

# Regional Overview: Europe 2-8 February 2020

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Last week, demonstration events remained high in the Balkans and Southeastern Europe, in particular in Montenegro, Serbia and Greece. Demonstration events in Eastern Europe, including Ukraine and Russia remained relatively low compared to previous months.

In **Montenegro**, protests by Serbian Orthodox Church followers over the Religious Freedom Law continued for the seventh week. Nearly two dozen protests were held across Montenegro, as well as one in Serbia.

In **Serbia**, protests took place in over 20 cities, with protesters demanding better solutions to the heavy air pollution affecting the region ([European Western Balkans, 13 January 2020](#)). Similar protests have been held over the past weeks in other countries in the region, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Bulgaria.

In **Bulgaria**, a handful of protests were organized by the nationalist Revival party. Protesters demanded the resignation of the government over the ongoing water crisis, air pollution and poor economic prospects for citizens.

In **Greece**, the situation around migrant camps deteriorated. Protests and riots continued to occur frequently inside and near the camps. Vigilante groups, whose members reportedly are connected to far right movements, appeared on the island of Lesbos – policing the area and getting into fights with migrant groups and NGO activists ([The Guardian, 9 February 2020](#); [The National Herald, 4 February 2020](#)). Labor-related demonstrations surged, in particular over proposed reforms of social insurance and pensions.

In **Moldova**, war veterans protested in Chisinau, demanding the creation of a special department for veterans' affairs as well as demanding the dismissal of the Foreign Minister over his statements on the 1992 war ([Agora.md, 8 February 2020](#)).

In **Romania**, the cycle of political turmoil continued as opposition MPs dismissed the National Liberal Party (PNL)-led minority government. It is the second government to fall in months, after the Social Democrats (PSD) were ousted in October last year. It opens the possibility of snap parliamentary elections, although these are expected to benefit the PNL, meaning the PSD may seek to prevent triggering snap elections ([Euractiv, 6 February 2020](#); [Balkan Insight, 5 February 2020](#)).

In **Russia**, demonstrations continued over similar issues to weeks prior, including over political repression, the proposed constitutional amendment and waste management.

In **Ukraine**, protests continued over the issues of liberalization of the land market, censorship and labor law. In the Donbass region, fighting between Ukrainian government forces and separatist rebels decreased last week, after an uptick in the week before, with 89 armed clashes and 151 shelling incidents resulting in four reported fatalities.



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