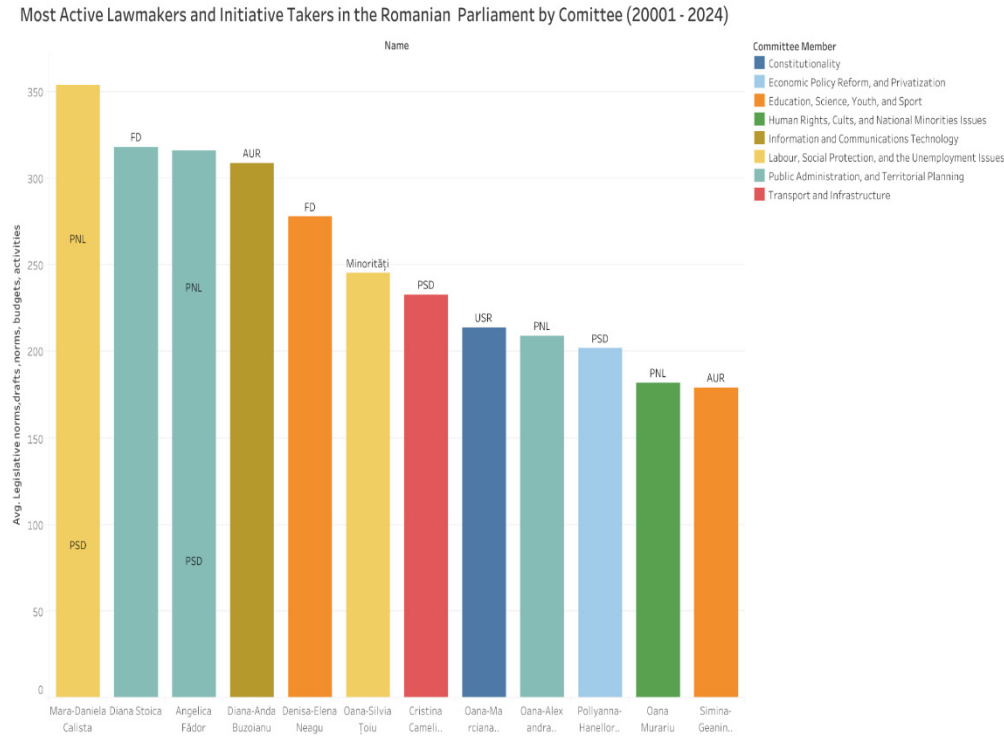


Made with VISME

**Figure 5:** The number of seats occupied by Female deputies from 2000-2024 in the Romanian Parliament.

From 2000 to 2004, women held 7% of the seats, which slightly decreased to 6% in the 2004-2008 period. There was an improvement in the 2008-2012 period, with female representation rising to 8%, a level maintained

through the 2012-2016 period. The most significant increase occurred from 2016 to 2020, with women occupying 10% of the seats, a figure that remained steady through the 2020-2024 period.



