
Center for the Study of Democracy

Building Bridges between Scholars and Policy Makers

Founded in late 1989, the Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD) is an interdisciplinary public policy institute dedicated to the values of democracy and market economy. CSD is a non-partisan, independent organization fostering the reform process in Bulgaria through impact on policy and civil society.

CSD objectives are:

- to provide an enhanced institutional and policy capacity for a successful European integration process;
- to promote institutional reform and the practical implementation of democratic values in legal and economic practice;
- to monitor public attitudes and serve as a watchdog of the institutional reform process in the country;
- to strengthen the institutional and management capacity of the NGOs in Bulgaria, and reform the legal framework for their operation.

CSD encourages an open dialogue between scholars and policy makers and promotes public-private coalition building. As a full-service think tank, the Center achieves its objectives through policy research, process monitoring, drafting of legislation, dissemination and advocacy activities, building partnerships, local and international networks.

Introduction

One of the key missions of a think tank in a country in transition is to anticipate the rising challenges to society and to work with the stakeholders to develop and advocate solutions. National and global developments in 2001 – some of them unfortunately tragic – have shown that CSD is addressing issues that are at the forefront of the Bulgarian and international agenda. In particular, these include coalition building in anti-corruption and the impact of the new soft security risks on democracy and the rule of law.

For Bulgaria, 2001 was the year of parliamentary elections that brought to power a new coalition government. One of its main stated intentions was to prioritize anti-corruption in its reform policies. This came at a time when CSD, and its partners under *Coalition 2000*, had built up a significant capacity in establishing partnerships among public and non-governmental institutions in the various areas of combating corruption – monitoring, awareness, legislative and judicial reforms, etc. For almost four years, the Center has been advocating that integrity and good governance are the keys to successful reforms, and that rooting out corruption could only be achieved by combining commitment at the policy level, participation and watchdog at the civic, and international assistance which supports both. Time has vindicated this vision and the *coalition building approach* – particularly in anti-corruption – is now widely appreciated internationally. It is also growingly accepted as indispensable by politicians and foreign development agencies in Bulgaria as well.

Among the key benefits of the public-private partnership approach is the sustainability it provides to reform efforts. Most of the policy areas of transition – anti-corruption in particular – are susceptible to being used by political parties for short term advantages that could compromise the long term objectives; they could also be heavily influenced by the election cycle. It is only the institutionalized involvement of civil society in the process of reforms that guarantees its sustainability. This was exemplified by the change of government in Bulgaria in 2001 when the anti-corruption expertise accumulated in the framework of *Coalition 2000* allowed the government to tap into a considerable expert resource to be used in designing anti-corruption programs. Thus the efforts which CSD has been making over the years to ensure its *institutional capacity and viability* as a non-governmental institution promoting reforms in Bulgaria have proven crucial to fulfilling its main mission – building bridges between scholars and policy makers.

Over 12 years of experience in working in various policy areas have allowed CSD to develop the expertise to develop new pieces of legislation in areas that had not been regulated before and to advocate for their adoption by Parliament.

As Bulgaria is among the few European countries without an ombudsman institution, CSD has been promoting the concept of the ombudsman for four years now. Having developed a draft law which was introduced to Parliament in 2000, in 2001 the Center put a lot of effort into popularizing the institution and its benefits to society, including through a number of international discussions. In 2001, the draft was

developed further, with the latest version highly evaluated by the ombudsman institutions of a number of European countries and the European Ombudsman as following the European standards in this area.

Another law drafted by a CSD expert team was the Law on Electronic Document and Electronic Signature. The drafting process was initiated by the CSD in early 1999 with a comprehensive research of the most important foreign and international instruments already adopted or in process of preparation. The law was elaborated through a number of consultations and discussions held with representatives of the stakeholders, lawyers and IT experts and takes into consideration most of the opinions, suggestions and recommendations made. It is based on the main principles of EU law and on a number of international acts and successfully implemented national provisions in other countries. After the National Assembly - Bulgaria's Parliament - adopted the law in March 2001, CSD continued its work with the State Telecommunications Commission on developing the secondary legislation required by the law.

CSD's has been concerned with the new risks that soft security issues place for the emerging institutions in transition countries for two years now. The ability of organized crime to smuggle large quantities of drugs and commercial goods across the Balkan borders depends on a corrupt law enforcement in these countries. CSD's work in this area started with the development of methodology for assessing the link between smuggling and corruption in Bulgaria. In 2001, it expanded to include a regional approach making a connection between the developments in all Southeast European countries.

Another major regional initiative of CSD in 2001 was the introduction of a *Regional Corruption Monitoring System (RCMS)* in Southeast Europe. The first ever region-wide corruption diagnostics were carried out in Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, and Yugoslavia. The main goal of the comparative analysis contained in the RCMS is to show the public significance of the problem of corruption and the extent to which corruption has penetrated into the various sections of these societies. The RCMS is a unique effort which has not been undertaken in the region before as it measures both public attitudes as well as the actual spread of corruption in the countries. It allows a comparison of the public sectors most affected by corruption thus providing objective data for the design of regional anti-corruption policy instruments.

In summary, the year 2001 was another step in fulfilling CSD's mission of building bridges – this time between the problems of security and the issues of democracy.

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