

Croatia ruling HDZ leads general elections

by UPI

ZAGREB, Croatia -- Croatia's ruling HDZ party won a plurality of seats in parliamentary elections but will need support from smaller political parties to form a Cabinet. The conservative Croatian Democratic Union, or HDZ, of Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, won 61 seats, 16 short of the number needed for outright control of the 153-seat parliament, Croatia's HTV radio-television reported Monday. Croatia's biggest opposition, the leftist Social Democratic Party, followed with 56 seats won in Sunday's general elections. Sanader and SDP's leader Zoran Milanovic confirmed on Monday they had begun contacting minor parties to drum up the needed support to reach the total of 77 deputies needed to form a coalition government. Preliminary results, based on the 98 percent of ballots that had been counted, indicated a coalition of Croatia's Peasants and Social Liberals was third with eight seats, followed by the Croatian People's Party with seven seats and a number of smaller parties that won from one to three deputies. Both, HDZ and SDP are pro-Western parties that advocate Croatia's membership in NATO and the European Union, with leftist Milanovic emphasizing the need for faster judiciary reforms and fighting corruption.

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