

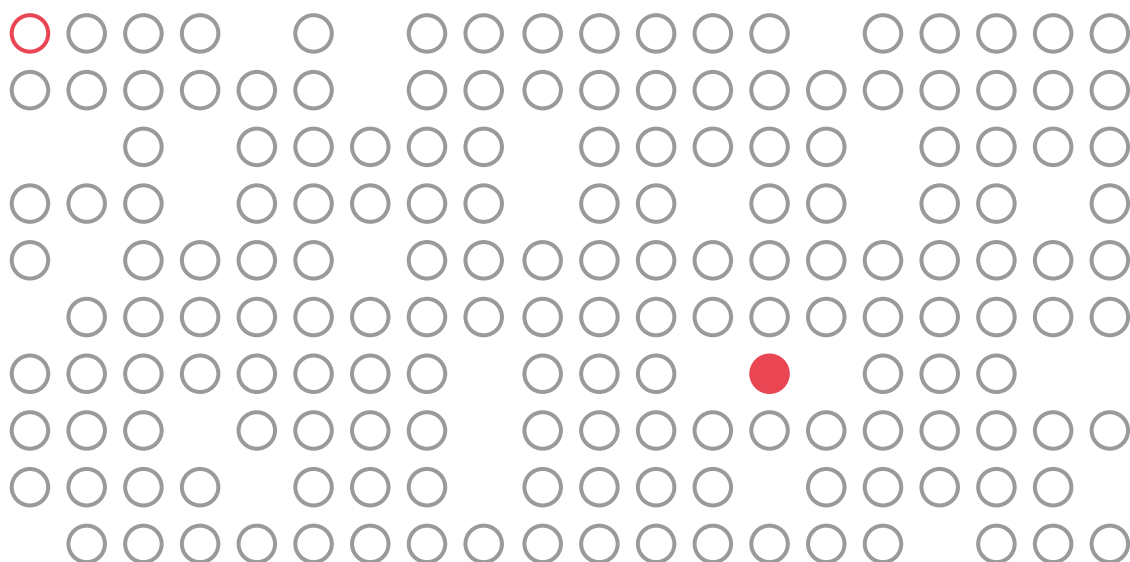
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# Manipulation and Threat:

The non-representation of Roma  
candidates at the local elections in  
Romania

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BAMBERG  
GRADUATE SCHOOL  
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# Manipulation and Threat: the non-representation of Roma candidates at the local elections in Romania

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## Abstract

Why are Roma (not) represented on the electoral lists of the mainstream political parties? Whereas the political representation of the Roma minority has primarily been approached through ethnic lenses, focusing either on Roma ethnic parties or on other types of organizations, the role of mainstream political parties is typically considered marginal in the process. This might seem counter-intuitive, considering that previous studies have provided ample confirmation that political parties are the main gate-keepers to representation, not only when it comes to the majority population, but also to minority groups. An additional aspect that is extremely important for understanding the phenomenon of under-representation is the process of selection of candidates, as the focal point that shapes how inclusive representative bodies and their members will be with regard to the ethnic element. In order to cover this gap, this PhD study unpacks the nomination of Roma candidates by mainstream political parties in the context of the 2016 local elections in Romania. Combining theories of political representation from the literature on political parties and ethnic studies, it argues that minority nomination is dependent on the electoral resources of political parties. Electoral resources – defined here as the size of the party, change of party leadership, party competition, presence/absence of Roma political parties, and the size of the Roma groups – are tested for their relative impact on Roma nomination, following two different and supplementary methods. First, a quantitative study is conducted based on 289 party lists in 77 localities with a minimum of 1% of Roma population from three counties: Galati, Iasi and Salaj. The quantitative study is supplemented by a qualitative analysis based on 39 semi-structured interviews with local party leaders belonging to five mainstream political parties: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats, Popular Movement Party, National Liberal Party, Social Democratic Party, and National Union for the Progress of Romania. The statistical results show that mainstream political parties are only motivated to include Roma candidates on their party lists once the size of the Roma community is large, with all the other tested variables receiving either weak or no statistical support. However, explanations based strictly on cost-benefit calculations should be interpreted with caution, as without taking into consideration the contextual aspects such explanations can lead to inaccurate conclusions. The size of the minority groups does not always outweigh other losses, as long as the discriminatory and biased attitudes of the mainstream party leaders govern the nomination process. Additionally, the manipulation and control of the Roma voters by incumbent local political parties interfere in the process. Abusing their powers to distribute social benefits and taking advantage of the precarious socio-economic situation of most of the Roma, local incumbent political parties reserve Roma votes for themselves and directly exclude the option of having Roma candidates on their party lists. Consequently, the representative chain whereby Roma voters would choose their representatives in accordance with their free will to voice their issues and interests is broken as long as voters are forced to vote for a political representative that not only is not interested in acting for them, but defies and disrespects democratic principles.

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### Abbreviations for the political parties included in the study

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Original name</b>	<b>English name</b>
ALDE	Partidul Alianta Liberalilor si Democratilor	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats
FSN	Frontul Salvării National	National Salvation Front
PC	Partidul Conservator	Conservatory Party
PD	Partidul Democrat	Democratic Party
PD-L	Partidul Democrat Liberal	Liberal Democratic Party
PLR	Partidul Liberal Reformatior	Liberal- Reformatory Party
PMP	Partidul Miscarea Populara	Popular Movement Party
PNL	Partidul National Liberal	National Liberal Party
PNTCD	Partidul National Taranesc Crestin Democrat	Christian Democratic National Peasant's Party
PP-DD	Partidul Poporului- Dan Diaconescu	People's Party- Dan Diaconescu
PSD	Partidul Social Democrat	Social Democratic Party
PUNR	Partidul Unitatii Natiunii Romane	Party for Romanian National Unity
UDMR	Uniunea Democratica Maghiara din Romania	Democratic Alliance Hungarians in Romania
UNPR	Uniunea Nationala pentru Progresul Romaniei	National Union for the Progress of Romania
USL	Uniunea Social Liberala	Social-Liberal Union
USR	Uniunea Salvati Romania	Union Save the Romania



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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

### 1.1. Study background and research gap

The Roma minority represents the largest and the most heterogeneous minority group in Europe, and one which is spread over the entire continent. In general, references to Roma groups are often associated with the lack of something: a kin state, equality, education,<sup>1</sup> decent economic status,<sup>2</sup> political representation (Barany, 1998; McGarry, 2008, 2010; Rostas, 2009), a ‘political entity of its own’ (Mirga and Gheorghe, 2007), etc. The minority is also associated with negative experiences: of ‘hostility, segregation, and misery’ (Stewart, 1997), persecution, discrimination and negative feelings (Nicolae, 2006; Vermeersch, 2007; Agarín, 2014; Iordache, 2015). Such descriptions apply to most of their history and their situation has not improved much in most Central and Eastern European countries, where the majority of the Roma minority resides, even after the adoption of representative democracy following the collapse of the socialist regimes. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that they have not engaged in political life to an extent that would have an impact on the mainstream decision-making process. The Roma are often politically under-represented in most of the countries where they live, even in places where they make up an important share of the population, such as Slovakia (e.g., Vašečka, 1999; Sobotka, 2002; Friedman, 2005; Vermeersch, 2007; Mihálik, 2014; Degro, 2015; Kende *et al.*, 2020), Bulgaria (e.g., Barany, 1998; Spirova, 2004; Rechel, 2007; Rechel, Umland and Crampton, 2012), Hungary (e.g., Barany, 2001; Sobotka, 2001, 2002; Vermeersch, 2007; McGarry, 2010; Rövid, 2012; Mihálik, 2014; Kende *et al.*, 2020), or Romania (e.g., Protsyk and Matichescu, 2011; Zamfir *et al.*, 1993; Barany, 1998, 2001; McGarry, 2008, 2009, 2010; Rostas, 2009a, 2009b, 2012; Iordache, 2015). The present study focuses specifically on the case of Romania, which will be employed as a case study meant to explore and improve our understanding of the political under-representation of the Roma minority.

The Roma minority has been living on the territory of Romania for more than seven centuries and has a long history of repression. They experienced slavery for more than four and a half centuries, until their emancipation in 1856. Under the military dictatorship of Ion Antonescu during the Second World War, 25,000 Roma were deported to Transnistria, due to ‘their way of life, nomadism, previous convictions and the lack of means of supporting themselves or of a specific occupation enabling them to earn a living’ (Achim, 2004, p. 169); out of these, around 19,000 died. After 1945, during the communist period, the Roma in Romania were subject to disruptive assimilatory policies. The fall of communism brought unprecedented opportunities for political participation, as the Roma were recognized as a national minority, consequently gaining access to political and cultural rights. Thus, the Roma were expected to participate in politics and to establish formal structures that would allow for this participation and involvement. This new chapter of their history also brought new challenges: the Roma had to define their political space for the first time (Mirga and Gheorghe, 2007). While a number

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<sup>1</sup> According to the 2011 Romanian census, out of around 500,000 Roma persons over 10 years old, more than 160,000 had pursued only primary school; out of these, 67480 persons were illiterate. See National Institute of Statistics, <http://www.recensamanromania.ro/rezultate-2/>.

<sup>2</sup> In Romania, only one out of three Roma are employed and remunerated, while 90% of the Roma have an income below the national poverty threshold. See <https://www.crpe.ro/economia-sociala-si-incluziunea-romilor-situatia-actuala-si-perspective-de-dezvoltare/>.

of political elites emerged and political organizations were set up to defend the interests of the Roma, their effectiveness was contested by members of the Roma communities, who did not recognize them as legitimate and maintained a certain reluctance toward their roles in the community (Mirga and Gheorghe, 2007). As such, although the Roma represent the second largest recognized minority group in Romania, it is also the most under-represented politically.

The representation of minorities in Romania, including Roma, is facilitated through a system allowing ethnic parties, as well as minority-run civic associations to run for elections as ‘ethnic parties’ for reserved seats in the Lower Chamber of Romania’s bicameral Parliament. A system of representation based on positive discrimination for minority groups was also introduced at the local level through Law 67/2004. The law imposes though in the first instance that ethnic organizations, like any other political parties, have to pass the 5% electoral threshold, but ‘in the event that none of the organizations of the citizens belonging to national minorities, other than the Hungarian one, has obtained at least one seat, a councilor’s seat shall be assigned from among the ones left from the first stage to the organization having reached the election threshold and having obtained the highest number of valid votes of all those organizations’ (Law 67/2004, art. 96, paragraph 4.).

Despite this ‘apparently permissive minority participation system’ (Rostas, 2009), at the national level the Roma have never managed to pass the 5% electoral threshold and have thus been able to elect only one MP, due to the aforementioned special provisions for minorities embedded in the electoral law guaranteeing reserved seats. Moreover, not only did they fail to pass the electoral threshold, but their electoral support has decreased over time, as from a peak turnout of 159,521<sup>3</sup> in 1996 it reached the level of merely 22,124 votes in 2012.<sup>4</sup> These weak performances are all the more striking when set against the background of the fact that since 1992 the Roma population has been constantly increasing. According to official statistics, the Roma population in 1992 was of 401,087, while in 2012 it consisted of 621,573 persons; according to unofficial sources, the increase seems to be even more dramatic, as the Roma population is believed to be in fact around 1.5-2.5 million.<sup>5</sup> At the local level, the situation is equally bad. On the one hand, there is a similar trend of decreasing participation in elections. In 2004, the number of votes that Roma civil society associations obtained for local councilors was 69,293, while in 2016 it was 45,599; consequently, the number of mandates for local councils decreased from 189 to 160.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the electoral legislation applies only if the minority organization has passed the 5% threshold, but no minority group apart from the Hungarians achieved this (Székely, 2008).

So far, the literature has focused extensively on the representation of Roma through their own parties. However, it has largely ignored the fact that Roma can have their interests represented by mainstream political parties targeting the majority population. In this study, I argue that Roma representation is not only a ‘Roma thing’ (i.e Vermeersch, 2007; Rostas, 2009a; McGarry, 2010; McGarry, 2014) and may very well happen outside the remit of Roma political

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<sup>3</sup> The number represents the sum of all the votes obtained by the Roma associations for the Chamber of Deputies. It should be noted that in 1996 there were five Roma associations competing in the general elections, while in 2004 there were just two. However, out of the five associations competing in the 1996 elections, three of them obtained a total number of votes of 6306.

<sup>4</sup> The number of votes obtained by Partida Romilor “Pro Europa” for the Chamber of Deputies.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the estimates offered by the Council of Europe, under the section ‘Estimates of Roma population in European countries’, available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/publications>.

<sup>6</sup> The numbers are obtained by summing up the votes and seats that each Roma organization has obtained, according to the results published by the Central Electoral Office in 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016.

associations. This is a new perspective – at least for the Roma minority – that focuses on the external constraining factors instead of questioning the agency of the groups / individuals. Considering agency is important because change in the political arena is dependent on the actions of the individuals themselves; it is the critical citizen (Norris, 1999) that has to identify and acknowledge a certain problem, to reflect on it and to find means to alter the status quo, as well as to have the capacity and motivation to try to implement these alternative means (e.g., Giddens, 1993; Norris, 1999, 2011; Stoker, 2006). Nevertheless, the manifestation of agency can be constrained / influenced by the environment where it takes place (Giddens, 1993; Archer, 2000; López and Scott, 2000; Akram, 2019).

This study starts from the premise that political representation is related to the monopoly of power(s) that certain groups had over time, as well as to the exclusion of others. As political parties / institutions are not neutral, the outcomes of their actions are different for the members of the majority and minority groups. This new perspective is important not only because it expands the scope of the types of organizations that can be involved in the political representation of minority groups, but also because it questions the neutrality of mainstream political parties, exploring their electoral behavior in relation to a group that is not conventionally part of their electorate, as well as the outcomes of such behavior. It provides us with relevant information about their internal functioning, i.e., the rules of selection, the means to achieve electoral goals, as well as about their openness toward the inclusion of different ethnic groups and the factors that favor either electoral cooperation or estrangement between mainstream and minority groups<sup>7</sup>. This in turn has the potential to show whether the Roma, as groups representing an important share of the electorate, face barriers or opportunities for political representation coming from mainstream political parties, and whether mainstream political parties contribute indirectly to their under-representation. Simultaneously, the present project reveals novel details about the political behavior of the Roma electorate, i.e., the extent to which they vote, whom they vote for, etc., data which can contribute to addressing the puzzle of political under-representation. Although nomination does not automatically translate into political representation, it is the first step toward it, where exclusion starts, so it is important to start from this step; as such, the research question that guides this study is: why did mainstream political parties nominate Roma candidates at the 2016 local elections?

## 1.2. Levels of analysis

The academic interest in patterns of under-representation of minority groups is not new. Although the literature is still in an incipient phase (Bird, 2003; Bird, Saalfeld and Wüst, 2010; Bloemraad and Schönwälder, 2013), the phenomenon of political under-representation of minorities has been connected with three different types of factors: micro, meso, and macro. On the micro level, factors such as personal motivation (Norris and Lovenduski, 1993) and socio-economic status (Nie and Verba, 1975) of Roma individuals can represent a barrier to

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<sup>7</sup> In this study, the following conceptual distinction is made between different groups in the population: ‘minority’ refers to persons who identify themselves as belonging to any of the 20 ethnic groups recognized by the Romanian legislation as national minorities, and therefore here it refers exclusively to Roma persons, while ‘majority’ refers to persons identifying themselves as Romanian. As such, mainstream political parties are defined as political parties that are not explicitly associated with any of the recognized minority groups in Romania and that claim to represent the interests of the majority of the population, thus not using minorities’ ethnicity as a means of electoral mobilization.

and a partial explanation for their lack of political representation; as long as they are not willing to get involved, it is not surprising that there are few Roma representatives. However, it has been shown that both of these personal factors are indirectly conditioned by external factors, such as the behavior of political parties. In the case of personal motivation, the presence or absence of incentives to get involved in politics is the result of the available opportunities and previous experiences, as well as of the norms and practices of the institutions in charge of representation. With regard to the socio-economic situation of the members of minority groups, it has been argued that political parties have more incentives to voice the interests of active groups, who generally belong to the higher socio-economic strata. As minority groups are less likely to have a good socio-economic situation, they are less likely to be politically active and thus to have their interests represented. A more complete story would combine the factor of socio-economic status, especially when it comes to immigrant or ethnic minority groups, with socialization experiences and local environment factors (Fennema and Tillie, 1999; Tam Cho, 1999; Ramakrishnan, 2005; Cho, Gimpel and Wu, 2006; Persson, 2014, Dancygier *et al.*, 2015). As such, purely personal factors do not make a great difference in and of themselves, but the environment in which these personal characteristics develop does.

On the macro level, the electoral system has been considered to have a significant impact. Although in theory a proportional system should provide more incentives for minority representation, as the electoral outcome is not a zero-sum game (Norris, 2004, 2006) as in the case of majoritarian systems, the empirical evidence shows that under both electoral systems minority representation is possible, as well as that other contextual factors – such as district magnitude (Nowacki 2003) or preferential voting (Togeby, 1999) – tend to account for the positive correlation between the proportional representation (PR) system and minority representation.

The last level of analysis, the meso level, which refers to the political party itself, seems to have a greater impact than the previous two. Several explanations have been offered to support this hypothesis. First of all, this is related to political parties' function of interest aggregation, as they are the ones that decide which interests are part of the political arena and which are not (Sartori, 1976; Janda, 1980; Mair and Katz, 1992). Second, although the voters decide who gets elected and who does not, it is important to have a broader view of representation that would include also the mediator of the relationship between the voter and representative, namely the political party (Hazan and Rahat, 2010). As mentioned above, they are the instances that decide whose interests are represented and whose are not, and one way to do that is through the selection of candidates. Although there are cases when political parties have inclusive selection procedures in which the voters also select the candidates, in most cases it is the political party that nominates the candidates on the electoral lists, which at a later stage are then elected by the voters (Rahat and Hazan, 2001; Andeweg, 2005). Due to this power capacity implicit in the candidate nomination process, political parties have been labeled as 'the main gatekeepers of political representation': while they can encourage some individuals to run for election, they can also discourage others from doing so (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Norris, 2004; Cheng and Tavits, 2011).

This prerogative of political parties can have a biased outcome, especially when it comes to minority groups. Political parties can use a 'double strategy' as they try to attract the votes of members of minority groups, by nominating minority candidates but placing them, for example, on unelectable places on the electoral list (Bloemraad and Schönwälder, 2013). Additionally, the fact that the political space today is one with typically low levels of partisanship (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2002), with low party identification as well as volatile

voting patterns, political parties have more leeway to capture different groups of voters. This is very important to consider in relation to political parties' aim of vote maximization, which contributes to their two other goals, of office seeking and policy making. Finally, the stronger organizations of mainstream political parties can render them more reliable and competent (Tavits, 2013) in comparison to ethnic political parties, whenever they are competing for voters.

In the specific case of the Roma, such a focus is justified by both minority- and party-level factors. On the one hand, the existing literature on Roma political representation is limited to analyses that focus either on the performance of Roma organizations and their leaders, or on the legal barriers posed by the national legislation. On the other hand, the Romanian political environment is party-centered, displaying prominent characteristics associated with cartel politics (Gherghina, 2014b; Volintiru, 2016), where a limited number of political parties have a monopoly over power, while also facing low party membership and identification, as well as voter volatility (Kopecky, 1995; Van Biezen, Mair and Poguntke, 2012; Gherghina, 2014a). Additionally, as a result of the Roma having lived in Romania for such a long period and constituting such an important share of population, doubled by the low support for minority organizations, mainstream political parties could have additional incentives to attract Roma voters, through the nomination of Roma candidates.

### **1.3. The key arguments of this thesis**

Although the meso level approach offers strong arguments to studying minority representation from a perspective focusing on political parties, we should not ignore the fact that political parties might not nominate minority candidates unless their electoral situation calls for it, because in general such a practice has been considered as conflicting with their electoral purposes and might alienate majority voters. Nevertheless, the literature on party politics indicates that it is possible to have candidates belonging to ethnic minorities on the lists of mainstream political parties, and the empirical reality confirms this. Although political parties are often conservative organizations (Harmel and Janda, 1994) that refrain from making important changes, research shows they can change their behavior under certain circumstances. This happens especially when they lack electoral resources or when they encounter problems with maintaining access to such resources. Lack of electoral resources increases the prospect of electoral defeat, which further impacts on two main party goals: office seeking and policy making (Harmel and Janda, 1994). As such, this study argues that nomination of minority candidates on the electoral lists of mainstream political parties is a function of the threat of electoral defeat, which arises when political parties either lose or have access to few electoral resources. As the behavior of political parties is affected by both inter- and intra-party factors (Panebianco, 1988b; Norris, 2004, 2006; Kittilson, 2006), in this study the relative lack of electoral resources will be a matter defined by the size of the political party and the time of party leadership change (intra-party factors), as well as by party competition, the presence of Roma political parties, and the size of the minority group (inter-party factors).

The size of the party is an important intra-party organizational characteristic that reflects the electoral resources a party has. It indicates the satisfaction of the voters with party performance, as voters value party performance more than ideology, since it offers easier and more precise information about political parties (Stokes, 1963; Fiorina, 1981; Seyd and Whiteley, 2004b). This renders a larger political party more reliable and more competent, leading to a better connection with the voters, while smaller political parties are frequently unsuccessful in

mobilizing and convincing voters. In an attempt to compensate for the lack of information about their performance, they can try to attract additional groups of voters, such as those belonging to minority groups, through the nomination of candidates. The time of party leadership change is equally important for political parties, as the leaders are the connection between the party and the voters. However, party leaders can face different electoral challenges because change of party leadership is in a way an emergency measure motivated by serious factors that affect the survival of the party (Harmel and Tan, 2003), having important consequences for the connection with the voters, which might be weakened as a result of such changes. There are two mechanisms at work here: new party leaders might need to reconnect the party with the voters, as these might not automatically perceive her/him as worthy. Secondly, the party might be more committed to change (Harmel and Janda, 1994) because the new leader might promote different ideas and views, which might challenge the views of existing voters or might promote openness toward more inclusive practices. Hence, in order to compensate for potential losses among the main electorate, newer party leaders might consider including minority candidates on their lists.

With regard to inter-party factors, the first such factor to consider is party competition / the number of political parties involved in the electoral competition. As these impact on the electoral resources available to a political party, they can create incentives to nominate minority candidates. Higher competition typically means that political parties are more responsive toward the needs of the voters, as they fear that because of smaller policy distance, higher information costs, as well as the possibility of the voters punishing political parties for not behaving as promised (Popkin, 1991; Moser, 1999; Madrid, 2005; Mainwaring and Zoco, 2007; Mainwaring, España and Gervasoni, 2009; Gherghina, 2014a), voters will cast their votes for other parties. This inevitably also affects the number of votes that a political party can get from an election to another and increases the need to supplement the number of votes through nominating minority candidates. Mainstream political parties can use this strategy as long as there is no ethnic outbidding from ethnic political parties. Ethnic outbidding refers to a phenomenon when voters are attracted exclusively along ethnic lines, when voters are radical and have intransigent and mutually exclusive interests (Rabushka and Shepsle, 1972; Horowitz, 1985), allowing for ethnic political parties to have a 'reserved' and stable electorate (Gherghina and Jigla, 2016). Under such circumstances, the incentives of mainstream political parties to enlarge issue ownership are minimal. Finally, the threat of electoral defeat can also become a factor if the size of the minority group is considerable. From a rational point of view, mainstream political parties will have incentives to include minority candidates on their lists as long as the equation between benefits and losses is positive (Adams and Simon, 1962; Saggat and Geddes, 2000; Sobolewska, 2013; Dancygier, 2014, 2017). Benefits here refer to the number of minority votes, as a function of their respective size, while costs entail the potential loss of majority voters due to having minority candidates. Under these circumstances, when the size of the minority is larger, there are higher chances that the incoming Roma vote will outweigh the number of Romanian votes lost.

#### **1.4. Research design**

In order to answer the research question, this study focuses on the nomination of Roma candidates in mainstream political parties in Romania. The focus on Roma group(s) in Romania is motivated by their paradoxical situation, being on the one hand the second largest and the fastest-growing minority group(s) in Romania, and on the other the most under-represented ones when comparing population size and the number of representatives.

As the study employs a party-level perspective, the case selection has two different components. The first one is the selection of the country. The focus is on Romania, as a representative country with an important share of Roma population, yet with critical levels of political representation for this minority. Taking into account the uneven distribution of the Roma population (ranging from 1% to 8% in different counties), the high number of counties in Romania (41), the paucity of data on the topic, as well as time constraints, the research has been limited to three counties: Sălaj (6.5% Roma population), Iași (1.5% Roma population), and Galați (3.2% Roma population). These counties were selected with the purpose of analyzing variations with regard to the size of the Roma group, geographical position within Romania, overall ethnic composition, economic situation, etc. In each of these counties, all the communes with at least 1% Roma population were selected, in order to meet the lowest threshold necessary to have Roma candidates. With regard to the selection of the political parties, the research included all the five mainstream political parties that obtained mandates in the Romanian Parliament following the 2016 national elections, namely: PSD (Social Democratic Party/ Partidul Social Democrat), PNL (National Liberal Party/Partidul National Liberal), ALDE(Alliance of Liberals and Democrats/ Partidul Alianta Liberalilor si Democratilor), PMP (Popular Movement Party/Partidul Miscarea Populara) and UNPR(National Union for the Progress of Romania/ Uniunea Nationala pentru Progresul Romaniei).

The analysis was carried out on the 2016 local elections, and the decision to do so was guided by the data collection process. As data was collected from local party leaders, the focus on the most recent local elections at the time ensured accuracy of the data, as well as a higher response rate, as from 2012 to 2016 certain political parties could have ceased to exist, while local party leaders could have been changed or experienced difficulties in remembering some of the aspects the research inquired into. Nevertheless, there are neither reasons to believe that the 2016 elections differed much from previous ones, nor that the inclusion of more election years would have significantly altered the results. This focus has several benefits. First of all, in contrast to the national level, although the information is not so easily accessible, the size of the sample is bigger. This offers the possibility to compare the behavior of the same party in different contexts and to identify intra-party variation, as well as to identify as a result of different factors across communes. Second, minority groups might display different political behavior at local level, as local decisions are directly affecting their lives (e.g., with respect to housing, linguistic rights, employment, etc.) and as such political parties may as well have different attitudes (more or less supportive) toward minority representation.

The unit of analysis is the party list in a commune, resulting in a sample of 289 party lists, distributed over 77 communes. The dependent variable is Roma nomination and refers to the presence or absence of Roma candidates on the lists of political parties; the data has been collected from local party leaders. The study tests the effects of five independent variables, measured at party (identified here as the intra-party variables) and commune level (identified here as the inter-party variables). The intra-party variables are the size of the party (namely the number of mandates) and the time of party leadership (referring to the presence or absence of change in the party leadership between the 2012 and 2016 local elections). The commune-level variables are party competition, Roma political parties, and the size of the Roma group. The first variable refers to the number of political parties involved in the electoral competition; the second variable refers to the number of Roma political parties competing in a commune; while the size of the Roma group refers to the percentage of members of the Roma minority in the commune, as reported in the 2011 national census. The analysis includes two control variables:



the re-nomination rate measured as the percentage of councilors who were re-nominated (relative to 2012) by the same party on the 2016 lists, and the size of the council, measured as the number of councilors elected in the 2016 elections.

The analysis uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, in an attempt to mitigate the weaknesses of each method, as well as to offer a more complex image of the process under study. The quantitative part includes descriptive statistics, correlations as well as logistic regression, and aims to test the relationship between variables in order to validate the theoretical assumptions, as well as to measure the strength of their relationships and to identify general trends across counties. The qualitative part, based on semi-structured interviews with local party leaders, aims to complement the statistical findings by confirming (and specifying the motivations behind) or disconfirming the relationships (and identifying where and why these causal relationships break down), as well as to identify possible additional factors that cannot be detected or measured through quantitative methods.

### **1.5. The Romanian political context: A short overview**

Before embarking on a discussion about the peculiarities of this study, it is important to have a short introduction about the Romanian political environment, in order to better understand the importance of adopting a new angle of analysis of minority representation, as well as the results presented in the following chapters. As such, this subsection provides some concise information about the party and electoral system in Romania and their consequences for political representation, as well as a short presentation of the five mainstream political parties included in the analysis.

Politics in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) are considered to be party politics (Enyedi and Linek, 2008). Despite the fact that many rounds of free elections were held since the collapse of the socialist regimes, and yet representation is mainly achieved through political parties. Romania seems to be a good example of this pattern, as independent actors rarely have the chance to be elected (less than 5% of the total number of MPs are not affiliated with a political party) and even less to be re-elected, as well as to occupy governmental positions. Also, as it displays many elements of cartel politics – simply put, the system allows certain political parties to work together in such a manner that allows them to maintain their power and access to state resources (Gherghina 2014 a). Its party system can be characterized as being somewhere on the border between moderate and extreme pluralism (Duverger 1951), where the power is shared mainly by the largest political party, PSD, with other smaller parties trying to make alliances with or against the PSD. The formation of electoral alliances has become a key characteristic of legislative elections, and it is a tool used to help larger political parties to maintain their dominance and to obtain a majoritarian government. These electoral alliances were not made only between larger and smaller political parties, but also among the three largest political parties, irrespective of their ideologies (e.g., the 2008 alliance between PD-L and PNL or the 2012 one between PNL and PSD). The development of such a political environment has been made possible by two main factors: the transition period and the electoral system.

Right after the fall of communism, the beginning of the democratization process was driven by the wish to end one-party dominance through the participation of different groups in the political process. However, the first political institutions that appeared in post-socialist

Romania were the political parties and they were also the primary actors involved in the organization of the transition process, taking advantage of the lack of popular involvement and the relative weakness of civil society (Enyedi and Linek, 2008). This favored their institutionalization, as well as elite reproduction, diminishing the chances of political reforms (Gherghina, 2015) and encouraging certain socio-economic groups to promote their interests and to create obstacles for other potential competitors. One example of these double standards is the law on political parties, which until recently imposed quite strict regulations on the creation of new parties, requesting as a condition for registration that a new party have a membership of at least 25,000 founding members, which had to be resident in at least 18 counties and Bucharest, while the lowest number of members in each county had to be a minimum of 700 (Law on Political Parties no. 14/2003, Art. 19, paragraph 3). Similarly, the law on the financing of political parties offers financial support only to those parties that managed to pass the electoral threshold and compensation for the costs of the electoral campaign if they obtained at least 3% of the total number of votes cast (Law on the Financing of the Activity of Political Parties and Electoral Campaigns no. 334/2006, republished, Art. 18 and 48, paragraph 1).

As mentioned above, Romania has a closed list proportional system with a 5% electoral threshold. The electoral system has provided three types of advantages for larger and older political parties. The first come from the distribution of mandates, which are distributed first according to the electoral percentage obtained by each political party, while the votes from the political parties which did not manage to pass the 5% electoral threshold are distributed to the parties that did, in accordance with the number of unused votes left. This way of distributing mandates has created a “non-proportional representativeness” (Barbu, 1999) giving bonuses to the winning (and larger) political parties (Preda, 2013a). For example, in the 2000 legislative elections, a total of 20% of the votes cast for political parties that did not pass the electoral threshold were reallocated to parties that gained parliamentary representation. The second advantage provided by the electoral system to larger and older political parties comes from the imposition of an electoral threshold. The first elections in 1990 were the only elections that were held without an electoral threshold; however, in order to decrease the high number of competitors and the power of smaller parties (Preda, 2013b), for the 1992 and 1996 elections a 3% threshold was introduced, subsequently increased to 5% starting in 2000. The effects of the introduction and increase of the threshold could be seen as some parties disappeared from the political scene (e.g., Partidul Unitatii Natiunii Romane / Party for Romanian National Unity), while others had an interrupted presence (e.g., Partidul National Taranesc Crestin Democrat / Christian Democratic National Peasant Party). The dominance is not only one of larger parties compared to smaller parties, but also of successor parties over new ones. The example of the Frontul Salvării Naționale (National Salvation Front, FSN), as the first political party created in 1990, mainly by members of the old communist party, is quite illustrative, as it managed to hold power, in some form, since 1990. Although it suffered a split into two other political parties, the resulting parties, and especially the PSD, were the dominant political parties<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the electoral system has not only benefitted larger political parties at the expense of smaller ones, but also provides additional powers to political parties through the use of closed lists and the lack of stipulations about candidate selection provisions. Political parties therefore have the advantage of deciding the members of the representatives’ bodies before voters

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<sup>8</sup> Although the Democratic Party / Democratic Liberal Party merged with PNL in 2014, it enjoyed greater electoral support than PNL in the 2008 elections and competed on its own in 2012, when PNL joined PSD in an alliance.

(Andeweg, 2005; Hazan and Rahat, 2010). On the one hand, as none of the parties use inclusive candidate selection methods, the voters have no power to suggest candidates and most of the time the decision rests in the hands of the party leader. On the other hand, the use of closed lists offers no chance to voters to change the composition of the list, and it is thus the party that decides on the people who will become members of the representative bodies. Finally, this offers them the chance not only to decide which issues are promoted, but also to show which groups hold power inside the party. The picture depicted above accounts for the specificities of political representation in Romania, both at national and local level. Although these elections are organized separately, there is a connection between them: the local elections often predict quite accurately the results of the national elections.

After the 2016 local elections,<sup>9</sup> there were five mainstream political parties which gained representation: the PSD, the PNL, the ALDE, the PMP and the UNPR.<sup>10</sup> PSD is the largest political party in Romania, being the main successor of the communist party. It has had a continuous presence in the Romanian parliament, winning five out of seven parliamentary elections, three of which as a single party rather than an electoral alliance. Its dominance is not only visible at the national level, but also at the local level. In the 2016 local elections, the PSD won the highest number of local councilors (41%), as well as of mayors and county councilors. Although officially the PSD's can be characterized as a mixture between a centralized and decentralized candidate selection procedure, as both central and local authorities are supposed to be involved in it, unofficially the decisions are mostly taken at the local level, mainly by local leaders. The PNL is the second largest political party, being active in the political arena since 1875.<sup>11</sup> Similar to the PSD, it has had a continuous presence in the Romanian Parliament since 1990, four times as the opposition party and three times as a coalition party. In 2014, it has merged with PD-L (the second largest political party at that time). In the 2016 local elections, PNL managed to get the second highest number of local councilor mandates (32.8%). It has a decentralized candidate selection process, and the decisions however are taken by local party leaders.

UNPR was a political party formed in 2010 by a group of MPs from the PSD, PNL and PC (Partidul Conservator / Conservative Party), who left their previous parties in order to decrease the power of their "mother parties" in the Parliament and to unofficially increase the power of PD-L (Pavel 2012). In the 2012 elections, it managed to enter the Romanian Parliament as part of the Social-Liberal Union (PSD+PC+PNL). In 2015, it merged with the PP-DD (Partidul Poporului - Dan Diaconescu / People's Party - Dan Diaconescu), while after the 2016 local elections it merged with the PMP (Partidul Miscarea Populara / Popular Movement Party) and continued to function under the name of PMP. However, it should be mentioned that in the 2016 local elections, the UNPR competed as a single party, and it managed to win around 3% of the local councilor mandates. Similar to the previous political parties, the decisions on the selection of candidates are taken at the local level, by the party leader and the political bureau.

ALDE represents a new party established in 2015 through the fusion between the Conservative Party and the Liberal-Reformist Party. It has managed to enter the Romanian Parliament after the 2016 elections and it was part of the governing coalition. In the 2016 local elections, it

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<sup>9</sup> All the information about the results of local elections are available on the website of the Permanent Electoral Authority at <http://www.2016bec.ro/>, accessed December 2021.

<sup>10</sup> In addition, there was also one minority party (Democratic Alliance Hungarians in Romania), which is not relevant for the purposes of this study as the focus is on the behavior of mainstream political parties and not of the ethnic ones.

<sup>11</sup> See the official website of the party, available at <https://pnl.ro/istoria-noastra/>, accessed December 2021.

managed to become the third political party in terms of number of votes, winning 6% of the local councilor mandates. Officially, it has a decentralized candidate selection procedure that involves both party members and the political bureau at the local level. PMP represents the other new political party created in 2014 by the ex-president Traian Basescu. In the 2016 parliamentary elections it managed to pass the electoral threshold to obtain representation in the Parliament, being part of the opposition. As mentioned above, in June 2016 it merged with the UNPR, keeping its name; however, in the 2016 local elections it competed as a single party. It managed to win around 3% of the local councilor mandates. Like ALDE, PMP has a decentralized candidate selection procedure that involves both party members and the political bureau at the local level.

## **1.6. ‘Who is a Roma’?**

Considering that this study focuses on the nomination of Roma candidates by mainstream political parties, another important clarification that needs to be made is with regard to the understanding of the term ‘Roma’. In academic disciplines, any attempt to define the ‘Roma’ has ‘generated heated debates for decades’ (Kállai, 2002, p. 8), as scientists have different opinions on how to define the group. The literature on Romani studies can be divided into two different approaches on how the Roma are represented. Tremlett (2014) states that there is the ‘ethnicity’- oriented approach which define the Roma as a distinct ethnic group, with foreign origins and ancestry influenced by early writings on the Roma, which argued that the Roma originally come from India. The focus is on individual and group traits that create a ‘fixed’ image, traits that are transmitted not only through their culture and education, but also through biological inheritance. The second stance is the anti-ethnicity approach, which seeks to break away from the previous one, and wherein two perspectives can be distinguished: the anthropological and the sociological one. By contesting the idea that Roma are defined by their ‘Indian belonging’, the anthropological approach focuses on how Roma identity is constructed through the difference from the others, non-Roma, ‘by a kind of internal emigration’ (Stewart, 1997), which comes from Roma culture and which creates a ‘Gypsy way’ (Stewart, 1997). The sociological approach instead argues that this emphasis on culture misses out important issues such as poverty. Rejecting the essentialism promoted by the first approach, both the anthropological and sociological perspectives promote the idea of Roma as a ‘mosaic of small diverse groups’. They also infer that there is ‘a pre-conceived template of what the Roma population is’, which links together the mosaic (Tremlett, 2014). Consequently, defining the Roma is a matter of deciding on which aspects to focus on in order to define them.

In this study, the identification of Roma follows an ‘essentialist’ approach, as the case selection of counties and communes was guided by the results of the 2011 census conducted in Romania. As in any census, the total number of Roma is limited to those individuals who self-identified as Roma; due to the discrimination that many Roma experience, they often refrain from officially declaring their ethnic identity. Also, as there is no data on the number of Roma candidates on the lists of mainstream political parties, the identification of Roma candidates was done by the Romanian local party leaders, who again identified a person as Roma due to their ‘culture’, language, skin color, etc. This inevitably defines the Roma by making reference only to those characteristics that make them different from the Romanians, leading to the idea of Roma as a bounded group. Such an approach ‘misses out on the inclusion of a range of other types of diversities, for example: gender, socio-economic positioning (or class contexts), generation, sexuality, legal status, local and national contexts, along with employment,

education and migration experiences. Glossing over such differences can prevent a full understanding of social processes, change and the involvement of actors and their agencies' (Tremlett, 2014, p. 3). Yet, despite this simplistic and pragmatic definition of Roma in this study, the author acknowledges the importance of recognizing the super-diversity of the Roma groups and of their experiences (i.e. Vermeersch, 2007; Tremlett, 2014) and tries to overcome this limitation, whenever possible, by highlighting the fact that Roma nomination is connected with the economic and educational situation of Roma, as can be seen in the analysis carried out in chapters 5 and 6.

