



BFMI and Sensika's

'TikTokcracy'

Tracker #2

Life monitoring
Bulgarian Parliamentary Elections 2026

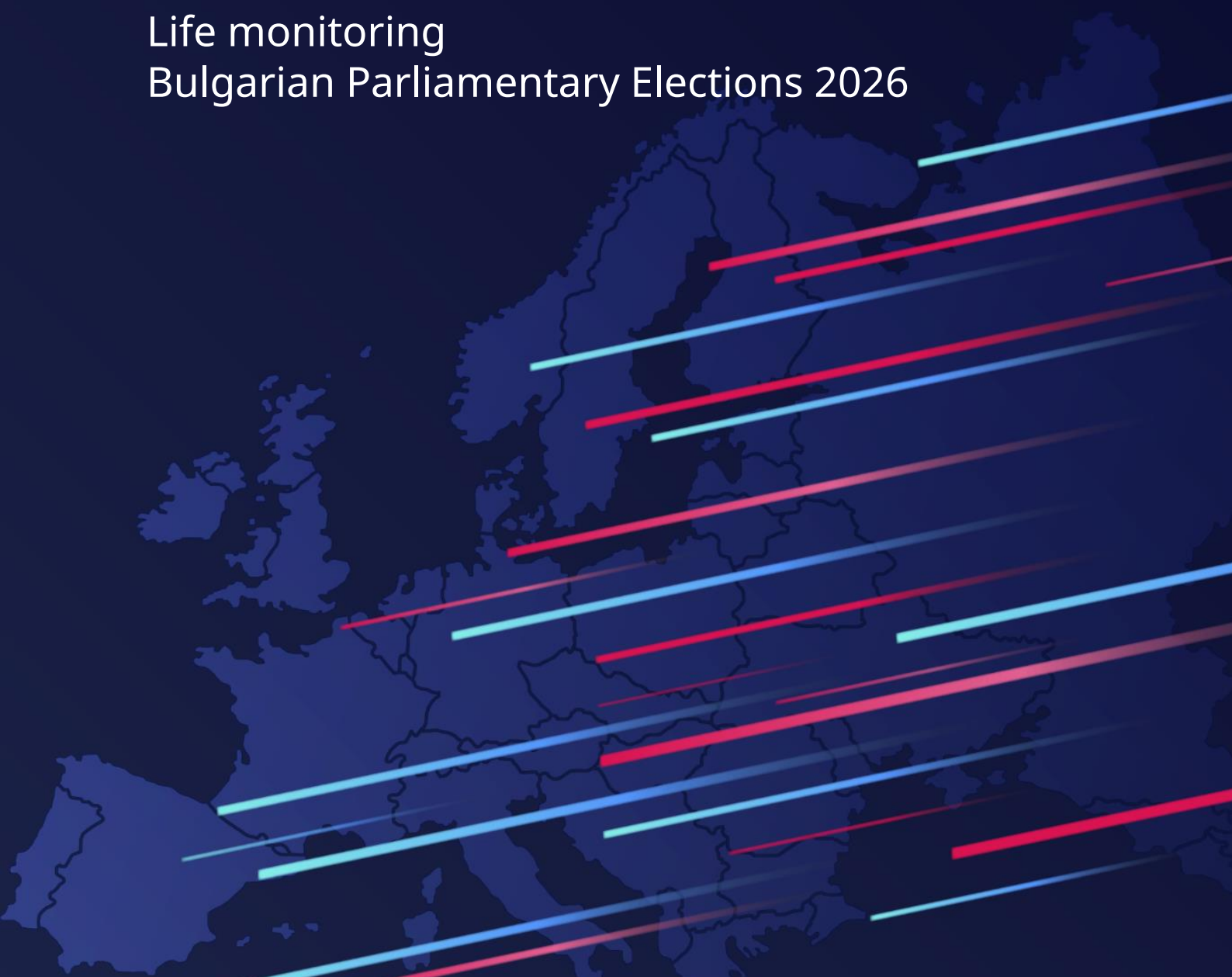


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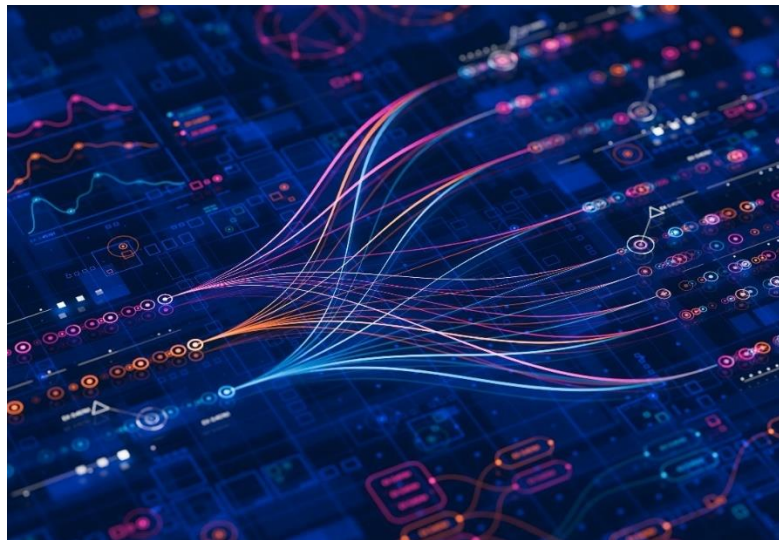
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Executive Summary

Bulgaria's information environment continues to be shaped by coordinated inauthentic activity that is multi-platform and multi-party. Documented coordinated inauthentic activity has been linked to three of the major political forces contesting this election, with significant anomalous engagement patterns observed around two more. The methods and platforms differ, but the cumulative picture is one in which inauthentic or artificially amplified activity is present across virtually the entire electoral landscape.

Both TikTok and Facebook are being subjected to significant manipulation. [TikTok has taken enforcement action, removing 34 accounts associated with Movement for Rights and Freedoms - New Beginning \(DPS-NN\)](#) following the findings in our [first tracker](#). New data suggests this produced a measurable contraction in the party's reach. Accounts with similar manipulation patterns have, however, emerged around other political actors, notably Revival (Vazrazhdane) and Morality, Unity, Honour (MECh), in the most recent monitoring period.

In communications with BFMI, Meta confirmed that it has not identified coordinated inauthentic behaviour (CIB) targeting the Bulgarian elections according to its own definition of the term. As documented throughout this report, platforms apply divergent definitions and thresholds when assessing manipulation, producing enforcement outcomes that are difficult for external observers to evaluate. Given Facebook's penetration of [65 per cent of Bulgarian adults](#) and its dominant role in political communication, inconsistent approaches by the platforms to documented manipulation remain a significant gap in defending these elections.



Any platform response in this electoral cycle appears, in BFMI's assessment, to have been largely prompted by flagging from civil society organisations. There has been no proper activation of the governmental strand of the EU's response mechanism. Despite the recent designation of a Digital Services Coordinator in Bulgaria, the operational capacity required to exert

meaningful regulatory pressure on the platforms during this electoral cycle has not materialised.

Bulgarian media and political leaders have speculated about a so-called "Romanian moment." This report does not find manipulation on the scale of what occurred in Romania in December 2024. It does, however, find a qualitatively different problem, in which the manipulation is distributed across the political spectrum, generated domestically, and embedded within the competitive dynamics of the election itself.

The monitoring data, **covering 16 March to 12 April 2026**, confirms that the patterns identified previously are structural. The electorate has no reliable means of distinguishing manipulated engagement from authentic political activity. With five days before polling day, that is the condition in which Bulgarians will vote.

The shortcomings in the response by platforms, national authorities, and the EU to the manipulation documented in this report carry critical lessons for future elections and for digital regulation more broadly across the European Union. These are addressed in the final section of this report.



Methodology

This report examines publicly available engagement data from the major platforms dominating Bulgaria's information environment. It seeks to establish whether the patterns observed are consistent with inauthentic behaviour, which political actors stand to benefit, what themes and messages are being amplified, and through what mechanisms that amplification is being achieved.

Coordinated inauthentic behaviour, as this report defines it, refers to the use of accounts, pages, or networks to artificially inflate the apparent popularity of political content through means that misrepresent the organic nature of the engagement. It encompasses purchased engagement, bot-driven interaction, coordinated posting from purpose-built accounts, the repurposing of existing pages for undisclosed political purposes, and the deployment of AI-generated fake profiles. The common characteristic of these practices is the deliberate presentation of manufactured activity as organic public sentiment.

Platforms, such as Facebook and TikTok, maintain their own definitions of coordinated inauthentic behaviour, which differ from one another in scope and in the thresholds they set for enforcement. Meta's definition has narrowed over time to focus on adversarial threat actors deploying false identities. In doing so, it excludes coordinated activity that does not rely on fake accounts or deceptive personas, even where coordination is still deliberate and strategic.

TikTok frames comparable activity as 'covert influence operations,' emphasising deception of platform systems and users. This does not capture coordinated activity that is publicly

attributable or does not rely on networks of deceptive accounts.

These definitional variations produce, in practice, different levels of tolerance for the same observable behaviours, and account in part for the divergent enforcement outcomes visible in this electoral cycle. As acknowledged, this report adopts its own operational definition in order to assess the phenomena consistently across platforms.

A note on terminology is necessary before the metrics are introduced. This report distinguishes between interactions and engagements. Interactions refer to proactive user actions around a piece of content, including likes, reactions, shares, and bookmarks. Engagements encompass interactions plus views. The distinction matters because on all major social media platforms, videos are auto-played by default as soon as they scroll into view, meaning that a view does not necessarily reflect a conscious decision by the user to watch the content. Interactions represent voluntary engagement with content. Views represent passive exposure to it. Both are relevant to assessing the health of an information environment, but they tell different stories about how audiences are relating to the content they encounter.

