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The Republic of Moldova under pressure:

how democratic resilience is being strengthened

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Executive Summary

The Republic of Moldova has taken important steps in strengthening democratic resilience, but remains exposed to persistent risks: external interference, disinformation, illicit political financing, cyberattacks, polarization, and limited public trust in institutions. External indicators describe a competitive but still fragile democracy: Freedom House classifies Moldova as “Partly Free” with a score of 60/100, and 36/100 classifies Moldova as a “Transitional or Hybrid Regime” in Nations in Transit 2026. Meanwhile, the EIU’s Democracy Index 2024 gives it 6.04 points and 71st place globally, also in the “hybrid regime” category.

Global ranking per category of democratic performance in 2024

	Representation	69/173
	Rights	52/173
	Rule of Law	64/173
	Participation	95/173

Source: IDEA International, *Global State of Democracy 2024, Moldova*

At the same time, the authorities have begun to treat democratic resilience as an explicit component of national security. The Plan for Strengthening Democratic Resilience for 2026–2027, approved by the National Security Council, emphasizes cybersecurity, preventing illicit political financing, strengthening information security, and protecting electoral processes.

Moldova must move from a largely reactive resilience to an institutionalized democratic resilience. This means more capable institutions, better protected elections, a more robust rule of law, a more credible information space, and a stronger relationship of trust between citizens and democratic institutions.

The Republic of Moldova is facing a context in which democratic processes are under constant pressure. International observers found that the presidential elections and referendum of October 2024 were well administered, but affected by illicit external interference and active disinformation, while the parliamentary elections of September 2025 were competitive, yet undermined by external interference, illicit financing, cyberattacks, and large-scale disinformation.

At the same time, internal vulnerabilities persist. The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2025 places Moldova 68th out of 143, with a score of 0.53, while the Corruption Perceptions Index 2025 gives it 42 points, indicating a still modest level of corruption control and rule of law consolidation. These weaknesses reduce the capacity of institutions to respond coherently and credibly to democratic shocks.

68/142

Moldova's ranking in the Rule of Law Index 2025 (score 0.53)

Analysis

Moldova's democratic resilience has several clear **strengths**.

In **the first** place, at a comparative level, the country maintains real electoral competition and relatively high political participation. In the Democracy Index 2024, Moldova scores 6.50 for electoral process and pluralism and 7.22 for political participation, but weaker scores for the functioning of government, 5.36, and political culture, 4.38. The resulting profile is that of a democracy that endures through competition and mobilization, but remains vulnerable through institutional performance and insufficient democratic consensus.

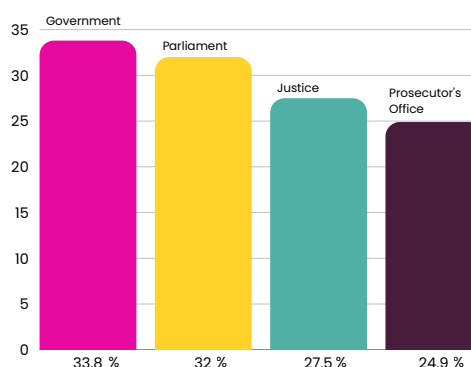
In **the second** place, an important strong point is that the state has begun to respond to these vulnerabilities through a clearer strategic framework. The resilience plan for 2026–2027 sets out measures to strengthen cybersecurity, prevent illicit political financing, and reinforce information security, while the published version of the plan also includes adjusting media legislation to European standards in order to guarantee editorial independence and protect journalists. This shows a more structured approach, not just ad hoc reactions.

In **the third** place, the integrity and functioning of electoral processes represent a central of democratic resilience. Here, recent lessons are clear: Moldova's electoral processes are functional and competitive, but they are systematically targeted by external actors and opaque networks of influence. ODIHR's conclusion for the 2025 parliamentary elections is relevant: the electoral administration managed the preparations professionally and efficiently, but the environment was highly polarized, and the process was affected by foreign interference, illicit financing, cyberattacks, and disinformation.

In **the fourth** place, the rule of law constitutes another key dimension of robustness. The World Justice Project score of 0.53 and position 68/143 suggest that Moldova is not in a zone of legal collapse, but neither is it in one of high institutional robustness. This positioning confirms that democratic resilience is limited not so much by the total absence of rules, but by the uneven capacity of enforcement, the vulnerabilities of the judicial system, and the persistence of corruption.

Looking at the information space, Moldova ranks 35th in Reporters Without Borders' (RSF) World Press Freedom Index 2025, which indicates a relatively better position than many states in the region, but RSF also notes pressures on journalists, polarization, and an environment still vulnerable to propaganda and manipulation. In addition, ahead of the 2025 elections, RSF warned that the vote was taking place in a context of pro-Kremlin propaganda, disinformation, and manipulation. This means that defending democracy requires not only restrictive measures against manipulation, but also the active protection of pluralism and independent journalism.

