

Briefing on

Parliamentary Elections in Montenegro

11 June 2023

Darija Benic

IDM Former Trainee

56%

voter turnout during the 2023
parliamentary elections

15

current political entities

81

seats in the
Parliament

Introduction

Montenegro has been undergoing significant political changes over the past few years. In 2020, the country's ruling party, the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), lost its majority in parliament for the first time in decades. This marked a significant shift in Montenegrin politics and sparked hopes for a more diverse and competitive political landscape. Since then, Montenegro has experienced a series of political crises, including widespread protests over controversial church property laws. The country has also been grappling with corruption and organized crime, which have been major issues in its political and social spheres. Against this backdrop, parliamentary elections are scheduled to take place on June 11, 2023. These elections will be crucial for the future of Montenegro, as they will determine the country's political direction and leadership. Montenegro's accession to the European Union will likely be a key issue in the upcoming elections, with some parties advocating for closer ties with the EU and others pushing for a more isolationist approach. The 2023 parliamentary elections in Montenegro will be closely watched both domestically and internationally how this small Balkan nation will navigate its complex political and social landscape in the years ahead.

Background

The former President of Montenegro, Milo Đukanović, announced extraordinary parliamentary elections for June 11 this year. Đukanović made the decision after the current parliamentary majority failed to form a new one or reconstruct the existing Government of Dritan Abazović, which was voted no-confidence in August last year. The parliamentary majority was made up of the pro-Serbian Democratic Front, the Democrats and the Citizens' Movement (URA), which in the August 2020 elections had sent Đukanović's Democratic Party of Socialists into the opposition after three decades of power.

Many parties and alliances running for elections

Electoral lists were submitted by 17 political subjects. The majority of them who were part of the extraordinary parliamentary elections are not new to the Montenegrin political scene. Among the main lists is the Europe Now Movement, which was formed in the middle of last year by former ministers in the Government of Zdravko Krivokapić: Milojko Spajić and the newly elected President of Montenegro Jakov Milatović. On June 11, the opposition Democratic Party

of Socialists ran with the list "Together! For the future that belongs to you!", whose top candidate is the acting president of DPS, Danijel Živković. The partners in this alliance are the opposition Social Democrats (SD), the Liberal Party (LP) and the Democratic Union of Albanians (DUA).

After the leaders of the Democratic Front, the most numerous coalitions of the current parliamentary majority announced that the political alliance ceased to exist, the electoral list was submitted by two of the three constituents of the DF – the New Serbian Democracy (NSD) and the Democratic People's Party (DNP). The URA and the Democrats submitted an election list under the slogan "Courage counts", and its top candidate is the leader of the Democrats, Aleksa Bečić, while the second on the list is the leader of the GP URA and Prime Minister Dritan Abazović. For the first time, the "Justice for All" movement participated in the elections, with Vladimir Laposavić, who was the Minister of Justice in the Government of Zdravko Krivokapić. As another new political entity, the "Turnover for a safe Montenegro" movement, led by former member of the Parliament of Montenegro Srđan Perić, submitted its electoral list.

Several small parties and alliances ran as independent lists: the Croatian Citizens' Initiative, the Social Democratic Party, the Albanian Forum, the Albanian Alliance, the Bosnian Party, an alliance consisting of several smaller parties led by the Christian Democrats, the SNP and Demos, as well as the "We can have a civil Montenegro" and "Casa del Papel".

Elections results

After the success in the presidential elections with Jakov Milatović, Movement Europe Now beats the Democratic Party of Socialists again. For the first time since 1990, the DPS is not the party with the most votes in a nationwide election. Montenegro is turning the page and looking more and more towards Europe, but with the lowest voter turnout ever since the country gained independence in 2006, with only

slightly over half of registered voters participated. By comparison, the second round of the presidential elections earlier this year had a turnout of 70 per cent, the parliamentary elections in August 2020 saw a 76.6 per cent turnout, and the 2016 elections for the Assembly of Montenegro had a turnout of 73.3 per cent.

Europe Now won with 25.5 per cent of the votes while the DPS made second place with 23.8 per cent. The pro-Serbs of For the Future of Montenegro stopped at 14.9 per cent and the centrists of URA and Democratic Montenegro at 12.9 per cent of the votes. The various parties representing the Bosnian, Albanian and Croatian minorities (traditionally allies of former President Đukanović) obtained a maximum of 6.9 per cent of the votes. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) remained below the threshold of three per cent with 2.9 per cent, as did the Pravda za sve movement with 2.77 per cent.