This report draws on metrics from two sources that use different methodologies and therefore should not be compared directly. To avoid confusion, metrics derived from Exolyt and Socialinsider are referred to throughout as **interaction ratios**, while metrics derived from Sensika are referred to as **engagement ratios**.

For Exolyt and Socialinsider, the interaction ratio is calculated as interactions divided by views, capturing the share of viewers who actively respond to a given piece of content. In

this report, these interaction ratios serve as the main benchmark for assessing account- and video-level performance against organic norms. Socialinsider's 2025 benchmark places the normal range for accounts with 10,000 to 50,000 followers at 3.9 to 4.4 per cent.

Sensika, by contrast, calculates engagement ratio as total engagements, meaning interactions plus views, divided by followers. This measures cumulative engagement relative to an account's stated audience size. In this report, Sensika engagement ratios are used as indicators that may warrant closer scrutiny when they appear alongside other anomalies.

As a general rule throughout the report, figures below 10 per cent described as interaction ratios refer to the Exolyt/Socialinsider methodology. Figures above 100 per cent described as engagement ratios refer to Sensika's methodology. The two measures are not interchangeable.

We distinguish three levels of analysis when assessing whether activity is inauthentic. At the account level, Engagement ratios are assessed against the benchmarks described above. A normal rate at account level does not, however, rule out artificial amplification of specific videos or at network level. At the video level, individual content is examined for anomalies in the relationship between views, interactions, and follower counts, as well as for irregularities in comment patterns. At the network level, coordination is assessed through repost matrices, shared hashtag

packages, chronological build-up sequences, and burst patterns.

Conclusions about coordination are only drawn when indicators from multiple levels converge. Engagement ratios above 1,000 per cent in the Sensika methodology are described in this tracker as methodologically anomalous, since the methodology can generate such values under specific conditions. They serve as indicators warranting further investigation. Definitive determination in any individual case requires platform-side data that no institution in Bulgaria has requested and that no platform has volunteered.

As noted, Facebook and TikTok publish definitions of coordinated inauthentic behaviour in their community standards and transparency reports. These definitions, however, describe the categories of conduct that may be subject to enforcement without specifying the investigative methodologies, evidence, or decision-making criteria through which those categories are applied to individual cases. Civil society organisations and regulators can read the policies, but cannot reconstruct why the same observable indicators produce enforcement on one platform and not on another. The absence of this operational transparency limits the capacity of external actors to hold platforms accountable for the consistent application of their own standards, and compounds the difficulty of assessing whether the information environment in which an election takes place has been adequately defended.

Guide to Political Parties

Acronym	Full English Name	Bulgarian Name
GERB-SDS	Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria - Union of Democratic Forces	ГЕРБ-СДС
DPS-NN	Movement for Rights and Freedoms - New Beginning	ДПС-НН
MECh	Morality, Unity, Honour	МЕЧ
Progressive Bulgaria	Progressive Bulgaria	Прогресивна България
Revival (Vazrazhdane)	Revival	Възраждане
PP-DB	We Continue the Change - Democratic Bulgaria	ППДБ
BSP-OL	Bulgarian Socialist Party - United Left	БСП-ОЛ
ITN	There is Such a People	Има Такъв Народ
Greatness (Velichie)	Greatness	Величие
Siyanie	Siyanie	Сияние
APS	Alliance for Rights and Freedoms	АПС

This report covers eleven political parties and movements contesting the 2026 Bulgarian Parliamentary Elections. Party names and acronyms are used interchangeably throughout. Where a party has no established English equivalent, the Bulgarian name is retained.

A Multi-Party Problem

Our [first tracker](#), published on 18 March, documented an information environment dominated by pro-Radev content. Rumen Radev, Bulgaria's former president who resigned in January 2026 to lead the newly formed Progressive Bulgaria coalition, was the beneficiary of a network of unofficial fan pages, political pundits, and activist accounts that outpaced every other political force on both Facebook and TikTok. The hashtag **#руменрадев** (**#rumenradev**) had accumulated 90.4 million views across 2,700 videos since its first use - a figure that represents the aggregate of every view on every piece of content tagged with the hashtag across its entire lifetime, and which grew each time a new video was posted or an existing one watched.

DPS-NN, led by Delyan Peevski, a Magnitsky-sanctioned oligarch and media mogul, was operating a parallel publishing operation across ten to fifteen TikTok accounts bearing his name. The picture was one of two dominant inauthentic ecosystems, with Radev's being more extensive and Peevski's more coordinated, and a broader environment in which organic and manufactured activity had become difficult to distinguish.

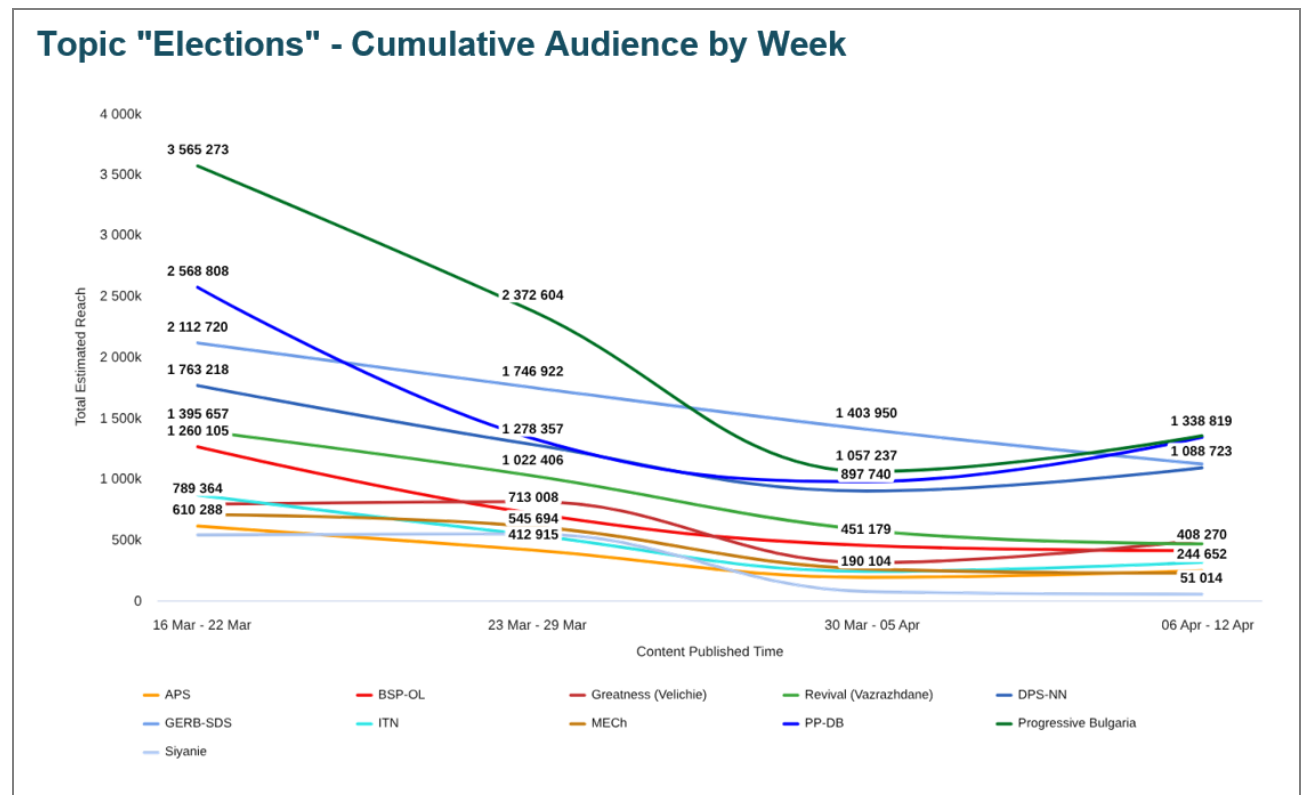


Figure 1: Cumulative estimated audience reach by party across election-related content, 16 March - 12 April 2026.

The chart above tracks the cumulative estimated reach of each major party across election-related social media content over the monitoring period. It captures the starting positions from which each party entered the campaign and provides the baseline against which the shifts documented in this edition should be read.

Progressive Bulgaria and GERB-SDS led the field in the opening week, with DPS-NN and Revival trailing at roughly half the reach. The downward trajectory visible across all parties in subsequent weeks is addressed in the analysis that follows.

The newly documented data reveals that the finding of two dominant ecosystems in the first tracker may have understated the scale of the problem. The manipulation detected in this report is distributed across three major political forces, and further two with activity worth monitoring. DPS-NN, Progressive Bulgaria, and ITN are the three with documented coordinated activity. GERB-SDS and Revival exhibit patterns that warrant monitoring, though the evidence for each is distinct in character and does not, in either case, meet the same threshold. DPS-NN, Progressive Bulgaria, and ITN appear to be benefitting from different methods and platforms, ranging from structurally coordinated TikTok networks to repurposed Facebook infrastructure to networks of AI-generated fake profiles. The method and scale varies, but the presence of documented coordination or artificial amplification across virtually the entire competitive landscape is consistent.

The parties that appear to operate organically, notably We Continue the Change - Democratic Bulgaria (PP-DB) and the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), may be considered an exception. Their information space is influenced by the inauthentic activity of their competitors, with PP-DB's own hashtag, like other parties, being dominated by hostile content from other networks.

