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WOMEN AND REGIONAL POLITICS: POLITICAL DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN'S DESCRIPTIVE REPRESENTATION IN THE CZECH AND SLOVAK REGIONAL ELECTIONS OF 2000–2017¹

Pavel Maškarinec*

ABSTRACT

Although there is an extensive comparative research focusing on the influence of various factors contributing to the increase of female representation at the national level, relatively little space is devoted to a similar research at (sub)state levels of governance. Hence, the main objective of this article is to analyse the determinants of women's descriptive representation in Czech and Slovak regional elections. We show that women's representation at the regional level is lower not only in comparison with the national but especially with the local level. Our results confirm that women are significantly advantaged in the regions where women held a much higher representation in the previous electoral term. However, other factors show only little positive (expected) influence on women's representation in the Czech Republic (district magnitude), while we find negative influence of economic development (unexpected) and Catholicism (expected). On the contrary, in Slovakia, most factors influence women's representation in the expected way. We find higher women's representation in the regions characterized by higher economic development, higher district magnitudes, higher difference in salaries between men and women and a lower share of Catholics and Hungarians. Furthermore, electoral system proves to be a strong factor as a proportional system, together with higher magnitudes, strongly increases women's representation. Generally, while the results from the Czech Republic indicate that women's representation is influenced rather by institutional variables, together with greater openness for women based on previous experience, in Slovakia the relation among various factors is much more complex, influenced by all types of variables.

Key words: Czech Republic, Slovakia, regional politics, regional elections, women and politics, women's representation

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Introduction

Although there is an extensive international comparative research focusing on the research of the influence of various factors contributing to the increase in gender representation of women at the national level (e.g. Norris, 1987; Paxton, 1997; Matland, 1998), relatively little space is devoted to a similar research at (sub)state levels of governance (regional, local, etc.). Perhaps a bit surprisingly, at the (sub)state levels of governance relatively more attention is dedicated to the local level (e.g. Welch and Karnig, 1979; Bullock and MacManus, 1991; Trounstein and Valdini, 2008; Smith, Reingold and Owens, 2012; Magin, 2013) than to the regional one, the so-called meso-level of governance, standing just between the central and local levels (e.g. Vengroff, Nyiri and Fugiero, 2003; Orbals, Rinckery and Montoya, 2011; Navarro and Medir, 2016).

A similar situation can also be found in the research of the political representation of women in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as well as in other states in the area of Central and Eastern Europe. The research of the political representation of women is rather a minor topic in the Czech and Slovak academic environment, outside the main interest of the political community (for the exceptions, see for example, Bitušíková, 2005; Bútorová and Filadelfiová, 2011; Sztwiertnia and Hellová, 2012; Kouba, Nálepová and Filipec, 2013; Sloboda, 2014, 2015; Maškarinec, 2016; Bláha, 2017; Ďurinová and Malová, 2017; Maškarinec and Klimovský, 2017; Maškarinec, Klimovský and Danišová, 2018), and majority of the works are almost exclusively descriptive in nature, free of any attempts to find the factors that can explain the reasons for the different women's representation among the countries of the Central European area, as well as between different levels of the Czech and Slovak political systems (e.g. in a different degree of women's representation among individual regions or municipalities).

The presented text aims to try to fill this research gap. However, given the limited scope of the text, this will rather be an attempt to open this research topic. Our goal will be to analyse the determinants of descriptive (or numerical) representation of women (Pitkin, 1967) in the regional elections in the Czech Republic and Slovakia since the establishment of regional self-government in 2000 and 2001, respectively, up to the last regional elections held in 2016 and 2017, respectively. The observed period will include a total of five elections to the regional councils in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Research on women's representation at the regional (meso)level is important in view of the fact that many policies are decided at this very level (outside the competence of central state institutions). Moreover, this political arena offers not only attractive opportunities but also easier access for women to the decision-making process, as electoral competition at this level is characterized by lower competition, it does not require such high financial costs for electoral campaigns or separation from family, or family-related demands that are traditionally perceived as discouragement for a higher participation of women in politics (Vengroff, Nyiri and Fugiero, 2003, p. 163).²

1 Determinants of political representation of women

The theoretical delimitation of the determinants of the success of women in the sub-state (in our case regional) elections is made slightly more difficult by the fact that, as already stated above, there is only a limited number of works that would treat this phenomenon. One of the few exceptions is the work by **Vengroff, Nyiri and Fugiero (2003)**, which, however, with its broad comparative focus primarily addresses the variables of institutional nature that are available for a wide range of countries (type of electoral system, proportionality of electoral system, level of development, distribution of constitutional competencies among the individual components of the state – federal/unitary state). For this reason, in order to theoretically delimit the determinants of the political representation of women in the regional elections we will also include in our pursuit such works that deal with the issue of political representation of women at the nationwide level (Norris, 1987; Paxton, 1997; Matland, 1998; Krook, 2010), or the works that attend to the research into the differences between male and female electoral behaviour – the so-called “gender gap” (Ingelhart and Norris, 2000; Abendschön and Steinmetz, 2014).³

² On the other hand, some recent studies have found the opposite pattern of women's representation and have pointed out that the assumption that politics for women is more or less open to lower levels of governance (local or regional) cannot be considered completely valid, given the considerably different reality between different countries (Holtkamp, Wiechmann and Schnittke, 2009; Tolley, 2011; Eder, Fortin-Rittberger and Kroeber, 2016; Navarro and Medir, 2016).