**Figure 6:** Most active lawmakers and Initiative in the Romanian Parliament 2001-2024.

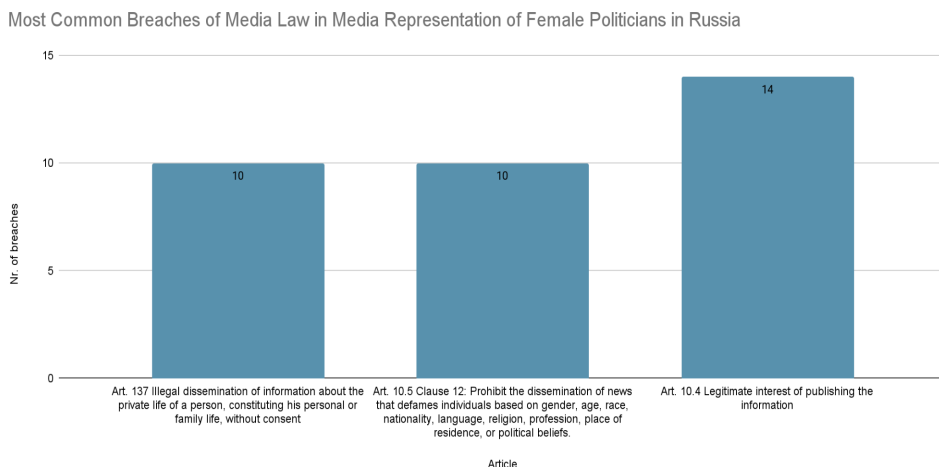
The next bar chart highlights the most active lawmakers and initiative takers in the Romanian Parliament from 2000 to 2024. Mara Daniel (PNL) leads with nearly 350 activities in the Health and Family committee, followed closely by Diana Stoica (FD) with around 320 activities in the Public Administration and Territorial Planning committee. Other top performers include Angelica Fădor (PNL) and Diana-Anda Cosma (AUR), each with around 300 activities in their respective committees. The list is rounded out by Cristina-Camelia Socoleanu (PSD), Oana-Marciana Ozmen (USR), Oana-Alexandra Hănală (PNL), and Pollyanna Mărgineanu (PSD), and others.

It is important to mention that politicians such as Irina Khakamada – Russia, Irina Vlah, Violeta Ivanov - Republic of Moldova, and Ana Birchall were included in the analysis due to their previous roles held such as minister, or their candidacy in presidential elections.

## 5. Research results:

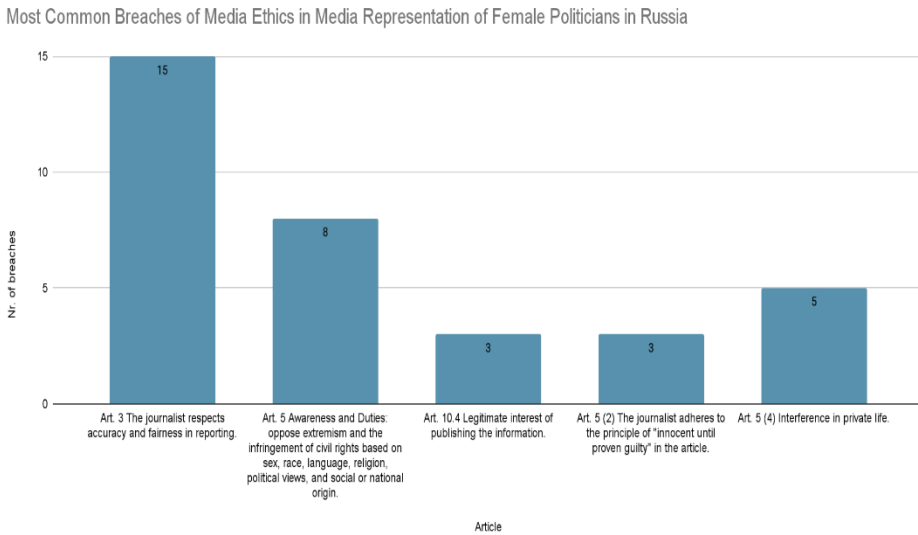
### 5.1 Findings related to Media law regarding the Representation of Female Politicians in Russia

Several breaches and non-compliances were found in the representation of female politicians pertaining to media law and ethics. In Russian online publications, 34 breaches were found regarding privacy, defamation, and non-legitimacy of the topic. Article 14 to article 17 from the online publication Vesti, followed by article 25, 33, 36, 42, 43 by Lenta.ru breach art. 137, art.10 of the Russian Federation Code of Administrative Offences nr.195/2001, Law. 87/2017 art. 10.5 regarding defamation and art. 10.4 regarding the legitimate aim of publishing the information. The legitimate aim was identified by balancing the three-part test are in accordance with the law, pursue a legitimate aim if for example are newsworthy, and are necessary in a democratic society.



