



# An Analysis of the Political Parties Evolution in the Parliamentary Elections in Romania

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Accepted August 2023

Available online September 2023

### JEL Classification

D72, D90, K16

### Keywords:

parliamentary elections, legal framework, human resources, management, evolution

## ABSTRACT

An important component of the system created in a democratic society for fulfilling specific activities through the institutions and bodies belonging to the administrative apparatus of the state is the political formations. A fundamental element of democracy is the existence of political formations and pluripartyism. This research analyses the evolution of the parliamentary elections held in Romania from 1992 to 2020, including the evolution of the specific legal framework. The results reveal the fact that one party, individually or in different alliances, was present at all electoral consultations regarding the election of the legislature. Moreover, the human resource mobility is representative of political organizations by generating a continuous flow of members and can become a phenomenon who can conduct to changes the party's management, and the political programs.

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## 1. Introduction

In a democratic society, specific activities are carried out both through the institutions and bodies belonging to the administrative apparatus of the state, as well as through a vast and complex network of related organizations and institutions. An important component of this complex system is the political formations, because a fundamental element of democracy is the existence of political formations and pluripartyism as a political phenomenon. Political organizations fulfil social and political tasks that another type of organization does not have the capacity to operationalize, by maintaining the consensus at the level of society, coordinate political personnel, survey citizens' opinions, mediate, filter, and process and simplify the issues formulated by citizens, facilitate the work administration (Pizzorno, 1970). Romanian political thinking from the interwar period issued a series of explanations associated with the notion of a political party. Negulescu (1926) [9], considered parties as "more or less strong currents of public opinion". According to Seiler's (1999) opinion, political parties remain an essential condition for a democratic society and the pluralism of political parties and the struggle for power through the electoral process represent the basis of democracy. In the same context, Boboc (2007), believes that "a competitive multipartyism" is based on free and fair elections and offers individuals, members of a political community, the opportunity to pursue and satisfy their own interests. Summarizing the definitions stated by various researchers, it can be concluded that the political party represents a collective entity, with objectives that derive from the ideology accepted and appropriated by its members.

## 2. The specific characteristics of political parties

Three basic elements distinguish social or economic organizations from political organizations, which are:

- ✧ the political party is a free-voluntary association established on the basis of free consent;
- ✧ the political party is bound by an ideology or a certain political doctrine;
- ✧ the political party acts on the basis of a program platform to conquer power through electoral consultations and to exercise it directly.

According to the opinions of LaPalombara and Weiner (1966), the general characteristics of political parties to four features irreducible to partisan organizations:

- ✧ sustainable organization, with a political life expectancy that outlives its founders and leaders; a political party transcends the stage of loyal groups of leaders, becoming a genuine party as it routinizes its rules of operation and succession and creates its own tradition;

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- ✧ complete organization, in the sense of the hierarchization of structures from the central level to the local echelons, levels between which there are permanent relationships; this criterion distinguishes between a political party and a simple parliamentary group;
- ✧ the deliberate will to directly exercise power, alone or with other parties, at the local and/or national level; this aspect differentiates political parties from pressure groups that seek to influence power, not hold it;
- ✧ the will to seek popular support both at the level of militants and voters; through this feature, parties are distinguished from clubs, which generally remain closed from an organizational point of view, even if they exchange information with the outside.

Brechon (2004), in turn signals the first two and indicates in addition two other major principles of political organization management which are the permanent and correct information of the leadership and party leaders and the effective implementation of central decisions by all local organizations, under the conditions of the existence of effective local organizations capable of quick action.

### 3. Methodology

The research is based on an overview of the parliamentary Romanian election results from 1992 to 2020 which are collected and computed. The analysis of the evolution of the specific legal framework is conducted by reviewing the available legal framework. Some qualitative aspects from the political party evolution are identified based on quantitative analysis.

### 4. The evolution of parliamentary elections management in Romania

In the post-communist Romania, the first parliamentary elections were organized based on the Decree no. 92 of March 14, 1990 regarding the election of the Parliament and the President of Romania and were held on May 20, 1990. The normative act regulated the fact that Parliament representatives will be elected on party lists by proportional voting, without establishing an electoral threshold. In this context, the election result allowed a number of 27 political parties to the Chamber of Deputies and 7 political parties to the Senate to join the Romanian Parliament. It should also be mentioned that 11 of the 27 winning political formations in the Chamber of Deputies were national minorities. In these first parliamentary elections, there was a considerable difference between the results of the winning party, the National Salvation Front, which won 67.53% of the mandates, and the rest of the political competitors. Among the other political formations that are part of the Parliament, a weight of approximately 7% of the mandates went to the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the same percentage to the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR).