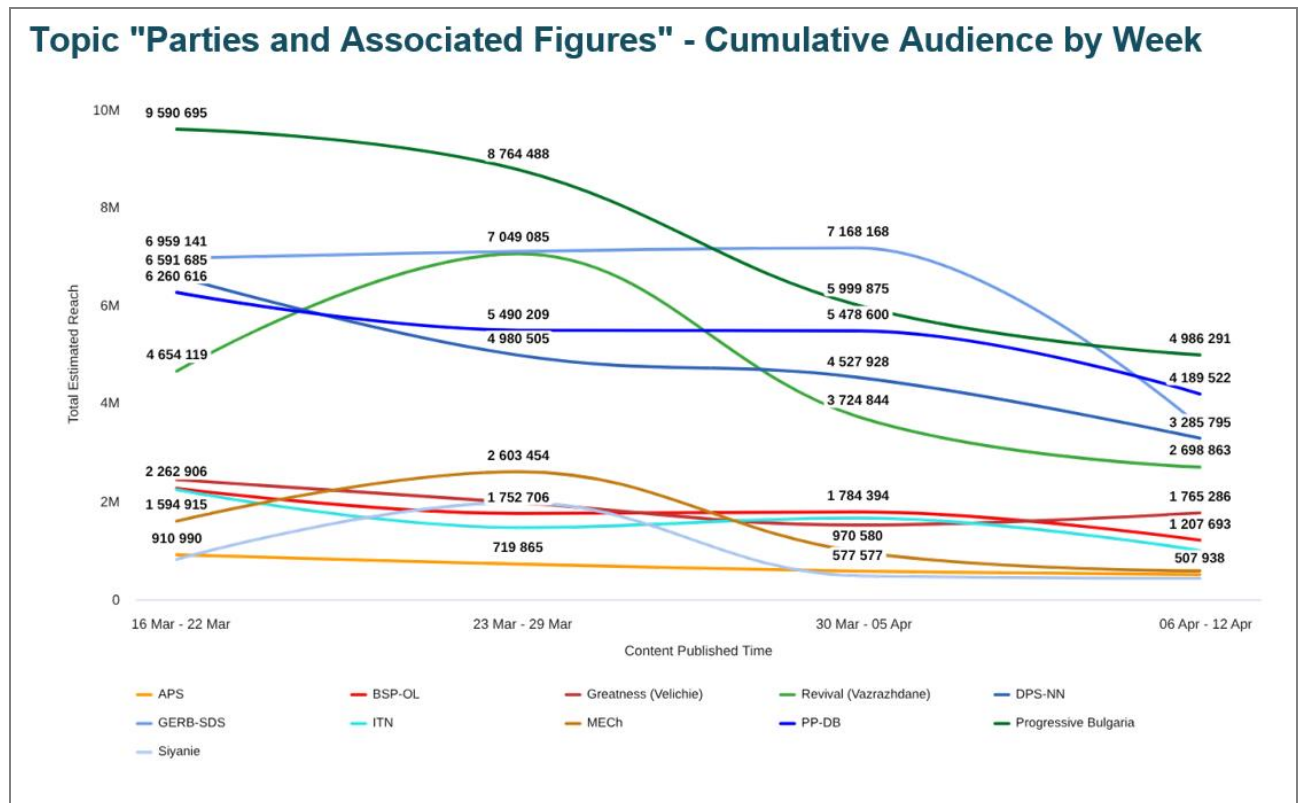


Figure 2: Cumulative estimated audience reach by party across content about political actors and associated party figures, 16 March - 12 April 2026.

Content organised around political actors and associated party figures generates nearly three times the engagement of election-process content and offers the most accurate picture of the terrain on which the campaign is actually being fought.

Progressive Bulgaria's reach contracts from 9.59 million to 4.98 million over the monitoring period, a decline of 48 per cent. DPS-NN's contraction is slightly steeper at 50 per cent. GERB-SDS declined by a comparable 49 per cent.

The differential rates of decline are significant because they coincide with enforcement actions on TikTok, the platform on which Progressive Bulgaria and DPS-NN are most active, while GERB's

reach, concentrated predominantly on Facebook, was not subject to comparable enforcement dynamics. The chart makes visible the differential response from the platforms that is central to this report's findings.

Engagement Ratios - Who Benefits?

Engagement ratios are among the most reliable indicators available through external monitoring for identifying activity that departs from organic patterns. When accounts with small follower bases and minimal posting histories generate engagement volumes that exceed their audience by orders of magnitude, and when that pattern recurs systematically across political content during an election period, the data warrants serious scrutiny.

The benchmarks established in the methodology section provide the baseline against which these signals are assessed. Applying those benchmarks across election-related and personality-driven political content in Bulgaria produces a striking picture.

The engagement ratios documented across political content in this monitoring period are of an order of magnitude that does not occur in comparable content categories on these platforms. Engagement ratios of **6,000 or 13,000 or 84,000 per cent** are far beyond any benchmark for organic activity on these platforms.

These figures are specific to political content, specific to the pre-election period, and concentrated around accounts that were either recently created or minimally active before the campaign began.

That specificity tells us that the amplification at work in Bulgaria's information environment is targeted at political material, and operating at a scale that implies a level of resource and coordination beyond what any individual account holder could achieve through organic means alone.

The scale is consistent across content categories. In election-related content, the top ten accounts by engagement per post, several of which also register among the highest engagement ratios recorded, varying **between 1,095 per cent and 83,899 per cent**. In content organised around political actors and associated party figures, engagement ratios range from 439 per cent to 83,899 per cent. The identical upper figure reflects the same account, @alexander_koychev, appearing in both categories, as the monitoring categories overlap, and a single post about a political figure in an electoral context is classified under both. The same applies to several other accounts that appear across both tables, reinforcing the finding that the amplification operates across thematic boundaries.

The ratios are not confined to accounts associated with any single party. They span Progressive Bulgaria, Revival, MECH, and accounts with no documented party affiliation, which confirms that the phenomenon is distributed across the political spectrum.

Topic "Elections" - Top Influencers by Engagement per Post





















Source	Influencer	Posts	Potential Reach	Engagement	Engagement per post %	Engagement Ratio
	 Константина Петрова @kossy265	1	3,252	199,506	199,506	6,134.87%
	 Александър Койчев @alexander_koychev	1	223	187,096	187,096	83,899.55%
	 Maria Tsantsarova @maria.tsantsarova	1	29,000	149,450	149,450	515.34%
	 'Айде БГ' @AydeBG	1	926,000	143,666	143,666	15.51%
	 Коалиция Прогресивна България @progresivna.bg	7	108,700	988,075	141,154	908.99%
	 Иван Христанов @ivan.m.hristanov	2	277,000	268,808	134,404	97.04%
	 Радостин Василев @VasilevRadostin	4	1,164,000	497,044	124,261	42.70%
	 Кристиан Янкулов @kristiyanyankulov	1	135,300	105,632	105,632	78.07%
	 БГ ПОЛИТИКА @bgpolitics1	2	1,447	193,569	96,785	13,377.26%
	 Borislav Ardev @borislav.ardev	1	8,826	96,644	96,644	1,094.99%

Figure 3: Top ten accounts by engagement per post in election-related content, with engagement ratios,

16 March - 12 April 2026.

Of the ten accounts with the highest engagement per post in election-related content, four are official party accounts or accounts of identified party figures spanning Progressive Bulgaria, Revival, and MECh. The account **@alexander_koychev**, a confirmed Revival MP candidate, **registered 83,899 per cent** from a single post on an account with 223 followers, while **@bgpolitics1** registered **13,377 per cent** from two posts with 1,447 followers.

The remaining six - comprising journalists, influencers, and content creators, have no documented organisational connection to any party, and their engagement volumes are more modest.

Topic "Parties and Associated Figures" - Top Influencers by Engagement per Post

Source	Influencer	Posts	Potential Reach	Engagement	Engagement per post \bar{x}	Engagement Ratio
	 Звезделина Карavelова @zvezdelina_karavelova	1	11,000	549,104	549,104	4,991.85%
	 ПП МЕЧ @ppmech_	1	5,108	443,224	443,224	8,677.06%
	 Town.BG @town.bg	2	55,100	483,038	241,519	876.66%
	 Цанов НАПРЕД и НАГОРЕ @napredinagore	1	710,000	195,206	195,206	27.49%
	 Иван Христанов @ivan.m.hristanov	3	414,000	580,724	193,575	140.27%
	 Александър Койчев @alexander_koychev	1	223	187,096	187,096	83,899.55%
	 DilyanTenev @dilyant112	1	8,033	181,422	181,422	2,258.46%
	 НАРОДНА ВЕЗНА @narodna.vezna	1	22,300	169,909	169,909	761.92%
	 Илия Тенев Iliya Tenev @tenevillya	1	36,100	158,612	158,612	439.37%
	 Константина Петрова @kossy265	2	6,727	271,176	135,588	4,031.16%

Figure 4: Top ten accounts by engagement per post in content about political actors and associated party figures, with engagement ratios, 16 March - 12 April 2026.

The composition shifts in the above table covering content about political actors and associated party figures. Four of the ten accounts are official party accounts or accounts of identified party figures. One further account has documented advocacy for Progressive Bulgaria. The remaining five operate without documented organisational connections to any party, though their content reflects varying degrees of political orientation. Several of these accounts operate with minimal follower bases and generating engagement that dwarfs their visible audience.

Given that content about political personalities generates nearly three times the engagement of election-process content and represents the primary terrain on which the campaign is being contested online, the prevalence of unofficial accounts with anomalous engagement ratios in this category is particularly consequential. The accounts shaping that terrain most disproportionately are, in the majority, accounts whose relationship to the political actors they amplify is not publicly transparent.

