



Romania

Local Elections 2004

Post-Election Report

On June 6 voters cast ballots at more than 16,000 polling stations across the country to elect mayors and municipal counselors. For mayoral races in which no candidate received more than 50 percent of the vote, a second round was organized between the top two contenders on June 20. NDI is producing an occasional series of reports about Romania's 2004 general election cycle. This report provides a wrap-up of the local elections results.

ELECTION RESULTS HIGHLIGHTS

Pre-election polls showed Romanians torn between a desire for change in government and uncertainty about a credible political alternative. The election outcome showed that voters were prepared to oust incumbents, particularly in urban areas, while the ruling party held firm in rural, economically disadvantaged regions. The local elections have produced more diverse political representation across the country and suggest that presidential and parliamentary elections, to follow in November, will see close races between the governing social democrats and a new centrist alliance formed by the two main opposition parties.

Voter turnout hovered around 50 per cent of registered voters for both the first and second round reversing a 12 year trend of decreasing turnout. Mayoral mandates and the percentage of votes received by major parties after both rounds of local elections are as follows:

Party	Total Mayoral Mandates Won	Percentage of Votes for Judet Councils	Percentage of Votes for Local Councils
Social Democratic Party (PSD)	1695	38%	38%
National Liberal Party (PNL)	442	20%	18%
Democratic Party (PD)	376	16%	15%
Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)	186	8%	6%
Greater Romania Party (PRM)	81	9%	7%
Humanist Party of Romania (PUR)	121	5%	6%
DA Alliance (PD-PNL) ¹	10	3%	-
Union for Reconstruction of Romania (URR)	1	-	-
National Christian Democratic Peasant Party (PNTCD)	34	.42%	2%

¹ The DA Alliance parties, the National Liberal Party (PNL) and Democratic Party (PD), ran separately in all but Bucharest and Cluj. The Alliance plans to run jointly nationwide in the parliamentary and presidential elections.

Following are highlights of the local election:

“The responsibility of the Liberal-Democrat Alliance at this time is very big, This is why the euphoria of victory must end tonight; starting Monday the DA Alliance must demonstrate that this time Romania has a real alternative to the PSD.”

- PD President Traian Basescu, re-elected as Bucharest mayor on the DA Alliance ticket

- The ruling Social Democratic Party (PSD) claimed the greatest number of mayoral mandates, while the DA Alliance parties the National Liberal Party (PNL) and Democratic Party (PD) received the highest number of votes mainly due to stronger support in large urban areas.
- The DA Alliance garnered greater support among the younger, more educated, urban sections of the Romanian population while the PSD captured a larger section of the rural vote. The social democrats received a slight advantage due to the party’s appeal to a more disciplined voting bloc while the Alliance captured less than its potential support since its constituent base typically votes at lower rates.
- Opposition parties made significant inroads in the northeastern region of Moldova, the traditional stronghold of the ruling party. Examples include the newcomer Union for Reconstruction of Romania’s win of the mayor’s seat in Cimpulung Moldovenesc in the judet of Suceava, where the party also won eight local council seats, and the DA Alliance’s breakthrough mayoral victories in the cities of Suceava, Piatra-Neamt, Falticeni, Braila, and Botosani.
- The Humanist Party of Romania (PUR) posted better than expected results of more than 5% of local and judet council seats and of about 4% of mayors elected nationwide in comparison to less than half that number four years ago.
- Two parties that in the past obtained impressive results did not fare as well in the June local election. The Greater Romania Party (PRM), which in the previous election had seen surprising gains from voters’ protest votes, this time lost in favor of the DA Alliance as a potential alternative for those dissatisfied with the status quo. The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) also lost saw some of its support eroded as a result of its past policy of coalitions with other parties and due to recent conflict within the party.

“We, as party, understood the signal given by the people. We appreciate the support we received in hundreds of localities throughout the country, we also understand the warnings where our results were not so good.”
“The electorate has changed. Romania has changed, so we need to change too. We need to change the top structures. I don't refer to people, but to the leading structure. We need to modernize the management system.”

- Adrian Nastase, PSD President and current Prime Minister

- Following are outcomes in key cities:
 - Bucharest: Voters replaced four of five PSD district mayors with DA Alliance candidates, elected one independent district mayor and reelected mayor Traian Basescu over the PSD candidate and current Romanian foreign minister, Mircea Geoana;
 - Cluj: Longtime mayor Gheorghe Funar, who has provoked controversy in his handling of inter-ethnic relations, was defeated by both the PSD and joint DA candidate in the first round. The DA candidate, Democratic Party Vice-President Emil Boc, went on to defeat the PSD's Ioan Rus, who currently serves as minister of the interior; and
 - Iasi: PSD's Gheorghe Nichita won the mayor's seat defeating PD's Dan Carlan in the second round.
- The leading domestic election and government monitoring organization Pro Democracy Association (PDA) stated that the elections were free and fair, but cautioned against overlooking the numerous irregularities observed by more than 2,000 PDA monitors. A detailed list of all complaints of irregularities received or observed by PDA and a full post-election report from the organization is available in Romanian and an English version of PDA's post-election press release at www.apd.ro.
- NDI Romania staff members received accreditation to monitor the first and second round of the election in Bucharest and surrounding regions; similar to PDA, they did observe some irregularities, but none that constituted organized electoral fraud.

"...For more than 15 years from the first free elections, Romanian authorities fail to show any progress concerning the manner in which they are organizing the elections... As to the irregularities and frauds, or better said attempts at fraud, it can be said that although the notifications we received in relation to them were fairly numerous, they do not seem to be part of a strategy of fraud in the elections established at a certain level. Therefore, when speaking about correctness, we may conclude that these elections are to be considered as part of the manner in which the elections in Romania usually take place."

- Excerpt from Press Release on Elections from Pro-Democracy Association

This report was compiled by NDI. With support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), NDI is promoting interaction between civic groups and political parties at the local level and helping to build a competitive multiparty system. For more information, please contact Edmund Rhoads in Washington at (202) 728-5500 or NDI's office in Romania at (4021) 212-5658 or visit www.ndi.org. NDI, a nonprofit organization working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide, has assisted Romanian political parties and civic organizations since 1990.