



Moldova

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Population:	4,320,748 (July 2009 est.)
Prime minister:	Vladimir Filat (since September 2009)
President:	Acting President Mihai Ghimpu (since September 2009)
Governemental type:	Republic
Ruling coalition:	Alliance for European Integration
Last election:	Parliamentary July 29, 2009
Next election:	
Sister parties:	Democratic Party of Moldova



The last Parliamentary elections in Moldova were held on 29 July 2009. After the elections, the Alliance for European Integration consisting of four pro-Western parties, formed a governing coalition. Early Parliamentary elections might be necessary after the Communist Party in the opposition boycotted the Presidential vote in Parliament, which resulted in a failure to elect the next President. Read Moldova's country update for the latest developments.

INTRODUCTION

Moldova's relationship with the East, Ukraine and Russia, is predominantly shaped by the ongoing and persistent dispute over the region of Transdnister. This conflict started in the early 1990's and so far, despite the international diplomatic interference, no solution has been found. The relationship with the West is determined by the great influence of Romania on Moldovan politics, culture and society. Besides its difficult geo-political position, Moldova has some serious internal problems to deal with too. Poverty, the agricultural dominated economy and the problems with democracy are some of the problems that Moldova faces. Taken this all together, Moldova has, despite its ambitions, still a long way to go before closer ties with the European Union can be achieved.

ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL SITUATION

Electoral system

Moldova is a republic that elects directly the legislature, the Parliament and indirectly the head of state, the President. The Parliament ("Parlamentul") has 101 members, elected for a four-year term by proportional representation. To enter Parliament, the independent candidates must obtain 3% of the total number of the votes, the parties 6%, the electoral blocs (consisting of two parties) at least 9%, and the electoral blocs consisting of more than two parties 12%. According to the electoral law, the "lost votes" of the parties that did not pass the threshold are distributed proportionally among those who did.

The President (head of state) is elected by the Parliament. This was installed in 2000, when the Parliament voted to change the Constitution to strengthen the parliamentary republic. Three fifths of the MPs, or 61 deputies, must elect a President not later than 45 days after the first session. Otherwise, the Parliament dissolves itself and calls for early elections.

Parliamentary elections 2009



The first Parliamentary elections in 2009 were held on April 5th. The Communist party (PCRM) won a majority of the seats for the third consecutive time. The turnout was 59.49 per cent, exceeding the 50% necessary for the election to be valid. After the election violent protests broke out as the opposition claimed fraud had taken place and demanded new elections. Finally, the votes were recounted and the results were confirmed by the Constitutional Court. Before the election the EU called on Moldova to reform its electoral law, which foresees an electoral threshold of 6% and makes little allowance for alliances of smaller parties, so that smaller parties might also enter Parliament. President Vladimir Voronin rejected these calls.

The ruling PCRM failed to gain the 61 seats required to elect the President, leaving the opposition parties with the possibility of demanding new presidential elections. The ballot recount confirmed these results.

Parties and coalitions	Initial results	After recount	Seats
Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova	49.48	49.48	60
Liberal Party	13.14	13.13	14.85
Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova	12.43	12.43	15
Party Alliance Our Moldova	9.77	9.77	11
Social Democratic Party	3.70	3.70	–
Democratic Party of Moldova	2.97	2.97	–

Post-election violence

Following the announcement of preliminary election results – which gave the Communists the majority of the votes – the opposition rejected the results, accusing the authorities of falsification in the course of vote counting and demanded new elections. Youth activists organised demonstrations in front of the Parliament building in Chişinău on 6–7 April. On 7 April 2009 about 30.000 people gathered on the main Square in Chisinau. The demonstrations threatened to spin out of control and escalated into a riot on that same day. There are reports that the police provoked the demonstrators, even though the opposition and organizers of the demonstration urged them not to reply to these provocations. The government and opposition parties accused each other of sending provocateurs to incite the crowds, although the opposition strongly spoke out against violent demonstrations. President Voronin blamed Romania for masterminding an ‘attempted coup d’etat’ and declared the Romanian ambassador to Moldova a persona non grata in his country. He also recalled the Moldovan envoy from Bucharest, and said Romanians would in future need visas to enter. Romania denied any involvement, and called for a European inquiry into Moldova's "repression" of those who took part. Romanian and other foreign journalists were expelled or barred from entering the country.