³ As shown by **Ingelhart and Norris (2000, p. 459)**, the so-called modern gender gap is, in particular, a product of cultural differences between men and women in their value orientations, primarily in their attitudes to post-materialism and women's movements, rather than in the differences in their lifestyles; for more on the variations in differences in the voting by men and women and the concepts of traditional and modern gender gap, see **Ingelhart and Norris (2000, p. 443–448)** or **Abendschön and Steinmetz (2014, p. 317–322)**.

The literature analysing women's political representation distinguishes three basic groups of factors that strengthen the representation of women at the parliamentary level: a) socio-economic factors, such as education, women's representation in the labour market, urbanization, the scope of social services, etc.; b) cultural factors, represented in particular by a different attitude on the axis of the traditional values vs. struggle for a higher level of equality, etc.; c) institutional factors, such as the electoral system, stability of the party system, type and power of political parties, etc. (Norris, 1987; Krook, 2010).⁴ Drawing on theoretical assumptions based on the findings of previous studies, the following variables have been selected for the analysis.

The level of development of the given region and the status of women will represent in our case socio-economic variables. As some studies have shown (Krook, 2010), it can be assumed that a higher status of women or level of development will positively influence opportunities and general attitudes towards participation of women, while a higher number of people working in the primary and secondary sectors of the national economy will have a negative effect. Previous researchers confirmed that out of other variables of socio-economic nature, education and employment are two of the key factors in explaining electoral behaviour of women. According to **Norris** (2002), people with higher education are more involved in political affairs, because higher education enables individuals to make politics more important. Also, according to other authors, education is a central factor in the political participation of women (Rule, 1987; Magin, 2013), and a higher number of educated and employed women provides a social base from which leaders and voters of female parties can be recruited (Ishiyama, 2003). Employment then provides women with financial independence, organisational skills and connections that can be useful in politics and can further support the prospects of women in the elections (Togebay, 1994).

On the other hand, further studies show that the influence of these factors is at best mixed (Matland, 1998; Ruedin, 2012). Similarly, it can be assumed that a higher proportion of women will be strengthened by a higher rate of urbanization, while such an assumption draws on the analyses of local level. They have shown that larger municipalities have a higher number of university educated people (both women and men), who embrace more liberal values,

⁴ On the other hand, **Ishiyama** (2003, p. 268) distinguishes only contextual factors (including socio-economic and cultural factors) and institutional factors.

which creates a more favourable voting environment for female candidate lists and as a result it supports chances of women to gain representation (Bullock and MacManus, 1991; Smith, Reingold and Owens, 2012). Therefore, we assume that a higher representation of women will be found in the regions with a higher degree of urbanization. In our case (see below), however, the initial analysis showed a strong level of multi-collinearity among mostly socio-economic variables, and for this reason only the level of development of the given region and the status of women enter the analysis. We assume in their case that they will be positively linked with a higher women's representation in the councils of individual regions.

Unlike socio-economic factors, the identification of appropriate cultural factors at the observed level of aggregation is relatively difficult. In our case, two variables will be used, to be more precise – one in the Czech Republic and two in Slovakia. The first one is Catholicism, which is traditionally studied with regard to its preference for traditional gender roles and conservative attitudes towards the position of women in society (Giger, 2009, p. 481). With increasing influence of Catholicism on culture, it can be expected that a higher number of women will vote for right-wing parties and vice versa (Abendschön and Steinmetz, 2014, p. 340). At the same time, a smaller proportion of the population with post-material views and thus less willingness to vote for female candidates can be expected in more strongly Catholic countries. On the other hand, Ingelhart and Norris (2000, p. 453–457) have shown that in post-communist societies this trend is reversed. Another range of cultural factors can be connected with the influence of political culture or political history. In this respect, there is the presence of quite significant Hungarian minority in Slovakia, which accounts for approximately 8.5% of the total Slovak population. From our point of view, the findings of **Bakoš, Soukopová** and **Šelešovský** (2015) are quite significant. According to them, the current policy in the two monitored countries (the authors speak of the local level of governance) is rooted in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. While the Czech local policy contains some elements of the “Austrian heritage”, the Slovak environment is associated with the “Hungarian heritage”. Considering the above mentioned, we expect that a higher proportion of the Catholic population and the Hungarian minority in individual regions will reduce the representation of women in the regional councils.

