

Gender and LGBTQ Issues in Election Processes

Global and Local Contexts

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Chapter 2

Gender and post-election intraparliamentary volatility in East Central Europe

The cases of the Czech, Lithuanian,
and Polish parliaments

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2 Gender and post-election intraparlimentary volatility in East Central Europe

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Przemysław Żukiewicz

Introduction

The final results of parliamentary elections may rapidly become out of date, especially in some parliaments in the East Central European countries. During the term parliamentary mandates can expire, causing MPs' replacement, or some deputies may change their party affiliation. It results in a situation in which the voters' will is not respected for the whole duration of the parliamentary term. The main contribution of this chapter is to complement the current state of research on party systems with an analysis of its dynamic between the parliamentary elections through conceptualisation and measurement of the phenomenon of intraparlimentary volatility and its influence on the intraparlimentary gender balance.

The objective of this chapter is to understand the causes and consequences of this intraparlimentary volatility and to investigate its size, focusing on the gender factor. The main research question is about the differences and similarities between the female and male MPs' decisions on party-switching or replacements, as well as its consequences for the party system. Three cases and nine terms were selected for the study: Czech Republic (*Poslanecká sněmovna*, terms of office: 2010–2013, 2013–2017, 2017–2021), Lithuania (*Seimas*, terms of office: 2008–2012, 2012–2016, 2016–2020), and Poland (*Sejm*, terms of office: 2007–2011, 2011–2015, 2015–2019).

Theoretical background

Main definitions

The configuration of the party system between elections is altered by intraparlimentary volatility. I define this term as the deformation of the original election result reflected in changes in the personnel structure of the parliament. There are two ways in which intraparlimentary volatility can

be generated by the individual MP: (1) horizontally (*party switching*), when a deputy decides to change party affiliation during the term of office but still exercises the mandate and (2) vertically (*replacement*), when a deputy decides to resign or is impeached and is replaced by another deputy (either the next candidate on the list or a person elected in a by-election) (Evans & Vink, 2012; Heller & Mershon, 2005; Van der Hulst, 2000).

The analysis of events that constitute intraparlimentary volatility can be done at three different levels.

Firstly, its scope and consequences can be examined in relation to individual MPs. Party switching is then considered to occur when deputy A changes party affiliation, moving from party X to party Y; while replacement occurs when deputy A from party X lost their mandate and their seat is taken by deputy B (B may join parliamentary group X but it is not obligatory). The number of MPs choosing to switch parties does not have to be equal to the number of times they do so, as one MP can switch parties multiple times during their term of office (Mershon, 2014).

Among the various typologies of party switching and replacement, it is worth mentioning the one based on the reasons and motivations as seen from the perspective of individual MPs. Party switching can be either individual (when the decision to switch is taken by one MP and is motivated by the chances of an individually perceived advantage) or collective (when the decision to switch is taken by many MPs and is due to structural conditions such as rebranding, splitting, or merging of parties) (Kemahlioğlu & Sayarı, 2017; Kreuzer & Pettai, 2009, p. 268). Replacement, on the other hand, can result from objective factors (illness, death, or personal circumstances) or from intentional events (taking up another post incompatible with the parliamentary mandate, forced resignation due to accusations or disloyalty, decision to give up a political career, etc.).

At the second level, intraparlimentary volatility can be analysed with regard to individual parties. The measurement then concerns how many seats individual parties have lost/gained due to switches of parliamentarians from one party to another and how often they have experienced replacement (Desposato, 2006).

Thirdly, intraparlimentary volatility can be captured globally in relation to the full parliamentary term, seeking to calculate and compare how often party switching and replacements occur at the level of different parliaments (not only national but also regional, or local) (Dassonneville & Dejaeghere, 2014). At each of the aforementioned levels of the analyses, the researchers use different coefficients and pose slightly different research questions. The present study deals only with the first (individual) level.

Literature review

Researchers of changes in the structure of party systems between elections have so far focused primarily on party switching. The initial research was

focused on categorising causes of this phenomenon and has a mostly theoretical nature (Aldrich & Bianco, 1992) but quickly evolved into two, more developed, approaches – strategic and institutional studies (Mershon, 2014, p. 419).

Adopting the strategic approach, scholars analysed the motivations of politicians who changed their party affiliation (Laver & Benoit, 2003), the way how they synchronise collective actions, as well as patterns of such behaviour (Heller & Mershon, 2009). Furthermore, scholars were also interested in the influence of parliamentary cycles on party switching (Mershon & Shvetsova, 2008) and an effect of pre-election polls on frequency of such behaviour (McMenamin & Gwiazda, 2011).