Read together, the two tables reveal that the most powerful amplification forces operating in Bulgarian political content during this election period are not, for the most part, the official channels of the parties themselves. They are small, recently active accounts achieving reach that bears no relationship to their audience size, distributed across the political spectrum, and present across content categories.

That pattern points to an amplification layer that sits beneath the party-specific networks and that functions independently of any single political project. The party-affiliated coordination documented around DPS-NN, Progressive Bulgaria, and There is Such a People (ITN) is a significant finding. The prevalence of unaffiliated accounts achieving comparable or greater amplification across the political landscape may, in the longer term, prove the more consequential one.

The findings identify distinct models through which coordinated inauthentic activity has become embedded across the Bulgarian political landscape, with different patterns observed on TikTok and Facebook.

TikTok Influence Networks

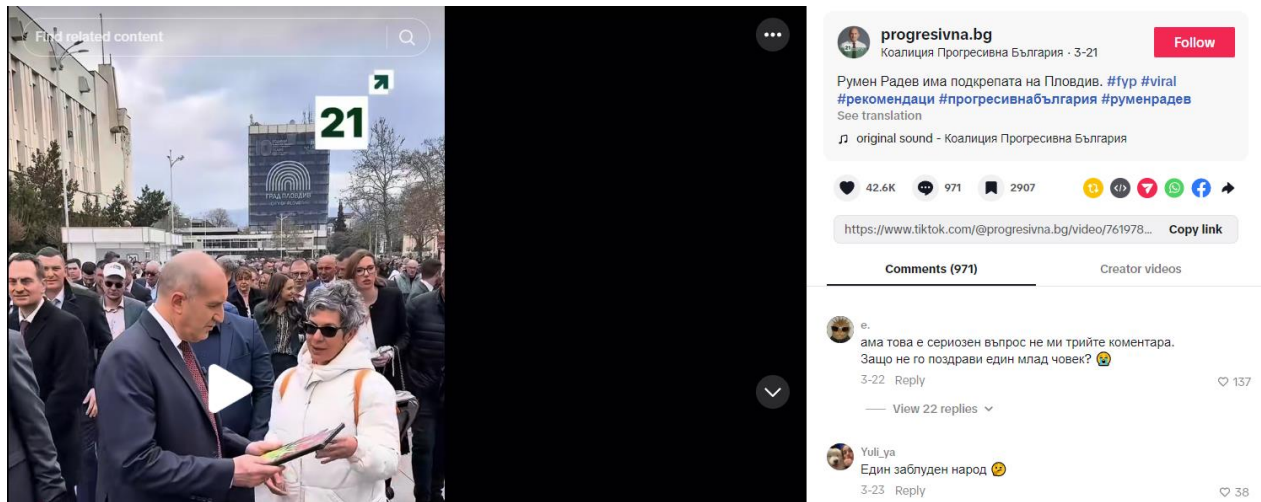
The first model, applied on TikTok, is the construction of purpose-built coordinated networks that amplify a political actor through volume and manufactured reach. DPS-NN and Progressive Bulgaria are the principal beneficiaries of networks of this kind, though the two differ significantly in their methods and in what the engagement data reveals about how they function. In neither case can this tracker establish whether the parties themselves commissioned or operated the networks in question, or whether independent actors built them to capitalise on a political moment. Both possibilities are consistent with the evidence. What the data does establish is that the networks exist, that their behaviour is coordinated, and that the beneficiaries are identifiable.

DPS-NN's network consisted of a coordinated presence across TikTok whose defining characteristic was unusually low interactions relative to its reach, with rates systematically below established benchmarks. In practical terms, this means the network was generating views that did not translate into interactions (likes, comments, or shares) that would normally accompany genuine audience interest. That pattern is consistent with a network optimised for visibility through purchased views, designed to create the impression of broad public interest. This mode of operation has negligible effect on the platform's recommendation algorithms, which prioritize proactive user interactions as stronger signals compared to views.

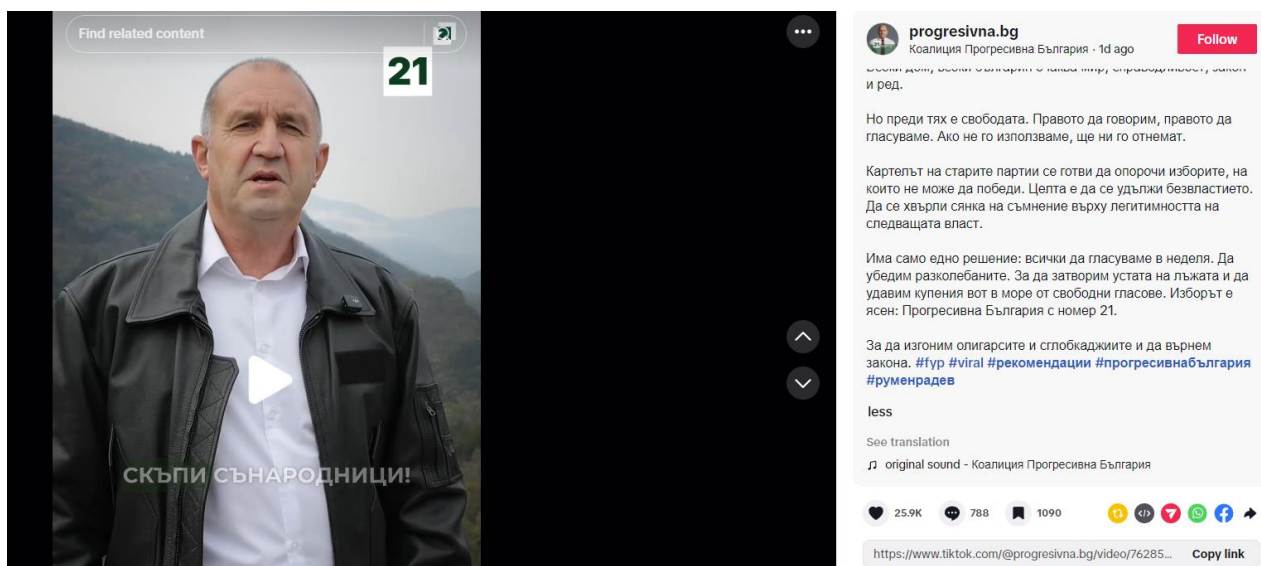
Progressive Bulgaria's TikTok network seems to function through a more layered structure. Coordination appears through multiple independent indicators, including accounts launched with identical content in identical order, systematic bidirectional reposting in near-symmetric volumes between nominally independent accounts, and a cascading activation sequence incompatible with independent organic development. At the account level, engagement ratios appear normal, which makes the network harder to identify through surface-level metrics alone. At the video and network level, however, accounts consistently generate views tens or hundreds of times above established benchmarks for their follower size. That profile is consistent with coordinated amplification achieved through network-level sharing patterns and algorithmic manipulation, though the specific mechanism cannot be determined from publicly available data.

That methodological point is worth underlining. A network can appear organic by one measure while exhibiting clear signs of manufactured reach by another. It is only by combining indicators across all three levels of analysis that the coordination becomes visible.

As recently as 10 March 2026, Progressive Bulgaria's TikTok accounts began to employ hashtag piggybacking, the practice of using popular or trending hashtags, including on unrelated content, to manipulate discovery and increase visibility on a social platform. Although this practice does not violate the platform's terms of service, the specific choice of hashtags is notable, as it may constitute a further indicator of foreign influence on the campaign.

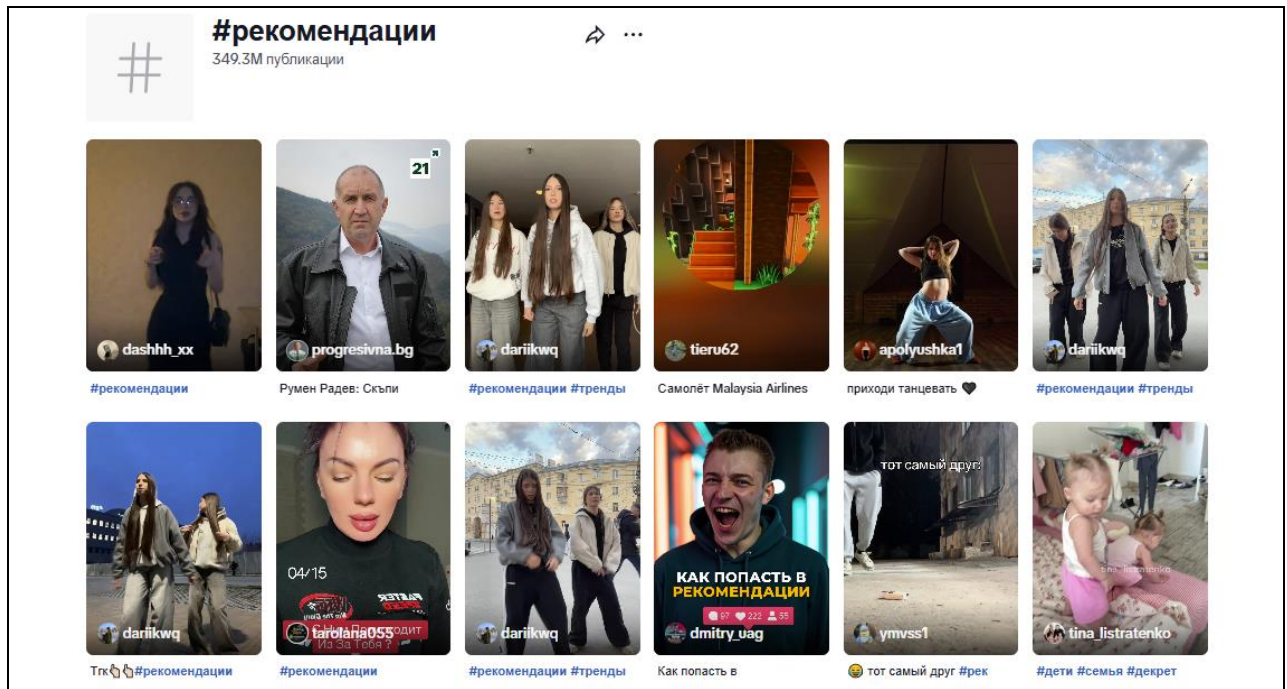


Top screenshot: TikTok video posted by the official Progressive Bulgaria account (@progresivna.bg) showing Rumen Radev meeting supporters in central Plovdiv, tagged with #рекомендации.