The Constitutional Court decided that votes of the Parliamentary elections should be recounted within 9 days. The



Central Electoral Commission decided that ballot recount would take place simultaneously in all polling stations nationwide on 15 April. After the vote recount, valid votes were found among the invalid ballots. Nevertheless, their number was insufficient to change the distribution of parliamentary seats. On 21 April, the Central Electoral Commission submitted to the Constitutional Court its decision on totalising the results of the parliamentary elections after the vote recount. On 22 April, the Constitutional Court validated the 5 April elections, despite the requests by PL, PLDM AMN to invalidate the election results. The International Election Observation Mission, represented by delegations from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), and the European Parliament evaluated the elections as positive on the whole.

Presidential vote 2009

One of the first tasks of the newly elected Parliament was to elect a new President. President Vladimir Voronin was ineligible for another term, as he already served two terms, the maximum number allowed under the Constitution. A new President had to be elected before 7 July 2009 with a three-fifths majority (61 of 101 votes), otherwise new elections would be held. The Presidential poll held on 20 May failed as all members of the opposition boycotted the voting session due to which there were not enough MPs to elect a new President. As a result, the candidate of the ruling PCRM Zinaida Grechanaya received 60 votes, 1 vote short to be elected President. The PCRM faction tried to come to terms with the opposition to avoid the dissolution of the Parliament. The authorities initiated negotiations with the opposition and offered to the opposition the posts of the vice-speaker and the chairpersons of four out of ten parliamentary committees. However, this did not satisfy the opposition and on 3 June, for the second time, the Parliament failed to elect a new President, as the opposition MPs again boycotted the vote. According to the Constitution, Voronin had to dissolve the assembly and call for new general elections. On 16 June, the Parliament was officially dissolved and elections were announced.

Marian Lupu was speaker of the Moldovan Parliament for the ruling PCRM until May 2009. He left the PCRM after the April elections, saying he was no longer prepared to play their 'dirty games'. After a brief yet hard-fought struggle over him amongst the democratic opposition, he eventually chose the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) as his new home, because "it's the only party that demonstrated political maturity and transparency and is ready for a generation change", said Lupu. Lupu was named the new leader of the PDM and is now the only registered Presidential candidate in Moldova.

Early Parliamentary elections 2009

On 29 July early Parliamentary elections took place in Moldova. The results represent a stark change from the April elections, as the PDM now cleared the threshold gaining 12.5%. The ruling PCRM, on the other hand, failed to gain a majority and the pro-Western democratic opposition parties gained the most votes.

Party	%	Mandates
Communist party	44.69	48
Liberal Democratic Party	16.7	18
Liberal Party	14.68	15
Democratic Party	12.54	13
Moldova Nostra Alliance	7.35	7

The victory of PDM must be attributed to its new leader, Marian Lupu. As one of the most popular politicians in the country, Lupu took a great number of Communist voters with him when he left. He was said to account for as many as 15% of the Communist vote.

On 8 August 2009 four parties who entered Parliament signed a coalition pact creating the "Alliance for European Integration" (AEI). The newly formed coalition consisting of the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM), the



Liberal Party (PL), the Democratic Party (PDM) and the “Moldova Nostra Alliance” (AMN), will among other things, focus on economic reforms. The coalition also wants to push for rapprochement with the European Union and guarantee the protection of human rights and freedom of press. With the pro-western government, Moldova leaves behind a Communist regime that lasted for eight years. The four parties obtained in the July elections a combined number of 53 seats in the 101-seat Assembly. The coalition thus may elect a speaker and a Prime Minister with 51 votes, but not a successor to President Vladimir Voronin, for which at least 61 votes are needed.

Parliament fails to elect a President

The coalition needed to convince at least eight Communists parliamentarians out of 48 to vote for their choice of President. The next stage, according to AEI, was to establish a dialogue with the PCRM, in an attempt to gather enough votes to elect the new President. Therefore, AEI officially invited the PCRM to a dialogue on the 21st of August. The PCRM, however, rejected the invitation. Instead, at a PCRM meeting on August 24th, the party decided to attempt to create a left-wing broad coalition of its own. Officials informed of plans to approach separate parties, and not the AEI as a whole. Furthermore, different sources stated that the party would be willing to support PDM leader Marian Lupu's candidacy for President in the context of the mentioned broad left-wing coalition, mainly including the Communist Party and the PDM. Mr Lupu commented by saying that he would not be involved in any 'haggling' with the Communists, since it would simply be an attempt to harm the AEI.