**Figure 7:** *Most Common Breaches of Media Law in Media Representation of Female Politicians in Russia.*

The most common breaches were found for the politicians Khakamada Irina, Mizulina Elena, and Yarovaya Irina. In some cases, the breaches were related to interference in private life without a legitimate aim. Articles related to Khakamada Irina were found non-legitimate, applying the three-part test relating to her appearance or family affairs, which were not of public interest.

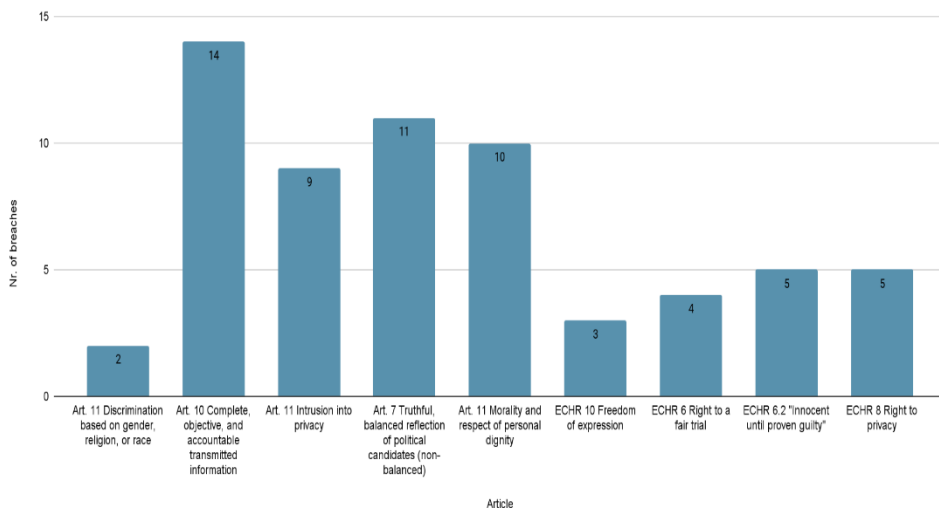


**Figure 8:** *Most Common Breaches of Media Ethics in Media Representation of Female Politicians in Russia.*

A total of 31 breaches were found in correlation with media ethics regarding impartiality and fairness in reporting, usage of extremist and non-filtered language by journalists in the articles, and interference in private life. All the publications have breached ethical aspects. Vesti.ru for articles 1 and 2 has breached art.3 by being non-impartial and not providing an official response from the public person mentioned in the articles, as well as defamatory language. In Article 7, Vesti breaches indicator 1 regarding accuracy and fairness in reporting, by not including the official statements from the Polish official. The articles that breached ethical aspects were related to Yarovaya Irina, Oksana Dimitreeva, Khakamada Irina Mutsonova.

In Moldova, 46 breaches were found regarding privacy, objectivity, and balanced opinion reflection, morality and ECHR article's 10, 6 and 8. Six articles did not comply with ECHR 3-part test to assess proportionality, and had infringements regarding article 10, 8 and 6 of ECHR. These include politicians such as Marina Tauber, Violeta Ivanov, and Irina Vlah. The press interfered with their right to privacy, freedom of expression, and right to a fair trial.

Most Common Breaches of Media Law in Media Representation of Female Politicians in Moldova

