

# General Elections in Moldova, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2010

from **Corinne Deloy**  
Translated by Helen Levy

**ANALYSIS**  
1 month before  
the poll

On 5<sup>th</sup> September last although 87.8% of Moldovan electors approved the constitutional reform that meant the modification of article 78 of the Constitution to enable the election of the President of the Republic direct universal suffrage the referendum was invalidated due to a low turnout rate. Indeed only 30.98% of Moldovans voted whilst the Constitution demands a minimum 33% turnout for the elections to be declared valid.

The popular consultation was an attempt to bring Moldova out of the political deadlock in which it has found itself since the spring of 2009. Indeed according to the Constitution in force since 2000 the Moldovan Head of State is elected by secret ballot by 3/5 of the MPs i.e. 61 of the 101 in Parliament. If this procedure fails the President of the Republic has to dissolve Parliament and convene early general elections. The parties of the European Integration Alliance in office for over a year do not enjoy a wide enough majority in Parliament to take their candidate through as Head of State but the communists do not have an adequate majority either. Moldova has therefore been deprived of a President for over one year.

The failure of the referendum on 5<sup>th</sup> September obliged the Moldovan authorities to dissolve Parliament which is what the interim President, Mihai Ghimpu (Liberal Party, PL) did on 28<sup>th</sup> September. He announced an early election on 28<sup>th</sup> November next.

## The consequences of the failure of the referendum on 5<sup>th</sup> September

The invalidation of the referendum was a success for the communists who had called on the electorate to boycott the popular consultation – and it meant a serious setback for the Alliance for European Integration in office since the general elections on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2009. This alliance brings together the Liberal Party (PL) led by Mihai Ghimpu, the Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM) led by Vlad Filat, the Democratic Party (PDM) led by Marian Lupu and the Our Moldova Alliance (AMN) led by Serafim Urechean. *“The electoral campaign lacked unity. The communists, the lack of coordination within the ruling coalition and citizens’ indifference caused the failure of the referendum,”* declared interim President Mihai Ghimpu who convened the referendum in the hope of bringing Moldova out of the political crisis. *“The leaders of the Alliance for European Integration are responsible for the referendum’s failure,”* added Prime Minister Vlad Filat.

Many politicians close to the government accused the Alliance leaders of having been so absorbed by their

preparations for the upcoming elections that they did not pay the referendum the attention it deserved. *“No one explained how important the referendum was. Some politicians, sure of the result, had already started to campaign for the presidential and general elections,”* said Marian Lupu. Former President Vladimir Voronin (PCRM) qualified the election’s failure as being *“logical”*. *“The people chose the parliamentary republic as the most democratic and the fairest,”* he said, showing his opposition to the election of the President by universal suffrage.

*“The referendum result bears witness to the low level of confidence in the Alliance for European Integration, the ruling coalition. At the same time society is still divided between the supporters of communism and the pro-Europeans,”* analyses political expert Igor Botsan who doubts that the upcoming elections will change this balance of power. Vitaly Andrievschi, a political analyst and director of the think-tank AVA.MD (<http://ava.m>) believes that the Communist Party will benefit from the referendum’s failure in the general election.

"The communists achieved a success that they were not expecting. Even though the failure of the referendum is not totally their victory they should be able to take advantage of it," he indicated. According to political analyst Viorel Cibotaru the referendum's failure was due to the support enjoyed by the Communist Party, the discontent with regard to the Alliance for European Integration and because the four parties that comprise this Alliance were not at all interested in the success of the popular consultation. Prime Minister Vlad Filat threw himself more into the electoral battle than his partners. However Viorel Cibotaru believes that the problem remains the same because the Communists who have no support in Parliament will find it difficult to win enough votes to take their candidate forward to the Presidency of the Republic.

### The Political System

The Moldovan Parliament is mono-cameral and comprises 101 members, elected by proportional vote for a four year period within one national constituency. The government coalition approved a law enabling the formation of pre-electoral blocs once more and modified the system (proportional) of how the seats are distributed. Any party must win 4% of the votes cast to be represented in Parliament (7% for coalitions comprising two parties and 9% for those rallying three or more). Candidates who want to stand independently must collate support signatures from at least 5000 voters. People who are under legal prosecution or who have a dual nationality cannot stand in the elections. Finally a minimum of 50% turnout is necessary to validate the general election.

