

BULGARIA FORMS NEW CARETAKER GOVERNMENT AS COUNTRY HEADS FOR YET ANOTHER SNAP ELECTION

Key takeaways from the formation of the second Glavchev Cabinet

4 September 2024

SUMMARY

Bulgaria is heading for its sixth consecutive snap parliamentary election in three years after its ideologically and structurally diverse parliament yet again failed to produce a functioning government following June's snap parliamentary elections. After this latest failure to form a cabinet with a democratic mandate, President Rumen Radev appointed the second Caretaker Government of Prime Minister Dimitar Glavchev on 27th August, with the next parliamentary elections now scheduled for 27th October.

Glavchev's return as Caretaker PM comes after President Radev rejected Goritsa Grancharova-Kozhareva, a previous candidate for PM, over disagreements on her candidate for Interior Minister, Kalin Stoyanov. Largely mirroring his first cabinet, the new Glavchev Government includes three new additions: Foreign Minister Ivan Kondov, Interior Minister Atanas Ilkov and Transport and Communications Minister Krassimira Stoyanova.

Although functioning in a caretaker capacity, Bulgaria's recent interim governments have started going beyond their caretaker role to address current issues and challenges, as well as focusing on strategic policy objectives. Accordingly, the Glavchev Cabinet is expected to advance the country's EU integration, with a focus on securing full membership in the Schengen Zone and introducing the Euro as the country's official currency. However, prospects for progress remain limited due to the political uncertainty of recent years.

With less than two months to go until the next election, Bulgaria is bracing itself for another hung parliament, with yet another snap election looming on the horizon if parties fail to agree on a governing majority. However, multiple other factors could shape the outcome of the October election, including growing voter fatigue, as well as disputes within centrist parliamentary parties.

 Below, Aretera takes a deeper look at Bulgaria's new government and the country's pre-election landscape.

BULGARIA FORMS NEW CARETAKER GOVERNMENT

On 27th August, Bulgarian President Rumen Radev appointed the country's new caretaker government, led by incumbent Caretaker Prime Minister Dimitar Glavchev. Bulgaria's latest interim cabinet was sworn in after President Radev rejected an earlier proposal to form a new caretaker cabinet from Goritsa Grancharova-Kozhareva, the Vice President of Bulgaria's National Audit Office, over disagreements on her candidate for Interior Minister, Kalin Stoyanov.

The formation of Bulgaria's new caretaker government comes after three failed and largely stalled attempts to form a new cabinet since the country's latest snap elections were held on 9th June¹. The centre-right GERB-SDS of former PM Boyko Borissov won that election but fell short of a majority and subsequently failed to form a working coalition, as did two other parties – the Turkish minority Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS) and the populist There is Such a Nation (ITN). Under Bulgaria's constitution, three failed attempts to form a government trigger snap parliamentary elections, which President Radev set for 27th October.

COUNTRY HEADS FOR YET ANOTHER SNAP ELECTION

The formation of Glavchev's new cabinet comes as massive political uncertainty has been looming over Bulgaria since none of the country's six consecutive snap parliamentary elections held since mid-2021 have managed to produce an enduring government with a democratic mandate. The lack of a functioning parliamentary majority is due to multiple political and ideological divides, as well as a largely fragmented political playing field.

Despite winning several of the previous snap elections, GERB has been unable to form long-lasting alliances in the parliament, while divides have been growing with the appearance of new parties, including those on the pro-Russian far-right – Revival and Grandeur. Aside from the Turkish minority DPS, most parties remain sceptical of GERB over allegations of corruption, including the centrist-liberal We Continue the Change-Democratic Bulgaria alliance (PP-DB). Following years of political rivalry, PP-DB did form an informal coalition government with GERB led by Nikolay Denkov, however his government was short-lived and collapsed in April this year.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE NEW CABINET

The second Glavchev Cabinet is largely a continuation of the interim PM's first government, appointed on 9th April². The new cabinet does include three new members, however: Foreign Minister Ivan Kondov, Interior Minister Atanas Ilkov and Transport and Communications Minister Krassimira Stoyanova.