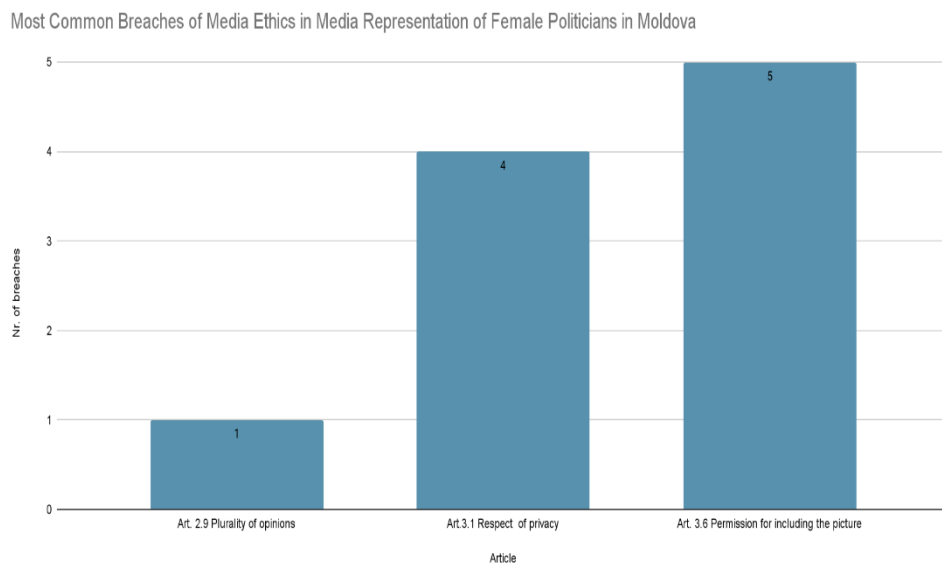


**Figure 9:** *Most Common Breaches of Media Law in Media Representation of Female Politicians in Moldova.*

Agora.md and Ziarul de Gardă, interfered with their rights and freedom of this politicians by publishing private information regarding Ivanov's photo is in a private setting, at her daughter's wedding with her husband and her other daughter. The following picture is not of public interest; other breaches include information about her wardrobe or material items that she owns, while it is of public interest for deputies to declare their source of income, their personal belongings are not of public interest. For Zinaida Greceanii, multiple articles concentrated on her legal issues and professional roles while maintaining a respectful tone and avoiding personal intrusions. Olesea Stamati's professional

actions and decisions were discussed without bias, respecting her privacy. Veronica Rosca received balanced coverage that focused on her legislative actions and professional background. Regihina Apostolova's detailed accounts of legal and political challenges were reported while maintaining her professional dignity. Overall, the analyzed articles from various sources maintained journalistic integrity, respecting the privacy and dignity of the female politicians and pertained to respect of the legislation in Republic of Moldova, and ECHR convention. The journalists in Moldova practiced a accountable and non-discriminatory reporting, but also breached some of the articles regarding to right to privacy of individuals, some of which were justified by the proportionality principle.

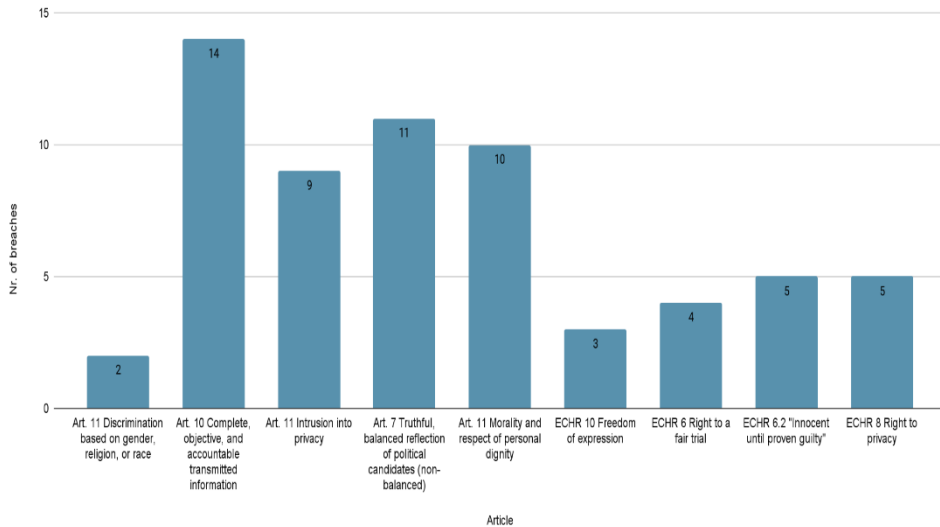
All publications adhere to good media ethical practices, however, there were occasional lapses where private details were shared by journalists without consent, particularly in articles involving personal items or family matters applying to Vlah and Ivanov. Only 10 breaches were found regarding to plurality of opinion.



