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Croatia's Leap Toward Gender Equality in the Parliament: Rules Versus Players

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Oral Presentation 5.2

**CROATIA'S LEAP TOWARD GENDER EQUALITY IN THE PARLIAMENT:
RULES VERSUS PLAYERS**

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A number of political, socioeconomic, and cultural factors have been identified as having an effect on the level of parliamentary representation on women. Studies concentrating on the most prosperous longstanding democracies accentuate the importance of political factors, whereas most of the studies that include less developed nations suggest a more pronounced role for socioeconomic and/or cultural factors. Conclusions about the relevance of a particular group of factors become much less clear-cut when tested on a sample of nations such as the post-communist bloc, which does not clearly belong to either the most affluent longstanding democracies or the less developed nations. This study examines the effects of the political factors using what Lijphart calls the controlled comparison method in a single post-communist country: Croatia. Since Croatia represents a single cultural and developmental 'container,' changes in its levels of women's parliamentary representation must be attributed to some other factors. The conclusion of this study is that the immense increase in the proportion of female representatives in Croatia cannot be attributed to the changes in its electoral system. Rather, it can be ascribed partly to the ideology of the party in power and partly to the ability of women to, with the help of non-governmental organizations, form inter- and intra-party unions which have put significant pressures on all party leaderships to nominate more women to office.