Bulgaria: Elections and the rule of law

Top rule of law issues

Prosecutor General: Public protests in 2020 were closely linked to the public outcry at the scope of powers and lack of responsibility of Prosecutor General Ivan Geshev, who is still in office.

Corruption: Corruption remains one of the biggest issues in Bulgaria, with 80% of polled Bulgarians considering the problem widespread. In June 2021, the United States blacklisted multiple Bulgarian individuals and entities over alleged corruption.

Independence of the judiciary: There are persistent concerns with the independence, integrity and effectiveness of the judiciary, although Bulgaria has not seen a capture of judicial institutions by the ruling party.

Press freedom: The situation of journalists and independent media in Bulgaria is assessed as alarming by leading civil society groups and experts. Corruption and collusion between media, politicians and oligarchs are seen as widespread in Bulgaria with the situation deteriorating in recent years.

Elections at a glance

When? 14 November 2021
Who is being elected? The President of Bulgaria and all 240 members of the National Assembly
Why?
- The end of the first 5-year long term of office of President Rumen Radev
- The third parliamentary election this year after elections in April and July did not lead to a government formation

Who is leading the polls?
Parliament (Politico/Kalman)
- GERB (EPP) 24%
- We Continue the Change (-) 16%
- Coalition for Bulgaria (S&D) 15%
- There Is Such a People (-) 12%
- DPS (RE) 11%
- Democratic Bulgaria (EPP) 10%
- Stand Up.BG! We are coming! (-) 4%

President (Exacta)
- Rumen Radev (-) 48%
- Anastas Gerdzhikov (-) 27%
- Mustafa Karadayi (DPS) 7.5%
- Lozan Panov (-) 7%

System of government: Unicameral parliamentary republic
Electoral system: Proportional representation, 4% electoral threshold

Elections and covid-19:
- Only in-person voting at polling stations is permitted. However, those infected with covid-19 or under quarantine can vote from home through mobile polling stations.
- Postal voting is not possible.
- Voting abroad is possible via Bulgarian embassies and consulates.

Key numbers & facts

Freedom House Freedom in the World 2021: Score 78/100, free (27/27 in the EU)
World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2021: Score 0.56/1.00, (26/27 in the EU)
RSF World Press Freedom Index 2021: Rank 112/180 (27/27 in the EU)
TI Corruption Perception Index 2020: Rank 69/180 (27/27 in the EU)
Eurobarometer on Independence of Judiciary 2021: 56% of polled Bulgarians rate the justice system in Bulgaria negatively in terms of judicial independence (35% EU average)
Implementation of leading ECtHR judgments: 49 % pending from the last 10 years (45 % European average)

Further information

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Previous DRI analysis: Bulgaria's elections and the rule of law
Further reading: EU 2021 Rule of Law Report Bulgaria