

Web 57DHYAFZZFLEB April 20 2026 Bulgaria under Radev may be pro Russia but address corruption

1 Bulgarian Voters Worn Down by Corruption Back New Coalition headed by **Progressive Bulgaria** with an alliance of liberal opposition parties called **We Continue the Change Democratic Bulgaria** Bulgarian citizens are yearning for the kind of prosperous life enjoyed by other Europeans Bulgaria held its eighth election in five years **RAWSEP View** The good news is that a new government in Bulgaria may fight corruption The bad news is that new leader Rumen Radev is in favor of Russia and recently criticized the caretaker Bulgarian government for rushing to sign a security agreement with President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine Bulgaria has deep cultural religious and linguistic ties to Russia said the founder of the Myara polling agency and since the full scale war in Ukraine began in 2022 politics in Bulgaria has changed from right wing versus left to East versus West But Rumen Radev has filled his party list with sports personalities and technocrats who are decidedly in favor of Europe in their outlook and focused on economic development And The Rumen Radev Party **Progressive Bulgaria** is expected to form a coalition with **We Continue the Change Democratic Bulgaria** Excerpts edited by Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization The New York Times April 20 2026 Bulgarians voted decisively on Sunday April 19 2026 for politicians promising change and a crackdown on corruption delivering a blow to the center right party that had dominated for the last decade Former President Rumen Radev leader of a new coalition **Progressive Bulgaria** claimed an uncontested victory in comments to journalists outside his party headquarters two hours after voting had ended Rumen Radev offered a broad platform that can appeal to a wide cross section of society and draw in older generations **conservative voters in favor of Russia** and the younger voters in favor of European and business communities Bulgaria has deep cultural religious and linguistic ties to Russia said the founder of the Myara polling agency and since the full scale war in Ukraine began in 2022 politics in Bulgaria has changed from right wing versus left to East versus West The tradition here the cultural tradition the religious tradition is rather linked to Russia he said and Rumen Radev speaks this language Radev gained a reputation for being in favor of Russia in his comments and positions during his nine years as president He recently criticized the caretaker Bulgarian government for rushing to sign a security agreement with President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine He has complained that the previous government decision to join the eurozone in January should have been put to a referendum saying that the timing was not beneficial for Bulgaria But he has filled his party list with sports personalities and technocrats who are decidedly in favor of Europe in their outlook and focused on economic development Some political analysts said Rumen Radev had been so purposefully vague about his policies that it was far from clear how he would act if he formed a government Radev will most likely want to continue importing Russian oil and gas to Bulgaria and be against the European Union supplying financial and military assistance to Ukraine said Mister Smilov the professor at the University of Sofia I do not expect any radical moves from Radev such as withdrawing Bulgaria from NATO or the European Union he said For the first time however there is a possibility of a parliamentary majority that is not strongly committed to the European Union and NATO It is unlikely to be openly in favor of Russia but it could differ significantly from previous majorities in favor of Europe Polling agencies reported that the coalition was leading with up to **45 percent** of the vote and might be heading for a majority of seats in Parliament The results remain incomplete and the official count is expected Monday but the size of the **Progressive Bulgaria** win appeared to be the largest seen in Bulgaria in years The party of the former prime minister Boyko Borissov Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria or GERB which resigned in the face of the protests in December was pushed into **second place** with a much reduced portion of the vote And an alliance of liberal opposition parties called **We Continue the Change Democratic Bulgaria** which

spearheaded mass protests in December that had brought down the government made significant gains coming in a close third with 13 to 14 percent Both Progressive Bulgaria and We Continue the Change Democratic Bulgaria have campaigned on plans to fight the stranglehold of corruption that Borissov together with another powerful politician Delyan Peevski leader of a small party DPS have maintained over Bulgarian institutions In the new Parliament there will be a strong majority against corruption This will mark the end of the dominance of GERB and DPS in Bulgarian politics They will be prevented from blocking necessary reforms in the judiciary and the security services Turnout was up from previous years at around 50 percent breaking the trend of apathy among an electorate weary of repeated elections in which turnout fell as low as 34 percent in 2024 Five parties appeared to have passed the 4 percent threshold to win seats in Parliament polling agencies indicated Polling stations were busy on a sunny spring day in the capital Sofia with lines stretching down the street in some places Voters said they wanted to change the status quo a reference to the coalition led by GERB that has dominated the political scene for the last decade and become mired in corruption Many voters said that they did not expect one party to win outright and that there could be drawn out negotiations to form a coalition government I do not believe there could be sudden change out of the blue said the executive director of public transport in the municipality of Sofia There is no magic wand Bulgarians have seen multiple governments come and go since the fall of Communism in 1989 most voted out for failing to deliver It became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization NATO and the European Union EU yet has remained at the bottom of the European family in terms of economic prosperity and endemic corruption Public dissatisfaction reached a peak in the past five years over a growing sense that a corrupt elite was ruling with impunity and that weak coalition governments were failing to enact promised reforms Tens of thousands of people filled the streets on several occasions in organized protests bringing out a cross section of society that included employer associations and trade unions teachers students and ethnic minorities of Bulgaria The number of protesters surprised even the organizers The last government in particular was composed of political parties that the great majority of people saw as corrupt A caretaker government was put in place in February A former fighter pilot and commander of the air force of Bulgaria Radev age 62 was twice elected president and became a popular figure in the country The post of president in Bulgaria is largely ceremonial which allowed him to remain aloof from the political maneuvering and infighting of daily governing He resigned from it in January to join the race for Parliament Under Bulgarian parliamentary democracy the party with a majority of seats in Parliament forms a government with the party leader often but not always assuming the post of prime minister Radev has promised to fight corruption and dismantle the oligarchy a phrase used to describe a powerful and shady elite with outsize influence over Bulgarian political and economic life At a rally on Thursday night of more than Ten Thousand supporters in the city of Sofia Bulgaria Radev said the party was aiming to form a government without needing to enter a coalition with the political parties that have been in power over the past decade Progressive Bulgaria will not go down the path of the previous stitched together coalitions he told an applauding crowd We do not promise miracles but we promise rules a law for everybody peace because without it everything else loses meaning he said We are very ambitious people and very pragmatic said a 45 year old former adviser and a candidate for the Radev party from the industrial cities of Stara Zagora and Shumen describing the members of the new party We have shared priorities on how to improve the wellbeing of Bulgarian citizens That is the common topic Radev has been outspoken about his determination to break the stranglehold of organized crime in Bulgaria and specifically to dismantle the influence of Peevski one of the most powerful politicians in Bulgaria Peevski was placed under sanction in 2021 by the US Treasury for engaging in corruption using influence peddling and bribes to protect himself from public scrutiny and exert control over key institutions and sectors in Bulgarian