Taking the institutional approach, researchers were focused on macro-factors influencing party switching, such as the level of party system institutionalisation and its fragmentation (Mejía Acosta, 2004). Authors also analysed the way how party switching is determined by differences in various electoral systems and how this phenomenon influences the legislative process (McLaughlin, 2012; Schofield, 2009).

Additionally, scholars, who adopt both approaches, conducted cross-national comparative research and created statistical models (Mershon & Shvetsova, 2013), which were helpful in verifying hypotheses assuming that politicians move more often from small to large parties (McElroy, 2003) and MPs of the ruling parties are less likely to change their affiliation (Thames, 2007).

Much attention has also been paid to proving that elections and predictions of their results, made mainly on the basis of polls, are an important factor determining the dynamics of the political system. However, while local, presidential, and European elections favour the cohesion of political groupings, the upcoming parliamentary elections result in an intensification of activities aimed at maximising the electoral results of individual parliamentarians (including a change of party affiliation) (Pinto, 2015). However, it has not yet been reasonably proven that there is any correlation between gender and the number of party switches or mandate losses, which makes it all the more interesting to address this issue.

Party systems overview

Czech Republic

The party system of the Czech Republic was transformed fundamentally in the second decade of the 21st century. At the beginning of the 6th parliamentary term, the dominance of two traditionally rival parties – the conservative-liberal Civic Democratic Party (*Občanská demokratická strana*, ODS) and the social-democratic Czech Social Democratic Party (*Česká strana sociálně demokratická*, ČSSD) – was still evident, although this dominance was weakened by the good results of the TOP 09 and

Public Affairs (*Věci veřejné*, VV) parties. Over time, however, signs of change have become increasingly evident. Polls indicated that voters were beginning to look for political parties and movements that could better represent their views than the existing establishment parties. The changes in the party system were accelerated by the scandals in the government of Petr Nečas and the unstable majority that his successor could not count on. Eventually, the 6th term was shortened, and early elections were held in 2013.

It was won by the ČSSD, but with only 25% of the seats, which meant that the party was forced into a coalition government. The ODS had their worst electoral result in Czech history after 1992. New parties such as the liberal-populist ANO 2011 led by Andrej Babiš (who formed a cabinet together with ČSSD and KDU-ČSL) and the Eurosceptical and nationalist Dawn (*Úsvit*) movement came into play.

Controversies around the ANO leader, who was accused of conflicts of interest at the interface between media, business, and politics, led to his resignation from government in the 7th term. However, it did not cause a decline in the popularity of his party, which won the next parliamentary elections in 2017. The price of coalition governing was paid by the ČSSD, which decided to support the new Babiš's cabinet as a junior coalition partner. It was also a turning point, in that the Czech communists emerged from its previous isolation in the party system, deciding in its 8th term to support the minority ANO-ČSSD coalition government (Klvaňová, 2016; Lorenz & Formánková, 2020).

Lithuania

The last three terms of the Lithuanian parliament seemed to be moderate stable. In 2008, the winning conservative Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats (*Tėvynės sąjunga – Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai*, TS-LKD) formed a coalition cabinet led by Andrius Kubilius. This was the first post-independence government to function for a full four years. It was able to maintain stability even in the face of a coalition crisis and the break-up of the junior-party into two parliamentary groups resulting in the loss of the government majority. However, the TS-LKD had to pay the cost of coalition governance and moved into opposition after the next election. The 2012 election was won by the left, concentrated around two parties: the Social Democratic Party of Lithuania (*Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija*, LSP) and the Labour Party (*Darbo partija*, DP), which together, however, still did not have a majority. The new Prime Minister won a vote of confidence thanks to the support he received from two other coalition partners: Order and Justice (*Tvarka ir teisingumas*, TT) and the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania (*Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija*, LLRA). The latter left the coalition in 2014 but the government retained its majority and lasted until the end of the term.

The 2016 elections were won by the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union (*Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga*, LVŽS), which formed a cabinet coalition with the LSP. The government had the support of 78 MPs (out of 141) but conflict erupted within the LSP against the background of coalition cooperation, resulting in a split between supporters and opponents of remaining in government. Ultimately, Prime Minister Saulius Skvernelis had to seek additional support from other parties. He found it among the breakaway members of TT, with whom he signed a confidence and supply agreement (Jurkynas, 2019; Ramonaitė, 2020).

