

General Elections in Moldova,

A round up one week before the vote

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D-7
7 days before
the poll

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 29th July 2009 and the referendum of 5th 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 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 28th November which will be decisive for the government coalition, the Alliance for European Integration, in office since the last general elections on 29th 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 5th September, are standing divided this time round. Hence on 15th 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.

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red. The Romanian Head of State also said he hoped to see the Alliance for European Integration remain in office after the election on 28th 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 1st 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 collect 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.

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