European Elections monitor

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RESULTS

Iliana Iotova wins the presidential election thereby becoming the first woman to hold this office in Bulgaria

On 1 November, Bulgarian citizens were called upon to elect their President of the Republic in a second round of voting, which pitted the outgoing President, Iliana Iotova (acting since January 2026), against the former Prime Minister (February–May 2026) Andrey Gyurov. She won 57.56 % of the vote, compared with 39.48 %for her opponent, thereby becoming the first woman to be elected to this post in Bulgaria.

Voter turnout remained particularly low at 29.1%, although it did rise slightly compared with the first round (22.9 %). This figure is significant, as it means that 70 % of the voting-age population (6.5 million Bulgarians) chose to abstain. It also suggests that only one-sixth of the Bulgarian electorate supports the government's approach to a high-risk situation, as the conflict between Ukraine and Russia draws ever closer to its borders, particularly in the Black Sea.

One of the main issues at stake in this election was Bulgaria's security, as attacks on merchant ships in the Black Sea have been on the rise. Iliana Iotova and Rumen Radev refused to place direct blame on Russia, advocating diplomacy and strengthened dialogue with Moscow to resolve the conflict in Ukraine, from which they would like to withdraw all direct financial aid.

Following years of political turmoil during which public confidence in the political class and the democratic process has been seriously eroded, the outcome of this election could prove decisive not only for Bulgaria's future, but also for that of the European Union. Indeed, the president-elect advocates dialogue, and even a rapprochement, with Moscow in order to bring an end to the war in Ukraine.

Although Iliana Iotova stood as an independent candidate, she was in fact backed by Prime Minister Rumen Radev (whom she succeeded last January when he resigned from his post as president), his new left-wing political movement, 'Progressive Bulgaria', and the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). Her victory is expected to reinforce the political line advocated by Rumen Radev's government.

Andrey Gyurov also stood as an independent candidate, but he received the support of the parties 'We Continue the Change', 'Yes, Bulgaria' and 'Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria'. On 30 October, the leader of GERB, Boyko Borisov, a former Prime Minister (2009–2013, 2014–2017, 2017–2021) gave him his backing after signing an open letter alongside former Prime Ministers Ivan Kostov (1997–2001) and Nikolay Denkov (2023–2024), whilst in the first round he had left his electorate free to form their own opinion. Andrey Gyurov is regarded as pro-Western and pro-Ukrainian, and a proponent of a hard line towards Russia.

Although the role of the Bulgarian president is largely ceremonial, he is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, has the right to veto legislation and can sign treaties. During Roumen Radev's terms in office, the president's influence over the general direction of Bulgarian politics grew steadily. Will Iliana Iotova continue along this path?

She will be sworn in on 22 January 2027 for a five-year term.

Results of the second round of the Bulgarian presidential election on 1 November 2026

Turnout: 29.1%

Candidates	Number of votes won (1st round)	% of votes won (1st round)	Number of votes won (2nd round)	% of votes won (2nd round)
Iliana Iotova	528 753	34.76	1 093 852	57.56
Andrey Gyurov	485 927	31.95	750 251	39.48
None of these candidates	67 353	4.42	56 080	2.95

Source: https://results.cik.bg/pvr202610/tur2/rezultati/index.html

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