Poland

Since 2007, the Polish party system has been dominated by competition between two dominant parties: the conservative-liberal Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska*, PO) and the social-oriented and traditionalist Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS). Neither party, however, had the support to establish a one party government – PO in the 6th and 7th parliamentary terms was supported by the Christian conservative agrarian and pivotal, Polish People's Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*, PSL), while PiS in the 8th (and later 9th) parliamentary term was supported by two coalition partners: far-right and Euroskeptical, United Poland (*Solidarna Polska*) and conservative-liberal, Agreement (*Porozumienie*). However, the coalitions around PO and PiS were organised differently. The first assumed full autonomy and agency of the partners. PO and PSL emphasised programme convergence but maintained their different manifestoes and organisational structures. The second coalition evolved from a group of separated parties in the parliamentary arena to a common (non-coalition) electoral list and a single parliamentary group under the PiS brand, which includes MPs from the three parties of the so-called United Right (*Zjednoczona Prawica*).

What was symptomatic for the Polish party system in 2007–2019 was the weak position of the left, which was searching for its agenda and ideological identity, as well as the relative popularity of ephemeral parties led by populist leaders (such as Palikot's Movement – an election committee registered by an ultraliberal businessman, and then Kukiz'15 – an election committee registered by a right-wing pop-rock musician). Towards the end of the 8th term, the far-right Confederation, which bases its message on nationalism, Catholicism, and an emphasis on economic freedom, began to gain popularity (Antoszewski & Kozierska, 2019; Szczerbiak, 2017).

Parliamentary mandates and parliamentary groups

In all of the analysed countries, deputies exercise a free mandate, which means that they are not obliged by voters' instructions and can freely change their parliamentary groups between elections. However, the Czech

Republic, Lithuania, and Poland differ when it comes to the details of the formal and legal solutions adopted in this field. The most important differences concern the following issues:

- 1 *The rule of incompatibility* of the parliamentary mandate and other public offices. The list of public functions that cannot be combined with a parliamentary mandate is very long in Poland (one cannot simultaneously hold a seat in parliament and a number of posts in local government, state-owned companies, business, the judiciary, European structures, diplomacy, etc.) and much more limited in other countries (in the Czech Republic, for example, it is allowed to combine a parliamentary mandate and some executive function at the local or regional level).
- 2 *Electoral system*. The Czech Republic and Poland have a proportional electoral system of party lists with a preferential vote, while Lithuania follows a Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) system. In the proportional systems, the rule of replacing a member of parliament is simple. If deputies resign from their seats, their place is taken by the person on the same party list who received the highest number of votes in the previous election. In this case, the resignation of a mandate by an MP rarely entails the risk that a political party will lose that mandate. In the Lithuanian MMP system, this rule applies only to the proportional tier, in which half of the seats are allocated. The other half is allocated on the basis of election results in single-mandate constituencies. If parliamentarians elected in the majority tier lost their seats, a by-election became necessary. This is why the withdrawal of a seat is in this case a major risk for the party, which cannot be sure that its candidate will win in the by-election.
- 3 *Parliamentary traditions and political culture*. In the Czech Republic, the ideological disagreement of MPs with their original party often results in the resignation of the mandate by the MP and leaving politics, rather than changing party affiliation. Meanwhile, in Poland and Lithuania, such a practice has been noted only incidentally (Janusz Palikot). In the Czech Republic, there is also no formal prohibition on combining local/regional authority functions with a parliamentary mandate but a practice has emerged whereby a person elected to the regional *hejtman* post resigns from his parliamentary seat. The Czech system also differs from others in that MPs' formal membership in a new party need not be reflected on the parliamentary level. MPs often move to a group of independents but they brand a new political project with their name and are associated with it in the media.
- 4 *Rules for the formation of parliamentary groups*. A parliamentary group organises the work of its members at parliamentary level. A distinction is made between single-party parliamentary groups and coalition parliamentary groups. Rules for the formation of groups are

set out in parliamentary regulations and laws. Parliamentary groups usually receive certain privileges: they have speaking time during parliamentary sessions, and are assigned on a parity basis to the posts of speaker/deputy speaker and chairman/member of the parliamentary committees.

- 5 *Types and numbers of elections held during the parliamentary term.* The following types of elections were held during the respective parliamentary terms: European, presidential, local/regional (see Table 2.1).

Research design

Data for the database of intraparlimentary volatility in the examined parliaments was obtained from the websites of the Czech, Lithuanian, and Polish lower chambers of parliaments. On the websites of the Czech and Lithuanian parliaments, information on changes in party affiliation is available in the profile of each deputy, as well as information on whether they served a full term. The dates of any party switching or replacement events are also given. On the profiles of Polish MPs, only data on whether they have served a full term is visible but no information on party switching is provided. I gathered this omitted data from the voting tables available in the transcripts of each *Sejm*'s session. The exact date of the party switching meant in this case not the formal declaration of an MP but the first sitting during which they voted as deputies affiliated to a particular party.

