

The 2025 Parliamentary Elections in Moldova – Moldovans Choose EU Integration Despite Massive Russian Interference

Executive Summary:

- **Pro-European majority confirmed:** The ruling Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) won the 2025 parliamentary elections with 50.2 % of the vote and 55 seats (out of 101), reaffirming Moldova's pro-EU direction.
- **Geopolitical choice as key campaign issue:** The different parties and alliances largely campaigned on Moldova's geopolitical choice between EU and Russia and the respective portrayed consequences.
- **Russian interference and disinformation:** Massive campaigns of disinformation, troll farms, and illicit financing attempted to undermine the elections, but law enforcement and investigative journalists largely exposed and disrupted these operations.
- **Oppositional parties:** The pro-Russian Patriotic Bloc gained 24.2 % (26 seats), losing some ground as compared to the last elections, while new actors such as the Alternative Bloc (8 %), Our Party (6.2 %), and Democracy Home (5.6 %) entered Parliament.
- **Symbolic anti-oligarch moment:** The extradition of ex-oligarch Vlad Plahotniuc shortly before the election and the viral TV series *Plaha* might have reinforced anti-corruption and pro-reform sentiment among voters.
- **Geopolitical choice for the future:** The 2025 parliamentary elections effectively acted as a second referendum on EU integration, confirming citizens' determination to continue reforms, resist Russian influence, and consolidate democracy in Moldova.
- **Expectations:** After the elections, voters expect PAS to consolidate the fight against high-level corruption, as well as to implement key reforms to continue EU integration and economic development.

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Introduction

Despite massive Russian interference, Moldovans voted for a pro-European majority in parliament. The victory of the ruling Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) is all the more striking, given that Moldova has faced up to 30% inflation¹ following the pandemic, the energy crisis sparked by Russia's reduction of gas volumes to Moldova in 2021, and the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The vote was largely geopolitical, being driven by Moldovans' commitment to decouple from Russia and continue the EU integration process sped up by President Maia Sandu. For many, a pro-Russian government would have meant the missed opportunity of a generation for EU integration.

The Electoral Campaign

While in the 2021 parliamentary elections, the main issue was the fight against corruption, the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine has brought back geopolitics and energy to the fore in the 2025 elections. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine has polarised Moldovan society. While everyone in Moldova says they want peace and are empathetic towards Ukrainian refugees, the way peace could be achieved is seen in different ways by different voters. For pro-European voters, EU integration guarantees peace, while pro-Russian voters fear that being too antagonistic to Russia can attract Moscow's rage, or NATO can drag Moldova into conflict. Furthermore, Moldova had been dependent on Russian gas for decades, when Russian blackmail in 2021 forced the government to look for alternative sources of energy on the international market; many Moldovans, meanwhile, embraced renewables.²

The pro-European ruling party PAS broadly campaigned on the topics of EU integration and decoupling from Russia. This geopolitical direction is seen by pro-European voters as the guarantor of peace, democracy, human rights, and economic development. The pro-European electorate was also scared that if Moldova

falls back into Russian hands, the country would be dragged into the war in neighbouring Ukraine, and that it would turn into an autocracy and kleptocracy. By this the chance to join the EU would be lost, once again, as it has been on so many past occasions. For the opposition, the main issue of the campaign was to get rid of the ruling party PAS, which governs with an absolute majority since the last parliamentary elections in 2021. By the oppositional pro-Russian forces, PAS was portrayed as a dictatorial and incompetent party, guilty of the cost-of-living crisis, expensive energy, and the tense relationship with Russia, which may degenerate into war. These different views have also been reflected in public and independent mainstream media supporting human rights and European integration, as opposed to the televisions and online portals linked to pro-Russian opposition parties.

Huge disinformation marked this campaign. According to an analysis by the Atlantic Council, around 40,000 posts created by a Russian troll farm in Moldova in two weeks of September reached 55 million views,³ all while Moldova's population is 2.6 million. Most disinformation aimed at denigrating the EU and PAS. Russian interference has stayed a major theme of the campaign thanks to law enforcement institutions' consistent action and communication, as well as well-documented journalistic investigations into fugitive Ilan Şor's networks. The police and national anti-corruption centre confiscated the equivalent of five million euros, did hundreds of searches, and arrested 74 people for taking part in trainings in Russian-coordinated destabilisation tactics in Serbia.⁴ Together with the national intelligence, they also held press conferences and constantly published evidence of cash or weapons found, as well as recordings revealing how the various schemes work. Alone, these findings may have had less credibility. But following the success of Ziarul de Gardă's two undercover journalistic investigations from the presidential campaign in 2024 (which scooped the European Press Prize), independent journalists from several media outlets, including

1 Statista (2025), Average inflation rate in Moldova from 1993 to 2030, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/513343/inflation-rate-in-moldova/> (accessed 06.10.2025).