**Figure 10:** *Most Common Breaches of Media Ethics in Media Representation of Female Politicians in Moldova.*

## MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE POLITICIANS ...

Most Common Breaches of Media Law in Media Representation of Female Politicians in Moldova



**Figure 11:** *Most Common Breaches of Media Law in Media Representation of Female Politicians in Romania.*

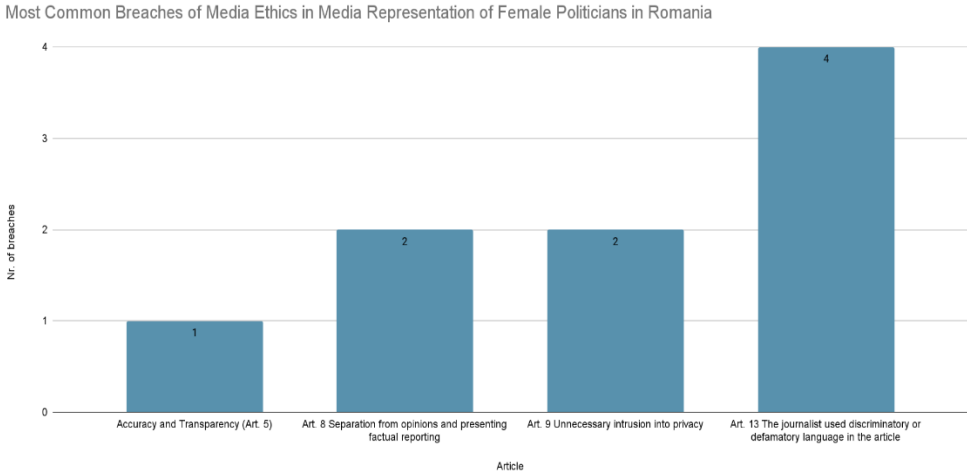
In Romania 22 breaches were found regarding privacy, objectivity, and balanced opinion reflection, morality and ECHR article's 10, 6 and 8. Seven articles did not comply with ECHR 3-part test to assess proportionality, and had infringements regarding article 10, 8 and 6 of ECHR, all related to Ana Birchall.

MediaFax adheres to ethical journalism standards and respects relevant legislation in its coverage of female politicians. The outlet's articles respect the privacy of individuals, avoiding defamatory statements and use factual accuracy. MediaFax balances public interest with individual rights by focusing on professional roles and legislative matters. The articles maintain good faith, impartiality, and balance, providing multiple perspectives on political and legislative issues. For example, the article "Ana Birchall, interviewed at DNA" features involvement in an investigation while maintaining her privacy and presumption of innocence. The article reports on her role as a witness, supported by statements and context from legal proceedings, without implying guilt or making defamatory statements.

Digi24.ro also respects relevant legislation in its representation of female politicians. Provides privacy, honour, and reputation of individuals. Digi24.ro's articles are factually accurate and presented in good faith, focusing on the professional actions and public statements of politicians. While maintaining a commitment to freedom of expression, Digi24.ro balances this with the right to privacy, providing a fair and impartial view of political events and legislative initiatives. For example, articles covering Mara-Daniela Calista respect her privacy and her professional role and legislative work.

Antena 1 also respects Birchall's privacy. It presents her statements regarding the GRECO report in a professional context, avoiding personal attacks or defamatory remarks. The article presents her views factually and in good faith.