Each data sheet corresponded to one parliamentary term. The starting point for creating the sheets was the results of the parliamentary elections. Based on the documents of the state electoral commissions, I identified the number and labels of the electoral committees which participated in the allocation of seats, and I created a list of candidates who should have been given a seat. I then verified whether the candidates had actually taken up the mandate. I then reconstructed which parliamentary groups were formed during the first post-election parliamentary session and checked whether there was a match between the electoral committee on whose list the candidates for MP stood and the parliamentary group they joined after the elections. Finally, from the official profiles of deputies, their biographies available online, and from available press sources, I extracted data on: (1) type of constituency and electoral result; (2) gender (defined on a binary male-female scale as there was no parliamentarian in any of the parliamentary terms analysed who declared themselves as non-binary); (3) age at the time of obtaining a parliamentary mandate; (4) parliamentary experience (including length of service measured by the number of previous terms in which an MEP has held a seat and information on past party switching or replacement events); and (5) career path after leaving office (whether the member has stood for re-election and how successfully).

Table 2.1 Types and numbers of elections held during the parliamentary term

Country	No. of term	European	Regional	Local/municipal	Presidential	Parliamentary – Senate
Czech Rep.	VI	–	12-13.10.2012	15-16.10.2010	11-12.01.2013	12-13.10.2012 ^a
	VII	24-25.05.2014	07-08.10.2016	10-11.10.2014	–	10-11.10.2014 ^a
	VIII	25-26.05.2019	02-03.10.2020	05-06.10.2018	12-13.01.2018	7-8.10.2016 ^a 05-06.10.2018 ^a 02-03.10.2020 ^a
Lithuania	X	07.06.2009	27.02.2011		17.05.2009	–
	XI	25.05.2014	01.03.2015		11.05.2014	
	XII	26.05.2019	03.03.2019		12.05.2019	
Poland	VI	07.06.2009	21.11.2010		20.06-04.07.2010	Simultaneously to the Sejm election
	VII	25.05.2014	16.11.2014		10-24.05.2015	
	VIII	26.05.2019	21.10.2018		–	

Source: Author's own study.

Note:

^a Every two years 1/3 of the Czech Senate is renewed.

I juxtaposed these data with the studied events that build up intraparlimentary volatility, i.e., the annotations attributed to MPs in terms of: (1) party switching: the number of changes of party affiliation made in the legislature with noting the names of parliamentary groups, which lost and gained an MP's seat, if there was such a change; and (2) replacement: information on whether the MP was an abandoner or a replacer during the parliamentary term and information on whether or not the replacement induced party switching.

In separate sheets I collected data on the categories of party switching and replacements at the party level. In the case of party switching, I registered the date of the event, the name of switcher, the reason of event, the name of the old and new parliamentary groups, and the size change of the parliamentary groups that the party switching resulted in. In the case of replacement, I registered the date of the event, the names of the MPs concerned (abandoner who lost mandate and replacer who gained mandate), the party affiliation of both MPs, and the reason for the event.

Bearing in mind the objectives of the article, the most important data were those on the gender of MPs who changed their party affiliation or lost/gained mandate during the parliamentary term, and an analysis of how the studied phenomena were affected by elections held during the analysed parliamentary terms.

Results

Number of deputies

First of all, it should be noted that most of the previous studies have gathered party system data based on election results. Notwithstanding, my analyses show that the number of deputies and parliamentary groups at the beginning of the parliamentary term changes quite rapidly due to intraparlimentary volatility. These changes occur in specific cycles, but they mean that in Central and Eastern European parliaments (unlike in Western Europe) more attention should be paid to changes in the party system at the parliamentary level that occur between parliamentary elections.

In the analysed cases, the number of all mandates held in one four-year parliamentary term differed by an average of 10.65% from the number of mandates specified in the constitutions (see Table 2.2). This means that every tenth MP in a term lost their seat before the end of a term and had to be replaced by another MP. Notably, the shortened 6th term of the Czech parliament did not significantly affect this number of replacements (there were even more of them than in the following full term). There is also a noticeable difference between individual parliaments. The Czech parliament is the most stable in this aspect (the rate of replacements is less than or equal to 10%), while the highest number of replacements is observed in Poland (as many as in two terms – more than 12%).