2 Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Moldova (2025), Renewable Energy, <https://energie.gov.md/ro/content/energie-regenerabila> (accessed 06.10.2025).

3 Marocico, O., Mirodan, S., Ings, R, How Russian-funded fake news network aims to disrupt election in Europe - BBC investigation, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4g5klon5d2o> (accessed 06.10.2025).

4 Ziarul de Gardă (September 2025), Dezordini în masă pregătite de doi ofițeri ai serviciilor ruse în Moldova și Serbia: 74 de persoane reținute. Au fost ridicate arme și muniții. Persoanele erau racolate prin grupul „Şor”, <https://www.zdg.md/stiri/dezordini-in-masa-pregatite-de-doi-ofiteri-ai-serviciilor-ruse-in-moldova-si-serbia-74-de-persoane-retinute-au-fost-ridicate-arme-si-munitii-persoanele-erai-racolate-prin-grupul-sor/> (accessed 06.10.2025).

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Ziarul de Gardă,⁵ NordNews,⁶ Cu Sens,⁷ and even the BBC,⁸ published undercover investigations revealing the inner workings of Russia's troll farms in Moldova. Because of the mentioned police searches, fines and arrests, many people were more scared to take part in the Russian vote-buying scheme than in previous local and presidential elections, as well as the 2024 EU constitutional referendum.

Furthermore, the 2025 campaign was also marked by several decisions by the Central Electoral Commission to exclude parties breaking the law from running in the campaign. The new party Moldova Mare (Great Moldova) led by former prosecutor Victoria Furtună⁹ and The Heart of Moldova, originally part of the Patriotic Bloc, led by the former governor of Gagauzia, Irina Vlah, were banned due to illicit financing, days before the election.¹⁰ Both had links to Ilan Șor's Moscow-coordinated networks, as independent journalistic investigations mentioned above showed. The Moscow-based oligarch Șor, whose party entered Parliament in 2021, was sentenced to 15 years in prison in Moldova in December 2024¹¹ and his parties were banned from running in the election for being part of a criminal network already in 2023.¹²

One additional feature of this electoral campaign has been the "return" of Vlad Plahotniuc, the oligarch that captured the Moldovan state during 2016–2019 and fled when Maia Sandu became prime minister. Some voices say Plahotniuc was preparing his comeback in politics. Instead, Moldova got him back three days before the election – in handcuffs, extradited by Greece, where he was caught with 16 different passports.¹³ The

image of a once all-powerful figure facing justice has been very powerful. The photos of him in handcuffs became viral. Moldovans' collective memory of recent history was also refreshed by the fictional 10-episode TV series *Plaha*, directed by Igor Cobileanschi, which ran everyday for two weeks before the election on independent channel Jurnal TV in Romanian language. The TV series was also briefly posted on Youtube for free and is to be sold to Netflix. The series shows Plahotniuc's rise, from human trafficking in the '90s, to the financing of several political parties across the whole political spectrum, from pro-Russian parties to unionist ones. The TV series had record audiences, with one in five Moldovans watching it.¹⁴