Bottom screenshot: TikTok video posted by the official Progressive Bulgaria account (@progresivna.bg) in which Radev addresses supporters directly, urging electoral participation. The video is tagged with #рекомендации.

The specific mechanism through which the Progressive Bulgaria network achieves algorithmic amplification is its systematic use of Russian-language hashtags. The official account, @progresivna.bg, uses **#рекомендации** - a transliteration of the English word "recommendations" that originates in the Russian-language TikTok environment - in 83 of its 84 videos, alongside the variant **#рекомендаци** in 30 videos. The same hashtag package appears in 16 of the 17 videos posted by the associated unofficial account, @onlytruth.bulgari. This hashtag is used predominantly in Russian-speaking countries, typically by lifestyle influencers and digital creators. Its adoption by the official account of a Bulgarian political party, despite its origins in a different linguistic and thematic context, suggests deliberate algorithmic targeting through techniques imported from elsewhere.



Screenshot: Hashtag #рекомендации with 349.3M publications - showing the lifestyle content from Russian accounts along with Progressive Bulgaria's @progresivna.bg content.

Facebook Influence Networks

A different model and techniques are utilized for reaching broader and more diverse audience on Facebook by repurposing of existing digital assets for electoral purposes. This involves the acquisition or conversion of existing channels, like Facebook pages and groups that were originally created for unrelated purposes, whether commercial, cultural, or aligned with a different political movement, into vehicles for electoral campaigning. The practice is significant because it allows political actors to inherit established audiences and algorithmic credibility without building them organically, bypassing the period of gradual growth that would normally precede political visibility on social media.

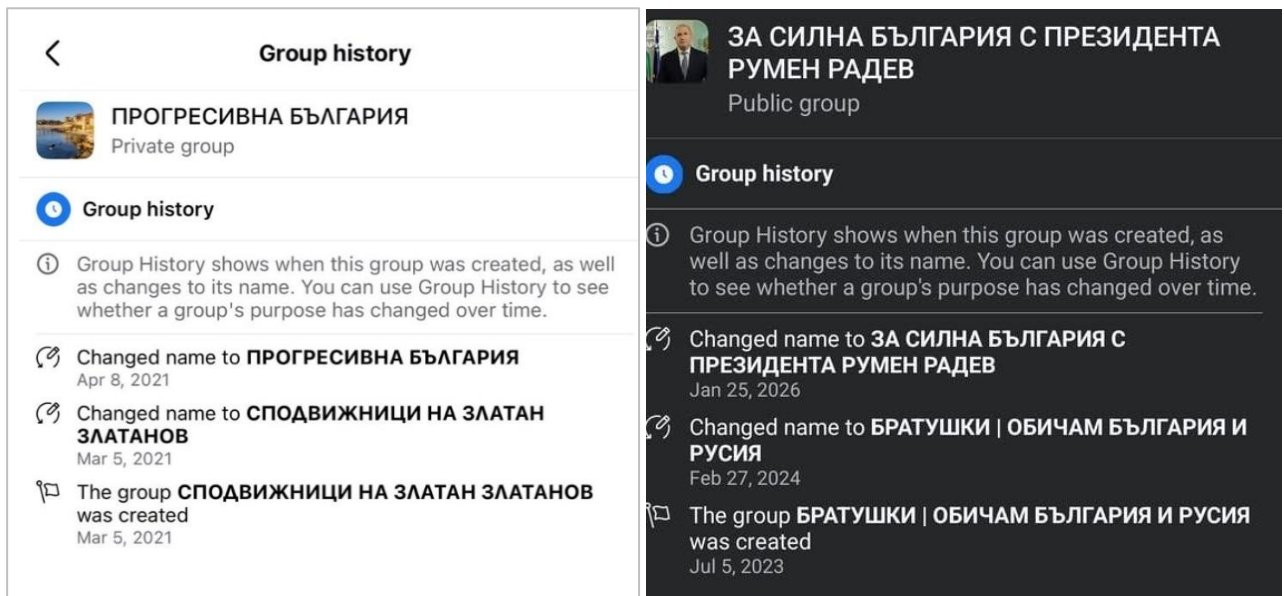
Progressive Bulgaria is the principal beneficiary of this model on Facebook, **where a network of approximately 30 pages and groups** has been developed in significant part through the systematic conversion of existing infrastructure. Groups originally created around pro-Russian themes and groups previously associated with ITN were renamed as pro-Radev properties, in several documented cases on the same day, indicating a common operator. Purchased pages were also identified, including one that passed through several unrelated commercial identities before becoming a pro-Radev asset. As with the TikTok network, the data establishes that Progressive Bulgaria is the beneficiary of this infrastructure. It does not establish whether the party itself directed its construction.

Meta's policies do not prohibit the renaming or repurposing of pages and groups, and the practice is not necessarily treated as evidence of coordinated inauthentic behaviour under the platform's current framework. The activity documented here may therefore fall outside the scope of enforcement under Meta's existing standards, even where it produces measurable effects on the information environment. A party that builds its Facebook presence through its own channels and administrators operates within platform rules through transparent political organisation. A network that acquires and converts pre-existing pages and groups to inherit their audiences and

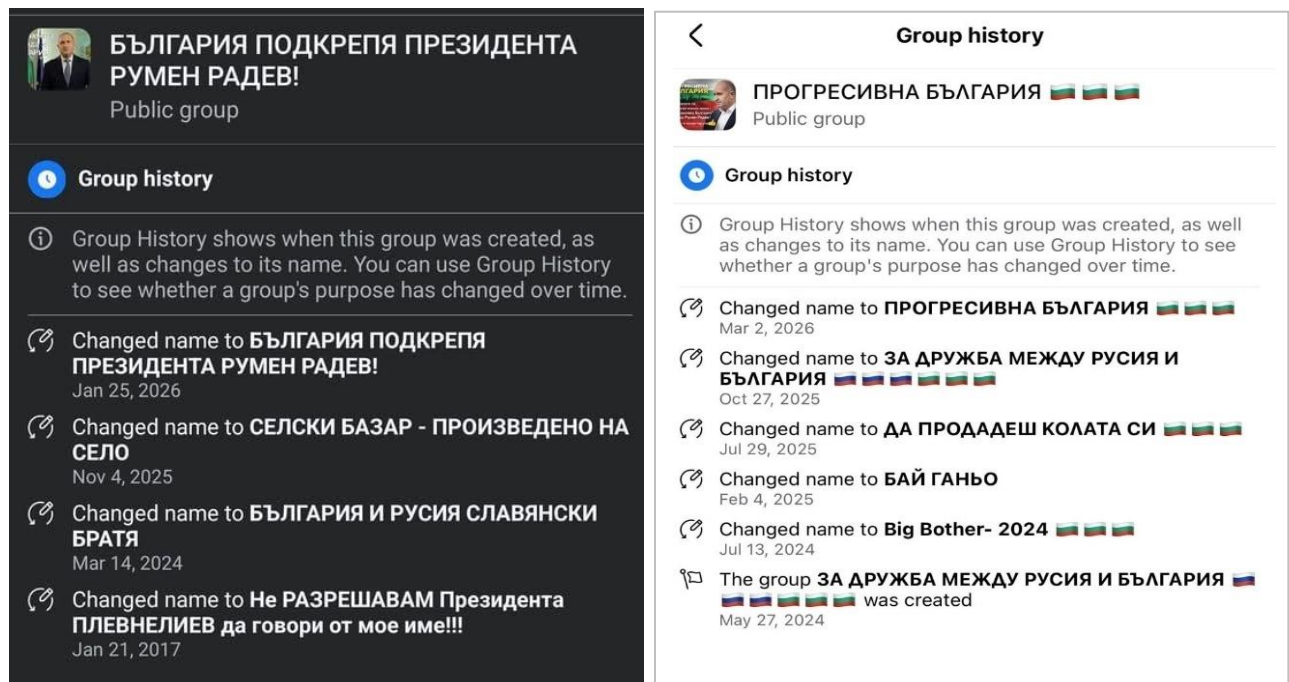
algorithmic standing also operates within platform rules, but through a practice that obscures the origins of its reach.

Whether Meta's framework distinguishes between the two is not discernible from its published policies, and that opacity is a finding of this report.

