

# Moldovan election: Sharp decline in support for pro-EU coalition

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Parliamentary elections were held in the former Soviet Republic of Moldova on November 30. As part of the military offensive by the NATO powers against Russia, the impoverished Eastern European state has increasingly become the focus of Western-led provocations.

While not an official member of NATO, Moldova's links with the organization go back to 1992 when the country first joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council.

After counting votes from 98 percent of the election stations, the pro-Russian Socialist Party of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM) emerged in first place, with 20.71 percent, followed by the main pro-European formation, the Liberal Democrat Party of Moldova (PLDM), with just under 20 percent. The Communist Party (PCRM) won 17.76 percent of the vote, while other pro-EU parties, the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) and the Liberal Party (PL), received 16 percent and 9.50 percent respectively.

These results show the rejection by broad layers of the population of the policies pursued by Premier Iurie Leanca's ruling pro-EU coalition, formed by the Liberal Democrats, Democrats and Liberal Party. Brought to power in the wake of violent pro-European protests in 2009, the governing coalition, led by the PDLM, has relentlessly pursued the course for European integration of the former Soviet Republic, overseeing drastic austerity measures, including the deregulation of the public sector and massive privatizations.

It has also embarked on a policy to isolate the Russian speaking population, by aggressively promoting the Romanian language and the supposed identity of Moldova as "the second Romanian country". In June 2014 the Moldovan parliament

ratified the Association Agreement with the EU. Following the NATO summit in Wales in September, the Moldovan army became heavily integrated into NATO operations in the region.

The PDLM's vote dropped from 29.4 percent in the 2010 elections, which gave them 32 seats in parliament, to 19.97 percent giving them 23 seats. The Liberals maintained their total from 2010, while the Democrats, who campaigned for a less confrontational stance towards Russia, increased their vote, and will have four more seats in the new parliament.

The vote for the Communist Party collapsed, with the party taking third place in the elections. In previous elections the PCRM had garnered the largest share of the votes. Now it will occupy just 21 seats in the new parliament, down from the 42 seats it held previously. Although traditionally viewed as an alternative to the right-wing pro-EU parties, the PCRM during the election campaign it took an ambiguous attitude towards the Association Agreement, with party head Vladimir Voronin declaring: "We have questions regarding the political aspect of this agreement, but we don't have much to object to on the economic side." Voronin was widely tipped by commentators to join a pro-EU coalition, if his help were needed.

The winner of the election was the PSRM. The party, led by former members of the Communist Party, campaigned on the basis of a rejection of the Association Agreement and for joining Russia's customs union. Although most opinion polls prior to the election gave the party less than 10 percent, it will have 25 seats in the new parliament after winning the largest share of the vote, including in the capital Chisinau and other large cities.

In the autonomous region of Gagauzia, the PSRM took 57 percent of the vote, followed by the pro-

Russian Electoral Bloc “The choice Moldova—Customs Union” and then the Communist Party. PSRM leader Igor Dodon also called for the federalization of the country, promising to peacefully end the conflict with the breakaway province of Transnistria.

The electoral success of the PSRM comes in the wake of an intense anti-Russian hysteria whipped up by the pro-EU forces. Echoing the international media, this campaign turned reality on its head by presenting Russia as the aggressor in Ukraine and the region, and as an existential and imminent threat to Moldova. The pro-Russian Fatherland Party, associated with the populist mogul Renato Usatii and credited by opinion polls with around 9 percent of the vote, was banned from participating in the elections, on November 27, ostensibly for receiving Russian funds for the election campaign.

One day earlier police conducted a series of raids on the homes of members of an antifascist organization, with links to the Fatherland Party. Police photos of antiquated weapons, presumably found on the searched locations, were presented by the media and politicians as proof that a violent takeover of Moldova was being prepared.

The ruling European parties are set to form a new governing coalition and will attempt to force through the program of European integration. Leaders of the three parties have announced that they will begin new coalition talks, presenting the result as “a vote of confidence, of support for the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the EU and NATO”, in the words of Mihai Ghimpu, president of the Liberal Party.

Immediately after the election, NATO Secretary Jens Stoltenberg declared: “The Moldavian people have made their choice, and everybody must respect it”, indicating that any opposition to the new government will be branded as Russian aggression.



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