

Bulgaria still in deadlock after its 5th general elections in 2 years

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The Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB), led by former Prime Minister (2009-2013, 2014-2017, 2017-2021) Boyko Borisov, came out ahead in the general elections held on 2 April in Bulgaria. This was the fifth such election to be held in the country since April 2021. The party won 26.54% of the vote.

It was ahead of We Continue the Change - a liberal coalition founded by Kiril Petkov and Asen Vassilev, which ran in alliance with Democratic Bulgaria, led by Hristo Ivanov, which includes Yes Bulgaria, the Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria and the Greens - which won 24.61%.

Revival (Vazrazhdane, V), a nationalist party, which favours Bulgaria's exit from the European Union and NATO and a rapprochement of the country with Russia, led by Kostadin Kostanidov, took third place with 14.19%. It was followed by the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS), a party representing the Turkish-speaking minority and led by Mustafa

Karadayi, which obtained 13.55%. The Socialist Party (BSP), led by Korneliya Ninova, obtained 8.96% and finally, Such a People Exist (Ima takuv narod, ITN), a populist party founded by singer and TV presenter Slavi Trifonov, obtained 4.12%.

Six political parties will thus be represented in the next National Assembly (Narodno sabranie), the single chamber of parliament.

Turnout was low: only four out of ten Bulgarians (40.50%) went to the polls, which is an increase of 0.8 points compared to the previous general elections of 2 October 2022.)

Result of the 2 April 2023 general elections in Bulgaria

Turnout: 40.50%

Political parties	Percentage of votes obtained
Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB)	26.54
We Continue the Change-Democratic Bulgaria	24.61
Revival (Vazrazhdane, V)	14.19
Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS)	13.55
Socialist Party (BSP)	8.96
Such a people exists (Ima takuv narod, ITN)	4.12

Source : [Bulgarian Electoral Commission](#)

General elections in Bulgaria

2nd April 2023

"This is a worst-case scenario. The closer the two main parties get to each other in terms of percentage of votes, the more difficult it will be to form a stable government," said Evelina Slavkova, an analyst at the research firm Trend. Indeed, these 5th general elections are not expected to allow Bulgaria to emerge from the political crisis it has been going through since the summer of 2020 and it seems that no party will be able to form a stable government. The ideological differences and tensions between the leaders of the two main parties - Boyko Borisov and Kiril Petkov - make any alliance between them totally unlikely at this stage. "The difficulties in forming a government remain the same as before the general elections," said Boryana Dimitrova, associate director of the Alpha Research opinion institute, after the results were announced.

Borisov said he would hold talks with various parties to gather as many allies as possible. He even mentioned the option of forming a grand coalition between his party GERB and We Continue the Change, which could be led by a Prime Minister who would not come from either party.

Kiril Petkov said he wanted to form a minority government.

If neither of these two parties manages to secure the support needed to form a government, new general elections, the sixth in just over two years, could be held before the end of this year. "It would be suicidal, most people want an end to instability," said Borisov.

According to Lukas Macek, director of the Central and Eastern Europe programme at Sciences Po's Dijon campus, only a withdrawal of Boyko Borisov would lead to a solution to the current crisis. "GERB officially belongs to the centre-right and the pro-Western camp, but in Bulgaria, one should not reason in terms of right or left, alliances can be formed on other convergences," said Nadège Ragaru, research director at Sciences Po. "The Bulgarian political landscape remains deeply fragmented and the challenges are becoming increasingly profound," said Capucine May, political risk analyst at political consultancy Verisk Maplecroft.

There is little reason to be optimistic that the country will emerge from the political crisis any time soon.

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