On 10 November the Moldovan Parliament held a scheduled Presidential vote. The only Presidential candidate, PDM leader Lupu, received all 53 votes from the Alliance for European Integration (AEI) MPs. The PCRM refused to provide the eight missing votes for a candidate that left its ranks before the elections and is considered a 'traitor' by many Communists. The Communists' reaction did not come unexpected, as on the previous day the Central Commission of the party obliged the Communist fraction not to vote for Lupu, and to boycott the entire voting procedure. Communist MPs consequently left the Parliament before the vote and did not participate.

On 7 December the second and final attempt to elect a President took place. The Parliament once again failed to do so. Lupu received the 53 votes of the AEI, but PCRM again rejected to participate in the vote. Leader of the Communist fraction, Maria Postoiko, said that the “ruling coalition AEI is performing an anti-social policy and is breaking the Constitution.”

Early Parliamentary elections?

According to legislation, the interim President –current speaker of Parliament Mihai Ghimpu– is obliged to dissolve the Parliament and announce early Parliamentary elections. At the same time, the Parliament can only be dissolved one year after the latest elections, i.e. after 16 June 2010. Baring in mind the election campaign, for which not less than 45 days are assigned, Parliamentary elections could only be held in the fall of 2010. In this case, the deadline for the dissolution of the Parliament and the designation of early elections are not stipulated by law.

At the same time, Ghimpu announced that “soon the President will be elected, disregard of the boycott by the Communists”. Ghimpu did, however, not elaborate on how the Parliament plans to overcome the political crisis. In the end of November, Ghimpu signed a decree on the creation of a constitutional reform commission. The commission will identify the shortcomings of the Constitution and formulate proposals for improving it. Among other things, it is aimed to modify the procedure for electing the head of state. PCRM leader Voronin, on the other hand, is hoping that early elections in the fall of next year would undermine the AEI's governance and boost his chances of a return to power.

IMPORTANT POLITICAL ISSUES

Transdniester conflict

The most prominent and urgent domestic issue is the conflict over the separatist pro-Russian Transdniester region. The region is situated in the East of Moldova, between the Nistru river and Ukraine. Unlike the Gagauz community, who settled the problem in 1994 by accepting an autonomous status, no solution has been found for this conflict so far. After a cease-fire in 1992, Russian troops, who supported the breakaway republic, started to withdraw. However, as of 2006 Russian troops are still stationed there and are not planning to leave. The Russians claim that they are peacekeepers or forces guarding the Russian arsenal in the region.



The three mediators in the conflict – Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE – worked out a plan for federalisation in January 2004. Parties on both sides criticised the plan. On the one hand it is seen as a minor variation to the earlier rejected "Kozak Memorandum" proposed by Russia, which does not recognize the "anti-constitutional rebellion", the role of the "mafia" and "Russia's geopolitical objectives". The separatists on the other hand, underline that the new plan does not grant Transdniestria the status of a state entity, since it makes no mention of separate state symbols for Transdniestria or of the status of the Russian language. Moldova sees an important role for peace-keepers of the OSCE in the region, while the separatists only want Russian forces. The Transdniestria republic is governed by traditional hard-line communists under the leadership of Igor Smirnov. The Transdniestria authorities are not recognised by any state and are subject to sanctions such as travel bans.

A political declaration of the OSCE calling, a.o. for the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Moldova, was proposed at the OSCE yearly summit in Bulgaria in December 2004. However, it was vetoed by Russia.

The EU decided to play a more active role in the settlement of the conflict. It will have a permanent representation in Moldova. The Special Representative of the EU in Moldova will operate under security coordinator Javier Solana. He was appointed soon after the 6 March elections of 2005. The Dutch former diplomat Adriaan Jacobovits will be the first one to fulfil this post.

On 30 of November 2003 about 50.000 people demonstrated in the streets of Chisinau, calling for a European solution to the countries problems instead of Russian involvement. The European Union has a high stake in the conflict since Transdniestria is a haven for corruption, smuggling and arms trade. According to the International Action Network on Small Arms, terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah and al-Fatah buy weapons in Transdniestria – which is denied by the Transdniestria authorities and proof is lacking.

