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# THE EUROPEAN POLICIES OF BULGARIA

A PERSPECTIVE ON BULGARIA'S ROLE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION





- *“Today is the culmination of efforts of three generations of Bulgarians. We are joining the European union not as a new member, but as an equal partner in the family of European Nations. This is the beginning of a new chapter in Bulgaria’s history, one stability, prosperity, and democratic development.”*
- *01/01/2007 President Georgi Parvanov*

# FACTORS SHAPING THE EUROPEAN POLICIES OF BULGARIA

## A. THE PLACE ON THE MAP



- Bulgaria is located in southeastern Europe. Bulgaria is bordered by the Black Sea to the east, Serbia and the Republic of North Macedonia to the west, Greece and Turkey to the south, and Romania to the north.
- The place of the map is very important as Bulgaria can connect Europe with all the countries of Black Sea region .
- Geographical size : 110.996 km<sup>2</sup>

# FACTORS SHAPING THE EUROPEAN POLICIES OF BULGARIA

## B. THE FACTOR OF SIZE



Bulgaria's population : 6.445.481 (2024)

The one sixth of population lives in Sofia , the capital of the country

It is placed among the small member-states as it occupies fifteenth position among the countries of the European Union based on population and size .

It is representing only the 1.4% of total union's population

# FACTORS SHAPING THE EUROPEAN POLICIES OF BULGARIA

## C. HISTORY



### 1. Founding and Early Empires (681 - 1018)

### 2. Second Bulgarian Empire (1185 - 1396)

### 3. Modern History (1878 - Present)

**1878:** Treaty of San Stefano recognizes autonomous Bulgaria after liberation from Ottoman rule.

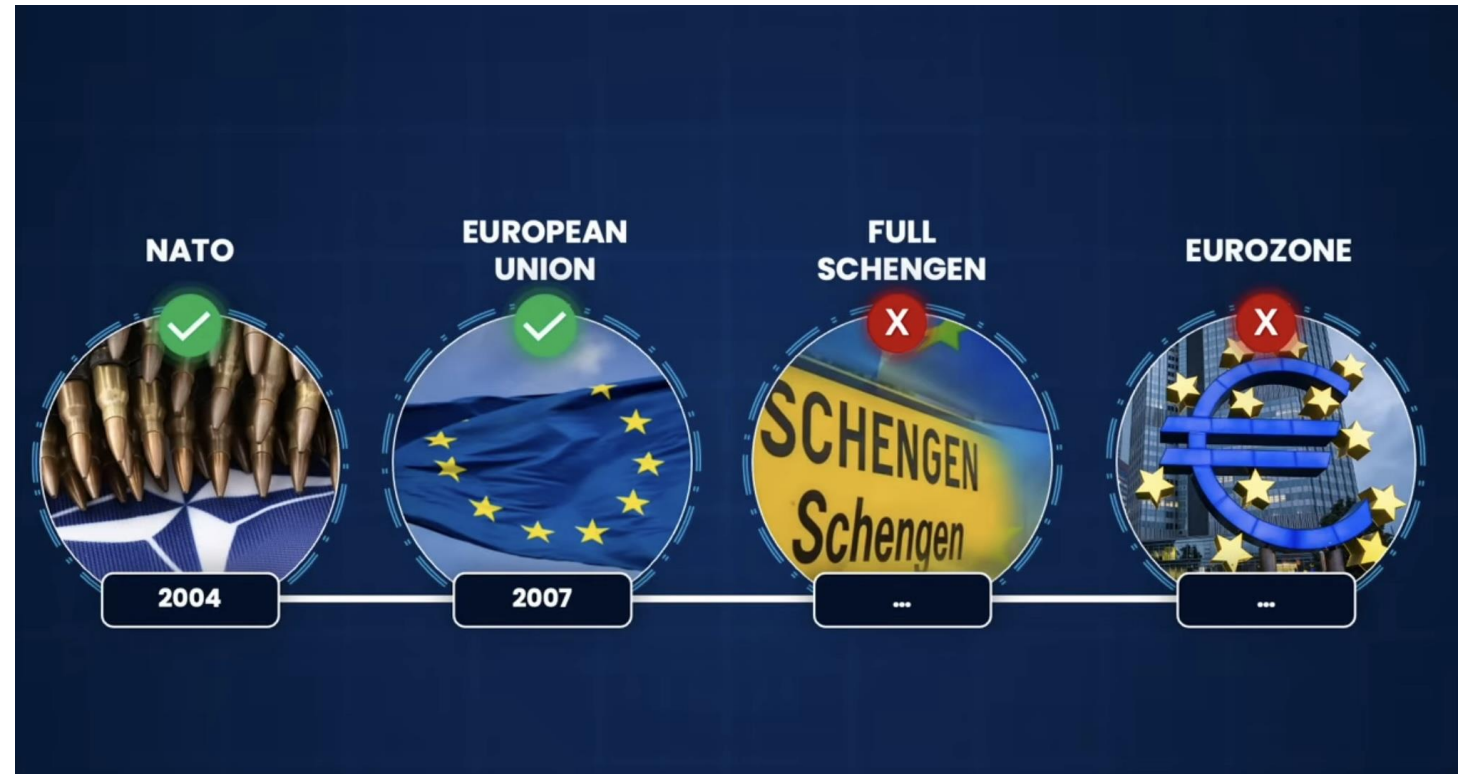
**1908:** Bulgaria proclaims full independence.