Table 2.2 Number of parliamentary mandates – *de iure* vs. *de facto*

Country	Legislature		Total no. of seats (mandates <i>de iure</i>)	No. of replacements	Total MPs (mandates <i>de facto</i>)	Replacements as % of MPs	
	No. of term	Years				Per term	Medium
Czech Rep.	VI ^a	2010–2013	200	18	218	9.0	8.83
	VII	2013–2017	200	15	215	7.5	
	VIII ^b	2017–2021	200	20	220	10.0	
Lithuania	X	2008–2012	141	13	154	9.22	9.69
	XI	2012–2016	141	15	156	10.64	
	XII	2016–2020	141	13	154	9.22	
Poland	VI	2007–2011	460	60	520	13.04	11.74
	VII	2011–2015	460	57	517	12.39	
	VIII	2015–2019	460	45	505	9.78	
Summary			2403	256	2659	10.65	

Source: Author's own study.

Notes:

^a The parliamentary term was three years, and the parliament was dissolved early.^b Data collected up to July 2021 – does not include last three months of term.

Table 2.3 Gender gap in the Czech, Lithuanian, and Polish parliamentary arenas

Country	No. of term	Male MPs	Female MPs	Male MPs (%)	Female MPs (%)
Czech Republic	VI	172	46	78.9	21.1
	VII	171	44	79.53	20.47
	VIII	170	50	77.27	22.73
Lithuania	X	125	29	81.17	18.83
	XI	121	35	77.56	22.44
	XII	118	36	76.62	23.38
Poland	VI	416	104	80.0	20.0
	VII	392	125	75.82	24.18
	VIII	363	142	71.88	28.12
Summary		2048	611	77.64	22.36

Source: Author's own study.

Gender gap

The indices of representation of women in the analysed parliaments are low – both in comparison with global (average in July 2021 – 25.5%), and European (average – 30.6%) indicators (*Global and regional averages of women in national parliaments*, 2021). Only in one of the studied parliamentary terms was the threshold of 25% female MPs exceeded (see Table 2.3). However, there is also a positive, albeit rather slow, progressive tendency noted: with each successive term, more and more female MPs sat in the analysed parliaments, although they still constituted a significant minority of all parliamentarians (below 30%) (see Figure 2.1). Interestingly, the biggest progress between the three terms was observed in Poland (increase in female representation by over eight percentage points). It was also the 8th term of the Polish parliament that proved to be the only one in which the parliamentary feminisation index exceeded the global average and amounted to over 28%. The example of Poland therefore contradicts the thesis that the backsliding from democracy must manifest itself in a decrease of female MPs' representation at the parliamentary level.

Party switching

In the abovementioned analysis of the institutional determinants of party switching and replacement, I pointed to significant differences between the parliaments studied. A detailed examination of the data reveals that these differences have a very large impact on the extent of intraparliamentary volatility. With regard to the ratio “switches as % of MPs,” the differences between the minimum and maximum value extend between

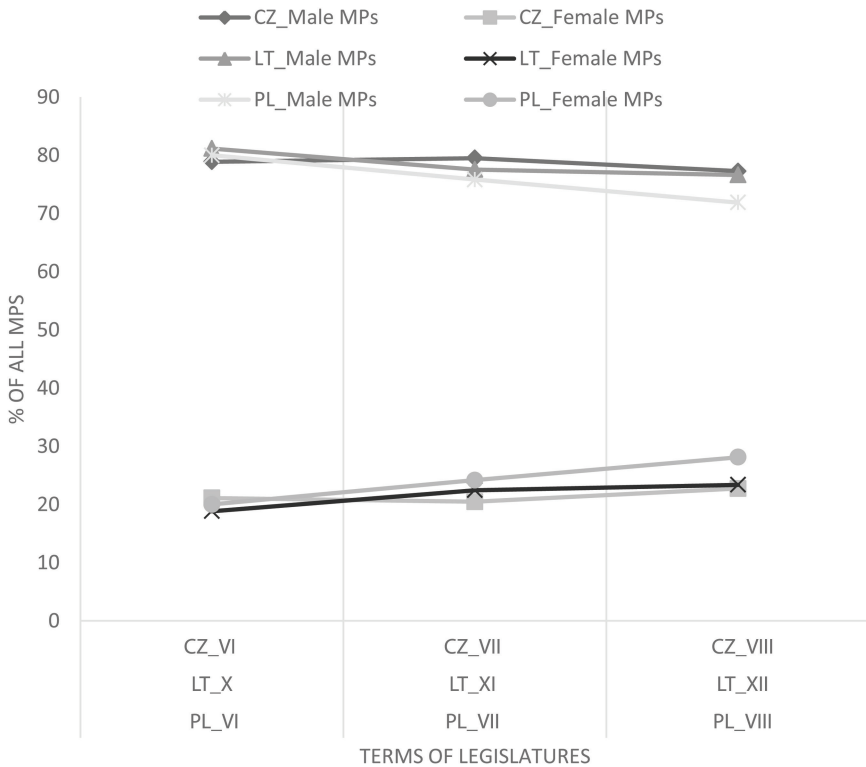


Figure 2.1 Tendency towards minimalising gender gap in the Czech, Lithuanian, and Polish parliamentary arenas

Source: Author’s own study.

