International Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Moldova

Final Report on the 2025 Parliamentary Elections

IRI INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE
Advancing Democracy Worldwide

International Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Moldova | Final Report on the 2025 Parliamentary Elections

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mission Overview

At the invitation of the Government of Moldova and the Central Election Commission (CEC), the International Republican Institute (IRI) conducted an international election observation mission for the September 28, 2025, parliamentary elections. The mission was led by The Hon. Frank LaRose, Secretary of State of Ohio, in collaboration with Mr. Scott Mastic, IRI Vice President of Programs, and Mr. Stephen Nix, IRI Senior Director of Europe and Eurasia. IRI board member, Mr. Olin Wethington, also served on the delegation. Through this mission, IRI provided an impartial and objective assessment of the pre-election, election day, and immediate post-election period, along with actionable recommendations to strengthen Moldova's future elections.

IRI has led or supported 250 international and citizen election observation missions worldwide and is recognized for its impartiality and professionalism. The mission's work is made possible with the support of the National Endowment for Democracy and was conducted in partnership with the Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation. Through this mission, IRI offered an impartial and objective assessment of Moldova's electoral process; provided actionable short- and long-term recommendations to improve Moldova's administrative, legal, and regulatory environment; and documented the malign activities of foreign entities who interfered in or attempted to discredit the election process. Importantly, the mission recognizes that the 2025 parliamentary elections were critical for Moldova's long-term future and its citizens' democratic aspirations. The mission is grateful for the cooperation it received from Moldovan citizens, government officials, candidates, party members, representatives from civil society, and the journalists with whom it interacted.

Methodology

Led by a distinguished delegation and supported by a 25-member team representing nine countries, IRI deployed observers both in-country and across diaspora communities to ensure comprehensive coverage. Thematic analysis of the pre-electoral environment began on August 25 with the deployment of three long-term analysts. IRI's analysis was augmented by 14 short-term observers (STOs) who arrived in the capital Chisinau on September 24, and by eight STOs posted abroad. Throughout the mission, IRI observers met with government officials, civil society groups, political parties, and the media, who offered their views on the conduct of the 2025 parliamentary elections. On election day, the mission deployed twelve observer teams to 18 raions (districts), two municipalities (Chisinau and Balti), and the autonomous administrative unit of Gagauzia.

Observers also witnessed voting in stations dedicated to voters residing in Transnistria, a Russian-backed separatist region located on the left bank of the Nistru River between Ukraine and government-backed Moldova, as well as voting for Moldovan voters in Italy, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom.[1] The mission strictly complied with Moldovan law and the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to non-interference throughout its activities.

1 The separatist territory of Transnistria occupies a thin 100-kilometer-long strip of land that runs along the left bank of the Dniester River, separating it from the rest of Moldova. The region has been under control of unrecognized authorities backed by the Russian Federation following a civil war in 1992.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Moldova's 2025 parliamentary elections followed a series of transformative contests, including the 2024 presidential election and constitutional referendum that affirmed the country's European aspirations. The campaign was shaped by a sharp divide between pro-European and pro-Russian forces, with the diaspora playing a decisive role in determining outcomes. Persistent Russian interference—through banned proxy parties and sophisticated influence operations—highlighted the high stakes of the election.

In response to these ongoing electoral and national security threats, Moldovan institutions enacted significant reforms. The Central Election Commission (CEC) modernized the country's legal framework, strengthened oversight of campaign finance, and expanded access to voting for citizens both in-country and abroad. Key innovations included digitized voter registration, streamlined candidate nomination procedures, and the extension of postal voting to ten countries, enabling secure and efficient participation for Moldovans living overseas.

Throughout the electoral period, the CEC demonstrated institutional maturity and resilience. Its commitment to transparency was reflected in timely public communication, the publication of its decisions, and the accreditation of over 3,400 observers. The commission's efforts to counter false narratives and promote civic engagement were equally robust, with multilingual voter education campaigns reaching citizens and targeted outreach to youth, rural communities, and the diaspora.

Despite these achievements, Moldova's democracy faced relentless assaults from malign foreign actors. Russian-sponsored networks engaged in influence operations, covert financing, and attempts to exploit vulnerabilities in regions such as Transnistria. Law enforcement and election authorities responded decisively, conducting hundreds of investigations, detaining individuals linked to illicit finance, and seizing assets tied to foreign interference. While these efforts mitigated the impact of external threats, they underscored the ongoing need for vigilance.

On election day, Moldova's commitment to professionalism and transparency was evident. Voter turnout reached 52.24 percent, with over 1.6 million citizens casting ballots—an eight percent increase from the previous parliamentary elections. Diaspora participation rose by more than 30 percent, driven by expanded overseas polling stations and improved postal voting options. Polling stations across the country and abroad opened on time, were well-equipped, and staffed by trained officials who upheld rigorous procedures. Observers reported a calm and orderly atmosphere, with strong participation from party representatives and citizen monitors, reinforcing public confidence in the process.

Five political formations entered parliament: the Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS), Patriotic Bloc, Alternativa Bloc, Our Party, and Democracy at Home. PAS retained its majority, while opposition votes scattered across several parties.

The 2025 parliamentary elections stand as a powerful testament to Moldova's democratic resilience and its unwavering determination to pursue a European future. Moldova's achievements in electoral integrity, transparency, and inclusivity reflect a maturing democracy, committed to defending its institutions and values. This report is offered by IRI in the spirit of international cooperation and in support of Moldova's aspirations for a free, prosperous, and European future.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Moldova's 2025 parliamentary elections were preceded by several key electoral cycles. In July 2021, PAS, founded by current President Maia Sandu, secured a parliamentary majority on a pro-European, anti-corruption platform.[2] President Sandu's re-election, alongside a narrowly approved referendum in October 2024, enshrined Moldova's EU accession aims in the Constitution.[3] Notably, Moldova's diaspora, estimated at over one million citizens, was a decisive electoral force.[4] The outcomes of the 2024 presidential and referendum elections affirmed public support for European alignment, while also exposing persistent divides between urban and rural voters, a pro-Europe diaspora, and several pro-Russia domestic constituencies.

Since independence, Moldova's democratic institutions have faced a relentless campaign of manipulation from the Russian Federation.[5] Online and physical interference have included covert financing of political parties and protests, sophisticated information operations, and use of the breakaway region of Transnistria as a platform for political and informational influence. Russian attempts to influence have become a defining feature of Moldova's political landscape.[6] Russian-sponsored actors continue to launch influence campaigns including deepfakes, false narratives, cyberattacks, voter bribery schemes, orchestrated street protests, and media manipulation all aimed at creating chaos and undermining electoral integrity.[7]

In 2023, the Constitutional Court banned the pro-Russian-aligned Șor party, which was affiliated with fugitive Moldovan oligarch Ilan Shor, for violating the law and undermining national sovereignty.[8] Parliament subsequently adopted amendments to the Electoral Code to mitigate foreign interference and strengthen the CEC capacity to address similar challenges. These reforms prohibited the creation of successor or "camouflage" parties designed to circumvent party bans. The reforms also enhanced campaign finance oversight by tightening reporting requirements and enforcement mechanisms. Despite these measures, actors linked to Shor and to similar figures have continued to exploit vulnerabilities through illegal proxy parties and media networks.