Finally, political and institutional factors represent the last set of factors. Most studies analysing political and institutional factors have confirmed that women's

political representation tends to be higher in the countries using proportional, rather than majority, electoral systems (Matland and Studlar, 1996), as in most proportional systems the mandates are allocated in large constituencies, which contributes to higher representation of women at the national level (Welch and Studlar, 1990).⁵

Further studies (analysing the sub-state level of governance) have shown that the candidacy of current councillors has a positive impact on the size of women's representation in the next election (Smith, Reingold and Owens, 2012). The presence of women as holders of political power may imply an electorate that is more receptive to the image of women as politicians, which in turn may encourage other women's candidacies and help increase their representation. According to some research, the first election of women can be understood as "innovative political behaviour, but successful innovations become routinized and diffused." (Ondercin and Welch, 2009, p. 599) The fact that the higher proportion of women in the previous electoral term may have the positive effect on women's representation in the following period was confirmed both at the national level of the elections (Ondercin and Welch, 2009) and at the local level (Trounstone, 2011).

Some further studies at the sub-state (local) level show that voter turnout can serve as an indicator of political participation, as the degree of voter participation may be related to the overall climate and the level of civic development of a given unit (Ryšavý and Bernard, 2013, p. 839–841). Based on previous studies, we expect a similar effect also in the case of elections to the councils of the Czech and Slovak regions. We, therefore, expect female representation to be higher in the regions with a higher number of women seated in the council in the previous term, the elections are based on the use of a proportional electoral system in large constituencies, and the level of electoral participation is higher.

2 Data and methods

The analytical units of our study include 8 Slovak regions and 14 Czech regions, or more precisely 13 Czech regions and the capital city of Prague, which holds both the statute of the municipality and of the region; however, there are no regional elections held there and powers similar to the regional

⁵ For more on clear discrepancies in the influence of the electoral system on the representation of women, see Krook (2010, p. 888–889).

council are vested in the municipal council of the capital city of Prague. Data on women's representation in Prague, therefore, relate to the municipal elections (in 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014).

The primary indicator (dependent variable) is the proportion of women elected to the regional council in 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016 in the Czech Republic and in 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013 and 2017 in Slovakia. Independent variables come from several sources. In the Czech case, these are data from the Public Database of Czech Statistical Office (CZSO, 2017) and the data from the 2011 Population and Housing Census (SLDB, 2011). In the Slovak case, these are the data from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (SOSR, 2017) and the data from the 2011 Population and Housing Census (SODB, 2011). The independent variables entering the analysis, corresponding to the theoretical anchoring of the work described above, are summarized in Table 1 (see below).

The method of multiple linear regression (or the classic method of ordinary least squares, OLS) has been chosen as a method of analysis involving the above-mentioned indicators. The identified relations will be expressed through basic parameters of the regression model, namely the values of unstandardized regression coefficients B (measuring the effect of an independent variable on the dependent variable when controlled for all other variables; it tells us how much the dependent variable changes per unit change in the independent variable), and the values of adjusted coefficients of determination (adjusted R square, measuring the overall performance of the model in explaining variance in the dependent variable).⁶ Model 1 tests indicators of descriptive representation of women for the Czech Republic, Model 2 for Slovakia, and Model 3 for both countries.⁷

6 The linear regression method in the ENTER variant was used for the calculation. For each regression model the analysis for multicollinearity was performed between independent variables. Variables between which high correlation values were found, causing problems with multicollinearity, were discarded from a set of independent variables. Subsequently, a multicollinearity check was performed in the regression model using statistics of tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), which indicate eventual multicollinearity between independent variables. It is indicated by the values of the tolerance indicator 0.2 and smaller, or in the case of VIF the values 5 or higher.

7 In the tables of regression models, the coefficients of statistical significance (p) are given for information, although the monitoring of these values is only relevant when working with data surveys (see Soukup and Rabušic, 2007). In our case, when the analysis is based on a set of all regions, however, the values of statistical significance do not hold the same explanatory power as

Table 1: List of variables and their descriptive characteristics

Variable	Description	Mean (standard deviation)		
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Dependent variable	Share of female councillors in the region	12.29 (0.633)	14.25 (1.055)	16.18 (0.571)
Economic development	GDP of the region per one inhabitant in the region	5.54 (0.013)	5.47 (0.028)	5.51 (0.013)
Status of women	Difference in average gross monthly wage of employees in the region by gender (median)	17.11 (0.361)	21.84 (0.495)	18.83 (0.363)
Catholics	Share of the Roman Catholics in the population of the region	10.34 (0.754)	62.34 (1.139)	29.25 (2.478)
Hungarians	Share of Hungarians in the population of the region		8.78 (1.465)	
Previous female councillors	Share of female councillors in the region in the previous term	13.17 (0.960)	11.45 (1.320)	12.55 (0.777)
Size of constituency	Number of seats allocated in the constituency	52.71 (1.013)	5.04 (0.189)	35.38 (2.290)
Turnout	Share of eligible voters who participated in the regional elections	35.46 (0.534)	23.33 (0.943)	31.04 (0.737)
Electoral system	Dichotomous variable dividing the set into the regions using the proportional (value 1) or semi-proportional (value 0) electoral system to elect councillors			0.64 (0.046)