3.64% (Czech Republic, 2017–2021) and 72.08% (Lithuania, 2008–2012). Moreover, the statistics are distorted by the very large size of the Polish parliament, where many of party switching events occurred as a collective action and resulted from the rebranding of factions (e.g., in the 8th term of the Polish parliament, the largest opposition party PO merged with the smaller party, which automatically generated more than 150 cases of collective party switching).

The only general conclusions that can be reliably drawn from the data analysis are that the Czech parliament is the least unstable in terms of party switching, while the Lithuanian parliament is the most unstable. In general, when MPs decide to party-switch in a legislature, they do so once, but two out of nine legislatures have a higher proportion of double party-switchers than of single party-switchers. A very large number of party switching is collective in nature and is related to party rebranding or the formation of new political parties (see Tables 2.4 and 2.5).

Table 2.4 Structure of MPs' party switching

Country	No. of term	Total MPs	No. of switches made by MP						Total MPs switching	Total no. of switches	Switchers as % of MPs	Switches as % of MPs
			0x	1x	2x	3x	4x	5x				
Czech Rep.	VI	218	194	20	4				24	28	11.01	12.84
	VII	215	204	9	2				11	13	5.12	6.05
	VIII	220	213	6	1				7	8	3.18	3.64
Lithuania	X	154	108	14	17	5	7	2	46	111	29.87	72.08
	XI	156	131	14	2	9			25	45	16.02	28.85
	XII	154	103	22	16	6	1	2	51	110	33.11	71.42
Poland	VI	520	426	29	45	10	5	3	94	196	18.08	37.69
	VII	517	428	22	13	28	10	16	89	252	17.21	48.74
Summary	VIII	505	290	148	49	13	3	2	215	310	42.57	61.39
		2659	2097	284	149	71	26	23	562	1073	21.13	40.35

Source: Author's own study.

Table 2.5 Changes in the size of parliamentary groups during the individual parliamentary terms

Country	No. of term	No. of parliamentary groups at the 1st session of the parliament	New parliamentary groups during the parliamentary term	Total no. of parliamentary groups during the term	Growth of the number of parliamentary groups during the term (%)
Czech Republic	VI	5	2	7	+40
	VII	7	1 ^a	8	+14
	VIII	9	1 ^a	10	+11
Lithuania	X	8	4	12	+50
	XI	8	1	9	+12
	XII	7	3	10	+42
Poland	VI	5	9	14	+180
	VII	7	8	15	+114
	VIII	6	13	19	+217

Source: Author's own study.

Note:

^a In the Czech Republic, only the group of independents can be treated as a new parliamentary group during the 7th and 8th parliamentary terms.

Regardless of the discrepancies across parliaments, the results show that there is no significant difference between the proportion of female MPs in the cohort of parliamentarians switching party affiliation and the proportion of female MPs in the population of all parliamentarians (see Figure 2.2).

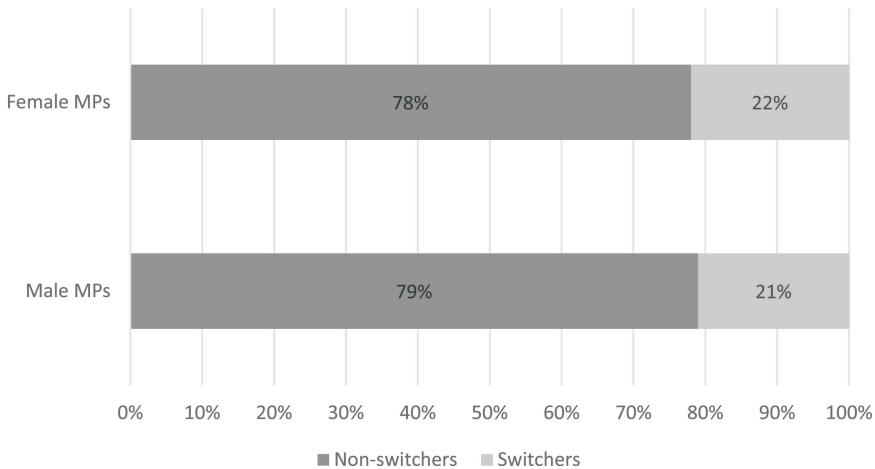


Figure 2.2 Gender share in total number of party-switchers and total number of parliamentarians

Source: Author's own study.

