



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

Elections in Moldova

2021 Parliamentary Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Europe and Eurasia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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When is Election Day?

On April 28, 2021, the President of Moldova, Maia Sandu, called for early parliamentary elections to take place on Sunday, July 11, 2021.¹ Voting will be held from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. at 2,150 polling stations, including 150 abroad and 42 special polling stations on the left bank of the Nistru River in the breakaway Transnistria region.

Why are these elections important?

The July 11 parliamentary elections will provide Moldovans the opportunity to determine the makeup of Parliament nearly 2 1/2 years after the last national legislative elections and eight months after the election of President Maia Sandu, in November 2020. The election represents a referendum of sorts on Sandu's governing agenda and whether she will have parliamentary support to see it through. Although President Sandu prevailed in the November election on a platform that supported closer ties with Europe, since her election the members of former President Igor Dodon's Socialist Party have blocked President Sandu's² key political appointments of two prime ministers, which has stunted her ability to advance key reforms and other political objectives.

The decision by Moldova's Supreme Court to end the State of Emergency that was enacted to stop the spread of COVID-19,³ and President Sandu's subsequent move on April 28 to dissolve Parliament,⁴ now offers an opportunity for Sandu to consolidate power and advance her agenda more actively. An electoral victory by the Socialist Party faction, however, would cast doubt on the feasibility of Sandu achieving her agenda and again lead to a split government and the prospects for ongoing political gridlock.

What is the electoral system?

Members of the Moldovan Parliament are elected to four-year terms by a universal, direct and secret vote. Elections are conducted from a single national electoral district with 101 elected deputies.⁵ Moldova uses a proportional representative system wherein parties, electoral blocs and individual candidates are assigned seats proportionally based on the number of votes received from the country-wide electoral bloc. To earn seats in Parliament, minimum percentage thresholds must be met (5 percent for a party, 7 percent for an electoral bloc and 2 percent for individual candidates, respectively.)⁶ Since the last parliamentary election, the legal framework has received significant amendments, including reverting to a proportional electoral system, lowering the electoral threshold for parties and blocs and bolstering the 40 percent gender quota with an additional placement requirement on party lists.⁷

¹ <https://www.rferl.org/a/moldova-president-calls-snap-elections/31228258.html>

² Moldova's President Maia Sandu calls early election for July 11, *Al-Jazeera*, April 28, 2021.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ [Moldova's president calls early election for July 11 - ABC News \(go.com\)](#)

⁵ Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, Article 79, Parliamentary Elections.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Article 94, Setting Representation Threshold

⁷ OSCE Moldova Early Parliamentary Elections Interim Report, June 22, 2021.

Who is eligible to run as a candidate?

According to the Electoral Code, to be eligible to run for a seat in Parliament candidates must be 18 years of age by Election Day and be Moldovan citizens.⁸ Citizens who are not eligible to run for Parliament include active military personnel, prisoners currently serving sentences and any individual prevented from holding public office via court ruling.⁹

Candidates can be nominated by political parties, socio-political organizations and electoral blocs that are registered with the Central Electoral Commission for the parliamentary elections. Candidates can be nominated starting 60 days before the date of elections (in this case, May 12, 2021) and ending 30 days before Election Day (June 11).¹⁰ Moldovan citizens can also nominate themselves as independent candidates.¹¹ Approximately 1,739 candidates are competing in the 2021 parliamentary elections, 46 percent of whom are women.

Who can vote in these elections, and how many registered voters are there?

Voter registration in Moldova is captured in the State Registry of Voters (SRV) and is updated through an ongoing process based on data extracted from the State Population Register. All Moldovan citizens who reach 18 years of age and have no statutory prohibitions against voting are included in the State Population Register, which feeds into the SRV.¹²

As of June 1, 2021, there were 3,282,288 registered voters, including some 258,600 voters residing in localities on the left bank of the Nistru river in the breakaway region of Transnistria.¹³

What are the campaign expenditure and donation limits?

In 2021, political parties have an expenditure limit of 21 million Moldovan leu (MDL) (approximately \$1,159,650 USD), which can come from annual public funding, and individual candidates have a spending limit of MDL 110,000 (\$6,074 USD).¹⁴ Moldova's Electoral Code limits the maximum amount that individuals, legal entities and citizens abroad can donate to election campaigns, with specific instructions on how to declare such donations. In 2021, individuals may donate up to the amount of six monthly average salaries (totaling MDL 52,300) (approximately \$2,888 USD), and Moldavans with foreign income can donate up to MDL 26,150 (approximately \$1,444 USD).¹⁵ In each instance, half the total amount can be provided in cash.¹⁶ Moldovan civil servants can donate up to 10 percent of their annual salary, or MDL

⁸ Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, Article 82, Setting the Date of Elections.