**1944:** Establishment of a communist regime post-World War II.

**1989:** Transition to parliamentary democracy after the fall of communism.

## BULGARIA IN EU

- 2004 Bulgaria joined NATO
- 2007 Bulgaria joined European Union
- Not part of the Land Schengen Area till 01/01/2025
- Not yet member of Eurozone



# BULGARIA AND SCHENGEN ACCESSION

- Bulgaria has been a candidate for Schengen Area membership since 2011, but its accession has faced significant delays.
- **Reasons for delayed accession:**
- **1.Rule of Law Issues:**
- Concerns about the effectiveness of Bulgaria's judicial system and the fight against corruption have been major factors.
- The European Commission has repeatedly highlighted the need for reforms to strengthen judicial independence and accountability.
- **2.Border Management :**
- The EU has emphasized the importance of effective border management and security.
- Bulgaria's ability to manage its borders, particularly in relation to migration, has been scrutinized.
- **3.Political Factors:**
- Political dynamics within the EU, including the positions of member-states like the Netherlands and Austria, have influenced Bulgaria's bid for Schengen. Membership.
- Some countries have expressed concerns over potential increases of irregular immigration.
- Although, despite this difficulties Bulgaria 01/01/2025 became a full member of Schengen.

# FACTORS SHAPING THE EUROPEAN POLICIES OF BULGARIA

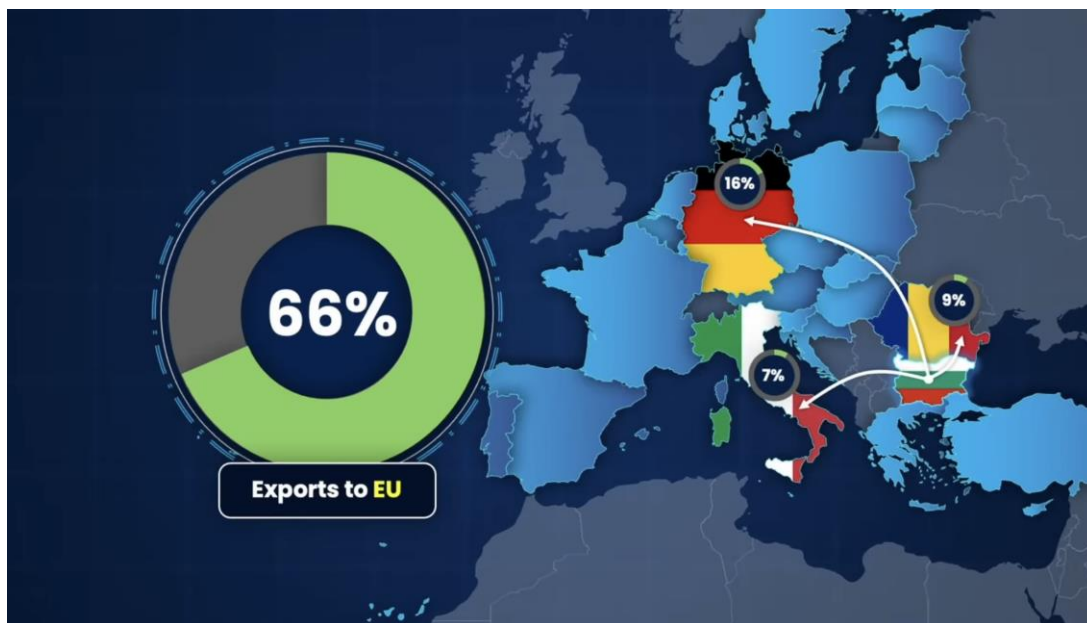
## D. ECONOMY

- Bulgaria is one of the poorest EU member states
- In 2022 the nation's GDP per capita stood at 13 thousand euros, positioning it at the bottom of the EU ranking.
- Due to its economic challenges, Bulgaria is a net receiver of EU funds . For example , in 2021 Bulgaria received 1.7 billion euros more from the EU than it contributed .