## **1.7. Contribution to the literature**

The contributions of the present research to the existing literature are manifold. First, it contributes to the literature on minority representation in two ways. For the literature on Roma political representation, it provides a new way of understanding Roma representation. So far, the study of Roma political representation has been limited to the analysis of the ups and downs of the special mechanisms of minority representation, or to the performance of Roma, be they political organizations or actors, during and after electoral campaigns (e.g., Barany, 2001; Sobotka, 2001, 2002; Vermeersch, 2007; McGarry, 2008, 2009, 2010; Rostas, 2009a, 2009b, 2012). As such, this is the first study to switch the focus of analysis to mainstream political parties, the gatekeepers to elected office (Norris and Lovenduski 1995) and test for the relationship between party-related factors and Roma candidate nomination. This is vital, as it will show, first of all, whether mainstream political parties are sensitive toward the inclusion of minority groups, as well as explore the reasons why they appoint (or not) Roma candidates. For the literature on minority representation, the angle of analysis is not new (e.g., Bird, Saalfeld, Wüst, 2010; Bloemraad and Schönwälder, 2013; Sobolewska, 2013; Dancygier, 2014, 2017; Farrer and Zingher, 2018; Geese and Schacht, 2019; Dowley, 2021; Janssen, Erzeel, Celis, 2021), as there have been other studies dealing with political parties and their different aspects. The novelty of this study comes from the fact that, although it focuses on only one country, it extends and tests the argument encountered in previous studies, that minority nomination is dependent on the electoral benefits that political parties can get, which come to the fore especially when the size of the minority group increases (Saggar and Geddes, 2000; Sobolewska, 2013; Dancygier, 2014, 2017). I build on this work, although as my approach looks however at the strategic behavior of the political parties and how such behavior is motivated by the size of the minority groups, I argue that minority nomination is a function of the lack of electoral resources. Furthermore, I operationalize the concept, namely by considering electoral resources as a product of both inter- and intra-party factors, and I propose five main factors as indicators. In this way, the present study avoids the danger of 'simple, deterministic and mono-causal explanations' (Norris and Lovenduski 1993, p. 194) – as party behavior is seen to be influenced by a combination of internal and external conditions (Panebianco, 1988) – and allows the identification of the specific factors that affect minority nomination. Political parties are complex organizations and, although they might show similarly rational behaviors (in the decision to have or not to have minority candidates on their lists), there might be different mechanisms and configurations at work. This also offers the possibility to show that political parties are not neutral institutions, and that the apparently justified rational behavior can lead to biased outcomes because it indirectly favors and empowers the majority population.

Secondly, by analyzing how political parties react to external and internal factors and why certain political strategies are adopted (and which ones), the present research contributes to the literature on party politics, especially on party behavior. Moreover, by dealing with minority integration by the mainstream political parties, it also questions the consequences of party actions on the external environment. As such, this study provides evidence (similar to e.g., Sartori, 1969; Katz and Mair, 1995; Gherghina, 2014a) that the actions of political parties have an effect on the external environment too. They are biased agents of change which can discourage the political representation of minorities through their selection process, as well as through informal practices, confirming also that they are the main gatekeepers to elected office (Norris and Lovenduski 1995).

Thirdly, the present study enriches the literature on neo-institutionalism, by indirectly analyzing the constraining barriers that are created by the traditional way of ‘doing politics’. As my work explains party behavior by analyzing how they react in uncertain situations, it provides information about power struggles and how the majority group tries to maintain the institutional status quo in order not to lose their status of ‘having power over’ other groups. Additionally, as the interview material has shown, it underlines also the importance of informal rules, especially in settings such as the Romanian one, where formal rules are quite weak, and reconfirms that in order to understand the biased outcomes of candidate selection processes, a configuration that goes beyond rational calculations and includes both formal and informal rules is needed (i.e Mackay, Kenny and Chappell, 2010; Cheng and Tavits, 2011; Krook and Mackay, 2011; Bjarnegard, 2013; Kenny, 2013; Lowndes 2013, 2014).

From a methodological perspective, it is one of the few studies on the nomination of minority candidates that combines quantitative and qualitative methods (except Togeby, 1999; Dancygier, 2014, 2017; Dancygier *et al.*, 2015), and also conducts a smaller-scale statistical study in combination with a comparative study between counties within a country. This offers the possibility not only to verify whether the overall theoretical argument holds, but also to identify which party factors have an impact on minority nomination. The qualitative part aims to validate the results of my quantitative analyses, as well as to foster further theory-building with regard to factors promoting minority representation. Lastly, the study has generated a unique dataset depicting the candidate nomination patterns of Roma representatives and providing novel information about party competition and incumbency rates. Empirically, the focus has been on the Romanian context, mapping the patterns of Roma nomination by mainstream political parties. This has also societal implications, as it provides evidence about the level of inclusion of minority groups, as well as about the motivation for the persisting lack of inclusion. Also, it reveals that much of the exclusion that characterizes the Roma group originates in discriminatory attitudes, which are further encouraged by the socio-economic situation of the Roma.

## **1.8. Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter aimed to provide a general overview of the entire thesis. It identified the research puzzle in order to frame the research question. Following a summary of the state-of-the-art in the existing literature, it briefly presented the main argument of the book and the research design. For a better understanding of the topic, the following two sections offered some background information on the Romanian political context, as well as about the understanding of the term ‘Roma’. The final section highlighted

the overall contribution of this study to the existing literature. All these subjects will be covered in more depth in the next two chapters of the study.

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical argument, as well as provides a short literature review. Starting from the idea that since political parties as primarily office-seeking political bodies have less incentives to defend the interests of the minority groups (instead traditionally defending the interests of the majority groups, the biased effects of neutral rules, stereotyping, etc.), I will argue that nomination of minority candidates is motivated mainly by the potential electoral instability of a political party. Five factors that can impact on the volatility of a political party are proposed: party size, the time of change of the party leadership, party competition, Roma political parties, and the size of the Roma groups. Chapter 3 provides details about the research design of this study. The first section brings arguments in favor of using a mixed methods research design and places the research within the explanatory sequential mixed methods design models. The section dealing with case selection offers information about the choice of Romania, as a single-country case study, and the contributions brought by a within-country comparison, as well as discussing the focus on three specific counties and on the mainstream political parties. Next, it elaborates on the methods of data collection and analysis, followed by a section on the operationalization and measurement of the variables included in the study.

Starting with chapter 4, the focus is on the empirical data. Chapter 4 deals with the analysis of the quantitative data and provides information about the number of Roma candidacies as well as councilors on the mainstream party lists, underlining the general under-representation of Roma, as well as highlighting differences related to the size of the party, of the Roma groups, as well between counties. For the purposes of offering further detail, it investigates the relationship between the five independent variables (and the two control variables) and the dependent variable, followed by a logistic regression. Chapters 5 and 6 continue the empirical analysis and provide an in-depth understanding of the statistical results. Chapter 5 focuses on intra-party variables (party size and leadership change), as well as presenting the results for the two control variables (re-nomination rate and the size of the council). Chapter 6 is dedicated to inter-party factors, covering party competition, outbidding, and the Roma population size variables. The discussions of the variables have the same purpose and follow a similar structure. Each independent variable is discussed at length: first, the analysis explains the lack of statistical support for the impact of the independent variables (except for the variable on Roma size, where it confirms the relevance) and then shows how things happen in practice and highlights the implications of these findings for Roma candidates' nomination.

The last chapter is the Conclusion, which includes a summary of the main findings of the study, covering the theoretical arguments supporting a relationship between inter- and intra-party factors and Roma nomination, followed by a short explanation for the pitfalls of these theoretical assumptions with a view to the empirical reality. The chapter also highlights the implications of the findings for the literature on party politics, clientelism, and minority representation. The limitations of the study are then identified and discussed, along with potential new areas of research.

## **Chapter 2 - Electoral Resources and the Nomination of Ethnic Minority Candidates**

### **Introduction**

Minority representation is an important pillar of democratic governance. However, many examples show that it is a rather neglected practice. The literature identifies three different angles through which such a phenomenon can be explained. At the micro level, individual factors such as motivation (Norris and Lovenduski, 1993, 1995) and individual resources, namely education, income and occupation (Nie and Verba, 1975), can have a negative effect on the recruitment pool available to political parties. Other factors, such as the political environment and the (informal) norms and practices that govern it, are equally relevant in this process (Strom, 1997; Mackay, Kenny and Chappell, 2010; Cheng and Tavits, 2011; Krook and Mackay, 2011; Bjarnegard, 2013; Lowndes, 2014). At macro level, the electoral system can create certain challenges; it has been argued that the proportional representation (PR) electoral system offers more motivation for political parties to nominate minority candidates (Lijphart, 1991; Norris, 2003, 2006). However, empirical studies have shown rather mixed effects of the electoral system itself (Matland and Studlar, 1996; Matland and Taylor-Robinson, 1997), ranking it more as a complementary than primary factor.

This chapter argues that an analysis of the supply side determinants (from a party perspective) offers a way forward with regard to the study of ethnic minority representation. As the main architects of representation, political parties are considered very influential factors, especially when it comes to equality in terms of political representation (Lilliefeldt, 2012). It is not only that they are the institutions that have the power to shape policies, but they are the ones that decide whose preferences are represented and whose are not, i.e., through recruitment and candidate selection. Their power of selection grants political parties exclusive and exclusionist powers, selection being ‘the narrowest gate of all’ (Gallagher and Marsh, 1988, p. 2) as it is regulated by a ‘series of gatekeepers’. In the last decades, the call for further investigation expressed by party scholars with regard to candidate selection has been answered by important research in the area (i.e. Caul, 1999; Katz, 2001; Rahat and Hazan, 2001; Rahat, Hazan and Katz, 2008; Bird, Saalfeld and Wüst, 2010; Gherghina and Chiru, 2010; Pruysers, Cross, Gauja, 2015). Nevertheless, the complexity of the issue requires careful consideration, in order to avoid ‘simple, deterministic and mono-causal explanations’ (Norris and Lovenduski 1993, p. 194) that focus exclusively on factors present at only one level (micro, meso or macro), and to integrate factors such as gender or ethnicity (Puwar, 2004; Mackay, Kenny and Chappell, 2010; Krook and Mackay, 2011, Kenny 2013).

This chapter follows this path and combines theories of political representation with ethnic and gender studies. While such an approach is not new in the party politics literature (Panebianco, 1988, pp. 11–14; Norris and Lovenduski, 1993), political parties are not typically treated as ethnic institutions. Considering that the biggest challenge for political parties is to find the means to stabilize their electoral support (Gherghina, 2014a), and that most of time the inclusion of minorities on party lists is motivated by purely strategic intentions (Saggar and Geddes, 2000; Anwar, 2001; Sobolewska, 2013; Dancygier, 2014, 2017; Farrer and Zingher, 2018; Geese and Schacht, 2019; Dowley, 2021; Janssen, Erzeel, Celis, 2021), such an approach does not only permit the concomitant analysis of both types of party factors and the interactions



between them, but it is sensitive to matters such as ethnicity as well. It shows the bi-dimensional character of political parties, which simultaneously acts as a constraint for minorities and as a strategic resource for the majority (Kenny, 2013). Ethnic minority representation is not only affected by individual factors, such as direct or indirect discrimination, but also by the context in which political parties operate, as it is structured in such a way that favors the exclusion of minority groups (Mackay, Kenny and Chappell, 2010; Krook, 2011; Bjarnegard, 2013).

This chapter is organized as follows: the first section takes stock of the existing literature on minority representation and points to its limitations. The second section explains why issues related to political stability can constrain political parties to reconsider their electoral strategies (and the personal beliefs and attitudes of their leaders) and appoint minority candidates. The third section formulates five testable hypotheses concerning the nomination of Roma candidates at the local level in Romania: party size, time of leadership change, party competition, Roma political parties, and size of the Roma minority. The last provides a general discussion and establishes a link with the following chapter.

## **2.1. Existing explanations: Levels and limitations**

The existing literature on the subject connects gender and ethnic minority representation with three different types of factors: the electoral system (macro level), political parties (meso level), and the structural resources of individuals (micro level)<sup>12</sup>. Studies focusing on women's representation at national level argue that the differences regarding the number of minority representatives in different countries can be explained by the electoral systems, which offer political parties different incentives to include minority candidates, as each electoral system has different outcomes in terms of the number of mandates. The micro level explanations focus on minority individuals, on their socio-economic status (education, income and occupation), and on their motivation and ambition to get involved in politics. If only a few members of minority groups are willing to get politically involved, the number of minority representatives will be inevitably low.

The meso level explanations argue that before candidates face the voters, they must pass first through the filters of the political parties. As most of the elected representatives are party members, they have to meet the candidacy requirements of the respective parties. This renders political parties the main gate-keepers when it comes to representation (Baer, 1993; Norris and Lovenduski, 1993; Bjarnegard, 2013; Kenny, 2013). Taking into account all these distinct interpretations of minority representation, I use a meso level analysis to explain and understand how the representation of ethnic minority groups (the Roma in this case) is affected by political parties. Before embarking on a discussion about the appropriateness of this approach, I will first briefly explain why the macro and micro level explanations have less potential in providing a clearer picture of minority representation in comparison with the meso level.

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<sup>12</sup> As acknowledged in the literature, despite some differences, similar mechanisms of exclusion apply to gender and minority groups when it comes to, among others, political representation. This makes it possible to draw on findings from both literatures.

### 2.1.1. The shortcomings of macro and micro level analyses

To start with the macro level, proponents of such analyses argue that political parties have more incentives to have minority representatives under proportional systems than in majoritarian systems as the electoral game is not a zero sum game (Norris, 2004, 2006, Spirova 2004). As the political party proposes a list of candidates, the spotlight is not just on one person but gives visibility to all candidates. Consequently, there are incentives to come up with a ‘list that looks like the voters’ (Bird, 2003, p. 13), while the outcome is one in which decision making is characterized by power sharing (Lijphart, 1977, 2012) and reflects the composition of the electorate (Lijphart, 1985; Reynolds and Reilly, 1997). Also, by having to propose a list, the political party is not put in the situation of having to promote certain groups at the expense of others, as it can accommodate many of them without the risk of losing the electoral support of any group. Additionally, in majoritarian systems, as the selection is usually undertaken at the local level, there are less chances of having a balanced list at the national level, as each selector proposes a candidate that is likely to bring victory in the constituency, ignoring needs for diversity (Matland and Taylor, 1997). Previous studies have shown that this is the case for women (Rule 1987; Darcy, Welch, and Clark, 1994), yet it has also been shown that the benefits in terms of representation brought by PR systems seem to be facilitated by other factors as well. They might be a matter of district magnitude (Nowacki, 2003) or a result of preferential voting (Togeby, 1999).

Similarly, a majoritarian system is not always unfriendly to minority representation, with the outcome dependent on contextual factors as well. If the size of the group is ‘appealing’ enough, minority groups might be represented also under a majoritarian system; for example, if inside a given constituency the minority group is geographically concentrated, then political parties will nominate minority candidates (Duverger, 1951; Lijphart, 1996; Reynolds and Reilly, 1997). Additionally, inside such constituencies, once a political party has appointed a minority candidate, other political parties might feel the pressure to do the same, as majoritarian systems are candidate-centered, leading to a “contagion effect” (Matland and Studlar, 1996; Tossutti and Najem, 2002). Studies on minority representation in the United States seem to confirm the arguments above. After 1965, when African American voters could fairly register for elections, there were situations in which the legislative districts were dominated by African Americans, although at the state level they were still a minority. As in such situations there were chances that the districts would be over-populated by representatives of the African American minority, the borders of the districts were redrawn and “majority-minority districts” (districts where the majority of persons belong to a minority group) were created in order to increase the representation of minorities under majority systems with single-member districts at the state level (Parker, 1990; Canon, 1999). Similar results can also be found in other majoritarian systems such as the United Kingdom, Belgium, Canada or Macedonia (Wagner, 2013)<sup>13</sup>.

A focus on the macro level therefore does not seem to be sufficient to account for minority representation (Norris, 2004; Moser, 2008; Bird, Saalfeld, and Würst, 2011; Dancygier, 2014). It is mainly the other features of the system that provide incentives for political parties to appoint minority candidates. Moreover, the macro level perspective leaves unanswered important questions about the intra-party and inter-party system differences within the same electoral environment (Bird, 2003). With this in mind, it can be argued that ‘electoral rules matter, but in more subtle ways than is commonly hypothesized’ (Dancygier, 2014), thus

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<sup>13</sup> For a comparison between the number of women and minority representatives in different electoral systems see Bird, 2003.

providing an impetus to look at the other factors inside the political milieu (Norris, 2004). Such an argument is also supported by a study conducted by Friedman (2005), where he examines the effects of PR and first-past-the-post (FPP) systems on the Hungarian and Albanian minorities in Slovakia and Macedonia. His results show that although the Hungarian minority is better represented under the PR system than the Albanians under FPP, the case of the Roma minority shows that in their case the PR nature of the Slovak system does not suffice, while in Macedonia they managed to win representation under both FPP and PR systems. Friedman underlines that in the case of the Roma, attention needs to be paid to the electoral strategies of the mainstream political parties as well as to personal intrigues among the Roma. The inconsistency of such macro level arguments can be noticed also when examining the situation of the Roma in Romania: although the electoral system is a closed list PR in which voters can cast a vote for a list and cannot change the order of the candidates, mainstream political parties rarely appoint Roma candidates. This seems to dismiss explanations according to which the electoral system 'is the most important predictor' (Rule, 1987, p. 494, see also Lovenduski and Norris, 1993) for the representation of minority groups and hints toward an examination of political parties and of the circumstances in which proportional systems encourage minority representation (Bird, 2003).

Micro level explanations focus on the motivation (Norris and Lovenduski, 1993) and the resources available to minority individuals (Nie and Verba, 1975; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). The basic assumption of these studies is that political outcomes (in this case representation) can be explained by the involvement of individuals, either as voters or as candidates, as the behavior of political parties is influenced by their actions. Two mechanisms at work here can be identified. First, if, in this case ethnic, voters are politically active individuals, they can motivate political parties to represent their interests (either directly, e.g., through minority candidates, or indirectly, e.g., through special programs designed for them). As political parties are dependent on the support of the voters to maintain their access to power, the voter has the power to 'influence the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they (political parties) take' (Nie and Verba, 1975, p. 2). However, although from a legal point of view all voters can participate equally in the political process and thus influence political parties, there might be some non-legal constraints that affect the involvement of voters.

Higher levels of electoral participation are found among individuals who have higher socio-economic status (SES), in terms of education, occupation, and income (Nie and Verba, 1975; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Dalton, 1988; Conway, 1991; Persson, 2011; Ojeda, 2018; Jungkurz and Marx, 2021). Persons with higher SES not only have the necessary skills to get involved, but are also able to understand politics better, as well as to accrue more benefits from their involvement, all factors that make them more active politically. Voters with lower socio-economic status, in contrast, tend to be less active politically because they do not possess or have the opportunity to acquire social and political skills. Additionally, the lack of time and money makes them less willing to be politically active or to see the benefits of participation. Minority groups tend to be part of the societal strata with lower socio-economic status and, in consequence, are less likely to be politically active. Thus, if ethnic voters are not politically active, there are less chances of having their voices taken into consideration by political parties. Here the lack of political representation is explained by the lack of involvement of minority voters, which means that their claims are not taken into consideration by political parties.

Looking at the Roma, this argument could be a possible explanation, since most of the Roma do suffer from poverty and have lower levels of education (National Democratic Institute,

2009).<sup>14</sup> However, there are studies which show that socio-economic status is not among the main factors affecting voting (Brady, Verba and Schlozman, 1995; Cho, 1999; Cho, Gimpel and Wu, 2006). Studies focusing especially on immigrant or ethnic groups have identified other factors that affect political behavior, such as political trust and civic association (Fennema and Tillie, 1999), political socialization and expectations (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Tam Cho, 1999; Ramakrishnan, 2005; Cho, Gimpel and Wu, 2006), cognitive ability or childhood socialization (Persson, 2014), or discrimination (Dancygier *et al.*, 2015). Presently there is no conclusive data to indicate that this explanation might hold for Roma; the limited empirical evidence tends to disprove the argument. Roma people do, in general, vote, despite their socio-economic conditions, the percentage of voters among the minority being comparable to the one of the Romanians (National Democratic Institute, 2009). Additionally, data from the 1990s shows how Roma voters were initially active, but that in time their involvement, at least in support of Roma political parties, has declined.

Individual factors are important because representation is dependent also on the availability of potential minority aspirants (Norris and Lovenduski, 1993; Kittilson, 2006). The political party might be willing to appoint ethnic candidates; however, due to the lack of supply of minority aspirants there might not be any minority candidates available. It is thus important that individuals themselves have the motivation and ambition to get involved into politics. Although an individual factor, motivation does not necessarily have to be a characteristic of the persons themselves, but can indirectly be influenced by different factors, especially when it comes to minority candidates. Motivation is dependent on how familiar the minority group is with the opportunities of participation in the state. Exposure theory, although referring mainly to migrant groups, states that groups that have been living on a host territory for a longer time are more inclined to become politically active because by getting in contact with the different political environment, the institutions, as well as other members of society (Voicu and Comsa, 2014), they get accustomed, through a process of ‘re-socialization’ (White *et al.*, 2008), to the different values of the new context. Although minority groups are different from migrant groups and are not a “new population” per se, their experience over time can have an influence on their motivation. If their political experience is a positive one, they might feel encouraged to continue their involvement; however, if they face certain barriers, they can feel discouraged from doing so.

Secondly, motivation might be affected by the norms and practices of the institutions in charge of representation, such as political parties (Bjarnegard, 2013; Kenny, 2013). In this case, minority groups have to fit an already developed profile of candidates, inspired by the characteristics of the persons constituting the majority, with regard to their language, behavior, or even clothes (Franceschet and Piscopo, 2008; Franceschet, 2010). Failure to do so might lead to exclusion. Also, the way in which the candidates are selected has a great impact on the motivation of minority groups. If the process tends to be informal, to be limited to the members of certain networks, etc. (Bjarnegard, 2013; Kenny, 2013), members of a minority might not have incentives to become candidates, as they would be aware that they have no real chances to be nominated.

Although there is no data regarding the willingness of the Roma to get involved in politics, the political environment tends to be a discouraging one, as politics means party politics (Enyedi

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<sup>14</sup> According to the last census held in Romania in 2011, the Roma continue to have a sensitive situation when it comes to education and economic situation. More information available at <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-2/>.

and Linek, 2008) and access to representative bodies is mainly achieved through political parties (over 95% of the members of the Romanian Parliament are representatives of political parties). Furthermore, political parties have exclusive powers with regard to which candidates are selected, with the selection being mainly done by appointment, and thus providing no chance for possible Roma aspirants to make their wishes known. Thirdly, motivation might be affected also by discrimination and the attitude of the majority toward the members of certain minority groups. Discrimination tends to induce a feeling of being unwelcome and even of rejection, which might further discourage minority groups from being politically active (Schildkraut, 2005). Discrimination might on the other hand motivate individuals to get involved in politics in order to denounce such practices and to fight against them (DeSipio, 2002).

In the case of the Roma, studies show that they face discrimination (e.g., Agarín, 2014). However, due to lack of data, the impact of this aspect on Roma motivation cannot be assessed. Either way, if discrimination negatively impacts Roma motivation, this means that their lack of representation is due to the lack of supply of Roma candidates. However, this lack of supply is not due to the fact that Roma lack the ambition to compete in elections, but can be a result of the political system not offering them equal chances. If discrimination affects Roma motivation in a positive way, meaning that the Roma want to become politically active, then the problem is not one of supply, but of demand.

Overall, a micro level perspective is problematic because although individual characteristics play a role in political representation, they are influenced by factors that are related to political parties. Consequently, this inevitably requires for a complete analysis to be connected first with political parties. They are the central agents of representation, which decide not only which candidates will be on the list, but also indirectly the potential pool of aspirants.

## **2.2. A party level analysis**

Several arguments can be invoked in favor of a party level analysis in the case of minority groups such as the Roma. First, in general, political parties have, among others, the function of interest aggregation (Sartori, 1976; Janda, 1980; Mair and Katz, 1992). As agents of interest aggregation, they select, reduce, and combine which interests are considered and which are not. In a space such as Romania, known for its diversity, with 20 ethnic groups officially recognized as national minorities, it is important to see how parties perform the function of aggregation of interests and whose group interests they represent. In the specific case of the Roma, in addition to the fact that they are among the 20 recognized minority groups who have been living on the territory of Romania for centuries, they make up an important part of the electorate, which is a very important aspect for political parties.

Second, although voters play an important role in the process of representation, as they decide who gets elected and who does not, it is important to adopt a broader view on political representation, one that includes also the mediator of this relationship between the voter and the representative, namely the political party (Hazan and Rahat, 2010). After all, it is the party who has the power to decide whose interests will be represented in the representative institutions, even before voters (Rahat and Hazan, 2001; Andeweg, 2005), because it carried out a selection of candidates. Especially in Romania, where voters vote for parties (in a closed

list proportional representation system) and over 95% of the MPs belong to a political party (Gherghina, 2014b), the party has considerable power to decide over the composition of the legislature. As such, they can act as gatekeepers that can encourage or discourage specific candidates to run for elections (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Norris, 2004; Cheng and Tavits, 2011). In the specific case of parties interested in making use of a minority agenda, they can even use a “double strategy” (see Bloemraad and Schönwälder, 2013), i.e., attracting the votes of the minority groups by including candidates with a minority background, but purposely choosing candidates with no strong connection to the minority group or placing them on a non-electable place on the list.

Moreover, after the fall of communism, political parties were the first institutional bodies that appeared in Romania and as a result they played an important role in regime change and democratization (Gherghina, 2014a) and in the transformation of politics into party politics (Enyedi and Linek, 2008). The political environment is party-centered, presenting features of cartel politics, where the power is divided and shared by a limited number of parties which work together to maintain this monopoly, decreasing the chances of other parties to gain and maintain their presence in Parliament. In fact, the alliances between the existing political parties ensured until 2012 no new party managed to enter the Romanian Parliament (Gherghina, 2014a). This has two additional consequences for minority political representation. On the one hand, in order to be elected to the legislative assemblies, any potential candidate has to invest more time in convincing the political parties to add him or her on the list than the voters (e.g., Bjarnegard, 2013; Kenny, 2013). On the other hand, in the assemblies MPs have to maintain their loyalty toward the party if they want to be re-nominated, and, according to a number of studies, incumbents are most of the time re-elected, especially in the CEE space (Chiru, 2010). In the specific case of Romania, it has been shown that whenever MPs choose to switch between political parties, they have a lower rate of re-election in comparison with general or individual parliamentary groups. Additionally, re-election is related more to party factors than to the connection with the constituency, or to parliamentary or party activity (Gherghina, 2014b).

Political parties aim for re-election in order to gain access to power (Downs, 1957; Strom, 1990) and are thus dependent on the support of the voters. This might be challenging due to the low levels of party membership, party identification, and electoral volatility (Gherghina, 2013; Gherghina, 2014a). However, as political parties in CEE tend to be driven not by the logic of increasing the number of party members but by an electoral logic (Kopecky, 1995; van Biezen, 2003) mobilizing voters around elections (Millard, 2004) and not between them (Rohrschneider, 2002), this means that each vote is important, regardless of where it comes from. This makes it easier for political parties to address the needs of different groups within the electorate, making minority groups such as the Roma a “target group”, especially due to the high proportion of the electorate they represent. Such incentives are even more pronounced because the Roma are dispersed all over Romania and there are numerous cases of localities where they make up an important share of the overall population.

Finally, although the interests of minority groups can be represented also by ethnic parties (Chandra, 2004, 2009, 2011; Ishiyama, 2010; Ishiyama and Stewart, 2019), mainstream political parties have two advantages. On the one hand, Roma ethnic parties are not present at local level in all municipalities; on the other, not only do mainstream political parties have the numerical advantage over Roma political parties, they also have stronger organizations, which represents an important way of connecting with the voters. First, political parties with stronger organizations (in terms of members, organizational extensiveness, and professionalization of

the central office) can have more contacts with their voters and circulate information about the party. As this is a direct contact, it is more effective in convincing the voters than other types of contacts (Tavits, 2013). Second, political parties with stronger organizations are perceived as more competent and reliable, which makes them more attractive for voters (Tavits, 2013). Third and probably most importantly (Gherghina, 2014a), the party organization is an important mean of survival. It is not only that party organization is a reflection of the responsiveness of the party toward voters' needs – for example, through decentralized candidate selection processes which strengthen the 'party's capacity to address their interests' (Gherghina, 2014a, p. 43) – but it is also an important complement for any party leader. Recent research has shown that even party leaders who use their charisma and popularity to attract voters cannot survive if they do not have a stronger party organization behind them (Gherghina and Soare, 2019).

## **2.3. Theoretical framework**

As the previous section illustrates, there are many arguments in favor of analyzing minority representation from a party level perspective. This section presents the central argument and claims that only those party factors which impact on the electoral resources of the political parties have the potential to affect minority nomination. Consequently, it identifies five such factors and formulates testable hypotheses for each of these.

### **2.3.1. Minority nomination and the electoral resources of the political parties**

The argument has as its starting point the nature of political parties, as they are conservative organizations (Harmel and Janda, 1994) that refrain from introducing changes to their way of functioning and adding minority candidates to party lists represents an important change. Traditionally, political parties have been defending the interests of the majority and have included mainly the members of the majority; there is thus a predisposition to ignore the interests of other, non-dominant groups (Bjarnegard, 2013). However, it is not only that they ignore the interests of non-dominant groups, but in time, because of the lack of any contestation of such practices, these practices become the appropriate and normal way of doing things (Lowndes, 2013), creating in turn an ethnicized environment which offers more advantages to the persons belonging to the majority group. Additionally, as the desire to be in power is a primary objective of political power (Bjarnegard, 2013) and appointing minority representatives entails a change from power *over* someone to holding power *with* someone (Allen, 2011), political parties might not be willing to add minority candidates to their party lists.

Yet, reality shows that some political parties might forego their conservative character and include minority candidates on their lists, under certain circumstances (Daalder and Mair, 1983; Hopkin, 2010; Bardi, Bartolini and Trechsel, 2014; Bischof and Wagner, 2020). As emphasized by Harmel and Janda (1994), they are more inclined to do so especially when they face an external shock, such as electoral defeat (or the threat of electoral defeat), which ensues from a lack or weakening of electoral resources and has a direct impact on their access to power. Political parties might have different goals (voting, office-seeking or policy-making goals, see Strom, 1990), but vote-maximization goals ensure the realization of the other two and they are dependent on electoral resources. As political parties care about votes and are sensitive to voter volatility, they will try to avoid this scenario. As access to power is

conditioned by the votes of the electorate, political parties have to convince voters to maintain their loyalty toward them (Gherghina, 2014a). In post-communist countries this might be challenging, as there is a low level of party identification, relatively low party membership, and high electoral volatility (Gherghina, 2014a; Gherghina, Iancu and Soare, 2018; Emanuele, Chiramonte and Soare, 2020). Under these circumstances, political parties compete for the same segment of voters and need to come up with solutions that allow their access to and maintenance of power. As they do not have many tools to mobilize voters (Gherghina, 2014a), they can use their organization (although party organization can refer to different aspects, here it refers to the candidates a party proposes on the electoral list) as a means of communication (Adams, 2005; Tavits, 2013; Gherghina, 2014a) and to attract new votes. In those areas with minority groups on their territory, political parties can try to attract ethnic votes by appointing minority candidates.

Previous research has shown that ‘political parties are the main architects of parliamentary representation’ (Lilliefeldt, 2012, p. 194), especially because of their power to nominate candidates. Understanding both the behavior of political parties as well as political representation should however avoid ‘simple, deterministic and mono-causal explanations’ (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995, p. 194) and look at the interaction of factors within the political system (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995), as political parties do not operate in a vacuum and their actions are constrained by both external and internal conditions (Panebianco, 1988, pp. 11–14). This suggests that a comprehensive framework designed to understand the under-representation of minority groups should include both intra-party and inter-party factors (Norris, 2004, 2006; Kittilson, 2006). Thus, following this line of argumentation, I argue that the lack or decrease of electoral resources (Greene, 2002; Meguid, 2005) can arise from both intra- and inter-party factors (e.g., Van der Brug, Fennema, and Tillie, 2005; Mudde, 2007; Werkmann and Gherghina, 2016). To test this argument, five factors have been identified as a reflection of the electoral resources of a political party, namely the electoral competition between parties and the size of the minority group (inter-party factors), and the size of the political parties in terms of the mandates won and the time of leadership change (intra-party factors).

This does not ignore other possible party-related variables that have been identified as influencing the political representation of ethnic minority groups. However, due to their relatively limited capacity for explaining Roma political representation they have not been included in the study; in order to illustrate this, I will briefly provide some arguments about their unsuitability. Party ideology seems to have an impact on minority representation, with left-wing political parties being more inclined toward minority representation due to their egalitarian ideologies (Caul, 1998) and because they feel a certain responsibility to be sensitive toward the needs of traditionally excluded groups (Matland and Studland, 1996). However, in practice this variable might not be so relevant for countries in CEE for several reasons. First of all, political parties in CEE have institutional and not societal origins (van Biezen, 2003), which means that the competition between political parties has been dominated by issues such as institutional design, regime change, democratization, etc., and not around cleavage-related matters (Rivera, 1996). Secondly, voters have low levels of party identification, as well as strong anti-party feelings due to the communist regime (Gherghina, 2014a), which created barriers for political parties to establish connections with the electorate (Mair, 1997). Thirdly, as political parties were created when new technologies were introduced, skipping some phase of development that the Western political parties went through, they approached the electorate differently, as well as having access to different types of information about the electorate’s preferences (Gherghina, 2014a). Finally, it is difficult to map the political space, and although



certain classifications can be undertaken, there is disagreement between scholars on what would be the proper classification; consequently, it is thus difficult to measure ideology in the CEE political environment (see Gherghina, 2014a). Having in mind all these arguments, it is less likely that ideology is a party-related factor that would affect the stability of a political party or minority representation. The theoretical arguments about a second variable – party age – would make sense, as political parties which have run for election many times and have been successful are less prone to lose votes in comparison to new ones. However, empirical studies in Romania seem to dismiss the relationship between electoral volatility and party age (see Gherghina, 2008). Lastly, the ethnic composition of the party membership might influence the representation of minority groups, as political parties that have minority members might experience pressure from the inside or might be more aware of the exclusion of that group (Tremblay, 2012). Due to lack of data, this variable cannot be addressed as political parties do not have centralized data about their ethnic composition. This is valid for both larger and smaller parties.

In addition, it is important to acknowledge that such practices do have deeper consequences. Through their way of doing things, not only do political parties set up barriers for minority groups, but they also allow the majority to maintain and control the access to power, becoming in this way a resource available exclusively to them. By adopting a strategic behavior, which uses minority groups to fulfill their electoral logic, political parties continue to empower themselves as they disregard the rights and needs of minority groups, unless these are beneficial for themselves. Thus, the entire process of candidate selection has different outcomes for different groups, having an ethnic effect (Krook and Mackay, 2011, p. 181) that produces advantages for the persons belonging to the majority and excludes those belonging to minority groups.

Ethnic studies as well as gender studies draw attention to the neutrality of institutions, to power relations inside institutions, and to the existence of winners and losers (Saggar and Geddes, 2000; Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Birnir, 2006; Kenny, 2007; Krook, Lovenduski and Squires, 2009; Franceschet, 2010; Krook and Mackay, 2011; Bjarnegard, 2013). As social relations are guided by concepts such as ethnicity and gender (which are social constructs that emphasize perceived differences between the majority and other groups, who share different identities, such as race, language, religion; see Beckwith 2005), they have an impact on how power relations and hierarchies are defined and governed, as well as becoming customary (Mackay, Kenny and Chappell, 2010, p. 580; see also Scott, 1986; Hawkesworth, 2003; Hawkesworth, 2005). This means that ethnicity guides not only the actions of the individuals, but also of the institutions. As institutions are the product of the domination of the majority, their establishment has given the majority the power to ‘structure institutions, create laws, legitimize particular knowledge, establish moral codes, and shape culture in ways that perpetuate their power over’ other groups (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly, 1995, p. 20). Although such practices might not have been made with the explicit intention of exclusion, in time, because of the lack of contestation, they have led to bias for the interests and the way of doing things of the majority (Chappell, 2002; Bjarnegard, 2013).

As such, we need to depart from a static model in which minorities face only individual barriers, coming from direct and indirect discrimination of party leaders, and to consider also the features of the context in which political parties activate and how they operate, as in this study. Here, I will not consider only the interaction of factors, but question the meaning of the strategies adopted by political parties, instead of accepting their strategic character as a usual practice. This shows that the electoral logic of political parties, although apparently a neutral

practice, has a bias effect empowering the persons belonging to the majority. Secondly, it allows for a more complex analysis, which departs from previous approaches in which ethnicity plays a role only at the individual level, looking at both individual and institutional barriers.

### **2.3.2. Hypotheses**

After having underlined the main framework of the argument, the following sub-sections present in detail the logic that supports the inclusion of these specific five factors and formulate hypotheses for each factor.

#### **1. Party size**

This variable is informed by the literature on niche parties, as well as on party responsiveness, which has shown that political parties exhibit different types of behaviors depending on their type, e.g., mainstream / incumbent / government or niche / small / opposition political party, and that this is dependent on the resources they have (Greene, 2002; Meguid, 2005). Although such differentiations are very important when it comes to understanding the behavior of political parties, a more useful classification of political parties for the purposes of this study would be based on their size. As the number of votes a political party obtains dictates the need for change of their political behavior and how risk-adverse they are (Somer-Topcu, 2009; Budge, Ezrow and McDonald, 2010; Meyer and Wagner, 2013), the size of the party, defined as the number of seats a political party has won in the last elections, is an indicator of the resources held by a political party. As such, it can be assumed that larger political parties have better resources than smaller ones, an aspect which ensures their electoral stability and provides fewer incentives to have Roma candidates on their lists.

Different electoral resources that larger political parties have can be emphasized from the point of view of their size. First of all, if we were to consider theories of voting behavior (retrospective and valence voting, see Fiorina, 1981; Stokes, 1963) as well as the theory of bounded rationality (Seyd and Whiteley, 2004a), it can be assumed that voters vote according to the past performances of the political party and not according to their ideology (Seyd and Whiteley, 2004a). This constitutes an advantage for larger parties, as they can use their past performance as a testimony of their worthiness; by showcasing their achievements, they can advertise themselves as competent and reliable (Fearon, 1999), as well as claim that they are the party that is best-equipped to solve the problems of their citizens, becoming more persuasive (for a similar argument with regard to incumbency, see Gherghina, 2014a). At the same time, past performance reduces the level of uncertainty about a party's future actions. Faced with less uncertainty about the future, voters will have fewer incentives to switch to another party.

Second, a political party with a higher number of seats can provide voters with information shortcuts about their activity and this can bring benefits for two reasons. Political thinking, as already mentioned above, can be best described as "low information rationality" and can be divided in a two-step process when voters manage the information available to them. The first instance corresponds to the collection of information about parties on issues that the voter is interested in and cares about. Subsequently, he or she checks the information gathered from

different sources, such as friends, newspapers, or experts (Popkin, 1991). Depending on the results, he/she will vote for a certain party. This tends to benefit parties with higher numbers of seats, because most probably they lead the representative institutions and there is much more information about their activities and performances (Fiorina, 1981). For parties that are not in government, people are informed about their activities by the media; however, when parties implement policies, voters can evaluate their performance even more easily. Once the voter is satisfied with their performance, there are higher chances that they will give their vote to the party (Jastramskis, Kuokštis and Baltrukevičius, 2021; Stiers and Dassonneville, 2021).

Third, larger political parties are well anchored in society, they have a brand name that they rely on (Snyder and Ting, 2002). This can impact and limit the issues and the candidates they can select and use in the electoral competition, in order not to lose voters who are attracted by the profile of the party. The historical roots of the political parties are also important in this respect. Although there are differences between the processes of party formation in Western and Central and Eastern Europe, respectively (Rivera, 1996), their historical roots have similar implications. Western political parties were formed around the social cleavages that existed at the time (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967), providing them with a 'basis' on which they built their electoral programs and attracted their voters, allowing them to 'have established constituencies and long-standing agendas that mobilize intense commitments on the parts of leaders and activists' (Marks and Wilson, 2000, p. 434; see also Meyer and Wagner, 2013). For the political parties in CEE, the story is more complicated as they had institutional roots rather than having their origins with certain social groups (van Biezen, 2003; Gherghina, 2014a); however, by using their party organization (membership, candidate selection procedures, incumbency), as well as other modern means of communication with the electorate, they have on the long run connected to and mobilized certain categories of voters (Tavits, 2013; Gherghina, 2014). As such, larger political parties, although rooted in society, are constrained in their actions; in order not to be perceived as opportunistic, they cannot change their programs too much or too often (Meyer and Wagner, 2013). As research has shown, for larger / mainstream political parties it is not appealing to change their profile to that of a niche party – although it might adopt issues promoted by niche political parties (Meguid, 2005) – even in the case of electoral defeat, while the chances of adopting certain new issues are also constrained by their past interests (Marks and Wilson, 2000).

For small political parties the situation is different, as they do not have the same electoral resources. First of all, their past performance is not such an important electoral asset, as their role in the government is less visible, as well as more difficult to monitor (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge, 1994; see also Meyer and Wagner, 2013), which can also make them appear less competent or reliable. For a small party it is harder to compete with larger parties and to convince voters only through electoral promises, which may or may not be implemented and which do not provide such solid proofs of party performance (Clarke, Sanders, Stewards and Whiteley, 2009). Secondly, they do not benefit to the same extent from media attention (Meguid, 2005), due partly to the high costs of getting access to prime-time programs, nor from other types of advertising (Greene, 2002). When access to mainstream media is not available, small parties rely mainly on electronic media, especially websites, in order to reach their audience; this, however, is not a given, as even websites are not available for every small party (Ishiyama and Stewart, 2019).