In 1992, the next parliamentary elections were held, in which the total number of mandates was 484 (143 seats in the Senate and 341 seats in the Chamber of Deputies). Unlike the previous elections, 8 political formations were found in the composition of the Parliament, with the Democratic Front of National Salvation (FDSN) having the most mandates (117 in the Chamber of Deputies and 49 in the Senate). In second place was the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR) with 82 deputies and 34 senators, followed by the National Salvation Front (FSN) with a total of 61 mandates. The result of the general elections in 1996 brought a change in the hierarchy, the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR) winning the Senate elections with a percentage of 30.7% of the votes, the equivalent of 53 mandates, in second place being the Social Democracy Party in Romania (PDSR), the successor of the Democratic Front of National Salvation, which obtained 23.08% of the votes, respectively 41 mandates. In the Chamber of Deputies, the scores obtained were 30.17% of the votes for the CDR, equivalent to 122 seats, and 21.52% of the votes for the PDSR, respectively 91 seats. At a relatively large distance from the leaders of the ranking, the Social Democratic Union (USD) was positioned in 3rd place, with a total of 75 mandates and in 4th place UDMR, with 36 mandates. The last 2 places were occupied by the Greater Romania Party (PRM) and the Romanian National Unity Party (PUNR).

In the parliamentary elections of 2000, there was a decrease in voter turnout by approximately 10%, the turnout in the elections being 65.31%. Against the background of the low interest of the electorate, the election was won by the social democrats, respectively the Social Democracy Party in Romania, which obtained a total of 220 mandates. The result was 37.09% of the votes in the Senate, respectively 65 seats and 36.61% of the votes in the Chamber of Deputies, the equivalent of 155 mandates. Parliamentary elections organized in 2004 bring into the electoral race 2 electoral alliances "National Union" of the left formed by the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the Romanian Humanist Party (PUR) and the Alliance "Justice and Truth" in which the Party was found National Liberal (PNL) and the Democratic Party (PD). In the context of a voter turnout of 58.5%, lower than the 2000 elections, the Social Democratic Party wins the elections with a union score of 37.16% of the votes in the Senate and 36.64% of the votes in the Chamber of Deputies. According to the report issued by the Permanent Electoral Authority - the White Paper of the 2004 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections. The political configuration of the new Parliament included, in addition to the component political formations of the two alliances, the Greater Romania Party (PRM) and the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR). These last political formations occupied the 3rd and 4th places, with a total of 69 and 32 seats of senators and deputies, respectively.

The parliamentary elections of 2008 followed, when the electoral legislation underwent changes, the Government of Romania adopting Decision no. 802/2008 regarding the delimitation of single-member colleges. The normative act brought elements of novelty transposed in the abandonment of voting on lists, the parliamentarians being elected through a mixed system. In the new electoral system, candidacies and voting were uninominal and mandates were allocated proportionally. The trend of interest in the elections continues to decrease for this election as well, in the sense that only 39.20% of voters with the right to vote went to the polls. The parliamentary elections of 2008 brought another element of novelty regarding the result of the election, as a result of which no political party obtained the parliamentary majority. The situation led to the formation of a governing coalition consisting of the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Democratic Party (PDL). From the point of view of the allocation of mandates, the PDL took first place with 51 senatorial mandates and 115 deputy mandates, followed by the alliance formed by the Social Democratic Party and the Conservative Party (PC) with 163 parliamentary mandates. The National Liberal Party and the Hungarian Democratic Union from Romania were also part of the parliamentary architecture and the national minorities, which received 18 seats.