On 17 September 2006, the Transdniestria authorities organised a referendum on the issue of independence for the region. The question was whether the region should follow a path towards independence and possible integration with Russia, or abandon its quest for independence and integrate with Moldova. According to Pyotr Denisenko, the head of Transdniestria's Central Election Commission, 97.1 percent of the Transdniestria voters voted in favour of independence, with an additional 95 percent saying no to reunification with Moldova. Moldova and Western countries have said not to recognise the referendum and have called for renewed negotiations with Moldova.

Poverty

Official figures show that Moldova recorded a GDP growth of 4,6% (est.) in 2006. However, the economic growth does not contribute to improvement of living standards. Moldova continues to be the poorest country in Europe, ranked between Mongolia and Honduras on the Human Development Index 2006 of the United Nations. According to the CIA World Fact Book an estimated 29,5% (2005 est.) of the population lives below the poverty line.

The economy depends heavily on agriculture (fruits, vegetables, wine, and tobacco). Moldova must import all of its supplies of oil, coal, and natural gas, largely from Russia. Energy shortages contributed to sharp production declines after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Moldova is highly dependent on loans from the international institutions like the IMF and the World Bank and fails to meet payments in foreign debt. Most of the economic growth of Moldova is based on consumption fuelled by remittances received from Moldavians working abroad.

The poverty leads to illegal practices such as women trafficking and human organ trade. In addition, many Moldavians emigrate to search for a better future elsewhere or try to obtain Romanian or Russian citizenship. It is estimated one million Moldavians – or half of the country's workforce and potential voters – has left Moldova over the years.

Politicians often point at the failure to solve the Transdniestria conflict as the main source for economic backwardness. However, according to a research of Gottfried Hanne, political officer of the OSCE mission in Moldova, this can be mainly attributed to governmental policy and lack of reforms. Also the widespread corruption contributes to an unattractive business investment environment.

Political and media freedom

The influential NGO "Freedom House" and the Council of Europe noticed a worsening of the political climate since the communists came to power. In February 2002 a coalition of 30 Moldavian NGO's blamed the communists for



“using the public media as a Communist propaganda machine, violating political pluralism, neglecting decisions by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) that concern Moldova, and marginalizing the Romanian language in favour of Russian.”

The demonstrations organised by the Christian democrats that endured from the 9 January to the 29 April 2002 were ended only after involvement of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which called for strengthening of the legal protection of the parliamentary opposition, more freedom of press, and an end to the process of Russification. The government saw the intervention of PACE as a defeat and opposed the implementations of the recommendations.

In their 2006 report on Moldova, Freedom House scores Moldova 3 out of 5 on political rights and 4 out of 5 on Civil Liberties. Freedom House concludes that Moldova is only partly free on these issues. With respect to the media-freedom, Freedom House concludes that Moldova is not free. In the capitol Chisinau, a reasonable number of different newspapers can be found. However, in the rural areas this number is much lower. This is marked as highly problematic by Freedom House and is seen as the most worrying developments for the press-freedom in the country.

The OSCE Mission Head in Moldova, Louis O'Neill, has expressed his concerns about the lack of free media in Moldova. In a statement he said: “I urge the Moldovan authorities to exercise restraint in the future. It is vital to ensure that journalists can report freely and that citizens enjoy their right to free expression. (...)” Besides his concerns about the lack of media freedom in Moldova, O'Neill also emphasised the importance of ensuring equal conditions for political parties in Moldova to handle their electoral campaign in the run-up to the local elections of 2007. In his opinion, to often opposition parties had many difficulties in ensuring their “playing field” during the electoral campaign.

Foreign relations– Russia

The relations with Russia have been dominated by the involvement in the Transdnister conflict and by Moldova's economic, cultural and political dependence on Russia. In an interview President Vladimir Voronin said Russia will retain a key role in the settlement of the Transdnister conflict. He said that thanks to Russia's assistance, Chisinau and Tiraspol were “very close to a [final] settlement of the conflict” in November 2003. He described Russian-Moldavian relations as “unshakable” and said anyone who attempts to undermine them is doomed to fail. He also said Moldova's efforts to achieve European integration will not come at Russia's expense or disadvantage. From the Russian side no serious attempts to withdraw the troops have been made and involvement in the Transdnister conflict will endure. Russian involvement is a source for heated discussions and demonstrations of oppositional groups and nationalists.

Russian influence is large as can be read from a recent a critical statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Russia's plan to have 17 polling stations in Moldova for Russian citizens participating in the country's 14 March 2004 Russian presidential elections, without consulting the Moldavian government.