Two additional arguments contribute to the hypothesis that smaller political parties have more incentives to have minority candidates, as 'imperfect competition means that challengers must strategize to overcome systematic resource deficits' (Greene, 2002, p. 759) and to use whatever

options they have for the purposes of vote maximization. On the one hand, when political parties face electoral losses or in general display an inability to attract a higher number of voters, as suggested by the lower number of seats won by smaller parties, they can be more risk-acceptant (Somer-Topcu, 2009; Budge, Ezrow and McDonald, 2010). This makes them more flexible when it comes to the issues they focus on, and more prepared to change their profile and add new policies to their agenda (Meyer and Wagner, 2013). Flexibility is encouraged also by their nature and by their opposition status. By their nature, niche/smaller political parties focus on issues that are ignored by their opponents, the mainstream political parties, and which in general are outside the 'existing lines of political division' (Meguid, 2005, p. 348). Their opposition status, although it hinders their resources, does provide them with the opportunity to be innovative with the issues they focus on. On the other hand, smaller political parties are more sensitive to any potential electoral losses than a larger political party and have more stimuli to act pre-emptively. As highlighted for example by Meyer and Wagner (2013) and Gherghina (2014a), a few electoral points lost by a political party which has over 20% of the support of the electorate will not have such drastic effects as on a party which only has the support of 6-7% of the electorate. In such an eventuality, while the first one will have less of an influence in the decision-making process, the latter might be in the situation to not pass the electoral threshold and not get access to power at all.

The paragraphs above provide substantial arguments that larger political parties, due to their electoral resources, have more incentives to have minority candidates in comparison with smaller parties; thus, it can be hypothesized that:

H1: Small party size favors the nomination of Roma candidates by mainstream political parties

## 2. Party leadership change

The literature on both political parties and ethnic minority representation argues that there is a strong connection between the representation of minority groups and the candidate selection process (Norris and Lovenduski, 1993; Sobolewska, 2013; Spies and Kaiser, 2014). Although important, in this study this connection or, more specifically, the question of "who does the selection" (Gallagher and Marsh, 1988; Hazan and Rahat, 2010) will be analyzed by focusing on the party leader alone. Although the candidate selection process includes different dimensions that can equally affect minority representation, there are different, but related arguments which support this decision. Before going into that, however, it has to be mentioned that not all party leaders have the same incentives to add minority candidates, as this is also influenced, as mentioned in the framework argument presented above, on the electoral resources they have, which are a function of the time when a person became party leader (Pedahzur and Brichta, 2002; Gherghina, 2014a; Werkmann and Gherghina, 2016; Ishiyama and Stewart, 2019).

The importance of party leaders is related to the current political context. Nowadays party leaders have become the center of politics. In an era of decline of party membership and party identification and of candidate-orientated politics (Wattenberg, 1991) and valence politics (Seyd and Whiteley, 2004a), party leaders become the connection between parties and voters (Blondel and Thiébault, 2009). Although this study is not about how party leaders manage to compensate for the weakness of the political parties, it is important to acknowledge the importance that party leaders have nowadays in order to understand the impact they have on

representation. Secondly, party leadership is important because of its goals, as the actions and behavior of political actors are guided by the goal of winning elections (Downs, 1957; Mitchell, 2000). Although this goal is characteristic to political actors in general, party leaders aim to win elections not only because it is in the interest of the party to be part of the government, but also because winning allows the facilitation of a leader's own individual goals (Aldrich, 1995). Political parties are vehicles used by the party leaders to accomplish these goals and their survival is dependent on the goals of the leader (Aldrich, 1995; Spirova, 2007; Passarelli, 2015; Cross and Pilet, 2016; Gherghina, 2020). Due to their personal goals, party leaders tend to be more moderate and flexible with regard to party ideology (May, 1972).

Yet, political parties are hierarchic structures composed of several strata who have different opinions and preferences when it comes to the ideological stream: the party elite (members of parliament, party candidates, members of executive committees, etc., in general members whose position depends on election), the middle elite (loyal party voters, party members and activists, local office holders), and the non-elite (voters). Each member of these strata has different motivations and preferences arising from their own involvement in politics, which translates into different stances with regard to the ideology of the party. Party elites, by gaining their status as a result of the votes received from voters, tend to have their preferences closer to those of the median voter; in contrast, the middle elite, because of their voluntary involvement and because they do not hold an elected position, tend to appreciate the ideology of the party and be less willing to depart from it.

How can this autonomy be obtained then, especially when there are different preferences among different strata in the political party? Party leaders might avoid reducing the rights of the members because this would be difficult to achieve and because this might also damage the legitimacy of the party. Additionally, party members still constitute an important electoral asset (Scarrow, Webb and Farrell, 2001). Katz and Mair (1995) argue that party leaders can manipulate and reduce the influence of the middle elite by "democratizing" the intra-party decision making process. In an "internal democratization process" (Pennings and Hazan, 2001) in which party members are given the right to decision-making, especially with regard to candidate selection, the party leader continues to have and to control power. The democratization process helps in fact to disempower the middle elite, which are more ideologically oriented, by giving power to the non-elites (ordinary voters), who are not as connected to the party and its ideology as the middle elite. Because of their occasional support for the party, they are "more docile and more likely to endorse the policies (and the candidates) proposed by the party leadership... The activist layer inside the party, the traditionally more troublesome layer, becomes marginalized... In contrast to the activists, these ordinary and often disaggregated members are not very likely to mount a serious challenge against the positions adopted by the leadership" (Mair 1994, p. 16). The leader of the party is also involved in the selection of candidates. Although the selection might not be done solely by the party leader, cartel party theory shows how changes in the composition of the selectorate toward inclusiveness do not diminish the power of the party leader. To sum up, it is important to look at the motivation of the party leader because he or she controls the selection process, but also because they are more attuned to the preferences of the median voter and seek vote maximization.

If the party leader is more inclined toward the median voter, which most probably translates for mainstream political parties to the preferences of the members of the majority, and considering also the norms and practices that favor members of the majority, how can the connection between party leadership and minority nomination be understood? The short

answer is that party leaders have different incentives (Katz and Mair, 1993), depending on the timing when they have come to power. The time of leadership change has an impact on party characteristics, which in turn have repercussions on the electoral resources of party leaders, making newer party leaders more vulnerable to electoral volatility for at least two reasons. First of all, a newer party leader is more likely to introduce changes to reflect the new position of the party with regard to its ideology and preferences (Harmel and Tan, 2003), as well as to bring new ideas (Matland and Studlar, 2004). Consequently, a party that has recently undergone leadership change may be characterized by a ‘broader commitment to change’ (Harmel and Janda, 1994, p. 262). Although parties might be adaptive and change gradually as they pass from one stage to another depending on the external environment, important changes such as a change of leadership do not just happen (Harmel and Tan, 2003). Especially because parties are conservative organizations, ‘it reasonably could be assumed that parties would resist change unless there were a “good reason” for change’ (Harmel and Tan, 2003, p. 410, see also Janda, 1990), and, as long as there is no power configuration that would facilitate a change (Harmel and Tan, 2003), it would not happen. This nevertheless might restrict the number of voters, in case the voters are not happy with the new stand. Secondly, it is not only the ideas promoted that are questioned by the voters, but the abilities of the party leaders themselves. S/he can encounter difficulties to present her/himself as trustworthy or efficient, characteristics which are easier to highlight by older party leaders who have the advantage of previous performance. As such, new party leaders need to re-connect with their voters in order to mobilize them and until this reconnection has been established, their electoral resources are at risk (Pilet and Cross, 2014; Gherghina, 2014a; Cross and Pilet, 2015).

Party leaders who have held their position for a long time might be less inclined to face shortages of electoral resources (Pedahzur and Brichta, 2002; Gherghina, 2014a; Werkmann and Gherghina, 2016; Ishiyama and Stewart, 2019) for different reasons. First of all, the fact that the leader has been leading the party for a certain period indicates lack of leadership contestation (or at least of a successful one). This has two implications. First, it is an indication of internal acceptability by the party members of his or her leadership, making him or her more confident in their style and less in need to change something about it. Second, it is also a marker of connection and acceptability from the voters, which again illustrates strength of leadership and no shortage of electoral resources. Parties leaders do re-evaluate their electoral strategies every inter-electoral period; however, if their electoral resources are sufficient to realize their goals, they will stick with their previous electoral strategies (Spirova, 2007). There can also be a scenario when older party leaders start to lose their electoral resources or when they need to re-adapt to a new environment. Yet, considering that older party leaders have run the party for a longer period, there has also been an institutionalization of norms and practices that are usually not favorable for the members of the minority groups (Searing, 1991; Franceschet, 2010; Lowndes, 2014) and which are not easy to change.

With all these arguments in mind, I expect that:

H 2: Party leadership change favors the nomination of Roma candidates by mainstream political parties.

### 3. Party competition

Party competition, defined as a process through which the preferences of the voters are shaped and modified by political parties in order to win as many votes as possible (Bartolini, 2000),

entails ‘competitive struggle for people’s vote’ (Schumpeter, 1942, p. 208). Previous research has shown that electoral competition between parties or the number of parties competing in elections has been connected with volatility (Pedersen, 1979; Bartolini, 1990), which refers to a phenomenon where voters change their party preference and consequently vote for another political party than the one they voted for in the previous elections (Pedersen, 1979). This is because a competitive environment provides different conditions than a less competitive one (Mainwaring, España and Gervasoni, 2009). This negatively affects the goal of vote maximization of political parties, as it decreases the level of electoral resources that are available to each political party, prompting political parties to change their electoral behavior, for example by adding ethnic minority candidates to their lists. There are three different reasons that sustain such a relationship.

First of all, a competitive environment is one where the market is more permeable. The power is shared not just among the same few actors; once new political parties can enter and win a considerable number of votes (Mainwaring, España and Gervasoni, 2009), there is always fluctuation with regard to the number and type of political parties. Such a change is generally motivated by the dissatisfaction of the voters with the performance of the previous political parties, as well as by the willingness of the politicians to create new political parties,<sup>15</sup> which in turn leads other political parties to face uncertainty. Permeability translates into a division of the electorate among many more competing political actors and the availability of fewer electoral resources for most of them. In contrast, a system in which only a few parties compete in every electoral round is a closed market (Mainwaring, España, and Gervasoni 2009); as political parties do not fear the loss of electoral resources, they provide no or little space for the promotion of different and/or new preferences. Under these conditions, political parties will display different behaviors depending on the accessibility of the market.

Second, party competition implies also contestation, which can be defined as the uncertainty faced by a political party in an electoral contest; thus, the higher the party competition, the higher the level of contestation. Contestation in its turn implies a higher level of responsiveness from the political parties, as they fear they will be replaced. So far, the literature on responsiveness is quite inconclusive as to which political parties are responsive to whom and under what circumstances, although the topic has been addressed from different angles: mainstream vs niche political parties, government vs opposition parties, or median voters vs supporters. Regardless of these ongoing debates, the present study argues that political parties are responsive to different parts of the public (Adams *et al.*, 2006; Romeijn, 2020) depending on the environment; in competitive environments they will be sensitive also to the preferences of narrow groups (e.g., minority groups) (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008) in order to maximize their number of votes. This is especially the case in local elections, because local organizations have direct interactions with all groups of voters (Freundreis, Gibson and Vertz, 1990). This provides them with quick and direct information about the needs and preferences of each group, as well as with ‘a mechanism for reacting quickly and flexibly to changing environmental needs and conditions’, such as the mobilization of members of marginalized groups (Geser, 1999, p. 9), in order to increase the number of votes they get.

Finally, higher party competition means also a shrunk electorate, as it is more difficult to convince the voters to maintain their electoral preferences constant (for more than one election); consequently, the number of voters that each party has access to is considerably smaller. Three different explanations can be offered for such an outcome in competitive

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<sup>15</sup> Which, according to Mainwaring, Gervasoni and España-Najera (2017), tend to be similar.

elections. First, party competition decreases the policy distances between competitors, and voters have the possibility to choose political parties that are closer to their own preferences and can easily switch parties (Madrid, 2005). The polarization of the party system, on the other hand, by increasing the distance between political parties, tends to reduce electoral volatility, as voters have fewer options to choose from. If the policy of the alternative political party does not correspond to a voter's preference, s/he might have to keep voting for the party s/he has voted before (in case s/he decided not to abstain), due to a lack of options leading to a lack of contestation (Gherghina, 2014a). Although voters might not vote according to the policy of the political parties, whenever there are more political parties, the voters have different alternatives available and whenever they are not satisfied by a certain political party, it is easier to find an option that satisfies their expectations.

Second, in an environment in which many political parties compete, the costs of information gathering are high. This poses challenges, since voters, especially those who have no or low party identification, have to spend much more time informing themselves about the actors competing, as they have less clear cues to guide their decision on which party to vote for (Mainwaring and Zoco, 2007). For voters that have higher levels of party identification, the label of the party offers some cues on whom to vote and thus implies lower costs. As a result, voters usually use information shortcuts, some cognitive shortcuts that help actors to make decisions in complex situations using previous knowledge and experience, to decide on which political parties to vote for (Popkin, 1991), making it difficult for political parties to maintain their electoral pool. Additionally, as it is difficult for voters to distinguish viable from non-viable contenders, the votes are divided between different actors, increasing the uncertainty of the electoral outcome (Moser, 1999). Finally, party competition can also affect voters' behavior as it increases randomness. This basically means that when voters are faced with an environment in which the electoral competitors change as a result of the entry or exit of political parties, they are more likely to change their preferences from one election to the other, as they are influenced by the actions of the elites (Powell and Tucker, 2009, 2014). This poses challenges for political parties to maintain their electoral stability, as voters do not have some stable preferences which guide their political behavior, but they are instead responding to the availability of political parties, encouraging randomness and implicitly volatility.

As shown above, party competition does pose some challenges on political parties that do not have access to the same level of electoral resources as in an uncompetitive environment, affecting thusly the number of votes a political party can get. Faced with a higher number of electoral competitors, with a need for higher responsiveness, and with volatile voters, political parties in a competitive system do have to seek to increase the number of voters, especially the ones that are outside their usual target group, if they want to win elections. As a result, political parties could try to attract the minority electorate, through fielding minority candidates, in order to increase the number of votes or to cover the losses they experience from the majority group. It could consequently be hypothesized that:

H3: High electoral competition favors the nomination of Roma candidates by mainstream political parties.

#### 4. Outbidding

As the previous sections cover aspects pertaining to inter-party competition, it is important to consider not only the number of political parties, but also the policies promoted by political



parties. The literature on women's representation emphasized that in competitive systems (namely when more than two parties compete) political parties tend to "borrow" from the strategies adopted by other parties (Matland and Studlar, 1996). If in a competitive space the nomination of minority candidates by a mainstream political party might encourage other mainstream political parties to do the same, the opposite phenomenon will happen when inter-community competition involves both mainstream and ethnic political parties, especially in a society dominated by ethnic outbidding, as it will be explained in the following paragraphs.

Ownership theory refers to 'the ability (of political parties) to resolve a problem of concern to voters. It is a reputation of policy and program interests, produced by a history of attention, initiative and innovation towards these problems, which leads voters to believe that one of the parties ... is more sincere and committed to doing something about them' (Petrocik, 1996, p. 826). According to this theory, political parties will emphasize those issues themes they are known for. If voters make their political decisions based on the issues a political party promotes, then those political parties that have gained a certain reputation on a certain matter will have a more stable electorate, as when voters will think of a certain issue, they will think of the political party that has best promoted the issue (Walgrave, Lefevere and Nuytemans, 2009). Political parties manage in this way to maintain or increase their electoral leverage as they come across as competent and experts in handling certain issues (e.g., Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994; Van der Brug, 2004; Bélanger and Meguid, 2008; Sanders *et al.*, 2011); however, the importance of this expertise tends to be limited to a special segment of voters.

Under these circumstances, ethnic political parties have certain advantages over mainstream political parties. Horowitz argues that an ethnic party is a 'party that derives its overwhelming support from an identifiable ethnic group and serves the interests of that group' (Horowitz, 2000, p. 291), while "multi-ethnic" parties, in contrast, 'champion the interests of all significant ethnic categories in a society without excluding any' (Chandra, 2013, p. 155). An ethnic party is thus considered 'the champion of the particular interests of one ethnic category or set of categories to the exclusion of others and makes such an appeal central to its mobilizing strategy' (Chandra, 2013, p. 155). As ethnic political parties promote exclusive claims, it makes them own the 'ethnic issues', providing them with certain electoral advantages when it comes to the ethnic electorate, which consequently becomes a group exclusively devoted to them. Although, as Chandra underlined, mainstream political parties might address minority claims, there are higher chances that the ethnic voter will vote for the ethnic party.

First of all, as ethnic parties own ethnic issues, the mobilization of ethnic voters occurs mainly through the invocation of ethnicity. In post-communist countries ethnicity is quite a strong component of identity, due to the attempts of the authoritarian regimes to dilute it and because, despite the fact that minority individuals have multiple identities, ethnicity remains the strongest. Consequently, ethnic parties have higher chances to reach an electorate consisting of members of minority groups than political parties that make recourse to ideology or any other strategy (Spirova, 2007). Also, 'ethnic identity serves as a stable but flexible information shortcut for political choices' (Birbir, 2006, p. 9; see also Popkin, 1991). Birbir (2006), using the arguments of social identity theory, argues that membership in a group creates certain connections between members, making members of that group to favor the other members. Additionally, it facilitates also the adoption of a political attitude by that group. As membership in a group has the function of information provider, members of an ethnic group have higher chances to become familiarized with the policies of an ethnic party than with those of a mainstream one.

Moreover, the information costs are lower. As usually the number of ethnic political parties ranges on average between one and two, while the number of mainstream political parties is considerably higher, the time needed to analyze and familiarize oneself with the policies of many mainstream political parties is higher. As voters generally use information shortcuts to make their political decisions (Popkin, 1991) in order to minimize the time spent obtaining political information, ethnic voters can use the knowledge of the other members of that group. Under these conditions, it is no surprise that there might be a bias toward ethnic political parties and that the ethnic voter will prefer that his interests are represented by an expert from within his group, a candidate of an ethnic party (Birbir, 2006).

Finally, it is not only that an ethnic party has an exclusive electorate, but this electorate is also stable (Gherghina and Jigla, 2016). Previous studies have shown that by focusing on ethnic issues, ethnic political parties do not face such high levels of electoral volatility as mainstream political parties do, being able to maintain the number of voters they mobilize relatively stable (Gherghina, 2014). With all these factors in mind, it can be seen how ethnic political parties have higher chances to reach the ethnic voter than mainstream political parties. As shown above, mainstream political parties are disadvantaged from two points of views: ethnic voters are harder to reach and they are also more loyal to ethnic parties. This can discourage mainstream political parties from even trying to adopt an ethnic approach at all, as long as ethnic political parties are present in the electoral competition.

However, when no ethnic political party is present, mainstream political parties could try to approach the members of the minority. As shown by Ishiyama and Stewart (2019), there is a correlation between the organizational capacity of the ethnic parties and their electoral success, making ethnic party organization even more important than the size or the geographic concentration of the ethnic groups. Whenever ethnic parties have organizational capacities, the ethnic electorate will be attracted to them. Although according to issue ownership theories ‘parties sustain an identity that is anchored in the cleavages and issues that gave rise to their birth’ (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge, 1994, p. 24), recent developments in the area have shown that issue trespassing or issue convergence is not an exception, as issue ownership is not always a stable phenomenon (Walgrave, Lefevere and Nuytemans, 2009). For example, Aalberg and Jenssen (2007) showed how in Norway media debates have produced a switch on issue ownership, as some parties gained expertise on issues that were previously ‘reserved’ for other parties. Similarly, research on presidential campaigns in the US shows that issue trespassing is a common phenomenon (Damore, 2004; Sigelman and Buell, 2004) determined by factors related to the context of the electoral campaign, such as changes in voter preferences, the level of support a candidate gets in pre-election, or the salience of certain issues at the respective time.

It is therefore possible for mainstream parties to approach minority voters if there is no ethnic outbidding. Ethnic outbidding, according to Rabushka and Shepsle (1972) and Horowitz (1985), is a process in which in plural societies the mobilization of voters happens exclusively on ethnic lines, resulting in ethnic groups having intransigent and mutually exclusive political preferences. Political parties appeal exclusively to their own ethnic groups; as voters themselves are radical, political parties have to adopt more extreme positions, toward the radical end of each spectrum of group-specific interests (Rabushka and Shepsle, 1972), leaving no option of gaining votes through a moderate, middle-ground discourse.

Ethnic outbidding has been characterized as a threat to democratic institutions, as ‘the emergence of even a single ethnic party, in turn, “infects” the political system, leading to a

spiral of extreme bids that destroys competitive politics altogether' (Chandra, 2005, p. 235), as well as contributing to societal division and non-cooperation (Gunther and Diamond, 2003). Although ethnic political parties can affect the incentives of other political parties to mobilize certain groups of voters, it should be noted that their presence should not be seen as negative for the democratic environment and for multiethnic cooperation. As highlighted by Ishiyama (2000), if ethnic parties had not appeared in post-communist states, the interests of the minority groups would have been alienated by other mainstream political actors. It is not the ethnic emphasis promoted by ethnic parties that is dangerous, but the lack of institutions that encourage 'multiple dimensions of the ethnic identity' (Chandra, 2005, p. 236), as ethnic political parties by themselves do not lead to ethnic conflict (Ishiyama, 2009). Ethnic political parties are themselves different, some promoting and educating their supporters to accept democratic principles (Ishiyama and Breuning, 2011). In fact, once awareness has been raised about the need to address the interests of the ethnic groups as well, ethnicity can be an useful indicator for non-ethnic political parties too, as by using such a rhetoric themselves they can attract ethnic voters (Birbir, 2006). Under these circumstances, the presence of ethnic parties should not be seen in such a black and white perspective, acknowledging instead that it has both positive and disadvantageous effects on intra-party competition. On the one hand, the usage of ethnicity as a mean of mobilization by ethnic political parties can indirectly motivate mainstream political parties to be aware of ethnic interests and to address such interests when an ethnic political party does not compete in elections. On the other hand, where ethnic political parties compete and place emphasis exclusively on ethnicity, mainstream political parties have less incentives to reach other ethnic groups, as this would be electorally unsatisfactory, entailing both the risk of losing their own supporters and that of not winning other voters from other ethnic groups.

Following this line of argumentation, it has been emphasized that ethnic political parties have certain advantages when it comes to attracting minority candidates. Although not uncommon, the trespassing of mainstream political parties on ethnic issues is then guided by the absence of ethnic political parties and ethnic outbidding, leading to the formulation of the following hypothesis:

H4: The absence of Roma political parties from elections favors the nomination of Roma candidates by mainstream political parties.

## 5. Roma population size

Another inter-party factor that motivates political parties to have minority candidates is the size of the ethnic minority (Saggar and Geddes, 2000; Anwar, 2001; Sobolewska, 2013; Dancygier, 2014, 2017; Farrer and Zingher, 2018; Geese and Schacht, 2019; Dowley, 2021; Janssen, Erzeel, Celis, 2021). This is not in itself a factor that is characteristic of any electoral race but rather one that is relative, which makes it difficult to make any prognosis about a potential threshold needed to establish a relationship between the size of the group and nomination, as this depends on the structure of each constituency, as well as the electoral goals of each political party. However, in diverse areas, the size of the minority group is an important factor of inter-party competition, as it affects both the performance of political parties and the overall electoral results.

From a rational point of view, if political parties are governed by electoral logic, they need to attract voters not only from the 'mainstream' group, but also from the minorities. However,

this is dependent on whether the benefits surpass the costs of having ethnic candidates (Dancygier, 2017). The benefits are the number of votes gained from the minority groups, while the costs amount to the percentage of votes lost from the majority electorate, who, due to racist views, might stop voting for a party once it has minority candidates. Thus, to know whether a minority candidate could be a benefit, the size of its group is the first thing taken into consideration, as it gives the party information about the potential additional electoral support a minority candidate could bring, after subtracting the costs. As it is quite obvious, there are better chances that the equation will be positive when the proportion of the ethnic electorate is higher. It is different to have a minority candidate in a constituency where the minority represents 1% of the population than where it represents 5%, not to say more, as the number of votes a party can gain by using the minority strategy is different. As such, the size of the ethnic minority has a ‘personal’ impact for political parties, as it helps the political party to either reach vote maximization or electoral stability, depending on its goals.

Secondly, we must look beyond the motivations at party level, as a larger size of the ethnic minority also has implications for party competition. If political parties are not attracted by the size of the ethnic minority itself, they can indirectly be motivated to nominate minority candidates in case other competitors are attracted by the electoral gains brought by the ethnic electorate and will have minority candidates themselves (Matland and Studlar, 1996). It is a matter of strategy to avoid that certain political parties obtain a monopoly over the ethnic votes and thus further strengthen their position within the party system. In this case, the votes of the minority group will most probably be divided among several political parties, leading to a shrinkage of the number of votes each political party can get and of the associated electoral benefits. Still, although no single political party will maximize the number of votes from the minority group as it would have if it was the only one to use this strategy, it will still bring some benefits, as it will gain some extra votes, but it will also shrink the support other parties might get from the minority group.

Another advantage that a higher size of the ethnic electorate brings is a larger pool of potential Roma candidates. Previous studies have drawn attention to the fact that political parties might encounter barriers in having minority candidates due to issues on the supply side (which can be related to both individual and party reasons). However, as the size of a group grows, so do the chances of having people willing to run as minority candidates (Kanter, 1977; Sobolewska, 2013).

Thus, considering that political parties are governed by electoral logic, minority candidates could be used as a strategy to maintain political stability, once the size of the minority is considerable, overcoming this way other potential costs that a party could suffer due to minority appointment. Consequently, I expect that:

H5: A large Roma group within the constituency favors the appointment of Roma candidates by mainstream political parties.

### ***Control variables***

This work includes and tests also for the explanatory power of two control variables, which might potentially interfere in minority nomination: re-nomination rate and the size of the council. The following section presents the reasons for using these control variables. To begin

with the re-nomination rate, the literature on incumbency reaches one main conclusion: incumbents have more advantages over challengers (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Stonecash, 2008). Although the debate is still open about the sources of these advantages (Hirano and Snyder, 2009), previous studies do provide a good picture on the benefits of the incumbency. The advantages of incumbency comes from two types of factors: direct and indirect (Cox and Katz, 1996). Direct factors refer to benefits that come from office holding (Pattie, Johnston and Fieldhouse, 1995; Hirano and Snyder, 2009), such as media exposure (Erikson, 1971; Pattie, Johnston and Fieldhouse, 1995), financial resources (Erikson, 1971; Pattie, Johnston and Fieldhouse, 1995) or ‘political authority, status (i.e. influence), and expertise’, giving them a certain credibility when it comes to the ability to deal with political issues (Gherghina, 2014b, p.3). Indirect factors refer to the opportunities that arise from their “personal” characteristics, being based on the assumption that although incumbency increases the number of votes, this is also a matter of the electoral appeal that the incumbent has (Erikson, 1971). These personal characteristics have two different effects: they can discourage challengers from getting involved, while their abilities of performing certain tasks, such as speech performance (Ansolabehere and Snyder, 2002; Hirano and Snyder, 2009), can attract more voters.

All these arguments show how incumbents can develop and sustain a better connection with voters. This good connection to the voters seems to favor not only the candidate, but also the party, as most of the times candidates run on party lists and they represent a label for political parties. By considering also the personal dimension, incumbent candidates complement parties, helping with the stability of the political party (Gherghina, 2014a). However, it must not be forgotten that political parties favor incumbents not necessarily for these qualities, but because these qualities make them more likely to bring more votes. Although incumbents bring more political stability, if a political party is convinced that a challenger can bring at least the same number of votes as an incumbent, it might prefer the challenger. Also, previous research showed that voters vote for the party and not necessarily for the individual (Butler and Kavanagh, 1992). Consequently, it is not necessarily that incumbency directly affects the nomination of minority candidates, although it has its own impact. This is a matter of decision making at the party level, a subjective decision that a party leader takes considering circumstances. With these arguments in mind, the re-nomination rate has been introduced as a control variable, in order to account for its potential contribution and to better understand the statistical results.

Moving on to the council size, earlier research shows that as the number of seats in a district grows, so are the chances of minority candidates being appointed (Matland and Taylor 1997). The strategies adopted by a political party change according to the type of ticket they compete for, as well as the attention that different groups inside the party receive. When the number of seats is reduced or equals one, the political game is a zero-sum game and only powerful groups inside the party will have access to nomination, leaving no room for the accommodation of other groups, as the party offers opportunities only to those who have higher chances to win the elections. In contrast, if the number of seats is higher, less powerful groups have the opportunity to gain some places as well. Although priority is once given again to those powerful groups, who are being awarded the first positions on the party lists, minority groups have the chance to receive the remaining places. In such a situation, the party tries to make both groups happy, as they both contribute votes, and as a result it has more balanced lists.

The empirical support for the argument is inconsistent so far: some studies identified the size of the council to have only a small effect, supporting the idea that it is more of an intervening factor (Welch and Donley, 1990; Darcy, Welch, and Clark, 1994). There could be two different

mechanisms at work here: on the one hand, it could be that the size of the council influences minority representation as long as it leads to higher party magnitude. If the party does not have chances of winning many seats, then it will prefer that on the first places there are candidates who can for sure bring enough votes; however, when the party expects to win many seats, it has incentives to balance the ticket. On the other hand, the size of the council might have a positive impact on minority representation as long as minority members are part of the political party (Matland and Taylor, 1997). As it can be seen, empirical studies show that there are certain flaws with this argument, and that the size of the council has a limited explanatory power when it comes to minority representation. This explains the inclusion of this variable as a control variable. Keeping in mind that its effects are tangled with party size and minority membership, in order to provide a clearer view, this study included both party and council size as variables. However, party size has been included as an independent variable due to its higher explanatory power for Roma appointment, while the size of the council will be used as a control variable.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter argues that a supply side determinants perspective can offer new insights into minority representation, by combining key themes in the literature on political parties and ethnic studies. Although different approaches have been identified to explain the lack of minority representation, the idea that party-related factors are the main causes for this anomaly is highlighted throughout the chapter. It is the political party that decides who gets to be represented and who does not, even before the voters, as well as who influences aspirations to become a candidate and who does not. This transforms them into primary gatekeepers (Norris and Lovenduski, 1993). As political parties face issues such as electoral volatility, decline in party membership, and low turnout, the biggest challenge for political parties is to find the means to stabilize their electoral support (Gherghina, 2014a). One of the strategies used can be the nomination of minority candidates, as it can serve the purpose of winning more votes and surpass the critical moments that put the life of the political party in danger. Thus, this study claims that minority representation is dependent on the electoral resources of a political party, as an electoral logic is adopted. In turn, electoral resources can be influenced by both intra- and inter-party factors.

Intra-party factors refer to changes in party leadership and party size. A recent change in party leadership can alter the relationship between the political party and voters, both supporters and non-supporters, as they are faced with uncertainty about the qualities of the new leader. Meanwhile, the size of the party influences the electoral resources of a party, as voters have lower information costs for bigger political parties than for smaller ones, being able to use past performance as an indicator. Inter-party factors refer to party competition (the number of political parties competing and issue ownership) and the size of the Roma minority. Electoral volatility is known to be related to the number of political parties, since, as the political market becomes crowded and more responsive, the voter has the chance to vote for a political party that better suits his or her ideas. Similarly, once an ethnic party, which by its nature defends the interests of the minority group, enters the electoral competition, minority voters might be less inclined to vote for a mainstream political party, which has to defend both majority and minority interests. Finally, the incentives a mainstream political party has toward nomination of a minority candidate are influenced by the size of the minority group, once a mainstream political party follows an electoral logic that aims at vote maximization.

Such a perspective has two important implications. From a theoretical point of view, a party-level analysis of minority representation combines both inter- and intra-party factors, representing a departure from previous studies that focus only on one of these. This is relevant, considering that political parties do not operate in a vacuum (Panebianco, 1988b; Norris and Lovenduski, 1995). Secondly, the perspective is a critical one, as suggested by previous studies (among others Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Mackay, Kenny and Chappell, 2010), which allows for the integration of factors such as ethnicity. Unlike previous studies, ethnicity here is not considered to be related only to the direct or indirect discrimination of party leaders, but as a characteristic of the context in which parties operate, leading to an ethnicization of political parties. This leads to different outcomes of their actions, depending on the ethnicity of the person, creating additional barriers for the opportunities available to certain persons of becoming candidates on the electoral lists of mainstream political parties.

## **Chapter 3 - Research Design**

### **3.1. The importance of mixed methods**

To test the hypotheses presented in the previous chapter, the study uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Although in the past the two methods were sometimes considered incompatible, as they were based on different epistemological positions, there has been a reconsideration of these assumptions (Hodgkin, 2008), which have been catalogued as ‘sterile and based on false polarization’ (Epstein, Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991, p. 89). As a result, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is presently not only accepted, but highly encouraged, as each method can address the weakness of the other (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative methods focus more on the provision of in-depth details through a more inductive approach, while the quantitative stance ‘is often confirmatory in nature and driven by theory and the current state of knowledge about the phenomenon under study’ (Tashakkori, Burke and Teddlie, 2020, p. 29). As such, ‘quantitative data may assist in providing the big picture, but it is the personal story, accompanied by thoughts and feelings, that brings depth and texture to the research study’ (Hodgkin, 2008, p. 296). This implies that data has a higher explanatory power, as well as quality, and that the picture of the phenomenon under consideration is more complex and comprehensive (Domingues and Hollstein, 2014, p. 18). The utility of such an approach has been considered crucial, especially when it comes to research on women (see Hodgkin, 2008), as well as on other disempowered groups, as ‘there are grounds for arguing that both qualitative and quantitative approaches need to be applied in combination, especially where investigations are carried out on social groups whose material situations and perspectives have been under- or mis-represented in social research. While the qualitative approach may overcome some of the problems of giving a voice and language to such groups, through which they may better express their experiences, the quantitative approach would serve to indicate the extent and patterns of their inequality at particular historical junctures’ (Brannen, 1992, p. 22).

In this specific case, the decision is guided by both practical and theoretical reasons. A large N quantitative analysis of the impact that candidate selection processes of the political parties have on Roma representation at the local level would not be possible due to lack of data<sup>16</sup>. Roma candidates cannot be identified based on their names and as there are no other tools which could help, this would have requested a “door to door” data collection in which each political party in each locality would be asked to state whether it considered Roma candidates and, if so, about their number. This practice would require a tremendous amount of time considering that the analysis is carried out at the local level and that Romania has around 2,850 villages and 320 towns and municipalities. Also, having in mind that the literature on party politics has identified political parties as “gatekeepers” of representation, that the selection of minority groups is influenced also by informal institutions, such as networks, the presence of norms, negative attitudes, and the motivations of the members of the political parties, and that Roma groups in Romania are and have been subject to discriminatory practices, the use of an exclusively quantitative analysis would have ignored important contextual factors. A complete qualitative analysis, on the other side, would have offered little factual information about the

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<sup>16</sup> Check the case selection section for detailed information.



existence of the phenomenon and would have had to be limited to an exploratory single case study. Although important, this would have had limitations with regard to the external validity of the data. As such, using a mixed methods design has offered the possibility to have an overview about the situation of Roma candidates on the lists of mainstream political parties, but also to obtain a more comprehensive image on how candidate selection practices unfold and their consequences for Roma nomination.

There are different approaches to mixed methods research, and this study is located within the explanatory sequential mixed methods design models (Creswell, 2014; Tashakkori, Burke and Teddlie, 2020). This means that data is collected and analyzed separately, in a sequential manner. The results of the first phase of the analysis help to design and choose the elements of the next phase, thus being able to ask both exploratory and confirmatory questions. The conclusion draws on the results of both types of data, partial and cumulative. As a result, in this study the quantitative data was collected first; then, based on the quantitative data, the sample for the qualitative data has been identified and qualitative data has been collected.

In this study, the quantitative analysis is reported in Chapter 4. The overall aim is to offer an overview of Roma nomination, as there was no data available on the number of Roma candidates and councilors that mainstream political parties have, as well as to test the relationship between inter- and intra-party-related factors and Roma nomination and their explanatory power, as well as account for the two control variables. This constitutes the introduction for the qualitative analysis, which is reported in Chapters 5 and 6. The analysis in Chapter 4 showed that the theoretical assumptions were not statistically supported by the data, as of the five independent variables, only one has a statistically significant effect. The qualitative analysis is meant to help understand these statistical results and to validate or invalidate the results obtained through qualitative analysis and to provide further explanations for these results (Tashakkori, Burke and Teddlie, 2020).

### **3.2. Case selection**

The case selection covers several aspects: the selection of the country, the identification of the counties and communes, and the choice of political parties. Each of these is addressed in detail in the following sub-sections.

#### **3.2.1. Romania as a case study**

Although CEE countries share similarities with regard to the lack of political representation of the Roma minority and at the same time a relatively high percentage of Roma population on their territory, aspects which could have been conducive to an inter-country comparison, the decision to focus just on a single country has been motivated by empirical and methodological considerations.

In order to answer the research question, Romania represents a relevant setting due to several reasons. Roma groups make up an important share of the overall population of Romania, namely 1.5 – 2.5 million out of 20 million.<sup>17</sup> From an electoral perspective, this translates into

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<sup>17</sup> See, for example, the estimates offered by the Council of Europe, under the section ‘Estimates of Roma population in European countries’, available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/publications>. The

the Roma minority constituting an important share of the electorate, which, if we were to take into consideration the performance of Roma political organizations, is not mobilized by their own ethnic organizations and should thus be appealing to mainstream political parties. Also, the Roma are unevenly distributed on the territory of Romania, allowing to see whether size variation leads to different outcomes, as well as for the identification of a potential threshold that encourages mainstream political parties to nominate minority candidates. Roma are not ‘newcomers’ in Romania, as they have been living on the country’s territory for centuries. Since historically they have been deprived of political rights (Klímová, 2002; Achim, 2004), this raises normative arguments in favor of promoting their increased political representation, corresponding to their share of population. Finally, Romania can be labelled as a country that is relatively open toward minority representation, if we were to take into consideration the legal developments after the fall of communism. These include: ratification of international legislation dealing with minority protection,<sup>18</sup> the official recognition of 20 minority groups, out of which the Macedonians have less than 1000 members, reserved seats in the lower chamber of Parliament for each of these groups that do not manage to pass the general electoral threshold of 5%, the option granted to minority organizations to compete in elections as minority political parties, consultation between the different bodies of the state with minority organizations, etc.

Once the choice of Romania has been established, it is important to highlight the benefits and limitations of a single-country case study, where the empirical data is collected exclusively from a single country (Pepinsky, 2019). Such an approach is valuable when the aim is to study a particular issue in depth (Yin, 2009; Creswell, 2014). As such, it provides the opportunity to expand knowledge on a certain topic, within a bounded area, and even to test contemporary theories in the field (Peters, 2013). Also, when it comes to the process studied, the researcher is able to explore the complexity of and interplay among different mechanisms that lead to specific outcomes (Blatter and Blume, 2008), revealing sometimes multi-causality (Ragin, 1989) instead of looking only at the outcome. Finally, it allows for a better integration of the events into the respective cultural, social, or political context (Peters, 2013).

As any method, the use of single country case studies has its own limitations. The first limitation comes from what Sartori has called ‘parochialism’ (Sartori, 1991). This means that single case studies treat a certain phenomenon *in vacuo*, as they do not take into consideration general theories, as well as create their own terminology (Sartori, 1991). The solution would be to have a strong theoretical background, as well as to acknowledge that the results might be similar in other countries as well. In order to overcome this limitation, the present study has been designed after meticulously consulting the current state of art, as well as by providing a theoretical framework, followed by the formulation of clear hypotheses derived from the party politics and minority representation literature.

There is then the issue of ‘extraneous variance’ in which the causes of the phenomenon might be wrongly attributed because there are ‘more variables that have a systematic relationship with the dependent variable and perhaps also with the independent variables in an analysis’ (Peters,

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results of the last national census can be seen under the table ‘Population at the 1948, 1956, 1966, 1977, 1992, 2002 and 2011 censuses – counties and categories of localities’ / Populatia la recesamintele din anii 1948, 1956, 1966, 1977, 1992, 2002 și 2011’, available at <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/noutati/volumul/>, accessed November 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Such as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/etats-partie>, or European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-charter-regional-or-minority-languages/signatures-and-ratifications>.