Source: CZSO, 2017; SLDB, 2011; SODB, 2011; SOSR, 2017; own calculation.

Other independent variables were also tested when creating the model, but they were excluded from the model due to multi-collinearity with other variables. Specifically, for example, the following variables were removed – the higher

in the case of analyses based on sample surveys. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that statistical significance in itself does not indicate factual significance, and recently there has been an upsurge in the interest of researchers in statistically “insignificant” findings, which nonetheless may be factually significant to the problems solved. As **Ziliak** (2016, p. 85) states: “statistical significance is by itself neither necessary nor sufficient for proving a scientific ... claim. Rational assessment of the probability or likelihood of a hypothesis cannot be derived from statistical methods alone.”

education variable (the proportion of women with completed university education), employment of women (share of women employed) or urbanization (the share of inhabitants in municipalities with 5,000 or more inhabitants), whose values showed a high degree of correlation with other socio-economic variables. Unlike the model for the Czech Republic, the variable “Hungarians” has been added to the model for Slovakia and the variable “Catholics” excluded from the common model (Model 3) given its very strong relationship (negative) with the variable of “electoral system.”

3 Analysis of women’s representation in the regional elections of 2000–2017

3.1 Changes in descriptive representation of women at the regional level

Before we analyse the determinants of the descriptive representation of women in the regional elections, we will attempt to briefly approach the development of the representation of women in the Czech Republic and Slovakia since the establishment of the regional representation in 2000 in the Czech Republic and in 2001 in Slovakia compared to the development of the representation of women at the national (parliamentary) level.⁸ The basic finding in this regard is the fact that in none of the surveyed countries it was confirmed that the so-called “pyramid pattern” should be emerging when we move to a higher decision-making level, demonstrating the decreasing success of women in gaining higher power positions, in other words, the principle of “the higher the fewer”, or the law of minority attrition.⁹

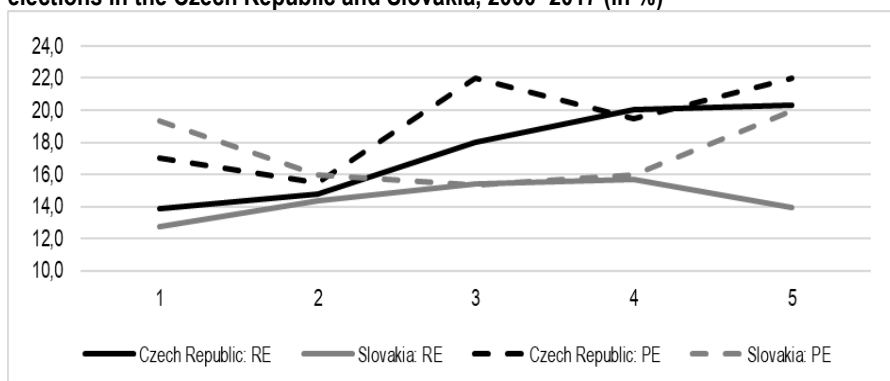
As shown in Figure 1 (see below), the success of women in different types of elections is very different and at the same time variant over time. Regional elections in the two countries have long ranked as the elections with the smallest representation of women. In spite of the gradual and continuous increase in the number of women who succeeded in gaining post of regional councillors in the Czech Republic, the proportion of female representatives

⁸ In the Czech Republic, what we mean by the parliamentary level is the Lower Chamber of the Czech Parliament, namely the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic.

⁹ Under the law of minority attrition, the number of allocated positions decreases along with the rising level of decision-making, which should automatically reduce the representation of minorities, including women (Taagepera, 1994, p. 201).

remains low – from the first regional elections held in 2000 to so far the last regional elections in 2016 – from 13.84% to just 20.30% (17.39% in the average of all elections). The representation of women in regional councils is not even close to the so-called critical mass, which stipulates a condition of at least 30% of the representation of women for women to be able to play by “their own” rules, not to have to adapt and their presence in a representative body could bring about a change to the existing rules of the game (see Dahlerup, 1988).¹⁰

Figure 1: Descriptive representation of women in the regional and parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, 2000–2017 (in %)



Source: CZSO, 2017; SOSR, 2017.

