

European  
Elections monitor

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ANALYSIS

# Klaus Iohannis due to be re-elected for a second term as President of the Republic of Romania

On 9th July last the Romanian authorities announced that the first round of the next presidential election would take place on 10th November. If none of the candidates win more than half of the votes cast, a second round will be organised two weeks later, on 24th November.

Romanians living abroad will be allowed to vote between 8th and 10th November for the first round (and between 22nd and 24th November for the second round). Everyone who takes his/her place in the queue two hours prior to the closure of the polling stations will be able to fulfil their civic duty until midnight. These measures aim to prevent the incidents that occurred in the last European elections. Indeed, on 26th May last dozens of Romanians living abroad had to wait hours to be able to vote because there were not enough polling booths. Moreover, many Romanians living abroad were unable to vote in the first round of the presidential election on 2nd November 2014 due again to a lack of polling stations (294 in all and only 160,000 slips printed for around 4 million voters), notably in France, the UK, Germany and Belgium.

Between the two rounds of voting demonstrations were organised in Bucharest and in the towns of Cluj, Timisoara, Sibiu, Brasov, Oradea and Constanta in solidarity with expat Romanians who were unable to fulfil their civic duty. On 10th November, the Foreign Affairs Minister Titus Corlatean (Social Democratic Party, PSD), responsible for the organisation of the expat vote, had to resign from office.

The electoral campaign started on 12th October. All of the polls forecast victory for the outgoing President of the Republic Klaus Iohannis. According to the most recent poll by Sociopol, he is due to win 43% of the vote in the

first round. He is forecast to beat Viorica Dancila (PSD), who is due to win 21%; Dan Barna (Save Romania Union, USR), is due to win 15%, and independent candidate Mircea Diaconu, supported by the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE and Pro Romania (PRO)), 11%.

## THE CANDIDATES

The grand favourite in the presidential election, Klaus Iohannis is hoping for a second term in office. On 11th March last, the National Council of the National Liberal Party (PNL), the party to which he belonged prior to his election as head of State, appointed Mr Iohannis as its candidate.

He started his campaign by opposing the government led since 10th October by Viorica Dancila (PSD), which he has qualified on several occasions as "corrupt" and "toxic". The government<sup>[1]</sup> collapsed on 10th October last following a no confidence vote by Parliament, with 238 votes out of the 465 MPs and Senators. "Romania won. The fall of the social democrat government is the natural result of the response of all Romanian society against the abuse and incompetence of this government. A totally off-course, failure of a government", declared Klaus Iohannis when the result was announced. On 15th October he appointed the leader of the National Liberal Party (PNL), Ludovic Orban as Prime Minister. The Constitution allows him ten days to form a government and win Parliament's confidence.

Of course, the President of the Republic emerges strengthened by the government's difficulties and notably those of Viorica Dancila, who, on 23rd July last, was asked to stand in the presidential election on 10th and 24th November by the PSD. She declined the offer in June

<sup>[1]</sup> The ministers of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE) resigned from government on 26th August. Without the support of this party the social democrats, which held 205 seats, no longer had a parliamentary majority (which was 223).

## Presidential Election in Romania

### 10th November 2019

maintaining that she did not have a powerful enough name to lead her party to victory. Finally, she decided to accept and stand for the social democrats. *"I believe that Romania could have a woman head of State for the very first time. I am the first woman to have reached the post of Prime Minister, I will become the first woman to be the president of the Republic,"* she declared.

The Social Democratic Party, whose candidate is struggling in the polls, might not even reach the second round of the presidential election however, which would be a first since the end of Communism in Romania. The PSD, in office since the parliamentary elections on 11th December 2016, is extremely unpopular, notably due to the reform of the judicial system that it has adopted. The latter irritated the Romanians, but also the European Union, which sees in this text and in the easing of anti-corruption legislation, a threat that weighs over the rule of Law.

Viorica Dancila promised not to interfere with the judicial system any longer. She also distanced herself from Liviu Dragnea, former chairman of the Social Democratic Party (2015-2019) and former chair of the House of Deputies (2016-2019), sentenced on 21st June 2018 to three and a half years in prison for abuse of power and the embezzlement of social goods. The sentence was confirmed by the High Court of Justice on 27th May last.