The CEC, a constitutionally independent body responsible for supervising and administering elections, has operated under significant political pressure. In recent years, escalating election interference and manipulation led to intensified collaboration between the CEC and other governmental institutions, particularly agencies tasked with national security. However, this interagency cooperation fueled allegations of executive branch influence, a narrative perpetuated by malign actors seeking to discredit the commission.

Moldova's 2025 parliamentary elections took place amid threats of foreign interference, internal polarization, and heightened regional instability.[9] After gaining EU candidate status in 2022 alongside Georgia and Ukraine, Moldova intensified accession talks in mid-2024.[10]

2 Comisia Electorală Centrală a Republicii Moldova, "Rezultatele alegerilor parlamentare din 11 iulie 2021."
3 Curtea Constitutionala a Republicii Moldova, Hotararea nr. 21, November 12, 2024.
4 Central Electoral Commission (CEC), Rezultatele votării peste hotare – Alegeri parlamentare 2021 și 2025.
5 Donald N. Jensen, "Russian Interference in the 2024 Moldovan Presidential Election and Constitutional Referendum," United States Institute of Peace, November 12, 2024, https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/11/russian-interference-2024-moldovan-presidential-election-and-constitutional.
6 "Transnistria: Russia's Next Battlefront," Harvard International Review, October 21, 2024, https://hir.harvard.edu/transnistria-russias-next-battlefront/.
7 Ramazan Alpaut, "'Mirror Politics' And Deepfakes: How Authoritarians Are Honing Their Disinformation Game," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, November 18, 2024, https://www.rferl.org/a/deepfakes-disinformation-russia-moldova/33205600.html; Mark Scott, "Moldova Fights to Free Itself from Russia's AI-Powered Disinformation Machine," Politico, May 7, 2024, https://www.politico.eu/article/moldova-fights-free-from-russia-ai-power-disinformation-machine-maia-sandu/.
8 Straits Times. "Who Is Ilan Shor, the Fugitive Tycoon at Centre of Moldova's Meddling Allegations." The Straits Times, October 21, 2024. https://www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/who-is-ilan-shor-the-fugitive-tycoon-at-centre-of-moldovas-meddling-allegations.
9 Carnegie Europe, "Moldova's Geopolitical Vulnerability," accessed November 3, 2025, https://carnegieeurope.eu.
10 CSIS. Russian Hybrid Tactics in Moldova. Accessed November 3, 2025. https://csis.org

Its geographic position, bordering war-torn Ukraine, further amplifies its geopolitical significance.[11] Ultimately, the 2025 elections represented a sharply defined choice between continued alignment with the European Union and a more neutral stance or a renewed partnership with Russia.[12]

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Elections in Moldova are regulated by the Constitution, the 2022 Electoral Code, the Law on Political Parties, the Code of Audiovisual Media Services, the Criminal Code, and secondary legislation, including the CEC's decisions, regulations, and guidelines on campaign finance and related matters.[13] The Law on the Constitutional Court establishes procedures for validating election results, while judicial precedents guide the interpretation of these norms, thereby reinforcing constitutional guarantees for free and fair elections.[14]

The 2025 parliamentary elections were conducted within an evolving legal and institutional framework. This framework, built on Moldova's Constitution and refined through a series of legislative reforms between 2022 and 2025, reflected a sustained effort to address vulnerabilities previously identified by election observers and to align with international democratic election standards.[15] Reforms to the electoral code banned "camouflaged electoral blocs," closing loopholes that allowed informal alliances to bypass formal registration procedures, a gap previously criticized by the Constitutional Court.[16] Similarly, the definition of "independent candidate" was revised to prevent covert party sponsorship, requiring individuals to demonstrate political independence during the 70 days preceding election day.[17] In a significant steps toward modernization, Moldova also launched the Electronic Subscription List, which enabled digital collection of signatures for candidate registration.[18] This innovation simplified procedures, improved verification, and reduced the risk of administrative errors or abuse.

In June 2025, a wide range of reforms were introduced to strengthen accountability for electoral corruption. Penalties were increased for vote buying and the misuse of administrative resources.[19] The Criminal Code was amended to explicitly penalize vote selling, expanding the definition of voter corruption.[20] The Contravention Code was amended to address practices such as photographing marked ballots and to sanction illegal campaigning by religious leaders.[21] Amendments to the Law on Political Parties and related acts closed legal gaps exploited by those seeking to reconstitute banned organizations under new names.[22]

11 European Commission. Moldova Granted EU Candidate Status. Accessed November 3, 2025. https://ec.europa.eu
12 OSCE/ODIHR. Moldova Parliamentary Elections Analysis. Accessed November 3, 2025. https://osce.org/odihr
13 Republic of Moldova, Constitution of the Republic of Moldova; Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, Law No. 325/2022; Law on Political Parties, Law No. 294/2007; Code of Audiovisual Media Services, Law No. 174/2018; Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova, Law No. 985/2002; Central Electoral Commission (CEC) regulations, https://cec.md.
14 Republic of Moldova, Law on the Constitutional Court, Law No. 317/1994.
15 Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, Law No. 325/2022, as amended in 2025.
16 Constitutional Court of Moldova, Decision No. 15/2023 on electoral blocs
17 Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, Art. 46 (Independent Candidates), amended 2025.
18 Central Electoral Commission, "Electronic Subscription List," https://cec.md
19 Republic of Moldova, Law No. 100/2025 amending Electoral Code and Criminal Code.
20 Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova, Art. 181[illegible] (Vote Buying and Selling), amended 2025.
21 Contravention Code of the Republic of Moldova, Art. 52, amended 2025. The amendment explicitly prohibits photographing marked ballots and sharing them publicly, as this violates the secrecy of the voting process. The amendment also penalizes illegal campaigning by religious leaders. Under Moldovan law, church officials are not permitted to engage in electoral campaigning or use their positions to influence voters during elections. This isintended to prevent undue influence and maintain the neutrality of religious institutions in the electoral process, especially as the Moldovan church operates under the Russian metropole.
22 Law on Political Parties, amendments of June 2025

A move to introduce new national and provisional ID cards to serve as valid voting documents made voting easier. Parliament also amended the Electoral Code, authorizing voters to use expired national identity cards or passports as valid proof of identity at polling stations.[23] The provision allowed election officials to verify a voter's eligibility using the State Register of Voters, even if their physical document had expired. This temporary measure was designed to safeguard the right to vote, particularly for citizens facing bureaucratic or logistical obstacles to renewing documents in time for the election. Additionally, postal voting, first piloted in 2024, expanded from six to ten countries, extending to North America, Nordic countries, East Asia, and Oceania.[24] The Electoral Code was also amended to streamline the complaint process, allowing authorities to determine a complaint's admissibility before a substantive review. This reduced frivolous filings and sped up adjudication. Moreover, journalists were granted the right to file complaints when their professional rights were infringed, recognizing their essential role in ensuring electoral transparency.[25]