Note: RE: regional elections; PE: parliamentary elections; 1: RE 2000 and 2001 (Czech Republic and Slovakia), PE 2002 (Czech Republic and Slovakia); 2: RE 2004 and 2005 (Czech Republic and Slovakia), PE 2006 (Czech Republic and Slovakia); 3: RE 2008 and 2009 (Czech Republic and Slovakia), PE 2010 (Czech Republic and Slovakia); 4: RE 2012 and 2013 (Czech Republic and Slovakia), PE 2013 and 2012 (Czech Republic and Slovakia); 5: RE 2016 and 2017 (Czech Republic and Slovakia), PE 2017 and 2016 (Czech Republic and Slovakia).

An even worse situation can be seen in Slovakia, where, after the small gradual increase in the representation of women from 12.72% to 15.69% between 2001 and 2013, there was a decrease in women’s representation all the way down to 13.94% after the last regional elections in 2017 (14.42% in the average of all elections). That means that women’s representation is therefore even by 6 percentage points lower than the proportion of women’s

¹⁰ Similarly, **Dahlerup** and **Lejtnar** (cf. 2013, p. 10) differentiate the degree of male dominance with regard to the proportion of female representation in the representative body.

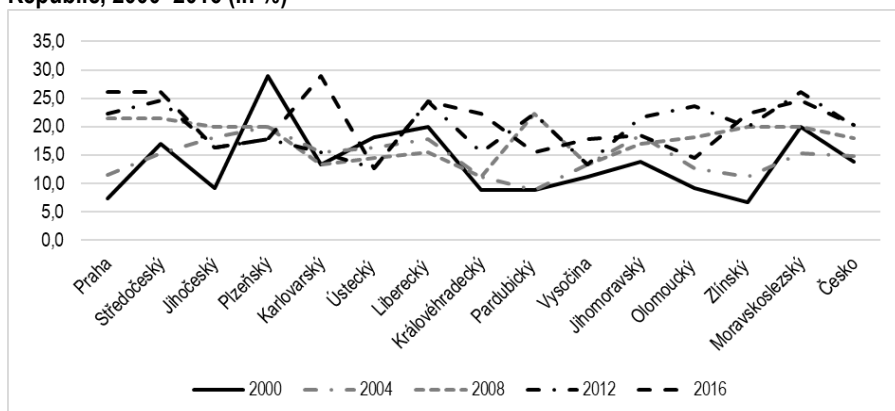
representation after the last Slovak parliamentary elections held in 2016. The low proportion of women in regional elections is in sharp contrast to, for example, the municipal elections (i.e. another of the so-called second-order elections – see Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif, 1997). In the Czech Republic, women's representation rose from 17.70% in 1994 to 27.99% in 2018 (data for all municipalities are not available in Slovakia) and significantly moved towards the so-called critical mass.

However, the approximation of the variation of women's representation between individual regions and the elections is in our case much more important than a view of the national level. This comparison points to significant differences between the two countries. In the Czech Republic, it is quite difficult to identify any clear trend that would differentiate between the regions with a long-term low or, on the contrary, high representation of women in regional councils; the opposite conclusion applies to Slovakia.

In the Czech case, we can observe in many cases a considerable fluctuation in the success of women between individual elections, which can lead to the situation where the region with the lowest representation of women may belong to the regions with the highest presence of women in the regional council in the next election. If, however, we try to generalize the found values at least partially, it is possible to conclude that the regions where women are traditionally more successful include the Moravian-Silesian, Central Bohemian, Pilsen and Liberec regions, where the average representation rate of women exceeds the 20% threshold. Nonetheless, even here the representation of women in some elections dropped all the way down to the 15% threshold and, on the contrary, in other elections, it rose to or above the 25% threshold. The opposite side included the Ústí, Hradec Králové and Vysočina regions, where on average the share of successful women remained below the 15% threshold although in the last regional elections in 2016 the representation of women in Vysočina rose to 17.78% and in the Hradec Králové region even to 22.22%. An interesting development can be seen in the capital city of Prague, which was historically a place where women were not very successful; however, the change has taken place since the 2008 election, when the representation of women exceeds the 20% threshold (on average 23.27%).¹¹

¹¹ Overall, the average representation of women in the council of the capital city of Prague reaches 17.70% over the examined period, and if we also included the first municipal elections in 1994, it would reach an average of 17.17%.