society Political parties have made similar promises before but Mister Pulev said he believed the team under Radev was ready for a fight

2 Moscow friendly Rumen Radev wins absolute majority in Bulgarian elections The win of the Former president could end years of weak coalition governments But critics say it may be bad for the EU [RAWSEP View](#) The corrupt politician Boyko Borissov was considered supportive of Europe over Russia Therefore Rumen Radev is considered a change from a corrupt Borissov government that happened to also be supportive of the EU However Rumen Radev is not expected to block EU aid to Ukraine for instance [Excerpts edited by Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization](#) The Guardian April 20 2026 The Bulgarian Moscow friendly former president has won an absolute majority in parliamentary elections that could bring the country political stability after years of short lived coalitions but [leave it walking a tightrope on EU issues](#) With all votes counted on Monday the Progressive Bulgaria party of Rumen Radev a former fighter pilot and air force chief had 44 point 6 percent of the vote giving it an estimated 131 of the 240 seats in the national assembly which is over half the seats in the Bulgarian Parliament The election was the eighth in Bulgaria since 2021 when [huge anticorruption rallies brought down](#) the government of the long serving [supportive of Europe prime minister Boyko Borissov](#) The Radev majority is the first for a single political formation since 1997 The left leaning Progressive Bulgaria tally put it far ahead of the Borissov conservative GERB party with 13 point 4 percent and the supportive of Europe We Continue the Change Democratic Bulgaria PP DB coalition which had 12 point 6 percent of the votes on the Sunday ballot Radev who rode a wave of voter anger at entrenched corruption and the veteran parties that have allowed it said late on Sunday This is a victory of hope over distrust a victory of freedom over fear and finally if you will a victory of morality [Radev said Bulgaria would make every effort to follow its European path](#) but added A strong Bulgaria and a strong Europe need critical thinking and pragmatism [Europe has fallen victim to its own ambition to be a moral leader in a world with new rules](#) While hailing the benefits to Bulgaria of EU membership Radev has been critical of several of the European bloc policies and [called unsuccessfully for a referendum on the Bulgarian decision to join the euro last year](#) [António Costa](#) the president of the European Council said on social media that he looked forward to working with Radev on our shared agenda for a prosperous autonomous and secure Europe Radev has also talked repeatedly about [improving ties with Moscow](#) and [resuming the free flow of Russian oil and gas into Europe](#) [The Kremlin on Monday welcomed the Radev win](#) Radev 62 who stepped down from the largely ceremonial role of president in January to campaign on an antigraft ticket has [criticized a recent defense agreement signed between Bulgaria and Ukraine and opposed Sofia sending arms to Kyiv](#) He has however pledged not to use a Bulgarian veto to block future EU decisions and analysts note he has consistently denied being aligned with the Kremlin backed EU membership and appeared deliberately vague on foreign policy In a message perhaps designed to calm concerns about a possible pro Russia drift one of the closest associates of Radev Slavi Vassilev said last week Bulgarians do not want closer ties to Russia but rather [Bulgarians want continued active participation in Nato and the EU](#) Maintaining a strategic ambiguity towards Russia and the EU while focusing his campaign on corruption allowed Radev to take votes from the far right Revival party which won just 4 percent of the vote and GERB whose score was its lowest ever [EU diplomats have said they do not expect Radev to seek to take over from the Hungarian support for Moscow](#) and stands against Brussels of prime minister Viktor Orbán whose 16 years in power were dramatically ended last weekend as the bloc disrupter in chief