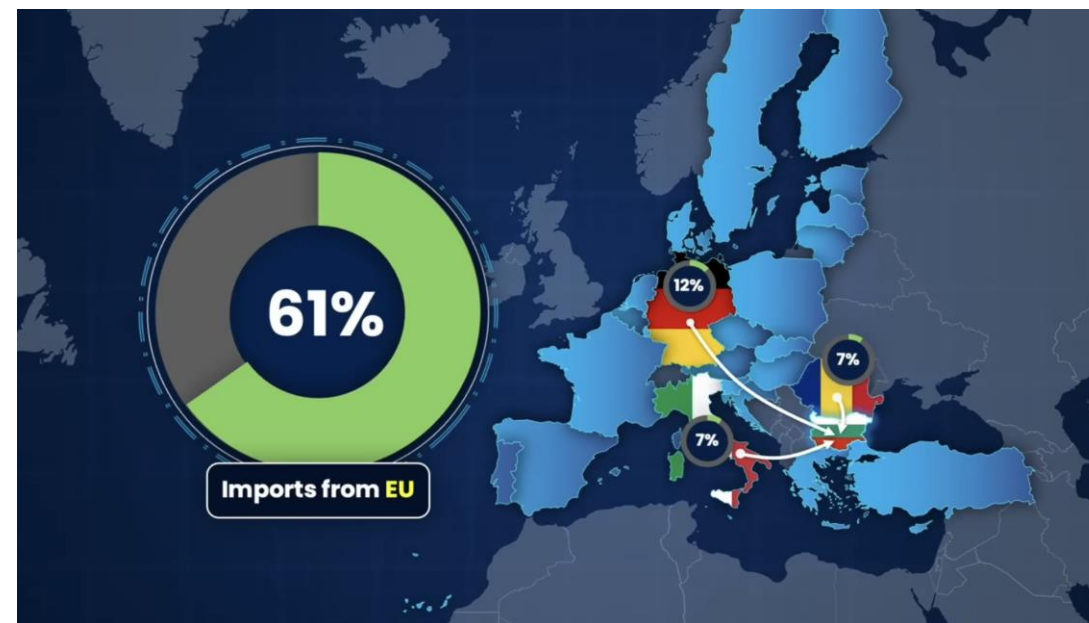
eurostat

|    | Country        | GDP per Capita |    | Country   | GDP per Capita |
|----|----------------|----------------|----|-----------|----------------|
| 1  | Luxembourg     | 118.710 €      | 14 | Spain     | 28.280 €       |
| 2  | Ireland        | 98.990 €       | 15 | Slovenia  | 27.040 €       |
| 3  | Denmark        | 64.450 €       | 16 | Estonia   | 27.040 €       |
| 4  | Netherlands    | 54.150 €       | 17 | Czechia   | 25.850 €       |
| 5  | Sweden         | 53.640 €       | 18 | Lithuania | 23.800 €       |
| 6  | Austria        | 49.400 €       | 19 | Portugal  | 23.530 €       |
| 7  | Finland        | 48.340 €       | 20 | Latvia    | 20.610 €       |
| 8  | Belgium        | 47.430 €       | 21 | Slovakia  | 19.980 €       |
| 9  | Germany        | 46.260 €       | 22 | Greece    | 19.550 €       |
| 10 | France         | 38.550 €       | 23 | Hungary   | 17.440 €       |
|    | European Union | 35.430 €       | 24 | Croatia   | 17.400 €       |
| 11 | Italy          | 33.020 €       | 25 | Poland    | 17.300 €       |
| 12 | Malta          | 32.430 €       | 26 | Romania   | 15.010 €       |
| 13 | Cyprus         | 30.430 €       | 27 | Bulgaria  | 13.270 €       |





The EU single Market has been very good for Bulgaria , as intra-EU trade accounts for 66% of Bulgaria's exports , with Germany receiving 16% , Romania 9% and Italy 7% .



