



# Weekly Briefing

**Bulgaria political briefing:**  
**Mutual Accusations, lack of trust and Ultimatums between the**  
**Ruling Political Forces in Bulgaria**  
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## **Mutual Accusations, lack of trust and Ultimatums between the Ruling Political Forces in Bulgaria**

### **Summary**

*Just two weeks after the election of a regular government in Bulgaria, headed by Prime Minister Nikolay Denkov, contradictions broke out between the political parties that supported the government and tensions emerged that threaten the stability of the cabinet. The problem arises from the fact that the new government of Bulgaria was formed as a result of the support of the two largest forces in the parliament, the coalitions GERB – “Union of Democratic Forces” and “We continue the Change” - “Democratic Bulgaria”, which on the other hand are extreme political opponents. This is also the reason that there is no real coalition agreement on governance between the two formations. This in turn leads to constant mutual accusations, lack of trust and ultimatums. Many experts predict that the government will not last long, as tensions between the two governing formations will surely intensify further with the upcoming local elections in the autumn this year, in which the same two political forces will be the main political rivals.*

Just two weeks after the start of the newly elected government of Bulgaria a scandal broke out between the main political formations that elected and support this cabinet. The problem comes from the fact that the government was formed and elected as a result of an unformal agreement between the two largest political forces in the parliament - the coalition GERB - "Union of Democratic Forces" and the coalition "We continue the Change" - "Democratic Bulgaria". At the same time, these two political forces are extreme political opponents. This makes understanding between them extremely difficult. The agreement between the two political forces was to form a government with a prime minister on a rotating basis, with the first nine months being the prime minister, Professor Nikolay Denkov from "We continue the Change", replaced as a prime minister by the current foreign minister from GERB, Maria Gabriel.

At the same time, however, apart from a joint declaration by Nikolay Denkov and Maria Gabriel announced on June 2, which became the basis of the joint cabinet, no more detailed and clear coalition agreement was signed between the political forces that formed and supported the

cabinet. This became prerequisite for many mutual accusations, mutual dissatisfaction, lack of trust as well as some ultimatums.

On June 22, for the first time, there was a danger for the government to collapse. This happened after clashes between the coalitions GERB-"Union of Democratic Forces" and "We continue the Change" - "Democratic Bulgaria", which exchanged accusations of non-compliance with previous agreements.

The main cause of misunderstanding is issues related to personnel appointments to some leadership positions in the state government offices, as well as the election of the leadership of some state regulators such as the Audit Office, the National Health Insurance Fund and the Bulgarian National Bank. The GERB-"Union of Democratic Forces" accused "We continue the Change" - „Democratic Bulgaria" of making decisions alone, without considering the other governing political force. The main accusation is that the second political force in the parliament is simply trying to occupy all the positions of power without regard to the previous agreements to share both the power and the responsibility of governance.<sup>1</sup>

For their part, "We continue the Change" - "Democratic Bulgaria" accused GERB that the declaration of governance accepted by Nikolay Denkov and Maria Gabriel upon the formation of the new government on June 2, has been violated. So they insisted on signing clear conditions and guarantees for the future governance.

The leader of the GERB party, Boyko Borisov, argued that there was no coalition agreement concluded between the first and second political force, which for him means that any claims are completely groundless. Borisov's position is that an official coalition agreement should be concluded.<sup>2</sup>

The situation escalated when "We continue the Change" - "Democratic Bulgaria" called on GERB with a special declaration to stick to the commitments made for reforms and invited them to a leadership meeting to find a solution to the situation. However, this declaration was perceived rather as an ultimatum, which, if not fulfilled, would demand the resignation of the "Denkov-Gabriel" cabinet. This was clearly stated by the leader of "We continue the Change" Kiril Petkov in a short interview after the adoption of the declaration.

In his words: *"We have confirmed the decision for a declaration that will be in 7 points with clear guarantees for their implementation. In case of failure, we will demand the*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://manager.bg/%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0/vzaimni-obvinenia-za-plavasti-mnozinstva-i-smokinovi-listove-zalaha-parlamenta>

<sup>2</sup> <https://boulevardbulgaria.bg/articles/borisov-i-petkov-se-napadnaha-za-plavashtite-mnozinstva-na-gerb-i-upravlenieto>

*resignation of the government"*. Petkov added that Bulgaria needs a reformist government, not a new political crisis, but not at any cost.<sup>3</sup>

In the declaration "We continue the Change" - "Democratic Bulgaria" stated that they insist on receiving *"a clear confirmation of the commitments made only two weeks ago by GERB - "Union of Democratic Forces", as well as additional guarantees for their implementation"*. These commitments and guarantees include the following:

1. Creation of a board of representatives nominated by the two political coalitions before the start of procedures for the election of the regulatory state bodies, elected by the National Assembly. This includes coordination of the nominations for the election of the National Health Insurance Fund, the State Audit Office and the Bulgarian National Bank.