⁹ OSCE Moldova Early Parliamentary Elections Interim Report, June 22, 2021.

¹⁰ Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, Article 46, Nomination of Candidates.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Article 47, Collecting Signatures in Support of an independent candidate and for initiating a Referendum.

¹² *Ibid.*, Article 42, State Registry of Voters.

¹³ OSCE Moldova Early Parliamentary Elections Interim Report, June 22, 2021.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

52,300, whichever is less.¹⁷ Candidates are not allowed to receive donations from foreigners, civil society organizations, religious institutions, anonymous donors and labor unions.¹⁸ The Central Election Commission maintains various means of confirming compliance with donation and expenditure requirements and has overall campaign finance oversight.¹⁹

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

In Moldova, the Central Election Commission (CEC) is the highest-level election management body, followed by district electoral councils (DECs) and precinct electoral bureaus (PEBs).²⁰ The CEC is composed of nine individuals, one appointed by the president and the others by Parliament, proportionally represented by the strength of the majority and opposition factions. These individuals serve a five-year mandate.²¹ In addition to the nine-member CEC, there are 37 DECs and 2,150 PEBs, including 44 special polling stations on the left bank of the Nistru River (Transnistria) and 150 additional locations in 38 countries outside of Moldova.²²

According to the Electoral Code of Moldova, the CEC has a range of important electoral responsibilities and powers. These include:

- Studying the procedure for organizing and holding elections with the goal of improving the election legislation and procedures, and submitting proposals to the government and Parliament concerning the appropriateness of operating amendments to election legislation;
- Developing regulations and guidelines to improve election procedures;
- Ensuring the compilation and verification of voter lists;
- Offering election-related information on debates to the media and the public;
- Establishing contacts with political parties and with other sociopolitical and nongovernmental organizations entitled to nominate candidates for public positions, facilitating their full participation in the election process;
- Advising public associations interested in conducting civic education campaigns during the run-up to the elections; and
- Analyzing election fraud, including allegations related to past, current or future elections and taking preventive anti-fraud measures.

The Central Election Commission also maintains its own Center for Continuous Electoral Training (CICDE), which helps train officials in advance of major electoral events. In advance of the early parliamentary elections, the CICDE has conducted extensive online and in-person trainings for DECs and started training PEB members in mid-June. These training materials covered Election Day operations and responsibilities, as well as detailed COVID-related

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, Article 41, Terms and Conditions of Financial Support for Electoral Campaigns.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Article 14, System of Electoral Bodies.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Article 17, Central Election Commission Composition and Term Office.

²² OSCE Moldova Early Parliamentary Elections Interim Report, June 22, 2021.

precautions for election management body staff and voters.²³ Training materials were prepared in the state language, Romanian, and Russian. The CICDE also is responsible for conducting voter education in advance of the elections and launched a campaign that addressed issues such as voter accessibility and vote buying. The campaign was conducted in both Romanian and Russian.²⁴

How is the election management body protecting the elections and voters from COVID-19?

Moldova recently reduced its overall infection rate to 6,332 cumulative cases per 100,000 people,²⁵ and as of June 13, 2021, over half a million vaccines had been administered in Moldova.²⁶ During the campaign, authorities established maximum capacity limits for people attending indoor events and restrictions for canvassers. The Ministry of Health has also made the following requirements for voters and election officials for Election Day²⁷:

- A minimum of one meter of physical distance between people;
- Masks are required in all closed public spaces, public transport, and in outdoor situations where it is impossible to observe proper physical distancing;
- Mandatory temperature checks of all election officials and staff;
- Election officials must wear proper protective equipment, which will include masks and gloves; and
- Polling stations will be disinfected at least three times every day and supplied with hand disinfectant for voters.

What is the election management body doing to strengthen its technology and procedures to resist vulnerabilities and counter malign interference?

Moldova, a former constituent republic of the Soviet Union, has significant cultural and economic ties to Russia. Given the presence of a sizeable ethnic Russian minority population in the country, Moldova has a complicated relationship with Russia and the European Union (EU). According to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Russia is eyeing the Moldovan parliamentary elections with great interest, considering its ongoing conflict with Moldova's neighbor Ukraine and its troop presence in the breakaway Transnistria region of Moldova.²⁸ Security experts are also examining Moldova's cybersecurity resilience after a major cybercrime operation revealed an extensive network of criminals operating out of Moldova.²⁹

²³ Details available at: <https://cicde.md/index.php?l=ro>

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ World Health Organization, Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Weekly Update, June 8.

