



**European Platform for Democratic Elections**  
**Expert assessment**  
**Parliamentary Elections in Moldova on 30 November 2014**

**Introduction**

On 27 November 2014, EPDE began its experts' mission for the parliamentary election that took place in Moldova on 30 November 2014. The mission was composed of 17 EPDE representatives – members of citizens' election observation organizations from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Germany, Lithuania, Russia, and Ukraine – who observed the election day proceedings in approximately 100 polling stations in Chisinau and other regions of the country. Furthermore, EPDE conducted several meetings with representatives of the Central Election Commission, political stakeholders, and representatives of the civil society. Due to the limited observation period, this statement mainly focuses on some aspects of the election campaign, electoral legislation, and election day procedures and their implementations.

**Summary**

The parliamentary election in Moldova took place in a competitive environment, with 19 parties, 1 electoral block and 4 independent candidates registered at the CEC. A scandal concerning cancelation of electoral registration of one of the parties with relatively high voter support overshadowed the final days of the campaign. There was an overall lack of trust in the public opinion surveys – there were no exit polls conducted. The voting process on election day happened in a calm atmosphere, and established procedures were largely followed. Some irregularities were observed during the election day, however, they did not influence the election results. The recently introduced electronic State Voter Register and the system to electronically deliver the voting results from the PEC to the CEC were not fully operational in all observed polling stations. The criteria for establishing polling station abroad were not clear and contested by some of EPDE respondents.

Elections environment was competitive. Initially there were 21 political parties, 1 electoral block and 4 independent candidates registered at the CEC. There are relatively high minimal thresholds to obtain seats in Moldovan parliament: 2% for independent candidates, 6% for political parties and 9-11% for electoral blocks of 2 and 3 or more political parties respectively.

Although the campaign was overall calm, it was overshadowed by cancelation of the electoral registration of the “Patria” party for illegal donation from abroad. This situation was extensively covered by the media. Registration cancelation on the last day of the campaign of a political entity, which, according to sociological studies, had all the chances to be elected to the new Parliament of Moldova, raises concerns that a formal legal excuse in this case was used to achieve political results.

In general, Moldovan election law gives a sufficient legal framework to conduct democratic elections. However, concerning the formation of election administration, it tends to favor

parties represented in the parliament. For example, the law does not give a chance for independent candidates and parties that are not represented in the parliament to nominate members of the election commission.

Several EPDE respondents assessed control over the campaign expenditures of the election contestants as not sufficient. A large number of the election process participants did not publicize complete reports on election campaign financing. This does not allow to establish a clear picture of how all the candidates complied with the rules of financing.

In general, the campaign was active and visible. Open-air events sponsored by some of the electoral contestants took place in Chisinau in the last days of the election campaign. The state and private media largely covered those events. On election day, there were no exit polls published. All EPDE respondents reported overall lack of trust in the opinion surveys.

The recently introduced central electronic State Voter Register was not operational during the election day in all observed polling stations. This caused difficulties in the work of all the PECs and led to the de facto use of traditional forms of voter registration, criticized by national and international observers in the past. The PEC members reported long-lasting interruptions in the work of the system. Changes and updates to the voter lists were made on self-arranged, hand-written lists prepared by the PECs. CEC provided no clear instructions on how to proceed in case of disruption of the system's functioning.

The law provides detailed procedures of including voters in supplementary voter lists and offers sufficient safeguards against multiple voting. On election day, voters can be added to the supplementary list after they provide evidence of being registered within the territory of respective precinct, or present an absentee ballot, if they are students and voters voting with mobile ballot box and in special PEC, i.e. in hospitals.

There were 25 polling stations where voters from Transnistria could cast their vote. However, access restrictions to those polling stations were observed this time just as during the previous election campaigns.

The number of polling stations established abroad as well as the number of ballots issued for polling stations abroad were a matter of serious concern for several EPDE respondents. Crowds at the polling stations and protest rallies in the Russian Federation (Ramenskoe town), where only 5 polling stations had been established, were reported and largely covered by the Russian media.

In several cases, different PECs implemented procedures differently during the voting. This was obviously due to the insufficient preparation of the PEC members by the Center for Continuous Electoral Training. Filming and taking pictures were prohibited in many cases. Handling of protocols during the opening of the polling stations was carried out differently in various polling stations.

In the Soroka region, in polling stations with a large Roma population, voters entering polling stations received advice to vote for a particular party. There were persons controlling the "proper" voting and exercising pressure on voters in the vicinity of the polling stations.

Overall, there was high interest among the civil society groups in exercising civic control over the electoral process. There were civic observers present in all the visited polling stations.

## **Main Recommendations:**

1. To the parliament of Moldova
  - a) Allow independent candidates and parties that are not in parliament but participate in elections, to delegate their representatives to the commissions at all levels and participate in a lottery for the seats in election commissions.
  - b) Introduce amendments to the election law that would eliminate last minute changes in the list of candidates, and guarantee a voter sufficient time to form opinion about the electoral candidate.
  
2. To the CEC of Moldova:
  - a) Ensure effective work of the electronic system of the State Voter Register.
  - b) Enhance control over the campaign expenditures of electoral contestants; establish a special body under the CEC, which would monitor campaign financing effectively, using available international practices.

## **About EPDE**

On 12 December 2012, 13 civil society organisations supporting or conducting citizens' election observation in the states of the Eastern Partnership, the Russian Federation and the European Union launched the "European Platform for Democratic Elections" (EPDE) in Warsaw. The aim of the EPDE is to assist citizens' election observation in the countries of the Eastern Partnership and in the Russian Federation, and to contribute to democratic election processes throughout Europe.