When it comes to imports , EU Member States contribute to 61% of Bulgaria's imports , with Germany accounting for 12% , and both Italy and Romania 7% each.

# FACTORS SHAPING THE EUROPEAN POLICIES OF BULGARIA

## E. TYPE OF GOVERNMENT



Bulgaria is a parliamentary republic with a single house legislature based on proportional representation .



The first democratic elections were held in 1990 , shortly after the collapse of the Communist state .



The prime minister who is the head of government holds the most powerful executive position . The president who is the head of state primarily holds representative powers as well as limited veto powers .



Bulgaria is a unitary country . The territory is divided into 28 regions (oblast) , with governors appointed by the prime minister . Municipalities do not have tax-collecting powers and largely depend on fiscal transfers from the state budget .

## TYPE OF GOVERNMENT II



Bulgaria operates as a parliamentary republic where the President holds mainly ceremonial duties, such as international representation and signing laws. While the Prime Minister wields executive power, overseeing policy implementation and government management.



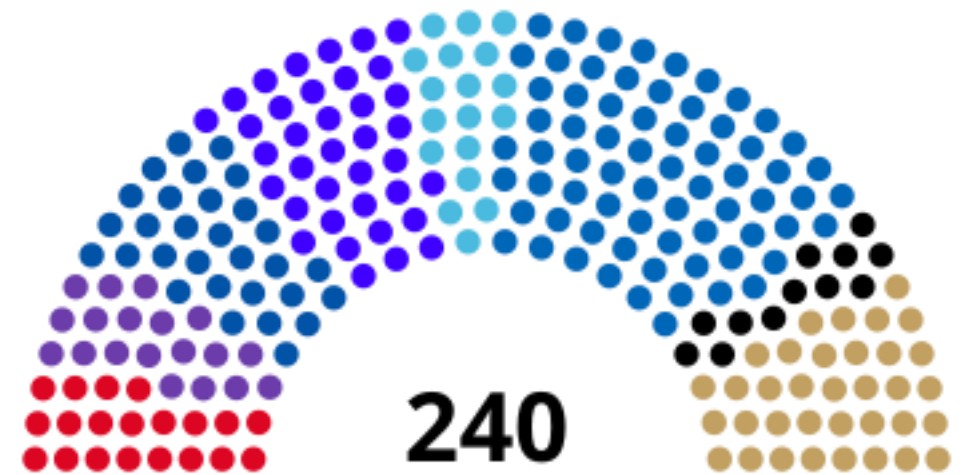
Bulgaria's governance revolves around the National Assembly, a unicameral parliament with 240 members elected every four years through proportional representation, ensuring diverse voter preferences are represented.

## 2024 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION IN BULGARIA

| EP GROUP   | SEATS | PARTY  | SEATS       |
|--|-------|--|-------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>European People's Party</li> </ul>                          | 7/17  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria</li> <li>Union of Democratic Forces</li> <li>Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria</li> </ul> | 5<br>1<br>1 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats</li> </ul> | 5/17  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bulgarian Socialist Party</li> </ul>  | 5           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renew Europe</li> </ul>                                     | 3/17  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Movement for Rights and Freedoms</li> </ul>   | 3           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>European Conservatives and Reformists</li> </ul>            | 2/17  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VMRO – Bulgarian National Movement</li> </ul>   | 2           |

## OCTOBER 2024 BULGARIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

| PARTY    | LEADER              | VOTE  | SEATS | +/- |
|----------|---------------------|-------|-------|-----|
| GERB-SDS | Boyko Borisov       | 25.52 | 69    | +1  |
| PP-DB    | Kiril Petkov        | 13.74 | 37    | -2  |
| Revival  | Kostadin Kostadinov | 12.92 | 35    | -3  |
| DPS-NN   | Delyan Peevski      | 11.17 | 30    | New |
| BSP-OL   | Atanas Zafirov      | 7.32  | 20    | +1  |
| APS      | _Dzhevdet Chakarov  | 7.23  | 19    | New |
| ITN      | Slavi Trifonov      | 6.56  | 18    | +2  |