Figure 2: Descriptive representation of women in the regional elections in the Czech Republic, 2000–2016 (in %)

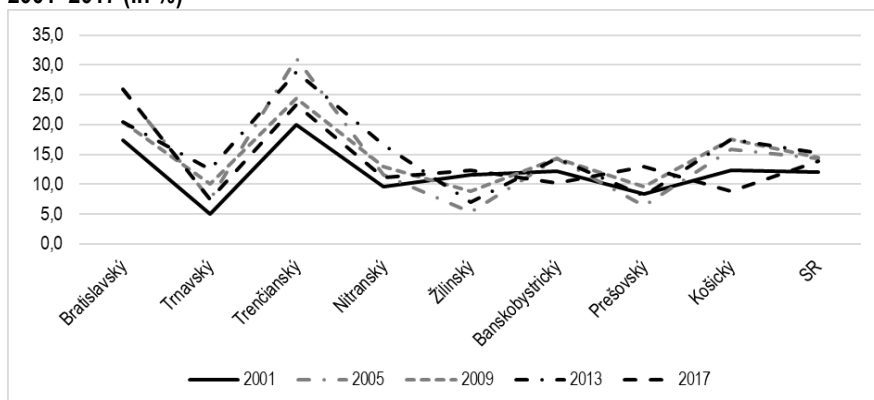


Source: CZSO, 2017.

If we move on to the development of the political representation of women in Slovakia, we can identify several clear trends that divide the Slovak regions into about three units. The first group assembles the regions with long-term high representation of women. In particular, the Bratislava and Trenčín regions, where – with only one exception (the Bratislava region in 2001) – women’s representation did not fall below 20% and in the Trenčín region even exceeded the 30% threshold in 2005. In the average of all regional elections, the women’s representation reached 25.57% in the Trenčín region, or 22.06% in the Bratislava region.

The second group, on the other hand, comprises the regions with a significantly below-average representation of women. It includes the Trnava, Žilina and Prešov regions, where the descriptive representation of women on average does not exceed 10% (8.50%, 8.97%, and 9.09%, respectively). The remaining Slovak regions then oscillate in the degree of women’s success above 10%, but they only narrowly exceed this threshold and women’s representation does not exceed the 15% threshold: on average in the Košice region (14.39%), the Banská Bystrica region (13.06%) and in the Nitra region (12.38%).

Figure 3: Descriptive representation of women in the regional elections in Slovakia, 2001–2017 (in %)



Source: SOSR, 2017.

3.2 Determinants of the descriptive women's representation at the regional level

In the final part of the study we will seek to answer the question to what extent the differences in the representation of women in individual Czech and Slovak regions can be explained by their structural features and other selected characteristics. If we first focus on the overall parameters of models explaining the success of women in regional elections, we can see foremost the relatively low success rate of most regression models. The model for Slovakia (Model 2) was the only model able to explain the higher degree of variability of the dependent variable; in its case the explained variability of the model reached 52%, compared to 25% in the case of the Czech Republic (Model 1) and 37% in the aggregate model for the Czech Republic and Slovakia (Model 3). An important finding is also in some cases the different direction in the effects of independent variables in the Czech and Slovak regional elections.

Moving on to the evaluation of individual effects of independent variables, we can see that the variable of economic development is reversed in the Czech Republic. Unlike the theoretical expectations, the representation of women was lower in economically more developed regions, while the opposite held true (in line with expectations) in Slovakia, where the GDP per capita rate strongly strengthened the representation of women, as well as in the aggregate model. Likewise, the status of women, measured by the difference in the average wage

of men and women, did not display any constant influence. While in the Czech Republic the influence of this variable was approaching zero, in Slovakia, on the contrary, the increasing pay gap between the genders strengthened the representation of women, which also applied to the aggregate model.

Compared to socio-economic variables, the factors of cultural nature worked entirely in compliance with previous research findings. It was confirmed in both countries that the environment with a larger representation of the Catholic population and citizens of Hungarian nationality (only in Slovakia) is not too open to women seeking active involvement in regional politics and the regions with a more conservative electorate, therefore, rather add to the persistence of male dominance in both countries.

Table 2: Determinants of the representation of women in the regional elections in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, 2000–2017 (OLS regression)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)
Socio-economic and demographic factors						
Economic development	-4.673	(7.104)	10.021*	(5.455)	3.505**	(4.849)
Status of women	-0.002	0.244	0.323	(0.345)	0.101	(0.152)
Culture factors						
Catholics	-0.120	0.108	-0.252*	(0.140)		
Hungarians			-0.168	(0.106)		
Political and institutional factors						
Previous female councillors	0.306***	(0.071)	0.372***	(0.101)	0.383***	(0.057)
Size of constituency	0.117	(0.078)	0.981	(0.962)	0.025	(0.070)
Voter turnout	0.190	(0.145)	-0.110	(0.133)	-0.082	(0.092)
Electoral system					2.127	(3.666)
Constant	27.469	(37.688)	-37.063	(30.276)	-34.453	(19.306)
N	70		40		110	
Adjusted R ²	0.249		0.515		0.368	

Source: CZSO, 2017; SLDB, 2011; SODB, 2011; SOSR, 2017; own calculation.