Besides close historical ties with Russia, the ruling party PCRM has more and more the objective to focus on European integration rather than on closer ties with Russia. This “flirt” with the West has damaged the Russian – Moldovan relationship seriously. In January 2006, Russia decided to temporarily ban all the wine and meat coming from Moldova. On a yearly basis, approximately €250 million is brought into Moldova through this type of exchange. In November 2006, Russia lifted the restrictions. Officially, Russia banned the wine and meat due to a lack of quality of the products. Analysts say, however, that it is another attempt by Moscow to punish former Soviet states for severing ties with Russia.

Foreign relations– Romania

Romania plays an important role in the history of Moldova and also culturally both countries have commonalities. The Moldavian language is virtually the same as the Romanian language. Bessarabia, the land between the Prut and Nistru rivers, is predominantly ethnic Romanian in population and constitutes the eastern half of a region historically known as Moldova. Until 1940 the region was ruled by Romania, after which it became part of the Soviet Union.

Relations between Romania and Moldova while generally very good, are not free of troubles. Especially since the



communists came to power in 2001 the relation between Moldova and Romania worsened considerably. The communist authorities underlining the Russian connection have raised fears in Bucharest for the return of a soviet approach to the identity of Bessarabian Romanians.

The Moldavan government pursued a policy of small steps, opening a Moldavian–Romanian trade centre, discussing trilateral co–operation between Romania, Ukraine and Moldova and planning revival of the Euro–regions of the Lower Danube and the Upper Prut. However, after accession of Romania to the EU, Moldavians will need visa to enter Romania, which might further harm the relationship.

Foreign relations– EU

The Moldavan government sees good relations with the EU as a priority strategic long–term objective. Moldova is a member of the Council of Europe since 1995. The European option is seen as a means for the maintenance and consolidation of independence and assurance of stability and security of the country and its citizens. Also it is expected that co–operation with the EU will help to raise the standard of living.

Moldova established relationships with the European Union in 1992, when it was included in the program of assistance provided to the newly independent states. The present relationships between the Republic of Moldova and European Union consists of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), signed in 1994.

In 2005, the European Union send a special representative to Moldova in order to find a solution in the Transdnister conflict. Furthermore, the Delegation of the European Commission opened an office in Chisinau. In December 2005, Moldova welcomed the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) to fight smuggling, strengthen the customs procedures and facilitate cross–border cooperation between at the Ukrainian–Moldovan border.

In accordance with the Action Plan with the EU, Moldova is on the path of harmonising its laws with the laws of the European Union. Enlargement Commissioner Gunter Verheugen said that Moldova could become a "pioneer" in implementing the Action Plan for the "New Neighbours," which neither offers nor rules out eventual EU membership.

On 7 May 2009 Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin did not attend the European Union's Eastern Partnership summit in Prague, Foreign Minister Andrei Stratan went instead. The EU downplayed his absence by saying that countries were free to decide whom to send, and that this did not mean Moldova does not want to cooperate with the EU. The Eastern Partnership summit was held in order for the EU to establish better and stronger ties with former Soviet republics. Voronin criticized the EU plan to offer his country and five other form Soviet republics "too little" cooperation in the Eastern Partnership. The EU plan did not promise eventual EU membership to the six countries and Voronin said Chisinau wants an association agreement that could lead to membership. Voronin also said that the Eastern Partnership is directed against Chisinau ally Moscow and is meant to create new spheres of influence in Eastern Europe.

Foreign relations – US

Moldova sent 24 Moldavian peacekeepers to Iraq at the request of the United States. The Moldavian battalion is serving in humanitarian operations. Concerning the Transdnister conflict the U.S. expressed its worries about the dominant role of the Russians. The leader of Transdnister, Igor Smirnov, in return condemned the depicting of Transdnisters as terrorists.

Foreign relations – GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development

In 1998, Moldova was one of the founding countries of GUAM, the regional cooperation agreement between Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova. The regional cooperation consists of information exchange, trade and transportation, border control and energy projects. Most important, GUAM initially included an agreement on mutual defence. However, Moldova ever since declared its disinterest in the construction of a mutual defence system. In 2006, the organisation has changed its name in GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development.



SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES

Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) www.pdm.md
President: Dumitru Diacov (PDM)
first vice president: Oleg Serebrian (former PSL)
Parliament: 11 MPs
Affiliations: observer status Socialist International

On 10 February, the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) and the Social Liberal Party (PSL) officially merged under the slogan "We Come to Build." The opposition parties formed a new democratic party through the disbandment of the PSL, which was then absorbed into the PDM. The renewed PDM will continue under its old name, and pledges "for the affirmation of the Republic of Moldova as an independent, unitary and democratic state, based on the rule of law and integrated in the united family of European democracies." The PDM supports the integration of Moldova in the EU and NATO, and will keep a social democratic orientation.

The PDM, which existed under its current name since April 2000, has since then been a growing oppositional party with clear social democratic orientation and international activity. In the March 2005 elections, the party participated in the Democratic Moldova Block (BMD). The BMD received 34 mandates from which 8 were accorded to the PDM through international agreements. The PDM subsequently registered as an autonomous faction during the founding session of the new parliament. Since then, the party gradually gained influence. The PDM supported the presidential candidacy of Vladimir Voronin (PCRM), which he needed to win the elections, on the condition that the ruling party would carry out reforms in the electoral system of Moldova. However, relations with the Communist Party cooled due to a lack of progress as to the promised reforms.

The PSL was created in 2001 by representatives of the intelligentsia, students, and civil society organisations. It aimed to present an alternative to the Communist government, but also to the failed democratic forces, with which the public had gotten disappointed. In the March 2005 elections, the party participated in the Democratic Moldova Block (BMD), and received 3 mandates. In the first weeks of the activity of the new parliament, the SLD left the block and the three MPs, including party leader Oleg Serebrian, registered as independent MPs, as at least five MPs are needed to form a faction in the Moldovan parliament.

Prior to merging, the PSL was a member of the Liberal International, whereas the PDM had strong relations with the European Social Democratic parties and holds an observer status in the Socialist International. The renewed PSL will remain the contacts with the Social Democratic parties, and declared on the 10 February party congress that it "reaffirms its affiliation to the principles and the values of the Socialist International."

The two parties merged hold 11 MPs and 13% of the parliamentary votes.

Social Democratic Party of Moldova (PSDM) www.psdm.md
Parliament – no seats
Chairman of the party: Dumitru Braghis
Secretary: Eduard Musuc
International affiliation: Observer status in Socialist International (SI)

The Social Democratic Party of Moldova is a merger of the Party of Social Democracy (PSD), led by former Moldovan prime minister Dumitru Braghis, and the Social Democratic Party of Moldova (PSDM), led by businessman Eduard Musuc. On 22 December 2007, the two parties officially united. The unification congress delegates elected Dumitry Braghis as chairman of the new organization. Eduard Musuc was elected secretary.

The two parties had already announced their intention to merge in June 2007, after the last national elections, at which the parties combined had polled nearly 7% of the votes, but individually failed to pass the threshold. Initially, the Centrist Union of Moldova (CUM) was supposed to merge with the parties as well. In many local councils, the three parties even formed factions, as a first step in the process after which an official unification on the level of the parties' central leaderships was to take place. However, eventually the CUM officially quitted the negotiations in a



belief that the unification was designed solely to bring former Moldovan president Petru Lucinschi back to active politics. This caused a rift in the CUM, as several local CUM organizations choose to stay in the merger process and join the newly emerging Social Democratic united force.

The former PSDM was founded in 1991, and is one of the oldest parties in post-Soviet Moldova. It has, however, always been small and was never represented in parliament, although it did gain representation in a limited number of municipalities. The party was known as a very European oriented party, and has received the observer status in the SI. It furthermore has extensive contacts with different parties and foundations within EU member states. The tone of the party has changed, however, after the election of Ion Musuc as its leader. Most noticeably, the party regularly voices fierce anti-communist rhetoric.

The Party of Social Democracy (PSD) was founded in 2006 by Dumitru Braghis, former member of the Moldovan parliament for the liberal democratic party "Our Moldova". The party won representation in several local constituencies.

OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES

Party of Communists of Republic of Moldova (PCRM) www.pcrm.md

Parliament – 56 MPs (out of 101 in total)

Leader: Vladimir Voronin (also president of the country)

Chair of parliamentary group: Vladimir Stepaniuc

International affiliation: contacts with Party of European Left

Until 2003 the PCRM had extensive relations with Russia. The party won the 2001 elections with absolute majority, having one of its electoral promised to join the Russia-Belarus Union. Its leader Vladimir Voronin became the president of Moldova. The relations with Russia were on administrative level between presidents Voronin and Putin, but also on party level with the Russian Communist Party of Gennadii Zyuganov.