The 2025 parliamentary elections marked a major step in Moldova's democratic development. Grounded in constitutional principles and strengthened by reforms aligned with international standards, Moldova built a framework of laws and regulations designed to offer voters accessibility coupled with transparency, pluralism, and anti-corruption measures. However, its success depended not only on legislation, but on the impartial and coordinated performance of key institutions to ensure electoral integrity and safeguard the expression of voters' choice.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Moldova's parliamentary elections, which determine the composition of its 101-seat legislature, use a closed-list proportional representation system.[26] Parliament is elected to a four-year term.[27] All votes, whether cast domestically, by the diaspora, or through special voting arrangements for Transnistrian voters, are aggregated into a single national constituency.[28] Electoral contestants may participate as political parties, electoral blocs (formed by two or more registered parties), or as independent candidates.[29] Parties and blocs must submit candidate lists containing between 51 and 111 names, and these lists must satisfy a 40 percent gender quota.[30] To qualify for seat allocation, at minimum an electoral bloc must secure at least seven percent of votes, political parties at least five percent, and independent candidates at least two percent.[31] Only those surpassing these thresholds are considered for seat distribution. The allocation of seats to qualifying party and bloc lists is determined using the D'Hondt method, a mathematical formula designed to ensure proportionality.[32] Candidates on successful lists who are not initially elected are designated as alternates. If a parliamentary seat becomes vacant, the Constitutional Court, upon request from the CEC, appoints the next eligible alternate from the same party or bloc.[33] If no alternative remains or an independent candidate's seat becomes vacant, the mandate is redistributed among the remaining qualifying competitors using the successive division method.[34]

23 Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, Art. 54, amended 2025
24 Central Electoral Commission, "Postal Voting Expansion," https://cec.md
25 Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, Art. 75[1] (Journalists' Rights), amended 2025.
26 Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, art. 12, accessed November 3, 2025, https://legislationline.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/Electoral%20Code_Moldova_8Dec2022_ENGLISH.pdf.
27 Ibid., art. 63
28 Ibid., art. 13.
29 Ibid., art. 41
30 Ibid., art. 68
31 Ibid., art. 86.
32 Ibid., art. 87.
33 Law on the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova, art. 4, accessed November 3, 2025, https://www.constcourt.md.
34 Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, art. 88

PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

Election Administration

The administration of the 2025 parliamentary elections was overseen by a professional and independent system of electoral bodies under the supervision of the CEC. Operating in accordance with the Electoral Code, the CEC and its subordinate structures which include 35 permanent District Electoral Commissions (DECs) and three temporary DECs were responsible for the lawful, transparent, and efficient organization of the elections.[35] The process benefited from a strengthened legal framework and improved procedural planning. However, its credibility was tested by malign foreign influence operations and by the logistical complexities of organizing polling abroad and for voters in Transnistria.

The CEC operated in its full nine-person composition, with members representing both ruling and opposition parliamentary factions, providing, in principle, pluralistic oversight.[36] The Commission's Secretariat, comprising its administrative apparatus and specialized departments, demonstrated technical and operational proficiency.[37] While the Commission's professionalism was generally acknowledged, several observers noted ongoing efforts by malign actors to undermine its independence.

Opposition parties complained of some irregularities and made allegations about political influence. They cited inconsistencies in the handling of complaints and bias in procedural interpretations. Malign online influence campaigns amplified these concerns. The CEC, in a demonstration of transparency, broadcasted its meetings, published all major decisions on its website in a timely manner, and adhered to the procedural calendar established by law. The mission also noted that Commission members could publish dissenting opinions on the official CEC website.[38]

Following Parliament's April 2025 decision to set parliamentary elections for September 28, the CEC adopted an official electoral calendar that adhered to legal deadlines.[39] Electoral bodies—including 35 permanent and three temporary DECs, as well as PEBs were all established on time.[40] PEBs are composed of five to 11 members for in-country polling stations and up to 15 for those abroad, with each parliamentary party entitled to appoint at least one member.[41]

A total of 2,274 polling stations were opened: 1,961 in-country, 301 abroad (up from 234 in 2024), and 12 designated for Transnistrian voters. The polling stations could accommodate a maximum of 3,000 voters per station in-country and 5,000 abroad.[42] The expansion of overseas polling and the broader use of postal voting marked a significant logistical achievement.[43]

Ballot production totaled 3,663,527 across six languages: 2,772,255 for in-country voting, 865,300 for abroad, 2,472 for mail-in voting, and 23,500 for Transnistrian voters.[44] Ballot printing was staggered and conducted under strict security protocols.[45]

35 Electoral Code, art. 27.
36 Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, art. 16–18, accessed November 3, 2025, https://legislationline.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/Electoral%20Code_Moldova_8Dec2022_ENGLISH.pdf.
37 Ibid., art. 21.
38 Ibid., art. 23.
39 Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, art. 26.
40 Ibid., art. 27.
41 Ibid., art. 29.
42 CEC Decision No. 100/2025.
43 Ibid.
44 CEC Official Report on Ballot Printing, August 2025.
45 Ibid.

The number of polling stations for Transnistrian voters was reduced from 41 in 2021 to 12, based on past low turnout and legal requirements prioritizing security.[46] The CEC's August 24 decision also considered risks such as voter fraud, organized transportation of voters, false bomb threats, and potential destabilization.[47] Although some observers criticized the move as restrictive—and it prompted a dissenting opinion within the Commission—security alerts from the General Police Inspectorate (IGP) and the Security and Intelligence Service (SIS) led to the relocation of four polling stations farther from the security zone.[48]

The Center for Continuous Electoral Training (CCET) prepared and certified approximately 8,000 election officials to support subnational election administration.[49] Mandatory courses for DECs and PEBs focused on new legal provisions, postal vote handling, and use of the State Automated Information System "Elections" (SAISE) Which collects and counts, in real time, the votes cast.[50] Training also included cybersecurity modules in response to 2024 cyber incidents.[51] Both PromoLEX, a prominent Moldovan non-governmental organization that focuses on citizen-led election monitoring, and the IRI mission reported that most DECs and PEBs functioned effectively, though staffing shortages were noted in Rezina, Rîșcani, and at some overseas polling stations.[52] No major technical failures occurred, and connectivity with the central database was maintained throughout election day.[53]

The CEC provided consistent public updates and granted access to media, observers, and party agents.[54] A total of 3,408 observers were accredited—2,496 domestic and 912 international—alongside journalists and political representatives.[55] The CEC also launched a centralized digital archive for decisions and complaints.[56] However, the CEC also tightened accreditation criteria on vetting that drew some concern from Promo-LEX and the Ministry of Justice for its consistency with the Electoral Code.

