

# PROCOMMUNIST EUROPE AND WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

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## CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: FACTORS

- 1. Communist regime and ideology of equality
- 2. Transition to democratic regime and capitalism
- 3. EU accession

## WOMEN IN POLITICS IN POSTCOMMUNISM

- End of state socialism brought drop from high levels of representation to very low levels of representation
- Severe underrepresentation in all post-communist countries

## V.I. LENIN 1920

- "In law there is naturally complete equality of rights for men and women. And everywhere there is evidence of a sincere wish to put this equality into practice. We are bringing the women into the social economy, into legislation, and government. All educational institutions are open to them, so that they can increase their professional and social capacities.... In short, we are seriously carrying out the demand in our program for the reference of the economic and educational functions of the separate household to society. That will mean freedom for the woman from the old household drudgery and dependence on man. That enables her to exercise to the full her talents and her*



# COMMUNIST REGIMES

- Women formally equal
- High levels of education, employment, political representation
- Communist ideology = dissolution of the PUBLIC and PRIVATE spheres
- Gender inclusiveness beneficial
- East Germany (GDR): decree for equal work in 1946!
- USSR: 17% of women in national legislature in 1946!
- GDR: 30% of women in parliament (Sweden didn't reach 30% until 1985)

# COMMUNIST REGIMES

- Society as patriarchal as in liberal democracies
- Fodor 2002: *Just as in liberal capitalist societies, women's assumed inferiority was tied to their reproductive duties under state socialism too. However, while in liberal political ideology, pregnancy and childbearing were seen to damage women's rationality and individuality, in Hungary, these were considered to impair women's political devotion and reliability. As a result, women could never be fully trusted and could never be integrated at equal subject status into the state socialist political system*
- Proclaimed equality did not reduce women's domestic and reproductive responsibilities
- No reorganization of labor in the household
- (Even though some measures helped a lot: free nursery, child care centers, generous maternity leave policies reduced the family burdens a lot. Most evident when the support system disappeared in 1989)

## WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION UNDER COMMUNISM

- No free political competition
- Prerequisite to political career: working class background, political reliability
- One-party party list
- Candidates centrally nominated
- Internal informal quota measures for women

# WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION UNDER COMMUNISM

- In USSR, internal quota 33% in the highest Soviet
- Most influential office held by women: ministry of culture
- Minister of culture: Ekaterina Fucevova
  - Entered KOMSOOL (youth communist organization) at the age of 13
  - Working class family
  - Studied Party College
  - Member of the part at the age of 20
  - 8 years in Central Committee of Communist Party, 14 years as minister, 4 years in leadership of the highest Soviet
  - Accused of illegal enrichment and excluded from list of candidates
  - Typical political career



## WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION UNDER COMMUNISM

- In Czechoslovakia no official quota
- Women represented in the parliament
- Real power held by the Communist Party politburo (leadership)
- 1948-1989 only three women in leadership of the Party!
- Marie Švermová, Ludmila Jankovcová and Marie Kabrhelová
- East Germany = no woman in party politburo in its history

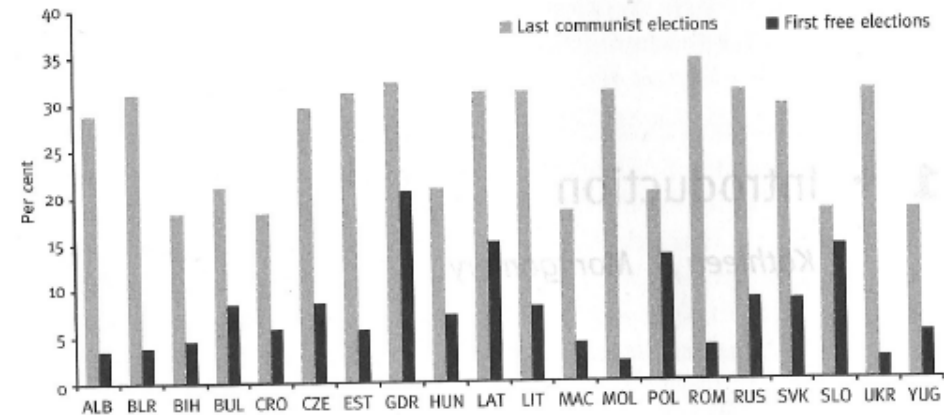
## TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

- Big question of 199s: Would women's past role in politics allow them to compete for power???
- Clear answer: NO
- Immediate fall of numbers of women in politics
- Kostova (1998): *"Many of the women were workers, seamstresses, heroes of socialist labor, women with low status jobs. The fact that these women did not have experience to be taken seriously in important decision-making was exactly the reason why they were chosen"*.