2013, p. 33). As such, this could lead to what Rokkan called the ‘whole-nation bias’ (Rokkan, 1970). This means that in the case of countries with internal heterogeneity, the usage of national level data can lead to a miscoding of the data, as it ignores the differences that can appear at lower levels (Snyder, 2001; Denk, 2010). This in turn ‘distorts causal inferences and skews efforts at theory building’ (Snyder, 2001, p. 94). In order to bypass this issue, this study embraced two solutions offered by the literature. One is the recourse to theory (Peters, 2013). As already emphasized in the previous paragraph, the present research conducted here is not conducted *in vacuo*, but has been constructed with a view to the existing literature in the relevant fields. Additionally, as a part of the data comes from interviews with the local party leaders, who are the main decision makers with regard to the nomination of minority candidates, issues of causal interference are diminished. Consequently, the present study makes use of within-country comparisons, a method whose benefits will be discussed in the next subsection.

### **3.2.2. Local level comparisons and sampling**

Bearing in mind the drawbacks mentioned above, this study will pursue a within-country comparison. While acknowledging that such comparisons do not automatically solve the issue of ‘extraneous variance’ (Peters, 2013) and that, as any methodology, it has its own weaknesses, its advantages are greater (Lijphart, 1971, 1975; King, Keohane, Verba, 1994; Snyder, 2001; Denk, 2010). In order to demonstrate this, I will briefly explain how its limitations can be transformed into assets, as well as highlight its own contributions.

The switch from a single case study to medium-N studies involves a trade-off between in-depth knowledge with thick descriptions to thinner details, yet it does allow the exploration of complex causal mechanisms and processes. In this specific case, this is very important, as the nomination process has generally been labeled the ‘secret garden of politics’ (Gallagher and Marsh, 1988), consisting of different elements which can work on their own or in combination (Hazan and Rahat, 2010), leading to different types of outcomes. Within-nation comparison is also limited with regard to the number of cases that are comparable, as it is only similar contexts that can be compared. Finally, it leaves unanswered questions about the ‘variations in factors on a system level’ (Denk, 2010, p. 30), decreasing the ability to generalize beyond similar contexts (Snyder, 2001). One solution for this issue is the use of both within-country comparisons and between-nation comparisons of within-country comparisons (Snyder and Ting, 2002; Denk, 2010), but this is dependent on the availability of data; sometimes in order to have such data, the starting point is within-country comparisons.

Yet, a within-country comparison tackles one of the greatest weaknesses of small N designs, that of ‘many variables, small number of cases’, by increasing the number of cases, providing the opportunity to focus on more complex connections between elements, during both the quantitative and the qualitative analysis (Denk, 2010). Lijphart (1971) and later on Yin (2009, p. 46), argue that ‘the evidence is more compelling and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust’. Additionally, as Snyder argued, ‘subnational units can make it easier to construct controlled comparisons that increase the probability of obtaining valid causal inferences in small-N research’ (Snyder, 2001, p. 94). As the cases share similarities, theoretical complexity is reduced as certain aspects (political, economic, cultural, etc.) have less of an influence on the outcome (Lijphart, 1971). Finally, the use of comparison allows

exploring the complexity of each case, but also identifying common or different patterns across cases, thus avoiding also the danger of miscoding. This will allow gaining some scope for generalization, at least within Romania, in a way that still reflects diversity in general and of my cases in particular.

The decision to include a within-country comparison in the study has implications not only for the number of cases selected, but also for the definition of the term ‘case’. Although the term ‘case study is a definitional morass’ (Gerring, 2004, p. 342), as authors use different aspects to explain the meaning of “case”, referring for example either to the number of cases (Campbell, Stanley, Gage, 1963) or to types of cases (George and Bennett, 2005; Yin, 2009), in this work a case study relates to the object (Ragin, 1992) or the unit of analysis, which in turn refers to the ‘intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units’ (Gerring 2004, p. 342). As a result, a case study refers to the candidate nomination carried out by a political party in a commune (the constituency in local elections) in the 2016 local elections in Romania.

As the purpose of my quantitative data is to derive some generalization from my cases and as my unit of analysis is the electoral list of a political party in a commune, I had to choose from a considerable number of cases. As Romania is divided into counties, which are further include towns, cities, and communes, a decision had to be made first on how many counties to select and then which ones. With regard to the number of counties, the research has been limited to three counties, bearing in mind the uneven distribution of Roma population in the selected counties (between 1% and 8.5%), the high number of counties (41), and the extensive primary data collection required in each case. In order to ensure variation and representativeness, these three counties differ with regard to the total size of Roma population: small (Iasi, 1.5%), medium (Galati, 3.2%), and large (Salaj, 6.7%), ethnic composition, economic situation, geographical location within the country, etc. Although there are other counties with similar characteristics that could have been considered, there are no reasons to believe that the results would have been different. In each of these counties, I selected all the localities with a Roma population higher than 1% to identify the lowest threshold necessary for Roma nomination, resulting in a sample of 289 units of analysis. Using purposive sampling, I selected from each county three representative communes, with small, medium, and large Roma population size, resulting in a total of 45 cases for interviewing. Out of these 45 cases, 39 local party leaders accepted to be interviewed.

In order to be included in the analysis, the mainstream political parties had to have representatives in the Romanian parliament after the 2016 general elections. Although the study focuses on local elections, similar to Lundell (2004), I consider this aspect as proof of engagement in the electoral competition. One of the main functions of the party is that of selecting its candidates, and, if a party does not have chances to gain any seats, this function might not be so important or might even be neglected. As a result, five mainstream political parties were selected: PSD, PNL, ALDE, PMP, and UNPR. Similarly, the Union Save Romania (USR) was excluded because it did not compete in the 2016 local elections.

### **3.2.3. Why the local level**

Minority representation has in general been discussed in connection to national politics (see e.g., Bird, Saalfeld and Wüst, 2010; Saalfeld; Kyriakopoulou, 2011; Sobolewska, 2013),

although there are a few exceptions to this pattern (Togeby, 1999; Schönwälder, 2013; Dancygier *et al.*, 2015; Vimmr, 2015; Dancygier, 2017; Dowley, 2021; Janssen, Erzeel and Celis, 2021). Such a focus has been preferred because as most of the legislation on national minorities is created and adopted in national assemblies, it is important to see whether political parties include minority members at this level of representation as well (Vimmr, 2015). Also, as national level data is easier to obtain in most countries, this in turn makes country comparisons easier (Ruedin, 2009), allowing for the identification of not only country-specific factors, but also general ones with regard to minority inclusion or identification. This study focuses instead on the local level, for a combination of theoretical and methodological reasons. Minority groups might show different political behavior at local level rather than in national politics. Due to territorial proximity, individuals might develop a feeling of belonging and of shared interests, which might make them more motivated to be interested and to participate in local politics (see Garbaye, 2008). Also, the decisions taken at the local level directly affect their lives and the environment where minorities live (e.g., housing decisions) and as a result national minorities can better influence or challenge these decisions by becoming involved in local politics (Vimmr, 2015). In turn, it is more likely that the interests of the minority groups are better known by local authorities, as they interact with the state at the local level, which might motivate them to adopt more inclusive approaches to representation. Finally, although perhaps not ‘all the politics are local’ (Pavel, 2012) as the important decisions are made by a few persons in high-ranking positions, local elections do reflect the status quo of political parties and of the whole political system (Pavel, 2012). Although data about local municipalities is not easily accessible in Europe in general, from a methodological point of view such a focus is important. As the size of the data set is larger in comparison to the national one, it further allows for the identification of variation on minority nomination within the party, as well as across and within communes with different sizes of minority groups.

### **3.3. Data collection and analysis**

As the previous section has explained ‘why’ the study has opted for a particular case selection, this section complements it by providing details on how the data has been collected.

#### **3.3.1. Quantitative data**

Collecting data containing ethnic information has its own challenges. Political parties keep no information about the ethnicity of the candidates, while identification of Roma candidates on the basis of names is not possible. Consequently, some of the information required for analysis could be obtained only from local party leaders. As such, the data was collected using a five-questions questionnaire undertaken via telephone with each of the local party leaders in the 77 municipalities in October 2017.

The questions enquired about the presence/absence of Roma candidates on their electoral lists during the 2016 local elections, any recent changes with regard to local party leadership, and incumbent persons.<sup>19</sup> The collected quantitative data is thus subject to local party leaders’ ability to remember this type of information. In some cases, some information was also collected from the leaders of the regional parties, when the local leaders refused to respond or

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<sup>19</sup> See Appendix 2 for the list of questions.

when it was impossible to contact them. With regard to the size of the Roma minority, the data of the last population census has been consulted and the total size of the Roma groups has been subtracted from the total population of the commune and then transformed into percentages.<sup>20</sup> For the size of the council, party competition, and party size, the data was compiled using the information provided by the Permanent Electoral Authority. On the section ‘local elections 2016’, information is provided for each commune, in each county, with regards to the number of total mandates in the commune, the number and name of political parties registered, and the number of votes and mandates received by each party.<sup>21</sup>

The data has been analyzed using three different types of statistical tests investigating the same relationship. Although the way they work is different, each of them is important as their sequence facilitates a gradual move toward more complex models, which ultimately allow establishing causal relationships between the independent and the dependent variables. The analysis will start with descriptive statistics that will provide a general picture regarding the representation of Roma candidates on the lists of the mainstream political parties in the three counties covered in this study. I compare not only the number of Roma candidates across the five political parties included in the study, but also across the three counties. Also, in order to get a better picture, I will compare the number of Roma candidates with that of Romanians and provide information about the winning potential of such candidates. Such an analysis is complemented by an attempt to identify the relationship between the proposed explanatory variables (party competition, Roma parties, size of the party, re-nomination rate, and leadership change) and Roma nomination.

The analysis concludes with a logistic regression as a means to test for the causal relationships expressed in the hypotheses. Such an analysis has several advantages. First of all, the logistic regression allows assessing the explanatory power of each independent variable, while keeping other variables constant, as well as the explanatory power of the model itself. Secondly, it allows for the introduction and testing of control variables, which theoretically might also have an effect on the dependent variable. I ran four binary logistic regression models: Model 1, only with the party level variables; Model 2, with the party and county level variables; and Model 3, including the control variables. Model 4 also included party fixed effects; however, this model was not included in the analysis and discussion in Chapter 4.<sup>22</sup> The main reason for this decision was the minimal improvement associated with the use of this model: the size of the Roma minority remained the only independent variable with a statistically-significant effect and the model showed only slight improvement on the size of the effect, while none of the variables on political parties had a statistically-significant effect. Before running the regression, it was tested for multicollinearity and the results indicate no highly correlated predictors, i.e., the highest value is 0.54. This is also reflected by the values of the VIF test for multicollinearity, which are smaller than 1.59. The dataset consisted of 289 party lists from the 2016 local elections in 77 localities in three Romanian counties.

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<sup>20</sup> See Appendix 3 and <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-2/>, Table 8: ‘Population according to ethnicity – counties, municipalities, towns and communes’ (Tab 8. Populatia stabila dupa etnie - judete, municipii, orase, comune), accessed November 2021.

<sup>21</sup> See <http://alegeri.roaep.ro/?alegeri=alegeri-locale-2016>, accessed November 2021.

<sup>22</sup> See Appendix 1.

### 3.3.2. Qualitative data

The most convenient and productive method of qualitative data collection for the purposes of this study is the semi-structured interview. It provides rich information, ‘insights into events about which we know little: the activities that take place out of the public or media gaze, behind closed doors... and can provide immense amounts of information that could not be gleaned from official published documents or contemporary media accounts’ (Lilleker, 2003, p. 208). Due to the nature of the topic, candidate selection mechanisms are considered “sensitive”, as they are part of the internal organization of the parties. Party statutes of the mainstream parties contain only brief references to the election of candidates at the local level and considering that the process of candidate selection relies also on informal rules, the only way of obtaining a better picture of the entire process is by interviewing local party leaders. Through interviews, the research gains access to information about the motivations behind the inclusion of Roma candidates on the lists, identifies who does the selection and at which level, as there might be differences within the same party on the criteria according to which the list of candidates is ordered, the rules according to which the selection is done, and which strategies are used.

While some of these answers could be obtained from a survey, the use of interviews has certain advantages. First, questions about the internal life of an organization can be received with suspicion and lack of trust, which in the end could lead to low rates of response; alternatively, the answers could be short or even no answer provided. All these deficiencies can be avoided through interviews, as they presuppose personal contact with the interviewee and a relationship of trust can be generated. Secondly, the interviewer has the opportunity to ask additional questions in case the responses are vague or important details can emerge that had not been previously considered.

As mentioned above, a total of nine communes (three from each county) where all the five political parties included in the study participated in elections were selected for this study.<sup>23</sup> Conducting interviews with each of the local party leaders resulted in a sample of 45 interviewees. Due to the nature of the topic, not all local party leaders agreed to be interviewed, downsizing the sample to 39 interviews.<sup>24</sup> Out of 39 semi-structured interviews, 12 were conducted over the phone and 27 face to face, in mainly in November 2017; 33 interviews were recorded and notes were taken for the remaining six. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the information, the names of local party leaders have been numbered from 1 to 39 and renamed as R (respondent) 1, 2, 3, etc.<sup>25</sup> The same procedure was used for the names of the localities, where the name of each commune was replaced with a letter of the alphabet.<sup>26</sup> First the nine communes where the interviews were conducted were arranged alphabetically and then the first one received the label A, the second the label B, etc. Sometimes the interviewees made reference to the specific situation in certain village(s) within a commune; as such, the name of the village received the letter from the commune plus the number 1, 2, 3, etc. (e.g., C2), depending on the total number of villages making up a commune. All the recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed using qualitative content analysis, as described by Gläse and Laudel (2013). This technique reduces the data material stepwise (Flick, 2012).

Having as a starting base the theory on the basis of which the hypotheses were formulated, an initial set of categories were created, which have been subsequently divided into sub-

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<sup>23</sup> See Appendix 4.

<sup>24</sup> See Appendix 5 for the interview guide.

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix 5.

<sup>26</sup> See Appendix 3.

categories. For example, for the category ‘size of the party’, three extra categories were created: small, medium, large; similarly for the category ‘change of leadership’, new and older leader subcategories were established. These categories and sub-categories have been applied throughout the text of each interview, having the sentence as a unit of analysis. Whenever a sentence contained information that would fall within these categories, the text has been marked as belonging to a category, or, where this was the case, to two or more. Whenever the text of the interviews brought out information that would fall outside the initial categories, new categories were created. One example is the control of the local incumbent party, which has been further subdivided into: bribery, threats, provision of social aid before elections. This allows the analysis to make reference to new or unpredicted data as well, without ignoring or deleting relevant information, further allowing it to explain possible contradictions between the theory and empirical data in the main analysis. Once the entire text has been assigned to one or more categories, the data has been restructured according to the categories created, keeping in mind the sources in order to make it possible to go back to them whenever needed. Next, the data has been assigned to the sub-categories created and similar information has been sorted together, in order to facilitate comparison.

### **3.4. Operationalization and measurement**

This section provides information about the definition and measurement of the variables included in this study, in order to facilitate the quantitative analysis.

#### **3.4.1. Defining the dependent and the independent variables and their measurement**

The dependent variable – Roma nomination – refers to the presence or absence of Roma candidates on the lists of political parties and it was coded dichotomously: 0 when there was no Roma candidate and 1 for their presence on the list. Although it could be argued that more rewarding results would have been obtained if the position on the list was analyzed or if the dependent variable would have been the presence or absence of Roma councilors, such an operationalization was not possible for different reasons. First of all, why not the presence or absence of Roma councilors? Before someone becomes a councilor, they have to pass through two different filters (Kunovich and Paxton, 2005): nomination and election by voters. In turn, these filters are influenced by different factors: the political party itself vs the election by voters and the impact of the electoral system. As such, it is not only important first to distinguish the two, but also to start the analysis with nomination, as it is at this very step that barriers are created for certain groups, as the political party itself determines which legislators are selected, even before the voters do. Especially because of the shortcomings of the literature on Roma representation, when introducing new perspectives of analysis, as is the case in this study, these must start from the bottom. As such, having the dependent variable as the presence or absence of Roma councilor(s) would have made it difficult to explain why mainstream political parties nominate ethnic candidates, as it would not have distinguished between the effects of party and voter factors. Additionally, focusing on candidates brings new information about party competition when there are ethnic candidates involved (Dancygier, 2014). Secondly, why not the position of Roma candidates on the electoral list? Considering that political parties keep no information about the ethnicity of the candidates and identification of the Roma according to the name alone is not possible, the data was collected directly from local party leaders and is subject to their ability to remember this type of information. As most of the party leaders could



not provide accurate information about the position of Roma candidates, as sometimes the electoral lists included up to 20 candidates, this would have raised questions about the accuracy of the data. Also, such a choice would have made it difficult to compare data across political parties, as the positions are also influenced by organization capacities. As such, smaller political parties could place Roma candidates higher on the list, but not because they are necessarily keen to do so, but because of their inability to provide a full list of candidates. In contrast, larger political parties, which do not encounter such difficulties, might have placed them in lower positions. As a result, focusing on whether there was a Roma candidate or not was preferred.

Party size refers to the number of seats a party won in the 2016 elections. As the localities have different sizes of councils (ranging from 9 to 17 councilors), a relative measure has been used. The number of councilor seats for each political party was transformed in percentages, indicating the relative power that each party has in the decision-making process. This bears two advantages when compared to the raw number of seats: it indicates the size of the political party directly, without making it necessary to look also at the total number of councilors in the council, and it allows differentiating between parties; for example, although two political parties from different localities might have each won five seats, this does not mean that their power in the decision-making process is the same, as one council might have 9 seats in total and the other 15.

The change in party leadership refers to the replacement of local party leaders between the 2012 and 2016 elections and was coded dichotomously: 0 for continuation in leadership and 1 for party leader change. Leadership change happened in 168 out of 289 cases.

The existence of a Roma party in the elections refers to the number of Roma political parties registered in the electoral competition in each commune. This has been operationalized as a continuous variable ranging from 0 to 2, as there were no cases where more than two Roma political parties competed in the same commune. As such, 0 means no Roma political party, 1 means one Roma political party, and 2 means two Roma political parties competing in the elections. It should be mentioned that there was only one instance where more than one Roma political party competed in the 2016 local elections, this being the case of Barcea, where Asociatia Partida Romilor Pro Europa (Roma Party Pro-Europe) and Alianta pentru Unitatea Rromilor (Alliance for the Roma Unity) competed. The Asociatia Partida Romilor Pro Europa competed in 21 communes, while in 56 communes there was no Roma political party competing.

Party competition refers to the effective number of political parties involved in the local electoral competition, namely those that have gained at least one mandate. Party competition has been calculated using Golosov's (2010) formula, as this formula includes not only winning political parties (with at least 1 mandate), but is also sensitive to the share of mandates of the largest political party. It is calculated at the level of each locality according to the formula below:

$$N = \sum_{i=1}^n \left( \frac{p_i}{p_i + p_1^2 - p_i^2} \right)$$

Where:

$N$  = the total number of political parties with at least one seat

$p_i^2$  = the square of each party's proportion of all seats

$p_1^2$  = the square of the largest party's proportion of all seats

The size of the ethnic group indicates the percentage of the Roma population in the commune according to the results of the last national census (2011) and ranges from 1% to 30%.

Re-nomination refers to the percentage of councilors who ran as candidates again on the list of the same party. The percentage has been calculated using Gherghina's (2015) formula, as it is sensitive also to the number of candidates proposed by the party, the number of re-nominated councilors, as well as the size of the party. The renomination rate is calculated for each political party and has a value between 0-100, according to the formula below:

$$R_j = \frac{1}{2} \left[ \frac{IC_{t1}}{TC_{t1}} + \frac{IC_{t1}}{S_{t0}} \times 100 \right]$$

Where:

$R_j$  = renomination rate for party  $j$

$IC_t$  = the total number of incumbent councilors renominated by the party  $j$  in election  $t_1$

$TC_t$  = total number of candidates of party  $j$  in election  $t_1$

$S_{t0}$  = number of seats held by party  $j$  in the previous term  $t_0$

The size of the council refers to the total number of local councilors a local council can have according to size of the municipality and is established by law. In the case of the localities covered in this study, it ranges between 9 and 17 councilors.

## Conclusion

This chapter elaborated on the research design of this work, providing justification for the choices made. The chapter is organized in four sections. The first section argued in favor of a mixed methods approach, namely for an explanatory sequential mixed methods design model, as this allows not only retaining the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (generalization, but also exploration of complex phenomena through rich details), but also overcoming their weakness. This is very important when the research includes disempowered groups, where not only a numerical confirmation of certain deprivation(s) is needed, but also an exploration of the multi-causality of the specific outcomes. The second section explained the 'why' (Romania, within-country comparison, local level), highlighting how the approach adopted in this study is preferable to others because, by being the middle ground between small and large  $N$  studies, it allows for an increase of the cases included in the analysis, for an exploration of the complexity of the phenomena, as well as for drawing causal inferences. It also provided the criteria for the selection of counties and political parties. Subsequently, the focus was on data collection, describing when and how both types of data were collected and analyzed. Finally, the last section provided definitions for the variables included in the study and explained how they were measured. Once all these details have been clarified, the door is open for the empirical analysis, which will start, as in any explanatory sequential mixed methods design model, with the quantitative part.

## **Chapter 4 - The Nomination of Roma Candidates<sup>27</sup>**

### **Introduction**

This chapter analyzes the reasons why mainstream political parties appointed Roma candidates in the 2016 local elections in Romania. It tests the extent to which the size of the party, party leadership, the electoral competition, the existence of Roma political parties, and Roma size can have an effect on mainstream parties' nomination of Roma candidates. The first section sets the scene with an overview of the under-representation of Roma minority more generally, as visible from the low positions of Roma candidates on the lists of the five mainstream political parties and to some extent from the number of Roma councilors, keeping in mind however the paucity of the empirical evidence of the topic. The section also provides information about the distribution of Roma candidates across counties and political parties, revealing important differences. It then continues with the empirical testing of the hypothesized relationships between the five predictor variables and Roma nomination. The third section presents the factors accounting for Roma candidacies and the conclusions summarize the results.

### **4.1. The Nomination of Roma Candidates: An Overview**

This section presents an overview on how much under-representation of the Roma minority can be encountered at the local level in Romania, by assessing the number of Roma candidates and councilors on the lists of the five mainstream political parties that participated in the 2016 local elections. Even at a glance, the under-representation of Roma candidates is obvious if we examine the number of local party lists in the villages that have at least 1% of Roma population on their territory in the three counties included in this study, and the occurrence of Roma candidates on those lists. As such, only in 29.1% of the cases there is at least one Roma candidate on the list; namely, out of 289 local party lists, there are Roma candidates on 78 party lists. This of course comes as no surprise considering previous research that shows that the nomination of ethnic candidates is dependent on different things, such as the ideology of the party, the size of the group, or district magnitude (Matland and Studlar, 1996; Caul, 1999; Sobolewska, 2013; Dancygier, 2017). In order to provide some preliminary answers regarding this discrepancy, it is necessary to have a better overview of where Roma nomination occurs, which political parties are more prone to nominate Roma, but also about the number of Roma candidates who become councilors.

#### **4.1.1. Examining cross-county variation**

Going further and looking at the total number of candidates in those villages where Roma represent at least 1% of the total population, the under-representation of Roma candidates is

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<sup>27</sup> Parts of this chapter have been published under the title “Organisational capacity and electoral gains: why majority parties nominate Roma candidates in local elections”, in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2022), DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2022.2031921 (Co-Autor mit Sergiu Gherghina)

striking, as there are only 126 Roma candidates of the total number of 3960 (i.e., 3.1%). Moreover, this under-representation is persistent in all three counties; regardless of their share of the total population, the overall percentages of Roma candidates are low, as it can be seen in the following, as well as in Table 1. In Iași, the county with the lowest overall proportion of Roma population (1.5%), there were a total of 52 Roma candidates running for election. Although we could have expected to encounter the lowest number of Roma candidates in Iași, as it is the county with the lowest percentage of Roma, it has in fact almost three times more candidates (52 vs. 18) than Galați and almost the same number of Roma candidates as Sălaj, the county with the highest number of Roma candidates (52 vs. 56). At the level of the entire Iași county, Roma candidates make up almost 0.6% of the total number of candidates, showing that they are represented approximately twice less as compared to the Roma minority's overall percentage of the population (1.5%). However, looking at the share of Roma population specifically in those municipalities where Roma make up over 1% of the total population and at the total number of Roma candidates, their representation is still problematic, as they are under-represented compared to their total population, maintaining the tendency of having twice less candidates compared to their population.

*Table 1. Roma candidates and the share of population*

<b>County</b>	<b>Overall Roma population (%)</b>	<b>Roma candidates (%) relative to the overall population</b>	<b>Roma population (%) (just the localities with over 1% of Roma)</b>	<b>Roma candidates (%) relative to the overall Roma population of counties with at least 1% Roma</b>	<b>Number of Roma candidates</b>
<b>Iași</b>	1.5 %	0.6 %	7.7 %	4.8%	52
<b>Galați</b>	3.5 %	0.3 %	19.1 %	2.4 %	18
<b>Sălaj</b>	6.5 %	1.5%	9.2 %	2.6 %	56

In Galați, the county with an overall Roma population representing 3.5% of the total, the situation is worse. At the level of the entire county, Roma represent just 0.3% of the candidates, more than 10 times less than their overall proportion of the population. This discrepancy is not significantly diminished if the comparison is limited only to the localities with at least 1% of Roma, as in these cases the Roma now represent an average of 19% of the population and the Roma have a share of 2.4 % of the total number of candidates; thus, it can be still noticed that the Roma are 9 times less represented than the majority population. Finally, in Sălaj, the county with the highest percentage of Roma population (6.5%), similar trends can be encountered. Overall, Roma are three times less represented compared to their overall population at the county level. The same configuration is maintained when considering just the overall population in those municipalities with at least 1% of Roma population, as they are still three times less represented, making up only 2.6% of the total number of candidates. As it can be seen, Roma groups do not have a fair share of candidates compared to their total population in any of the counties included in this study. Comparing the situation in these 3 counties, the

situation of Roma is the best in Iași county, where they are “just” twice less represented, and the worst situation is in Galați, where their presence appears to be almost completely ignored by the political parties despite their important size.

Table 2 provides a better overview of the distribution of Roma candidates as compared to their share of the population. The Roma population in the 77 localities included in this study is unevenly distributed, ranging between 1% and 59%.<sup>28</sup> Out of 77 local party lists where at least one political party included Roma candidates, almost half of them (36) are situated in localities which have a Roma population of up to 10%. This should come as no surprise, considering that within these localities there is a lot of variety and, unexpectedly, Roma candidates are present also in those localities with a share of just 1-2% of Roma, as is the case for Comarna, Dobrin, or Letca. Even if these are exceptional cases, it can be noticed that starting with the localities having at least 4% of Roma population, which is closer to the 5% threshold that political parties have to pass, it becomes almost a rule that in each locality there is at least one political party that nominated Roma candidates. Thus, their chances of being nominated increase extensively when the size of the Roma is closer to the electoral threshold, as out of these 36 cases, 33 are to be found in those localities with a Roma population between 4 and 10%. The high number is also explained by the fact that there is a higher number of localities with a medium share of Roma population (between 4-10%) as compared to localities that have between 11 and 32% Roma population.

*Table 2. Distribution of party lists by share of the Roma population*

<b>Share of the Roma population</b>	<b>Number of party lists with at least one Roma candidate</b>
1-3%	3
4-5%	12
6-10%	21
11-20%	25
21-32%	16

In the localities with 11-20% Roma population, there are 25 cases where the mainstream political parties nominated Roma candidates, a higher value of cases than when the share of Roma population ranges between 21 and 32% (16). Also, once the Roma minority reaches the threshold of around 15% of the total population, there is also a tendency of having more than one political party in the same locality which has Roma candidates. Examples include localities such as Lungani, where out of the five political parties registered in the competition four had

<sup>28</sup> Actually, the highest share of Roma population in a locality is 32%, except for one locality, Brăhășești, which was not included in the analysis, as there are different dynamics at work. In Brăhășești, due to the high number of Roma population (59% of the total), the Roma political party has most of the mandates in the local council, with the PNL having the rest of 2 mandates.

Roma candidates,<sup>29</sup> or Sâg, where all three political parties competing in the election had Roma candidates on their lists. This is probably related to the fact that the Roma represent a more significant electorate in such cases, giving the chance to more than one political party to nominate Roma candidates and still obtain enough electoral support.

#### **4.1.2. Roma councilors**

In this sub-section, the analysis will focus on the Roma councilors, in order to evaluate the extent to which political parties are indeed interested in providing Roma candidates with opportunities of representation. Although as explained above in the research design chapter, due to several reasons it was not possible to have the number of Roma councilors as the dependent variable of this study, it is still important to include a subsection on the topic, as the available data can enrich the analysis in the previous and the subsequent sections. Thus, the under-representation of Roma seems to be even more prominent when investigating the number of elected candidates (Table 3). As mentioned above, there were a total of 126 Roma candidates in the localities under consideration. However, only approximately 15% of them (19 persons) managed to become part of the local councils in all three counties, further suggesting that having concrete chances of being elected is more difficult still than being nominated for election.

This percentage is not encouraging at all for Roma representation, as it underlines the paucity of interest that mainstream political parties show for the representation of the second largest minority group in Romania and seems to confirm the patterns of under-representation that minority groups are confronted with, irrespective of their ethnicity and country (Bird, 2003; Bird, Saalfeld and Wüst, 2010; Bloemraad, 2013; Sobolewska, 2013). To prove this point, two comparisons will be made. The first of these is with the number of Romanian councilors: in the 77 localities covered by this study, there are 758 Romanian councilors, meaning that Roma councilors represent only 2.4% of the total number of councilors. Although the share of Roma population is different in each of these localities, the number of localities where Roma represent over 4% of the total population<sup>30</sup> and where at least one Roma candidate was nominated is 48. This means that although in these 48 localities Roma candidates were present on the lists and the share of Roma population was quite high, they still managed to get elected in less than one third of them.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that for the fifth political party there is no information available.

<sup>30</sup> I took this number as a reference point because starting from this share of Roma population Romanian mainstream political parties could be motivated to add Roma candidates to their lists, as well as because it is close to the 5% electoral threshold which allows a minority group the possibility to have political representation.

<sup>31</sup> Considering also that there were cases where there were 2 Roma councilors elected in the same locality.

Table 3: The rate of success of Roma councilors from the total of Roma candidates

County	ALDE		PMP		PNL		PSD		UNPR		Total number of Roma candidates	Total number of Roma councilors
	Total number of Roma candidates	Total number of Roma councilors	Total number of Roma candidates	Total number of Roma councilors	Total number of Roma candidates	Total number of Roma councilors	Total number of Roma candidates	Total number of Roma councilors	Total number of Roma candidates	Total number of Roma councilors		
<b>Galați</b>	3	1 (33.3%)	0	0 (0%)	3	1 (33.3%)	7	2 (28.5%)	5	0 (0.0%)	18	4 (22.2%)
<b>Iași</b>	2	0 (0.0%)	2	0 (0.0%)	19	6 (31.5%)	21	5 (35.7%)	8	0 (0.0%)	52	11 (21,1%)
<b>Sălaj</b>	10	0 (0.0%)	2	0 (0.0%)	19	0 (0.0%)	21	4 (19%)	4	0 (0.0%)	56	4 (7.1 %)
<b>Overall</b>	15	1 (6.7%)	4	0 (0.0%)	41	7 (17.1%)	49	11 (22.2%)	17	0 (0.0%)	126	19 (14.8%)

Looking at the number of Roma councilors in each county, the highest is in Iași (11), the county with the lowest Roma percentage of the total population, both in the county overall and in localities with over 1% Roma population (Table 1). The reason for this high number (as compared to the other counties) is that four out of five localities where Roma councilors were elected have over 30% Roma population.<sup>32</sup> This increases the chances of Roma representation, as PNL and PSD have two Roma councilors each, except in Ciohorăni. The case of Ciohorăni is however special, as there was only one mainstream political party that participated in the election and, although the party had the intention to have two Roma councilors, one Roma person decided to run on the lists of the Roma political party. In Sălaj, despite it being the county with the highest share of Roma population (see Table 1) as well as the highest number of Roma candidates (56), only four Roma councilors were elected. While the county includes localities with 29% Roma population, there are no Roma councilors in these localities. Instead, the Roma have representatives in two localities with 20% Roma population (Sânmihaiu Almașului and Sâg), but also in Chieșd, where the Roma represent 10% of the population, and Treznea, with 4.7% Roma population. In Galați, except for Grivița (which has 4.5% Roma population), the Roma are represented only in Ivești (19% Roma population) and Ghidigeni (27% Roma population).

What can be inferred from the data presented above is that, at least at this preliminary stage of the analysis, the case of the Roma seems to confirm the assumptions of the rational theory that stipulates that the higher the size of the minority group, the higher the chances to get access to political office. Although there are cases when Roma descriptive representation occurs once the size of the Roma minority approximates the 5% threshold (such as in Grivița) or is slightly higher (Mironeasa and Chieșd), there are higher chances that mainstream political parties offer winnable<sup>33</sup> positions to the Roma once the population is around 20%, while chances of having a more proportional descriptive representation occur mainly when the Roma population is over 30% of the total. It must be noted though that a higher share of Roma population (over 20%) does not automatically lead to Roma representation, but mainly that it provides higher chances of representation than situations where the Roma share of the population is under 20%.<sup>34</sup>

#### 4.1.3. Examining party differences

Especially in light of the theoretical argument presented in this study and after having acknowledged the diversity among counties and localities with regard to the presence of Roma candidates and councilors, it is essential to account also for the diversity that exists between the five political parties, as these differences help us understand as well as confirm the results from the following sections. The analysis will start by looking at the Roma candidates first. As already mentioned above, there were a total of 126 Roma candidates in these three counties (Figure 1). The vertical axis indicates the number of Roma candidates and the horizontal axis provides the names of the political parties. Most of the Roma candidates, 49, are on the lists of the PSD, which comes as no surprise considering that it is the largest party in Romania, having a strong organization with offices in almost every locality in Romania, which facilitates its

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<sup>32</sup> The one exception is Mironeasa, which has 8% Roma population and 2 councilors.

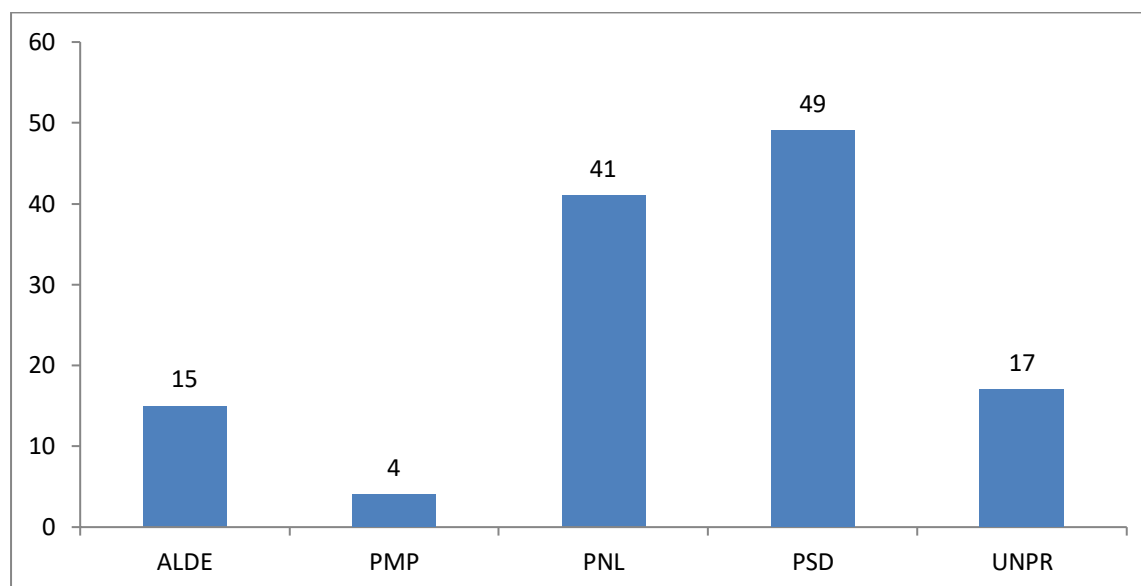
<sup>33</sup> As mentioned, the term ‘winnable’ refers to positions on the electoral lists that have real chances of winning a mandate.

<sup>34</sup> This can be exemplified by localities such as Movileni (Galati county), with a Roma population of almost 17%, 2 Roma candidates and Roma councilors. Also, in Mirsid, the Roma population accounts for 19% of the total and there were 3 Roma candidates, but no Roma councilors.



participation in elections in almost all of these localities. Additionally, PSD has had in the past certain electoral alliances with Roma political parties and was also the first political party to send Roma representatives to the Romanian Parliament, suggesting that the party might be inclined to nominate Roma candidates at the local level as well. The second party, not very far behind the PSD, is PNL, with a total of 41 Roma candidates. It has also a strong organization with local offices and participation in every election and in almost every locality in Romania. Despite the fact the party has never entered an official partnership with the Roma, they had also Roma representatives in the Romanian Parliament.

Comparing the level of nomination of Roma of the two largest parties with that of smaller parties, it can be noticed that the number decreases to half for UNPR and ALDE, and 10 times for PMP. It is important to note that the UNPR, although participating for the second time in elections in 2016, was still a small party that did not have a capacity comparable to those of the two largest parties. This can be seen from the fact that it had a weaker presence in elections all over Romania and weaker electoral results as well, as described in the introduction of this study. When it comes to Roma nomination, the party included a total number of 17 Roma candidates on its electoral lists in the three counties. Despite being a new party established in 2015 and at its first participation in elections, ALDE had almost the same number of Roma candidates as UNPR, namely 15. Lastly, the party which offers least chances of representation to the Roma is PMP. Although also a new political party, like ALDE, PMP has had only four Roma candidates nominated in the 2016 local elections in the three counties under consideration in this study.



*Figure 1: The number of Roma candidates by political party in the three counties*

With regard to the distribution of the candidates by political parties in each county, an unbalanced spread can be noticed, along with the fact that Roma are better represented in Iași county. This probably derives from the fact that although overall the Roma percentage of the population is the lowest at county level, their communities are fewer, but more compact, highlighting the importance of the size of the Roma group at the village level. To be more specific, in the case of PSD, the 49 Roma candidates (Table 4) are unevenly distributed in each

county. In both Iași and Sălaj, PSD has proposed 21 candidates in each county, while in Galați only seven. Having said that, it seems that Roma are better represented on the PSD lists in Iași county, as they account for 7% of the total number of candidates, while in Sălaj and Galați Roma account only for around 3% of the candidates. It must be noted also that while PSD nominated the same number of Roma candidates in Iași and Sălaj, that number has different weight, as in Iași this number provides double representativeness than it does in Sălaj (7% vs. 3%).

*Table 4. The number of Roma candidates on the lists of mainstream political parties*

	ALDE	PMP	PNL	PSD	UNPR	Total
Galați	3 (2.6%)	0 (0%)	3 (1.4%)	7 (3.7%)	5 (3.7%)	18 (2.4%)
Iași	2 (0.6%)	2 (0.6%)	19 (7.3%)	21 (7.6%)	8 (3.6%)	52 (4.8%)
Sălaj	10 (3.4%)	2 (1.2%)	19 (2.6%)	21 (3%)	4 (0.3%)	56 (2.5%)
Overall	15	4	41	49	17	126 (3.1%)

The same trend can be verified for PNL as for PSD: equal number of candidates in Iași and Sălaj counties (19) and only three in Galați. These numbers, although smaller than those of PSD, seem to offer similar weight when compared to the total number of candidates: in Iași, Roma candidates represented 7.3% and in Sălaj 2.6% of the total number of PNL candidates. The exception is in Galați, where Roma had smaller chances of nomination, representing only 1.4% of the total number of candidates.

In contrast to the two larger parties, in the case of UNPR the highest number of candidates were in Iași (eight), followed by Galați (five) and Sălaj (four). Although the numbers are different in Iași and Galați, the party seems to have proposed a similar percentage of Roma candidates (approx. 3.5% of the total). It is important to note as well that despite having a similar number of candidates as in Galați, in Sălaj Roma candidates on the lists of UNPR account for less than 0.5%.

ALDE proposed the highest number of Roma candidates in Sălaj (10), followed by Galați (three) and Iași (two). It is important to note that although there is a difference of seven candidates between Sălaj and Galați, in terms of coverage of Roma candidates out of the total number of candidates, the correspond to a similar share, respectively 2.6% in Galați and 3.4% in Sălaj. Considering the very low number of Roma candidates, it comes as no surprise that PMP had no Roma candidates in Galați, while in Iași and Sălaj it had two each, representing less than 2% of the total number of candidates the party put forth for election.