Voter Registration

The integrity of Moldova's voter register is central to its electoral process, particularly given the legal requirement that at least one-third of voters must turn out in order for an election to be valid.[57] The 2025 parliamentary elections were conducted using a unified, digitized State Register of Voters (SRV), managed by the CEC in cooperation with the Public Services Agency (ASP).[58] The SRV, derived from the State Population Register, is continuously updated with data on births, deaths, address changes, and citizenship status.[59] Each voter is uniquely identified by a numeric code.[60]

Ahead of the elections, the CEC and ASP did a comprehensive check of the SRV to remove deceased individuals, confirm addresses, and merge duplicate entries.[61] The finalized SRV, containing 3,299,396 registered voters, was transmitted to DECs by September 1, 2025.[62]

46 CEC Decision No. 120/2025.
47 Ibid.
48 OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, Final Report, 2025.
49 CCET, "About CCET."
50 OSCE, Assessment of the State Automated Information System "Elections" (SAISE).
51 Tsurkan, "Moldova's Election Infrastructure Targeted in Mass Cyber Attacks."
52 Promo-LEX, Observation Mission for the Parliamentary Elections of 28 September 2025: Report No. 4.
53 IRI, Preliminary Statement of the 2025 Moldova Parliamentary Elections.
54 CEC, "Decisional Transparency."
55 Radio Moldova, "CEC: Sunday's Elections Will Be Monitored by 2,496 National and 912 International Observers."
56 Council of Europe, "The Perspective of Electoral Complaints in Electronic Format."
57 Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, art. 5.
58 CEC, State Register of Voters Overview.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Promo-LEX, Observation Mission Report No. 4.
62 Ibid.

Despite some reports of minor delays in some areas, the CEC's online portal remained operational throughout the election period, allowing voters to verify their registration and polling station details.[63] The IRI mission noted the SRV's technical integrity and integration with civil databases. However, challenges included outdated records for voters abroad, the presence of deceased individuals in the SRV, and those lacking updated address information.[65]

Based on past turnout, registration data, and consultations with diplomatic mission, the CEC established 301 polling stations abroad, up from 234 in 2024.[66] Two polling stations were opened In Russia, Israel, and Ukraine, respectively.[67] From May to August, 16,134 diaspora voters preregistered online.[68] Additionally, 2,606 voters registered for postal voting in ten countries, including the U.S., Canada, and several European and Asia-Pacific nations.[69]

To ensure inclusivity, the CEC authorized supplemental voter lists for individuals who changed residence within 30 days of the election, were voting at a different polling station, casting mobile ballots (e.g., students, military, hospital patients), or whose names were missing from the main register but could prove their eligibility.[70] These lists were especially important for voters in the diaspora and in Transnistrian. A new legal amendment allowed citizens to vote with expired identity documents, which was widely praised for preventing disenfranchisement caused by administrative delays in document renewal.[71]

Partly because of close coordination between the CEC and ASP, voter registration in 2025 met key transparency and inclusiveness standards ensuring accurate registration and verification.[72] Expanded postal voting and overseas polling stations improved diaspora access, while supplemental lists and acceptance of expired IDs boosted inclusivity.[73] Remaining challenges include verifying addresses, the timely updating of records in the database and building stronger safeguards for postal voting. Continued collaboration with diaspora groups and civil society will also be essential to strengthening trust and equitable access in future elections.

Candidate, Party, and Bloc Registration

The 2025 candidate registration process reflected Moldova's ongoing political pluralism and the volatility of its party system, with eligibility disputes cropping up through election day. Conducted in line with the law and CEC regulations, the process ran from July 20 to August 19, resulting in the registration of 23 contestants: 15 political parties, four electoral blocs, and four independent candidates.[74]

To qualify, parties and blocs submitted 5,000 to 25,000 supporter signatures. Male independents needed 2,000 valid signatures and female independent candidates 1,000.[75] The CEC verified signatures electronically and cross-checked nominees against the SRV and criminal records.[76] The process was largely inclusive and transparent, though opposition parties raised concerns about selective enforcement and inconsistent signature verification.[77]

63 Ibid.
64 IRI, Preliminary Statement of the 2025 Moldova Parliamentary Elections.
65 Promo-LEX, Observation Mission Report No. 4.
66 CEC, Polling Stations Abroad Decision.
67 IPN News Agency, "Two Polling Stations Each in Russia, Ukraine, and Israel."
68 CEC, Diaspora Pre-Registration Statistics.
69 Promo-LEX, Observation Mission Report No. 4.
70 Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, art. 54.
71 Moldpres, "Moldovan Central Electoral Commission Announces Documents Required for Electors to Vote at Parliamentary Elections."
72 CEC, Report on Voter Registration and Coordination with ASP.
73 IPN News Agency, "Two Polling Stations Each in Russia, Ukraine, and Israel."
74 Moldpres, "CEC Announces Schedule for Candidate Registration."
75 Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, art. 113.
76 IFES, Moldova 2025 Parliamentary Election FAQ.
77 Promo-LEX, Observation Mission for the Parliamentary Elections of 28 September 2025: Report No. 4.

All parties and blocs met the 40 percent gender quota, 42 percent of candidates were women.[78] However, women held fewer than 25 percent of the top 10 positions in the list of candidates presented by political parties. Minority representation remained limited, with Gagauz, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, and Roma candidates comprising about six percent of nominees, a modest increase from 2021, but still below their population share.[79]

The CEC received 54 complaints and 12 judicial appeals, mainly on signature validation, list order, and alleged bias.[80] All were resolved within the legal deadlines, though the exclusion of parties such as Heart of Moldova and Moldova Mare sparked public controversy and complaints about the CEC's neutrality.[81]

Voter Education

To counter propaganda and voter apathy, the CEC launched a nationwide campaign under the slogan "Contezi. Votează" ("You Matter. Vote!"), promoting electoral participation and awareness of new procedures such as postal voting and updated ID rules.[82] The campaign included 20 TV and radio spots, 10 social media clips, digital banners, and printed materials distributed to all polling stations in Romanian, Russian, and Gagauz.[83]

The CEC also partnered with civil society and government institutions to promote participation and combat misinformation, especially in rural areas and among first-time voters. A mobile outreach initiative, "Caravana Votului Informat," toured the country from 8–26 September 2025, engaging over 30,000 citizens through interactive sessions, Q&As, and other events.[84] Youth-focused activities included film screenings and discussions on democratic values.

The CEC extended its voter education efforts abroad, holding information sessions in The Hague, London, Milan, Dublin, and Potsdam.[85] These sessions addressed postal voting, ID requirements, and digital tools like the polling station locators. Online platforms also supported outreach through instructional videos and FAQs.

The 2025 elections marked a significant uptick in voter education efforts. The CEC's multilingual, multi-platform approach and direct engagement informed voters and countered propaganda. However, gaps remain in regulating digital media, which continues to operate largely outside national oversight.

