

## Outgoing Prime Minister Boyko Borissov wins his wager and also the general election in Bulgaria

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Results

The Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB, the party of outgoing Prime Minister (2009-2013 and 2014-2016) Boyko Borissov, came out ahead in the snap election that took place in Bulgaria on 26th March. The head of government therefore won his wager and has asserted himself for the fourth successive time in the ballot box after 2009, 2013 and 2014. The GERB won 32.64% of the vote. The Socialist Party (BSP), the main opposition party led by Kornelia Ninova, came second with 27.12% of the vote.

*"The Bulgarians have chosen security and brought the GERB back into office, counting on their future in the European Union. The socialists have failed to convince the electorate that they could be the actors of change,"* analyses Genoveva Petrova, Director of the pollster Alpha Research.

The Patriotic Front, the nationalist alliance rallying the National Movement (IMRO-BNM) of Krasimir Karakachanov, the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria led by Valeri Simeonov and Ataka (A) led by Volen Siderov, came third with 9.06% of the vote. It came out ahead of the Movement for Rights and Freedom (DPS), the party representing the Turkish minority of Bulgaria (700,000 people, around 10% of the total population), which is against the policy undertaken by the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (Party for Justice and Development), led by Mustafa Karadayi, 9.04% of the vote. The general elections were a test for the two parties representing the country's Turkish minority. The Movement for Rights and Freedoms won the battle against Dost (which means "Friend" in Turkish), which was openly supported by the Turkish government, which, with 2.89% of the vote, failed to enter the National Assembly (*Narodno sabranie*), the only chamber in Parliament.

Finally Volya (Will) will be represented in parliament – a populist movement launched by a businessman, a self-proclaimed "Bulgarian Trump", Vesselin Mareshki who won 4.15% of the vote.

However, the Reform Bloc, a coalition formed by five parties (Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria, the Movement Bulgaria for Citizens, the Union of Democratic Forces, the People's party for Freedom and Dignity and the National Agrarian Union) which was a member of the outgoing government failed to retain its place in parliament. It won 3.02% of the vote, i.e. less than 4% of the vote necessary to be represented in the National Assembly.

This election followed the resignation of outgoing Prime Minister Boyko Borissov after the second round of the Presidential election on 6th and 13th November last, which was lost by the GERB candidate Tsetska Tsatcheva and won by the candidate supported by the Socialist Party, Rumen Radev. Whilst the head of State has an essentially honorary role in Bulgaria Boyko Borissov turned the presidential election into a vote of confidence regarding his government.

Turnout was about the same as that registered in the previous general elections on 5th October 2014: only half of the Bulgarians turned out to vote.

**Results of the General Elections on 26th March 2017 in Bulgaria**

Turnout: around 50%

Political Parties	No of votes won	% of votes won
<b>Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB)</b>	1 128 218	32.64
<b>Socialist Party (BSP)</b>	937 269	27.18
<b>Patriotic Front</b>	313 117	9.06
<b>Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS)</b>	312 347	9.04
<b>Volya</b>	143 354	4.15
<b>Reform Bloc</b>	104 553	3.02
<b>Dost</b>	99 794	2.89
<b>Others</b>	412 963	12.02

Source : Central Election Committee <http://results.cik.bg/pi2017/rezultati/index.html>

"The best part about democracy is that the people govern the country via its will. We have been correct and we resigned so that we could settle our accounts. This result undoubtedly confirms that GERB has to lead the way in the Bulgarian government," declared Boyko Borissov, who should therefore lead the next Bulgarian government. Bulgaria's strong man has again succeeded in snatching victory from the Socialist Party that is undergoing reconstruction. In this way the GERB has wiped out part of the defeat suffered in the presidential election of 6th and 13th November.

Boyko Borissov, who is the first head of the Bulgarian government to undertake two mandates (the first between 2009 and 2013, the second between 2014 and 2016), stands as the guarantor of his country's political stability, which he wants to be a loyal member of the European Union and NATO. However he has not ruled out maintaining "pragmatic" relations with Moscow. "The pro-Western consensus has been maintained. The rise in Russia's foreign policy ambitions played a role in mobilising the electorate," indicated Parvan Simeonov of Gallup. International issues – the weight of Russia's influence and tension with neighbouring Turkey – dominated in the electoral campaign.

"The Bulgarians who are not satisfied with the GERB's policy supported Boyko Borissov so that the socialists did not come to power. He succeeded in reassuring, in adopting the role of a unifier, a conciliator," analyses political expert Haralan Alexandrov.

"The socialists hoped to take advantage of the impetus, which in November last took their candidate Rumen Radev, former head of the air force, to the presidency of the Republic," stressed Daniel Smilov of the Centre for Liberal Strategies. "The Socialist Party stood as a vector of change but it over did it in presenting itself as an alternative to the status quo in terms of foreign policy and by advocating a rapprochement with Russia," declared political expert, Ognian Minchev. The left-wing opposition seems in effect to have scared off the Bulgarians.

Aged 57 and from Bankya (a suburb of Sofia), Boyko Borissov started his professional career as a fireman. After having worked at the Home Affairs Ministry he founded his own business – Ippon – in the 1990's. Firstly specialised in the textile trade he then turned to the security sector. Boyko Borissov worked as the bodyguard for the former leader of communist Bulgaria (1971-1989), Todor

Jivkov, then for King Simeon of Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha as he returned from exile in 1996. When the latter became Prime Minister in 2001, he became Secretary in Chief of the Home Affairs Ministry, i.e. chief of the national police force. Elected MP during the general elections on 25th June 2005 he chose not to sit in Parliament and on 8th November 2005 he won the local by-election to become mayor of Sofia. On 3rd December 2006, Boyko Borissov founded Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB), which the following year asserted its position as the country's main opposition party before winning the general elections that took place on 5th July. He resigned in 2013 amidst protests against poverty and corruption before returning as head of the government after the elections on 5th October 2014. Mr Borissov resigned again and placed his mandate in the balance after the defeat of his party's candidate Tsetska Tsacheva in the

presidential election on 6th and 13th November last. The GERB will probably form a coalition with Volya and the Patriotic Front, which we should recall said it was prepared to govern with them as well as the Socialist Party. *"The Patriotic Front does not really want to govern. It has no expertise and no solutions. Their agenda is conservative, xenophobic and linked to the Church. In the eyes of many Bulgarians these aspects are part of their national identity but they are not those which count the most in their daily life. Corruption and inequality are major stakes,"* indicated Christian Nitoiu of the London School of Economics (LSE).

*"Whoever the victor, the general elections will probably lead to an oligarchic government model that fosters corruption,"* maintains Evgueni Daynov, analyst and director of the Centre for Social Practice.

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