Prior to becoming Bulgaria's FM, Kondov, who joined Bulgaria's Foreign Ministry in 1995, briefly served in the same position in Galab Donev's second Caretaker Government (February-June 2023), and as Deputy FM in the first Glavchev Cabinet. The new Interior Minister, Atanas Ilkov, held several positions in Bulgarian law enforcement, having served as a criminal investigator and chief of Bulgaria's national police. Newly appointed Transport and Communications Minister Krassimira Stoyanova is a lawyer by profession, who served as chief of staff to five previous transport ministers.

¹ See [here](#) for Aretera's overview of Bulgaria's latest snap elections from June 2024

² See [here](#) for Aretera's overview of the first Glavchev Cabinet

As for the returning Caretaker PM, Glavchev – nominally a political independent and a previous member of Borissov’s GERB – worked as a professional accountant for nearly 30 years and went on to become the President of Bulgaria’s National Audit Office, a position he still holds officially and from which he has taken unpaid leave. He served as an MP between 2009 and 2021 and briefly as Speaker of Parliament in 2017.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE SECOND GLAVCHEV CABINET

Cabinet Composition as of 27 th August, 2024		
Cabinet Member	Position	Portfolio
Dimitar Glavchev	Prime Minister	-
Lyudmila Petkova	Deputy PM & Minister	Finance
Atanas Ilkov	Minister	Interior
Ivan Kondov	Minister	Foreign Affairs
Atanas Zapryanov	Minister	Defense
Maria Pavlova	Minister	Justice
Ivailo Ivanov	Minister	Labour & Social Policy
Vladimir Malinov	Minister	Energy
Violeta Koritarova-Kasabova	Minister	Regional Development
Petko Nikolov	Minister	Economy & Industry
Galya Kondeva-Mankova	Minister	Health
Petar Dimitrov	Minister	Environment & Waters
Georgia Takhov	Minister	Agriculture
Krassimira Stoyanova	Minister	Transport & Communications
Valentin Mundrov	Minister	e-Government
Evtim Miloshev	Minister	Tourism
Rossen Karadimov	Minister	Growth & Innovation
Galin Tsokov	Minister	Education
Naiden Todorov	Minister	Culture
Georgi Glushkov	Minister	Sports

Source: Government of Bulgaria

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In the absence of a democratically elected government, Bulgaria's interim cabinets – functioning in parallel with hung parliaments with multiple parliamentary groups – have started going beyond their caretaker role, taking on current and long-term challenges. However, their mandate remains limited to the formation of a new government that is expected after the next snap parliamentary election.

The key policy objectives of the second Glavchev Government include advancing Bulgaria's European integration, with a focus on securing full membership in the EU's Schengen Area (after securing an EU decision to eliminate air and maritime border control as of March), as well as introducing the Euro. However, the implementation of the latter objective has been facing significant legislative delays due to the political uncertainty and high inflation.


LOOKING AHEAD

With less than two months to go until the next snap elections, Bulgaria's political scene remains largely unchanged. Borissov's GERB continues to poll first with 23-24% on average, followed by the PP-DB alliance and the DPS, which are competing for second place and are each polling at 15%, respectively. They are followed by the pro-Russian and far-right Revival, the left-wing BSP for Bulgaria and the populist ITN, while other potential entrants include the pro-Russian Grandeur, the latest addition to the National Assembly.

Accordingly, Aretera's baseline scenario assumes that the October election will likely fail yet again to produce a functioning majority. At the same time, multiple other factors could impact the electoral race, including a recent dispute within the DPS, which led to a split within its parliamentary group. The upcoming snap parliamentary vote may also be impacted by growing voter fatigue, which could likely hurt the country's centrist and establishment parties and simultaneously benefit pro-Russian formations, potentially contributing to deepening the political divide.

###

If you would like to schedule a discussion of this paper, please contact:
[Lilyana Zagorcheva](mailto:L.Zagorcheva@AreteraPA.com), Aretera's Regional Director for Bulgaria & the Balkans at L.Zagorcheva@AreteraPA.com

 **Aretera** is a leading independent public affairs advisory firm operating across Central & Eastern Europe, Türkiye, Central Asia and a growing number of global emerging markets. We advise a wide range of leading multi-national corporations, providing counsel on all aspects of public policy, public affairs and reputation management. www.areterapa.com