2. Compliance with the commitment to the already approved general legislative program by introducing a mechanism to guarantee a stable majority formed by the first and second political forces in the adoption of all bills from this general legislative program. This mechanism should include a weekly meeting of the leaders of the parliamentary groups to agree on the agenda of the National Assembly.

3. Commitment of GERB-"Union of Democratic Forces" to comply with a road map with specific deadlines for the implementation of the judicial and constitutional reform, including a clear commitment regarding a bill to change the constitution, as well as to take measures and guarantees to ensure that the current composition of the Supreme Judicial Council will not elect the next Prosecutor General.

This position is related to the understanding that since the mandate of the members of the current Supreme Judicial Council has already expired a new composition should be elected accordingly.

4. Adoption of legislative changes regarding the way of functioning of the Bulgarian security services and their exemption from foreign influence, as the Chiefs of the services and the chief secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs are proposed by the Council of Ministers and elected by the Parliament;

5. Adoption of the anti-corruption bills regarding the new anti-corruption commission, after reaching political agreement on the composition of the body, the scope of the investigated persons and the crimes that fall under the competence of the commission.

6. Drafting and adoption of a general bill for changes to the Electoral Code, so that the machine vote is returned, as well as to change the composition of the Central Electoral

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<sup>3</sup> <https://trafficnews.bg/politika/pp-db-postaviha-ultimatum-gerb-7-tochki-inache-iskat-282128/>

Commission the way that all parties in the Parliament to be represented - in order to guarantee the fairness of the vote of the Bulgarians citizens in the upcoming local elections in 2023;

7. Creation of guarantees for the implementation of the governing program in connection with the admission of Bulgaria to the Eurozone by working out a common political position regarding the legality of the referendum initiative of the "Revival" political party.<sup>4</sup>

The last point refers to the proposal of the "Revival" party to hold a national referendum for the Bulgarian currency to remain the only official currency in the country until 2043.

In the conclusion of the document, it is said that any non-fulfilment of the above-mentioned commitments and guarantees arising from the joint declaration of Professor Nikolay Denkov and Maria Gabriel constitutes a serious violation and replacement of the reformist character of the government and make the work of the "Denkov-Gabriel" cabinet meaningless. This, in turn, will be ground for the resignation of the cabinet.<sup>5</sup>

The proposal of "We continue the Change" - "Democratic Bulgaria" to GERB - "Union of Democratic Forces" is to sign a document called "Mechanism for guaranteeing the reform program of the office "Denkov - Gabriel". It must be signed by the two nominated prime ministers and by the leaders of all political formations in both two political forces.

The response of GERB leader Boyko Borisov was that he would sign such a document if it had the character of an official coalition agreement. Formally, GERB announced that a coalition agreement must be signed, which must first be discussed at a leadership meeting.

However, this creates a difficulty, since "We continue the Change" - "Democratic Bulgaria" do not wish to officially announce that they entered into a de facto coalition with their main political opponent. Their fear is that if they officially recognize such a coalition, they will lose a serious part of their electoral support.

## **Conclusion**

The tension between the two main political forces staying behind the Bulgarian government continues. At this point it is clear that first of all they need to specify a mechanism for the appointments that are to come. At the insistence of the "We continue the Change"- "Democratic Bulgaria", this mechanism should be the standard for nominations and support in the election of new members of important state regulatory bodies with an expired mandate. However, according to GERB, this is not enough. GERB wants clear commitments for the

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bta.bg/bg/news/bulgaria/oficial-messages/479417-deklaratsiya-na-pp-db>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bta.bg/bg/news/bulgaria/oficial-messages/479417-deklaratsiya-na-pp-db>

appointments in the executive power as well, to which they insist on direct and equal access, as long as their partners from "We continue the Change" - "Democratic Bulgaria" want to maintain a general majority in the parliament.

The dividing line now seems to be whether to sign a traditional coalition agreement or go for an alternative document that bears a different name such as "Mechanism for guaranteeing the reform program".<sup>6</sup>

Many experts predict that as the local government elections approach in the autumn, in which the two political forces will be rivals, the contradictions and further clashes between them in parliament as well as in the government will deepen and grow.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.mediapool.bg/nyamame-si-doverie-gerb-i-pp-db-ne-mogat-da-se-razberat-kak-da-zaraboti-upravlenskata-formula-news348963.html>