The social democrats suffered defeat in the European elections on 26th May last. They won 22.5% of the vote and only just came out ahead of the Alliance 2020, comprising the Party of Freedom, Unity and Solidarity (PLUS) of former Prime Minister Dacian Cioloș and the Save Romania Union (USR), led by Dan Barna, which won 22.4% of the vote. The National Liberal Party won the election with 27% of the vote. Half of the Romanians turned out to vote (51.2%).

Apart from these two personalities – the outgoing Head of State Klaus Iohannis and Viorica Dancila, 12 other people are running in the presidential election of 10th and 24th November in Romania:

- Dan Barna, leader of the Save Romania Union (USR);
- Mircea Diaconu (independent), actor and former MEP (2014-2019) supported by the Liberal and Democrat

Alliance, chaired by former Prime Minister (2004-2008) Calin Popescu-Tariceanu, and Pro Romania (PRO), the social liberal party led by former Prime Minister (2012-2015) Victor Ponta;

- Kelemen Humor, candidate for the Democratic Union of the Hungarians of Romania (UDMR);
- Theodor Paleogu, candidate of the People's Movement Party (PMP);
- Ramona-Ioana Bruynseels, candidat of the Humanist Power Party;
- Catalin Ivan, candidate of the Alternative for National Dignity;
- Ninel Peia, candidate of the Romanian Natinality Party;
- Sebastian-Constantin Popescu, candidate of the New Romania Party;
- Bogdan Marian-Stanoevici, independent;
- John-Ion Banu, candidate of the Romanian Nation Party;
- Viorel Catarama, candidate of the Liberal Right Party;
- Alexandru Cumanasu, independent.

### THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE

In Romania, the President of the Republic is elected for five years. Any candidate hoping to be elected to the supreme office must be at least 35 and he/she has to have a list of at least 200,000 voter signatures in support his/her candidature before the election. He/She must also swear not to have collaborated with the Securitate, the Romanian secret police under the Communist regime.

The head of the Romanian State has limited powers. He appoints the Prime Minister *"after consultation with the party which holds the absolute majority in Parliament or if this majority has not been won, the parties represented in Parliament"*, (article 103-1 of the Constitution) but he cannot revoke the latter.

Romania has a bicameral parliament which is renewed by a mixed majority system every four years in 43 constituencies. The upper house, the Senate (*Senatul*) has 134 members and the lower house, the House of Deputies (*Camera deputatilor*), 308. The national minorities (Roma, Germans, Armenians, Italians, Croatians, Albanians, Serbs etc.) have a number of seats reserved in the House of Deputies (17).

Reminder of the presidential elections on 2nd and 16th November 2014 in Romania

Turnout : 53.17% (1st round) and 64.1% (2nd round)

Political parties	No of votes won (1st round)	% of votes cast (1st round)	No of votes won (1st round)	% of votes cast (2nd round)
<b>Victor Ponta (Social Democratic Party, PSD)</b>	3 771 422	40.44	5 264 383	45,56
<b>Klaus Iohannis (National Liberal Party, PNL)</b>	2 846 227	30.37	6 288 769	54,43
<b>Calin Popescu-Tariceanu (independent)</b>	504 880	5.36		
<b>Elena Udrea (People's Movement Party, PMP)</b>	484 397	5.20		
<b>Monica Macovei (independent)</b>	417 865	4.44		
<b>Dan Diaconescu (People's Party-Dan Diaconescu, (PPDD)</b>	373 944	4.03		
<b>Corneliu Vadim Tudor (Great Romania Party, PRM)</b>	343 016	3.68		
<b>Hunor Kelemen (Democratic Union of Hungarians of Romania, UDMR)</b>	327 918	3.47		
<b>Teodor Melescanu (independent)</b>	102 936	1.09		
<b>Zsolt Szilagyi (Party of the People of Hungarians of Transylvania, ENMP)</b>	52 809	0.56		
<b>Gheorghe Funar (independent)</b>	44 932	0.47		
<b>William Brinza (Romanian Ecologist Party, PER)</b>	42 640	0.45		
<b>Constantin Rotaru (Socialist Alliance Party, PAS)</b>	28 414	0.30		
<b>Mirel Mircea Amaritei (Prodemo)</b>	7 794	0.08		

Source : <http://bec2014.roaep.ro/rezultate/index.html>

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