Moldova's parliamentary elections were competitive but campaign marred by cyberattacks, illegal funding and disinformation, international observers say

CHIŞINĂU, 29 September 2025 – Moldova's parliamentary elections were competitive and offered voters a clear choice between political alternatives, but the process was marred by serious cases of foreign interference, illegal funding, cyberattacks and widespread disinformation, notwithstanding the authorities' efforts to respond, international observers said in a statement today.

The joint observation mission from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), and the European Parliament (EP) found that the legal framework provides a sound basis for holding democratic elections in line with international standards. A recent law introduced key improvements including clearer definitions of electoral corruption, tougher penalties, and better regulation of campaign financing. However, the frequent changes to the law and particularly shortly before these elections undermined effective implementation as well as legal certainty.

"Yesterday's parliamentary elections in Moldova demonstrated a high level of commitment to democracy amid unprecedented hybrid threats coming from Russia," said Paula Cardoso, Special Co-ordinator and leader of the OSCE short-term observers. "From illicit financing funnelled through shadowy networks to relentless disinformation campaigns eroding public trust, and brazen cybersecurity incidents designed to sow chaos, these tactics sought to manipulate Moldova's democracy and sovereignty. Yet, the nation's democratic tenacity prevailed and helped to ensure the integrity of the vote."

These elections took place against the backdrop of unprecedented hybrid attacks, including illegal funding and disinformation and cyberattacks amid deep political polarization over the country's geopolitical orientation. In this context, the election authorities prepared professionally for the elections and were transparent in their work at all levels. There was high trust in their competency and efficiency. However, a number of decisions along partisan lines on certain controversial issues called into question their impartiality and independence. Election day was smooth and positively assessed in the vast majority of polling stations observed.

While voters had real political alternatives to choose between, some new eligibility requirements for contestants were overly burdensome and unclear. At the same time, the decision to declare two parties ineligible in the final days of the campaign limited their right to an effective remedy. Election disputes were generally handled efficiently, but some court decisions demonstrated varied understandings of new legislation affecting party eligibility.

"These elections showed that even unprecedented foreign interference and co-ordinated disinformation cannot derail Moldova's European path, endorsed last year. We commend the electoral authorities for a well-run process and the people of Moldova for their calm, civic-minded participation", commented Chris Said, Head of the PACE delegation. "Voters had a broad choice, but inclusiveness suffered: last-minute deregistration of candidates and persistent obstacles for voters from the left bank of the Nistru may have discouraged some. We urge all institutions to safeguard pluralism and equal participation so that every citizen's voice is heard in future elections."

Despite increased efforts by the authorities to mitigate threats to cybersecurity it remained a serious concern, with the government's digital infrastructure facing significant cyberattacks. The election authorities were the target of foreign cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns especially in the days before and on election day, aimed at undermining its public credibility by amplifying false information.

"In the face of sustained disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks, and other elements of hybrid warfare originating from Russia, Moldova has been actively targeted in efforts to undermine its institutions," said Linnéa Wickman, Head of the OSCE PA delegation. "Despite these challenges, the country's steadfast commitment to transparency and the proactive measures taken by its authorities and citizens have been key to preserving the integrity of the electoral process. This underscores the need for continued vigilance and strong protection of democratic principles."

The competitive campaign was seriously impacted by the activities of an organized network funded by foreign sources that was credibly identified as co-ordinating targeted vote-buying schemes and disinformation campaigns. In the run-up to the elections, networks of accounts sometimes using AI generated videos, troll farms and automated bots spread manipulative narratives on social networks. While the authorities increased their efforts to counter this disinformation, its prevalence had a negative effect on the election campaign. The response of the platforms themselves to notifications they received from state authorities and civil society organisations was

"On election day, we observed an electoral process conducted smoothly and without any notable irregularities. This can be attributed to the high level of competence demonstrated by the electoral staff, the majority of whom were women who performed their duties professionally," said Michael Gahler, Head of the EP delegation. "We respect the free and unimpeded choice of the Moldovans to determine their future, the Russian Federation does not. In the run up to this election Russia interfered at an unprecedented scale with cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns, intimidation and illicit financing and vote buying schemes, with a clear objective to substantially alter the results of the elections. Yet again they failed. We commend the determined and measured pushback against this malign election interfering by Russia and its local proxies."

Moldova's media landscape is diverse but polarised, which was mirrored in the news coverage of the election. Regrettably, observers heard many reports of intimidation and harassment of journalists. While the media gave candidates numerous opportunities to present their views and opinions through a variety of formats, the partisan coverage in some media outlets and limited investigative or analytical reporting hindered voters from making an informed decision on election day.

"The election authorities were professional and efficient. However, the deep political divisions in Moldovan society did not only mark the campaign but were also reflected at times in the election authorities' decision making," said Jillian Stirk, who heads ODIHR's election observation mission. "Throughout the election process, Moldova has shown impressive resilience to the hybrid threats it has faced. While there is still work to be done, the election reforms that have been introduced so far show determination to build a strong democracy for the people of this country."

The international election observation mission to the Moldovan parliamentary elections totalled 415 observers from 50 countries, consisting of 269 ODIHR experts and long- and short-term observers, 108 parliamentarians and staff from the OSCE PA, 24 from PACE, and 14 from the EP.

Media contacts:
Katya Andrusz, ODIHR: katya.andrusz@odihr.pl or +48 609 522 266
Nat Parry, OSCE PA: nat@oscepa.dk or +45 601 08 177
Ivi-Triin Odrats, PACE: ivi-triin.odrats@coe.int or +33 6 07 06 77 73
Raffaele Luise, EP: raffaele.luise@europarl.europa.eu or +32 473 865101