Campaign Period

The official campaign period ran from August 29 to September 26, following legal amendments that introduced a 10-day gap between candidate registration and campaigning.[86] Registration and campaign finance verification standards were applied uniformly, but some contestants reported short delays in opening bank accounts and in getting tax authorizations for printed materials.[87]

78 Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, art. 68.
79 Partnership for Development Center, 2025 Parliamentary Elections: An Analysis of Electoral Competition.
80 CEC, "Regulations on Complaints and Appeals."
81 Al Jazeera, "Moldova Bans Pro-Russian Parties Ahead of Sunday's Election."
82 CEC, "Contezi. Votează Campaign Launch."
83 Moldpres, "CEC Rolls Out Multimedia Campaign for Parliamentary Elections."
84 Radio Moldova, "Caravana Votului Informat Reaches All Districts."
85 CEC, "Information Sessions for Diaspora Voters."
86 Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, art. 52 §1; CEC, Calendar of Activities for the 2025 Parliamentary Elections, Aug 2025.
87 ENEMO, Campaign Environment Analysis, 19; Promo-LEX, Observation of the Electoral Campaign: Preliminary Findings, 4 (Sept 2025), https://enemo.org/post/statement-of-preliminary-findings-and-conclusion-on-the-2025-parliamentary-elections-in-the-republic-of-moldova-603.

Campaigning was highly regulated. Contestants were permitted to hold small meetings, distribute materials, and set up campaign tents. Larger gatherings required prior notification, at least five days for events with more than 50 participants, limiting large-scale mobilization.[88] Between August 29 and September 24, 3,471 campaign activities were documented, with PAS and the Patriotic Bloc each accounting for 26 percent, and the Alternativa Bloc 15 percent.[89] About 70 percent of activities were small-scale. Such strict enforcement of campaign regulations limited permissible activities, prompting many contestants to move their outreach to less-regulated digital platforms.

Campaign outreach followed linguistic and geographic divides, with Moldova's official language, Romanian, dominant alongside Russian, to facilitate inter-ethnic communication. Messaging focused on governance, foreign policy, and economic issues. Local authorities generally allocated public spaces fairly, though prior notification and funding rules reduced flexibility. Law enforcement maintained a visible presence at events, which some opposition figures viewed as intimidating.

The CEC and Audiovisual Council provided consistent oversight and guidance, but the short campaign period and advertising limits constrained their outreach. While the legal framework ensured equal conditions for all contestants, its restrictive design confined campaigning to narrowly defined, procedurally controlled activities.

Campaign Finance

Amendments to the Electoral Code expanded the definition of electoral bribery, tightened donor verification, and empowered the CEC to sanction, suspend, or deregister contestants for serious violations. All campaign transactions were required to pass through Electoral Fund accounts, with banks and media outlets obligated to report large or suspicious transactions to the CEC and to the National Anticorruption Center (NAC).[90] Donation limits were capped at six times the average monthly salary for individuals and twelve times for legal entities, with mandatory income verification for donations exceeding three average salaries.[91] The CEC published weekly financial reports within 24 hours of receipt, enabling near real-time public scrutiny.

The CEC enforced these rules, issuing sanctions ranging from warnings and fines to suspension and deregistration. Notably, Great Moldova and Heart of Moldova were penalized for foreign-linked donations and ties to the banned Shor network.[92] Law enforcement conducted 844 searches, detained 122 individuals, and seized assets valued at approximately eight million lei (about $475,040 USD), including cash, cryptocurrency, and luxury goods, targeting networks allegedly financed through Russian intermediaries.[93]

The CEC's Financial Control platform managed campaign finance reporting.[94] Most contestants complied with reporting deadlines, though civil society observers noted over two million lei ($118,760 USD) in unreported spending, particularly for online ads, transportation, and campaign staff.[95] The CEC cross-checked online ad spending with Meta and Google data, issuing warnings for discrepancies.

88 Electoral Code, arts. 52–55 (as amended 2025).
89 Promo-LEX, Observation of the Electoral Campaign: Reports 3–4, pp. 6–7 (Sept 2025). https://promolex.md/en/category/elections/parliamentary/parlamentare2025-en/
90 Central Electoral Commission (CEC), Decision No. 4148, "On the Supervision and Finalization of Electoral Campaign Financing," October 5, 2025; Law No. 325/2022.
91 Ibid.
92 Al Jazeera, "Moldova Bans Pro-Russian Parties Ahead of Sunday's Election."
93 Moldpres, "NAC Reports on Anti-Corruption Operations During Electoral Campaign."
94 CEC, "Financial Control Platform Overview."
95 Promo-LEX, Observation Mission Report No. 4.

While political contestants acknowledged the importance of transparency, many found the reporting process burdensome. Manual data entry, a lack of guidance on how to value volunteer work, and difficulty hiring accountants posed challenges, especially for smaller parties.[96] Some admitted to underreporting volunteer contributions.[97]

Overall, the 2025 elections marked significant progress in campaign finance transparency and enforcement. However, further improvements are needed to regulate third-party and digital expenditures, streamline reporting systems, and improve coordination among oversight bodies to sustain public trust and electoral integrity.

Media Environment

The Audiovisual Council (AVC) regulated the broadcast and print media, while digital platforms operated with minimal oversight. In July 2025, Parliament amended the Audiovisual Media Services Code (AMSC) to align with European standards.[98] These changes expanded the AVC's authority to regulate speech and required broadcasters to disclose advertising tariffs and submit their editorial policies. These moves were intended to strengthen resilience against malign influence, but they did not provide precise statutory definitions of false information, harm thresholds, or the evidentiary burden of proof. Nor did they contain language distinguishing between inaccurate reporting, false narratives, and legitimate political opinion.[99] Instead, the AVC was left to establish these standards in practice. The absence of a sufficient definition of key terms weakened the legislation's enforcement. While the intent of these amendments was to counter harmful content and harmonize with EU practice, a lack of precise definitions may have hindered enforcement.

The AVC monitored 22 broadcasters across the first three weeks of the campaign period and issued more than 30 public warnings and fines totaling over 100,000 lei.[100] The AVE imposed sanctions for exceeding daily advertising limits, misplacement of political ads, and unbalanced coverage. Several outlets committed repeat violations, underscoring current enforcement tools' limited impact.[101] Public service broadcasters also did not consistently meet obligations, with Gagauzia Radio Television (GRT) failing to provide any coverage of contestants in the early campaign period.[102]

Vague definitions under the AMSC law led to inconsistent implementation and uncertainty over their period of application.[103] In September 2025, the AVC fined regional public broadcaster GRT 30,000 lei for "propaganda and manipulation" in a live Independence Day broadcast, relying on "correct public information" provisions without a defined test for manipulation, while other broadcasters in the same period received only public warnings for coverage irregularities.[104]

Civil society monitors noted that vague terms allowed regulators to categorize content retroactively as false or unbalanced.[105] Smaller regional outlets reported that fines for minor infractions were disproportionate, equaling several months of staff salaries, which threatened their ability to continue operating.[106] Smaller outlets advised IRI observers that they chose to self-censor rather than risk unpredictable sanctions of unknown scope and severity.