In 2012, the parliamentary elections were organized on the same electoral system based on uninominal colleges. According to art. 2 of Law no. 35/2008, single-member colleges represented "a subunit of an electoral constituency, in which a single mandate is assigned". According to the AEP report on the organization and conduct of the elections for the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of December 9, 2012, the first delimitation of single-member colleges in Romania was carried out by Government Decision no. 802/2008. The normative act was based on the decision of a special parliamentary commission and provided for the organization of elections based on the proportionality of parliamentary representation. Thus, in these elections there was a total number of 452 uninominal colleges, of which 315 colleges for the election of the Chamber of Deputies and 137 for the election of the Senate. There was an increase in the turnout, the participation being 41.76%. The election result was easily predictable due to the alliance of two parties with different ideologies, the electoral race being won by the Social Liberal Union (USL). The alliance, in addition to the Social Democratic Party and the National Liberal Party, also included the Conservative Party (PC) and the National Union for the Progress of Romania (UNPR). The alliance's result was 58.63% in the Chamber of Deputies and 60.10% in the Senate, equivalent to 122 seats in the Senate and 273 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. In the Senate, the distribution of mandates for each component party of the alliance was as follows: 59 PSD, 50 PNL, 8 PC and 5 UNPR and in the Chamber of Deputies the distribution of seats was: 150 PSD, 100 PNL, 13 PC and 10 UNPR. In the second place in the 2012 electoral competition was the Romanian Right Alliance. Its composition included the Liberal Democratic Party, the National Christian Democratic Peasant Party (PNȚCD) and the Civic Force (FC). These parties obtained a total of 24 seats in the Senate and 56 in the Chamber of Deputies. A notable result was also achieved by the People's Party - Dan Diaconescu (PP-DD), which occupied 68 seats in the Romanian Parliament. The UDMR with 27 mandates and the national minorities with a similar number of seats as in the previous elections were also part of the parliamentary composition.

The 2016 parliamentary elections were organized based on a new normative act, Law no. 208/2015 regarding the election of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, as well as for the organization and functioning of the Permanent Electoral Authority. The law is still in force today and its provisions regulate the return to list voting, according to the principle of proportional representation. According to the norm, the representation was one deputy per 73,000 inhabitants and one senator per 168,000 inhabitants, thus reaching a number of 308 deputies and 134 senators. In these elections, each parliamentary party participated independently, so there were no political or electoral alliances in the electoral competition. According to the minutes regarding the final results of the elections, the configuration of the 2016-2020 legislature included 6 political formations and the national minorities who were allocated 17 mandates. The elections were won by the Social Democratic Party with a score of 45% of the votes in the Chamber of Deputies and 45.68% in the Senate and in second place was the National Liberal Party with 30 mandates in the Senate and 69 mandates in the Chamber of Deputies. In third place was a newly established party, the Save Romania Union (USR), with 13 seats in the Senate and 30 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. Fourth place went to the UDMR with 30 parliamentary mandates, followed by the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE), a political formation separated from the National Liberal Party and which obtained 29 mandates. The electoral threshold was also met by the Popular Movement Party (PMP), a party that included some of the members of the former Democratic Party, which in 2014 merged with the current National Liberal Party. PMP obtained 26 seats in the Romanian Parliament in these elections.

The most recent parliamentary elections in Romania took place in 2020 and took place from a legislative point of view, based on the same normative act as the previous elections, namely Law no. 208/2015. In these parliamentary elections, 308 of the members of the Chamber of Deputies were elected by proportional representation from 42 constituencies made up of the 41 counties of Romania and the municipality of Bucharest. Also, by proportional representation, the 4 members from the constituency related to the Romanian diaspora were elected, resulting in a number of 312 members. They were joined by 18 representatives of ethnic minorities, resulting in a final total of 330 deputy mandates for 2020. In the Senate,

in 2020, the 136 members were elected on the same principle of proportional representation as follows: 121 senators have been elected from 41 constituencies made up of the 41 counties, 13 senators from the Bucharest municipality constituency and 2 senators from the Romanian diaspora constituency. According to the minutes of the final election results, the parliamentary composition has not changed much compared to the previous elections. Four of the parliamentary parties from the previous legislature PSD, PNL, USR and UDMR managed to maintain themselves in the current parliamentary configuration. In conclusion, PSD won the elections with 47 senatorial mandates and 110 deputy mandates. In second place was PNL with 41 senators and 93 deputies and in third place was USR, which got 25 seats in the Senate and 55 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. The unpredictable result belongs to a newly founded party Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR), which occupied the fourth place in the hierarchy with 47 mandates and in the last place was the UDMR with a total of 30 mandates.

The summary of the distribution of the mandates of the parliamentary political parties, as a result of the parliamentary elections organized in Romania between 1992 and 2020, is shown in the table 1.