5 political parties are represented in the present Parliament:

- the Communist Party (PRCM) led by former President of the Republic (2001-2009) Vladimir Voronin, it has 48 seats;
- the Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM) led by outgoing Prime Minister Vlad Filat with 18 seats;
- the Liberal Party (PL) of interim President Mihai Ghimpu, an outgoing government coalition member which has 15 MPs;
- the Democratic Party (PDM) led by Marian Lupu, a member of the outgoing government which has 13 seats;

- Our Moldova Alliance (AMN), a party in the government coalition led by Serafim Urechean with 7 MPs.

### The Electoral Campaign

Around thirty political parties are running. Four of them only are due to enter Parliament: the Communist Party, the Liberal Democratic Party, the Liberal Party and the Democratic Party. Just one month before the vote relations have been very tense between the parties in the government coalition which announced that they would stand alone and undertake separate campaigns.

Strengthened by the invalidation of the referendum on 5<sup>th</sup> September the Communist Party is making a show of its confidence. "The authorities in power have changed the electoral code in order to minimise the chance of a communist victory. We accept this challenge and are aware that a result below 50% would be a defeat for us and would mean that the Alliance for European Integration would retain power," declared Vladimir Voronin. "The Alliance has disappointed everyone including those who voted for one of the four parties in power," he repeats. The Communist Party leader who says he is open to any post-electoral alliance said on 12th October last that "the Moldovan authorities were trying to falsify the election results."

Moldova – a former region of eastern Romania – and its neighbours have never entertained easy relations. Cut in two by the Soviet Union which annexed its eastern part across the Dniestr River in 1940, Moldova joined to the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova four years later (Moldovans, who sided with the Nazis, were freed from the Soviet system in 1941). The Soviet authorities banned the Romanian language and fostered the establishment of a Russian and Ukrainian population to the detriment of the Moldovans. Since its independence in 1991 Chisinau has often procrastinated over the position to adopt with regard to its Romanian and Russian neighbours. President of the Republic Mircea Snegur (1990-1997) did everything in his power to bring his country closer to Bucharest; his successor Petru Lucinschi (1997-2001), tightened relations with Russia whilst remaining aligned with Romania over the European Union and the West. Finally Vladimir Voronin (2001-2009) made 180° turnaround realigning the country with Moscow before changing his stance in 2003 when he suddenly refused to sign the Kozak

Plan - a text which enabled the formation of a reunified Moldovan State and that facilitated the deployment of Russian military forces in Transnistria, a secessionist Moldovan region which declared independence in 1991- on the grounds "this had been established without consulting the EU which Moldova intended to join." Consequently Vladimir Voronin defended his country's integration into the EU – a point on which the entire Moldovan political class agrees.

Interim President and leader of the Liberal Party Mihai Ghimpu, who openly supports the union of his country with Romania, has continued work to bring Moldova closer to the EU. He offended the Russians by proclaiming 28<sup>th</sup> June the Day of Soviet Occupation. In retaliation Moscow stopped the importation of Moldovan wines, which affected Chisinau badly since Russia is a major outlet for the wine industry; it also reduced its importation of fruit and vegetables from Moldova. This affected Mihai Ghimpu and his partners in the government coalition. According to Valery Klimenko, the leader

of the movement Equality, all Moldovans, whether they live in Russia (from where they dispatch money to their families who remain at home) or whether they make money from the trade they have with the Russians support good relations with Moscow.

Moldova's political positions with regard to the country's stance vis-à-vis Russia developed recently. Hence outgoing Prime Minister and leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, Vlad Filat now speak of a spiritual union between his country and its eastern neighbour; the head of the Democratic Party, Marian Lupu signed a cooperation agreement with the United Russia Party (ER) in September – the latter holds the majority in the Russian Parliament and is led by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

According to the most recent poll by the Association of Moldovan Sociologists and Demographers the Communist Party is due to win 45 seats on 28<sup>th</sup> November next. It should be followed by the Liberal Democratic Party led by Vlad Filat forecast to win 24 seats.