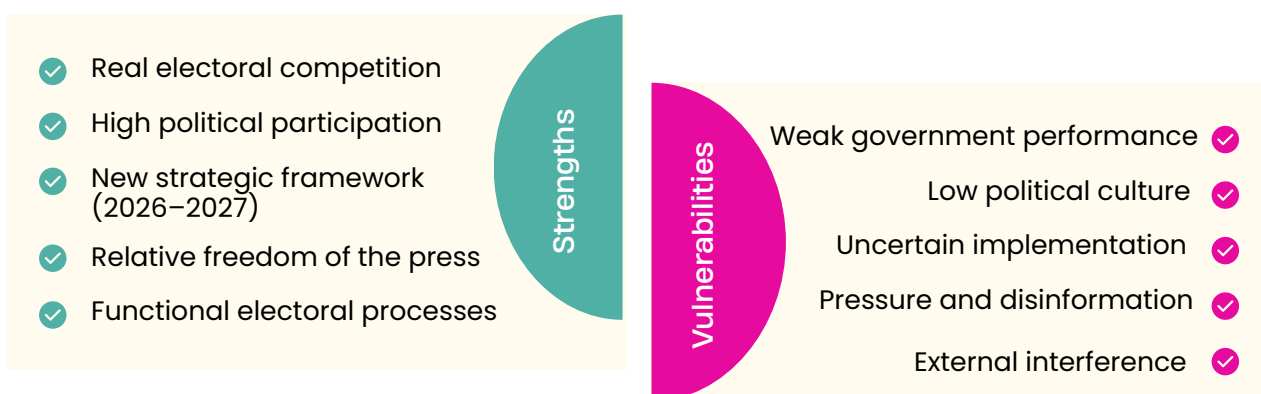
Data from the Public Opinion Barometer of September 2025 show that only 33.8% of respondents declare "a lot" or "some" trust in the Government, 32.0% in Parliament, 27.5% in the justice system, and 24.9% in the prosecution service. These figures indicate a major strategic vulnerability: democratic institutions may function formally, but their social legitimacy remains limited. In a context of hybrid threats, a low level of trust



makes it easier for anti-system narratives to spread and more difficult to mobilize the public in defense of democracy.

The European Commission states in its 2025 EU enlargement policy report that Moldova adopted in May 2025 roadmaps on the rule of law, public administration, and the functioning of democratic institutions, in the context of the accession process. This confirms that democratic resilience is already being treated as part of fundamental governance reforms, not only as a security issue. However, turning this orientation into results depends on implementation, human resources, and interinstitutional coordination.

Moldova's Democratic Resilience: Strengths and Vulnerabilities



Source: author's elaboration

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Republic of Moldova should treat electoral integrity as a permanent priority of democratic security. This requires strengthening control over political financing, increasing the capacity to detect external influence, and better cooperation between the electoral authority, financial control institutions, law enforcement bodies, and security structures. This priority is justified both by ODIHR's findings regarding the 2024 and 2025 elections and by the emphasis placed in the national plan on preventing illicit political financing.

It is necessary to strengthen the cybersecurity of democratic processes,

especially electoral infrastructure and key public institutions. Independent auditing of systems, vulnerability testing, and clear incident response protocols should become standard practices. The national plan is already moving in this direction, and the experience of recent electoral cycles shows that this field is no longer a secondary one.

The information space must be protected

through a combination of proportionate regulation, transparency of media ownership, support for the independent press, and investments in media literacy and civic

education. Sustainable democratic resilience cannot be built only by blocking manipulative content; it also requires credible sources of information and the capacity of citizens to critically assess information. Both RSF and the national plan indicate the importance of this pillar.

The Government should treat strengthening the rule of law

and reducing corruption as basic conditions of democratic resilience. The scores on justice and corruption show that Moldova still has ground to make up in terms of law enforcement and institutional credibility. Without progress in these areas, measures to secure democracy risk being perceived as selective or insufficiently legitimate.

The Government should treat civil society as democratic infrastructure.

This means more predictable and more substantive public consultations, better protection for civic organizations and human rights defenders, as well as more stable funding mechanisms that reduce excessive dependence on external donors.

The democratic resilience strategy must include

an explicit component of building public trust. Strategic communication, transparency of decisions, visible results in fighting corruption, and better public services are key to turn resilience into a relationship of trust between the state and citizens.

CONCLUSION

The Republic of Moldova is a competitive democracy that has become more aware of its vulnerabilities and more active in addressing them. External indicators show a country situated between resilience and fragility: electoral pluralism and political participation remain strengths, while the rule of law, control of corruption, media, and public trust should be strengthened to ensure democratic resilience.

The current direction is the right one. The emphasis on cybersecurity, political financing, electoral integrity, and protecting the information space responds to real and already observable risks. The decisive challenge remains implementation: Moldova needs this agenda to become a permanent state capacity.

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