Note: B: unstandardized regression coefficients, SE: standard errors in brackets, statistically significant coefficients are indicated in bold, level of statistical significance: ***: $p < 0.01$, **: $p < 0.05$, *: $p < 0.10$.

On the other hand, in the case of political and institutional variables the effects of individual variables were not exactly the same. In line with the expected logic, the number of elected women increased with an increase in the number of women seated in the previous municipal council in a given region. The intensity of this factor was relatively strong and very similar in both countries, with only a slightly higher intensity in the case of regional elections in Slovakia. Similarly, the positive influence of the size of the constituency on the representation of women was confirmed. Even in this case, however, we can observe a very different influence of the size of constituency in both countries.

While in the Czech Republic the increasing size of constituency only slightly enhanced the women's representation, in Slovakia the positive effect of this variable is very strong. However, the explanation for this difference is relatively simple and is consistent with many previous researches. The distribution of seats in the Czech regional elections takes place in large constituencies (within proportional electoral system), where the territory of the entire region forms a single constituency, ranging from 45 seats in the smallest regions (e.g. the Karlovy Vary region or the Liberec region) to 65 seats in the largest regions (e.g. the Central Bohemian or Moravian-Silesian regions).¹² On the other hand, in the Slovak regional elections each region is divided into several constituencies and the constituencies are therefore rather small or medium-sized.¹³

In contrast to the previous two institutional variables, the influence of the voter turnout was quite different in both countries. While in the Czech Republic a higher degree of voter turnout of citizens slightly strengthened the representation of women, in Slovakia the influence of the voter turnout was exactly the opposite, as in the aggregate model, which calls for the question seeking the reasons for different effects of this variable on the representation of women.

¹² More to the Czech regional elections, see Balík et al. (2013), Ryšavý (2013), Ryšavý, Čermák et al. (2015), Eibl and Pink et al. (2017), Pink and Eibl (2018).

¹³ The average size of Slovak constituencies for the entire monitored period reached 5.04 seats per constituency; for example, in the last regional elections in 2017, the size of the constituencies ranged between 1 and 13 seats. Only 4 out of a total of 96 constituencies were larger than 10 seats (4.1%); in 23 constituencies between 6 and 9 seats were allocated (24.0%), and the remaining 69 constituencies (71.9%) had between 1 and 5 seats. 16 constituencies (16.7%) were single-member constituencies; 13 single-member constituencies were in the Bratislava region and formed the majority (54.2%) of the local 24 constituencies. More to the Slovak regional elections, see Krivý (2002, 2006), Spáč, Voda and Zagraban (2016), Plešivčák (2017), Kováčová (2018), Marušiak (2018), Maškarinec (2018).

Finally, the last variable that entered only the aggregate model (Model 3) was the form of the electoral system. As in case of the size of the constituency, the electoral system as another institutional variable has confirmed a strong influence on the representation of women. The use of a proportional system in the Czech regional elections together with the larger size of the Czech constituencies (here to a lesser extent than in Model 1) significantly increased the chances of women to enter the regional council and their opportunities to participate in the formation of regional politics.¹⁴

Conclusion

This study has aimed to analyse the influence of different factors of socio-economic, cultural, political and institutional nature, on a different degree of descriptive representation of women in the Czech and Slovak regional elections since the establishment of regional self-government at the beginning of the 21st Century until the last regional elections. It thus includes five regional elections spanning a 17-year period, which is sufficiently long time to try to draw more general conclusions.

The first finding of the study is the overall low success rate of women in regional elections, which lags not only behind municipal elections as another sort of second-order elections, but also with some rare exceptions behind the elections to national parliaments. This conclusion is in sharp contrast to the conclusions of most foreign studies that point to a higher success rate of women at sub-national level, and confirms the importance of research into the political representation of women at lower levels of governance. Interregional comparison of women's success offered an interesting difference between the two countries. It showed that while there is no clear pattern in the Czech Republic that would allow for a simple differentiation between the regions that are more open to women's representation and those where women's involvement in politics has been long-term low, the situation in Slovakia is exactly the opposite. On the one hand, there are the Bratislava and Trenčín regions, whose population is quite strongly in favour of female candidates,

¹⁴ In the aggregate model, the variable "size of the constituency" is retained despite its relatively large correlation with the type of electoral system used. When forming the model, the model was also tested without this variable, but it did not change the direction and effect of other variables in Model 3. The only significant change was the much stronger (still positive) influence of the electoral system on the representation of women.

compared to the regions of Trnava, Žilina and Prešov, where women enjoy only limited access to decision-making positions. This finding implies that the electoral system (as an institutional variable) may not in itself be necessarily hostile to higher representation of women because, as we have stated above, it is precisely the Bratislava region that has the most single-member constituencies that should theoretically restrict women's representation most, but actually the opposite is true.