# TRANSITION

- Women marginalized during the period of transition
- Even though they participated on the protests against old regime
- Withdrawal from politics in the new regime
- Explanation: little to no activity of women's movement!
  - In the Leninist ideology women's movement was part of the great revolution, no need for independent organization of women
- Conservative view of feminism and gender equality
- Women had little opportunity to develop organizational skills, reluctant to identify with any ideological position, including feminism
- Parties faced no internal nor external pressure to place women on the ballot

# TRANSITION



**Figure 1.1.** Democracy and the decline in female legislative representation

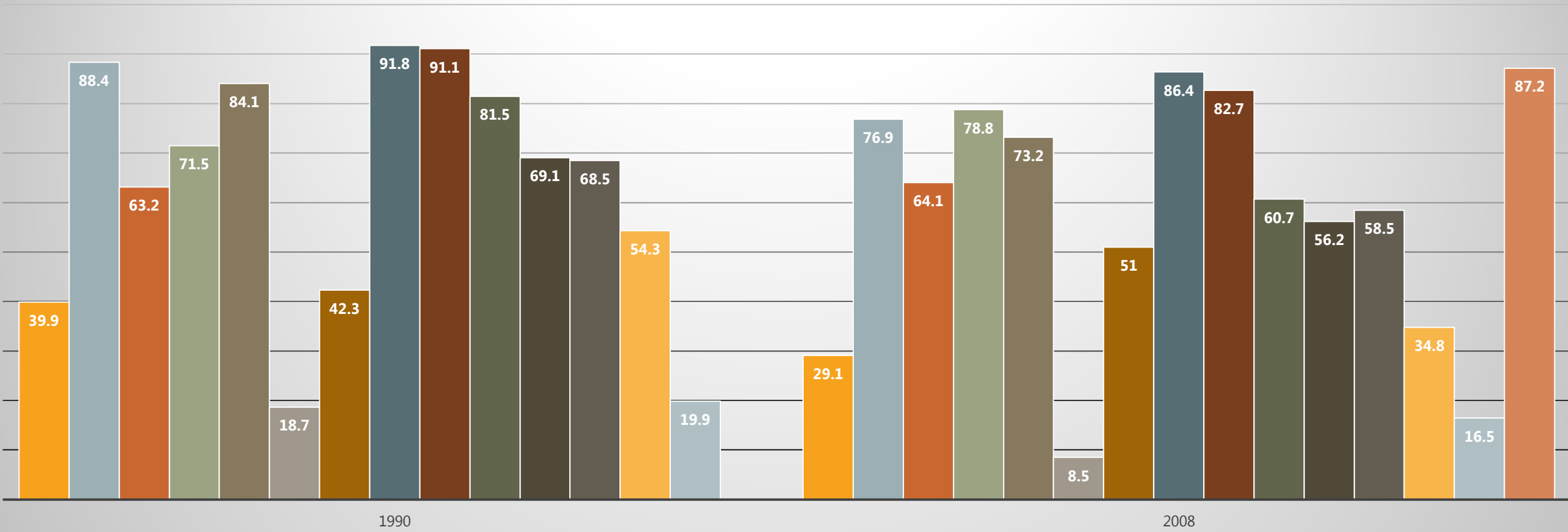
Countries included are Albania, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, Yugoslavia

Notes:

- (1) Figure includes all countries that emerged from the Soviet Bloc except the Central Asian and Trans-Caucasian states of the Former Soviet Union.
- (2) For Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine, the 'last communist elections' figure represents the 1984 elections for the lower chamber of the USSR's Supreme Soviet.
- (3) The figures for Czech Republic and Slovakia are for united Czechoslovakia.
- (4) For Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Slovenia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the 'last communist elections' figure represents the elections to the joint Yugoslav legislature.