After the "Kozak plan" for federalisation and solving the Transdnister conflict failed in 2003, it surprisingly came to the break of the good relations between the Voronin and Putin administrations. The plan itself was proposed by Russia, written by Dmitri Kozak, deputy head of Putin's administration. The document was to be signed in November 2003 by the Moldovan President and the chief of Transdnisterian administration in the presence of Vladimir Putin. However, shortly before President Putin's arrival to Chisinau, his Moldovan counterpart changed his mind and decided to "adjourn" the document signing on the grounds that "the document was developed behind Europe's back, which we intend to join". Well-informed sources in Moldova say that the document was secretly changed, unfavourably for Moldova, in the last moment by the Russian administrators in the hope that the Moldovan side would not notice it. When Putin was on his way to Chisinau, he heard that he was not welcome in Moldova anymore. In the longer term, this led to worsening of the bilateral relations, examples of which are the economic sanctions and energy cuts imposed on Moldova in 2005. Voronin also stopped attending the meetings of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), saying they only serve Russian interests.

Since 2003, Voronin speaks very favourably to EU integration. In the first instance this was met with certain mistrust by Europe. This is also very logical, because Voronin did not take any steps to reform either his party or his country. It seems that the international profile was never a priority of the PCRM but after the elections of 2005, when it stated its pro-European orientation, it gradually became a necessity.

The PCRM retained its position of biggest party after the parliamentary elections of March 2005. During the electoral campaign, the party (and mostly its leader) succeeded in convincing the international community that the PCRM was a reliable pro-Western and pro-European partner. In the pre-elections month, Voronin arranged symbolic and well reported meetings with his Ukrainian and Georgian counter partners – who of course are famous with their Orange and Rose revolutions. The message of Voronin was clear: there is no need of revolution in Moldova, as the Communist Party and government are already democratic and friends with the European democrats. During the



elections, Voronin invited a record number of international observers. At the same time, the Moldovan authorities expelled Russian observers on the grounds that they were spying on the Communist party and supporting some opposition parties.

After the break with Russia, the pro-European contacts became necessity for the PCRM. Of course, even before this time, there were political relations within the Parliamentary Co-operation Committee of the European Parliament and the Moldovan Parliament, as well as within the Council of Europe. In the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), the PCRM is in the group of the Unified European Left. PCRM leader Voronin has established relatively good contacts within Europe and the neighbouring countries. The bilateral relations with Ukraine and Romania are better now, and the cooperation with Europe has intensified.

Our Moldova Alliance (MNA) – local name Moldova Noastra Alianta
Leader: Serafim Urechean (also of the parliamentary faction)
Parliament: 16 MPs
International affiliation (no)

The MNA was established as a political party in July 2003. The original leaders and party structures of the three composing parties are, for a great extent, still preserved. It consists of the Social Democratic Alliance of Moldova (SDAM) lead by Dumitru Braghis, the Liberal Party (LP) lead by Veaceslav Untila and the Independents' Alliance of Moldova (IAM) of Serafim Urechean. Until the congress in June 2005, when Urechean was elected as leader, it was lead by a "troika" – Urechean, Untila and Braghis. During this congress, the party defined itself as right-centrist.

As for parliamentary representation, the MNA now has 16 MPs. It ran for the parliament together with the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) and the Social Liberal Party in the Bloc Democratic Moldova (BDM). The bloc formally stopped existing shortly after the elections, because the DPM and the SLP left.

Recently, the MNA itself has been undergoing a process of fragmentation. In October 2005, seven MPs, members originating of the SDAM of former PM Dumitru Braghis, registered their own parliamentary factions. This is why only 16 MPs represent what is left of the Our Moldova Alliance.

Next to Urechean (IAM), Untila (LP) is also a very important leader within the ANM. The bloc that was previously was classified as social-liberal, now names itself centre-right, but observers point to its liberal and nationalistic character as well.

A short description of the three founding parties of the MNA:

– The Liberal Party is a right-wing neo-liberal party headed by Veaceslav Untila. It was created in 2002 as a result of a conglomeration of different right-wing, nationalist, and conservative parties. Prominent members of it were Marcia Snegur, first President of the Republic of Moldova and Valeriu Muravschi, former Prime Minister. It had a very pro-European orientation and used to have contacts with liberal parties across Europe. It formally stopped existing when it co-founded the MNA in 2003. However, it represents an important power and influence wing within the MNA.