The patterns of Roma nomination disaggregated by political parties confirm that the proportion of Roma candidates compared to the total number of candidates is indeed small and add a new set of conclusions to the available evidence. Differences can be seen not only between counties, but also between political parties, depending on their size. The larger political parties, PSD and PNL, offer higher chances of nomination. These two parties tend to have a higher and similar number of Roma candidates, distancing themselves from smaller political parties as they propose at least twice more Roma candidates. However, when it comes to the smaller parties, we can see different behavior: ALDE and UNPR have four times more candidates than PMP, the other small political party.

Although not the goal of this study, the analysis of cross-party differences includes also information about the outcome of such nominations, namely the number of Roma councilors. This type of information can further strengthen the previous findings, as it indirectly suggests the purpose of proposing Roma candidates, as well as offering a broader understanding of why mainstream political parties nominate Roma candidates. In terms of elected Roma candidates, similar patterns are maintained across the five political parties, in the sense that larger parties are not only offering more positions on their party lists to Roma candidates, but place them, to a certain extent, on winnable positions. As shown in Table 5, with the exception of one case for ALDE, Roma councilors belong to either PSD (11) or PNL (seven). Looking at how many councilors each party had and where, PSD is the only party that had Roma councilors in each county: two in Galați, five in Iași and four in Sălaj. This means that out of the total number of Roma candidates, in Iași the party had the highest success rate, as 35% of the Roma candidates became councilors. Although in Sălaj the number of councilors was smaller, with just one person, the success rate of Roma candidates was 19%, while in Galați it was 28.5%. In the case of PNL, interestingly enough, it did not have any Roma councilors in Sălaj, although it proposed 19 candidates, the same number as PNL Iasi, making the success rate of Roma candidates zero. In Galați, only one out of three Roma was placed on an electable position, translating into a 33.3% success rate for Roma candidates. Finally, in Iași PNL had a total number of six Roma councilors elected, even higher than PSD, translating into a success rate of 31.5%. As can be seen in Table 5, although the other political parties nominated Roma candidates as well, the chances of election of the Roma are very small.

*Table 5. The percentage of Roma councilors out of the total number of councilors*

County	ALDE	PMP	PNL	PSD	UNPR	Total
Galați	1 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2%)	2 (1.9%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.1%)
Iași	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (10%)	5 (5.2%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (5.3%)
Sălaj	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (2%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (0.9%)
Overall	1	0	7	11	0	19

ALDE had 10 Roma candidates but no councilors in Sălaj, while in Galați they had three candidates, out of which one was elected a councilor. UNPR had eight candidates in Iași, but no councilors. This is not too surprising considering that the number of seats won by these political parties in the local councils is in general considerably lower than those of PSD and PNL, so clearly in this case Roma nomination was part of their strategy of gathering more votes from the Roma electorate. Also, while having more than double the number of Roma candidates than the smaller parties, the two large political parties themselves had lower rates of promotion of Roma candidates, as on average they placed only 20% of the Roma candidates on winnable positions.

Comparing the percentages of Roma councilors with those of Romanian councilors, the likelihood of strategic behavior by political parties is further strengthened (see Table 5). If out of the total number of Roma candidates, 15% made it to the local councils, the percentage is smaller when compared to Romanian candidates. The overall rate of winning mandates was of 2.4% (19), meaning that out of around 777 local councilors, only 19 were Roma. Surprisingly, PNL offered better opportunities for Roma candidates as compared to Romanian candidates than PSD. As it can be seen in Table 5, in Iași out of the total number of the PNL councilors

10% were Roma, compared to PSD, where only 5.2% were Roma. In Galați, both parties had similar shares of Roma councilors, while in Sălaj only PSD had Roma councilors, representing 2% of their total councilors. It is important to note that in the case of ALDE, although it has only one Roma councilor in Galați, this represents 20% of the total number of councilors the party obtained in the county. These results show that political parties are indeed conservative organizations that would not nominate Roma candidates unless there are certain electoral constraints, as shown by both the low number of candidates and the even lower number of Roma councilors. This highlights that by nominating Roma candidates political parties aim mainly to attract the Roma electorate, without being ready however to offer them honest chances of representation by taking into consideration their size, as well as by placing Roma candidates on winnable positions.

The overview of Roma candidates and councilors has shown general as well as particular tendencies noticeable across counties and political parties. Although the data presented above is essential before embarking on any discussion about how mainstream political parties perform their function of aggregation of interests and whose interests they represent, it is time to proceed further. As such, the evaluation should provide more substantial evidence about the extent to which Roma nomination is indeed part of the strategy of mainstream political parties to fulfill their electoral goals by testing each of the five hypotheses, in an attempt to explain the under-representation identified in this section.

#### **4.2. A more detailed picture of the Roma nominations**

The results in Table 6 show the association between each of the five party-related factors and Roma nomination. The empirical results show support only for three independent variables, all being statistically significant at a 0.05 level, namely size of the Roma minority, the absence of Roma parties, and the size of the party. The relationships between variables are relatively weak, with  $r$  ranging from 0.164 to 0.382. Starting with Roma size, it can be noticed that there is a positive relationship, confirming that the hypothesis goes into the predicted direction. Although the size effect of this correlation is the highest among the three statistically significant associations, its effect is medium ( $r = 0.382$ ). These results are not surprising, as there was already evidence from the previous sub-description showing that the number of party lists with Roma candidates grew with the share of the Roma population, as well as that the number of Roma candidates increased in localities where Roma represented over 10% of the total population. Representative examples from the case studies are Dolhești (Iași county), with a Roma population of 21.19% and three Roma candidates, Ghidigeni (Galați county), with a Roma population of 26.97% and two Roma candidates, or Sânmihaiul Almașului (Sălaj county), with a Roma population of 19.54% and three Roma candidates. The association between the size of the party and Roma nomination is also positive, as expected, with  $r = 0.234$ . Examples from communes where all the five political parties included in the study competed in the local elections and where only the two largest political parties, PSD and PNL, had Roma candidates include Dagâța and Stolniceni-Prăjescu (Iași) or Mirșid (Sălaj). Lastly, the association between the absence of Roma parties and Roma nomination is also positive, confirming again the predicted direction of the relationship. The relationship is the weakest among the three statistically significant variables, with  $r = 0.164$ . There is no empirical support for the relationship between leadership change and party competition, respectively, and Roma nomination, their association values being quite weak and not statistically significant. With respect to the control variables, the re-nomination rate appears to be weakly and positively correlated with Roma nomination ( $r = 0.07$ ), but not statistically significant. An illustrative

example comes from Băbeni, where PSD had a high re-nomination rate and no Roma candidates, while PNL has no incumbents and still no Roma candidates. Similarly, in Ciurea PSD had a high re-nomination rate, while PNL had a lower re-nomination rate, yet none of the parties included Roma candidates on their lists. Finally, the size of the council is positively correlated to the inclusion of Roma candidates ( $r = 0.08$ ); however, it is also not statistically significant. Also, no statistically significant correlation has been found between the two control variables.

*Table 6. The correlation coefficients for the nomination of Roma candidates*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>
Size of the party	.234*
Leadership change	-0.073
Re-nomination	0.074
Party competition	-0.052
Roma parties	.164*
Roma size	.382*
Size of the council	0.083

Notes: N ranges between 264 and 271

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

#### **4.2.1. The multivariate analysis**

Table 7 takes a step further and provides the results of the binary logistic regression. I ran three statistical models to account for the influence of the different levels of measurement of the independent variables (party and community level) and for the influence of control variables. I also ran a fourth model, measuring party fixed effects. The results however showed no significant change, as the size of the Roma remains the only independent variable which has a statistically significant effect and whose size remains mainly the same, while none of the political parties have a statistically significant effect. When the control variables were also introduced in the model, there was a change regarding the size of the council, one of the control variables, as it becomes statistically significant. One possible explanation could be the association between the size of the council and the size of the party. As PSD and PNL are large parties and they usually have the highest number of mandates in the councils, the effect could have been driven by this correlation. Considering the fact that the results remain basically unchanged, the analysis will resume to the first three models, but the results of the fourth model (with control variables) is reported in the Annex, under Appendix 1.

Table 7 presents the results for each of the three models. Model 1 includes the independent variables measured at the party level – party size and leadership change – and has a weak goodness of the fit (Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .072$ ). Out of the two independent variables, only the size of the party seems to be statistically significant. Larger political parties are 1.02 times more likely to nominate Roma candidates than smaller political parties. However, considering that

the value of the odd ration is very close to 1, the effect is very small. The party level variables appear to have a limited effect on Roma nomination, contradicting the theoretical argument about the importance of intra-party factors, at least the ones included in the model. One possible explanation for this result is that the mechanisms linking the two party-related factors and Roma nomination are not so straightforward. In the case of the size of the party, three different explanations can be given. First, this might be related to the recruitment potential, as small political parties that do not have strong local organizations may encounter difficulties in recruiting and thus fielding candidates. Another explication could be related to the fact that Roma candidates might not be convinced by small political parties to run on their lists, because they are aware of the small chances of becoming councilors, since generally small political parties do not win many seats. Third, small political parties may be afraid of losing the Romanian electorate if they place Roma candidates on their lists, being aware of the stereotypes and prejudices held by the Romanians against Roma. In the case of leadership change, there are two possible explanations. First, it could be related to the party leaders themselves, who, similarly to other Romanians, may hold stereotypes and prejudices against Roma and this may prevent them from nominating Roma candidates, unless they believe the latter could significantly improve the electoral outcome for the party. Second, both old and new leaders might have incentives to include Roma candidates, but for different reasons. Older leaders could feel they can afford to have Roma candidates because their previous experience and popularity can balance any potential losses from the Romanian electorate. Newer leaders, on the other hand, may try to show their openness and nominate Roma candidates in order to attract the Roma electorate.

*Table 7. Binary logistic regression model explaining Roma nomination*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
Constant	0.262	0.098	0.018
size of the party	1.022**	1.021*	1.030*
leadership change	0.909	1.066	1.008
party competition	-	0.900	0.924
Roma party	-	1.302	1.160
Roma size	-	1.108**	1.115**
re-nomination	0.992	-	0.989
size of the council	-	-	1.141
N	261	261	261
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.072	.238	.263
-2log likelihood	307.99	273.51	267.975

Note: Reported coefficients are odds-ratios

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

Turning to the second model, when community level variables are included, it can be noticed that the model improves its goodness of the fit, although it generally remains low (Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup> = .238). Out of the three independent variables measured at county level – the absence Roma parties, party competition and Roma size – only the size of the Roma community is statistically significant. Political parties in municipalities where the size of the Roma population is larger are 1.10 more likely to nominate Roma than when their share of the population is smaller, with the result being generable at a confidence interval of 99.99%. This result confirms previous studies according to which the chances of representation of minority groups are dependent on the size of that group (i.e Saggat and Geddes, 2000; Dancygier, 2014, 2017). As political parties are driven by electoral logic, Roma nomination is dependent on the

size of the minority, which dictates the value of the electoral advantages; the larger the size, the higher the electoral advantages. Similar to the previous step, the size of the party is also statistically significant; however, the odd ratio does not change its value (1.02), which remains very low.

Finally, the third model, which includes also control variables, is a better fit of the data (Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .263$ ). Similarly to the second model, the odd ratios support only one main hypothesis (H5), according to which a larger size of Roma population favors Roma nomination, as only the size of the Roma population is both statistically significant and also has an effect. Mainstream political parties in villages with a high share of Roma population are 1.11 times more likely to nominate Roma than political parties in localities with smaller shares of the Roma population, without losing any of the predictability power, as the results are generalizable at a confidence interval of 99.99%. One example would be the case of Lungani (Iași county), a village with a Roma population of 32% and where four out of five mainstream political parties had Roma candidates. Similarly, in Sâg (Sălaj county), where the Roma represent 21% of the population, all three political parties that ran in the 2016 local elections included Roma candidates on their lists. The size of effect is not stronger because we have many parties with Roma candidates in localities where the Roma represent 1-2% of the population, e.g., Comarna (Iași county), Dobrin or Letca (both in Sălaj county). Similarly, in Umbrărești (Galați county), the Roma population is below 6% of the total population and both PSD and UNPR had a Roma candidate on their lists.

This confirms the expectation formulated in the theoretical chapter according to which mainstream political parties use Roma candidates as a strategy to maintain their electoral stability and not because they are interested in defending Roma interests. The examples from the second section showed how having Roma candidates in one locality becomes a more common practice as soon as the Roma make up over 5% of the population (although there are some examples to the contrary as well) and political parties are willing to give more than one position on the party lists to Roma candidates, as well winnable positions (that have real chances of winning a mandate) when the Roma represent an important share of population (over 30%). The size of the Roma population seems to be an important factor, as once they represent an important share of the population, such a practice becomes so ‘contagious’ (Matland and Studlar, 1996) that all mainstream political parties will make use of it, as was the case in Lungani or Sâg.

Although the coefficient of H1 is statistically significant, the effect is very small: a large political party is 1.02 more likely to nominate Roma candidates than a smaller political party, as also shown in the section that discussed the differences between political parties. Three examples, one from each county, could clarify this result. In Sălaj, the example comes from Buciumeni, where the electoral competition was between four political parties: two small (ALDE and UNPR), one medium (PNL)<sup>35</sup>, and one large (PSD). Out of these four political parties, one small (ALDE) and one medium (PNL) political party had Roma candidates. In Miroslovești (Iași), there were also four political parties competing, two small (PMP and PNL) and two large (PSD and UNPR). Of the two Roma candidates who were nominated, one was on the list of a large political party (PSD) and one on the list of a small political party (PNL). In Galați, in Umbrărești, the competition was between four small political parties (ALDE,

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<sup>35</sup> Although at the national level certain political parties can be classified as large, at the local level there can be different classifications. This can be seen in the examples in this paragraph, where, by looking at the number of seats obtained by each political party, PNL was classified as a medium party.

PMP, PNL and UNPR) and one large political party (PSD). Here too, the large political party and one small party (UNPR) had one Roma candidate.

One possible explanation for the opposite direction of this effect might be associated with the recruitment potential. Thus, smaller political parties, due to their weak organizational capacity, suffer also from a low recruitment potential, as they do not always manage to have offices in all localities. This drawback is reflected in the number of mandates small parties win, as they do not manage to attract electorally valent candidates. Consequently, it could be that smaller parties cannot convince Roma candidates to run on their lists, perhaps because of their low prospect of winning (many) mandates. At the same time, due to the low recruitment potential, they might be afraid of losing Romanian candidates if they place Roma candidates on their lists, considering the widespread discriminatory attitudes toward the Roma. Furthermore, they might also be afraid of losing the Romanian electorate, if they do not have strong candidates. In contrast, larger political parties have better winning prospects, as well as high recruitment potential. Looking at the correlation between the size of the party and re-nomination, there is a strong effect ( $r = .593$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This suggests that incumbents can be encountered more frequently among larger political parties. Again, examples to this effect can be provided from all counties under consideration in this study: PNL Drăgănești and PSD Ivești in Galați; PNL Mironeasa and PSD Ciurea in Iași; PNL Zimbor and PSD Creaca in Sălaj it is. As already mentioned in the theoretical chapter, incumbents can help political parties maintain their electoral stability, because once a voter has an affinity for an incumbent, he or she will vote for the party on whose list the incumbent competes, irrespective of all other considerations; consequently, they have less to lose if they include Roma candidates as well. However, as seen from the data presented above, the effect is very low. If smaller political parties do not always 'afford' to include Roma candidates on their lists, larger political parties have less to lose, as their electoral stability is maintained through incumbents. However, if their electoral stability is assured, they might not need Roma candidates at all, as already mentioned in the theoretical chapter.

The empirical evidence also confirms H2, although the coefficient is not statistically significant, but it has an even higher strength than Roma population size (this of course if we compare just the odd ratios). Questions are raised as to why, despite having a medium effect, change of party leadership is not statistically significant, considering the important role of party leaders in candidate selection processes, as well as in electoral campaigns. The results of the correlation show that, opposite to what it was hypothesized, no change of the party leadership is associated with Roma nomination, making older party leaders more likely to be associated with proposing Roma candidates. If we look at the correlations between leadership change and other variables, it can be noticed it has a high negative association with re-nomination rate ( $r = -.355$ ,  $p < .01$ ), all the other associations being limited. This means that older party leaders are associated with a higher number of incumbents, as well as with Roma nomination.

There could be two different explanations at work here. One possible explanation could be that older leaders, benefiting from the higher number of incumbents, have some leeway to also nominate Roma candidates. Regardless of the potential of a Roma candidate or concerns about the reaction of the electorate, older party leaders, due to their incumbents, can balance the electoral score. New party leaders, on the other hand, cannot count on the advantages brought by incumbents and thus they have to factor in both the positive and the negative effects of including Roma candidates on the party lists. Again, as the Roma face widespread discrimination, the inclusion of Roma candidates might decrease their electoral support from the majority population. However, it is not only that older leaders have a longer experience in



party leadership, they are mainly also the leaders of larger political parties. The negative statistically significant relationship between leadership change and size of the party, with a moderate effect ( $r = -.360$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicates that political parties that have recently passed through leadership change have a smaller size than those that have not. This result is mainly driven by PSD and PNL, which, having been on the political scene for a longer time and having stronger organizations, are less motivated to change their leaders. This confirms the fact that, once in power, it is rare for political leaders to be changed, especially when they have their own strong teams of incumbents, and that new leaders are less able to win many mandates in their first participation in elections.

Another possible explanation for the lack of statistically significant effect of this variable is related to the party leaders themselves. It might be the case that other personal factors, such as norms or stereotypes, might be so widespread that they compel party leaders not to choose Roma persons as candidates unless the party's electoral chances of winning are low and the size of the Roma population in a locality could improve the electoral result. Either way, the time since the party leader came to leadership is not so important, but there might be other intermediary factors that affect the decisions of the leaders, as will be shown in the following chapters, and that underline the importance of party leadership.

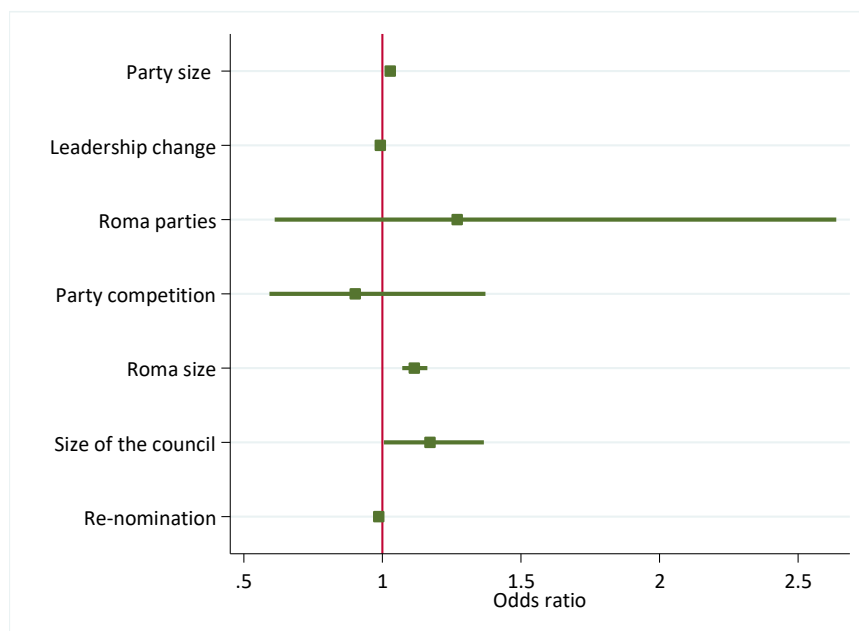
Similar to H2, there is empirical evidence for H4, but it is not statistically significant. This also goes against the hypothesized effect, as the absence of Roma political parties does not appear to favor the nomination of Roma candidates. On the contrary, the presence of Roma parties augments the likelihood of mainstream parties nominating Roma candidates. For example, in each county there were cases where there were Roma nominations from mainstream and Roma political parties alike, such as in Dagâța or Dolhești (Iași county), Ivești or Movileni (Galați county), and Nușfalău or Agrij (Sălaj county). In Dagâța and Agrij, for example, both PNL and PSD had one/two Roma candidates each, while in Movileni ALDE and PNL had one Roma candidate each. The opposite can happen as well though, as in Băbeni or Bălan (Sălaj county), Liești (Galați county), or Valea Seacă (Iași county), where there despite there being no Roma political parties competing, none of the mainstream political parties had Roma candidates on their lists. One possible explanation is that, contrary to the theories of ethnic voting, members of the Roma minority might not necessarily give their electoral support only to Roma political parties just because they are ethnic parties that by their very nature claim to defend only Roma interests. They might give the opportunity to mainstream political parties to persuade them, either because they are aware that Roma parties would have less power in the local councils in comparison with mainstream political parties or because in time they have lost their trust in the capacities of Roma parties to defend Roma interests, as shown also by the decreasing support that Roma parties have had in recent years (McGarry, 2010; European Roma Rights Centre, 2012).

Next, H3 is not confirmed either. The results of the correlation ( $r = .051$ , not statistically significant) show that it goes against the hypothesized effect, as higher competition does not favor the inclusion of Roma candidates. Although it has been hypothesized that political parties are sensitive to the electoral environment when the number of competitors grows, as they need new strategies to attract new voters, such as members of the Roma community, it seems that the theoretical arguments do not receive empirical support, at least with respect to Roma voters. Examples that support the statistical results could be Nușfalău (Sălaj county), where there were only two mainstream political parties competing and both had Roma candidates. Similarly, in Fildu de Jos (Sălaj county) there were only two mainstream political parties participating in elections and one of them had a Roma candidate on its party list. In contrast, in Valcău de Jos

(Sălaj county), there were three political parties competing and no Roma candidates, while in Ivești (Galați county) there were five political parties and only one Roma candidate. Questions might arise as to how responsive Roma voters are to Roma candidacies, as well to political parties that make such nominations. Indirectly, this has been suggested also in the second section, where it has been shown that the only instances when more than one political party had Roma candidates occurred when the size of the Roma minority was over 15% of the population; otherwise, a maximum of one political party per village included Roma candidates on its lists.

Model 3 shows that neither the size of the council nor re-nomination are statistically significant, namely the size of the council has a weak effect with an odd-ratio of 1.14, while re-nomination rate has a negative effect on the nomination of Roma candidates (0.981). This confirms the theoretical reasoning according to which the effect of these two variables is very limited, as shown in Figure 2.

*Figure 2: The effects on Roma candidate nomination*



## Conclusion

The findings of this chapter are threefold. First of all, the first section has confirmed that Roma are generally not included by mainstream political parties, neither as candidates nor as councilors. Roma are under-represented across the three counties and, surprisingly, the county with the lowest share of Roma population, Iași, had the highest number of candidates, while Sălaj and Galați, although having respectively a medium and high share of Roma population, displayed the highest levels of under-representation. Political parties appear to be motivated to include Roma candidates on their lists as long as the share of Roma is over 4%, a percentage close to the electoral threshold. Great variation has been found also between political parties. The highest percentage of Roma candidates has been found on the lists of the two largest political parties, PSD and PNL, at considerable distance from smaller political parties. With regard to Roma councilors, minority representation occurred only on the lists of PSD and PNL.

The results of the correlation showed a positive statistically significant relationship between the presence Roma political parties, the size of the party, the size of the Roma community in a locality and Roma nomination. However, the logistic regression has shown that the only factor that increases the likelihood of Roma nomination is the size of the Roma community. This confirms the overall argument in the theoretical chapter, according to which Roma nomination is related to the electoral resources a political party has or does not have. The numbers above showed how the phenomenon of minority nominations appears when the percentage of the Roma in a locality is close to the electoral threshold, i.e., when the presence of a Roma candidate on the lists could be expected to change the number of mandates a party can obtain. Yet, although not all the predictor variables have received empirical support, as they did not have statistically significant effects, this does not mean that the theoretical framework which focuses on both intra- and inter-party factors is weak. There might be other intra/inter-party variables that are not included in the study but that might have an effect on Roma nomination, as well as inter/intra-party factors that cannot be measured with statistical methods, as the next qualitative chapters show.

The implications of these findings reach beyond the case study analyzed here. At a normative level, the results provide important input for the theory of minority representation. Once ethnic nomination is linked to the size of the minority group, mainstream political parties cannot but be characterized as reluctant toward ethnic representation. As any type of minority political representation is intertwined with the struggle of the mainstream political parties for the monopoly of power, ethnic nominations have an instrumental value, and the proportionality between group size and number of candidates is far from equal. Although nomination does not automatically transform candidates into representatives and political parties still have control over the position of the ethnic candidates on their electoral party lists, they still make recourse to what may be called in this case a symbolic act only when the electoral competition dictates it. This reconfirms that political parties act as gatekeepers and that even if all the Roma candidates had won a seat, their representation would have still been precarious. This has consequences not only for the number of ethnic candidates, but also for their quality, as there is a predisposition to choose only candidates who would bring enough votes, restricting in this case the pool of potential candidates and implicitly their representativeness for the Roma / ethnic community. Especially because Roma party organization at local level is precarious, this leaves a group of a significant size (at the national level) without the opportunity to express their interests.

## **Chapter 5 - Party organization: size and change of party leadership**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter has showed that out of the five inter- and intra-party variables, only the size of the Roma groups in a certain locality influences Roma nomination. The inclusion of Roma on the electoral lists is connected with the electoral support a political party can expect to obtain by having Roma candidates. Where the size of the Roma community is larger, political parties can expect to be repaid for their ‘efforts’; where size is smaller, this is seen as not worth the effort. Considering the weak statistical relations found in the analysis in Chapter 4, this chapter tackles Roma nomination from a different angle and uses qualitative data from interviews carried out with 39 local party leaders to expand our knowledge and to have a broader picture of the process. As such, this chapter has two main goals: to provide additional and more in-depth evidence that supports the previous findings, and to unveil new factors accounting for Roma nomination. The qualitative analysis of the two components of party organization – the party size and the time of party leadership change –, as well as of incumbency and the size of the council, two control variables in the statistical analysis, reveals that clientelism,<sup>36</sup> personalization and informality of the selection process make Roma nomination more about power supremacy and control than electoral gains.

This chapter is structured in four main sections, dealing with each of the two intra-party variables mentioned above, as well as the control variables. The first section is dedicated to the size of the party and discusses the difference between smaller and larger political parties with regard to their incentives to add Roma candidates to their lists, as well as explaining why the size of the party does not have the expected impact. The second section moves forward and examines how party leaders, depending on their time holding the leadership of the party, attract their voters, and why, contrary to the theoretical assumptions, this does not constitute a vital element for Roma nomination. The following two sections bring to light the aspects that justify why the two control variables are not statistically significant. The last section provides the conclusions to this chapter.

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<sup>36</sup> Clientelism is understood here as ‘a particular mode of “exchange” between electoral constituencies as principals and politicians as agents in democratic systems. This exchange is focused on particular classes of goods’ (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007, p. 7), being different from party patronage. Although similar to a certain extent, these two phenomena have different target groups. The former is intended toward voters (Mares and Young, 2019), while the latter, which is about the capacity of political parties to appoint people to positions in public and semi-public life (Kopecký, Mair and Spirova, 2012), targets party activists (Mares and Young, 2019). A further differentiation needs to be made between positive and negative clientelism (Mares and Young, 2019). Whereas in the first case the exchange of votes between voters and political parties is beneficial for the agents, as they are rewarded for their good behavior through the provision of goods, money etc., in the second case the voters are punished in case they do not behave accordingly, e.g., with loss of welfare benefits, jobs etc.

## **5.1. Party size**

The following three subsections, which deal with the link between the size of the party and Roma nomination, complement the statistical results from Chapter 4 and pinpoint two main aspects: the connection between the size of the party and their electoral resources, and the misuse of power of local incumbent political parties. By analyzing how both large and small political parties maintain their electoral support, it is argued that Roma nomination is not as rewarding for small political parties as it is for large political parties. As previously confirmed in the literature, nomination is a rational act guided by the goal to maintain electoral stability and any decision about candidate nomination will weigh potential electoral losses and gains (Dancygier, 2017). As a result, political parties will stick to the electoral strategy that better suits their interests, considering that not all electoral strategies are available to all political parties. As some electoral strategies are more profitable than others, they offer different degrees of freedom of action for nominating minority candidates, leading to differences between large and small political parties. If for larger political parties stability is a function of larger and denser networks and social connections, for smaller political parties it is a function of competent candidates; as a result, Roma nomination is less electorally harmful for large political parties than for smaller ones. However, the missing piece of the puzzle to understand Roma nomination is not the size of the party per se, but rather the behavior of the local incumbent political parties that can misuse their power – and gain Roma votes by threatening Roma voters. As local incumbent political parties are wrongly perceived by the Roma voters as the givers, and not the distributors, of social benefits, they get access to an exclusive weapon of manipulation of the Roma electorate. Roma voters are beneficiaries of these social benefits, which are often their main source of income, and because of this economic vulnerability they are dependent on those political parties that distribute such aid, which can subsequently control and transform them into a ‘reserved’ group of voters. This simultaneously discourages other political parties from seeing Roma candidates as a potential source of votes. Once Roma voters are ‘reserved’ for a certain political party, the equation between gains and losses is negative for other political parties, regardless of their size; thus, Roma nomination becomes a less profitable electoral strategy.

### **5.1.1. Large political parties**

This subsection focuses on the analysis of the electoral strategies of larger political parties and finds confirmation of the argument present in the literature according to which large political parties are less in danger of losing electoral support, as they are indeed more appealing for the electorate, but also for potential candidates. This affinity is not the result of the satisfaction of the voters with the performance of the political party, but mainly of the social connections between the electorate / candidates and the local party leader, which leads them to share similar interests and a certain level of trust. The larger the network / social connections, the larger the party. Such a political party is then less in danger of losing their electoral resources as the people, be it voters or candidates, already have a certain level of trust in the party and are less likely to be interested in or to contest decisions regarding the selection of candidates. This also provides larger parties with more leeway to have Roma candidates on their lists, as once the local party leader is trusted, the voters and the candidates will remain loyal, regardless of their stereotypes or negative attitudes about the Roma. Yet, this offers no incentives for Roma nomination, as there is a lack of interest to ensure a ‘fair and inclusive representation’, unless the minority candidate does not bring her or his share of votes and/or is not also part of the

network of the party leader. This mechanism can be illustrated through the stories related by local party leaders.

Electoral support / appeal, most of the local party leaders believed, is the result of mainly party factors, especially the social contacts of the local party leaders. One local party leader explained: 'I would compare this electoral activity more with marketing; it is exactly the same thing, the network matters very much. In politics there are interests and friends, that's why things do not work in our country' (R 5). Similarly, another local party leader believed that '(a larger party) is better consolidated in the territory, any new party that appears now, if it does not have local organization (in terms of connections), it would be a miracle to gain 40% of the mandate, unless it is known' (R 20).

Two additional factors, related to party and non-party factors, have been identified. With regard to the other party-related factors, some party leaders mentioned the party organization of the national political party, mainly the popularity of the national party and/or national leader, as an element that impacts on the size of the local party. Although the votes at the local level are not won through the label of the party itself, it is still an advantage when the candidate is part of a party that is known at the national level and with a certain experience in elections. After all, even though parties are in general just some labels for the voters, some of them look more appealing than others. Party leaders claim that a small and new political party indeed has to spend more time convincing the electorate, because they have to explain and to introduce the party itself, while larger parties are already known to the electorate:

'A larger political party has also a history and has an advantage because of this, it is better known in comparison with UNPR, which is a party founded 10 year ago. It cannot be known in the same manner; some time has to pass for it to be known as PSD or PNL' (R 4).

'A larger political party knows what it has to do, it has all the power behind it, it has all the previous support. It is more difficult for a smaller political party to enter (the political arena), especially in F, as it has only two villages and it is more difficult to apply a strategy and to win much popularity. In our specific case we were all new people and it was more difficult to make ourselves known, but in the future people will know us and I hope this will change the situation' (R 9).

Concerning factors not related to the party, other local party leaders mentioned the national media as having an important role in voting decisions. Although national media might not be the main source of information when it comes to decisions in local elections, the information that media provides about national parties and their leaders can have a negative or positive impact, R 8 and R 3 argued. Similarly, R 24 said:

'The first 50% of the chances are made by TV programs, depending on what they present. Earlier people would go to church, now they sit in front of the TV and ... the first ideas are formed depending on what it is offered by the TV programs, depending on which TV programs the electorate watches and (only) then the platforms of larger political parties (are considered)'.

Yet, contrary to what is assumed in the literature, performance was rarely mentioned as an important factor in maintaining a stable electorate, except in very few cases. One example would be B: 'you know why it is harder? People (ask) sir what have you done? If it has been seen that a local political party has done what has been promised, then people in the next

mandate will go again with it as it has done something' (R 19). Similarly, in A, one PNL member claimed that his party managed to win another mandate because of its achievements: roads, wholesale market, rehabilitation of the medical centre, new building of the local council, etc. He considered that good performance translates into positive electoral results.

According to the local party leaders, one of the reasons for this weak connection between the size of the party and performance is the precarious and debatable meaning of performance itself, which can be easily attributed and misused, especially to and by local incumbent political parties. Holding both the function of mayor and the majority of councilors in the local councils, it is easy for them to claim credit for whatever achievements were registered and to use them to their advantage as proof of their worthiness, even though they were not the ones who had initiated them:

'(...) roads and everything, this was the merit of the previous mayor, including the open funding from European funds, but the new mayor came at the right time. How do people see this? Look, he made roads for us, we will vote for him. Although it was not his merit, as I told you, when he came everything was done (in terms of funding applications), and he reaped the benefit. In this situation, what can we say (to convince the voters to give us their vote)?' (R 29).

'The mayor receives the votes, as it is normal, as he has the power and can do something for the population. I have nothing against the current mayor, he has done something and it has been noticed. He could not lose as you know how it is, people have to see that you build something, rehabilitate something, even though you are not the main actor, they look for what has been done and then it will be known that the mayor has done that, although he is not the main actor behind it' (R 19).

When it comes to the mechanisms behind social networks and electoral stability, there are two distinct ones. On the one hand, they can attract the votes of a part of the electorate by convincing (more easily) persons they already know; consequently, the denser the network, the larger the pool of sympathizers. On the other hand, such networks facilitate the recruitment of their candidates. Belonging to the same network, the members have repeated and frequent contact, meaning that they have a relationship based on trust and on shared interests, as well as fruitful cooperation. This makes it easier for the party leaders to approach these persons that are part of their closed circle. As party leaders are in general popular members of the community, their social contacts (or at least the ones the party leader will tackle) tend to be similar persons, who, through their charisma or social position inside the community, are able to attract an important number of votes. In this case, the candidates act as brokers connecting the party with the voters, as being electorally appealing persons, they will bring an important number of votes for the party. The network works as a ramification point in which each candidate further increases the size of the electorate of a political party. Party size is thus, as mentioned above, about the access that political parties have to as many persons as possible in each village and, most importantly, to those key persons who also have high electoral potential: 'in the countryside there are blood relations, of business relations between persons and then each (party leader) goes with their own persons' (R 10).

'They are my collaborators. They are people with whom I collaborate, even though they have not been local councilors so far, I collaborated with them at the level of the communities from where they come. They are persons that I consider to have quality and who represent me through what they do. Me being the leader, I am

defined by the people I select, I associate my name with them, and it is logical to be like this. If I have chosen them, it means that I am compatible with them and then the results should be better or worse, depending on the (social) position they have in the territory' (R 32).

More importantly for this project, networks do not only translate into electoral resources, but offer leeway to also add minority candidates to the party lists, as party leaders are less likely to have such decisions questioned by their own candidates and their voters. The use of networks confers a higher recruitment potential to larger political parties, as they can convince people from their own network more easily than other parties. In turn, these candidates are less prone to contest the decisions of party leaders to nominate Roma, due to their shared interests and a certain level of trust. When it comes to their voters, since performance is not the main factor in maintaining a stable electorate, the composition of the electoral list of larger parties is less likely to be contested too. If performance had been a more important factor, perhaps party leaders would have had less incentives to add Roma candidates to their party lists, as the Romanian electorate might have questioned their capacity and reliability to provide the 'common good' for the majority once they claim to also defend the interests of the Roma. However, as candidates for the position of councilor or mayor win their votes through their own connections, social contacts, and charisma, there is a likelihood they become engaged in a mutually beneficial relationship with their voters and that the voters will remain loyal to these candidates, as long as they have a good and strong connection. Additionally, as voters are attracted because of their relationship with a certain candidate, there are less chances that these voters are interested in the composition of the entire party list and that they would stop giving their support to a certain political party just because the list includes Roma candidates as well. In this case, the entire local political party comes to be associated with the individual with whom the voter has a personal connection.

Additionally, the interviews showed that the high recruitment potential of the larger political parties impact not only on whether they, as a party, can nominate Roma, but also to overcome the possible issues related to the relative lack of supply of Roma candidates. As they have a higher number of winnable places on their lists than smaller political parties, they can more easily offer a winnable position. Consequently, they do not run the risk of being refused by Roma candidates, who, in theory, should have greater incentives to accept an offer which makes it almost 100% certain that they will be councilors: 'if they do not have an electable place, they do not accept' (R 35) or 'yes (it is difficult to find Roma), as those who have businesses and are well seen, those are already taken, you cannot convince them' (R 6).

### **5.1.2. Small parties**

This section expands the discussion on party strategies and electoral resources, focusing on small political parties. In contrast to large political parties, the leaders of the small political parties possess weaker social connections. Although they also use their networks, these are not sufficient to ensure an important number of votes that would allow continuous access to power, and as such they have to find other ways to attract and mobilize voters. They build their electoral strategies on the weaknesses of the larger political parties in order to attract the voters who are either not mobilized or who are angered by the practices of larger parties. These voters, although fewer in number, are a way of obtaining some votes, increasing the chances of small parties to obtain one or two councilor mandates. However, the connection between the political party and the voters / candidates is not so stable, neither is it based on trust. Being motivated by the wish



to fight larger political parties, small political parties have to prove their worthiness through the candidates they nominate. Contrary to what it has been hypothesized, weaker electoral appeal and resources work against Roma candidates, due to two factors. First, the restrictive candidacy rules which place the emphasis on professional preparation and education render the Roma less likely to fit in. Second, the voters might not be so tolerant to accept a Roma candidate to represent their interests.

In most of the interviews with the party leaders of small political parties, the latter have been described as different, as an alternative to the “dirty politics” of the larger political parties. Small political parties are distinguished, the party leaders argue, by different visions, they are more sensitive to smaller details and have different goals too. In order to distance themselves from the “dirty ones”, the leaders of the small parties argue that they take the electoral race seriously, invest time in the design of their candidates’ lists and, thus, use different criteria than large political parties when they select their candidates. Three reasons for such a behavior have been given. First, being part of the opposition, the supreme goal of small parties is to have well-prepared people that can confront the members of large parties. Although they also search for people with electoral weight in order to increase their votes, they also look for persons who have a critical spirit, are capable to initiate their own projects, and who do not agree with everything that the mayors say or intend to do:

‘No matter how good you are (as a political party), no matter how much you need a person with votes, you also need a person who can think. We, for example, thinking that as we will anyway be in opposition, since we will not win the majority of votes, we guided ourselves by this strategy: if they (the incumbent party) preferred (one person) who would not open their mouth for four years but brought votes, I would not have done anything in the council if I took one of those. I needed someone with whom to talk, to advise, to contradict their crazy ideas’ (R 2).

Similarly, in B, the president of PSD argued that smaller political parties only have a chance to take some votes from a larger party if they have well-prepared persons. As this is a personalized campaign, it is important that the candidates have different thoughts and education in order to distinguish themselves from the candidates of large parties.

Secondly, this different approach is an attempt to compensate for the small parties’ limited resources, as although they also make use of their social networks, these are less developed and thus insufficient to ensure their electoral success: ‘the rest of the parties, they use their network: he votes me as he is my godfather, neighbor, brother etc.; it is this small mass of persons around me and they do not betray you. And these can attract one or the other, but we cannot pass to the other voters outside this barrier’ (R 6).

The matter is acknowledged also by the leaders of the large political parties. When discussing the differences between smaller and larger parties, some gave the example of USR, a new and small national political party, which managed to pass the 5% threshold in the parliamentary elections of 2016. According to their statements, USR might have gotten an even higher score in the national elections if they had local organizations as well. The USR leaders acted mainly in the urban environment, but they did not have access to influential local persons and by not having this access, their success was limited. Similarly, if we look at the new political parties which were created by ex-members of large political parties, the argument holds as well. Their electoral success was dependent on the local networks they had and not only on their own popularity. As they left large parties, they did not manage to have followers in all local municipalities and their electoral results were modest, barely passing the electoral threshold.