First statements on government coalition

The victory of Europe Now was welcomed with satisfaction by its leader Milojko Spajić who declared that he expected "the formation of the government in the short term". Outgoing Prime Minister Dritan Abazović, a member of the coalition between URA and Democratic Montenegro, acknowledged that "Europe Now won the elections" but also that "the government cannot be stable without the participation of the coalition" and that "national interests must be put before those of the party".

Potential coalition combinations

Option 1: Before the election, a coalition between the Movement Europe Now, the coalition "Courage counts" and minority parties was perceived as the safest option. However, already on the night of the election, the leader of the strongest list, Milojko Spajić, ruled out the possibility of cooperation with the URA movement of former Prime Minister Dritan Abazović.

Option 2: Coalition between Movement Europe Now, Democrats, SNP-Demos, minority parties: In such a government, every parliamentary mandate would be important – if it could be formed at all, because the SNP-Demos is on the verge of the census. The leader of the Democrats, Aleksa Bečić, faces the difficult task of considering whether to remain faithful to his current partner, with whom she already has had a long-term political relationship that has ranged from supposedly solid cooperation to public quarrels and accusations.

Option 3: For the formation of a government between Movement Europe Now, For the future of Montenegro (pro-Serbs), minority parties, differences on some of the key foreign policy issues – NATO membership of Montenegro, alignment of foreign policy with the European Union, recognition of Kosovo – could be insurmountable. Considerable ideological differences would not be in line with the aspiration to make rapid progress on the European path of Montenegro.

Option 4: Coalition between Movement Europe Now, Democratic Party of Socialists, along with minority parties: According to the number of votes and their structure, this would be the most stable and simplest combination for the formation of the new government. However, the Europe Now leader did not support this option on election night, but the question is whether he will be able to persist. DPS has changed its leadership only in the last month, so that potential coalition partners prefer to wait and see how it will develop in the future.

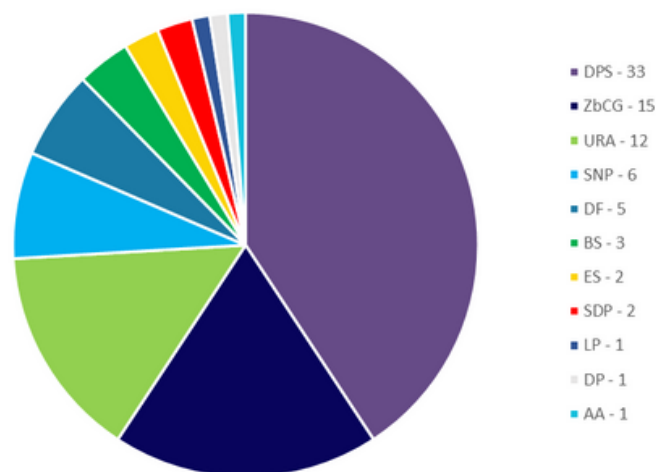
Option 5: A coalition of bitter enemies: Democratic Party of Socialists, Courage counts, and minority parties, does not seem likely. However, it must not be forgotten that the previous government of Dritan Abazović was voted in with the support of the DPS. It was, however, also the DPS that overthrew that government. As a matter of consequence, it is hard to believe that such a combination could be agreed upon.

The DPS has limited potential for forming a coalition due to its history of corruption scandals and accusations of causing economic problems.

Option 6: Montenegro entered these elections with the minority government of Dritan Abazović, which was denied the external support of the DPS, and after the elections, it could emerge with another minority government with the external support of the DPS. In that case, Miloško Spajić's cabinet would have a stable number of deputies in the assembly, but the question is whether the party that was led by Milo Đukanović until recently would be satisfied with supporting him without ministerial positions.

