

Briefing on

Parliamentary Elections in Bulgaria

19 April 2026

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39%

voter turnout in 2024

15/10

running political parties
and running coalitions

240

seats in the National
Assembly

Background

Since 2021, when former Prime Minister and GERB-SDS leader Boyko Borisov was voted out of office following months of protests, Bulgaria has struggled to form a government stable enough to last a full legislative term. In the seventh election since then, held on 27 October 2024, the centre-right GERB-SDS came first, followed by the liberal coalition We Continue the Change – Democratic Bulgaria (PP-DB) and the nationalist far-right Vazrazhdane. Eventually, in early 2025, a government was formed: a coalition led by GERB-SDS together with the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), and the populist There Is Such People (ITN), supported by DPS – New Beginning. The government, led by Rosen Zhelyazkov, identified its main priorities as protecting and strengthening the rule of law and advancing Bulgaria's entry into the eurozone.

Mass Protests

While Bulgaria successfully joined the eurozone in January 2026, the government did not last that long. In November 2025, it announced a budget plan that included tax increases, triggering mass demonstrations across the country, which continued even after the proposal was withdrawn. The protests, also referred to as "Gen Z protests," were driven by students and young people and called for the government's resignation,

reflecting broader dissatisfaction with governance and persistent corruption in Bulgaria. Particular criticism targeted Borisov and Delyan Peevski, both highly influential figures in Bulgarian politics, often accused of corruption and nepotism. The protests enjoyed broad public support, with around 70% of Bulgarian society backing them according to the agency Myra.

On 11 December 2025, the government resigned. Then President Rumen Radev invited the major parties in parliament to hold talks on forming a new government, but these ultimately failed. On 19 February 2026, a caretaker government was appointed, headed by interim Prime Minister Andrey Gyurov, who had previously served as deputy governor of the Bulgarian National Bank. The government announced that its main task would be to ensure fair elections.

New Party

While GERB-SDS has consistently placed first in elections since 2022, this time a new party might emerge at the top. The new force in Bulgaria's political landscape, Progressive Bulgaria (PB), was founded by former president Rumen Radev. Following the government's resignation, Radev – elected president in 2016 and nearing the end of his second and

final term – stepped down on 23 January 2026, with Vice President Iliana Iotova assuming the duties of head of state.

It had long been speculated that Radev would launch his own political project. Progressive Bulgaria (PB) brings together three centre-left groups: the Political Movement of Social Democrats (PDS), the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the Our People Movement (DNN), all closely associated with him. According to a press release, the coalition aims to “dismantle the entrenched oligarchic model and build more transparent and fair governance.”

Radev remains a controversial figure. He has repeatedly expressed pro-Kremlin positions, including statements that Ukraine “insists” on fighting and describing support for Ukraine as a “doomed cause”. He has also voiced strong scepticism about Bulgaria’s euro adoption and called for a referendum on the issue, even after the EU’s positive assessment of the country’s readiness.

At the same time, Radev enjoys significant public support and trust. In a highly unstable political landscape marked by frequent changes in governments and prime ministers, many Bulgarians view him as the only source of continuity and stability in the past years.

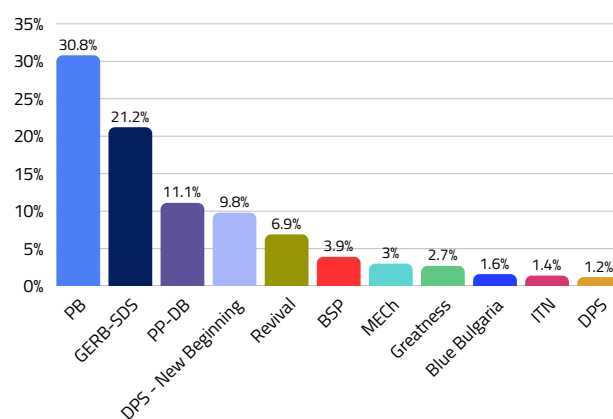
Opinion Polls

Recent opinion polls confirm the popularity of Radev and his new party. According to a recent Alpha Research poll released on 29 March – around three weeks before the elections – Progressive Bulgaria ranks first with 30.8%, followed by GERB–SDS with 21.2%. In third place is the liberal PP–DB with 11.1%, followed by Peevski’s DPS – New Beginning at 9.8%.

The pro-Russian Vazrazhdane is polling at just 6.9%, roughly half of its 2024 result. Similarly, the BSP has dropped to 3.9%, putting it at risk of falling below the 4% parliamentary threshold. Other parties are also polling below the threshold, including the nationalist MECh (3%), Velichie (2.7%), Blue Bulgaria (1.6%), the populist ITN (1.4%) as well as the the Alliance of Rights and

Freedoms (1.2%). These declining results – particularly for Vazrazhdane and the BSP – are likely due to Progressive Bulgaria attracting a significant share of pro-Russian and nationalist votes.