96 Promo-LEX, Observation Mission Report No. 4.
97 Ibid.
98 Venice Commission, Opinion on the Legislative Reforms on Mass Media Regulation (Republic of Moldova), CDL-AD(2025)027-e.
99 Republic of Moldova, Lege pentru modificarea unor acte normative, No. 243 (July 10, 2025).
100 Audiovisual Council of Moldova, "The AC Fined Two TV Broadcasters for Violations in Covering the Electoral Campaign; Fifteen Others Were Publicly Warned."
101 Center for Independent Journalism (CJI), "How Did Television Stations Cover the 2025 Parliamentary Campaign?"
102 Audiovisual Council of Moldova, "The AC Fined Two TV Broadcasters for Violations in Covering the Electoral Campaign; Fifteen Others Were Publicly Warned."
103 Venice Commission, Opinion on the Legislative Reforms on Mass Media Regulation (Republic of Moldova), CDL-AD(2025)027-e.
104 Moldpres, "Audiovisual Council Sanctioned GRT with 30,000 Lei for Propaganda, Manipulation."
105 Center for Independent Journalism (CJI), "Statement on the New Legal Mechanism for Suspending Licenses of Audiovisual Media Service Providers."
106 Center for Independent Journalism (CJI), "CJI Launches a New Study on Moldova's Media Market: Realities and Trends in 2025."

Structural issues compounded these problems. Moldova's Media Ownership Monitor's (MOM) mapping from late 2024 showed that a limited number of corporate entities hold significant positions across TV, radio, and online. This raises concerns about concentration and indirect influence.[107] Independent outlets face funding shortages, while advertising revenues were concentrated among politically affiliated broadcasters. Observers also noted persistent gender imbalance in coverage, with women underrepresented in debates, talk shows, and as quoted sources, despite legal provisions requiring gender parity.[108]

Online platforms emerged as an important channel of political communication during the 2025 elections, surpassing television in reach and relevance. Campaign advertising and messaging increasingly migrated online, given the comparative lack of regulation, its speed, and growing reach. Major platforms applied their private policies during the campaign, but they were not fully aligned with Moldovan law. Meta, Facebook's parent company, reported removing coordinated inauthentic networks and offering a political ad library, but the library lacked the level of detail required under Moldova's election transparency rules.[109]

TikTok deployed an embedded feature that directed users to legitimate election content; it also removed content violating its rules, including posts flagged as false or misleading. However, it did not report the removals in line with Moldova's regulatory requirements.[110] YouTube, owned by Google, shut down channels tied to coordinated influence operations but did not disclose response times or consistently remove content that Moldovan law deemed illegal under the AMSC amendments.[111]

Civil society monitors documented large-scale information manipulation campaigns. Promo-LEX reported nearly 500 coordinated accounts amplifying anti-EU and anti-government messages over a three-day period. These accounts garnered more than one million views.[112] Similarly, investigations by RISE Moldova, a non-profit investigative organization focused on corruption, organized crime, and illicit financing, identified coordinated networks using Telegram, TikTok, and YouTube to spread narratives questioning the election's legitimacy and the impartiality of state institutions.[113]

The authorities responded with appropriate measures, several of which had limited impact. For example, the Security and Intelligence Service (SIS) blocked more than 35 websites for spreading false narratives, but many quickly re-emerged under new domains.[114] Fact-checking and media literacy efforts by several domestic NGOs helped to counter some false narratives, but their reach was limited, especially when compared to the scale of manipulative content.[115] With digital media companies based in the U.S. or elsewhere, and without a legal presence in Moldova, the AVC's

107 Global Media Registry and Media Guard, Media Ownership Monitor: Republic of Moldova.
108 Ziarul de Gardă, "Audiovisual Council Examined the Second Monitoring Report on Television Coverage of the Elections."
109 Meta Newsroom, "Taking Action Against Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior in Moldova."
110 TikTok Newsroom, "Protecting the Integrity of TikTok During the Parliamentary Elections in Moldova."
111 BBC News, "How Russian-Funded Fake News Network Aims to Disrupt European Election."
112 Promo-LEX Association, Monitoring of the 2025 Parliamentary Elections: Interim Report.
113 BBC News, "How Russian-Funded Fake News Network Aims to Disrupt European Election."
114 European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO), 2025 Parliamentary Elections: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions.
115 EU vs Disinfo, "Disinformation & Elections in Moldova."

ELECTION DAY

jurisdiction over online content was limited, leaving the digital space largely unregulated.
Election day was peaceful, orderly, and professionally managed. Twelve teams observed 99 polling stations across the country, while four additional teams monitored 26 stations in Italy, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Observers reported that polling stations opened on time, at 7:00 a.m., followed established procedures, and operated in a calm atmosphere with broad participation from political party representatives and citizen observers.

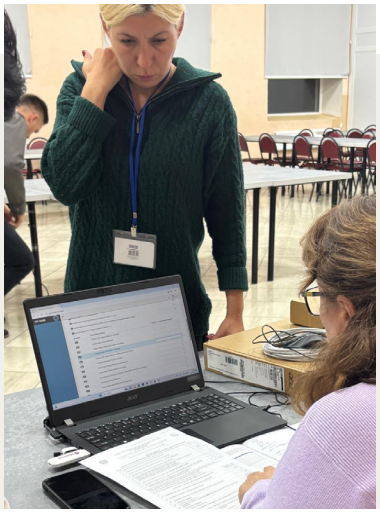
Polling stations were prepared and equipped with essential materials. Ballot boxes were sealed and placed in public view, and polling staff were adequately trained and applied procedures consistently and courteously. Poll staff followed voter identification protocols , and polling station layouts preserved ballot secrecy. Voters had free access to polling sites, though observers noted that 45 percent of the stations they monitored were accessible for people with reduced mobility. Police presence was visible but generally unobtrusive, though a few stations opened without on-site security.

Citizen observers were present in 95 percent of polling stations, and international observers in 18 percent, reflecting strong oversight. Representatives from major political parties including PAS, Patriotic Bloc, Alternativa, and Our Party, were observed at nearly all in-country polling stations. The voting process was calm and transparent, reinforcing public confidence in the electoral process.

The SAISE electronic monitoring system functioned effectively, enabling realtime data transmission and voter tracking.[116] Cybersecurity protocols were in place, and the CEC's monitoring center operated continuously throughout the day. Minor technical delays were reported at a few diaspora polling stations, but they were promptly resolved and did not affect the integrity of the vote.[117]

Polling stations closed on schedule at 9:00 p.m., and counting procedures were conducted transparently in full view of observers and party agents. Tabulation was assessed as accurate and credible. A procedural complication arose involving the Moldova Mare (Greater Moldova) party, which remained under judicial appeal on election day.

