

Will the pro-European coalition be reconstructed in Moldova?

The odds are against it

Kamil Całus, Niskie szanse na odtworzenie proeuropejskiej koalicji w Mołdawii

On 3 May, Moldova's parliament passed a number of laws concerning the operation of the systems of justice and voting; the Communists and the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (LDPM) voted in favour of them. The most important decisions include the introduction of the possibility of dismissing judges from the Constitutional Court by a 3/5 majority of the votes in parliament. The government is now also set to be entrusted with control of the National Anti-Corruption Centre (CNA) – this used to be the prerogative of parliament. Furthermore, the decision on 18 April to nominate the prosecutor general has been cancelled. Parliament also decided to revoke the law establishing a mixed voting system, which had been passed on 18 April at the behest of the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM), to raise the electoral threshold for political parties from 4% to 6% (and to 9% for coalitions formed by two parties and to 11% for blocs consisting of three or more groupings) and allowed people to use old Soviet passports when voting. Furthermore, the competences of the interim government, which has been led since 23 April by acting Prime Minister Iurie Leanca, were enhanced. For example, it is now authorised to sign international agreements. Leanca was granted the right to nominate and dismiss members of the cabinet. The parliament also deemed that the vote of no confidence in the government led by Vlad Filat on 5 March was "a political decision and not in any way linked with [the prime minister's] legal or criminal liability."

The EU has sharply criticised the new regulations and the hasty manner in which they were adopted. The European commissioner for enlargement, Stefan Füle, suggested on 3 May to President Nicolae Timofti that he should not sign the adopted laws.

Commentary

- The fact that LDPM and the Communists united during the voting should not be seen as a sign that these two groupings could form a coalition in the future. The Communists agreed to back the laws aimed against PDM in exchange for allowing people to use Soviet passports when voting and for revoking the law on the mixed voting system. Both of these changes will improve the Communist Party's result in a possible snap election. Its priority will still be to maintain and deepen the divides between the former coalition partners, which it has succeeded in by temporarily backing the party led by Filat.

- The laws adopted on 3 May are aimed against PDM, and have been significantly weakening its position on the political scene. This is due to the fact that the dismissed prosecutor general had been elected owing to a recommendation from PDM. This party also controlled the CNA until recently. The cancellation of the law establishing the mixed voting system and the fact that the electoral threshold has been raised are further attempts to put pressure on this party (the support level for PDM is approximately 6.8%). The fact that the new regulations have been passed proves that the conflict between Filat and PDM's leaders, Marian Lupu and Vlad Plahotniuc, is deteriorating; this greatly reduces the chances of LDPM and PDM entering into a coalition. It can be assumed that Filat has decided to deal a blow to PDM because he believes that the Constitutional Court's decision of 22 April imposing a ban on him performing the duties of prime minister and running for this position could have been inspired by PDM.
- A minority government formed by LDPM and a few independent MPs seems to be the most likely scenario at the present moment. The fact that the interim government have been granted more prerogatives means that LDPM is preparing for a lengthy political crisis. However, such a cabinet is unlikely to last until the parliamentary election scheduled for late 2014/early 2015.