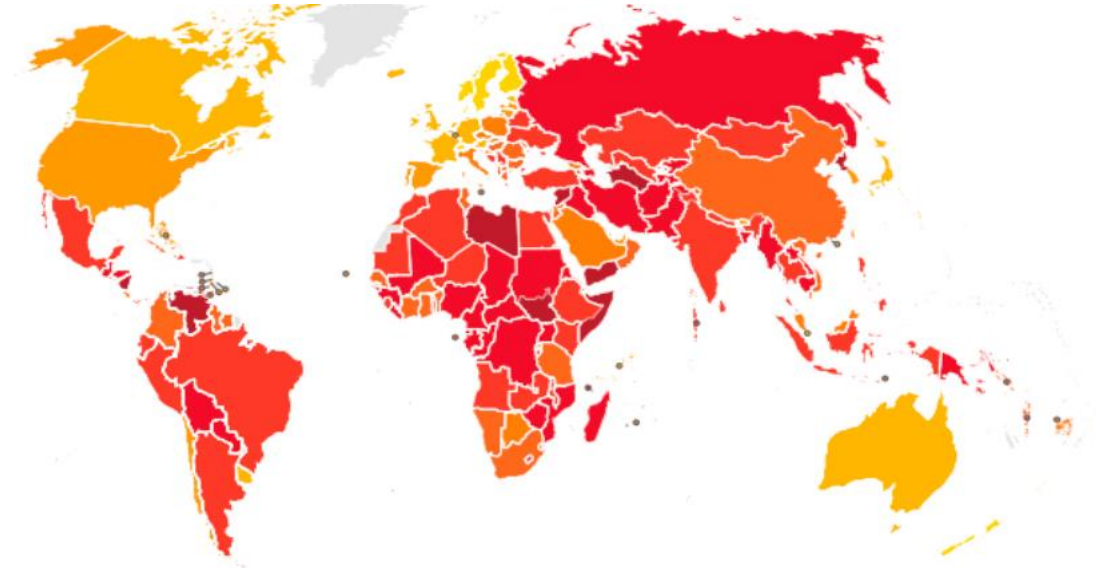
## POLITICAL CRISIS

- Bulgaria has been in a political crisis since 2021, holding seven elections in the last three years in an attempt to break the deadlock.
- The country remains highly corrupt, ranking second worst among European Union countries, after Hungary, on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, with significant mafia influence in the public sector. As shown in the chart below, the lower a country's score, the less corrupt it is, with Somalia coming in last place in the ranking.



## CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2023

The perceived levels of public sector corruption in 180 countries/territories around the world.