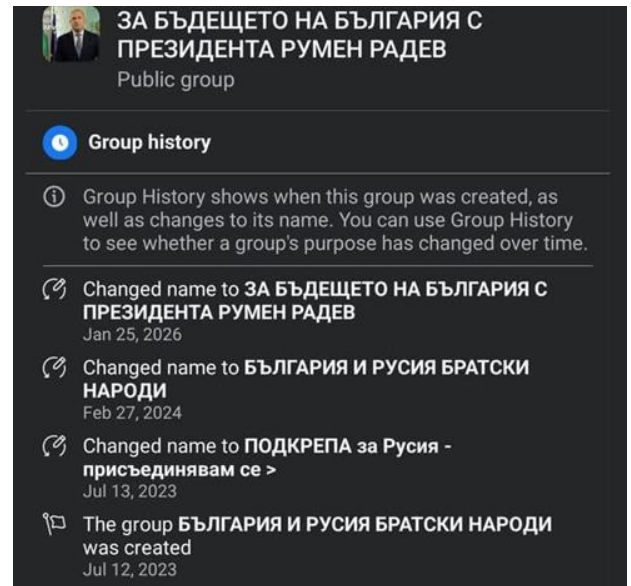
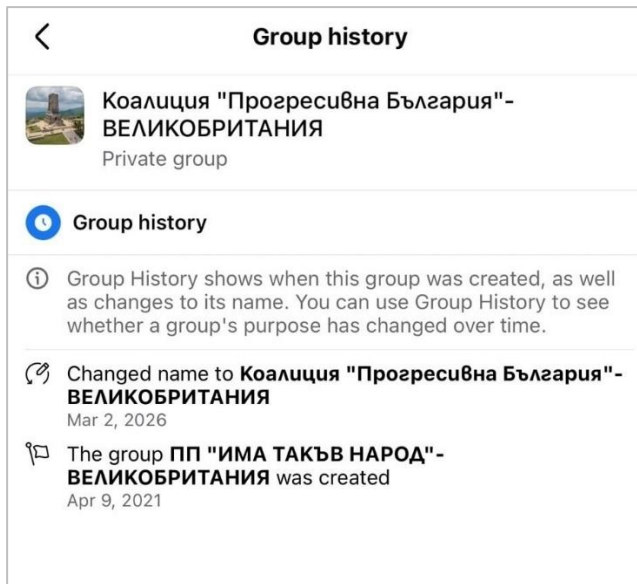
Another aspect of this model is the presumed involvement of undisclosed and opaque financial transactions for acquiring of existing digital assets, potentially violating the campaign financing legislation.



Facebook Group History logs showing examples of existing groups repurposed as pro-Radev support pages.



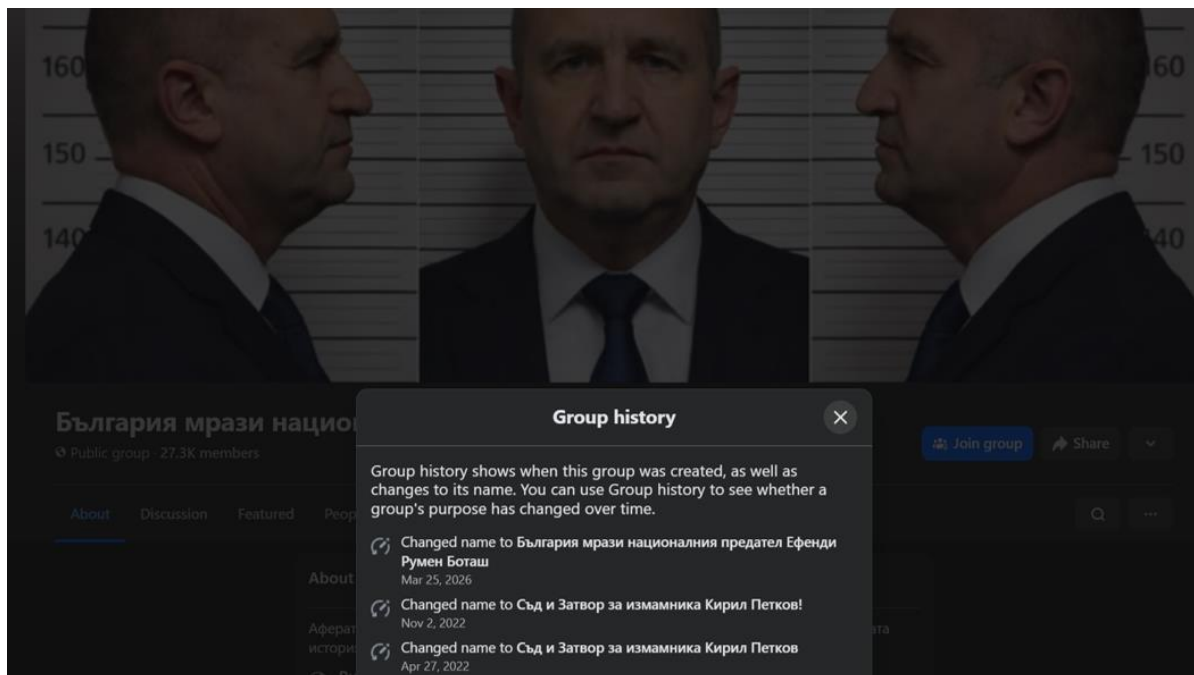
The above screenshots show some Facebook pages, part of PB's network, that were originally created around pro-Russian themes and have been renamed to pro-Radev support pages.



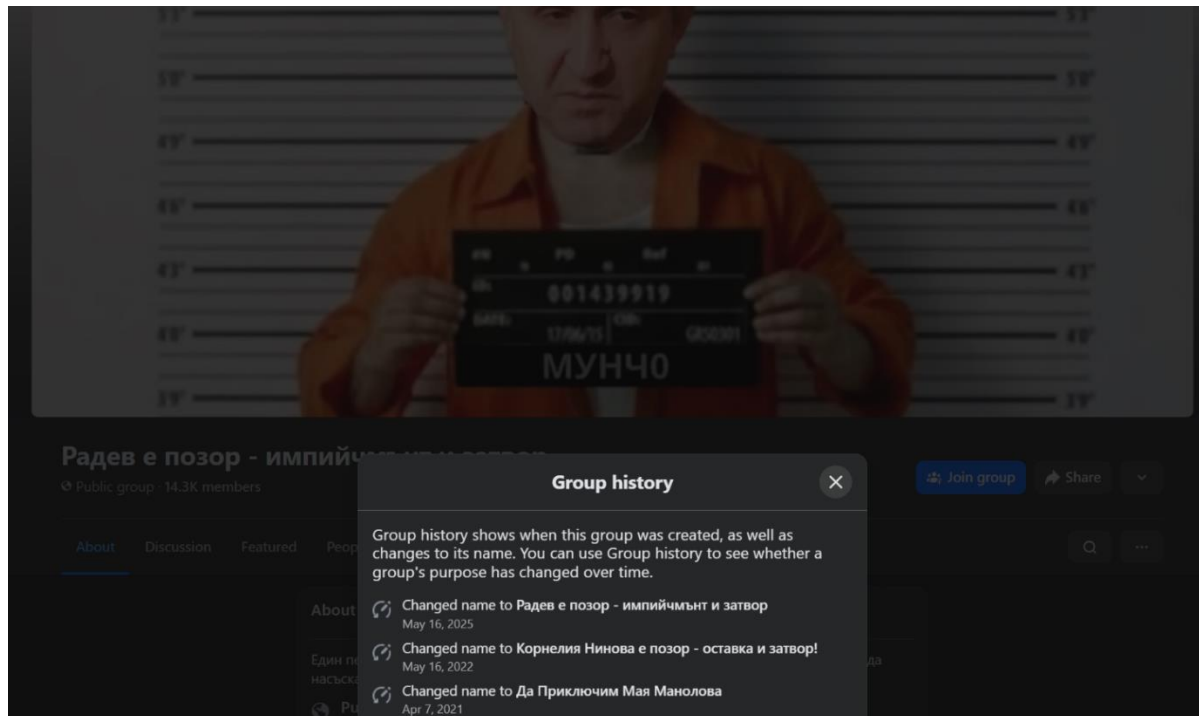
The above screenshots show more Facebook pages, part of PB's network, that were originally created around pro-Russian themes and have been renamed to pro-Radev support pages.

Facebook Group History showing a group currently named "БЪЛГАРИЯ ПОДКРЕПЯ ПРЕЗИДЕНТА РУМЕН РАДЕВ!" ("Bulgaria Supports President Rumen Radev!"). The group was created in January 2017 as an anti-Plevneliev (former president of Bulgaria) page, renamed to "БЪЛГАРИЯ И РУСИЯ СЛАВЯНСКИ БРАТЯ" ("Bulgaria and Russia Slavic Brothers") in March 2024, then to "СЕЛСКИ БАЗАР - ПРОИЗВЕДЕНО НА СЕЛО" ("Village Market - Produced in the Village") in November 2025, before becoming a pro-Radev group on 25 January 2026, six days after Radev's resignation.