# SOME DATA FROM THE EUROPEAN VALUE STUDY

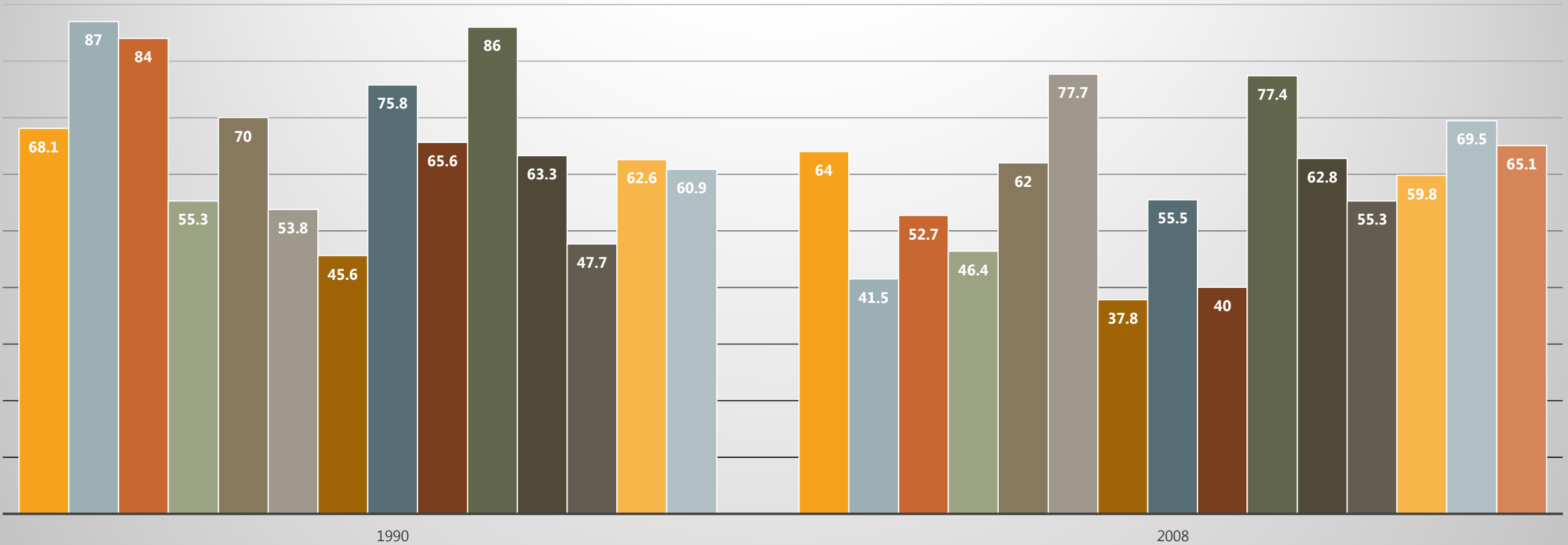
## Woman needs children to be fulfilled (%)



Legend: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Rep, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Great Britain, Russia

# SOME DATA FROM THE EUROPEAN VALUE STUDY

## Being housewife is as fulfilling as having paid job (Agree and Strongly agree)



- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Czech Rep
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- Germany
- Hungary
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Poland
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Great Britain
- Russia

# QUOTAS

- Not perceived positively
- Informal measures during communism delegitimized quota
- During 1990s post-communist governments resisted quota politics

## CHANGES AFTER 2000

Year	Country	Measure	% of women in parliament
2001	Bosnia and Herzegovina	40 % of candidates on a list (placement rule)	21%
2004	Serbia	30 % candidates of each sex at least (1 for every 3 on a list)	34%
2004	Uzbekistan	No less than 30 % women on a list	16%
2006	Slovenia	35 % of both sexes at least	36%
2006	FYROM	In every 3 places at least one reserved for underrepresented sex	31%
2007	Armenia	20 % of any integer group of five candidates starting from the second number on a list	17%
2007	Kyrgyzstan	30 % of either sex on a list, no more than 3 positions can separate men and women	19%
2008	Albania	30 % of candidates, one of the first three candidates	27,9%
2011	Montenegro	At least 30 % of underrepresented sex, no rank order	23%
2011	Poland	There cannot be less than 35 % of men or women on a list	27%



## EU ACCESSION

- Gender equality measures
- European Commission required gender equality aquis commnunitaire to be incorporated into the national law of candidate countries

## EU ACCESSION: CZECH CASE

- Gender equality perceived as less important issue by Czech representatives
- Incorporation of the gender equality EU directives perceived as simple and technical task
- By 2004 equality bodies established at governmental levels
- However the changes only formal, issue undervalued, process ineffective (Hašková, Křížová 2008)
- Support to NGOs (from the EU and government – as part of the goal to increase activity of civil society)
- Professionalization and project-based orientation of women's interest groups