#### Reminder of the general election results 29<sup>th</sup> July 2009 in Moldova

Turnout: 58.77%

Political Parties	No of votes won	% of votes won	No of seats
<b>Communist Party (PRCM)</b>	706 732	44,69	48
<b>Democratic Liberal Party (PLDM)</b>	262 028	16,57	18
<b>Liberal Party (PL)</b>	232 108	14,68	15
<b>Democratic Party (PDM)</b>	198 268	12,54	13
<b>Our Moldova Alliance (AMN)</b>	116 194	7,35	7
<b>Others</b>	66 187	4,18	0

Source: Internet Site <http://www.e-democracy.md/en/elections/parliamentary/20092/results/>

## General Elections in Moldova, A round up one week before the vote

The Moldovans are being called to vote on 28th November in early general elections. This election is the fourth in less than two years after the general elections on 5th April 2009, then on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2009 and the referendum of 5<sup>th</sup> September last with regard to the election of the President of the Republic by direct universal suffrage. This situation may be the source of a certain amount of lassitude amongst the electorate which the political parties have chosen to counter by using new means

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of communication in their electoral campaigns for the first time in the country's history; for example they have employed the social network Facebook or Twitter. The parties are hoping to reach the population by means of short videos. "People are tired of these interminable elections, we are calling on their patriotic sentiments and their sense of civic duty with the help of these videos," declared the secretary of the Central Electoral Commission, Iuri Cekan.

Twelve parties are officially registered for the election on 28<sup>th</sup> November which will be decisive for the government coalition, the Alliance for European Integration, in office since the last general elections on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2009 and which unites the Liberal Party (PL) of interim President Mihai Ghimpu, the Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM) led by Prime Minister Vladimir Filat, the Democratic Party (PDM) led by Marian Lupu and the Our Moldova Alliance (AMN) led by Serafim Urechean. Indeed the four parties, which have not recovered from the failure of the referendum on 5<sup>th</sup> September, are standing divided this time round. Hence on 15<sup>th</sup> November the Democratic Party condemned the Head of State's initiative to engage NATO troops to drive out the Russian military (around 1,300 men) from Transnistria (a secessionist Moldovan region at present occupied by the Russian military after it unilaterally proclaimed its independence in 1992 at the end of a conflict that led to the deaths of several hundred people).

However according to Dan Dungaciu, professor of sociology at the University of Bucharest and advisor to interim President Mihai Ghimpu "the fact that the referendum failed may paradoxically motivate the electorate in support of the government coalition - because the population as a whole did in fact support the election of the President of the Republic by universal suffrage."

The observers responsible for monitoring the democratic nature of the election said they were satisfied with the way the Central Electoral Commission was being run, which they qualified as being "transparent". However they regretted the lack of transparency with regard to funding of the electoral campaign as well as the poor use of administrative resources by the authorities in office. OSCE observers said they were pleased with the amendments made to the electoral code (the eligibility threshold is now set at 4%, a new distribution of seats benefits the 'small' parties and the voting procedure for students registered in towns other than

in the ones where they study has now been simplified). For its part the Journalists' Centre said it was happy to enjoy greater independence demonstrated by the state radio-TV company in its editorial policy which it qualified as being a definite change from the electoral campaigns in 2009.

The recent support given by Romanian MEP and former Justice Minister (2004-2007) Monica Macovei (Democratic Liberal Party PD-L, the party of Romanian President Traian Basescu) to the outgoing government coalition was the source of an outcry in Moldova. "The outgoing coalition is showing its determination to reform and has to be encouraged in its work," she declared. The Romanian Head of State also said he hoped to see the Alliance for European Integration remain in office after the election on 28<sup>th</sup> November.

The issue of its relations with Romania has always been a sensitive one for Moldova. "Understanding Moldova above all means understanding its relations with its closest neighbours. The Georgians and the Baltic populations have always known who they are. Moldova has never really been a State. It was first a province of the Tsarist Empire then it became a province of Romania. It is therefore not surprising that in 1990 when the Republic of Moldova was formed the level of national awareness was very weak;" stresses Dan Dungaciu. "The idea of a union with Romania finds little support. The President and the Prime Minister in Moldova have both officially acknowledged that they are Romanian and that they speak Romanian. It is clear that the language is the same in both countries," he added.

"No member of the Communist Party has any anti-Romanian sentiment. We are only against any interference on the part of Bucharest in our domestic affairs. We must be patriotic and fight for the ethnic Moldovan identity. We want to keep up good relations with Romania as two independent, sovereign States should," indicated Vladimir Voronin.

On 1<sup>st</sup> November Bucharest and Chisinau signed a

treaty over their joint border. "We succeeded in finalising a negotiation process that started in 2003. In this way we are putting an end to obsessional allegations from certain Moldovan political circles with regard to an imaginary irredentist agenda on the part of Romania. This treaty will provide us with European regulations," declared Prime Minister Vladimir Filat, adding that his country would soon be on the borders of the Schengen Area (once Romania has integrated the latter).