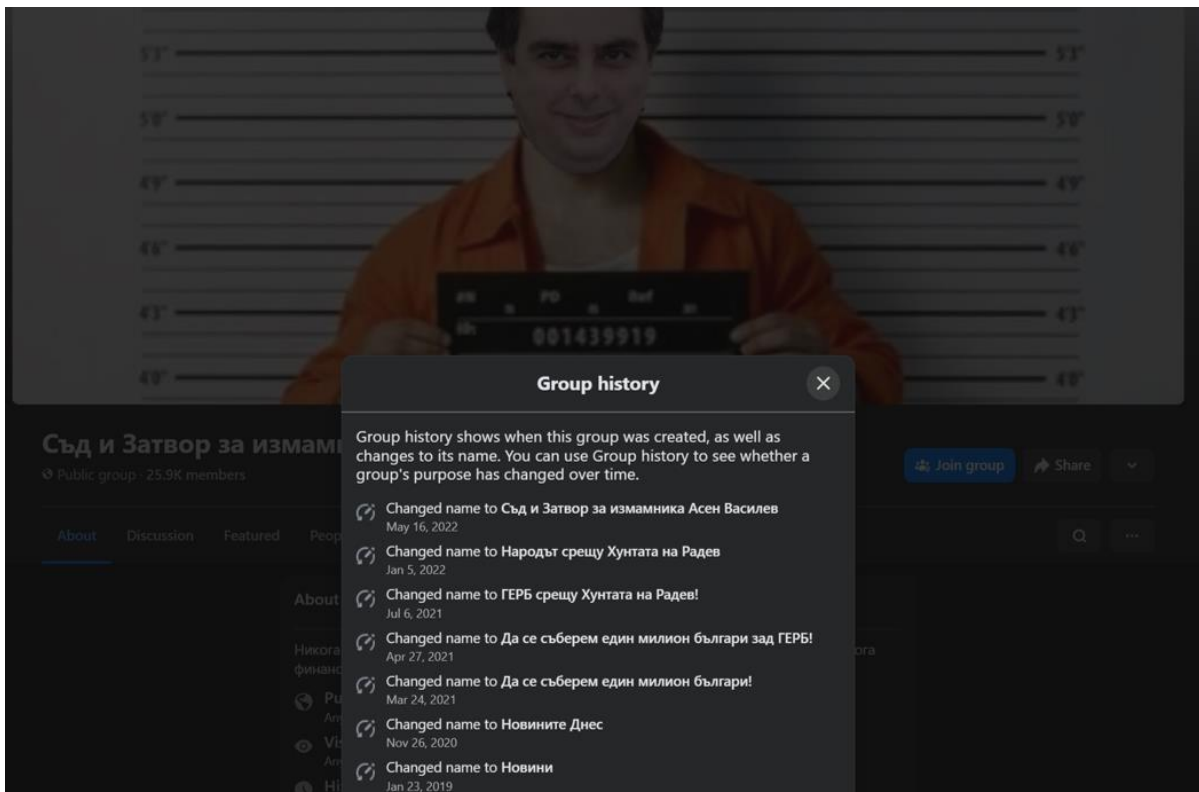
The practice is not unidirectional. Pages renamed to carry anti-Radev and anti-PP-DB content have also been documented, which complicates the attribution picture and reinforces the finding that the repurposing of digital infrastructure is a tactic employed by actors across the political spectrum.



Facebook Group History log showing sequential name changes, documenting the repurposing of an existing group for electoral political content.



A group with 14.3K members currently named "Радев е позор - импийчмънт и затвор" ("Radev is a disgrace - impeachment and prison"). Renamed to this on May 16, 2025. Previously "Корнелия Нинова е позор - оставка и затвор!" ("Kornelia Ninova is a disgrace - resignation and prison!") from May 2022, and before that "Да Приключим Мая Манолова" ("Let's finish off Maya Manolova") from April 2021. This group has migrated through three different political targets.

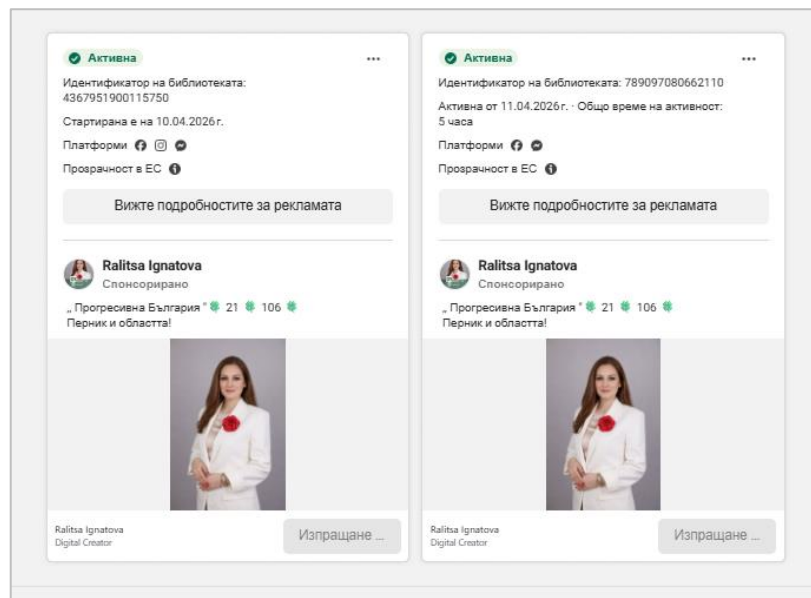
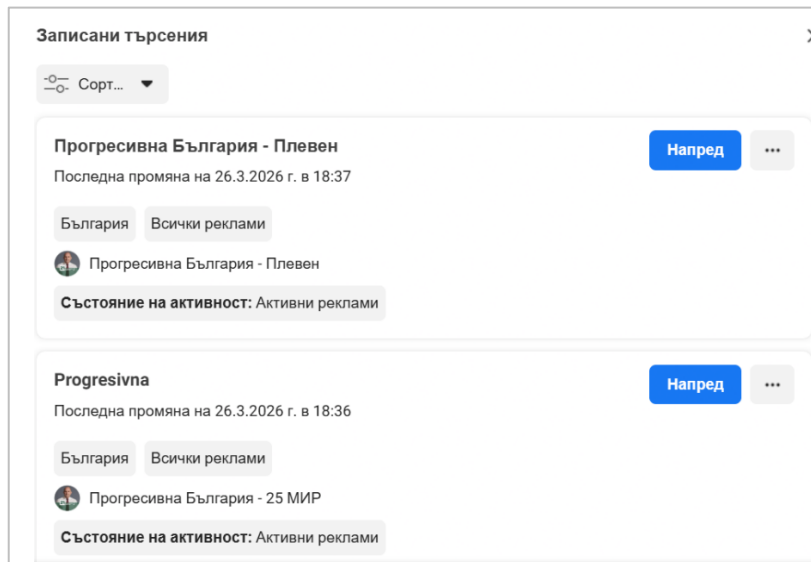


Facebook Group History log showing sequential name changes, documenting the repurposing of an existing group for electoral political content.

A group with 25.9K members currently named "Съд и Затвор за измамника Асен Василев" ("Court and Prison for the fraudster Asen Vasilev"). Its history shows seven name changes since January 2019, moving from "Новини" ("News") through "Новините Днес" ("News Today"), then to "Да се съберем един милион българи!" ("Let's gather one million Bulgarians!"), then "Да се съберем един милион българи зад ГЕРБ!" ("Let's gather one million Bulgarians behind GERB!"), then "ГЕРБ срещу Хунтата на Радев!" ("GERB against Radev's Junta!"), then "Народът срещу Хунтата на Радев" ("The People against Radev's Junta"), and finally to its current anti-Vasilev name. This group has been repurposed at least seven times across five years, migrating from generic news through pro-GERB mobilisation through anti-Radev content to anti-Vasilev content.

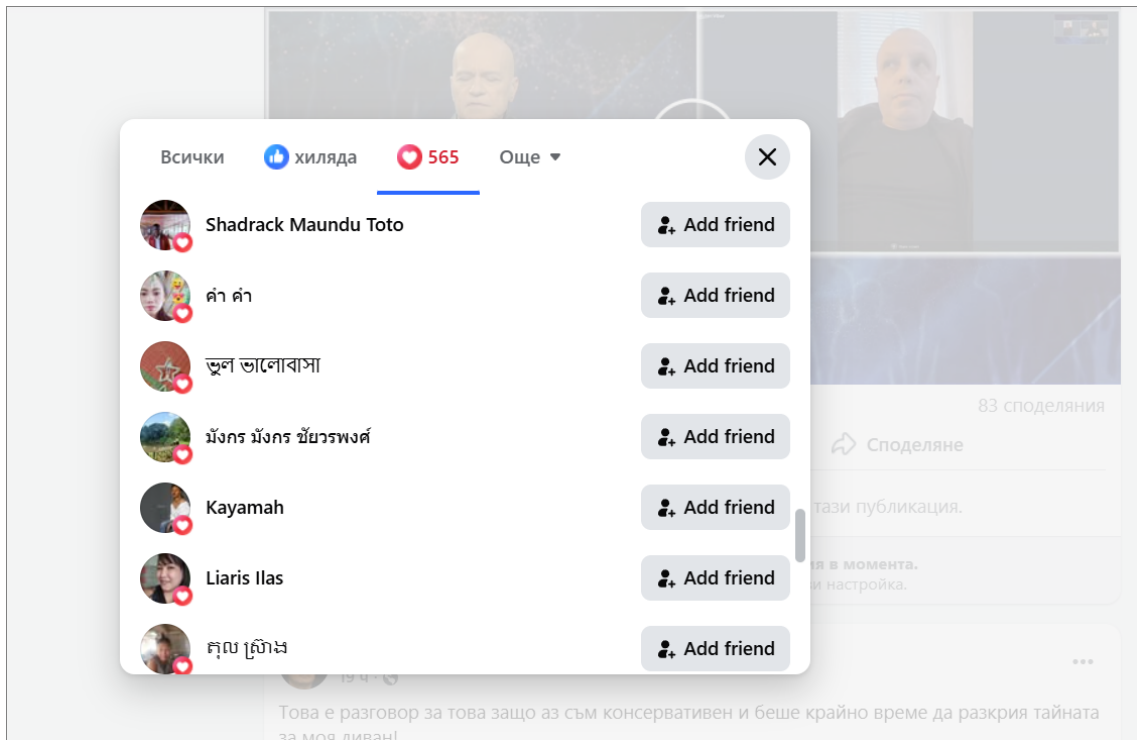
Controversial Political Ads

Meta Ad Library data shows active paid political advertising run through individual candidate profiles designated as "Digital Creators," a practice that warrants scrutiny under the EU's Political Advertising Regulation. Reaction patterns on posts by figures associated with the network showed engagements from profiles with no visible connection to Bulgaria, characteristic of purchased engagement through farming accounts.