- 5 *Ziarul de Gardă* (04.09.2025), Kremlin's Digital Army — An Undercover Investigation. „It's paid, let me tell you, it's paid directly from Moscow” <https://www.zdg.md/en/kremlins-digital-army-an-undercover-investigation-its-paid-let-me-tell-you-its-paid-directly-from-moscow/> (accessed 05.10.2025).
- 6 *Chirtoca, D.* (22.09.2025), Cinci luni sub acoperire // Rețeaua Moscovei, acțiuni conspirative, bani, propagandă și manipulare electorală, NordNews, https://nordnews.md/investigatii/cinci-luni-sub-acoperire-reteaua-moscovei-actiuni-conspirative-bani-propaganda-si-manipulare-electoralala/?fbclid=IwY2xjawM94i1leHRuA2FlbQlMQABHmUTCzEdiS66PF3JMWJJsDs-IY2eVmnKob48vp_tF3js74D_a4GbLmJBmdp5_aem_XQXRqQFFHBOCSQWgoniXSg (accessed 06.10.2025).
- 7 *Cojocari, M.* (22.09.2025), Instruiți să facă haos. Partea III, <https://cusens.md/ro/investigatii/instruiti-sa-faca-haos-partea-iii/> (accessed 06.10.2025).
- 8 *BBC World Service* (22.09.2025), Rigged: Undercover in a fake news network, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pf8arQO3-lc> (accessed 05.10.2025).
- 9 *Urușciuc, E.* (26.09.2025), Partidul Victoriei Furtună, exclus din cursa electorală. Blocul „Alternativa” și premierul Recean, sancționați de CEC, Radio Free Europe, <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/partidul-victoriei-furtuna-exclus-din-cursa-electoralala-blocul-alternativa-si-premierul-recean-sanctionati-de-cec/33542009.html> (accessed 06.10.2025).
- 10 *Europa Liberă Moldova* (02.10.2025), Partidul Irinei Vlah nu va putea participa la alegerile locale noi. Alte două formațiuni s-au ales cu activitatea limitată, <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/partidul-irinei-vlah-nu-va-putea-participa-la-alegerile-locale-noi-alte-doua-formatiuni-s-au-ales-cu-activitatea-limitata/33547148.html> (accessed 06.10.2025).
- 11 *Europa Liberă Moldova* (13.12.2024), CSJ pune punct în dosarul Șor. Oligarhul rămâne condamnat la 15 ani de închisoare, <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/cs-j-mentine-sentinta-lui-ilan-sor-condamnarea-la-15-ani-de-inchisoare-ramane-in-vigoare/33238925.html> (accessed 06.10.2025).
- 12 *Baciu, A.* (19.06.2023), Ultimă oră! Curtea Constituțională a decis: Partidul Șor, scos în afara legii, Agora, <https://agora.md/2023/06/19/ultima-ora-curtea-constitucionala-a-decis-partidul-sor-scos-in-afara-legii-videofoto>
- 13 *Lukiv, J.* (25.09.2025), Greece extradites oligarch to Moldova in \$1bn fraud case, BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clyldynzg48o> (accessed 05.10.2025).
- 14 *Jurnal.md*, Audiențe record: Unul din cinci moldoveni a urmărit în direct serialul „Plaha”, difuzat în exclusivitate de Jurnal TV, <https://www.jurnal.md/ro/news/01d1c712263bb9e7/audiente-record-unul-din-cinci-moldoveni-a-urmarit-in-direct-serialul-plaha-difuzat-in-exclusivitate-de-jurnal-tv.html> (accessed 06.10.2025).

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The Election Results – Winners and Losers

Figure 1: Competing Parties/Blocs and Voting Results in the 2025 Parliamentary Elections

Party Name / List	Percentage of Votes		Seats in Parliament this election (2025)
	this election (2025)	last election (2021)	
Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate <i>Action and Solidarity Party (PAS)</i>	50.2 %	52.8 %	55
Blocul Patriotic <i>Patriotic Bloc</i>	24.20 %	27.17 %	26
Blocul Alternativa <i>The Alternative Bloc</i>	7.96 %	–	8
Partidul Nostru <i>Our Party (PN)</i>	6.20 %	–	6
Partidul Democrația Acasă <i>Democracy Home Party (PPDA)</i>	5.62 %	–	6
	Voter turnout 52.21 % 1,608,518 voters	Voter turnout 48.5 % 1,480,965 voters	101

Source: 2025 election: <https://pv.cec.md/>; 2021 election: <https://a.cec.md/totalizator-8593.html>

