

Moldova Parliament Approves New PM to End Crisis

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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CHISINAU — Moldova's parliament on Thursday approved acting Prime Minister Iurie Leanca as premier to help end a political crisis in the small ex-Soviet republic that has paralyzed legislation and drawn criticism from the European Union.

Deputies from a three-party, pro-Western coalition that has ruled since 2009 patched up differences among themselves to ensure a vote of 58 in favor of the 49-year-old Leanca, seven more than the 51 votes required.

Underlining high political tension, deputies from the opposition communists boycotted the vote, walking out of parliament after their leader, Vladimir Voronin, denounced what he described as a "shameful deal" among rival parties.

Leanca, a Moscow-educated former diplomat who has served as deputy prime minister and foreign minister, replaces Vlad Filat, his political patron, who resigned in early March

after losing a vote of confidence amid feuding among coalition allies.

The outcome averted the prospect of early elections, which could have led to strong gains by the opposition communists.

Leanca, like Filat, follows a strong pro-Europe agenda and seems likely to follow policies aimed at gaining approval by the EU and securing an association agreement with the 27-member bloc in November.

Moldova, with a population of 3.6 million, is one of Europe's poorest countries with an average monthly salary of about \$230.

Heavily reliant on Russian energy supplies, its economy is kept afloat by remittances from several hundred thousand Moldovans working in Russia and EU countries.

Laying out his government's program earlier this week, Leanca said he would work to secure recognition from the EU by reforming the social infrastructure including the judiciary and courts system, improving the business climate to boost investment and fighting corruption.

But he takes over with the political atmosphere poisoned by tension among competing political forces and business interests involving such figures as Filat himself and his rival Vladimir Plakhotniuk, Moldova's richest entrepreneur.

The three-party Alliance for European Integration, which has run Moldova since 2009, virtually collapsed in February after Filat, then prime minister, broke the consensus by denouncing his coalition partners on the left and right for corrupt practices.

This led to him losing a vote of confidence and, despite attempts by President Nicolae Timofti to reinstate him, he has been blocked from becoming prime minister again by a constitutional court ruling.

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