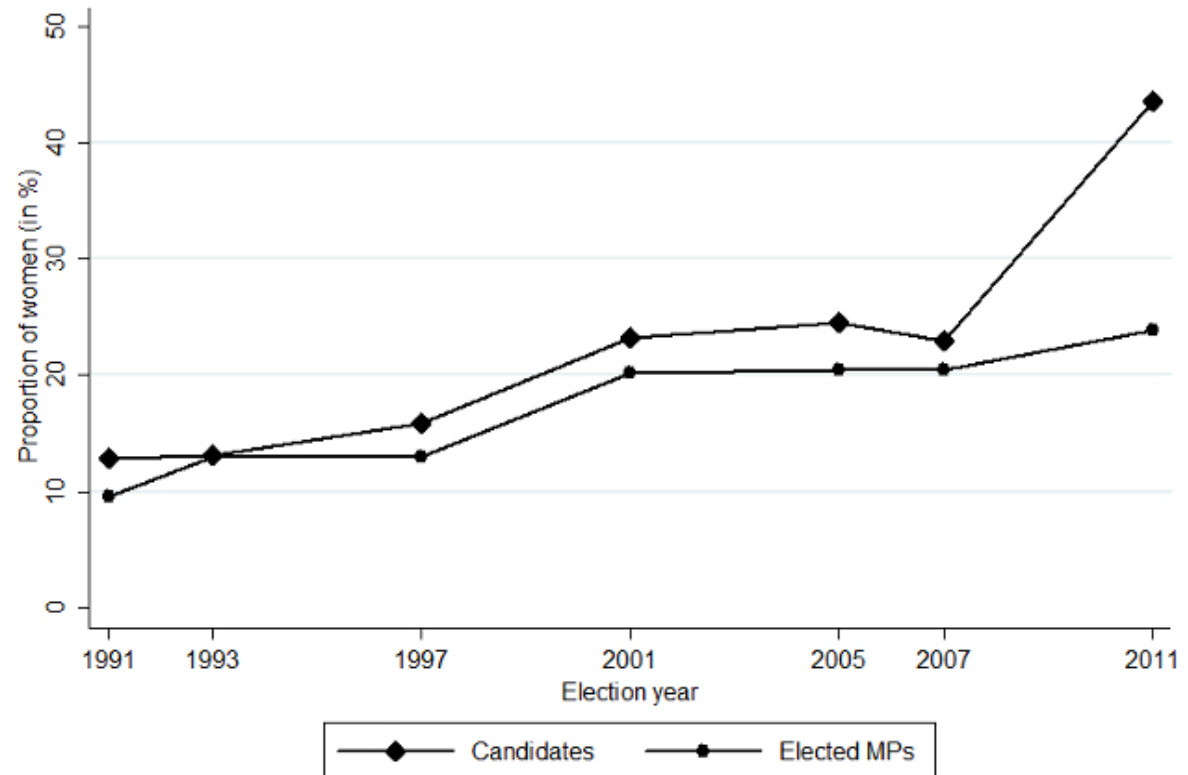
# SLOVENIA

- Exceptional success
- until 2005: only 3 ministers, 6 % of mayors, 12 % of local councilors, 14 % of MPs
- 2001 women formed the Coalition for Parity and took advantage of Slovenian accession period (2001-2004) to lobby for a change
- 40 % quota to the European Parliament,
- 20 % quota to local election
- 20% quota to the Parliament
- 35% quota to the Parliament
- Women's representation peaked at 37% in 2014
- One female prime minister.

# POLAND

- Pre-quota: 20,4 % in 2007
- In 2011: 23,9 %
- In 2015: 24,1%
- Today: 28%

Figure 1: Proportion of female candidates and elected members in the Polish Sejm (1991-2011)



# CONCLUSION

- Communist regime = lack of viable women's movement
- Transformation = led to marginalization of women
- Incapable of effective organized activity
- Conservatism and nationalism brought more conservative approach to gender roles in societies
- Quota discredited
- Positive influence of the EU
- Development not linear in the region
- Some countries more progressive than others
- Not all quota provisions effective in the same way (mainly due to the lack of rule of distribution of positions on the ballot)
- Number of women in parliaments still lower compared to the communist era (on average)