Thus, the winning political parties are those that are the best ‘infiltrated’ among influential people in the municipality, as unless the size of their network is sufficient, the number of votes will not be too high.

Thirdly, the image of the national party leader does not seem to be so beneficial either. By the virtue of their small size, the actions of the national party might not be so obvious, or they might even be unknown to the local population in comparison with those of the large parties. Also, their national party leader might not be so well-known, successful, or might even have a negative image, judging by their electoral results. Under these conditions, a small party might face instead certain burdens because of the image of the leader or the national political party. If the national leader has made a good impression, then it is easier to convince the voters; if, however, he has not, then according to the statements of the local party leaders, they have to invest more resources to attract certain voters. PMP was mentioned as such an example, where the fact that the ex-president Traian Basescu was the national party leader led certain voters to completely disregard the party.

The use of the so-called ‘opposition strategy’ shows the same rational behavior of the smaller parties, in which the benefits and costs of the potential candidates are carefully weighed. This indirectly affects Roma nomination, as the candidacy requirements are not easily met by Roma persons. The general convention is that Roma do not have enough electoral potential as persons, and that they lack education as well. ‘Potential’ comes either from a carrier or previous involvement into societal affairs. This is not the case for most of the Roma who, because of their history and past status in society (starting from slavery until after the fall of communism), have had less chances of having access to these positions. Lack of education translates into fewer competences and skills, and, as not so many Roma have access to higher education, they have been deprived of the opportunity of acquiring them.<sup>37</sup> This leads Roma candidates to be perceived as being unsuitable to fit in within the aforementioned pattern, that of a person capable of proposing certain projects, of being able to understand how the system works and how the legislation needs to be interpreted in order to promote the common good of the society and not that of the large parties.

The implications of the opposition strategy are not limited only to the exclusion of Roma due to electoral requirements, but also because they make small political parties fear contestation of their decision to nominate Roma candidates from two different groups. First, there is the possibility of contestation coming from their voters. As small political parties derive their votes from the electorate due to their competent and educated candidates, they fear that any departure from these requirements could be penalized. Once voters see there are also Roma on the list, they could question the capability of the small political parties to defend their interests together with those of the Roma, but also the capacity of Roma councilors more generally: ‘larger parties have always won. Most of the times you can put the cat to run on their list and people, as I said the Romanian people are not emancipated in politics, vote with their eyes closed and (in these conditions) it can be that the cat of the neighbors can be (councilor)’ (R 39). Or, according to another respondent, ‘if they put them (the Roma) on the first places, the Romanians will not vote for them’ (R 36). Also because they might ‘inherit’ the uncertainty associated with their national leader, small political parties refrain from adding Roma candidates, as this would foster the already existent uncertainty around the party. Having both a less popular national party leader and a local Roma candidate might make it impossible for local party leaders to convince voters about their potential. Then, there is also the possibility of contestation coming from Roma candidates; the low recruitment potential of small political parties, as they have very

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<sup>37</sup> See the introduction for further details.

limited capacities to offer winnable positions on their electoral lists to Roma, could discourage Roma persons to accept potential offers, as they would be aware that their nomination is symbolic. In most cases, small political parties manage to win one or two mandates, which are usually reserved for the party leader and another influential person who can guarantee that position through the number of votes s/he brings. The second position on the electoral list could also be filled by a powerful Roma leader, who usually should be able to bring enough votes to win a mandate. However, small political parties are not willing to take this risk and usually prefer, in case they decide to approach Roma, to offer them lower positions on the list. As a result, some small party leaders said that they encountered difficulties in convincing Roma candidates to accept to be nominated on their lists: 'I told you what the deal is with the Roma, they are smart, you cannot just put them (on the list). Either you put them on an electable place, or you do not put them at all' (R 33); or 'I wished for a candidate, I negotiated with an open-minded boy who, I don't know, probably because of the position that I offered, as I could not place him higher than place five or six, realized that he (does not have chances to become a councilor)... and decided not to get involved' (R 1).

### **5.1.3. The importance of electoral clientelism**

The previous sections revealed how the differences with regard to the electoral strategies adopted by small or large political parties impact on Roma nomination and brought several arguments to sustain the positive relationship between large parties and Roma nomination, as also disclosed by the statistical analysis. This subsection aims to clarify why, despite these incentives, large political parties have a limited number of Roma candidates on their lists, as well as the lack of statistical significance of the size of the party that became visible in the logistic regression. The empirical evidence from the interviews indicates that the driving mechanism for nomination is the informal control and manipulation that incumbent local political parties can exert over Roma voters, making them loyal either through the distribution of social benefits and "vote buying" or even with threats of losing welfare benefits.

As already mentioned, Roma communities are vulnerable communities who are dependent on those who can provide them with access to welfare benefits because they face high rates of unemployment. This was also mentioned by local party leaders, who argued that:

'Roma communities do not know whom they elect; they do not know how to vote. A big proportion of them choose the electoral sign, a lot of them are prepared beforehand by those who finance them on social lines: see the apple, the tulip, the rose. The week before elections the social aid is distributed, different works in the community, to attract them... after that, good-bye' (R 39)

'Roma are schooled, are threatened, easily bought with the social aid. If you do not support me, those from power would say, I cut your social aid. And then the gipsy accepts, you can promise him/her even a house at election day. I know so many who come and complain that they cut their heating aid, social aid and that they take them to work and mock them... There are all kinds of problems and people are ignorant, have no idea, they are deceived' (R 17)

Since the job market is unsteady and unreliable, most Roma rely on the social benefits offered by the state as their only source of income. Taking advantage of the fact that Roma voters do not know how social benefits work, that local incumbent political parties are not givers but

distributors of these aids, and that practices of withholding them are illegal and can be reported, the local incumbent political parties manipulate and control this group of voters. The negotiation for votes takes place on an individual basis between the voter (and his family) and the mayor and/or his councilors, whenever they interact, especially around elections, thus circumventing the need to have Roma candidates to facilitate and convince Roma to give their votes to mainstream political parties.

Party leaders emphasized that this manipulation can take different forms, distinguishing between “softer” and “harsher” forms of clientelism. Softer clientelism implies that the incumbent local political parties use state resources to ‘reward’ Roma voters for their electoral support. One type of reward, which could be encountered in some localities, is the distribution of social benefits just before the elections, as a way of “kindly” reminding Roma voters who helps them to survive and who has helped them more, or by promising to give social benefits: ‘I managed (to convince) just one and in the election week the mayor called him and asked how many relatives he had. If they would give him their votes, he will give them all social benefits’ (R 17). Alternatively, incumbent parties can use their position of power to compromise the opposition, as was the case in E, where a high number of persons benefitted from social aid. Here the local incumbent party controlled the Roma voters by saying that the opposition would cut off social aid, in order to prevent people from voting for other parties. This way, they pretended to be the “good guys” who provide Roma with financial support.

Another type of manipulation involves vote buying. Two different types of vote buying were mentioned by the respondents. One type involves the organization of, for example, different types of feasts, using public money. Using the excuse to celebrate different events, such the day of the locality, the local incumbent party can provide the voters with free food or alcohol, as well as certain forms of entertainment, with the purpose of convincing the electorate to give them their vote. This practice is very convincing and efficient to attract those voters who, once again, belong to the lower economic strata. Although the incidence of these practices has decreased over time, they are still present. One example would be I, where the opposition mentioned the organization of different events by the incumbent party in order to attract Roma voters, among others, through the provision of free goods. The second type of vote buying occurs through the direct provision of money. An example illustrating this is H, where a party leader declared that he caught people working for the mayor distributing money to those voters who voted for him the night after the elections.

In other situations the persuasion can take harsher forms, which involve threats. As the following quotes show, incumbent local parties exploit any service that is offered by the local council to the citizens in their favor to control voters, especially Roma voters, be it building authorizations, property titles, or different types of social benefits:

‘Initially, I made a list, after two days six of my people withdrew, I do not know whether they were blackmailed or because of the fear of being in conflict with the local power. I searched six other people. I found a woman, but she was blackmailed as she had social benefits, they said they will cut them. Later on, I found two other women. It was confusing, as a lot of people refrain from appearing on the list, if secretly they wanted to vote me, they did not want to show on my list...this is the fear of the “kingdom”’ (R 10).

‘When they went to each voter and distributed the electoral flyers, they also said “but you know that I do not know what (e.g., a building) is without authorization or but you know that your daughter gets social benefits, right? If you do not vote for

me, do you think she will still get them?” ... (and then the interrogated person replies): “No, I just talked to him (the other party), but I will not vote for him”... And so he stopped the voters’ (R 2).

Aware of these practices, the other political parties can refrain from adding Roma candidates to their lists as they know Roma nomination will not be effective or not an option at all: ‘the PSD owns them through bribery. I was forbidden to nominate candidates as they were told if they had social benefits and they come with me, the social benefits will be cut’ (R 26)

‘I discussed with the Roma, those who knew me and who had problems, the ones I helped. It is true that a lot of families have problems; there are a lot of children with precarious living situations. I tried also in the previous years to help them within the legal framework and this was my word of persuasion to them. But I told you in F who catches them (controls them), that (political party) will win (the elections) and this is bad for other parties’ (R 7).

Thus, the biggest challenge that minority candidates face are the corrupt and illegal practices, such as intimidation or vote buying, used by the incumbent local political parties to maintain their power. The recourse to clientelism in local politics has three main implications. First of all, it eliminates the possibilities for a fair party competition. By providing incumbent political parties with advantages, it reinforces the ‘incumbency effects’, which means that opposition political parties start with a drawback, as they do not have access to the same opportunities to mobilize the Roma voters. Although they try to approach Roma voters, they do it with the sole interest of winning some Roma votes and not to nominate candidates. Second, it enhances inequality. As certain voters, in this case the Roma, can be controlled through coercion, their free will is over-ruled and they are doubly discriminated in comparison to the other voters who have a better socio-economic position and who are not forced to accept such practices. Third, it leads to a biased representation or to no representation at all. Although Roma voters might not be happy with the ‘performance’ of the clientelistic party, they are obliged to re-elect it because of the conditionality of the relationship, thus breaking the accountability chain.

## **5.2. Timing of leadership change**

This section will focus on two aspects: personalization and its importance for party leaders and the informality of the selection process. It re-confirms and further underlines the findings of the previous section, as well as those from the literature on personalization, according to which local party leaders are at the center of local politics. It is not only that they need larger and denser networks, but they have to be popular and charismatic. The interviews showed that the personalization of politics provides easier access to political process; however, it does not protect local party leaders from the specific challenges that are associated with the time of leadership, rendering both new and older party leaders likely to include Roma candidates on their lists. Yet, the main reason why neither old nor new party leaders nominate Roma too often is due to their prejudices and stereotypes against Roma groups, which automatically disqualify Roma persons. Moreover, this confirms that when it comes to factors related to party leaders, it is the informal and biased selection rules that put the Roma at a disadvantage.

### 5.2.1. Personalization and Roma nomination

The existence of political parties at the local level is dependent on their leaders. This is a candidate-centered environment where access to power is conditioned on charisma or popularity. The inclusive / exclusive character of personalization which simultaneously encourages the entrance of newcomers into politics, but only of popular ones, challenges the notion that old party leaders are better connected with the voters. Both new and old party leaders face their own challenges when it comes to their connection to the voters. New party leaders face challenges because they do not have political experience and their behavior cannot be easily predicted by the voters. Similarly, old party leaders face challenges because of their predictable behavior, especially if they have not proven their worthiness during their mandates, as the effect of personalization fades away in time if it is not complemented with another electoral strategy. Old party leaders, especially those with many mandates, might indeed be more predisposed to include Roma candidates on their lists, as for them it might be the last round of the game and they are willing to take all the risks in order to maintain their access to power. However, this is not a practice exclusively reserved for this category of party leaders. This means that the consequences of leadership change can be more or less devastating for the party, as its fortunes depend on how convincing the new party leader is, as well as that both new and old party leaders are susceptible to use Roma candidates as a compensation strategy.

The personalization of local politics can be illustrated through different quotes, from party leaders belonging to large and small parties alike, irrespective of their ideological positions or the time for which they enjoyed leadership of the parties: 'Here (at the local level) it all depends on the person, on how well you know to communicate, on how involved you are' (R 7). Similarly, another party leader from PNL claims that:

'It all depends on the type of person, how representative you are in the commune, what you do, with how many people you interact, and it depends also on your own way of being, as automatically if I sympathize with a person I will vote for him, although I might not have a connection with him. This does not mean that older leaders are better than those who aspire, it depends on the person who tries' (R 20).

In certain cases, indeed, personalization can be intertwined with the superior economic resources of the leader: 'To make yourself known is not difficult, again, it is a matter of the person and of their financial force, this is what matters... if the person has financial potential it is not that difficult (to win), if he is educated and less financially potent, then it is difficult' (R 28). In the words of another respondent:

'The candidate for the mayor has to be well seen in the village, to be honest, with money, to have a certain social status, so if you do not have finances and you go to the elections with your hands into your pocket (the candidate does not bribe or provide certain goods for the voters), you come home with them like you went (...). One candidate with money can beat a smart candidate, no matter how capable that person is, if he has empty pockets, he (the wealthy one) beats him' (R 39).

It is not only that party leaders identified popularity as the most important characteristic, but looking also at the profile of the party leaders it can be seen that most of them were involved in activities which offered them a certain degree of visibility and access to the voters. Most of the

party leaders were small entrepreneurs (owners of shops, of agricultural associations etc.), engineers, doctors, or teachers, with common people being the exception. It is interesting to observe that what these functions also reveal is that, by their nature, they can help party leaders to maintain their visibility or popularity without spending too much time contacting the voters. Under these circumstances, personalization represents the main electoral strategy of both new and older party leaders.

The importance of the personalization of party leaders can be thus that, in certain cases, it can lead to situations when the party cannot be revived once the older party leaders leave: 'if I would give up the party, no one else would continue. I do not say no, but it is very hard, just if a magnate will come and so, s/he will attract them with money' (R 6) or

'I, for example, after I finish my mandate I will leave, but if I leave it will be (no party), no matter if three other people will come. This is because no one has (the same involvement), I am involved in agriculture two days a week, (...), two days I do trade, one day I am at the local council, plus other stuff' (R 17).

This may seem like over-appreciative, especially coming from the party leaders themselves, but considering that this is an environment in which the identity of those who compete matters, it should not be ruled out that the pool of people who are successful in politics is indeed so limited, as it is always the electoral potential of the person that dictates the way things work.

Yet, regardless of how handy personalization can be for party leaders, it does not insulate them from the challenges arising from the time they held the leadership of the party. In the case of old party leaders, the effect of personalization fades away and loses its strength in time, especially if party leaders only defend their own interests. After a time, popularity and charisma would not be enough to convince many voters, affecting the electoral resources of older party leaders. Party leaders confirmed the temporary character of personalization and mentioned several factors that could lead to the weakening of the connection with the voters, such as lack of performance: 'of course, if you do not accomplish what you promised, you will not get the second mandate' (R 4); corruption: 'it depends of the human quality, if there is the smallest suspicion about his legal or familial condition, then the electorate and the party members would withdraw their support, as they (the party leaders) do not have the same (human) quality' (R 34), or 'on the contrary, those who have been in politics for a long time have something stuck in their back, more or less justified, as they did (something illegal), they stole etc.' (R 1). Alternatively, this might simply have to do with the electorate growing tired of the same actors:

'No matter how good you are, there were others before, for example Ionescu. He had three mandates and, no matter how good you are, when you reach a certain threshold of saturation, in 2008 (he lost). He was mayor from the 90s, with a four-year interruption, until 2008. In 2008 he was dismissed, as no matter if he was good or bad, (the electorate) wanted a new person' (R 24).

Under these circumstances, old party leaders can include Roma candidates on their party lists. As they have already played their cards with the Romanian electorate and are aware of the fact that it would not suffice to ensure their electoral success, they can use Roma votes to counter-balance those losses. This counter-balance produced by the Roma electorate can be their last chance to access power, and as such it increases the chances of Roma nomination, as predicted by the positive correlation between old party leaders and Roma nomination.

In the case of new party leaders, the threat of electoral instability can come from the volatility of the voters, as it is difficult for a new party leader to maintain the previous electorate:

‘To change the leader, usually the leader there has been gathered something (votes), something has been accumulated. The leader is like an atom who attracts around him (people), if he does not have results, if he is weak, then he deserves to be changed, but to replace him with someone else means you lose 50% of what the other had’ (R 1).

It is not only that the party leader has to win the trust of the voters of the party he runs, but he himself has to prove that he is worthy to be trusted in front of the whole electorate if he wants to have continuity in politics. This can be challenging, as new persons are generally not well seen: ‘when someone new comes, it is more difficult to convince, if you do not have a certain position in the municipality through which you have contact with the voters and can influence them. It takes time to make yourself known’ (R 28). In the words of another respondent: ‘the first year as a party president is almost null, you barely manage to know who you are and where you are from, where you go and what you do, the party president cannot be a young person who just graduated, absolutely no’ (R 24).

Actually, popularity and charisma were not enough for any of the new leaders include this study to obtain results that would allow them to win the majority in the council or the position of mayor. The only exception is the case of C, where a new leader won the electoral race for the mayor position. His case is special though, as he was previously the vice-mayor and the old mayor, who belonged to another party, retired. In this case, this was a competition between an incumbent and the new party leader of the other party, who was new to politics as well.

Thus, the electoral challenges that new leaders face impact on Roma nomination as well, prompting some new party leaders to seek Roma candidates. Interviews showed that in fact there can be two different reasons behind such motivation. First, there is the electoral incentive, as Roma candidates could be a way to increase their electoral results: ‘everybody that nominates Roma, including myself, does it for how many relatives he has, how much influence over the others, and not for his beautiful face. They bring electoral benefits, of course they bring them’ (R1).

Second, some new party leaders may be more open minded and responsive toward diversity and minority rights: ‘but it is not that from all zones, from all the corners of the streets to be someone (as a representative), everyone has family, relatives, godfathers, not only from the middle of the village’ (R 18). As another party leader put it,

‘I would say that (having Roma candidates) brings benefits as through co-optation of an ethnic group it means that they are noticed and, having their own representative, they will have their problems defended differently. Nevertheless, we try to solve them as well and not to make any differentiation, also because we cannot do it, as they are not registered as Roma, and, even if they were, as a public servant we cannot discriminate. All the inhabitants of the village have to have equal rights and access to information’ (R 4).



### 5.2.2. Subjective assessment of Roma candidates

However, what seems to explain the generally low number of Roma candidates is the lack of formal institutional rules, which allows the norms, beliefs and stereotypes held by party leaders against the Roma to interfere in the selection process, leading to a biased outcome. As there is an overlap between the party and the party leaders, giving full autonomy to party leaders, as well as a lack of any candidacy criteria adopted by the national parties, candidates are selected according to subjective, unclear, and changing rules. Evidence from the interviews has shown that irrespective of whether new or old, belonging to small or large parties, party leaders have the same methods of candidate selection, as well as hold a generally negative opinion about the Roma. Although not explicitly recognized by all party leaders, the Roma in general are seen as persons who are not worth nominating. Whether this is framed as a supply side problem or as a rational decision made in order not to lose other voters, party leaders do tend to discriminate.

One of the biggest setbacks that party leaders underlined was the lack of education. Although the request for higher education as a condition for nomination is not a strict rule at the local level, as party leaders do not search for highly educated candidates, in the case of the Roma this seems to be problematic, because they barely know how to read or write:

‘The Roma are different, as they need to be educated, brought from a certain level in which they live to another level. What can I say, maybe in towns, where they have some education and some culture, probably they have the right and they know what to do. But here, at their level, as they do not know how to read and write, because they do not go to school, they cannot do anything, they cannot influence, decide, as they do not know anything’ (R 37).

The lack of this qualification, party leaders argue, would be in contradiction with the role of a councilor, who has to propose, read, and assess proposals, as well as to understand the legislation in general. Although a certain level of education is needed to understand how the decision-making process works, party leaders are willing to make concessions if the person is Romanian. There were complaints made by party leaders that some of the Romanian councilors are just puppets of the mayor who are not actively involved in the decision-making process and who do not have the appropriate preparation for that:

‘They behave like sectarians; they are very well trained, instructed, listen to their leaders. There were a few times when I would mock my colleagues from the PSD as I told them that you enter the meeting with your hand already raised to approve, you approve whatever the mayor says. Some true yes men’ (R 28).

‘I believe that it is a plus (incumbency) as long as you are well prepared (educated), because then you know how to frame a problem in the council, s/he knows how to interpret a law. Unfortunately, what I see at other parties (it is different), I have to say that I am sorry as these people (the other Romanian councilors from other political parties) are there (in the council) not to represent the community. Just like in Parliament, they are there just to raise the hand’ (R 7).

These situations prove that party leaders are quite subjective when they evaluate potential candidates. As they do not have certain criteria that they respect, the outcome is racialized and tends to benefit more persons with a Romanian background.

Secondly, another problem is that the evaluation of Roma candidates is not carried out on an individual basis; just because a person belongs to the Roma community, certain stereotypes that are usually attributed to the Roma as a group are applied to them. One of these stereotypes is that Roma, as an ethnicity, are inferior and unable to achieve basic things on their own. Party leaders referred to different ‘qualities’ to underline this inferiority, mainly to the fact that the Roma allegedly do not like to work and are dependent on social benefits to survive:

‘All they do is have children and use social benefits and they are happy. And now they do not even work for the people in the commune for money, this is a very big plague at the country level (social and child benefits) as it (the government) gives them money and makes them unwilling to work. I told you, if they would have a leader who would discuss and instruct them, they would know certain things, they would go to school and would evolve, but otherwise not’ (R 29).

Others connected Roma with alcohol dependence: ‘I was in their area, but I had no one to talk to, they drink alcohol and if you go in the afternoon when they are “tired”, it can end up with a scandal’ (R 39), while others just prefer to associate the Roma with lack of culture in general:

‘I did not have any racial or discriminatory reservation, but in those groups, in the Roma community, you would not find valid persons, with all good will. The human quality, the Roma community that exists in our commune is disorganized; it does not have the lowest level of culture. I did not think (about Roma nomination) as it was not the case, it was not an option, effectively I had no option to do that’ (R 37).

‘It seems absurd to me to offer winnable or even non winnable places (to Roma) when you have many other people among Romanians, who, although they might be the poorest, they are better or you can count on them more than on gypsies’ (R 33).

While party leaders refer to the lack of culture or to inferiority when they assess Roma candidates, they do not refrain from using the Roma votes brought by Roma candidates. As shown in the previous chapter, if they find a Roma candidate who can bring enough votes, they are willing to ignore these problems irrespective of whether that person is well prepared or not, if s/he is able to bring any proposals, etc. Almost all party leaders said that despite being aware of these issues, or that Roma votes are ‘reserved’ for certain political parties, they nevertheless did go in the Roma communities and tried to convince them to give them their vote. This shows the application of double standards, as while party leaders do not want to have Roma candidates, as they consider them unworthy and unable to represent the local communities, they do not refrain from trying to obtain Roma votes. Although they do not have special programs for the Roma either, they try to manipulate them in order to obtain their votes and to improve their electoral performance.

### ***Control variables***

Similarly to the previous two sections, the following two sections have the purpose of clarifying the weak statistical results associated with the two control variables, incumbency and the size of the council. Despite the fact that control variables are generally expected to have a lower statistical significance in comparison with independent variables, it is relevant to learn how party leaders perceive incumbents and the size of the council, and whether or not this affects Roma nomination.

### **5.3. Incumbency and its advantages**

The weak and not statistically significant effect of incumbency in the logistic regression can be succinctly explained as follows: incumbency has its own advantages, which can be appealing for the electorate; however, when it comes to the composition of the electoral lists, political parties guide their decision mainly by the number of votes a candidate can bring. Candidate-centered campaigns are associated with different dynamics, as votes are gained according to personal qualities and not so much to political experience and knowledge. Thus, if a newcomer is better rated than an incumbent, s/he will replace the experienced candidate. Thus, it is not the status of incumbent per se that disadvantages the Roma, but the fact that some candidates can keep their electoral potential for more than one mandate. In order to better illustrate this mechanism, this section is devoted to the advantages of incumbency and its implications for Roma nomination.

As mentioned above, almost all party leaders appreciated incumbents, as they bring several assets to any political party, both during their activity inside the office and outside it. First of all, incumbents tend to be seen by party leaders as experts in the local administration, as the position of councilor involves knowledge of the law and its application, as well as familiarity with the rules of the decision-making process: ‘political experience (matters), as it is one thing when someone comes from the outside, someone who was not involved in developing a budget, a project, s/he does not know what it is about, s/he does not know how to interpret or comment a law’ (R 22). Second, incumbents tend to have better communication skills. As the decision-making process is deliberative, future projects are first discussed and debated by councilors, giving the chance to local councilors to acquire or improve their performance in delivering speeches: ‘some who knew how to communicate with the electorate, for sure they kept their own electorate and through this electoral base, through ramifications, they accumulated a bit more capital’ (R 34). As another respondent put it, ‘being part of the local council, one mandate, not to mention two or three mandates, (a councilor), it is known, has a different way of talking to the citizens, to the electorate’ (R 29).

Third, those persons who have already been councilors for one mandate have direct access to information about what decisions and projects were discussed and implemented: ‘of course, I think it is a plus if they have experience, they know what has been discussed before, if they kept their word or not, what objective they had to solve and if they solved it’ (R 38). Inevitably, this gives them certain credibility, as well as competence in the eyes of the voters. Access to information gives incumbents advantages also during the electoral campaign, as they will know on which issues to focus in order to convince the voters. This has been emphasized as being especially important for the opposition councilors, because it gives them the opportunity to criticize the activity of the party in power and to win more votes.

An incumbent does not only attract voters through the information s/he holds, s/he also knows better which strategies to use in order to attract voters and to which electoral stimuli voters

react. Although candidates use their networks to attract votes, party leaders said that it is still important to know what voters want, what their needs are, and how to phrase certain objectives:

‘As I told you in F, between the forest and the Moldova river, when I was working on the development strategy, 30% of the voters wanted a park, so there were no roads, but they wanted a park, this is what was important for them. This is why it is important to know the commune, important to know those whom you are addressing, and this is why experience is needed, this means experience... to know what you are talking about’ (R 5).

Some party leaders even believed that their electoral instability was caused by the lack of incumbents. One example is the case of PSD A, which, having a list with 90% newcomers, managed to win only one mandate, won by the party leader himself, who was himself an incumbent. He was faced with this situation because in 2012 he refused to respect the directives from the national party to enter a coalition with the national liberals; consequently, he decided to allow the candidates on his list to decide for which party they wanted to run in the 2012 electoral campaign, PSD or PNL. In 2016, he tried to have his old candidates ‘back’, but as they had run for elections in 2012 as part of PNL, they preferred to continue to be part of the PNL in 2016. As they were gone from PSD, so were the votes of their supporters, hence the need to find new candidates.

This aspect is connected with the fact that small political parties are more inclined to maintain their incumbents. This is mainly a result of their low recruitment capacity; as small political parties do not easily attract electorally viable candidates, they try to make the best of the candidates they have. As small political parties manage to win in general one or two mandates (out of which one is reserved for the party leader), they will re-nominate incumbents as there are higher chances that they will attract more votes than newcomers on their list, especially if the newcomers are not so popular. Perhaps this also explains why some leaders of small parties are even willing to make unconventional moves, helping new people to acquire political experience, in order to make them more popular and visible, and consequently able to bring more votes at their first official participation. One example would be the case of PNL I, where the party leader said that he and his colleague would step down from their functions as councilors in the middle of the mandate to allow new persons to get involved in politics and to get some experience. A similar move was contemplated by one party leader in A:

‘Now I would like that the current councilors quit after one year and for the next two to come, as all of them have contributed to the campaign, so it is good that they have chances (to get rewarded for their work during the campaign). The leaders from Galati told me that it is not good, but I will see how things work and I and the other man who is also a councilor will leave’ (R 25).

Yet, despite this wide appreciation of incumbency, interviews revealed that it is not set in stone that an incumbent will be re-nominated. In theory, incumbents can be beneficial for a political party in many spheres of activity; in reality though, incumbents are not necessarily preferred because of their qualities, but because of their higher electoral viability. Once an incumbent loses this quality, his chances of re-election decrease considerably. Since these are personalized campaigns, newcomers can bring the same benefits through their popularity / charisma. This explains how some small political parties managed to win even three mandates even though all the persons on their list were newcomers, as with the example of PMP C, although such situations are rare. Similarly, there are examples of large political parties with many newcomers that still obtain good electoral results. An example of a large party with many newcomers would

be PSD I. Although the party registered a decrease in the number of votes received in the 2016 elections, it still managed to obtain the majority of the votes, winning five mandates. The same was true for PNL E, where out of five councilors, only two were incumbents. The reasons given by the party leaders for such decisions were similar:

‘Not necessarily, it depends on how they are known until that moment. We are talking about a rather small community; the commune has around 5000 people, so under these conditions, if you are known as honest and ok (well-behaved), you can bring advantages for the party you run for. If, however, you are not ok, you can bring disadvantages for the party and the list’ (R 11).

‘Every (candidate) wants to have the first places and in our political party there have been disagreements about this. People who were in PNL for a longer time thought that they will have an electable position assured on the list just because they were previously part of PNL; a thing that is not sufficient. If the analysis shows that they do not have (the electoral) value to justify their position, meaning two, three, four, those persons will not necessarily be on the list (...) (Incumbency) brings advantages to the party, but it depends on what you have done in your previous mandates. (...) I had a lot of young people. I made this change also because some of the incumbents left the party. I offered them unwinnable positions, meaning position six or seven, as I could not offer them the first places, and they did not understand this and left. Instead, I brought younger people’ (R 3).

As mentioned in the previous sections, party leaders measure the ‘pulse’ of each person before the elections, and these ratings provide them with indications as to who should be kept or not. This explains also why some party leaders mentioned that the performance / involvement of the incumbent was important as well; it is not necessarily performance inside the council that is needed, but performance in terms of attracting as many voters as possible: ‘someone who proved their seriousness during their mandate, they held their relationship with the electorate, someone who knew how to communicate with the electorate, of course they kept their electorate’ (R 34). In general, at the local level, it is difficult to know who has done what, because as decisions are taken through majority voting, voters are not aware of the contributions of each councilor, there is no media coverage, and the activity reports of the councilors are usually not consulted (and most of the time not even issued). However, considering the fact that local politics are candidate-centered, this is a matter of how much electoral viability a certain person has:

‘I believe that the number of votes that a candidate can bring, this is the most important principle, if you know s/he is loved or well seen in a certain area, you put them on the list on a winnable position, not just to be there (...) you can be new and convince, without any political experience. In the end (it is important) to have initiatives, the electorate needs to see that you have a vision, so it can put its hopes in you’ (R 8).

In case incumbents were re-nominated because of the skills they acquired while in office, the Roma would have been affected, as they would not have had the chance to acquire these skills outside the office. However, as the electoral viability of candidates dictates the composition of the lists, the biggest disadvantage comes from the fact that political parties are not interested in fulfilling their role of representation. Although in theory this gives equal chances to incumbents and newcomers, such as Roma, in practice it restricts the pool of Roma persons, as very few Roma possess the much-needed electoral viability mentioned above. Except for a few well-

positioned persons inside the Roma community, no regular Roma is considered to be electorally viable, because party leaders are aware that they would not be able to bring enough votes. A 'recycling' of the same Roma people with electoral viability is thus preferred, as it could also be seen in the previous chapter, in the section addressing Roma leadership.

#### **5.4. The size of the local council**

This section provides a short explanation about the relationship between the size of the council and Roma nomination. The lack of statistical support seems to be explained by the fact that mainstream party leaders do not consider the size of the council when they decide the composition of their electoral lists. Almost all of the local party leaders explained that the number of councilors that a local council has is established by law and is dependent on the size of the commune, on its population. Under these circumstances, they try to make their decisions based on the composition of the population and, if their share of the population is not large enough, they do not seem to be motivated to add Roma candidates to their lists:

'I would not see why they (political parties) would hurry too much to do that (add Roma candidates) as long as everything goes well (electorally speaking) and they have the number of councilors (they wanted). I told you with Roma you cannot crowd the list more than their size in the commune. Otherwise they will set up their own parties, they will have their own mayor where they have the power to do so, but the local council no matter how big it would be or no matter how many mandates a party has, you cannot say that for the future we will take four Roma instead of one, this is chosen according to the structure of the population' (R 19).

The theoretical arguments according to which the situations where political parties have the opportunity to win more seats can encourage the inclusion of less powerful groups do not receive support in the case of the Roma. Mainstream political parties pretend to apply the principle of proportionality when they deal with the Roma, although this is not so well reflected in practice, and do not feel any type of incentive toward diversifying their electoral lists just because they hold many seats in the council that are occupied by Romanians. Furthermore, some of the party leaders, in smaller numbers though, declared themselves skeptical of or even against positive discrimination, believing that the application of these principles does not bring anything good:

'If the number of councilors was larger, then Roma could get a place on the list, plus on the lists of their own parties. But this does not seem ok for the Roma, as it is still discrimination; it is positive, but still discrimination. I know persons of Roma ethnicity who were disturbed by the fact that they have reserved places at the university, whoever is good does not need reserved places, they can access (university) like the others... At F there are no cases of (group) discrimination, there is discrimination depending on the person, on what that person has done, but if he has the right behavior, it does not happen' (R 5).

'I do not believe this (that a larger council would offer more opportunities for Roma candidates), as proportionality is well thought, as it is Law 215, so I do not think this. I do not believe that we have to invent something else than this. Even through positive discrimination we can ruin the people, this would mean positive discrimination to put an ethnicity that has a smaller size (on the electoral lists). No, he (the ethnic candidate) has to fit in and do like all the others' (R 2).

These results support previous studies which showed that the size of the council is more of an intervening factor in the inclusion of minority candidates (Welch and Donley 1990; Darcy, Welch, and Clark, 1994). As shown above, the size of the council does not motivate political parties in any way to offer minority candidates places on their electoral lists. It is more the combination of other factors (e.g., the size of the minority group) with the size of the council that is propitious for minority nomination.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter sought to provide an in-depth understanding of the Roma nomination process, by focusing on intra-party factors, in order to account for the lack of statistical support received by these variables. The inconsistency of the statistical analysis is derived from the fact that Roma nomination, being part of the ‘secret garden of politics’ (Gallanger and Marsh, 1987), cannot be explained by looking at formal characteristics such as size or the time of leadership.

The section on party size has shown that the quest for maintaining electoral stability accounts for the fact that the electoral strategies, although based on a rational calculation aimed at maximizing votes, encourage a biased effect toward the members of the majority group in the nomination process and ignore the barriers that might be created in the process for members of minority groups. Regardless of whether they are large or small, as a result of their adoption of cost-benefit calculations, political parties continue to act as the main gatekeepers to minority nomination. The case of large political parties has shown how, although they have a certain leeway to also include minority candidates on their lists, as their electoral appeal would not necessarily be affected, there is no interest in nominating Roma candidates in order to ensure a ‘fair’ representation. The leaders of large political parties value only two things: the share of votes minority candidates could bring and whether they are part of their own social networks. Similarly, small political parties prefer to win one or two seats in the local council, mainly by fielding ‘competent candidates’, and not to include Roma candidates on their lists, as this could negatively affect their electoral performance by damaging their reputation. Deeper effects are however produced by the informal manipulation of the Roma voters by the local incumbent political party, which discourage other political parties and allow for Roma exclusion from the political arena to be nurtured by Roma votes. This also shows how, through their actions, political parties also have a dehumanizing effect, as they do not only create barriers inside the selection process (through their electoral strategies), but also outside it, as Roma voters are reduced to some objects that can be manipulated and used by whoever has the power to strengthen further their position of power. Because of their vulnerability, the human potential of Roma persons as potential candidates is rarely considered. What is striking here is that the outcome is not only racialized because the interests of the Roma are ignored and silenced, but because their own votes are used to maintain and perpetuate their silence, exclusion, and exploitation.

Similarly, the results presented in the second section show that old and new leaders alike face challenges to attracting the support of their voters, as even in a personalized environment such as the Romanian one popularity and charisma cannot deceive all the voters, making the prospect of Roma candidates potentially appealing for both types of leaders. Irrespective of these electoral challenges and of the fact that they try to act rationally and to use strategies that maximize their electoral outcomes, the trouble with party leaders seems to derive from their

negative opinions, prejudices, and stereotypes about the Roma. These automatically ethnicize the selection process by giving more credit to Romanians and downgrades the Roma to second-class actors, leading in turn to three important consequences. First, as the selection of candidates is not governed by clear and objective candidacy rules, but by the attitudes and personal opinions of the party leaders, this renders the whole process highly biased and Roma discrimination a quasi-universal practice. The application of double standards is a confirmation of the prejudiced selection environment, in which something that appears as outrageous about one Roma candidate is acceptable for a Romanian one. It is not only that party leaders tend to give more credit to Romanian candidates, and it is not just that the Roma are disregarded because of their lack of skills, but the entire process of evaluation of Roma candidates is a superficial process with a dehumanizing effect. Their unworthiness is taken for granted, whereby the Roma are believed to belong to a different type of human race, which is inferior and which needs an 'upgrade' in order to be able to match the Romanian one. This aspect also supports the results of the previous section, which has shown that the Roma are used as objects with electoral potential, in part because of their vulnerable socio-economic situation, but also because of the general view of the Roma as inferior and not needing or deserving representation. The exclusion from mainstream party lists is thus motivated by ethnicity alone, with all Roma fitting under one label that provides all the (wrong) information needed.

Secondly, as exclusion is motivated by racial beliefs and attitudes, the future prospects of Roma nomination are not optimistic either, as candidate selection will continue to be a painful process, on the one hand because such deep feelings are difficult to change and on the other because such biases are less likely to be challenged by others. As local selectors have full autonomy with regards to the selection process of local candidates, the national party would not be able to redress the situation even if its leadership were willing to. The case of women showed how the adoption by the national political parties of national rules meant to counteract gendered selection rules can have a (limited) impact on the number of women nominated as candidates. Especially because the attitude toward the Roma is so profoundly negative, such a first step, although not perfect, could represent a way to break this vicious circle.

Thirdly, who undertakes the selection plays an important role in Roma nomination, an aspect which also underlines the multidimensional character of the concept. On the one hand, this is related to the attitudes and norms held by party leaders, reconfirming the results of previous studies, especially on women's representation (among others Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Franceschet, 2010; Cheng and Tavits, 2011; Ashe and Stewart, 2012; Bjarnegard, 2013; Verge, 2015), but also on other minority / immigrant groups (among others Bird, Saalfeld, and Wüst, 2010; Dancygier et al., 2015;), which have already highlighted the need for 'deeper' analysis of the candidate selection process, as the attitudes and norms of the selectors are not neutral. On the other hand, this is an exclusive and decentralized candidate selection process which works to the detriment of minority nomination, as local party leaders and their autonomy constitute an important barrier.

The analysis of the two control variables comes to endorse the previous findings, as Roma nomination appears to be about more than the application of rational strategies, as it would be if incumbents were preferred over newcomers or if proportional principles were applied in the cases of an increase in the size of the council. It is an intertwined mechanism in which rational factors are mixed with subjective ones (beliefs, attitudes, etc.).

The novel finding that can be derived from the empirical analysis above is that Roma nomination is a complex process, where different barriers appear to be intertwined: informal candidate selection, characterized by vague and idiosyncratic rules, as well as manipulation and



control, encouraged by the socio-economic position of the Roma voters. This underlines how Roma nomination is not an emergency measure available to all political parties and that it can be used to maintain electoral stability, as in this specific case their political exclusion is not dictated by the size of the Roma community alone. Although the size of the Roma community has been identified by local party leaders as the reason for the low nomination rate, the qualitative analysis in this chapter also pinpoints that it should not be assumed that the size of the minority group can only be a factor that favors the nomination of Roma candidates. Although a larger size could make the equation between costs and benefits of Roma nomination positive, it is not the case for the Roma. Size can be an important political resource; however, it seems to be more beneficial for certain minority groups than for others, as the Roma example shows. As long as manipulation, threat, or vote buying are present, a larger size of the group cannot but have harsh consequences for Roma representation, since the ‘temptation’ of more votes can further create incentives for mainstream parties to engage in such practices.

