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By Veselin Toshkov

## Bulgaria moves closer to early election as talks fail

*Болгарія наближається до дострокових виборів через провал переговорів*  
*Болгарська ліберальна партія «Ми продовжуємо зміни» не змогла знайти більшість у парламенті для формування уряду, і її лідер, призначений прем'єр-міністр Асен Васильєв повернув мандат президенту Болгарії Румену Радеву, наблизивши країну до нових виборів – четвертих за трохи більше ніж рік.*  
*А. Васильєв пояснив, що його партія не знайшла необхідної підтримки, щоб забезпечити більшість у 121 місці в парламенті для обрання кабінету. Р. Радев оголосив, що передасть мандат на посаду уряду правоцентристській партії ГЕРБ колишнього прем'єр-міністра Бойко Борисова, яка вже заявила, що негайно поверне мандат. У цьому випадку третій і останній мандат президент запропонує обраній ним парламентській партії.*

<https://apnews.com/article/nato-russia-ukraine-elections-bulgaria-european-union-bb7e4e62fe34dc60061e77980fc3de5b>

SOFIA, Bulgaria (AP) — A Bulgarian liberal party failed to find a majority in parliament to form a government, and its leader on Friday returned the mandate to President Rumen Radev, bringing the country closer to a new election — the fourth in little more than a year.

Prime Minister-designate Assen Vassilev, who is co-chair of the reformist We Continue the Change party, had a week to try to end the European Union and NATO member's latest political crisis amid soaring tensions with Russia.

Before returning the mandate, Vassilev explained that his party didn't find the necessary support to secure a 121-seat majority in Parliament to elect a Cabinet.

“We could not get the support needed to rid Bulgaria of corruption and make the state work for the people, instead of channeling taxpayers' money into a few select companies that can use it to corrupt the political class,” the prime minister designate said.

He explained that his party had managed to secure the support of 117 lawmakers — not enough for a parliamentary majority — and hoped to gather at least four more seats in an upcoming election.

The Harvard-educated Vassilev served as finance minister in the previous pro-Western government that was toppled in a no-confidence vote on June 22.

The ouster of the government, which took office last December pledging zero tolerance for corruption, opens the way to a new election. That could bring a stronger presence of nationalist and pro-Russia groups in parliament.

On Friday, Radev announced that next week he will hand the government mandate to the center-right GERB party of former Prime Minister Boyko Borissov, which has already said that it

would return the mandate immediately. In this case, a third and last mandate will be offered by the president to a parliamentary party of his choice.

Political analyst Daniel Smilov said that the failure to form a new government means that the chances of an early parliamentary election had risen sharply.