As it can be concluded that the period of political instability might not have come to an end in Montenegro. It is also possible that the government will not be agreed within the deadline, which would lead to another snap election, already in autumn

Pre-election seats in the Parliament



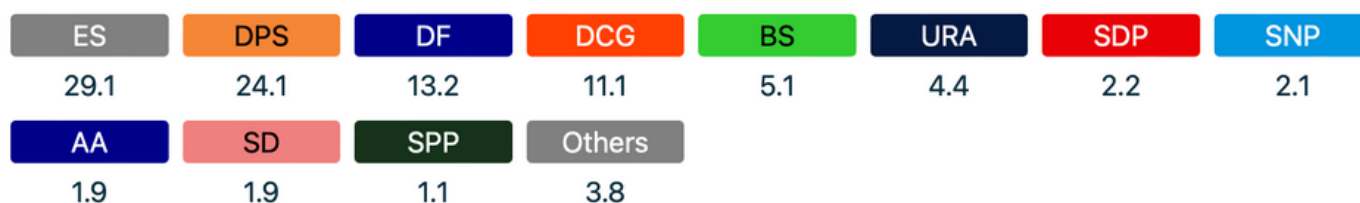
Source: Wikipedia

The Parliament's pre-election political entities, their main candidates and political orientations

Political Entity	Party Leader	Political Orientation
Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (DPS)	Danijel Živković	Centre-left
For the Future of Montenegro (ZbCG)	Milan Knežević	Right-wing
United Reform Action (URA)	Dritan Abazović	Environment & Climate
Socialist People's Party of Montenegro (SNP)	Vladimir Joković	Centre-left
Democratic Front (DF)	Nebojša Medojević	Right-wing
Bosniak Party (BS)	Ervin Ibrahimović	Centre-right
Europe Now Movement (ES)	Milojko Spajić	Transversal
Social Democratic Party of Montenegro (SDP)	Raško Konjević	Centre-left
Liberal Party Montenegro (LP)	Andrija Popović	Liberal politics
Democratic Party (DP)	Aleksa Bečić	Centre-right
Albanian Alternative (AA)	Nik Gjelošhaj	Right-wing

Source: Wikipedia

Election Trend of 2023 Parliamentary Elections in Montenegro



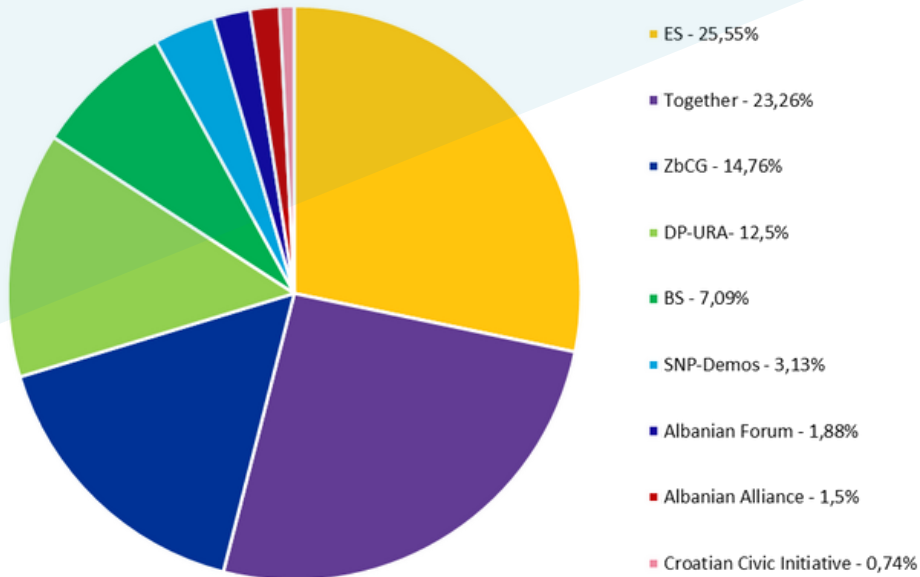
Source: CeDem

2023 Parliamentary Elections Results

Political Entity	Percentage	Seats
Europe Now Movement (ES)	25,55%	24
Together! (DPS-SD-LP-UDSh)	23,26%	21
For the Future of Montenegro (ZbCG)	14,76%	13
Aleksa and Dritan - Count Bravely! (DP-URA)	12,50%	11
Bosniak Party (BS)	7,09%	6
SNP - Demos	3,13%	2
Social Democratic Party of Montenegro (SDP)	2,90%	0
Justice for All	2,77%	0
Albanian Forum (ASH-LDSH-UNSh)	1,88%	2
Reversal for a Safe Montenegro	1,60%	0
Albanian Alliance (FORCA-PD-LSMZ)	1,50%	1
People's Coalition (DHP-PCG-SCG-DSS-PZPV)	1,20%	0
Croatian Civic Initiative	0,74%	1
Movement for Changes	0,66%	0
Yes, We Can!	0,48%	0

Source: IFES

2023 Parliamentary Elections Results



Source: IFES