The **Action and Solidarity Party (PAS)** won an absolute majority in Parliament with 50.2 % of votes (just around 2.5 percentage points less than in 2021), scoring once again more votes than opinion polls suggested.¹⁵ While they got 63 seats out of 101 in 2021, this time round they won 55 seats, although, around 18,000 more people voted for PAS in absolute terms, with a greater voter turnout in 2025 this translated into less seats.¹⁶ PAS remained the main pro-European political party in Moldova, with all previous and new parliamentary opposition having links to Russia. Other pro-European forces have not passed the five percent threshold. PAS relied on many of its own politicians, including those who withdrew from their roles in government despite their popularity but returned for this election, such as former foreign minister Nicu Popescu or the former minister of social protection, Marcel Spataru; it also brought on its list some public personalities such as writer and journalist Constantin Cheianu, musician Nicolae Botgros or world wrestling champion Anastasia Nichita. Maia Sandu, the President and founder of PAS – but not a party member since she took office as

president, due to the fact that the law bans the head of state from being a party member – remains the most popular politician in the country and represented a powerful symbol for Moldova's EU integration process.¹⁷ In an effort to attract its critics and become a national unity party, PAS even invited two leaders of another pro-European party without chances to pass the threshold to join its list: Dinu Plângău and Stela Macari, from Platforma DA, who in the meantime declared that while they will vote the government into office, may afterwards act as independent MPs.¹⁸

The **Patriotic Bloc** was formed of four political parties, the Socialists, led by former president Igor Dodon, the Communists, led by former president Vladimir Voronin, a new party called The Future of Moldova, led by former prime minister Vasile Tarlev, and the Heart of Moldova, led by the former governor of Gagauzia, Irina Vlah. The last party in the list was banned from running just days before the election due to illicit funding. While Dodon and Voronin have been Members of Parliament in 2021–2025 in the opposition, Tarlev has not

15 *Alegeri.md*, Alegerile parlamentare din 2021 în Republica Moldova, https://alegeri.md/w/Alegerile_parlamentare_din_2021_%C3%AEn_Republica_Moldova (accessed 05.10.2025).

16 *Alegeri.md*, Alegerile parlamentare din 2025 în Republica Moldova, https://alegeri.md/w/Alegerile_parlamentare_din_2025_%C3%AEn_Republica_Moldova (accessed 05.10.2025).

17 *Barometrul Opiniei Publice* (September 2025), <https://ipp.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/BOP-COMUNICAT-DE-PRESA.pdf> (accessed 06.10.2025).

18 *Popușoi, C.* (02.10.2025), Plângău și Macari mențin suspansul sau cum și-a ales PAS „cenzori”, <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/plingau-si-macari-mentin-suspansul-sau-cum-si-a-ales-pas-cenzori/33547189.html> (accessed 06.10.2025).

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taken an active part in politics since 2008, when he left office, as a member of the Communists Party. The Patriotic Bloc obtained 24.2% of the votes (as compared to 27.17% in the last elections), translating into 26 seats in Parliament, 6 seats less than in 2021.

Despite being populated by people with ample experience on the Moldovan political scene, including in Parliament, one newly formed alliance entered Parliament: the **Alternative Bloc**, led by Chişinău mayor and leader of the National Alternative Movement (MAN), Ion Ceban, as well as former general prosecutor and presidential candidate Alexandr Stoianoglo, former prime-minister Ion Chicu elected by the Socialists and the Democratic parties, and communist Voronin's former presidential advisor Mark Tkaciuc. The Alternative Bloc scored 8% of the votes, translating into 8 seats in Parliament.

Further Parliament newcomers with 6 seats each include the populist parties **Our Party** (PN) with 6.2% and **Democracy Home** (PPDA) with 5.6%. The leader of Our Party, Renato Usatîi, is a charismatic speaker who has been mayor of the northern town of Bălţi. He made money in dealings with the Russian state railways. He admitted to buying information from public servants.¹⁹ The leader of Democracy Home, Vasile Costiuc, is a former reporter, who campaigned for George Simion in 2025 in the presidential elections in Romania, and was on the far-right Romanian party AUR list for the Romanian Parliament in 2024 but did not win enough votes to secure a seat. Simion in turn openly supported Costiuc in the Moldovan elections.²⁰ In this poll, TikTok mattered more than in the past, helping Vasile Costiuc and his party, Democracy Home, make it into Parliament, which was a surprise to many observers. Costiuc grew his electorate on TikTok, especially in the past two weeks before the election, reaching 27 million views.

PAS came first in the majority of Moldova's regions, with between 30% and 68% of the votes.²¹ The excep-

tions include five districts in the north of the country, the southern autonomous region of Gagauzia, and the breakaway region of Transnistria, where the Patriotic Bloc scooped a higher percentage.²² The Moldovan diaspora has stayed pro-European, with 79% of votes going to PAS.²³

National and International Observations on the Elections

The Constitutional Court is yet to decide on whether the elections are valid (at the time of writing). While most countries congratulated president Maia Sandu and PAS for the result, Russia claimed the elections were not fair. Its ally in Moldova, Igor Dodon, also questioned the fairness of the elections and protested in front of the Electoral Commission on the night of 28 to 29 September, and then the next day in front of Parliament.

