

European
Elections monitor

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RESULTS

A double surprise in Romania, where a far-right candidate that no-one was expecting comes out ahead in the 1st round of voting

Calin Georgescu (independent), who no-one saw coming and who recent opinion polls credited with a maximum of 9% of the vote, dominated the 1st round of the presidential election held on 24 November in Romania. The far-right candidate won 22.95% of the vote, ahead of Elena-Valeria Lasconi (Save Romania,USR), who succeeded Catalin Drula as leader of the liberal party. Drula resigned following the USR's disappointing results in the provincial and local elections on 9 June last. She won 19.17% of the vote. The Liberal candidate narrowly edged out outgoing Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu (Social Democratic Party, PSD), who won 19.15% of the vote.

Calin Georgescu and Elena-Valeria Lasconi will therefore face each other in the 2nd round of the presidential election on 8 December. Between the

two rounds, Romania will hold its parliamentary elections on 1 December.

Placed second by all opinion polls, the other right-wing populist candidate, George-Nicolae Simion (Alliance for the Unity of Romanians, AUR), came 4th with 13.87%. Nicolae-Ionel Ciuca (National Liberal Party, PNL), former Prime minister (2021-2023) and defence minister (2019-2021), garnered 8.79% and former NATO deputy secretary general Mircea-Dan Geoana (independent), 6.32%. The other eight candidates secured less than 5% of the vote.

Turnout was 52.55%, slightly higher than that recorded for the 1st round of the presidential election on 10 November 2019 (+1.37 points).

Presidential election in Romania

24th November 2024

02

Results of the 1st round of the presidential election in Romania on 24 November 2024

Turnout: 52.55%

Candidates	Number of votes won	% of votes won
Calin Georgescu (independent)	2 120 163	22.95
Elena-Valeria Lasconi (Save Romania, USR)	1 771 542	19.17
Ion-Marcel Ciolacu (Social Democratic Party, PSD)	1 769 412	19.15
George-Nicolae Simion (Alliance for the Unity of Romanians, AUR)	1 281 105	13.87
Nicolae-Ionel Ciuca (National Liberal Party, PNL)	811 770	8.79
Mircea-Dan Geoana (independent)	583 633	6.32
Hunor Kelemen (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians of Romania, UDMR)	416 341	4.51
Cristian Diaconescu (People's Movement Party, PMP)	286 693	3.10
Cristian-Vasile Terhes (Romanian National Conservative Party, PNCR)	95 768	1.04
Ana Birchall (independent)	42 834	0.46
Ludovic Orban (Force of the Right, FD)	20 084	0.22
Sebastian-Constantin Popescu (New Romania Party, PNR)	14 680	0.16
Alexandra-Beatrice Bertalan-Pacurararu (Alternative for National Dignity, ADN)	14 500	0.16
Silviu Predoiu (National Action Plan League, PLAN)	11 244	0.12

Source : <https://prezenta.roaep.ro/prezidentiale24112024/pv/romania/results/>

"Tonight, the Romanian people have cried out for peace. And they have shouted very loudly, extremely loudly", declared Calin Georgescu on the announcement of the results, which he described as "an extraordinary awakening of the Romanian people", adding "The economic uncertainty that has weighed on the people for 35 years has become an uncertainty for the political parties".

Despite being relatively unknown to the general public, Calin Georgescu has been involved in politics for many years. He has worked in various ministries and his name has even been put forward several times for the post of prime minister.

A professor at the University of Pitesti, not far from Bucharest, Calin Georgescu is an expert in the environment and sustainable development. He represented Romania on the National Committee of the United Nations Environment Programme between 1999 and 2012. He stood in the presidential election as an independent candidate and

conducted most of his election campaign on the social network Tik Tok, calling on his compatriots to 'save the Romanian nation' and stop aid to Ukraine.

In recent years, Calin Georgescu has caused controversy by describing Ion Antonescu, the man most responsible for the Holocaust in Romania, as a 'hero of the nation'. He describes the world as 'manipulated by international lobbies' and has made a name for himself by describing the Covid-19 pandemic as an invention by politicians to subjugate the people.

Presenting himself as an anti-system candidate, he undeniably benefited from the weariness and discontent expressed by Romanians towards the traditional political parties - the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the National Liberal Party (PNL) - which have governed Romania since the fall of communism in 1989 and which have run it together for the last 4 years within a grand coalition. "I voted for the victims of injustice, for the humiliated, for

those who feel they don't count and who, in reality, are the ones who count the most", declared Calin Georgescu.

"The refusal of the PSD and PNL candidates to debate on television before the 1st round is a symptom of a political class that no longer knows how to talk to its own citizens" noted Elena Calistru, president and co-founder of the NGO Funky Citizens. "Calin Georgescu's unexpected performance is a protest vote or a revolt against the establishment (...) The main political parties have lost touch with ordinary Romanians," said Cristian Andrei, an analyst at the Political Evaluation Agency.

"Romanian democracy is in danger for the first time since the fall of communism in 1989. The situation has become even more complicated since Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election," said Cristian-Romulus Pirvulescu, a political scientist at the National School of Political Science and Public Administration in Bucharest. "While he was able to capitalise on the distress of a section of the population impoverished by high inflation, George Simion, a great fan of Donald Trump, also wanted to project a moderate image, which did him a disservice with the most radical elements," emphasised Cristian Pirvulescu to explain the disappointing result of the candidate of the populist right, even though the opinion polls qualified him for the 2nd round.

Elena-Valeria Lasconi, a former journalist for whom corruption is one of Romania's biggest problems, is in favour of increased defence spending and continued aid

to Kyiv. Romania shares a 650-kilometre border with Ukraine. Since the Russian armed forces invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022, Bucharest has allowed millions of tonnes of grain to be exported via the Black Sea port of Constanta and has provided military aid to Kyiv, including the donation of a Patriot air defence battery.

Whatever the final result of the presidential election, the 1st round is a victory for populist forces. It was a severe setback for the outgoing Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu and, beyond that, for all the 'traditional' politicians in the governing parties. Marcel Ciolacu wanted to embody stability. He put forward his experience at the head of the country and positioned himself as a bulwark against the forces of the far right, in particular George Simion, whom he saw as his opponent in the 2nd round.

Will Elena-Valeria Lasconi appeal to the moderates and warn of the danger posed by the election of Calin Georgescu as President of the Republic so as to rally support for her name in the 2nd round? The results of the 1st round mean that the next must be approached with great caution.

Even before 8 December, the 1st round of the presidential election is likely to have an impact on the parliamentary elections to be held on 1 December. "The result of the 1st round of the presidential election heralds a disaster for next week's parliamentary elections, especially for the parties in power, which is likely to complicate the formation of a coalition," declared Cristian Pirvulescu.

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