

Bulgaria: Elections and the rule of law

The elections at a glance

When? 11 July 2021

Who is being elected? All 240 members of the National Assembly

Why? Second election this year after elections in April did not lead to a government formation

Who is leading the polls? ([Alpha Research](#))

- There Are Such People (-) **21.8%**
- GERB (EPP) **21.5%**
- Coalition for Bulgaria (S&D) **16.4%**
- Democratic Bulgaria (EPP) **12%**
- DPS - Movement for Rights and Freedoms (RE) **11.1%**
- Stand Up.BG (-) **5.4%**

System of government: Unicameral parliamentary republic

Electoral system: proportional representation with 4% electoral threshold

Election rules & covid-19:

- Only in-person voting of registered voters 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. No exceptions have been made this year.
- 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)
- [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 Rule of Law 2019](#): **70% of Bulgarians** see a strong need for improving effectiveness and independence of courts (50% EU average)
- [Implementation of leading ECHR cases](#): **49% pending from the last 10 years** (45% average)
- Bulgaria, like Romania, falls under the [EU Mechanism for Cooperation and Verification \(CVM\)](#) that aims to monitor respect for the rule of law, democracy and human rights since the two states joined the union.

Previous DRI analysis

- [Bulgaria's elections and the rule of law \(2021\)](#)
- [Bulgaria's protests and the rule of law \(2020\)](#)

Further reading

- [EU Commission 2020 Rule of Law Report Bulgaria](#)
- [Eurobarometer on Corruption 2020](#)
- [EU Commission CVM progress reports](#)

Top rule of law issues in Bulgaria



Prosecutor general: Public protests in 2020 were closely linked to the public outcry at the [scope of powers and likely abuse of office](#) by Prosecutor General Ivan Geshev, who is still in office.



Corruption: Corruption remains one of the biggest issues in Bulgaria, with the country consistently ranking among the worst in the EU. In June 2021, the [United States blacklisted](#) multiple Bulgarian individuals and entities over alleged corruption, contrasting with the overall more timid actions by EU institutions.



Independence of the judiciary: There are persistent concerns with the independence, integrity and effectiveness of the courts, although Bulgaria has not seen a capture of key judicial institutions by the ruling party, unlike the situation witnessed in countries such as Poland.



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 is seen as widespread in Bulgaria, with the situation deteriorating in the recent years.