Already these basic findings of descriptive nature call for questions to be asked about different reasons that could stand behind different success of women in individual regions. Our results were unexpected in some cases, especially in comparison with the results of some foreign studies, in particular in the Czech Republic. The first finding of our study, with the exception of Slovakia, was the relatively low success of regression models that, however, does not differ much from foreign research on a similar topic. This statement, together with the aforementioned problem of the unexpected effect of some variables in the Czech Republic, reaffirms the statement mentioned above about the high variability of women's representation among individual Czech regional elections. This raises the question of what factors can stand behind such a high variability.

In the Czech Republic, the strongest predictor empowering women's representation is the success of women in previous regional elections, supported by institutional variables as well (proportional electoral system and large constituencies). At the same time, the success of women is quite negatively associated with economic development (against expectations) and a higher share of Catholics (in line with expectations) and the status of women basically shows no influence. On the other hand, women's representation in Slovakia is much higher in economically more developed regions, but is also positively linked with higher gender pay gaps. This may be due to overall higher wages in more economically developed regions that may also be reflected in a larger disparity in wages between men and women. Similarly, the success of women is strongly enhanced by their previous representation¹⁵ and much more strongly than in the Czech Republic (but in the same direction) by the size of the

¹⁵ The above finding suggests that, after the initial selection of women as "innovation", the gradual routinization of this political action leads to its transfer to other women as well and is, therefore, not tied to a specific person and can gradually transform the political culture of the given region. In contrast, Sloboda (2014) shows, that in local elections in Slovakia (mayoral elections) the effect of incumbency is very strong and the same is true for Czech local elections (see Bernard 2012).

constituency as well. Finally, in Slovakia, the relatively negative influence of the electoral system as well as of the cultural variables was confirmed, when the chances of women to participate in political decision-making were lower both in the regions with a higher presence of Catholicism and the Hungarian population.

These findings linked with the effects of individual indicators thus show that the effort to find clear determinants of women's representation at the regional level is quite a complex task. It involves the analysis of often mutually interconnected factors that can frequently contradict each other in both the positive and the negative direction, which makes particularly difficult any pursuit of a broader comparative study in a different institutional environment or contexts associated with different political cultures. While the results from the Czech Republic indicate that the descriptive representation of women is influenced (strengthened) rather by the institutional variables, together with greater openness for women based on previous experience with a higher number of women, in Slovakia the sought relation is far more complex and the chances of women to have a seat in the council of the given region is influenced by all types of variables (socio-economic, cultural and institutional). This conclusion is further underlined by the relatively decent explanatory power of the regression model for Slovakia, whereas in the Czech case the very low variance of the model leads to the need to seek other types of factors that can strengthen or weaken the chances of women to obtain the seat of the regional councillor.

In this respect, the working hypothesis of the possible influence of the political culture of the given regions can be presented, which is, however, in view of its broad and often completely different forms difficult to analyse only based on widely available aggregated data. In the next step, it will probably be necessary to try to find factors (rather qualitative in nature) that would take more account of the political climate and specifics of the given regions that can be rooted in different historical, political, cultural, demographic or socio-economic factors. These factors, nonetheless, may change between the elections (as indicated, in particular in the Czech case, by a marked variation in the success rate between individual regions and the elections). The question remains whether to try to replace the variables of the socio-economic development of individual regions and the status of women applied by us with different indicators that would better capture the influence of a similar type of variables on the political representation of women or, for instance, the influence of

(variable) success rate of the new parties that gain on strength in both countries, or the so-called regional or local parties (see Jüptner, 2008) that are successful at the sub-state level especially in the Czech Republic (see Havlík and Nový, 2013).

An important topic of the future analysis, necessarily drawing on a more qualitative survey, would entail a greater focus on the actors of the elections themselves (women-councillors), or the political parties these women come from, what their previous political experience is, their ideological orientation, etc. This, in turn, could shed more light on other possible explanations of the different level of descriptive representation of women among the surveyed regions. Given the fact that one of the most important explanatory variables of our analysis was the previous presence of women in politics (in the positions of regional councillors) and the degree of descriptive representation thus appears to be clearly an endogenous issue, a follow-up question would also address the way how the presence of women in the positions of the regional councillors is replicated in the regions with their higher or lower success rates, both on the part of voters and political parties.

Finally, one of the limits of our analysis was its focus on only two countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Here, as the next step, it would be advisable to extend the analysis not only to other countries of Central and to Eastern Europe, but also to Western Europe and other parts of the world, in view of the significant variation of regional forms of governance (see Bertrana, Enger and Heinelt, 2016) found in a global context. The last suggestion for future research may be focusing on the issue of the so-called critical mass. As Dahlerup and Leyenaar (2013) showed, it was possible to identify several stages in the development of the level of critical mass also in the so-called “old democracies” and this model, therefore, could be applied in the context of the Central and Eastern European region as well, primarily at the sub-state (regional) level of governance.

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