Voting proceeds calmly and securely at polling station no. 2/3 in Balti, where a soldier casts a ballot under the supervision of trained election officials.



Members of the precinct electoral bureau for polling station no. 2/9 and party-representative observers look on as the SAISE operator transmits the final protocol to the Central Election Commission, ensuring transparency and accuracy in the tabulation process.

116 The SAISE was used to verify a person's record and to record in the system that they had voted, offering a protection against multiple voting with the same identity.
117 CEC Final Protocol, 2025.

Since ballots had already been printed, the party's name appeared on ballots both in Moldova and abroad. After the appeal was rejected during the voting on election day, PEB chairs were instructed to invalidate those ballots cast for the party during counting. This instruction was applied consistently and without incident. The CEC later confirmed that all votes for Moldova Mare were excluded from the final results.[118] The issue did not affect the overall outcome, it highlighted the need for improved coordination between judicial and electoral authorities to avoid confusion on election day.

The mission observed diaspora voting in 26 polling stations across Italy, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Voting abroad was conducted in a calm and orderly manner, with procedures largely respected. However, several bomb threats were reported in five countries.[119]

According to the CEC, 281,224 people voted abroad, constituting 17.47 percent of all votes cast. Observers noted high engagement in several Western European cities. Transparency was maintained, with party agents and citizen observers present at all observed stations.

Twelve special polling stations were established in Varnița, Rezina, Florești, and Criuleni, Moldova, to serve approximately 277,094 registered voters from Transnistria. Ballots cast from these polling stations totaled 12,274, consistent with 2021 levels. IRI observers reported peaceful, orderly voting, though they also noted long lines and limited space at several sites. There were no verified incidents of intimidation or organized transportation of voters. Isolated online information manipulation campaigns targeting Transnistrian voters were documented but appeared to have minimal impact.

IRI observers encountered no serious irregularities or critical incidents. Minor issues included ballot shortages and occasional crowding, but neither compromised the voting process. Domestic observers reported isolated cases of family voting (three percent of stations) and campaign materials near polling sites, though these were deemed non-systemic and without material impact.[120]

Overall, the mission found that election day processes were conducted efficiently, transparently, and in a peaceful environment. While challenges such as limited disability acces, uneven diaspora logistics, and procedural uncertainty surrounding Moldova Mare's deregistration arose, none of them undermined the overall integrity of the process. The elections met key international standards for transparency, inclusiveness, and freedom of choice, reinforcing public trust in Moldova's electoral institutions.

However, the mission noted a potential vulnerability in the SAISE system: identity verification relied solely on text-based data, which could be exploited by fake documents containing real personal information. This highlights the need to further strengthen digital safeguards to prevent instances of multiple voting.

118 Ibid.
119 Radio Moldova, "Bomb Threats Reported in Belgium, Italy, Romania, USA and Spain."
120 Promo-LEX Report No. 4, 2025.

RESULTS ANALYSIS

The elections resulted in a more pluralistic legislature than in 2021, with three parties and two electoral blocs securing seats. According to the results published by the CEC, voter turnout reached 52.24 percent, representing 1,609,579 voters, an increase of approximately eight percentage points compared to the 2021 elections.[121]

The final seat allocation was confirmed by the Constitutional Court's validation decision on October 16th. Five political formations crossed the electoral threshold and gained parliamentary representation: PAS, Patriotic Bloc, Alternativa Bloc, Our Party, and the Democracy at Home Party. PAS secured a simple majority with 792,557 votes (50.2 percent) and 55 seats, retaining the ability to form a government independently. The Patriotic Bloc followed with 381,984 votes (24.2 percent) and 26 seats, becoming the principal opposition. The Alternativa Bloc won 125,706 votes (8 percent) and 8 seats, while Our Party and Democracy at Home each obtained 6 seats, with 6.2 percent and 5.6

The resulting composition reflects a pro-European majority facing a fragmented opposition. Although PAS experienced a modest reduction in seats compared to 2021, opposition votes fragmented among the other four groupings, which limits any single bloc's ability to mount a unified challenge. This is only the third time that five political groups have sat in Parliament since independence (previously in 2009 and 2014), a pattern historically associated with shorter parliamentary cycles.

While most results aligned with pre-election polling predictions, the Democracy at Home Party's (PPDA) performance was a notable exception. PPDA polled at just two percent in pre-election surveys but ultimately secured 5.6 percent of the vote. Four independent candidates also ran, but failed to meet the two percent threshold required for a seat in Parliament; together the four won 1.47 percent of valid votes.[123] While the legal threshold for independents is lower than that for parties and blocs, no independent candidate has yet succeeded in entering Parliament since the provision was introduced.

Geographic voting patterns remained consistent with previous cycles. PAS increased its support among Transnistrian voters while maintaining moderate levels across other regions. The Patriotic Bloc consolidated its dominance in Gagauzia and Taraclia, where it received over 80 percent of the vote. These results reflect Moldova's enduring regional divides, with pro-European and pro-Russian preferences aligning along north-central and southern geographic lines.

The diaspora participation played a significant role in shaping the national outcome. Turnout among Moldovans abroad rose by more than 30 percent as compared to 2021, with particularly high participation in Italy, France, and the United Kingdom, where PAS maintained strong support.[124] In contrast, turnout in the Russian Federation fell by approximately 33 percent, to just over 4,000 voters. This may be attributed, in part, to fewer polling stations, whose numbers feel free 17 to two due because of security concerns. Of the 2,606 voters registered for postal voting, 2,057 ballots were received, an 83 percent return rate.[125] These figures underscore the importance of accessible polling options abroad and the growing relevance of secure postal voting mechanisms.

123 CEC, Rezultatele alegerilor parlamentare 2025: Candidați independenți.
124 CEC, Raport privind votarea în diaspora și prin corespondență, Capitolul 13.3.
125 CEC, Protocol Ch. 13.3 (Diaspora and Postal Voting Data).

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The resolution of electoral disputes reflected Moldova's formal commitment to legality and procedural transparency, while also exposing persistent coordination gaps between electoral and judicial institutions. Between July 14 and October 5, the CEC registered 103 petitions and 98 complaints or referrals.126 Sixteen complaints were filed on election day, primarily concerning polling operations, and six were submitted afterward.[127] Separately, the General Police Inspectorate reported 263 election day incidents.[128]

While most complaints were adjudicated efficiently and within statutory deadlines by the CEC, the Chisinau Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court of Justice, high-profile deregistration cases—particularly those involving Heart of Moldova (PRIM) and Moldova Mare (Greater Moldova)—highlighted systemic vulnerabilities in the sequencing and communication of decisions. These cases had implications for candidate eligibility and voter clarity on election day.