**Table no.1 Parliamentary elections in Romania between 1992 and 2020; the distribution of mandates**

Year	Political Party	Mandates Senate	Mandates Chamber of Deputies Deputaților
1992	Democratic Front of National Salvation (FDSN)	49	117
	Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR)	34	82
	National Salvation Front (FSN)	18	43
	Party of the Unity of the Romanian Nation (PUNR)	14	30
	Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR)	12	27
	Greater Romania Party (PRM)	6	16
	Democratic Agrarian Party of Romania (PDAR)	5	----
	Socialist Labor Party (PSM)	5	13
1996	Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR)	53	122
	Party of Social Democracy in Romania (PDSR)	41	91
	Social Democratic Union (USD)	23	53
	Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR)	11	25
	Greater Romania Party (PRM)	8	19
	Party of the Unity of the Romanian Nation (PUNR)	7	18
2000	Party of Social Democracy in Romania (PDSR)	65	155
	Greater Romania Party (PRM)	37	84
	Democratic Party (PD)	13	31
	National Liberal Party (PNL)	13	30
	Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR)	12	27
2004	National Union Social Democratic Party (PSD) and Romanian Humanist Party (PUR)	57 (46 PSD + 11 PUR)	132 (113 PSD + 19 PUR)
	Justice and Truth Alliance The National Liberal Party (PNL) and Democratic Party (PD)	49 (28 PNL + 21 PD)	112 (64 PNL + 48 PD)
	Greater Romania Party (PRM)	21	48
	Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR)	10	22
	National Minorities	-----	18
2008	Liberal Democratic Party (PDL)	51	115

Year	Political Party	Mandates Senate	Mandates Chamber of Deputies Deputaților
	Alliance Social Democratic Party (PSD) and Conservative Party (PC)	49	114
	National Liberal Party (PNL)	28	65
	Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR)	9	22
	National Minorities	-----	18
<b>2012</b>	Social Liberal Union (USL) Social Democratic Party (PSD), National Liberal Party (PNL), Conservative Party (PC) and The National Union for the Progress of Romania (UNPR)	122 (59 PSD, 50 PNL, 8 PC, 5 UNPR)	273 (150 PSD, 100 PNL, 13 PC 10 UNPR)
	Right Romania Alliance Liberal Democratic Party (PDL), National Christian Democratic Peasant Party (PNȚCD) Civic Force (FC)	24 (22 PDL, 1 PNȚCD, 1 FC)	56 (52 PDL, 3 PNȚCD, 1 FC)
	People's Party - Dan Diaconescu (PP-DD)	21	47
	Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR)	9	18
	National Minorities	-----	18
<b>2016</b>	Social Democratic Party (PSD)	67	154
	National Liberal Party (PNL)	30	69
	Union Save Romania (USR)	13	30
	Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR)	9	21
	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE)	9	20
	Popular Movement Party (PMP)	8	18
	National Minorities	-----	17
<b>2020</b>	Social Democratic Party (PSD)	47	110
	National Liberal Party (PNL)	41	93
	Union Save Romania (USR)	25	55
	Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR)	14	33
	Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR)	9	21
	National Minorities	-----	18

Source: personal contribution, based on literature references

## 5. Conclusions

According to Neumann's opinion (1956), "the political party is the cohesive organization of the active political forces of society, concerned with the control over the governmental power". Sartori (1976), shifts the focus to the representation of citizens and mentions the political party as "a political group, which represents voters in electoral elections". Romanian political thinking from the interwar period issued a series of explanations associated with the notion of a political party. Negulescu (1926), considered parties as "more or less strong currents of public opinion".

Throughout the parliamentary elections held in Romania from 1992 to 2020, the results reveal the fact that the current Social Democratic Party, individually or in different alliances, was present at all electoral consultations regarding the election of the legislature. The Hungarian Democratic Union in Romania is in the same situation. The UDMR is an omnipresent national minority in the parliamentary configuration in Romania, with a relatively constant evolution and which was represented in each legislature by a significant

number of parliamentarians. The current National Liberal Party is also a political formation with extensive experience in participating in parliamentary elections. Over time, the PNL was the direct competitor of the Social Democratic Party in the electoral consultations. In the last two legislatures, the two political parties alternated in power and at the present time, together with the UDMR, form the current governing coalition of Romania.

It can be concluded that the political party represents a collective entity, with objectives that derive from the ideology accepted and appropriated by its members, and relevant is the finding of Gusti (1926) who summarizes the political party in a "free association of citizens, united in permanent way through common interests and ideas, of a general character, an association that aims, in full public light, to reach power". Human resource mobility is representative of political organizations by generating a continuous flow of inflows and outflows of members. The aggravation of the phenomenon can generate nuclei inside the political formations that can contribute to changing the party's foundation and its political programs.

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