| SCORE | COUNTRY/TERRITORY | SCORE | COUNTRY/TERRITORY                | SCORE | COUNTRY/TERRITORY     | SCORE | COUNTRY/TERRITORY   | SCORE | COUNTRY/TERRITORY      |                                  |
|-------|-------------------|-------|----------------------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 90    | Denmark           | 68    | United Arab Emirates             | 52    | Fiji                  | 42    | Moldova             | 36    | Ukraine                |                                  |
| 87    | Finland           | 67    | Taiwan                           | 52    | Saudi Arabia          | 42    | North Macedonia     | 35    | Bosnia and Herzegovina |                                  |
| 85    | New Zealand       | 66    | Chile                            | 51    | Malta                 | 42    | Trinidad and Tobago | 35    | Papua New Guinea       |                                  |
| 84    | Norway            | 64    | Bahamas                          | 51    | Mauritius             | 41    | Burkina Faso        | 35    | Dominican Republic     |                                  |
| 83    | Singapore         | 64    | Cabo Verde                       | 50    | Croatia               | 41    | Kosovo              | 35    | Egypt                  |                                  |
| 82    | Sweden            | 63    | Korea, South                     | 50    | Malaysia              | 41    | South Africa        | 35    | Nepal                  |                                  |
| 82    | Switzerland       | 62    | Israel                           | 49    | Greece                | 41    | Vietnam             | 35    | Panama                 |                                  |
| 79    | Netherlands       | 61    | Lithuania                        | 49    | Namibia               | 40    | Colombia            | 35    | Sierra Leone           |                                  |
| 78    | Germany           | 61    | Portugal                         | 48    | Vanuatu               | 40    | Côte d'Ivoire       | 35    | Thailand               |                                  |
| 78    | Luxembourg        | 60    | Latvia                           | 47    | Armenia               | 40    | Guyana              | 34    | Ecuador                |                                  |
| 77    | Ireland           | 60    | Saint Vincent and the Grenadines | 46    | Jordan                | 40    | Suriname            | 34    | Indonesia              |                                  |
| 76    | Canada            | 60    | Spain                            | 46    | Kuwait                | 40    | Tanzania            | 34    | Malawi                 |                                  |
| 76    | Estonia           | 60    | Spain                            | 46    | Montenegro            | 40    | Tunisia             | 34    | Philippines            |                                  |
| 75    | Australia         | 59    | Botswana                         | 46    | Romania               | 40    | India               | 34    | Sri Lanka              |                                  |
| 75    | Hong Kong         | 58    | Qatar                            | 45    | Bulgaria              | 39    | Kazakhstan          | 34    | Turkey                 |                                  |
| 73    | Belgium           | 57    | Czechia                          | 45    | Sao Tome and Principe | 39    | Lesotho             | 34    | Angola                 |                                  |
| 73    | Japan             | 56    | Dominica                         | 44    | Jamaica               | 39    | Maldives            | 33    | Mongolia               |                                  |
| 73    | Uruguay           | 56    | Italy                            | 44    | Benin                 | 38    | Morocco             | 33    | Peru                   |                                  |
| 72    | Iceland           | 56    | Slovenia                         | 43    | Ghana                 | 38    | Argentina           | 33    | Uzbekistan             |                                  |
| 71    | Austria           | 55    | Costa Rica                       | 43    | Oman                  | 37    | Albania             | 33    | Niger                  |                                  |
| 71    | France            | 55    | Saint Lucia                      | 43    | Senegal               | 37    | Belarus             | 32    | El Salvador            |                                  |
| 71    | Seychelles        | 54    | Poland                           | 43    | Solomon Islands       | 37    | Ethiopia            | 31    | Kenya                  |                                  |
| 71    | United Kingdom    | 54    | Slovakia                         | 43    | Timor-Leste           | 37    | Gambia              | 31    | Mexico                 |                                  |
| 69    | Barbados          | 53    | Cyprus                           | 42    | Bahrain               | 37    | Zambia              | 31    | Togo                   |                                  |
| 69    | United States     | 53    | Georgia                          | 42    | China                 | 36    | Algeria             | 30    | Djibouti               |                                  |
| 68    | Bhutan            | 53    | Grenada                          | 42    | Cuba                  | 36    | Brazil              | 30    | Eswatini               |                                  |
|       |                   | 53    | Rwanda                           | 42    | Hungary               | 36    | Serbia              | 30    | Mauritania             |                                  |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 29                     | Bolivia                          |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 29                     | Pakistan                         |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 29                     | Paraguay                         |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 28                     | Gabon                            |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 28                     | Laos                             |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 28                     | Mali                             |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 28                     | Paraguay                         |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 27                     | Cameroon                         |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 26                     | Guinea                           |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 26                     | Kyrgyzstan                       |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 26                     | Russia                           |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 26                     | Uganda                           |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 25                     | Liberia                          |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 25                     | Madagascar                       |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 25                     | Mozambique                       |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 25                     | Nigeria                          |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 24                     | Bangladesh                       |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 24                     | Central African Republic         |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 24                     | Iran                             |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 24                     | Lebanon                          |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 24                     | Zimbabwe                         |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 23                     | Azerbaijan                       |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 23                     | Guatemala                        |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 23                     | Honduras                         |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 23                     | Syria                            |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 23                     | Venezuela                        |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 22                     | Cambodia                         |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 22                     | Congo                            |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 22                     | Guinea-Bissau                    |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 21                     | Eritrea                          |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 20                     | Afghanistan                      |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 20                     | Burundi                          |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 20                     | Chad                             |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 20                     | Comoros                          |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 20                     | Democratic Republic of the Congo |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 20                     | Myanmar                          |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 20                     | Sudan                            |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 20                     | Tajikistan                       |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 18                     | Libya                            |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 18                     | Turkmenistan                     |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 17                     | Equatorial Guinea                |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 17                     | Haiti                            |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 17                     | Korea, North                     |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 17                     | Nicaragua                        |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 16                     | Yemen                            |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 13                     | South Sudan                      |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 13                     | Syria                            |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 13                     | Venezuela                        |
|       |                   |       |                                  |       |                       |       |                     |       | 11                     | Somalia                          |



\*The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map follow the UN practice to the best of our knowledge and as of January 2024. They do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of Transparency International concerning the legitimacy of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities or concerning the delineation of its borders or boundaries.

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## ■ POLITICAL CRISIS I I

■ **Anti-corruption protests** are taking place for years, for the resignation of key figures, including Boyko Borissov and the Chief Prosecutor, due to mafia ties.