According to the latest public opinion barometer presented by the Institute of Public Policy only 4 of the 12 parties registered in the election on 28th November are due to rise above the 4% threshold of votes cast (7% for coalitions comprising two parties and 9% for

those rallying three and more) which is vital to be represented in Parliament.

These are the Communist Party which is due to col- late 25.6% of the vote; the Liberal Democratic Party 21.4%; the Democratic Party 9.9%, the Liberal Party 8.6%. According to the poll the Our Moldova Alliance led by Serafim Urechean is only due to win 0.6% of the vote. One quarter of the electorate (26%) say they still have not decided what they will vote.

Finally according to a poll undertaken by the institutes CBS, AXA and CSOP 2/3 of Moldovans (65%) believe that the country "is going in the wrong direction". Half of the population favours the continued rapprochement of their country with the EU (49%) but a similar share would like Moldova to draw closer to Russia.

## General Elections in Moldova, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2010

### Outgoing Coalition – the Alliance for European Integration wins the General Elections in Moldova.

According to final results three of the four parties in the outgoing coalition, the Alliance for European Integration – the Liberal Party (PL) led by interim President of the Republic Mihai Ghimpu, the Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM) led by outgoing Prime Minister Vladimir Filat and the Democratic Party (PDM) led by Marian Lupu together won 52.06% of the vote and 59 seats (+11). The Liberal Democratic Party made a breakthrough with 29.38% of the vote (32 seats). The Democratic Party won 12.72% of the vote and 15 seats, the Liberal Party, 9.96% and 12 seats.

The Communist Party of former Head of State (2001-2009) Vladimir Voronin, who was however confident after the invalidation of the referendum on the election of the President of the Republic by direct universal suffrage on 5th September last, is losing ground. It won 39.29% of the vote and 42 seats.

None of the other parties running and notably the Our Moldova Alliance (AMN) led by the former Mayor of Chisinau, Serafim Urechean, member of the outgoing government coalition, rose above the 4% threshold necessary to be represented in Parliament.

Turnout was almost the same as that recorded in the last general elections on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2009 (+0.33%) and rose to 59.1%. The Alliance for European Integration authorised the opening of

75 polling stations abroad, a much higher number than in the previous general elections. The election on 28<sup>th</sup> November was the fourth in less than two years after the general elections of 5<sup>th</sup>

RESULTS

General Elections in Moldova,  
28<sup>th</sup> November 2010

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April 2009, those of 29<sup>th</sup> July 2009 and the referendum on 5<sup>th</sup> September last with regard to the election of the President of the Republic by direct universal suffrage.

*"These results show that the impossible is possible,"* said outgoing Prime Minister Vladimir Filat happily. *"The only real chance for Moldova is to continue along the road to reform now being implemented and which has the support of its external partners – the European Union, the USA, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Our goal is to ensure that Moldova does not return to the past,"* added the man who may be appointed to undertake negotiations to form the next government.

In view of these results, Moldova does not however seem to be in a position to solve the main political problem it has been facing since the spring of 2009 i.e. the election of the President of the Republic. According to the present Constitution in application since 2000 the Head of State of Moldova is elected by a secret 3/5 ballot of the MPs in Parliament i.e. 61 of the 101 MPs. The

parties in the Alliance for European Integration in office for the last 16 months would therefore not have an adequate majority in Parliament to elect their candidate as Head of State (-2).

Negotiations have therefore started between all of the parties to find a solution to this perpetual impasse. Florent Parmentier – French researcher – believes that the most probable scenario will be a decrease in the threshold to a simple majority (52 votes). He recalls that the Communist Party already supports this solution. Oleg Serebrian, Ambassador for Moldova in France also imagines this as the most likely scenario. *"Either Parliament agrees on a neutral candidate or it will modify the Constitution to reduce the majority necessary for the election of the Head of State,"* he declared.

According to the present Constitution MPs have to elect the President of the Republic within three months after the dissolution of the previous Parliament and so the new Head of State is due to be appointed before 28<sup>th</sup> December next.

**General Election Results of 28<sup>th</sup> November 2010 in Moldova**

Turnout: 59.10%

Political Parties	% of votes won	No of seats
Communist Party (PRCM)	39.29	42
Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM)	29.38	32
Democratic Party (PDM)	12.72	15
Liberal Party (PL)	9.96	12
Others	8.65	0

Source : Internet Site : Moldovan Central Electoral Commission <http://cec.md/index.php?pag=page&id=43&l=>

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