Replacement

As in the case of party switching, the likelihood of resignation/loss of mandate also remains independent of the MPs' gender. The percentage of male MPs losing their seats is slightly higher than the percentage of male MPs in the entire population of parliamentarians (and the percentage of female MPs is respectively lower), although these values are minimal (see Figure 2.3).

However, in-depth analysis of the replacements practices shows that there was a significant difference in the motivations for resigning from the mandate for women and men (see Figures 2.4 and 2.5). Firstly, resignation in favour of European Parliament positions (mostly Members of the European Parliament) was much more dominant for women than for men and was the motivation for resignation in more than half of the female MPs analysed. Secondly, in the cases of male MPs, there was a greater diversification of motives for leaving parliament and no single strong dominant basis was noticeable. Thirdly, there was a much higher frequency of "local-election-reason" of parliamentary mandate expiration among male MPs and a much lower frequency of this reason among female MPs. Fourthly, women relatively rarely resign for so-called other reasons, while men definitely do so more often.

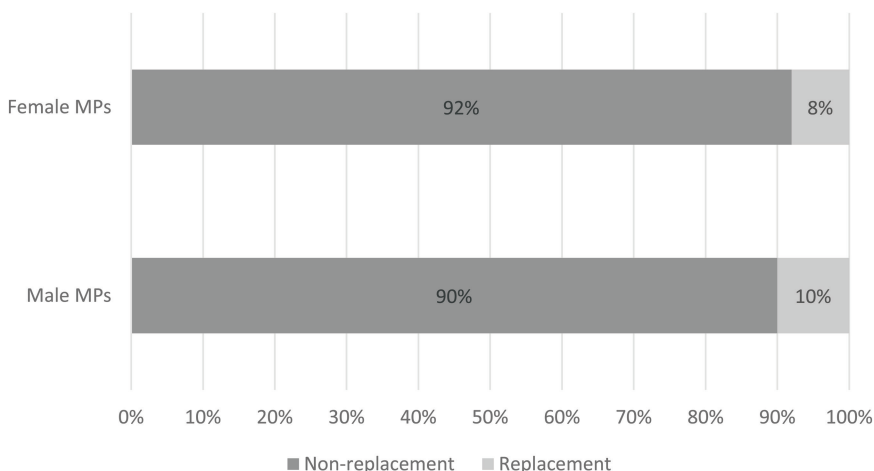


Figure 2.3 Gender share in total number of MPs who lost their mandates (abandoners) and total number of parliamentarians

Source: Author's own study.

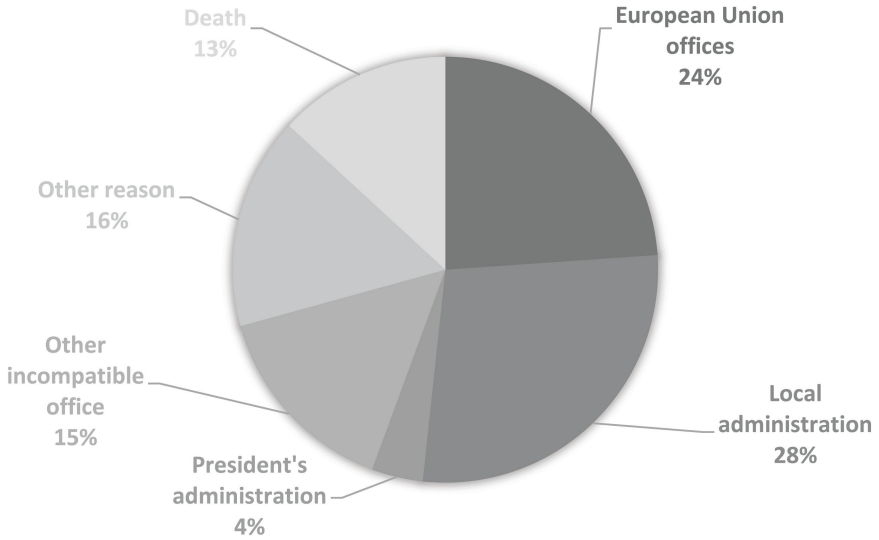


Figure 2.4 Reasons for the mandate expirations of male MPs ($n = 206$)

Source: Author's own study.