It is also important to understand and acknowledge that minority groups face different barriers and challenges to their political participation based on their socio-economic position. If certain minority groups are excluded because of the size of the group, others, such as the Roma, although they meet the size criteria, are excluded because of the vulnerable position they have within mainstream society. Although socio-economic status is taken into consideration in discussions of political participation and voting behavior (e.g., Nie and Verba, 1975; Auh, 1980; Brady, Verba, and Schlozman, 1995; Dancygier, 2017), to the author’s knowledge there are no studies about the impact of the socio-economic status of the minority group on party behavior.

## **Chapter 6 - Inter-party competition: still no stimulation for Roma nomination**

### **Introduction**

This chapter continues the investigation of Roma nomination based on the qualitative data provided by the 39 interviews carried out with local party leaders and focuses on the three inter-party factors: party competition, the presence or absence of Roma political parties, and the size of the Roma electorate. It has two main aims: to understand why the hypothesized relationships do not hold, except for the size of the Roma community, and to see where the hypothesized causal chain breaks and to disclose supplementary factors that hinder Roma nomination. The analysis reveals new variables have an impact on Roma nomination: the personalization of both Romanian and Roma electoral campaigns. The size of the Roma community is shown to have its electoral utility, yet not for the election of councilors, but that of the mayor.

This chapter is organized as follows: the first section is dedicated to party competition and argues that competition does not necessarily affect Roma nomination, because local politics are candidate-centered, which leads parties to prefer electorally viable people. These people can ensure the electoral stability of the parties, as their voters are less prone to switch parties; this is because they are not attracted by the ideas of their candidates, but by their relationship with them. This restricts the pool of potential candidates to only a few persons. The second section tries to explain how the presence of Roma parties encourages mainstream political parties to nominate Roma candidates, when the theoretical arguments would suggest the opposite. Evidence shows that Roma identity is a flexible information shortcut that does not create a bias toward Roma parties, but rather toward Roma leaders. Depending on the interests of Roma leaders, they can opt either for Roma parties or for mainstream political parties. Finally, the size of the Roma electorate is considered. As it was expected, and in line with the results of the statistical analysis, the size of the Roma community in a certain locality is significant for Roma nomination, as political parties aim to increase their electoral results, especially the ones for the mayor position, an election in which Roma voters can have a decisive influence.

### **6.1. Party competition**

The aim of this section is to reveal how party competition works and why it does not affect Roma nomination. As stated in the previous chapter, the quantitative analysis has shown that party competition does not have statistical significance and that, contrary to what it has been hypothesized, higher party competition does not favor Roma nomination. The qualitative analysis will illustrate how political parties, whether defined in terms of ideology or of membership, do not affect the electoral preferences of the voters as much as the profile of the candidates, who can not only attract the voters easily, but also secure their vote over a longer period through their personal relationships. This aspect does not only contribute to the electoral stability of the political parties, but also decrease the prospects of nominating Roma candidates.

### 6.1.1. Candidate-centered competition

This section will show that, contrary to what has been foreseen, party competition does not necessarily affect party volatility. Although the voters are presented with a more diverse representation of political ideas, they do not necessarily switch between political parties, at least not in a political environment where political parties, as representatives of ideas or ideologies, do not constitute the main factor accounting for people's votes. In the personalized political environment encountered at the local level, votes are given to the persons who are competing on the basis of the social connection between the voters and the candidates. As such, party leaders aim first and foremost to nominate persons who can guarantee a high number of voters. If they succeed, their electoral resources are stable, as voters will not care if there are two or ten political parties competing and will have no incentive to shift their preference to another party.

When local party leaders were asked about their electoral strategies and connections with their voters, party organization was barely, if ever, mentioned. Instead, party leaders asserted that matters such as party ideology and even the affiliation with a certain political party were invisible for the local voters: 'first of all, I would not talk about doctrine, they are similar if you look at... if you read the ALDE program you will see that it is similar, it has policies from the PSD program, but also that of PNL. It is somewhere between' (R 5) or

'I am part of PMP by chance, not that I share their doctrine or I do not know what, we cannot talk about doctrine in Romania, doctrine is a pure theoretical notion. There are just group interests, we called them political parties, but in fact they are groups that wear the mask of political parties and try to obtain all sorts of privileges... I would not say that the political party is important at the local level; at local level the person is important, that s/he is part of a party is one aspect, that s/he is part of another political party is another aspect. I observed persons in my commune who benefited from electoral support from certain inhabitants of the commune; regardless if they change the party, those persons would still vote for them, they would follow them no matter what political party the candidate would back up' (R 28).

Explanations for such a phenomenon were different. Some party leaders believed that the close proximity of the people at the local level contributes to the alteration of the importance of such organizations:

'If we talk about the urban areas, it is one thing. In the urban area, there the notoriety of the people is important. It is different in the rural areas, people are close to one another and people see much more of the persons next to them than in urban areas, where they know X from a scandal or that s/he has made a good thing, that s/he is a director. In rural areas, people know themselves differently; there is this a different proximity' (R 37).

Others suppose that this is encouraged by the lack of political culture of the voters themselves, who are not aware of the importance of voting:

'The Romanian political scene is full, it is worse than during Ceaușescu, politics are already divided according to areas: in township C, the PSD gets 65-67%. The Romanian people are not politically emancipated, they (the politicians) closed their eyes with social benefits, closed their eyes by passing through the zone (of the

voter) and did not bother him by signaling a problem that (the voter did not respect the law) when building his house. The Romanian has a short conscience, but politically s/he is not emancipated; s/he does not know what s/he wants. It is really nice to get two eggs and a loaf of bread because s/he lives in the present, s/he does not think about the future nor does s/he judge the past, s/he does not know how to make the difference (between political parties)' (R 39).

The flaws of the party organization can be observed also by looking at the party membership rates. Most of the time party leaders said they had a limited membership, of around 20-30 members. The low membership rates, it was argued by party leaders, are the results of two different processes. On the one hand, people are not interested in becoming party members: 'in terms of official members the number is limited, around 20, there are of course many more who support us, but this is another story' (R 37); 'we have on paper 15 members, but supporters with liberal views are a bit more. They are hard to find in township E, as it is a locality with social programs and social democracy is well infiltrated' (R 10). This is even less probable when they have to pay membership fees:

'Party members are quite unstable; we have a reservoir of supporters in township I, but we do not like to take them all as members, as we would have to pay membership fees for them too. People are not educated to pay membership fees and, if I registered someone, the fee has to be paid, and this is why I am reluctant to register more than maximum 20 official members' (R 2).

On the other hand, the low membership rates occur also because it is not profitable to invest in this aspect of the political party, as membership does not fulfill its traditional function of attracting voters.

In addition, the ways in which political parties are established and maintained raise questions about the overall role of the political parties. At least two examples can be provided to illustrate this. For example, R 25 acknowledged that the decision to run in elections was taken a few days before the deadline to register in the electoral race, as he was not happy with the position he got on the list of the party with which he had initially cooperated. Consequently, he decided to run on his own and the choice of the political party under which he ran was spontaneous, based on the availability of political parties in the municipality. Similarly, R 18 explained that he initially intended to participate in elections as an independent candidate, but as other experienced people encouraged him to run for election on the list of a political party, as this would make things easier, he decided to join a political party.

However, the lack of statistical significance of political competition, or the number of political parties, derives from the fact that the main electoral strategy of the parties is based on the electoral viability of their candidates and not on the ideas promoted by the party. Looking at how political parties attract their voters, it can be noticed that what matters is who makes up the party, which candidates compete in elections:

'In the countryside, it is the candidate who is chosen and not the political party; at the local level, the person matters, we want that person (the voters would say). There are very few voters who are interested in the party, few that ask for the platform or ask what party you are part of. Why would they be interested in the party? They vote for the person, I vote for a person who helped me, or who I sympathize with, or who is friendly or serious' (R 17).

‘This is a debatable thing. I say the persons who run matter very much, they are the first factor that influences the electorate, the persons who run. People change very often, today they support one political party, tomorrow they can support another one and the next day a different one still. I think there is only a small electorate that is loyal to one political party, very, very small, the others are a moving mass which might or might not support a political party. It depends very much on the candidate, on the circumstances, this is the right word’ (R 37).

Party leaders acknowledged that the decisive factor in the selection of the candidates is their electoral viability, namely the number of votes s/he can bring, which is not surprising at all: ‘I believe that the number of voters that a person can bring is the most important principle, if you know that s/he is liked or loved in an area, you put him/her on an eligible place, not just to fill in the list’ (R 8); or ‘I would have had the same result if I would have run with UDMR (the Hungarian political party), because at the local level the voters vote for the persons who run, not for the national party leaders, or very few vote for those’ (R 25).

This strategic reasoning prompts party leaders to choose popular or influential persons, either because they come from big families and have many relatives and/ or because through their jobs, they interact with many people: ‘those who are representative persons in the commune, who were also not already convinced by other persons, one who owns shops or who has a mill, those who are the leading figures of the locality, with a lot of relatives, those are the people I tried to get on my list’ (R 6); or ‘If you do not choose people with influence as councilors, you cannot do anything’ (R 33).

In order to be certain of the potential of their candidates, some party leaders, albeit few in number, asked for “proof” of how many votes they can bring:

‘For example, I asked (the potential candidates) during the electoral campaign: what position (on the list) would you like?... X... Then I told him/her: for X, a councilor needs to have around 150 votes. I would not ask for 150, but 100, as the other 50 votes I will bring them myself, as a leader. If I made 500 votes in total, I just need 150 to become a councilor, but the rest of the votes will help you to become councilors, but you need to do something as well... next week you will take me to five houses and I immediately feel if that person had a previous dialogue with those persons or if it was the first time s/he entered that house. I feel that depending on how the discussion takes place and I realize their value’ (R 1).

‘Two weeks before the election, I made a list (with possible votes), asking each candidate from each area of the village (to tell me who their supporters are), as I did this thing, namely to nominate candidates from different areas of the village, candidates who were popular, who were godfathers, had (a lot of) godsons and other kinships. Each of them brought a list (of supporters). out of which, ironically, at the polling station number 3, as we have five polling stations in total, very few maintained their loyalty toward my candidate. I realized (this) after the elections, looking at the number of voters who voted PMP (and the lists that my candidates gave me), while at other polling stations I had more votes than previously assumed’ (R 22).

The recourse to well-connected persons is so efficient that it undermines traditionally restrictive requirements, such as education and party membership, which were believed to be the key to

electoral success. The low interest in educated people, party leaders argued, comes from the fact that it is not an efficient way of attracting people, as

‘the citizens favor those who can do them certain favors, in 60% of the cases they do not vote for persons according to the way they would solve the problems of the commune. This is not a novelty in township B, it is all over the country. The moment when there would be seriousness among voters and among those who nominate the candidates, for them to be serious people and not to think about sausages and beer, or other stuff, the elections would be cleaner’ ( R 19).

This can be further illustrated by looking at the examples of township A and township I. Two persons who were engineers ran for election in both communes, with, however, very different results. In township A, the engineer ended up being the second on the list due to his qualifications, but also his good connection with the voters. Meanwhile, the engineer from township I had his political support withdrawn after the elections, as he had only 30 votes, and the following year his position was given to another person who worked and brought votes for the party.

### **6.1.2. Implications for the nomination of Roma candidates**

As the previous section explained why party competition does not affect the electoral (in)stability of local political parties, this sub-section will analyze the consequences of the preference of party leaders for persons with ‘personal political capital’ (Guadagnini, 1993). It will reveal that Roma nomination is discouraged by these restrictive electoral requirements, as well as by the fact that once political parties know that they have good candidates who can help them reach their electoral goals, they feel less pressure to search for additional sources of votes, such as the ones of Roma.

The preferences for influential candidates create a competition between candidates; however, this is a different matter from party competition based on ideas. The dynamics of the volatility that can be encountered are also different, as voters can change their ideas more easily than their personal preferences for certain candidates. As shown above, party leaders prefer persons who can bring the highest number of voters, but the votes are not won by the ideas promoted by the candidates, but by the connection between the local candidates and the voters, most probably along the lines of kinship or a business relationship: ‘I mobilized all my friends, acquaintances and I did not try (to convince) someone whom I do not know, this is all I have done’ (R 25).

‘Even though the voter might be a PNL member and s/he is convinced that this is the party s/he would support, if a relative or a good friend runs for another party, s/he will not vote with PNL anymore, s/he will vote with the preferred candidate. So, at the local level, the party membership is less important than the degree of kinship, friendship, or acquaintances, these are powerful here’ (R 20).

‘I did not do this thing (to make himself known) for the first time yesterday or in 2016, as I told you I am a vet since 1999, I am a quite well-known person in the community, I am born, raised and have lived here. Under these conditions, I believe it is more my activity from all these years, there are people who know me... think about the fact that in township Ea I obtained almost 300 votes, half of the total

number of votes were won by me. So this is not something you do overnight, it is about what you have done in the last years, this is the most important thing' (R 11).

Similarly, there were cases where the same candidate ran for a different political party in every election but s/he nevertheless managed to maintain her/his own electoral base constant. An example comes from township D, where one candidate ran over the last three electoral rounds for three different political parties and he was still able to become a local councilor each time. Similarly, another candidate in township C had a rich history of party membership, doubled by successful participations in elections. This is very nicely illustrated by the story of his involvement in politics:

'I became part of PSDR, as it was initially named, and (...) this is how I entered in politics, as otherwise I would not have entered. Not because of the doctrine or I do not know what, so I was a PSDR member, I made the organization and I brought 10,000 votes out of 15,000 in 1996 for the parliamentary elections, as in Valea Somesului the (political) color is red. I was very active, I lost a lot of private money, as there are a lot of expenses, after which I quit. As I was head of unit, after the Convention (the opposition party) won the elections, they started to control me a lot, so I gave up on politics. After 2-3 years some friends from Z contacted me and I became part of PNR, the political party of Magureanu, if you know him, and I became local councilor as part of PNR. After it fused with Basescu, I gave up, as I did not like it, as I am more of a leftist and then I was part of PC for two electoral rounds, out of which in 2008 I was vice-mayor. After that, PC also fused (and I left), I was approached by some local friends from UNPR (...) where I remained' (R 35).

Some party leaders mentioned how they failed to attract voters based on their ideas if they did not have a more personal relationship: 'I talked to every type of groups of voters, I even stayed in front of the church on Sunday, with the paper in my hand, and explained to them what has to be done. They agreed with me, but still that was all that I have got' (R 6). Another party leader stated the following:

'To be honest, I tried hard, I even had promises, I had contacts with the electorate, it happened to be when I gave the lease... around 150 landowners to whom I administer the land and with whom I talked passed by my country yard. Based on what they told me, I did the math, and the result was supposed to be spectacular, but in the end they did something else. As we were five candidates and people became perverse, just to get rid of you, as you suffocate them with your demands to give you their vote, they say yes to everybody and promise you, but when the counting of votes starts, you see something else' (R 1).

This inevitably means that as long as votes are motivated by the personal relationship between the voters and the candidates, voters will be convinced more easily and their political preferences will not change so easily, as would be the case with ideas, which can be promoted by other political parties, decreasing the danger of electoral instability.

Secondly, this offers party leaders a safety net ensuring that the electoral outcome of the party will not be too affected by any unpredicted changes that might occur during the electoral campaign. This of course does not mean that they might not register certain loses if more political parties with strong candidates are involved in the electoral campaign, but the fact the candidate has his or her own supporters ensures that, even if the number of political parties

increases, this would not impact so much on their electoral outcome, unless two candidates share the same level of support, which is not so probable. Actually, this comes as no surprise, since the number of competitors could change at the last minute, as suggested above; consequently, each party has to be prepared for such changes.

Under these circumstances, Roma nomination is a less appealing option for at least two reasons. First, once political parties have popular or influential candidates and they are certain about their electoral support, they have fewer incentives to add Roma candidates to their lists in order to increase their electoral outcome or to compensate for the loss created by the presence of other political parties. Roma nomination, as will be shown in the third section, does have its own risks and costs, so it is not a rewarding electoral action if all the elements are not considered. Second, Roma persons are indirectly excluded through this practice, since, due to their socio-economic situation, not so many Roma persons will be able to satisfy the criteria of bringing a high number of votes. An exception is, of course, if the Roma candidate is a popular person who has the support of an important number of Roma. These results contradict other studies (Matland and Studlar, 1996) which showed that political parties tend to make use of the 'minority strategy' when other political parties use it as well. This shows that there might be different mechanisms at work when it comes to the nomination of different minority groups, which are dependent on the electoral context.

## **6.2. Roma political parties**

The aim of this section is to discuss the link between the presence of Roma political parties and Roma nomination by mainstream political parties. In Chapter 4, the statistical analysis has shown that, contrary to what had been hypothesized, the presence of Roma political parties is positively correlated to Roma nomination, although the effect is not strong enough to maintain its statistical significance during the logistic regression. The lack of support comes from the fact that, again contrary to what had been hypothesized, ethnicity, although important to a certain degree, does not offer exclusive ownership over Roma issues to Roma political parties. It is the Roma leaders / influential persons who have this monopoly and who can use it, depending on their interests, within the framework of both ethnic or mainstream political parties, as can be seen in the following sub-sections.

### **6.2.1. The power of ethnicity for Roma mobilization**

As briefly mentioned above, a mismatch has been registered between the theory accounting for the relationship between the presence of Roma parties and Roma nomination, and the empirical reality. This sub-section will tackle the importance of ethnicity for Roma mobilization. The stories of the local leaders contradict the premise that Roma political parties have an exclusive electorate secured by recourse to ethnicity. In Romanian villages, this premise is exaggerated, since, just like global politics, ethnic politics has changed as well. This includes the ways in which Roma voters are mobilized (which can be seen if we compare the electoral results obtained by the Roma political parties over the years), as although Roma identity does play a role, ethnic claims do not have to be defended and manifested exclusively through the medium of Roma political parties. Although this is a sensitive matter and such assertions should be made after consulting the Roma voters themselves, the analysis of different local political settings, as well as the testimonies of different local party leaders, brings evidence that sustains this hypothesis.



The first illustrative story is the one of township A and township B, where Roma political parties were involved in the electoral competition. The share of the Roma population in these two communes is very different, namely 16.4% and 8.6%, respectively. However, this should not constitute an issue, as the important thing is that the share of the Roma population in each commune is large enough to allow a Roma political party to win a mandate in the local council. The electoral outcome however is positive just in the case of township A, as in township B the Roma political party managed to win only 40 votes out of a Roma population of 480, placing it significantly below the electoral threshold. The difference, according to the party leaders, came from the fact that ethnicity was not the only guiding factor for the electoral decisions:

‘No, no (it did not matter that there were Roma parties participating in the elections), they do not vote for each other. A girl that I know ran, they did not vote among themselves either, so that you realize how much hate there is also among them. Although they promised to vote among themselves, they did not want (to vote). Each (political party) had options (to nominate Roma), there is hate among the Roma too, not just between us the Romanians’ (R 18).

‘There is this strange envy between them (...). They are organized by families, but there are five or six (influential persons), meaning cousins and brothers, who cannot stand the others and even though they do not show it, in reality there is a certain envy (which prevents them to help / support one another)’ (R 20).

Also, by looking closely at the situation of township A, it can be seen that the three Roma councilor mandates belong to two different Roma political parties, questioning the power of ethnicity in the sense of a compact and fixed notion. The fact that Roma voters divided their votes for the two Roma political parties shows that Roma voters make their decisions based on other factors than identity.

The second story comes from townships E and F. Although in both these communes the size of the Roma population would be sufficient to pass the electoral threshold and Roma political parties competed in the elections in both localities, only in township F did the Roma political party manage to win one mandate. In township F, two persons who were incumbents, but on the lists of a mainstream political party (in the 2012 local election) ran on the first positions on the lists of the Roma political parties. During the 2016 election however, they did not manage to win enough votes for two mandates and, consequently, only one of them managed to hold on to his function as local councilor. In township E, there was a tough competition, as there were Roma candidates running for election on the lists of both Roma political parties and the four mainstream political parties (with 13 candidates in total on the lists of the mainstream parties). The winners were four Roma persons on the lists of two of the mainstream political parties (two Roma councilors per party), while the Roma political party managed to win only a few votes.

Lastly, there is also confirmation coming from Romanian party leaders, as actors involved in local political representation who are directly affected by the performance of Roma political parties. Mainstream party leaders seem to have quite different and opposed opinions about the influence of Roma political parties. Despite these divergences, it was only in a few exceptional cases (three) that ethnicity was found to be such an important matter for the Roma electorate, offering Roma political parties a monopoly over ethnic votes: ‘Absolutely, you will not obtain votes under any circumstances, you can do the math (to see that ethnic voting works)’ (R 24); ‘yes, yes, of course, if it was Partida Romilor (the Roma political party) it is clear for me that it would accumulate votes, it will have the majority of Roma (votes) and it would have been

another thing, for me as a party there would be nothing to represent (when it comes to Roma votes)' (R 1). A third respondent stated the following:

'I believe that there is such a thing (ethnic voting) and that it functions and it is well that it functions. People have to be, in the present condition, as we cannot but affiliate to a belief, to a hope and to say that a Hungarian will adopt social democratic politics just because the Romanians are in power, it is very unlikely. Or a Romanian by politics... I think that ethnic voting still functions in Romania' (R 2).

The rest of the party leaders instead believed that Roma votes fluctuate depending on the circumstances. A PNL party leader from township H disagreed with the assumption that Roma votes are reserved for Roma political parties. He stated that if the mainstream political parties take into consideration their interests, Roma voters are willing to vote for mainstream parties, even when there are no Roma candidates on their lists. He said that what is important is to continuously be connected with them through dialogue, as Roma votes are not necessarily ethnic, especially because there is this lack of connection and envy among them. A similar opinion was expressed by another party leader, from another commune:

'There is a chance that the mainstream political parties obtain Roma votes, of course there is. And I know cases where it happened and where the Roma party did not take all the Roma votes, exactly like the other minority groups. For example, the UDMR (the Hungarian party), do you think that all the Hungarians vote with the UDMR? This is not true. There are people who have something on the superior part (their brain) and think differently, not just toward a party. And among Roma there are people who do not think that just because it is the Roma political party and it will win the elections, it will be milk and honey, but it is clear that a part of the Roma electorate will go toward larger parties' (R 37).

### **6.2.2. Personalization in exchange for identity**

The reason behind this weak connection between Roma mobilization and ethnicity, this subsection demonstrates, is the personalization of the Roma politics, again just like the Romanian one. This means that votes are won on the basis of the personal characteristics of the Roma candidates, be it popularity, socio-economic status, or charisma. As shown below, where the Roma political party had an appealing and popular leader, they won mandates; however, if the Roma political party was led by a less popular person, the number of votes received would be limited.

This claim can be easily supported by statements made by the majority of the mainstream party leaders, who associated Roma votes to a representative and persuasive Roma candidate:

'But if... anyone from the community (wants to run), or the one that you nominate does not have the acceptance of the Roma community, it is worthless. So the candidate has to agree with them. This is it, even if s/he is a leader and here there can be noticed the characteristics of the leader, s/he has to be listened to, to have charisma, to be followed by them (the Roma voters), this is why s/he is a leader. There is no shortage of noticeable candidates, but if they do not have influence... they are not..., they cannot (do anything without the support of the Roma

community)... if you put such a person, like a simple member of the Roma community, you put her/him just to have them on the list' (R 8).

Party leaders have different opinions about the sources of the personalization of Roma politics. The (traditional) structure of the Roma groups was mentioned as such a source; where it exists, there are some persons who hold the title of leader.<sup>38</sup> In this case, they take all the decisions for the entire group, as the other people inside the group have to obey and respect their authority:

'With them it is a well-defined hierarchy, they recognize their leaders and know who the leaders are and they do not change them so easily, so in principle in their case if someone is recognized as a powerful man, a fighter... because you know what happens, in the local council, there are people who worked and did something for their community... Under these conditions, people have faith in them, I know that Roma go and ask from the local councilors certain things and under these conditions they are hard to replace' (R 11).

'In each Roma community there is a chief, it is worthless that I go myself as a mayor and tell them not to steal, I have no chance, but if the Roma chief goes, they will be listened to, as it is their community. In their community there is this link to help one another, we (the Romanians) do not have something like this' (R 27).

Secondly, this might be related to the socio-economic status of the Roma voters, which makes them vulnerable and more likely to give their vote to those persons with whom they are involved in an clientelistic relationship. Although the previous chapter has shown that most of the time the local incumbent political party controls Roma voters, because of their socio-economic situation, there are cases when the same practice is used by Roma leaders, as was the case in A. There, one party leader mentioned that:

'You do not have to convince them, the degree of culture is 25 years behind, when s/he went (to them to talk about voting, there was no need to convince them), and s/he freed them from work or gave them work as their life is dependent on them... There is in our village a Roma expert who has two mandates (as Roma expert), he has tried to convince the Roma to vote for the mayor, but he had no chance. All Roma went, they go with their people' (R 24).

Thirdly, it might be just the use of pressure that prompts Roma voters to follow a certain Roma leader. This seemed to be the case in communes E and F, where the Roma communities are controlled by Roma leaders by means that are not exactly democratic. In the case of E, all leaders of the five mainstream political parties acknowledged that in the Roma constituency there are 1-2 Roma leaders who control most of the Roma electorate. One of the party leaders explained how the Roma leaders 'convinced' their followers:

'They (Roma leaders) went from household to household and took them to elections, (as) they also had cars. They (even) made an ID (for those Roma who did not own one) following the emergency procedure, just to make them able to vote. Somehow it is a disloyal competition. For them it is not possible to say that you would not go, they (Roma leaders) go after them (Roma voters) and they have to get dressed and they have to go, there have been people who saw if you were present at the vote or not' (R 6).

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<sup>38</sup> In the case of traditional groups, this title is generally passed on from generation to generation.

In commune E, which is composed of two Roma villages and where the size of the Roma communities is about 30%, each village has its own leader, plus some other influential persons. One of the party leaders emphasized that the Roma are coordinated by their leaders and most of the time by persuasion:

‘They need to be coordinated, they fluctuate (on their electoral options), they are coordinated by their leader. It is a must to have Roma candidates, but to have one of their leaders, a more powerful one who can impose (himself) against the (other) candidates. How it is at township Ea, there it is their leader, he decides, so it is at township Eb as well, it is the vice-mayor, he is Roma, and he decides there, at the door (of the voters), with 5 liters of wine... A lot of Roma did not want to come to vote (for my party) because of the same issue, they had been contacted by their leader. Not to talk about the issues in the voting cabin, where there are the Roma leaders, or that they check each Roma vote’ (R 10).

### **6.2.3. Roma candidate-centered campaigns**

This sub-section analyzes the consequences of the personalized Roma campaigns on the motivations of the mainstream political parties to nominate Roma candidates. A deeper inquiry into the stories told by mainstream party leaders shows that the personalization of Roma politics has some drawbacks for the political representation of the Roma. Although in theory it should increase the prospects of nomination, as well as of representation in general, by creating a competition between Roma and mainstream political parties, in practice it restricts the pool of Roma candidates to just a few influential persons. Additionally, the chances to have a successful cooperation between Roma and mainstream political parties is dependent also on their belonging to similar networks, as will be seen in the remaining parts of this sub-section.

As mentioned above, a personalized political environment has three important consequences for Roma nomination by mainstream political parties. The first effect of the personalization of Roma candidates is that Roma political representation can be accomplished through both mainstream and Roma political parties. Romanian mainstream political parties do not feel discouraged include Roma candidates on their lists as long as Roma votes are won according to the characteristics of the candidate and not because of ethnic issues. These findings also help us understand the positive correlation between the presence of Roma parties and Roma nomination by mainstream political parties (see Table 6), as it is not the presence of the Roma political parties per se that discourages mainstream political parties, but their leader. If Roma political parties do not have as candidates the most powerful and influential persons within the Roma community, mainstream political parties try their luck as well. In fact, Roma nomination is even more appealing in these cases for mainstream political parties, as in those areas where Roma political parties compete in the elections the Roma population is also higher, since they only compete when they have chances to pass the 5% electoral threshold. Consequently, under such conditions, a Roma candidate can bring important electoral gains to mainstream political parties.

From a theoretical point of view, an open competition for Roma votes between Roma and mainstream political parties would decrease the chances of a certain monopoly over minority issues held by Roma political parties (see National Democratic Institute, 2009). It should also increase the chances of Roma nomination, as well as of representation through mainstream

political parties, as the latter should have incentives not only to include Roma candidates on their list, but also to offer them winnable positions. In practice however, things are a bit more complicated. First of all, as Roma nomination is in general a strategic move, as seen from the section discussing the variable of Roma population size, mainstream political parties aim mainly to have Roma leaders on their lists: ‘always in the previous mandates we thought about four (Roma candidates) and those four considered were those who have businesses or who have a lot of relatives, so they can convince (their relatives)’ (R 7); or ‘there are six big families, when you talk to one, you talk to the whole family. And this is what I will do in the future, I will use this program (strategy)’ (R 25).

The use of such practices is supported also by the analysis of the case studies. One example is that of township E, where more Roma persons were nominated on the lists of mainstream political parties and where these influential persons managed to become councilors, two for each of the large political parties, the PSD and PNL. Similarly, the example of township C shows that a high share of Roma population in the commune is not sufficient to convince mainstream political parties to nominate Roma candidate, unless there is a Roma person who is recognized as popular / influential at the commune level.

This basically means that the hypothesized competition between Roma and mainstream political parties is not verified, as in most cases the pool of potential candidates is not necessarily enlarged. Instead, the same Roma leaders are recycled by both Roma and mainstream political parties, in order to receive the much-wanted Roma votes. The monopoly over Roma votes that was mentioned above does not appear to be undermined. There are of course cases where mainstream political parties nominate less influential Roma, but these are marginal cases dependent on other factors, as will be seen later on. Thus, the nomination of Roma becomes a restrictive and exclusivist practice, reserved to a limited number of persons, the so-called “leaders” who are recognized and accepted by the Roma as such and who can in turn motivate the Roma to vote.

Secondly, Roma nomination by mainstream political parties does not just happen. The success of the mainstream political parties to attract Roma candidates is dependent on their personal relationships with those Roma persons, which influence their willingness to accept the offer. This connection seems to be very important, as in some cases it convinced mainstream political parties to nominate also other Roma beside their leaders, such as in township F or township A. However, these Roma candidates were placed in relatively low positions on the electoral lists, according to their perceived electoral potential. Thus, in those cases where the mainstream political parties are, due to different reasons, connected to Roma persons, Roma nominations are more likely: ‘what it mattered was that I was close to them a lot of the time, my friendship towards them, I know them all by name, 90% of them’ (R 25). Similarly, another party leader associated their relationship with the Roma with Roma nomination:

‘From my point of view, when you get involved in the electoral campaign, you rely first of all on your own acquaintances and on the availability of those persons. So, it did not matter that there were (Roma) parties, although for sure if Partida Romilor would not have competed I would have had other (Roma candidates)’ (R 5).

If however Roma leaders and mainstream political parties are not so well connected, there are fewer chances that Roma leaders accept the proposals of the mainstream political parties and they have more incentives to follow their own interests:

‘We knew already of the (Roma) competition, the games were already made from this point of view, as it was known that the Roma were on their own. But I told you, there were a few Roma who came to other parties. I do not think (I would have had Roma candidates if the Roma would not have come toward us), as they would have been more difficult to convince’ (R 9).

‘The Roma candidate (that was the leader of the Roma political party), we had him as a councilor in the 2012 local council. Thinking that you have a chance to take some votes from the Roma, we had discussions with the Roma (leaders) so that I can (have a Roma candidate). The Roma leader makes all the games with regard to the persons that you can have on the lists for councilors, as well as the number of votes’ (R 7).

Another example comes from township A, where only one mainstream political party managed to convince Roma candidates to run for it, due to their network connection, while the others had problems to convince them: ‘no, I did not have, on the contrary, we wished for, but there were at least two Roma parties (and they refused) (R 24); or:

‘They effectively refused, as they competed separately, they were with AUR<sup>39</sup> and Pro Europe (Roma political parties) and you realize that (I was not able to convince them). There were a few who accepted to go on the lists of other parties, even the PSD if I am not mistaken had Roma on their list, I do not remember exactly, but I did not have Roma on my list. The irony is that I am a teacher since 1976 at township Aa, where the Roma are a majority, and you realize that old students of mine are there and I would have found one (but they refused)’ (R 22).

Additionally, one mainstream party leader from township A disclosed that the decision of the two Roma leaders to run for their own Roma parties had also been influenced by their county leader, who had advised the local Roma leaders to run for their own political parties. This way they could negotiate certain arrangements with the mainstream county leaders. Similarly, in township F, the local Roma leader stopped their collaboration with the mainstream political party due to calls from the Roma county leader to run as an independent candidate.

This underlines the fact that when Roma leaders and mainstream political parties do not share the same interests, as it is mostly the case for people who are part of the same network, collaboration between the two is not possible. Although in this case Roma nomination is restricted also by a problem of supply of Roma candidates, as well as by the monopoly of Roma leaders, it can at the same time be the consequence of the restrictive nature of networks. Networks, by their very nature, have been characterized as exclusive and discriminatory clubs of people who prioritize members with the same (or similar) identity and with the same interests (Granovetter, 1973; Brass, 1985; Ibarra, 1992). If mainstream political parties had not relied so much on their own networks and if they had been more open to include persons from outside their own circles, maybe they would have not faced problems in finding Roma candidates willing to run on their lists. Either way, the fact that mainstream party leaders give priority to Roma from their own networks further limits the pool of potential Roma candidates. It is not only electorally viable Roma, but also those who are part of the networks of the mainstream party leaders that get nominated. This helps explain why the results of the logistic regression do not have a significant effect, as Roma nomination on the lists of mainstream political parties

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<sup>39</sup> Alianța pentru Unitatea Romilor/ Alliance for the Unity of Roma.

is not restricted by the presence of Roma political parties, but by the availability of candidates and the relationship with the Roma party leaders.

### **6.3. The size of the Roma population**

This section concludes the discussion of variables related to inter-party factors. It addresses the size of the Roma population, the only variable that is statistically significant, confirming the theoretical assumptions according to which political parties, as rational actors, will not refrain from using minority candidates in those areas where the size of the minority is considerable, as long as the anticipated benefits exceed the costs. The qualitative analysis below substantiates the statistical results and brings to light new aspects that make Roma population size, and thus Roma candidates, of tremendous importance in certain contexts. Due to phenomena such as migration and low electoral turnout, the size of the Roma community amplifies its electoral weight, becoming sometimes the decisive factor in a local election, especially when it comes to the election of the mayor, which is decided through a plurality system. Consequently, Roma nomination is very likely in such cases.

#### **6.3.1. Size of the Roma electorate and local power**

This sub-section brings empirical evidence confirming that Roma nomination is dependent on the size of the Roma electorate, as political parties, unsurprisingly, aim first of all to improve their electoral results. Under these circumstances, Roma candidates become an important opportunity to maximize votes. The rationality of the decision to have Roma candidates is exemplified by the electoral calculations that party leaders make, in which they balance costs (lack of knowledge of the Roma on how to vote) against benefits (higher turnout of the Roma voters, migration of the Romanian voters).

When asked about their motivation to have Roma candidates or about the importance of the size of the minority group, most party leaders have not refrained from confirming the significance of the anticipated electoral benefits. They acknowledged that including Roma candidates on their electoral lists had a major impact on the outcome of the elections, especially when the size of the Roma group in the commune was high(er) and thus that the motivation to have them as candidates was dependent on that: ‘everybody picks them, including myself, and not because he has a pretty face, but for his relatives, influence over the others. It brings, of course it brings (electoral benefits)’ (R 1); or ‘out of these 2000 (voters), one quarter of the electorate are Roma; if I did not add Roma, then I am almost lost’ (R 13).

Although a few party leaders did not recognize the importance of the share of the Roma population as a factor in nominating Roma candidates, as illustrated by the case of township C, where the size of the Roma community is of around 800 people out of a total population of 2100 and yet no Roma candidates were nominated, their explanations reveal the opposite: ‘what can I say, I would not exclude (the idea of nominating Roma) if I would find a serious man coming from their side. But a serious person, not just one to put on the list. I did not use this option, if I had chosen this strategy maybe I would have won the elections’ (R 31). Similarly, another party leader from township C divulged that he could put forth two ethnic Romanian as candidates for the Roma, because these candidates could offer the Roma job opportunities. This was only a strategy of nominating the respective candidates on the party list, hoping that the Roma, who depended on him, will vote for the candidate. Due to the lack

of supply of Roma candidates, it was argued, but also because these two Romanians were fundamental for the Roma community, helping them in general, the party leader thought that he could gain Roma votes by adding these persons to his list. The Roma community was not so impressed by this proposal though and the party leader gave up the strategy.

However, it should be emphasized that the effect of the size of the group is also amplified by other contextual factors, which further underline the strategic and rational thinking of the party leaders, whereby benefits are weighed against costs. Among the benefits, one of the factors mentioned by party leaders was the voting behavior of the Roma electorate. Contrary to what is generally assumed, the Roma seem to be more politically active than the Romanians:

‘They are orderly and go to vote, in comparison with the Romanians, who had a presence at the last three elections of 50%, 52% and 56% (respectively). They (the Roma) had a presence of over 70% in two voting sections at township Aa, where there are over 1200 Roma voters’ (R 24).

Secondly, the Roma share of the electorate appears to be higher because of the emigration of the Romanians:<sup>40</sup> ‘as I told you, in township Ea (Roma) are the majority, the Romanians left (migrated), so Roma took over the whole village, it is even called a Roma village. In township Eb there are a few Romanian families, but they are old, so Roma are once again the majority’ (R 10).

‘There are almost 500 (Roma) votes out of 4400 at the level of the whole commune, out of which on election day 2000 (voters) are outside (Romania). If (the elections) would be in August (when Romanians return home for holidays), the situation (the structure) of the votes would change at the commune level, both with Roma and Romanians, as we also have a high number of persons who migrated. So, out of 4400 (people) to vote, a maximum of 1700 come, and from these 1700, one is elected mayor with less than 1000 votes... 700-800’ (R 19).

As it becomes apparent, these two phenomena reduce the discrepancy in terms of size between the majority and the minority, all the more so in cases when Romanian both migrate and do not go to vote, giving the Roma even greater electoral weight.

Thirdly, this is not only a matter of strategies employed to increase the number of votes, but also to decrease the electoral score of other political parties: ‘I really wanted in the beginning to take the Roma from PSD and to have a Roma political party. There is a good person and I asked him (to create one)’ (R 2).

‘In commune E, as the Roma have such a big number, it is a must to have candidates from their side (...). As I told you, this is how I thought then and how I think even now, their presence on my list was necessary due to two main reasons: to decrease the electoral power of PSD and because I saw that in township Eb (a village populated almost exclusively by Roma persons) there were some Roma with (electoral) potential who were marginalized by the others’ (R 10).

Yet having a Roma candidate might also have some costs, which stem from the fact that Roma voters do not always know how to vote. An example is the case of C, a commune with 10%

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<sup>40</sup> In certain cases, party leaders suggested the Romanians migrated more than the Roma, as was the case in E.



Roma population and no Roma candidates. The leader of the incumbent local party emphasized how Roma groups cannot be regarded as an electoral resource because they lack knowledge about the electoral process. As it can be seen from the detailed quote below, although local party leaders offer some information to Roma on how to vote, they mainly do it by teaching them the distinctive electoral sign of their political party, without informing them about the role and functionality of each ballot paper. This is most probably due to different reasons: because they can use this situation to their own advantage, but also because the ability of Roma to understand the electoral process is limited by their low levels of education, making it difficult to vote for a party when you do not know how to read.

‘Considering the experience of the last year, I do not think (Roma votes are an advantage), as most of them are illiterate, they are uneducated and then their way to know how to vote is just (to learn) the distinctive sign of each party. In the moment in which, as it is clear that this is what each party has done (has taught the Roma how to vote for their party), (Romanian party leaders said) vote for the arrow, the roses, etc., and their (Roma) leader (vote for) the wheel, they have a principle that I identified and verified. If they promised to one of the candidates that they would vote for them and at the moment when they took the ballot paper they did not have the patience to look at the list (of parties), as the respective party was on the last page of the ballot paper, the other political parties were before, but as they promised (their vote) to the PSD... As there are three ballot papers for local council, mayor, and county council, and they did not have a candidate for the mayor and they had to put the stamp, then they took the next ballot paper but they did not know if it was for the local council or county council and they saw (the electoral signs)... s/he promised to vote for the three roses, for example, so s/he put the stamp on that one and s/he looked further at the list and saw also the wheel, s/he put the stamp on the wheel as well. This is because of the lack of education, for those that know how to read it is easier, but even those, because of the lack of patience to study the ballot paper, they made mistakes, they annulled it’ (R 34).

