

In Bulgaria, "We continue the change" wins the parliamentary elections and incumbent Rumen Radev is well placed to be re-elected on 21 November

Parliamentary Elections*

The coalition "We continue the change", founded by Kiril Petkov, former Minister of Economy, and Asen Vassilev, former Minister of Finance, from the government of experts led by Yanev Stefan, took an unexpected lead in the parliamentary elections held for the third time this year on 14 November in Bulgaria with 25.65% of the vote according to the results, which are still partial. On 16 September, Kiril Petkov and Asen Vassilev left their ministerial portfolios to enter the election race.

The coalition "We continue the change" is therefore called to form the next government "Bulgaria needs a government that functions normally (...) There is a majority. Bulgaria will be governed by a normal cabinet (...) Left, centre or right, it doesn't matter (...) If we can stop corruption and redistribute money for the welfare of taxpayers, then we should be able to get along with many parties," maintained Kiril Petkov

"We continue the change" could join forces with the Socialist Party (BSP), led by Kornelia Ninova, and Democratic Bulgaria (a liberal coalition that brings together *Yes Bulgaria*, *the Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria* and *the Greens*) led by Hristo Ivanov. However, these two parties only won 10.26% and 6.34% of the vote respectively. It could also negotiate with Slavi Trifonov's *There is such a people* (Ima takuv narod, ITN) which came first in the previous parliamentary elections on 11th July and won 9.52% of the vote.

"There is a thirst for change (...) so people are inclined to vote for the parties of change they consider capable of forming a government," said Boriana Dimitrova, director of the opinion institute Alpha Research, adding "The two newcomers - Kiril Petkov and Asen Vassilev - are very enthusiastic but they have little experience. She expresses her fear that the next government coalition will be unstable."

"It will be difficult to form a coalition with parties from which the new party Pursue Change has taken a lot of voters," said Ivan Krastev, a political scientist and president of the Centre for Liberal Strategies in Sofia.

The "We continue the change" coalition has set several priorities: ending corruption and theft, removing the Prosecutor General Ivan Gechev, not raising taxes but improving tax collection, reforming the health and education sectors, attracting foreign investment in advanced technologies, encouraging export-oriented businesses, giving more freedom to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), distributing prosperity fairly and restoring citizens' confidence in their institutions. The coalition is in favour of anchoring Bulgaria in the European Union and NATO.

The Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) of former Prime Minister (2009-2013, 2014-2017 and 2017-2021) Boyko Borissov came second in the parliamentary elections with 22.8% of the vote. *The Movement for Rights and Freedoms* (DPS), a party representing the country's Turkish-speaking

minority led by Mustafa Karadayi, won 12.92% of the vote.

Turnout was very low, partly due to election fatigue after three legislative elections in seven months

(4 April and 11 July). Less than one in four voters (39.10%) fulfilled their civic duty.

Results of the 14 November 2021 parliamentary elections in Bulgaria

Turnout: 39,10%

Political Parties	% of votes cast
We continue the change	25.65
Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB)	22,8
Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS)	12,92
Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP)	10,26
There is such a people (Ima takuv narod, ITN)	9,52
Democratic Bulgaria	6,34

Source : <https://results.cik.bg/pvrns2021/tur1/rezultati/index.html>

Presidential Election

On 14th November, Bulgarians were also called to elect their Head of State (1st round).

Rumen Radev, who is running with Iliana Iotova and supported by the BSP, *We continue the change*, *There is such a People and Stand up! Mafia Get Out!* (Izpravi se BG! Moutri van!), came out ahead with 49.45% of the vote.

Rumen Radev will face the rector of Sofia-Saint Clement of Ohrid University, Anastas Gerdzhirov, in the second round on 21st November, together with Nevyana Miteva, candidates of GERB and the Union of Democratic Forces (ODS), who won 22.85% of the vote.

Mustafa Karadayi (allied with Iskra Mihaylova), the candidate of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, a party that presented a presidential candidate for the first time, won 11.51% of the vote.

Rumen Radev is popular in Bulgaria, notably because of his support for the summer 2020 protests. *"He is a general, a manly man, categorical in his opinions, a moderate nationalist. He has built up an image of*

a leader," said Anna Krasteva, a professor of political sociology at the New Bulgarian University.

The outgoing president narrowly failed to win in the first round due to the large number of candidates (21). Barring a huge surprise, he should nevertheless win a second term at the head of Bulgaria on 21 November.

Turnout was low: 38.90%, or -17.38 points compared to the first round of the previous presidential election on 6 November 2016.

Results of the first round of the presidential elections in Bulgaria on 14 November 2021

Turnout: 38.90%

Candidats	Number of votes won (1st round)	% of votes cast (1st round)
Rumen Radev (independent)	767 731	49.45
Anastas Gerdzhikov (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria, GERB)	347 937	22,85
Mustafa Karadayi, (Movement for Rights and Freedoms, MDL)	199 506	11.51

Source : <https://results.cik.bg/pvrns2021/tur1/rezultati/index.html>

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