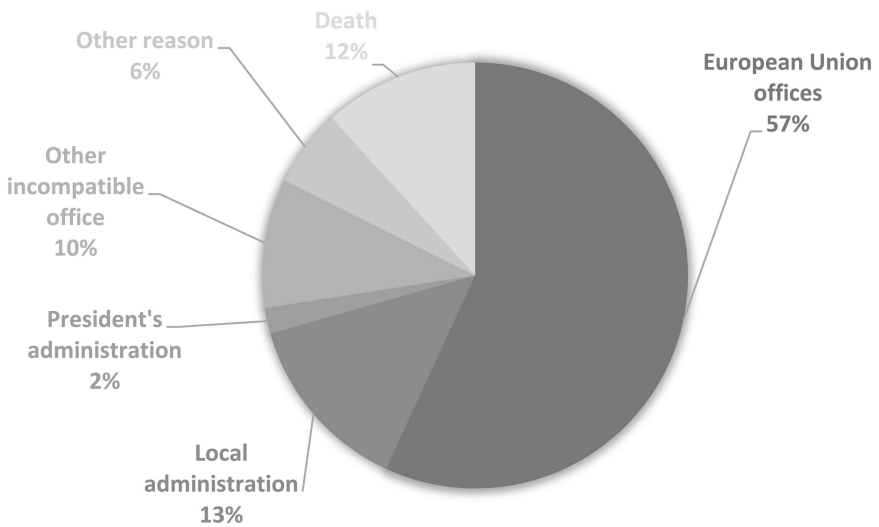


Figure 2.5 Reasons for the mandate expirations of female MPs ($n = 51$)

Source: Author's own study.

Concluding remarks

The analysis proves that the phenomenon of intraparlimentary volatility in different parliaments may have many faces. This poses a methodological challenge for researchers above all.

In the Czech Republic, the practice of resigning from a parliamentary seat when the views of the MP and the party diverge has been noted, whilst parties were practically never rebranded during their term of office (effecting in very low – recently even less than 5% – party switching rates). As a result, replacement has a greater impact on intraparlimentary volatility than party switching. And even in this case, the number of analysed cases of women who decided to switch or resign during their term of office is less than 10. By contrast, in Lithuania and Poland, party switching was mainly conditioned by the rebranding of political parties, which often skewed party switching coefficients to over 50%. Replacement in Lithuania was also burdened with a different risk for the parties than replacement in Poland, because it generates, in some cases, the necessity to arrange by-elections. The conclusions of the research are therefore rather descriptive than generalised.

One of the most important observations is that the aggregate number of MPs (it was the first time when data was gathered for the post-election configuration as well as the whole term of legislature) proves that in all three cases, i.e., Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Poland, the percentage of female MPs has been gradually increasing and the percentage of male MPs decreasing. This is not a rapid trend and rather indicates the evolutionary character of the systemic change, but it has nevertheless counterbalanced the crisis of democracy seen in recent years, especially in Poland and the Czech Republic.

Secondly, there is no evidence to support the hypothesis that gender has any effect on intraparlimentary volatility. In all cases the proportion of women and men in the cohorts of party-switchers and non-party-switchers was equal to the proportion of women and men in the population of all parliamentarians in the analysed terms of office. Similarly, the proportion of women and men in the cohorts of MPs who lost their mandates was almost equal to the proportion of women and men in the population of all parliamentarians in the analysed terms of office. Replacement caused neither a significant increase, nor a significant decrease, in the number of women/men represented in parliament.

On the other hand, the most significant differences were observed with regard to the reasons for leaving a parliamentary seat. In most cases, it was motivated by taking up a position in a regional/local authority or in the European Parliament, i.e., in most cases by the results of elections that take place during a parliamentary term. However, women were much more likely to resign for posts in the European Union institutions, and less likely to resign for posts in local or regional authorities. Together, both motivations

for female MPs accounted for 70% of all resignations. In the case of men, the “electoral motivation” accounted for only 52% of all resignations.

The data collected in the project offers great opportunities to deepen the research area. It is possible to investigate whether women or men are more likely to leave certain types of parties. It is also still unclear which types of party switching are more characteristic of women and which of men. For example, it is worth discussing whether gender determines party switching motivated individually (desire to gain a better position, ideological disagreement with the party) or collectively (split or merger of parties, rebranding of a parliamentary group). The increasing number of non-binary people in the parliaments of developed democracies will certainly also force a greater diversification within the “gender” category to be taken into account in research.

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