### **6.3.2. The election of the mayor and its implications for Roma nomination**

The novel finding of this section is that local party leaders seek Roma candidates not to increase their power inside the local councils, but to win the mayoral race, as each party leader aims to win this position. This is mainly because of the changes made to the electoral system in 2011, which replaced the two-round system with a plurality one, allowing the function of mayor to be instantly won in one round by the person who manages to obtain the highest number of votes. Under these circumstances, Roma votes become more valuable. Although some votes can be lost because some Roma do not know how to vote, overall the benefits are more significant, as for the function of mayor every vote counts and has an impact on the electoral output. As for the councilor positions a party must pass the 5% electoral threshold, if many Roma votes are annulled and the threshold is not reached, then all the Roma votes are lost. For the mayoral race, however, the valid Roma votes still count, even if some Roma votes were annulled, as what matters is who obtains the highest number of votes:

‘In township E, for example, the Roma community is decisive in deciding the mayor and they can do this because they are a lot, big families, kindred through weddings and confirmations, and they do not have Partida Romilor or what have you. They all go with the PSD and in this case the support of the Roma minority is given to

the largest party the other political parties who compete catch what they can (with regard to votes)’ (R 10).

‘This electoral law with one electoral round is bad, if there were two rounds the game would change, as you would need 50 plus one, the second round was different as it was just, it was more representative (...) They (the Roma) have an important role in the designation of the mayor, they always had, the person they voted as a mayor was the one elected’ (R 35)

Three consequences of this rational practice can be observed. First of all, the changes made to the electoral system for choosing mayors have transformed the Roma minority into a new partner of mainstream political parties in electoral races, implicitly increasing their chances of nomination. If until 2011 political parties would have made different alliances between themselves to determine who wins the position of mayor, it is now the minority candidates that become the substitute of the previous alliances made with other mainstream parties. In those cases where the size of the Roma minority is high to very high, Roma nomination can even become the only electoral strategy of some parties that could easily ensure that certain Romanian candidates win the most influential position at the level of the commune, that of mayor. This contributes to a monopoly of power of the winning party; if previously, by entering alliances with other political parties for the second round of elections, certain concessions had to be made, by having Roma candidates this becomes an “internal” matter. Secondly, in those situations where the share of Roma population is higher, there is a chance that certain party leaders can hold their position as mayor for many mandates in a row, just through the capture of the Roma votes. Thirdly, this positive change of status of the Roma seems to have tokenistic connotations, if we look at the number of Roma candidates reported to their share of the population, as well as at the number of Roma councilors, as shown in Chapters 4 and 5. Moreover, this “upgrade” is not motivated by a wish to ensure a proportional representation of the minority groups, but by the wish of the mainstream political parties to access and maintain power, as provided by the change in the electoral system. This shows how Roma nomination does not constitute a priority for mainstream political parties and raises questions about the extent to which even this tokenistic inclusion would have been present before 2011.

## Conclusion

This chapter sought to explain the statistical results and to shed light on the actual mechanisms that account for Roma nomination. It included a combination of confirmatory and new findings. The first section has shown that the case of the local Romanian political parties shows some peculiarities, further underlining that the electoral motivations of political parties are not inoffensive or even neutral toward Roma nomination. Personalization can act as a double-edged sword for the Roma. On the one hand it encourages collaborations between Roma and mainstream political parties, but also discourages it whenever the profile of and the connection with the Roma candidate is not strong enough, as well as when the party leaders have access to influential Romanian persons. The fact that mainstream political parties aim to have mainly influential Roma candidates on their lists raises question about the applicability of neutral rules for both Roma and Romanian candidates, i.e., with respect to popularity, and shows how there is a bias favoring persons belonging to the majority. As such, this raises additional questions about discrepancies between the position on the party lists offered to similar Romanian and Roma candidates, as well as about the number of Roma candidates on the party lists. In turn, this leads us to question whether the similar political resources of two candidates translate into

similar outcomes and impact equally on their political careers. Personalized campaigns come also at the expense of stronger party organizations, which, by defending certain principles, might have induced a certain sensitivity toward voters' needs and, implicitly, minority voters' needs, as well as fostering political competition. This confirms, once more (see Rose, 1995; Millard, 2004; Gherghina, 2014), that in Central and Eastern Europe party identification and party organization still carry negative connotations, attached to them by both mainstream and ethnic voters, who are undecided and volatile.

The second section has shown that Roma nomination is not a one-sided decision, but the result of a combination of factors associated with both the mainstream political party and the Roma minority. The starting point is, of course, the willingness and/or the need of the mainstream political party to include Roma candidates on its lists, which grows when the size of the Roma electorate is considerable. However, this depends also on the Roma leaders, who, as the gatekeepers of the Roma community, do have electoral potential, are connected with the party leaders, and can choose to accept or reject such offers. This accentuates again the fact that the size of the minority group is important for Roma nomination; however, it is important to acknowledge that other structural barriers exist. The fact that collaboration between Roma and mainstream political parties is dependent on previous collaborations confirms that the past exclusion of minority groups from power-sharing is difficult to challenge unless changes are made to the way in which political parties select their candidates, confirming at the same time the constraining effect of networks for minority groups. Furthermore, it is intriguing to see how both Romanian and Roma politics are governed by personalized campaigns that focus on the characteristics of the candidates, or better said on their relationship with the voters, as shown in the first section.

The fact that mainstream political parties use the size of the Roma minority only to their own benefit (i.e., to win the mayoral race and not so much to increase the number of Roma councilors) suggests that it takes more than a larger size of the Roma community to break the majority's ignorance of the needs of other groups. This indirectly confirms that the traditional way of doing politics, as well as the lack of contestation of such practices render the interests of the majority the top priority, in such a way that it has become normal to use even the electoral benefits brought by minority votes only to further advance the prosperity of the majority. Irrespective of the fact that Roma votes are a way to obtain and maintain the monopoly of power, mainstream political parties are not even inclined to consider Roma as a part of the electorate whose interests are worth considering, not to mention treating them as electoral allies.

All these findings support the theoretical assumptions according to which the decisions of the political parties to nominate Roma candidates are influenced by external party-related factors. Although among the inter-party factors only the size of the Roma group was a variable that obtained statistical support, the qualitative analysis showed that other factors such as availability, characteristics, as well as connections of the Roma with the Romanian leaders play an important role. The 'frame' argument, according to which Roma nomination is connected with the electoral resources of a political party, finds partial support, as Roma nomination is revealed to be a more complex matter. Mainstream political parties do try to make rational electoral choices; however, as the political environment is not one where voting decisions are made on more objective matters (ideas, party programs, competence of the candidates, performance, etc.), they consider Roma nomination as an option only when such a practice does not involve too significant a change for them (i.e., is based on past collaboration with the Roma, their high electoral potential, doubled by an unwillingness to treat Roma candidates as allies) that would challenge the traditional way of doing politics. This confirms and further emphasizes the importance of informal rules, which usually work to the detriment of excluded groups and

increase the power of the majority, as well as the conservative character of political parties, which are unwilling to embrace changes too easily.

Additionally, these findings come to confirm previous studies on party politics, as well as minority representation. First of all, they show that candidate-centered politics are a dominant feature of local politics in Romania, regardless of whether we are talking about Roma or Romanian politicians (Aldrich, 1995; Blondel and Thiébault, 2009; Gherghina and Chiru, 2010; Gherghina, 2014). Similarly, they confirm the results of previous studies on the nomination of ethnic minorities, which show that mainstream political parties give priority to certain minority leaders based on their electoral potential (Dancygier *et al.*, 2015; Dancygier, 2017), as well as preferring those leaders in their immediate proximity (Bird, Saalfeld and Wüst, 2010). Networks, through their very nature, have both inclusive and exclusive effects. Finally, this chapter provides evidence to the interpretation according to which ethnicity is not fixed and intransigent, but rather a social construct that can be influenced by circumstances as well as by group leaders (Laitin, 1998; Chandra, 2004; Posner, 2005) and that no longer guarantees Roma political parties exclusive access to Roma voters. The fact that ethnicity does not constitute the main guiding principle for Roma voters raises questions about whether its importance has been previously overstated in other studies dealing with minority representation or whether the importance of ethnicity in political decisions is also connected with the socio-economic situation of the minority group.

## **Chapter 7 - Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to recapitulate and revisit the main arguments presented in the theoretical chapter in order to sum up the main findings and to evaluate the compatibility between theory and empirical findings, as well as to highlight the contributions made by this study to the existing literature. Roma groups in Romania, as well as in most of the European countries where they live, are characterized as politically under-represented. Although political representation is a multi-faceted phenomenon which can be influenced by different types of factors, such low turnout of Roma voters, lack of strong leadership and organizational capacity of the Roma political organizations, unfriendly electoral laws and systems, etc., the focus of this study has been mainly on the behavior of Roma elites and organizations, and on the barriers created by the allegedly ‘minority friendly’ electoral legislation in Romania.

The main goal of this study was to explain why Roma candidates are nominated on the lists of mainstream parties. It focused on the five main mainstream political parties in Romania and their candidate-selection processes for the 2016 local elections. The central claim has been that the threat of electoral uncertainty for a mainstream political party, stemming from the electoral resources at their disposal, is the guiding factor that stimulates minority nomination. More specifically, I argued that electoral resources are derived from intra- and inter-party related factors, namely the size of the party, the time of leadership change, party competition, the presence of Roma parties, and the size of the Roma minority in a certain locality. These factors can determine voters to change their previous preferences for a certain political party, which can in turn suffer a decrease of electoral resources that can lead to electoral losses. In an attempt to avoid such a situation, mainstream political parties try to attract Roma voters by placing Roma candidates on their electoral lists, in order to compensate for the instability affecting their electoral resources.

In order to show whether this is indeed the case, this chapter first presents the main findings of this study and then highlights the main contributions brought by this new angle of analysis in theoretical, methodological, and empirical terms. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief scrutiny of the limitations of the present study and suggestions for further research.

### **7.1. Main findings**

The analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data has revealed that Roma nomination is a complex and ambiguous process. It is a practice characterized by controversy, as the potential electoral benefits brought by Roma candidates are not so straightforward. This is the reason why from the five party-related factors under consideration in this study, only the size of the Roma community had a statistically significant effect on Roma nomination. In order to disentangle these results, the following sub-sections will address each of these factors.

### 7.1.1. The size of the party

One intra-party factor related to the electoral resources of a political party and implicitly to minority nomination is the size of the party, in terms of the mandates won in the previous election. If the theories of retrospective voting and valence voting, as well as bounded rationality, are taken into account, when voters evaluate political parties they consider more their previous performance, and not their ideology. Two reasons why performance matters more than ideology for voters can be considered. Performance is more appealing as, in contrast to ideology, it is more concrete, as it comes from parties' actual activity and not from something that is proposed and defended on paper during electoral campaigns. Also, obtaining information is less time-consuming for performance than for ideology, as it is easily accessible and available in the media. This tends to benefit large political parties. Political thinking is consequently considered a 'low information rationality', in which the voter first collects information about the issues the voter is interested in, as well as the parties that addresses them, and then checks the information from the sources around them: friends, media, or other experts. Thus, there are better chances that voters will have more information about large parties: as they are the ones that lead the representative institutions, there is much more information about their activity. Additionally, because the voter has information about their performance, this makes them more persuasive, as they can appear more competent. As such, the electoral results of a political party are an indication of the satisfaction of the voters with their performance, suggesting that there is a stronger connection between the two. In contrast, smaller political parties, judging by their electoral results, are not so well connected with the voters. This makes them more prone to search for strategies to attract other voters in order to improve their electoral results, for example by nominating minority candidates in those areas where minority groups live.

However, the size of the party was not among the factors that affect Roma nomination in the case studies analyzed in this study. Contrary to what had been initially hypothesized, the correlation showed that there is indeed a positive association between large political parties and Roma nomination, but that the effect however disappears during the logistic regression test. The positive association, the interviews have shown, comes from the fact that large political parties have more leeway to nominate Roma due to their organizational strength, which comes from the extensive use of their own social contacts. This provides them with a higher recruitment potential, as they can more easily convince people to run for them; these in turn have supporters who remain loyal, making them less predisposed to contestation of the decision to nominate Roma candidates and to electoral losses. In turn, small parties, because they look for educated candidates and try to appeal to the voters who are dissatisfied with the performance of large parties, are constrained in their decisions, as they risk losing their core group of supporters if they nominate Roma candidates. Additionally, the candidacy rules indirectly exclude Roma from the pool of potential candidates, as they typically lack education and professional training. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, one main reason why Roma candidates are so under-represented in comparison with their share of the population comes from the manipulation and blackmailing of the Roma voters by the incumbent local political party. Taking advantage of the fact that most of the Roma voters have as their exclusive source of income the social benefits provided by the Romanian state, but distributed by the local councils, and that Roma voters are not aware of the fact that local incumbent parties are just distributors and not givers of these social benefits, they blackmail Roma voters. This makes Roma voters a group typically "reserved" for the local incumbent party, which does not even have to nominate Roma candidates in order to obtain Roma votes. Additionally, it decreases the incentives of the other political parties, large or small, to include Roma candidates on their electoral lists.

### **7.1.2. Change of party leadership**

In the literature on candidates selection processes, it is quite often highlighted that who undertakes the selection has important consequences for which candidates are placed on the electoral list. Although the selectorate can have different compositions, the focus in this study has been on the party leaders. Such a focus was motivated by the importance that party leaders have nowadays. They have become the center of politics, acting as the connection between the party and the voters. They are also the ones who set the goals of the political parties and because through these goals they can fulfill their own goals, they can show greater flexibility and openness toward experimenting with new strategies, such as having minority candidates. This is however dependent also on the time of leadership change, for at least two reasons. First, political parties are conservative organizations that do not easily implement changes, unless there is a good reason; this can mean that a change of leadership can be a sign of openness to change. Additionally, new party leaders might also introduce changes in order to reflect their own views and opinions about ideology and the party in general. Secondly, a change of party leadership can involve a loss of support, which can affect the electoral stability of the party. No change of leadership, on the other hand, is a sign of acceptability from both party members and voters, but also of a lack of leadership contestation (or at least of a successful one). This means that new party leaders are more likely to include minority candidates on their electoral lists, in contrast to older ones.

Such assumptions were contradicted both by the statistical tests as well as by the interviews. Although the correlation between longer-serving party leaders and Roma nomination is positive, contrary to what had been hypothesized, the logistic regression showed no statistical support for this variable. One explanation for these results is that personalization is a useful thing for new and old party leaders alike, but it does not offer protection against other challenges that are associated with the time of leadership change. In the case of new party leaders, these are related to the mistrust of the voters for new people and the unpredictability of their behavior, while for older party leaders this is more about the predictability of their corrupt or inappropriate behavior. This prompts both new and old party leaders to search for extra votes, such as the ones that a Roma candidate could bring. However, the main obstacle comes from the lack of formal rules, which gives full autonomy to local party leaders with regard to the selection of their candidates. This creates an environment in which the subjective norms, beliefs, and stereotypes held by party leaders allow for discrimination against Roma. Roma are typically portrayed as people without potential and education who are not compatible with the function of councilor. While such characteristics are not tolerated for Roma people, they are considered acceptable for Romanians, suggesting the application of double standards.

### **7.1.3. Party competition**

Party competition is an important aspect that contributes to the electoral in/stability of the political parties, as it can be translated into a loss of electoral resources. The connection with minority nomination comes from the fact that a political environment characterized by higher competition between political parties makes the voters more volatile, due to several reasons. The policy distance between political parties decreases and voters have the possibility to choose political parties that better fit their preferences. Voters, especially those who have little or no partisan membership, face an increase of the costs of information gathering and they may make their decisions based on cognitive shortcuts, using their previous knowledge, making it difficult for political parties to maintain their electoral base. Also, competition makes it more difficult for voters to distinguish between viable and non-viable competitors and increases the

randomness with which voters take their decisions. When the political arena is unstable due to the entry/exit of political parties, voters can also change their political preferences, as these are also influenced by the actions of the elites. Additionally, political parties might be more responsive to voters' needs in order to keep their voters happy, but also because party competition implies a shrinking of the electorate. In less competitive elections, political parties might not show such behavior, as they know the options of the voters are limited and thus that they are less likely to switch their preferences between political parties. Thus, in a competitive campaign, political parties are faced with an unstable and limited electorate and have more incentives to find additional strategies to increase the number of voters. In heterogeneous spaces, attracting minority voters by nominating minority candidates is a viable solution.

Although from a theoretical point of view there are many arguments to support the connection between higher party competition and nomination of Roma, in reality the situation is different. None of the statistical tests identified any association between Roma nomination and party competition, as there was no statistically significant effect. The interviews showed that competition is not associated with the number of political parties involved in the electoral campaign, but with the persons who are nominated on the party lists. Similar to the Roma groups, this is a personalized environment where votes are won by virtue of personal characteristics and the relationship between the candidates and the voters, and not through the party itself. Due to this, voters are less volatile than they would be if they were attracted by the label and manifesto of the party, and they are less likely to switch between political parties as long as they have a good relationship with the candidates. Also, they are less likely to be interested in the composition of the electoral list and thus to have their political behavior influenced by the presence or absence of a Roma candidate. This offers political parties something akin to a safety net for their electoral results, since they know that as long as they have compelling candidates, their electoral success is guaranteed. This makes them less likely to be interested in how many other political parties are participating in elections, but rather in their candidates. Although this creates a competition between political parties to attract the best candidates, this competition is superficial, as party leaders choose their candidates from among the people they know and with whom they have cooperated in the past. This leads to a situation where all party leaders have their own people and are aware of their potential. Such a personalized campaign is to the detriment of Roma candidates, since there are not so many Roma persons compatible with the requirement of bringing an important number of votes for a party. There are only a handful of Roma people who fit this profile. As such, it is not the number of political parties involved in the competition that offers more or fewer incentives to party leaders to include Roma candidates on their lists, but rather the fact that they typically nominate their own acquaintances, who are well connected and well known inside the community.

#### **7.1.4. The presence of Roma political parties**

Another inter-party factor that can be related to the incentives of the mainstream political parties to nominate minority candidates is the presence of an ethnic political party. Ethnic political parties are considered to have a stable and reserved electorate by virtue of mobilizing voters through recourse to ethnicity. There are many reasons why ethnic voters will remain loyal to ethnic parties and will not be attracted by mainstream political parties with 'ethnic policies' on their electoral agenda. First of all, membership in an ethnic group creates connections between the members, which makes them more inclined to view such persons favorably. Additionally, group membership can act as an information provider; as members exchange and share ideas between them, there are higher chances that an ethnic membership is more familiar with the policies of an ethnic party than with those of a mainstream one. Finally, as voters use



information shortcuts to make their political decisions, in order to minimize the time spent in gathering information, they are likely to support the ideas heard within the ethnic group. All of these aspects lead ethnic voters to prefer ethnic political parties, as well discourage mainstream political parties from adopting ethnic policies in elections. The situation changes though when there are no ethnic political parties involved in the elections. If there is no ethnic outbidding, mainstream political parties might not refrain from using the “ethnic card” and try instead to attract minority votes by nominating minority candidates.

As shown in Chapter 4, these theoretical assumptions have not received statistical support. Contrary to what had been hypothesized, the presence of Roma political parties is correlated with Roma nomination, but the relationship does not hold during the logistic regression. The inconsistency of the theory stems from the fact that ethnicity does not constitute such an important matter when making political decisions. Roma voters are not attracted by Roma candidates because they feel that a Roma person can better represent their interests, but because a candidate has a certain influence over Roma voters. Due to their socio-economic situation, Roma voters are dependent on and show support for those persons who can help them improve their economic situation, which in most cases are popular and charismatic Roma. The success of a Roma candidate among Roma voters, whether running on the lists of a Roma or mainstream political party, stems from his/her popularity and charisma, and not from the recourse to ethnicity. This explains the positive correlation, as unless a Roma political party has a popular leader, its success is not guaranteed, while mainstream political parties will not refrain from having their own Roma candidates. Under these circumstances, the personalization of Roma politics helps us understand why the presence of Roma political parties does not constitute a barrier for Roma nomination by mainstream political parties, as well as raising questions about the importance of ethnicity for the Roma, as well as for other minority groups.

### **7.1.5. The size of the Roma minority**

The size of the Roma population in a given locality has been considered to be an important intra-party factor that impacts on the electoral stability of a political party. From a rational point of view, a mainstream political party will not nominate minority candidates unless the benefits exceed the costs. As minority groups generally face discrimination from members of the majority groups, a mainstream political party has to take into consideration both benefits and costs before nominating minority candidates. These costs refer to the potential number of voters lost due to the prejudices and stereotypes held against the respective minority groups. The benefits refer to the potential number of votes obtained from the minority group itself. Consequently, the size of the minority group can be a good indicator of the potential benefits; the larger the group, the more incentives mainstream political parties have. Mainstream political parties are then more likely to include minority candidates on their lists when the size of the minority group is larger.

The statistical results that Roma nomination is indeed influenced by the size of the group; the larger the size of the Roma minority, the higher the chances to have (more) Roma candidates. The size of the group is also the only factor that is statistically significant in the logistic regression. Although the effect is not so strong, as there is a lot of variation and there are instances where Roma candidates were present on the electoral lists even though the size of the community is not so large, such as in Letca, it has been noticed that typically once the Roma minority constitutes more than 5% of the population, there will be at least one mainstream party list with a Roma candidate. Also, once the size of the Roma community is larger than 11% of the population, there is typically more than one mainstream political party nominating Roma

candidates. This confirms the theoretical assumptions according to which Roma nomination is dependent on their share of the population, but also that mainstream party leaders apply a cost-benefit analysis when they consider nominating Roma candidates. On the cost side, they factor in the volatility of the Romanian voters, as well as the lack of knowledge of some Roma on how to vote; on the benefits side, as it was expected, it is the size of the Roma community that counts. The Roma votes can weigh even more heavily due to the migration of the Romanian electorate. When the ratio of benefits to costs is positive, Roma nomination is more likely.

The analysis in Chapter 6 has shown however that such calculations are not necessarily important when it comes to political parties' attempts to increase the number of councilor positions they acquire, but rather in the race for the position of mayor. Although these public functions are the outcomes of two different elections operating under different electoral systems, they are held on the same day. As mainstream political parties advertise themselves as a team composed of a candidate for the mayor and candidates for councilor seats, the voters tend to vote for the same party in both elections. This way the votes of the Roma become very important for electing the mayor, who is elected through a pluralistic system, meaning that the person with the highest number of votes wins. In those communes where Roma make up a larger share of the population, their votes are important, as they can decide who becomes the mayor, turning the nomination of Roma candidates into an important electoral strategy. Although Roma candidates are nominated in such cases, the tokenistic purpose can be observed if we compare the number of Roma candidates with the size of the Roma community, as the results are far from proportional. This means that mainstream political parties use Roma candidates for their own purposes without increasing the number of Roma candidates proportionally to their share of the population.

## **7.2. Implications for the broader field of study**

The empirical analysis presented in this study provides several relevant results, making a contribution to different bodies of scholarship. First of all, it reconfirms that the nomination process is an obscure practice characterized by subjectivity and informality, advancing knowledge in several areas of study. One of these is the neo-institutionalist literature, where the present study confirms and strengthens the idea that without considering informal institutions, the behavior and decision-making process of political parties, or other political actors more generally, cannot be fully understood (e.g., Bird, Saalfeld, and Wüst, 2010; Mackay, Kenny, and Chappell, 2010; Elin Bjarnegard, 2013; Chappell and Waylen, 2013; Lowndes 2014; Waylen 2014). The other contribution this study makes is to the literature on party politics. As informality is an issue touching many spheres of politics, many 'sub-contributions' can be distinguished. The present study substantiates previous findings that 'traditional' political parties have little importance for voters in Central and Eastern Europe. As the connection between the voters and political parties takes place informally, through the social connections and based on the profiles of the candidates, features such as party membership, local offices, or the policies promoted are almost irrelevant in local settings. This supports the idea that political parties are agents that can structure the choices of their voters (see Gherghina, 2014a) through the informal practices mentioned above. The study also contributes to the candidate selection literature. First of all, it reconfirms that informal politics poses several challenges, as the opportunities for inclusion of minority groups are affected (by informal and subjective rules, the autonomy of the party leaders, etc.). Moreover, the lack of formal rules results in biased outcomes not only with regard to the selected candidates, but also to the competition between parties (see Hazan and Rahat, 2010). As shown above, because candidates are nominated due to their potential to attract votes and their social connections with the party leaders, the influence

of party competition on the incentives of the political parties to nominate ethnic candidates is diminished.

The second contribution this study makes is to the literature on clientelism, especially on negative clientelism. The qualitative data has showed that intimidation of Roma voters by incumbent local parties constitutes an important barrier to Roma nomination. This underlines the need for a broader conceptualization of clientelism, making the distinction between positive and negative forms, as the rationality and context in which they occur is different (see Mares and Young, 2019; Gherghina, Saikkonen, and Bankov, 2021). Especially when it comes to negative clientelism, this study endorses the findings from previous studies (Gonzalez-Ocantos *et al.*, 2020) regarding the factors that facilitate such practices (poor localities with weak party organizations that lack strong connections with their voters), as well those related to the target group (vulnerable socio-economic individuals who are less likely to contest such practices or to report it). Yet, it also highlights the connection between the struggle for power and negative clientelism, as it is not necessarily a practice used on individuals who are not responsive to vote-buying. Incumbent political parties prefer to use intimidation instead of vote-buying practices not because the Roma cannot be mobilized through such incentives, but because they know that in the case of vulnerable groups threats have the same effect, while being also cheaper. Moreover, intimidation does not have to have a demobilizing effect. As the case of Roma voters has shown, threats were used in order to stimulate political participation; as such, they go to vote because they are afraid that if they do not, they will be punished (with the withholding of their social benefits).

Thirdly, the findings draw on previous theories in ethnic studies and the present study contributes to two different, but related issues. When it comes to minority representation through minority organizations, the power of ethnicity as a guiding factor for the voting behavior of Roma is contested (i.e., Horowitz, 2000; Chandra, 2004; 2013, Birnir, 2006). The precarious economic situation of most of the Roma makes them susceptible to intimidation and manipulation from incumbent political parties, as well as willing to trade their votes. This challenges the idea that ethnic voters are a stable and reserved electorate for the ethnic parties (Gherghina and Jigla, 2016); in turn, this finding brings us to a second issue. Existing research showed that the under- and mis-representation of the Roma is a result of how Roma organizations and leaders engage in politics (see Barany, 2001; Sobotka, 2001; 2002; Vermeersch, 2007; McGarry, 2008; 2009; 2010; Rostas, 2009a; 2009b; 2012). However, the present study, by changing the focus of analysis to mainstream political parties, has shown that such political parties are an important barrier for minority representation, as their actions are not neutral and they constrain the free will of Roma voters. In this case, the under-representation of Roma candidates cannot be explained only by the electoral wishes of political parties to increase their electoral resources, as sometimes having a higher share of the population does not translate into the nomination of Roma candidates. This suggests that when studying Roma groups, it is important to take into consideration their ‘super-diversity’ (Tremlett, 2014), as there are other variables beyond ethnicity that impact on the political participation and mobilization of the Roma, like their economic situation, gender, or group structure. Their ‘super-diversity’ can be exploited by other political actors and can have negative consequences, as it can be used to the detriment and disempowerment of the Roma.

Methodologically, this is one of the few studies that uses mixed methods to analyze ethnic nomination by mainstream political parties (except Togeby, 1999; Dancygier, 2014, 2017; Dancygier *et al.*, 2015). On the one hand, this research is based on a unique data set about ethnic minority candidates, which provides not only new information about the number of candidates, but also underlines how party competition does not influence ethnic minority nomination in

certain contexts. On the other hand, qualitative interviews proved to be a very important tool when disentangling ethnic minority nominations by mainstream political parties. It is not only that without such data aspects such as discrimination and stereotyping would not have been revealed, but practices such as manipulation and control over minority votes would have been obscured by the argument that minority nomination is motivated by electoral benefits.

Empirically, the present study provides important information about the informal life of political parties. As previous studies on party organization in Eastern Europe have focused mainly on the formal aspects (van Biezen, 2003; Enyedi and Linek, 2008; Tavits, 2013; Gherghina, 2014a), there is no data about the ‘day-to-day life’ of political parties, e.g., about their electoral strategies, changes with respect to party leadership, connection with the voters, etc. Secondly, it offers details about local politics, especially about its non-democratic side, showing that elections are (still) characterized by practices such as clientelism and misuse of power. Finally, the study provides valuable information about the Roma electorate and their political behavior, showing that due to their socio-economic situation their freedom of choice is restricted, as well as that ethnicity does not play such an important role in their political decisions.

### **7.3. Limitations**

As already mentioned in Chapter 3, the methodological choices made also impose some limitations on the study. By choosing to focus on Romania, as a single-country case study, a compromise had to be made between the goal of generalization and thick description, so the extent to which the findings apply to other settings would be limited. However, the within-country comparison reduces this limitation because it increases the possibility to have controlled comparisons that allow for limited generalizations, applicable to similar contexts. The findings parallel those of other studies dealing with ethnicity and/or gender that highlight the importance of informality in the selection process, as well as of phenomena such as clientelism or networks affecting the representation of disadvantaged groups, further underlining the potential generalization.

A second limitation of this study is the size of the sample. Although it is not comparable with a large N sample, it does represent an important and unique data set. Considering that there were no previous studies on the topic and that data can only be collected by surveying the local party leaders themselves, a larger sample would have required extensive manpower and time, incompatible with and unfeasible within the framework of a PhD study. As the interviews showed and as it was already mentioned in the Research Design chapter, there are no reasons to believe that a larger sample would have changed the results.

Finally, the statistical models employed showed that there is room for improvement, as the amount of variance they registered was not high and other variables could be included in order to explain minority nomination more generally. It is important to remember however that the aim of the quantitative analysis was to test the relationship between the five proposed variables and minority nomination, and not to have the highest variance possible. As such, this does not affect the results of the study. Additionally, future studies interested in accounting for more variation can use the present findings as a starting point. Considering their weak explanatory power, some variables can be left out or included as control variables.

#### **7.4. Further research**

The findings in this study open the path for further research in different areas. First of all, the study showed how mainstream political parties were not constrained to have Roma candidates because the economic position of Roma voters created room for manipulation and control. It is important to see whether political parties apply the same tactic to similar groups of voters belonging to the majority group, for example, in order to check whether their behavior in this respect is dependent on the socio-economic position of the voters. Moreover, the study showed that manipulation and control were related to the changes in the electoral system for the election of the mayor. This raises questions about the extent to which this practice was present before these changes to the electoral system and to what extent.

Secondly, the autonomy of the local party leaders with regard to the candidate selection process, which allowed for discrimination and stereotyping, constituted one important barrier to Roma nomination. It would be interesting to explore whether a more inclusive and/or centralized candidate selection process would have different outcomes, namely if county/national party leaders share such discriminatory views and whether they plan to address this issue and introduce special regulations that would be more favorable to the nomination of minority groups, considering that there are some stipulations with regard to the nomination of women and people belonging to different age groups in the party statutes. The effects of racism and discrimination do not only impact on how many Roma candidates there are on the lists of the mainstream political parties, but also on their behavior if elected. It would be important to study how responsive Roma councilors are toward Roma needs and whether they feel discouraged to represent the interests of their group of voters because they are part of a mainstream political party or/and because they feel constrained by the norms and practices inside the mainstream political party.

When it comes to ethnic studies, it is worth analyzing the factors that influence the political behavior of the Roma. It is especially important to look at the role played by ethnic identity, to find out whether its weak impact identified in this study is the result of the involvement of mainstream political parties and their nomination process, or a response to the unsatisfactory performance of Roma leaders / organizations. Another important aspect concerns other structural factors that impede Roma representation, namely their group structure. As only influential Roma persons or Roma leaders were preferred by mainstream political parties, it is important to explore whether there is a shortage of Roma candidates, whether less prominent Roma persons feel discouraged to get involved in politics, and what the reasons behind their reluctance. Finally, the gendering effects of nomination by mainstream political parties on Roma candidates is worth exploring, considering that almost all the Roma candidates in the sample covered by the present study were men.

## Appendices

**Appendix 1:** Binary Logistic Regression model 4 explaining Roma nomination, including party level, community and control variables and party fixed effects

Variable	Model 4
Constant	0.009
size of the party	1.020*
leadership change	1.478
party competition	.913
Roma party	1.320
Roma size	1.117***
re-nomination	.981*
size of the council	1.193*
ALDE	.677
PMP	.178***
PNL	2.031
PSD	2.881***
N	261
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.323
-2log likelihood	253.967

Note: Reported coefficients are odds-ratios

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

## **Appendix 2:** Questionnaire for collecting quantitative data

1. Did you have any Roma candidates on the electoral lists for the 2016 local elections? If yes, how many? On which position (winnable/non-winnable)?
2. How many of your candidates running for the 2016 local elections are at their first mandate?
3. When did the last change of local party leadership take place?

**Appendix 3:** List of communes and size of Roma population, by county.

County	Commune	Roma size
Iași	Ciohorăni	10.3%
	Ciurea	6.1%
	Comarna	1%
	Dagăta	5.7%
	Dolhești	21.1 %
	Grajduri	8.7%
	Holboca	2.1%
	Lungani	31.8%
	Mironeasa	8 %
	Miroslovești	5.7 %
	Moțca	11.4%
	Răducăneni	4.9%
	Valea Seacă	2.2 %
	Stolniceni Prăjescu	7.2%
	Voinești	6.1 %
Galati	Barcea	16.4%
	Brăhășești	59.1%
	Buciumeni	16.3%
	Drăgănești	8.6%
	Ghidigeni	26.9%
	Grivița	4.5%
	Ivești	18.1%
	Liești	7.6%
	Movileni	16.4 %
	Munteni	10.7%
Salaj	Umbrărești	5.6%
	Agrij	27,5%
	Almașu	9.7 %
	Băbeni	1.8%
	Bălan	2.7 %
	Bănișor	1.1 %
	Bobota	15.7%
	Bocșa	8.7 %
	Boghiș	22.9%
	Buciumi	15.9 %
	Camăr	6.1 %
	Carastelec	3.2%
	Chieșd	10 %
	Cizer	11.4%
	Coșeiu	2%
	Crasna	8.6%
	Creaca	2.1%
	Crișeni	4.2%



	Cuzăplac	8.3%
	Dobrin	2%
	Dragu	29.6 %
	Fildu de jos	22.8%
	Gâlgău	3.6 %
	Gârbou	9.0 %
	Halmășd	15 %
	Hereclean	2.2 %
	Hida	2.6%
	Horoatul Crasnei	7.4%
	Ileanda	9.9 %
	Ip	11.4%
	Letca	1.9%
	Marca	6.5%
	Măeriște	2.6%
	Meseșenii de Jos	5.3%
	Mirșid	19.3 %
	Năpradea	16.8%
	Nușfalău	16.5%
	Pericei	6.3%
	Plopiș	6.6%
	Poiana Blenchii	9.9 %
	Românași	14.4%
	Rus	1.1%
	Sâg	20.7 %
	Sânmihaiu Almașului	19.5 %
	Someș-Odorhei	6.3 %
	Surduc	6.1%
	Sărmășag	7.9 %
	Șimișna	7.9 %
	Treznea	4.7 %
	Valcău de Jos	14.7 %
	Vârșolț	4.1 %
	Zimbor	4.9 %

**Appendix 4:** List of communes selected for interviews

- A- Commune in Galati, large Roma population;
- B- Commune in Galati, medium Roma population
- C- Commune in Salaj, large Roma population
- D- Commune in Salaj, small Roma population
- E- Commune in Iasi, large Roma population
- F- Commune in Iasi, medium Roma population
- G- Commune in Salaj, medium Roma population
- H- Commune in Galati, small Roma population
- I- Commune in Iasi, small Roma population

## **Appendix 5:** List of interviewees

- R 1- Male local party leader, small party, in commune I, November 2017
- R2- Male local party leader, small party, in commune I, November 2017
- R3- Male local party leader, incumbent local party in commune I, November 2017
- R 4- Male local party leader, large party in commune I, November 2017
- R 5- Male local party leader, large party in commune F, November 2017
- R 6- Male local party leader, non-winning party in commune F, November 2017
- R 7- Male local party leader, small party in commune F, November 2017
- R 8- Male local party leader, incumbent local party in commune F, November 2017
- R 9- Male local party leader, small party in commune F, November 2017
- R 10- Male local party leader, non-winning party in commune E, November 2017
- R 11- Male local party leader, large party in commune E, November 2017
- R12- Male local party leader, incumbent local party in commune E, November 2017
- R13- Male local party leader, small party in commune E, November 2017
- R 14- Male local party leader, non-winning party in commune H, November 2017
- R15- Male local party leader, small party in commune H, November 2017
- R 16- Male local party leader, incumbent local party in commune H, November 2017
- R17- Male local party leader, small party in commune H, November 2017
- R 18- Male local party leader, non-winning party in commune B, November 2017
- R19- Male local party leader, small party in commune B, November 2017
- R 20- Male local party leader, incumbent local party in commune B, November 2017
- R 21- Female local party leader, large local party in commune B, November 2017
- R 22- Male local party leader, small local party in commune A, November 2017
- R 23- Male local party leader, small local party in commune A, November 2017
- R 24- Male local party leader, incumbent local party in commune A, November 2017
- R 25- Male local party leader, small local party in commune A, November 2017

- R 26- Male local party leader, small local party in commune A, November 2017
- R 27- Male local party leader, non-winning local party in commune D, November 2017
- R 28- Male local party leader, small local party in commune D, November 2017
- R 29- Male local party leader, small local party in commune D, November 2017
- R 30- Male local party leader, incumbent local party in commune D, November 2017
- R 31- Male local party leader, small local party in commune D, November 2017
- R 32- Male local party leader, large local party in commune C, November 2017
- R 33- Male local party leader, large local party in commune C, November 2017
- R 34- Male local party leader, incumbent local party in commune C, November 2017
- R 35- Male local party leader, small local party in commune C, November 2017
- R 36- Female local party leader, small local party in commune G, November 2017
- R 37- Male local party leader, small local party in commune G, November 2017
- R 38- Male local party leader, small local party in commune G, November 2017
- R 39- Male local party leader, non-winning local party in commune G, November 2017

## **Appendix 6: Interview guide**

The questions below represent the guiding questions asked during the interviews, arising from each hypothesis included in the study. As the interview guide had a semi-structured format, additional questions have been asked during the interview.

### **Introduction**

1. What motivated you to get involved in politics?
2. How long have you been part of the party?
3. What attracted you to the party?
4. What do you think is the role of a local political party?

### **Size of the party**

5. Can you give me details on what strategies you used in the 2016 local elections?
6. Do you think that for a party that has won a smaller number of seats it is harder to convince the voters to vote for them? What strategies could they use?
7. Do you think that a party that has won a smaller number of seats needs different strategies than one with more seats?
8. What do you think is the key to winning as many seats as possible?
9. Can you tell me exactly how did you try to stay in touch with your voters?

### **Competition**

10. Were these strategies influenced by the fact that several parties competed / only X parties in the election? / Do you think it is easier to convince voters when more / fewer parties participate in the campaign?
11. Do you think that voters are less loyal to a certain political party when competition between parties is greater?
12. How exactly do you try to ensure your electoral success in this case?

### **Roma political parties**

13. Did the fact that Roma parties participated / did not participate in the electoral competition affect your decision to add Roma candidates? How exactly?
14. Do you think that if Roma parties also participate in elections, Roma voters are less accessible?

### **Re-nomination rate**

15. Have you made any changes to the list of candidates since 2012? Why?
16. If not, what would prevent a counselor from being re-elected?
17. Can you tell me on what criteria you choose your candidates for the local council?
18. Do you think that the presence of experienced candidates is a plus for the party? Do you think that in 2020, if you proposed the current councilors elected in 2016, it would be a plus for the party? How exactly?

### **Leadership change**

19. Do you think it is more difficult for a new party president to be known among voters? What strategies should you use? Is being a president for 10 years a benefit / detriment to the party? Why?
20. How do you think the change / lack of change of party president was perceived by the voters?

#### Roma candidates

- 21. I understood that you had / did not have Roma candidates. What motivated you to add / not add Roma candidates to the list?
- 22. Do you think that placing Roma candidates on the lists is a benefit to the party?
- 23. Do you think that the placement of Roma candidates brings more votes? Did you think that if the competition between the parties is higher, the Roma vote was more decisive or important?
- 24. Have you considered nominating more Roma candidates?

#### Roma size

- 25. How important is the size of the Roma group to nominate them?

#### Size of the council

- 26. Do you think that if the number of councilors in a local council was higher / lower you would have different motivations to add Roma candidates? How exactly?

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