Meta Ad Library records showing active paid political advertisements run through individual candidate profiles designated as Digital Creators.

A related but distinct form of infrastructure manipulation was documented around ITN. [Factcheck.bg reported](#) on 6 April a network of approximately 120 fake profiles on Facebook, confirmed as AI-generated, coordinating the distribution of posts by ITN figures Pavela Mitova and Slavi Trifonov. On some posts, nearly half of all shares originated from these inauthentic accounts.



The method differs from Progressive Bulgaria's infrastructure conversion in that it involves the creation of entirely fabricated identities for the purpose of amplifying existing content, but the effect is comparable: the artificial inflation of apparent public engagement with a political actor's messaging. ITN's official TikTok presence, by contrast, shows no signs of coordinated activity and appears to have organic metrics.

Further Observations

The data contains further observations about other parties where the evidence does not support the same level of attribution as the two models documented above, but where the patterns observed are nonetheless significant and warrant transparent presentation.

GERB generates the highest Facebook engagement of any party at 25.8 million, more than three times Progressive Bulgaria's Facebook presence, with content distributed through shared page administrators and the media portal 7dniplovdiv.bg. On Facebook, the evidence is consistent with a professional political organisation operating within platform rules.

On TikTok, GERB has not developed an active presence comparable to other major parties, and its official account generates only a small share of the reach of content about or against it. The #бойкоборисов (#boykoborisov) hashtag has been occupied by content from competing networks, with critical material outperforming pro-GERB content by approximately 17 to 1 in views.

There is, however, a cluster of unofficial accounts on TikTok operating within the #ппдб (#ppdb) hashtag space whose behavioural profile warrants attention. The account сринахадържавата (srinahadyrjavata, "they destroyed the state"), whose name directly references Borissov's rhetoric against PP-DB, has published 161 videos with over 2 million views and a systematically below-benchmark interactions ratio, with 79 per cent of its content falling below the 4 per cent threshold.

Several other accounts within the same hashtag, including херфликбългария (herflikbulgaria) and разобличавамепромяната (razoblichavamepromyanata, "we expose the change"), exhibit the same pattern of significant reach combined with below-benchmark engagement.

A further account, нецензурирано (necenzurirano, "uncensored"), appeared in the monitoring data with 330,477 views and an interaction ratio of 1.80 per cent, though direct inspection suggests the profile is now inactive or deleted. This report has identified no coordination signals linking these accounts to official GERB infrastructure, and the observation remains behavioural. The clustering of accounts with a shared below-benchmark profile within a single hashtag space is, however, a pattern that merits further investigation.

Revival's online presence appears to have a transparent ecosystem built around publicly identified individuals, with its official account reposting named MPs and candidates in a model that does not employ the algorithmic amplification tactics documented in other networks. The disinformation orientation of the content is systematic, encompassing anti-euro, anti-Western, and pro-Russian narratives, but it is publicly attributable to named political figures, which distinguishes it from the anonymous coordinated networks documented around DPS-NN and Progressive Bulgaria.

The data does, however, contain a number of accounts associated with Revival that have recorded methodologically anomalous engagement ratios, including a confirmed MP candidate at 83,899 per cent and several accounts bearing the party's name with ratios **between 1,374 and 6,522 per cent**. On direct inspection, several of these accounts show microscopic follower bases and some appear to have been deleted. Our analysis does not document a coordinated anonymous network comparable to those around DPS-NN or Progressive Bulgaria, but the accumulation of anomalous accounts around a single party constitutes a finding that warrants scrutiny.

PP-DB and BSP appear to operate organically, with official accounts showing normal engagement ratios and no documented coordinated infrastructure. Their information environments are, however, substantially shaped by the inauthentic activity of their competitors. PP-DB is, in practical terms, more a TikTok object than a TikTok actor, and its retreat from a hashtag space it cannot control represents a measurable loss of organic reach among undecided voters.

An important methodological note applies throughout: the Facebook data does not allow attribution of content direction, meaning accounts criticising a party may be captured in that party's engagement figures.

Platform Enforcement and Institutional Response

BFMI engaged with both Meta and TikTok throughout the monitoring period. The following analysis incorporates statements provided by each platform in response to the findings documented in this report.

Both DPS-NN and Progressive Bulgaria's networks experienced measurable contractions following the publication of our first tracker.

Bulgaria offers what may be the first empirically documented case in Southeast Europe of what effects partial enforcement has on an information environment in real time. Partial enforcement here means that individual actors have responded to documented manipulation, but no coordinated, pre-emptive effort brought together platforms, national institutions, and civil society ahead of the election at the scale the problem required.

The two editions of this tracker capture the environment before and after that partial response, and the comparison reveals a consistent pattern: enforcement at this inadequate level has changed the distribution of manipulation across the Bulgarian political landscape without reducing its overall presence.

TikTok's action against inauthentic networks produced a measurable contraction in the reach and engagement of the parties whose networks

were targeted. In the statement [published on 9 April on its global elections integrity hub](#), TikTok confirmed that the DPS-NN network:

"created inauthentic accounts in order to artificially amplify narratives in support of the DPS-NN political party, within the context of the April 2026 Bulgarian parliamentary elections. The network was found to coordinate across multiple online platforms."

In the same period, accounts associated with other political actors on TikTok, notably Revival and MECh, began registering methodologically anomalous engagement ratios that had not been present in the earlier monitoring data. Whether the same operators redirected their services, whether the parties in question commissioned the activity, or whether independent actors moved to fill a competitive vacuum is beyond what the publicly available data can determine. The net effect was a redistribution of inauthentic activity across the political landscape, not a reduction in its overall volume.

In regards to activity on Facebook, Meta, in its response to BFMI, stated:

"To date, we have not identified coordinated inauthentic behaviour targeting the Bulgarian elections, but we continue to monitor. In relation to signals brought to our attention by partners and via escalation channels, we have investigated the claims provided and enforced against accounts violating Meta's policies."

Meta did not specify which accounts were enforced against or under which policies. The nature and scope of the enforcement described has not been publicly disclosed.

ITN's network of fake profiles on Facebook, documented by Factcheck.bg, may fall within the scope of the enforcement Meta describes, though no specific public disclosure has followed. The enforcement actions that have been publicly documented in this electoral cycle have been concentrated on TikTok, affecting DPS-NN and Progressive Bulgaria. The divergent outcomes reflect the definitional and methodological differences between platforms documented in this report, and raise questions about the consistency of the broader platform response across this electoral cycle.

The partiality of the enforcement is also, in significant part, a consequence of how the mechanisms designed to coordinate the response have functioned in practice. The Rapid Response System, as established in a preceding section, is intended to operate through two channels, one in which civil society organisations report directly to platforms, and one in which national authorities engage with platforms and the Commission via structured evidence and formal data access provisions. In Bulgaria, the civil society channel produced the most publicly visible outcomes of the electoral cycle.

The second channel was nationally activated, but Bulgaria lacks the institutional architecture that would have given the activation consequence. The Communications Regulation Commission was [designated](#) as Bulgaria's

Digital Services Coordinator through amendments to the Electronic Communications Act adopted in November 2025, following infringement proceedings from the European Commission. The designation is recent, and the operational capacity required to exercise the DSA's data access provisions in an electoral context has not been built out at the pace the electoral timeline required. Without that capacity, the formal standing conferred by designation translates into limited regulatory pressure on platforms.

The Bulgarian government's request to the Commission cited the risk of coordinated disinformation campaigns, but it has not, as far as is publicly known, submitted the Bulgaria-specific risk assessments or structured evidence that the governmental channel requires in order to function as its designers intended. The system was 'activated' in the absence of the institutions it was built to coordinate.

The Election and Beyond

The manipulation documented across these trackers touches the majority of the political forces contesting this election, whether through documented coordination, anomalous engagement patterns, or the occupation of their digital space by competitors' inauthentic networks. That breadth carries implications that will outlast this electoral cycle.

With inauthentic amplification benefiting or affecting actors across the political spectrum, there is less incentive within the political process to take action against it. Addressing the institutional gaps documented in this report will therefore depend on the regulatory frameworks that already exist and have yet to be operationalised.

Bulgaria remains a clear illustration of what happens when the distribution of responsibility for electoral integrity across platforms, regulators, and national institutions meets a political environment in which none of the domestic actors with the power to act stands to gain from acting. That condition will not correct itself.

Addressing it requires one thing above all: the operationalisation of Bulgaria's Digital Services Coordinator to a degree that enables real engagement with platforms, exercise of data access provisions under the DSA, and generation of structured evidence that European coordination mechanisms were built to process. The capacity to act on the DSA's designation has not yet been built out. Until it is, the cost of that gap will continue to fall on the electorate.

This report's finding that Bulgarian authorities failed to prepare an institutional response commensurate with the documented threat carries obvious lessons for other national authorities as they approach their own elections. For the EU, Bulgaria's experience raises direct questions about whether both the Digital Services Act and the European Democracy Shield are adequate to the conditions they are intended to address.

The monitoring conducted by BFMI and Sensika has, however, demonstrated that real-time civil society documentation during an election period is both practical and effective, capable of identifying coordinated activity and prompting platform action where institutional actors have not. Large platforms should be on notice that their conduct during critical electoral periods, whether action or inaction, will be observed and documented. The legal responsibilities they carry under European law require proactive fulfilment, and this tracker will continue to assess whether that standard is being met.

BFMI's monitoring of the Bulgarian election will continue beyond 19 April, and the methodology developed through this tracker will be applied to other elections across the Balkans in 2026.



BFMI and Sensika's TikTokcracy Tracker #2
Bulgarian Elections 2026

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