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## **THE USL WINS A RESOUNDING ELECTORAL VICTORY**

As predicted by the polls, the USL won a landslide victory in the December 9 general elections. The USL candidates for the Chamber of Deputies received 58.63% of the votes, whereas the ARD candidates garnered only 16.5% of the votes, barely managing to get ahead the PPDD candidates who were voted by 13.99% of the electorate. The UDMR managed to surpass the proportional electoral threshold, receiving 5.1% of the votes. In the Senate race, the USL received 60.1% of the votes, whereas the ARD managed to receive only 16.7%. The PPDD got only 14.65%, and the UDMR a share of 5.23% of the votes. The turnout was 41.7%.

In the new Legislature, the USL will be represented by 395 MPs (273 members of the Chamber of Deputies and 122 members of the Senate). The PSD has won 149 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 58 seats in the Senate, whereas the PNL has won 101 seats in the lower house of the Romanian Parliament and 51 seats in the upper house of the Legislature. The conservatives will be represented by 21 MPs, whereas the UNPR has garnered 15 seats. The ARD, the electoral alliance that grouped the President's supporters has managed to win only 80 seats in the new Parliament (56 MPs in the lower house and 24 MPs in the Senate). The distribution of seats is completed by the 68 seats rewarded to populist actor PPDD and the 27 MPs of the UDMR.

The elections witnessed several impressive feats of the USL. The USL managed to win an unprecedented number of electoral races by an absolute majority (in 25 counties, all directly elected MPs were USL

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candidates). Moreover, the USL candidates managed to get first place in all races but one (if Romania had a first past the post electoral system, the ARD would have only 1 MP, the parliament being divided by an overwhelming majority of the USL and the UDMR). Under the current electoral rules, the electoral system strives to maintain a form a proportional representation which ensures that, even though the leaders and the candidates of the ARD lost the election, the votes they received will continue to be represented at the highest level.

At the same time, it is important to notice that the electoral score of the USL and the size of the USL majority are the highest ever obtained by a political party in Romania (with the exception of the first free elections which were held in 1990). According to most relevant political actors, the voting procedures were observed and both the domestic and international observers have concluded that the elections were free and organized in a fair manner by the incumbent cabinet!