The publications in Romania adhere to good media ethical practices; however, there were occasional lapses where private details were shared by journalists without consent, particularly in articles involving accuracy and transparency, unnecessary intrusion into privacy, and separation of opinions from facts. The publication that breached mostly this indicator was MediaFax, in total 9 indicators related to media ethics pretraining female politicians were breached.



**Figure 12:** *Most Common Breaches of Media Ethics in Media Representation of Female Politicians in Romania.*

For instance, MediaFax's focuses on the coverage of Mara-Daniela Calista's legislative work without intruding into personal details, and a article about Ana Birchall's fortune provides accurate information based on public declarations. Digi24 discusses declared wealth without personal intrusion, and Antena 1's article maintains Birchall's privacy and provides accurate, contextual information about her comments on the GRECO report. These outlets also avoid defamatory statements and strive for impartiality and balance, as seen in MediaFax's coverage of the INSCOP survey on women in leadership.

## **6. Conclusions and the need for better legislative and ethical media frameworks in Russia, Moldova, and Romania**

Female representation in the State Duma has generally increased from 2000 to 2024, with remarkable spikes during 2007-2011 and 2021-2024. The most active female politicians come from diverse parties and have significantly contributed to legislative initiatives. When it comes to media law compliance, there were multiple breaches related to privacy, defamation, and the legitimacy of published information, particularly concerning female politicians like Irina Khakamada and Elena Mizulina. Ethical breaches were frequent, involving issues of impartiality, fairness, and use of extremist language. "extremist media" such as Meduza Project proved to follow strongly the indicators pretraining media law and media ethics. To create a better environment and path for the progress of media ethics and law, pertaining a more balanced representation of female politicians, Roskomnadzor can elaborate an audiovisual code to regulate the media, and initiate collaborations with international media regulations organizations such as UNESCO, and respect international legal framework protecting the rights of broadcasting organizations such as the Rome Convention and the Brussels Satellite Convention. Female participation in the Parliament has seen significant growth, especially from 2021 to 2024, where representation reached 36%. This increase is potentially influenced by having a female president. In the Republic of Moldova, while most publications follow ethical standards, there were occasional lapses in respecting privacy, especially involving personal

items or family matters. Several breaches were noted concerning privacy and balanced opinion reflection. Media outlets occasionally infringed on the ECHR articles 10, 6, and 8. As a good practice recommended, the audiovisual council can monitor and create stronger media law frameworks regarding the regulation of online publication and promote periodical ethical training for journalists, reminding them about the necessity to comply with ECHR standards.

The representation of women in the Romanian Parliament has increased modestly over the years, with the most significant rise from 2016 onwards. When it comes to media representation of female politicians in Romania, fewer breaches were found compared to Russia and Moldova. The problem can be that less news is covered about female politicians, most violations involved privacy and objectivity, particularly in articles about Ana Birchall. The Romanian state can issue more laws related to media regulations and good practices referring to online media, to regulate and control fake news, hate speech, and disinformation while balancing free speech and privacy concerns.

The research analyzed only 9 publications, limiting the possibility to get a comprehensive insight into how all media coverage aspects of female politicians in Russia, the Republic of Moldova, and Romania. Another limitation that the research faced is using a qualitative approach; different researchers have different objectives in interpreting the data. Another limitation that the author encountered is language barriers related to translating the article accurately into English. Further on, the direction of the research can be improved by using a multi-method approach through conducting interviews with journalists, media analysts, and female politicians to gain more information from primary sources and views about media representation of politicians in the Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Russia. This can give more insights from first sources and offer more explanations on why some legislative and ethical standards are breached in reporting and media coverage of female politicians.

The analysis can also delve into analyzing big data, such as collecting social media posts from various news publications to see how different media outlets report on female politicians. This can involve sentiment

analysis to identify tone coverage, topic modeling to identify prevalent themes, and network analysis to understand the spread and influence of information. Additionally, machine learning algorithms can be used to detect patterns and biases in reporting, helping to uncover how media coverage can shape public opinion.

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