International observers from OSCE, the European Parliament and others said the election took place against the backdrop of unprecedented hybrid attacks but that the electoral bodies were professional and transparent.²⁴ Denouncing Russian foreign malign interference, the coordinator of the OSCE special mission Paula Cardoso said "the democratic tenacity of the nation prevailed" over "these tactics".²⁵ According to Michael Gahler, the head of the European Parliament delegation, "In the run up to the election there have been numerous challenges for the authorities, there were cyber attacks, there were vote buying attempts and disinformation campaigns from the Russian Federation, but the people, the voters and the authorities, withstood. So overall I think it was a test passed for democracy, for the European path that the Moldovans have another time confirmed."²⁶

The national NGO Promo-Lex, which had hundreds of observers across the country and in the diaspora, took a more critical approach. While they condemned the

19 *People of Interest* (10.09.2025), Renato Usatîi, <https://profiles.rise.md/profile.php?id=200315094607&lang=rom> (accessed 06.10.2025).

20 *Ziarul de Gardă* (28.09.2025), George Simion a îndemnat cetăţenii să voteze pentru partidul lui Vasile Costiuc. „E acolo Democraţia Acasă, DA. Pac!”, <https://www.zdg.md/stiri/video-george-simion-a-indemnat-cetatenii-sa-voteze-pentru-partidul-lui-vasile-costiuc-e-acolo-de-mocratia-acasa-da-pac/> (accessed 06.10.2025).

21 *Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova* (28.09.2025), Preliminary Results, <https://pv.cec.md/preliminare> (accessed 06.10.2025).

22 *diez* (29.09.2025), Cum a votat fiecare raion din Republica Moldova la parlamentare, potrivit rezultatelor preliminare, <https://diez.md/2025/09/29/harta-cum-a-votat-fiecare-raion-din-republica-moldova-la-parlamentare-potrivit-rezultatelor-preliminare/> (accessed 06.10.2025).

23 *Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova*.

24 OSCE (29.09.2025), Moldova's parliamentary elections were competitive but campaign marred by cyberattacks, illegal funding and disinformation, international observers say, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/598219> (accessed 06.10.2025).

25 Ibid.

26 *EP Election Observation delegation* (29.09.2025), Parliamentary elections in Moldova: statement by Michael GAHLER (EPP, DE), Head of the EP delegation, https://api.multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/documents/20125/84971556/1758784422013_1277615%5BSD-EN%5D.pdf (accessed 06.10.2025).

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Russian illegal financing of parties, cyber-attacks, paid protests, manipulation via religious actors, and disinformation campaigns, as well as the continuing, systematic role of Ilan Șor, they also criticised the “late legislative changes”, persistent “abusive use of administrative resources”, “unregulated activity of third parties, especially online actors”, “focus on geopolitics at the expense of substantive policy debate”.²⁷

Conclusion

Parliamentary elections in Moldova symbolically represented a second referendum to join the European Union, after the one officially held in 2024. For the voters of the ruling party PAS, the main motivation was geopolitical, to maintain Moldova’s process of EU integration and reform, and decouple from Russia’s sphere of influence. Russia invested huge amounts of money and effort into vote-buying schemes, manipulation and disinformation, cyberattacks, false bomb alerts, the politicisation and mobilisation of priests, and so on. While the state fought the illicit financing associated with many pro-Russian parties, this battle must continue in order to protect Moldova’s sovereignty and rule of law — consolidating the fight against high-level corruption, as well as key reforms to continue EU integration and economic development are what PAS voters expect from them. With less illegal money funnelled into Moldovan politics, other pro-European parties except for PAS may also have greater chances of growth by the next elections.

27 *Promo-LEX* (03.10.2025), Declarație succintă a constatărilor și concluziilor privind alegerile parlamentare în Republica Moldova din 28 septembrie, <https://promolex.md/declaratie-succinta-a-constatarilor-si-concluziilor-privind-alegerile-parlamentare-in-republica-moldova-din-28-septembrie/> (accessed 06.10.2025).