

Ukrainian parliament sets the date for parliamentary elections for autumn 2012

On 1 February, Ukraine's parliament adopted amendments to the constitution, finally fixing the terms of office for the president, parliament and local government authorities at five years. This means that the next parliamentary elections will take place on 28 October 2012. In this way, the Party of Regions has more time to prepare for those elections, especially by neutralising the opposition and building up its own public support.

The vote was held on the first day of the parliament's spring session, after a very short debate. 310 deputies voted for the motion (with 300 the required majority), including 180 from the Party of Regions, 7 from the Tymoshenko Bloc (these deputies were expelled from the party directly after the vote), 41 from Our Ukraine/People's Self-Defence, 25 from the Communist Party of Ukraine, 20 from the People's Party and 37 non-party deputies. Despite predictions to the contrary, the Tymoshenko Bloc did not try to prevent the vote from taking place. The amendment was necessary as after the restoration of the constitution in its 1996 version, a legal collision had arisen (the parliament's term lasted four years, but the current house of deputies had been chosen for a five-year term).

This result is a success for the Party of Regions, and more specifically for the 'Donetsk faction', centred around Prime Minister Mykola Azarov and Deputy Prime Minister Andriy Kluyev. It is known that a competing group, concentrated around the Head of the President's Administration, Serhiy Lovochkin, favoured earlier elections. President Viktor Yanukovich's speech in Parliament immediately before the debate demonstrates that he also supported postponing the elections until 2012. The Party of Regions therefore has more time now to prepare for them, so as to ensure an overwhelming advantage for itself in the new parliament. <Tao>