Voter turnout could be higher this time, partly due to the emergence of a new political force. According to polls, turnout may reach around 55%, which would be an increase of more than 15 percentage points compared to the last election.

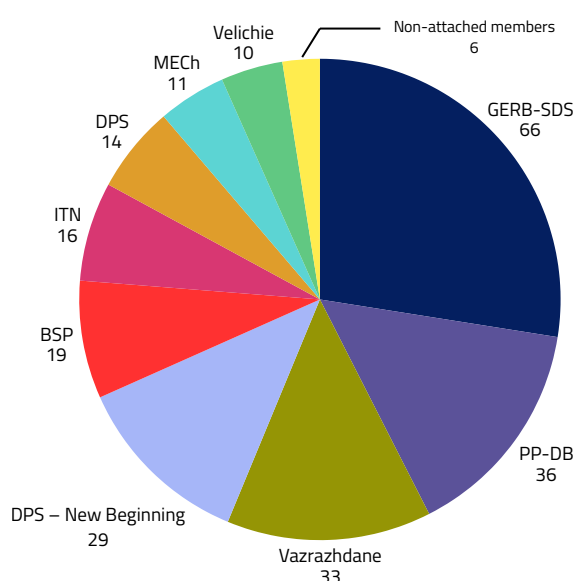


Main running political entities

15 parties and 10 coalitions will run for parliament on 19 April 2026 in Bulgaria.

Main running political entities

Political entity	Party Leader	Political Orientation	Group in the EP
PB (Progressive Bulgaria)	Rumen Radev	Center-left	-
GERB-SDS (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria - Union of Democratic Forces)	Boyko Borisov	Centre-right, conservative	EPP
PP-DB (We continue the Change- Democratic Bulgaria)	Kiril Petkov, Asen Vassilev	Centre, liberal	Renew Europe/ EPP
DPS – New Beginning (Movement for Rights and Freedom – New Beginning)	Delyan Peevski	Centre, Turkish speaking/Muslim minority	-
Revival (Vazrazhdane)	Kostadin Kostadinov	Far-right	ESN
BSP (Socialist Party)	Nataliya Kiselova	Centre-left	S&D
MECh (Morale, Unity, Honor)	Radostin Vasilev	Far-right	-
Greatness (Velichie)	Ivelin Mihaylov	Far-right	-
Blue Bulgaria	Petar Moskov, Vili Likov	Right-wing	-
ITN (There is such a People)	Slavi Trifonov	Right-wing	ECR
DPS (Alliance for Rights and Freedoms)	Ahmed Dogan	Centre, Turkish speaking/Muslim minority	Renew Europe



Current distribution of seats in the Parliament

The Bulgarian Parliament has 240 members (121 are needed for a majority), who are elected every 4 years in 31 constituencies. A party needs to secure at least 4% of the total votes cast to gain representation in parliament.

Corruption, Foreign Influence & Instability

The integrity of the elections remains a key challenge. Following the last vote, Bulgaria's Constitutional Court identified significant counting irregularities, leading to a partial annulment of results and the invalidation of 16 MPs' mandates – allowing an additional party (Velichie) to enter parliament and weakening the governing majority. In response, for the upcoming elections, authorities have intensified efforts against irregularities and increased investigations into vote-buying: in the first week of March 2026 alone, 41 pre-trial proceedings were launched and 25 people detained, compared to just three cases during the entire October 2024 elections, as EUalive reports. Due to ongoing concerns, international observers from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and by a Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) will monitor the 19 April elections.

Foreign influence – particularly from Russia – remains a persistent issue. Sentiments towards Russia remain relatively strong in Bulgarian society, with around 20% viewing Russia as a strategic partner (56% EU; 8% United States), according to an Alpha Research poll. A report by the Centre for the Study of Democracy (CSD) highlights Bulgaria's vulnerability to disinformation, pro-Kremlin narratives and hybrid threats, driven both by external and domestic actors. In response, Bulgaria has activated the alert system in the European Union's Digital Services Act ahead of the upcoming elections, aiming to combat illegal online activities, including the dissemination of disinformation.

Against this backdrop, forming a stable government remains highly uncertain. While Progressive Bulgaria is expected to come first, no clear coalition options or preferences have been announced by any running party, reflecting the country's fragmented political landscape. Public confidence is low, with around 30% doubting that a stable government can be formed after the upcoming elections