²⁶ World Health Organization, Coronavirus Dashboard.

²⁷ National Commission on Public Health ([Decision no. 56 of June 3, 2021](#))

²⁸ "Inventing Crisis in Moldova: All Geopolitics is Local," Philip Remler, May 17, 2021.

²⁹ "Moldova's Cyber Crime Defences Questioned After DarkNet Sting," BIRN, Madalin Necsutu, January 13, 2021.

What provisions are in place that support the equal rights of women, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups?

The most populous ethnic minorities in Moldova include Ukrainians (6.6 percent), Gagauz (4.6 percent), Russians (4.1 percent), Bulgarians (1.9 percent) and Roma (0.3 percent).³⁰ The Central Election Commission has translated its print voter education campaign materials into Russian, which is spoken extensively by many ethnic minority groups.³¹ National minority candidates are present in some parties, such as those with heavy representation in the Autonomous Unit of Gagauzia.³²

All voters in Moldova must cast their ballots in person, although Moldova's electoral code offers voters with disabilities who cannot physically come to designated polling locations the opportunity to request a vote via a mobile ballot box.³³

Candidate lists for parliamentary elections must have a minimum representation of 40 percent for both genders.³⁴

Is electoral observation allowed?

Yes. The elections will be observed by approximately 875 national and 161 international observers. This includes observers representing candidates and political parties as well as domestic nonpartisan election monitoring groups. Election observers are allowed both in polling stations inside Moldova and those set up outside of the country at Moldovan diplomatic missions.

The Central Election Commission (CEC) and its 37 district electoral councils (DECs) grant accreditation to political party observers, other authorized representatives of candidates and domestic or citizen observers to monitor the election process. The observers accredited by the CEC have the right to carry out their duties at all polling stations across the country and abroad, while those who receive accreditation from DECs can observe only on the territory of their accredited district.

Journalists are afforded equal rights with national domestic observers in that they are allowed to observe all aspects of the pre-election and Election Day process. Accredited observers are allowed to attend CEC sessions and other formal meetings of election bodies at all three levels of election administration and must strictly observe regulations including noninterference in the meetings or actions of election management bodies.

Accredited observers can attend any electoral procedures and meetings of electoral bodies, including on Election Day, without interfering with the voting process or other election

³⁰ OSCE Moldova Early Parliamentary Elections Interim Report, June 22, 2021.

³¹ Moldova Central Election Commission, <https://a.cec.md/ru>

³² OSCE Moldova Early Parliamentary Elections Interim Report, June 22, 2021.

³³ Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, Article 58, Voting.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Article 46, Nomination of Candidates.

procedures. Observers have access to key documents on Election Day including lists of voters and final protocols compiled by the precinct electoral bureaus (PEBs) at the end of the day.

National election monitors are also able to formally submit complaints in case they observe irregularities in the voting or administrative process at the PEBs and DECs. The respective chairs of these commissions will consider the complaints and inform the complainant of the decision.

When will official results be announced?

The official results of the July 11 elections will be known once all votes cast have been officially tabulated by the Central Election Commission. According to the Moldovan Electoral Code, within 24 hours of election results tabulation, the Central Election Commission must submit the lists of elected members of Parliament to the Constitutional Court. Further, “[w]ithin five days following the receipt of documents from the Central Electoral Commission, but not before the Courts have made final decisions on complaints submitted according to the legal procedures, the Constitutional Court shall confirm or invalidate, through an opinion, the legality of elections.”³⁵

³⁵ Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, Article 97, Confirmation of Results and Mandate Validation by the Constitutional Court.

Resources

- [Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova](#)
- [OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Interim Report – Moldova Early Parliamentary Elections](#)
- [Weekly epidemiological update on COVID-19 8 June 2021 – World Health Organization](#)
- [Central Election Commission of the Republic of Moldova](#)

About IFES in Moldova

While the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) does not currently have project activities in Moldova, it worked in the country for two decades beginning in the mid-1990s, supporting the development of professional election administration and a level electoral playing field. More recently, IFES has engaged with the Moldovan Central Election Commission through its programs in Ukraine and the Regional Europe Office to exchange regional experiences and discuss international best practices.

Disclosure

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Central Election Commission as of July 6, 2021, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.