

European
Elections monitor

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RESULTS

Far-right candidate George Simion pulls ahead in the first round of the Romanian presidential election

The candidate has changed... but not the result. The far right came out well ahead in the first round of the presidential election on 4 May in Romania. With 40.96% of the vote, George Simion (Alliance for the Unity of Romanians, AUR) consolidated the result obtained by Calin Georgescu on 24 November 2024 in the first round of the presidential election, which was invalidated by the Constitutional Court on 6 December, just two days before the scheduled date of the second round. On 9 March 2025, the Constitutional Court banned Calin Georgescu from standing in the presidential election on the grounds that he had not complied with the rules in the previous election, did not meet the legal requirements and had violated the democratic rules of a fair and impartial election. The former candidate was also placed under investigation at the end of February and also put under judicial supervision.

Nevertheless, on 4 May, Romanians confirmed their vote of six months ago. The Romanian diaspora voted strongly in favour of George Simion, particularly those living in Western Europe. The far-right candidate won more than 70% of the vote in Germany, Italy and Spain.

George Simion will face Nicusor Dan in the second round on 18 May. Dan ran as an independent candidate but was supported by Justice and Respect for All in Europe (DREPT), the People's Movement Party (PMP), the Right Force (FD) and Renew the European Project in

Romania (REPER). The mayor of Bucharest since 2020 won 20.99% of the vote.

He narrowly beat Crin Antonescu (National Liberal Party, PNL), who was the candidate of the ruling coalition Romania Forward (A.Ro) formed by the three parties of the government led since June 2023 by Ion-Marcel Ciolacu (PSD): the PNL, the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR). Crin Antonescu obtained 20.07%, a severe setback for the two parties that have shared power in the country for more than 30 years.

Victor Ponta (Pro Romania), former Prime Minister (2012-2015), came fourth with 13.05%, ahead of Elena-Valeria Lasconi (Save Romania, USR), who won 2.68%. The candidate, who came second in the November election, was 'abandoned' by her party, which decided to support Nicusor Dan on the grounds that the party president did not have the support needed to reach the second round.

The six other candidates each received less than 1% of the vote.

Turnout was almost identical to that recorded in the first round of the presidential election (which was invalidated) on 24 November. Half of Romanians went to the polls: 53.21%, up 0.65 points on six months ago.

Presidential election in Romania

4th & 18th May 2025

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Results of the first round of the presidential election in Romania on 4 May 2025

Turnout: 53.21%

Candidates	Number of votes won	% of votes won
George-Nicolae Simion (Alliance for the Union of Romanians, AUR)	3 862 761	40.96
Nicusor Dan (independent)	1 979 767	20.99
Crin Antonescu (National Liberal Party, PNL)	1 892 930	20.07
Victor Ponta (Pro Romania)	1 230 164	13.04
Elena-Valeria Lasconi (Save Romania, USR)	252 721	2.68
Lavinia Sandru (Social Liberal Humanist Party, PUSL)	60 682	0.64
Daniel Funeriu (independent)	49 604	0.53
Cristian-Vasile Terhes (Romanian National Conservative Party, PNCR)	36 445	0.39
Sebastian-Constantin Popescu (The New Romania Party, PNR)	25 994	0.28
John-Ion Banu Muscel (The Romanian Nation Party, PNRo)	22 020	0.23
Silviu Predoiu (National Action League Party, PLAN)	17 186	0.18

Source : <https://prezenta.roaep.ro/prezidentiale04052025/pv/romania/results>

'Together we have written a page of history,' George Simion triumphantly declared when the results were announced. 'This is not just an electoral victory, it is a victory for Romanian dignity, it is the victory of those who have not lost hope, of those who still believe in Romania, a free, respected and sovereign country,' he added, 'Get rid of the thieves, the patriots are coming.'

George Simion has appointed himself as Calin Georgescu's successor. He campaigned in defence of the latter, with whom he fulfilled his civic duty on 4 May and whom he has promised to make his next Prime Minister.

Although he rejects the label of far right, George Simion holds nationalist and very conservative views, particularly on social issues. He is opposed to any military aid to Ukraine: he has stated that he wants to halt Bucharest's aid to Kyiv and review the conditions for welcoming Ukrainian refugees in Romania. He is highly critical of the European Union and, finally, he sees himself as part of the MAGA (Make America Great Again) movement led by US President Donald Trump.

According to Sergiu Miscoiu, professor of political science at the University of Cluj, George Simion's rhetoric appeals to 'a fairly dormant electorate, an electorate made up of marginalised people who have long been rebelling against the political system, against the value system, against the lack of prospects and horizons in Romanian politics and society (...) Romanians who see themselves as the losers of Europeanisation, transition and globalisation, who for a long time have had no interest in political life, contenting themselves with criticising from afar, and who have been hyper-politicised by the very radical messages expressed by Calin Georgescu'.

Nicusor Dan, who decided to run in this presidential election after the 'shock' of the 24 November 2024 election, will therefore be George Simion's rival in the second round. A reformer and pro-European, he nevertheless denounces corruption in the political class.

'Fear of extremism and opposition to Prime Minister Ion-Marcel Ciolacu propelled Nicusor Dan into the second round because voting for Nicusor Dan meant

voting against the government,' said Emilian Isaila, editor-in-chief of the website Spotmedia.ro. This opinion is shared by Gelu Dominica, a sociologist: 'This is a significant defeat for Ion-Marcel Ciolacu, even though he did not stand in this election himself.'

The mayor of Bucharest has called for a 'new beginning', asking all pro-Western forces to support him. He says he wants to 'keep Romania on a Western course, with its eyes turned towards the West'. 'A difficult second round is looming against the isolationist candidate. This will not be a debate between individuals but a debate between a pro-Western path and an anti-Western orientation for Romania. Our task is to convince Romanians that the country needs a pro-Western orientation, and that is what our campaign will focus on over the next two weeks,' Nicusor Dan said.

He also promised that, if he wins on 18 May, he will work with the current government, despite its unpopularity and allegations of corruption. 'It will be very difficult to build bridges with Ion-Marcel Ciolacu's electorate when Nicusor Dan's main message for the past 15 years has been to attack the Social Democratic Party,' said Remus-Ion Stefureac, director of the Strategic

Thinking Group and founder of the INSCOP Research opinion institute, adding: 'He only speaks to voters in Bucharest.'

Sergiu Miscoiu describes Nicusor Dan's electorate as follows: *'the vast majority are residents of large cities, urban elites, people who are more educated than average (...) The percentage of people with higher education is double or even triple among Nicusor Dan's voters compared to other candidates. His electorate also includes some of those dissatisfied with the system who do not have a nationalist or populist vision and who hope to have found someone who is a constant fighter against corruption, unconnected to any political group, real estate mafia or other source of contamination of the political system.'*

Although George Simion has few reserves of votes for the second round of the presidential election, his result on 4 May should give him the momentum to carry him to victory. Unless the extremely divided Romanian political class manages to overcome its deep divisions and unite to bring down the man who has become the favourite in the presidential race.

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