– The Independent's Alliance of Moldova (IAM) has its roots in local government. It began in 2001 at a meeting of the National Mayors' League, which soon after registered the IAM. The mayor of the capital Chisinau, Serafim Urechean, became its leader. During its short existence, until 2003 when it joined the MNA, it also adopted a pro-European declaration but came short of developing a clear ideological basis.

– Social Democratic Alliance of Moldova (SDAM) The SDAM formally existed in the period December 2001 to July 2003, when it co-founded the MNA. But the SDAM itself was formed by different small parties with social democratic orientation. The most important of it was the Braghis Alliance, named after the former PM Dumitru Braghis. This alliance had 19 parliamentary seats in the period 2001–05. In October 2005, 30 members of the political council of the MNA, close to Braghis, left the bloc MNA. This way, the MNA split, however SDAM still remains co-member of the MNA. Also seven MPs around Braghis left the MNA faction in November 2005 and stated they would create their own party. The name of the party is not clear yet, but most probably Braghis will head the



party. Braghis has a good international and European reputation. In 2000, when he was prime minister, the country intensified its relations with the EU. He speaks good English and is often invited to different conferences abroad.

People's Christian Democratic Party (CDPP) www.cdpp.md

Parliament: 11 MPs

Leader: Iurie Rosca

Leader of parliamentary faction: Vlad Cubriacov

International Affiliations: full member of Christian Democratic International (CDI) and observer member of the European People's Party (EPP); youth organisation is a member of Youth European People's Party.

Created in May 1989, the CDPP fought against Communism and for the fall of the USSR. Since then, this party remained an influential player in Moldovan politics. It was an oppositional party in the 2001–05 parliament. It gained 11 seats in parliament in March 2005. Its leader Iurie Rosca became deputy speaker of Parliament. This was a major change of the course of the development of the CDPP, which for 15 years was ardently anti-Communist.

Since its creation and until the middle of the 90's, the CDPP was openly proposing the accession of Moldova in Romania. It had excellent relations with all post-Communist governments of Romania. Until around the year 2000, it managed a Romania-sponsored fund, which was used for party financing but also for scholarships for young party members to study in Romania. In 2002, Rosca organised the major popular protests against a new law of the Communist administration, which would make the Russian language second official one and thus also obligatory in school. Some observers point out that the Russian-speaking population of Moldova, and the whole Transdnisterian population, is very afraid of Rosca.

Nowadays, the CDPP leader has abandoned his unionist ideas to join Romania, however he is still very fierce against the Russian troops in Transdnister and is anti-Russian as a whole.

The CDPP has very good international contacts: it is accepted in the international and European Christian democratic / conservative political family. During the 2005 electoral campaign, Rosca used his good international image very skilfully – he appeared on big posters, or wrote letter with, among others, the Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili, and Wilfred Martens, president of the European People's Party. The CDPP is a major propagator of the Euro-Atlantic integration of Moldova.

Patria-Rodina (electoral bloc) www.patria-rodina.md

Leader: Boris Muravschi

Parliament: no seats, 4,97% at elections

International Affiliation: no

While the Communist Party is not pro-Russian anymore, some of the hardcore pro-Russian electorate voted for Patria-Rodina (Motherland) and Ravnopravie (Justice) in the last parliamentary election. Patria-Rodina was created by the Socialist Party of Moldova and the Party of Socialists of Moldova, as well as the Young Komsomol of Moldova. Patria-Rodina did not manage to pass the high threshold to enter parliament, but nevertheless received the remarkable 4,95%. In the Russian-speaking autonomous region Gagauzija it even received more than 50%. It propagates that the future of Moldova does not lie in the West, but in the East. It aims to cooperate more with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The final goal is full integration with the Russian Federation. It remains to be seen whether Patria-Rodina (or its founding parties) will receive growing support in the coming years.

Party of Ecology of Moldova "Green Alliance" (PEM-AVE)

Parliament: no MPs

Leader: Ion Dediu

www.pemave.md



European Forum
for Democracy and Solidarity

Affiliation: European Green Party (observer)

This party, created in 1992, has participated in all elections in Moldova but has never succeeded to gain seats in parliament or representation in local government. However, it has a clear green ideology, on the example of many other Green European parties. It is an observer member of the European Green Party.