Heart of Moldova (PRIM)

On September 17, the CEC adopted Resolution No. 3993/2025 following a complaint against PRIM's party president, Irina Vlah. The CEC cited concerns over potential illegal financing and the provision of material benefits to the party, concluding that such practices posed risks to political pluralism and democratic integrity. The CEC issued a warning to the Patriotic Bloc, of which PRIM was a component, for violating campaign finance laws. The CEC referred the case to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) for further action under Article 21 of the Law on Political Parties.

On September 19, the MoJ filed a lawsuit seeking to limit PRIM's activities. On September 25, three days before the election, the Chisinau Court of Appeal barred the party from participating in any electoral process. As a result of that ruling, the CEC annulled the registration of PRIM's candidates within the Patriotic Bloc. While the decision was legally grounded, the IRI mission noted that its timing and limited public outreach created confusion.[129]

Moldova Mare (Greater Moldova)

The deregistration of Moldova Mare (PMM) underscored the tension between judicial timing and electoral administration. On September 26, the CEC voted to deregister PMM, citing foreign financing, incomplete financial disclosures, and links to sanctioned individuals.[130] PMM appealed the decision on September 27, but the Court of Appeal did not rule before polls opened on September 28.[131] As a result, PMM remained on the ballot.

IRI observers saw voters casting ballots for PMM on election day. Once PMM's appeal was rejected, during the counting process, PEB chairs were instructed to classify PMM votes as invalid. This instruction was applied consistently and without incident. The CEC later formally annulled all votes cast for the party.[132]

126 CEC Final Protocol, 2025.
127 Post-election complaints were submitted by the independent candidate Olesea Stamate (2 complaints) and the political party Partidul Politic „Democrația Acasă" (4 complaints), concerning the actions and financing of other electoral competitors.
128 CEC Final Protocol, 2025.
129 Ibid.
130 CEC, "CEC Annuls Moldova Mare Party from Elections."
131 Moldpres, "Court of Appeal Rejects Moldova Mare Appeal."
132 Moldova1.md, "CEC: All Votes for Moldova Mare Party Declared Invalid."

Although the situation did not materially affect the election outcome, it highlighted the need for improved coordination between judicial and electoral bodies to avoid overlapping timelines and voter confusion.

The CEC met statutory deadlines in nearly all complaints, and its decisions were upheld by the courts in most instances. The IRI mission commends the CEC for promptly publishing decisions and maintaining an online archive of rulings. However, observers noted that the public had limited access to underlying evidence and legal reasoning. A pre-election amendment allowing the CEC to conduct admissibility checks and reject complaints without examining their merits appeared to function as intended, streamlining the process. However, the number of cases dismissed under this provision was not publicly reported.[133]

133 Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, art. 93.

DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2025 parliamentary elections marked significant progress in Moldova's electoral integrity, transparency, and inclusivity. Despite persistent challenges in matters such as legal instability, media regulation, campaign finance, and logistical barriers, the September 2025 elections reflect Moldova's democratic resilience. Implementing the recommendations below will further strengthen the country's electoral framework, enhance transparency, and build public trust in Moldova's institutions. In support of Moldova's democratic progress, IRI offers the following recommendations to improve future elections:

Legal Framework

- To encourage broad participation while maintaining the integrity of the electoral system, Parliament might consider removing the option for independent candidates to stand in the national closed-list proportional representation system. Instead, lowering the minimum number of candidates required on a party list to ten could incentivize smaller and emerging parties to participate.
- The practice of reallocating vacant seats from winning lists to other parties, once alternates are exhausted, distorts the voters' will. In such cases, party leadership be permitted to designate other qualified alternates, as necessary.

Complaints and Appeals

- To ensure transparency over the dispute resolution process, the CEC should publish the number and summary details of the decisions ruled ex officio as inadmissible under Article 93.
- To improve legal redress mechanisms' effectiveness, reforms should be introduced for faster appellate review, greater transparency, and early communication of disqualification decisions before election day. While the complaints and appeals system provide effective remedies, these enhancements would strengthen its responsiveness.

Media Environment

- To reduce ambiguity and legal uncertainty for media outlets, Parliament should consider amending the law on the AVC of Moldova to clarify definitions that risk arbitrary application.
- To promote responsible online engagement during elections, the CEC and AVC should develop a voluntary Code of Conduct for social media platforms to endorse, coordinate an information-sharing forum, and encourage alignment of platform policies with national norms and priorities.
- To address persistent gaps in media monitoring and message coordination across public institutions, a sustained, year-round civic education strategy should be developed beyond the electoral calendar. This initiative should also aim to build resilience among the electorate against false narratives and hybrid campaigns, serving as a continuous investment that gains credibility and public acceptance over time, rather than a short-term intervention tied to elections.

- To broaden the campaign environment while maintaining equity, the CEC should revise current campaign regulations to enable greater flexibility in voter engagement. These measures would preserve the transparency and fairness of the existing framework while ensuring contestants can engage voters more actively and under more open conditions. Authorities should also shorten the five-day advance notice period for small gatherings, streamline financial and reporting for low-value campaign activities, and expand the range of public spaces where campaign events may be held.

Campaign Finance

- The CEC should streamline reporting procedures and provide clear instructions and guidelines on cost estimation issues, including the valuation of volunteer contributions, to streamline campaign finance requirements

Election Administration

- The CEC should create a ballot reserve for emergency resupply in case of shortages or damage. Ballots are printed with unique codes linking them to specific polling stations, a strong security measure, but this creates a risk that voters may be unable to vote if they cannot access their specific ballots. Allocating an emergency reserve to DECs, to be used only under strict protocols, would address this vulnerability.
- To strengthen safeguards against multiple voting, the SAISE protocols should be upgraded to include visual verification. This can be done by displaying the registrant's recorded photo, or alternatively, indelible ink should be used at polling stations. While the current system prevents multiple voting with the same identity, it remains susceptible to fraudulent identities.
- To boost participation from abroad, mail-in voting should be expanded for diaspora voters. Additional resources should be allocated to this process to increase awareness and engagement around postal voting.
- To promote inclusive participation while balancing security concerns, efforts should continue to identify and implement mechanisms that enable voters residing in Transnistria to take part in Moldova's elections and be meaningfully represented. These approaches should safeguard against potential foreign manipulation or interference while reinforcing the principle of political participation.
- To reduce the volume of ballots produced, the CEC should explore whether a revised ballot design could accommodate multiple languages on a single ballot, rather than producing separate ballots for each language.
- To strengthen confidence in future registration cycles, improvements are needed in the standardization of verification procedures, transparency in the publication of decisions, and clarity in CEC communications.
- A review of the relevant legal provisions should be undertaken to ensure appeals processes are fully exhausted prior to election day.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IRI expresses gratitude to The Hon. Frank LaRose, Moldovan authorities, the Central Election Commission, civil society organizations, political parties, media, and international partners for their cooperation and support. The mission was made possible with support from the National Endowment for Democracy and in partnership with the Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation.

INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE

IRI.org
@IRIglobal
P: (202) 408-9450
E: info@iri.org