■ Political landscape remains **fragmented**, with no party able to form a stable government after the 2021 elections.

■ In April 2023, a **rotating coalition** between GERB and We Continue the Change was formed but collapsed after nine months due to disagreements.

■ GERB won the most recent election in **October 2024**, but no party has formed a majority government and none of the parties has yet managed to form a coalition government that can withstand, risking another election in 2025.

### ■ Challenges Ahead

■ Ongoing political paralysis is preventing crucial economic and judicial reforms needed for Eurozone and Schengen Area accession.

■ Risks losing EU funds due to instability and lack of governance.



**WHY DID BULGARIA  
CHOOSE TO ENTER THE  
EUROPEAN  
COMMUNITY/EUROPEAN  
UNION?**

Bulgaria's decision to join the European project was influenced by a combination of political, economic, and strategic factors:

**a) Political and Democratic Transition**

**b) Economic Modernization**

**c) Geopolitical and Security Considerations**

**d) Regional and Historical Factors**



## **WHY DID BULGARIA JOIN THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS WHEN IT DID?**

Bulgaria began its formal relationship with the EU in the early 1990s, when the country applied for association status with the European Community (EC) in 1993. However, several factors explain why Bulgaria entered the European integration process when it did:

**a) Post-Communist Reform Agenda**

**b) Changing European Context**

**c) EU Incentives and Conditionality**

# EUROSCEPTICISM IN BULGARIA



## ■ Impact on Political Landscape

Euroscepticism significantly affects Bulgaria's political landscape and public sentiment. Ongoing political crisis marked by repeated elections and lack of stable governance. Only 10% of Bulgarians express confidence in elections.

Rise of Eurosceptic Sentiments

Linked to a resurgence of pro-Russian discourse in politics.

16-fold increase in Eurosceptic publications between 2013 and 2016. 71% of Bulgarians want to remain in the EU, but many feel a sense of "Brussels diktat."

Approximately, 56% of them believe adopting the euro would undermine sovereignty.

## ■ Political Instability and External Influences

Increased vulnerability to external influences, particularly from Russia.

Nostalgia for Soviet ties amid frustrations with the EU.

Rise of parties like Vazrazhdane (Revival) capitalizing on Eurosceptic sentiments.

## ■ Trust in the EU

Trust in the EU remains higher than in domestic institutions.

Many Bulgarians see the EU as a stabilizing force despite growing Euroscepticism.

Addressing Euroscepticism is crucial for maintaining support for European values.

# BULGARIA'S POSITION IN THE UKRAINE WAR



## ■ Overview of Bulgaria's Role

Bulgaria's stance is shaped by military support, political divisions, and public sentiment.

Initially supplied arms to Ukraine covertly after Russia's invasion in February 2022, despite domestic opposition .

## ■ Political Dynamics

President Rumen Radev opposes large-scale military aid, reflecting a pro-Moscow stance that complicates political landscape .

Bulgarian parliament has passed resolutions favoring military assistance to Ukraine, demonstrating NATO commitment .

## ■ Military Modernization

Government initiated military modernization in response to perceived threats from Russia.

Acquiring Western arms and enhancing coastal defenses to bolster national security .

## ■ Public Sentiment

Divided public opinion: considerable support for Ukraine's sovereignty but strong pro-Russian sentiments among some factions .

Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed support for Ukraine on the 1,000th day of the war, highlighting commitment to Ukrainian independence .

# BULGARIA AND THE EUROZONE



## ■ Impact on Economic Stability

Bulgaria has faced significant challenges due to the eurozone crisis.

The economic crisis led to one of the sharpest deteriorations of public finances in emerging Europe.

Forced Bulgaria to withdraw its application for the European Exchange Rate Mechanism II and delayed entry into the EMU. However, Bulgaria joined the European Exchange Rate Mechanism II in 2020, a crucial step for eurozone crisis.

## ■ Government's Stance on Euro Adoption

Initially aimed for euro adoption to stabilize the economy.

High inflation and political instability have postponed accession originally targeted for January 2024 to 2025 or later.

Ongoing political crisis complicates meeting necessary criteria for eurozone entry.

## ■ Public Attitudes Towards the EU

Many Bulgarians still support EU membership despite concerns about adopting the euro.

Survey data from 2012 indicated fears of negative consequences from euro adoption.

Perception that joining the EMU could provide financial assistance during crises remains strong.



- **THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION !**