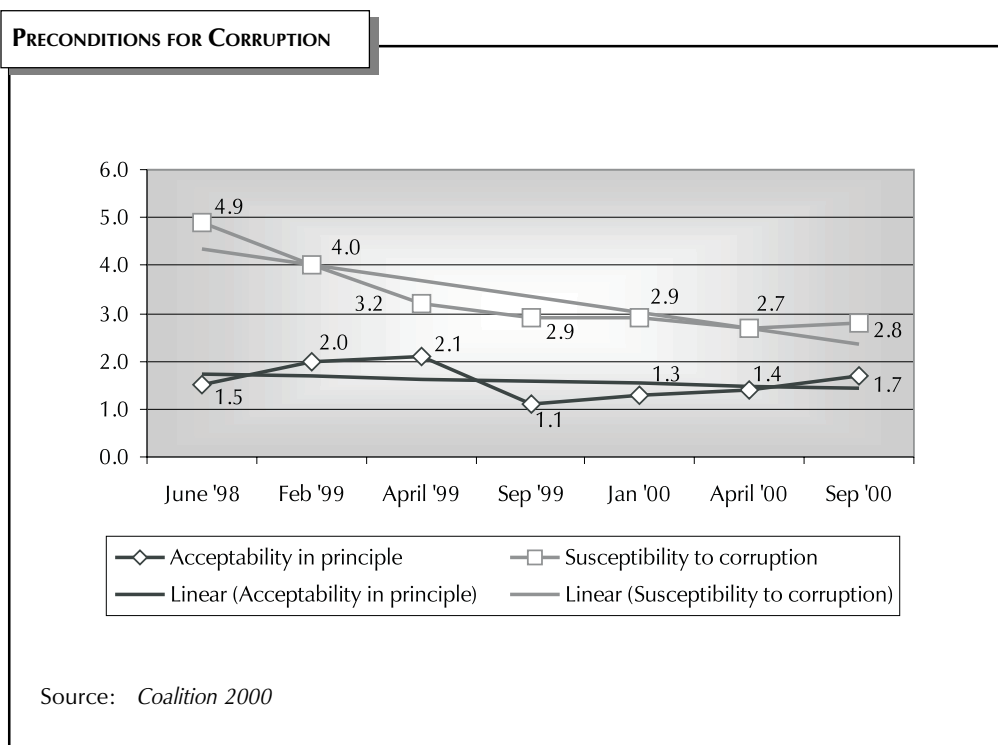


E. DYNAMICS OF CORRUPT BEHAVIOR AND THE CHANGE IN PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS CORRUPTION

In the year 2000, as a result of the greater public concern with corruption and the identification of a broader range of specific corrupt practices, the public attitudes and actions of Bulgarian citizens underwent the following notable changes:

- There was a tendency towards a **shift in the public criticism from „everyday“ corruption to „big“ corruption**. While in 1999 the manifestations of this phenomenon were sought primarily in activity on the lower levels of public administration, in the past year public attention turned to the actions of the political class and the high ranks of power. This means that the phenomenon of corruption is increasingly perceived as a problem of politics, and the efforts to curb corrupt practices are considered an inherent part of society’s democratic priorities.
- As a consequence, there has also been an observable **broadening of the scope of public criticism to comprise the more amorphous forms of corruption such as nepotism, trade in influence, and other instances of corruption of a „barter“ type**, characteristic of “big”, or political corruption.



Topics and problem areas that used to be taboo until recently, such as privatization of large enterprises, political and economic clientele practices, the budget of government institutions, the private lives of public figures, etc., have come to generate civic pressure for transparency and public access to information.

- **Customs, the tax administration, the court system, and the police were firmly de-**

fined as corrupt. Unlike the previous year, „big“ corruption hotbeds came to include the legislative and executive branches of power, as represented by MPs and ministers.

- Realization of the gravity of the problem, on the one hand, and the considerable divergence between the declared intentions and real actions of the authorities, on the other, have leveled the index of **the positive tendency towards lower public tolerance and increasing moral inadmissibility of corruption** registered by the *Coalition 2000* Corruption Monitoring System (CMS). Yet, compared to 1998, Bulgarian society still proves less inclined to encourage corruption and recourse to various forms of corrupt behavior.
- A positive development was registered with regard to the pressure to pay bribes exerted over citizens by public sector employees. In this respect the actual results should be attributed mainly to the favorable evolution up to April, 2000. Regarding the frequency of acts of corruption involving the citizens, there is reason to claim that **the number of acts of corruption in this country has remained stable and relatively invariable.**
- According to public opinion, corruption is still widespread in Bulgarian society.

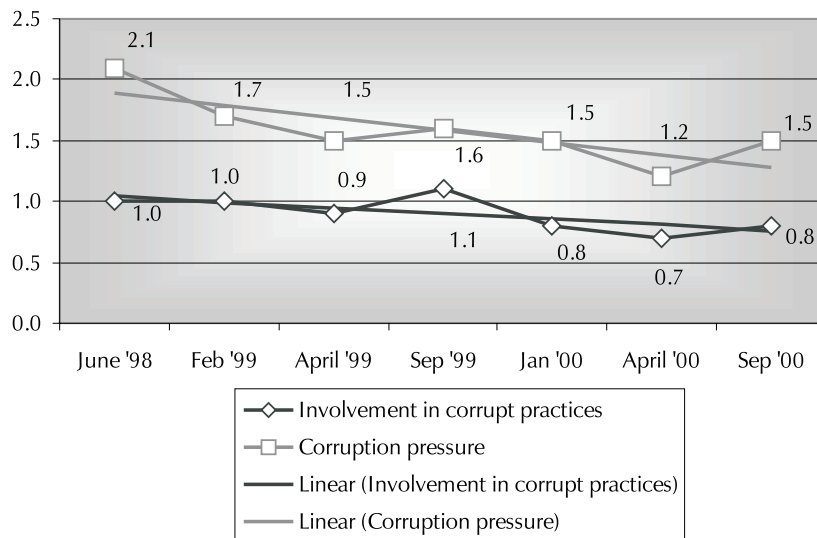
Lack of fluctuation of this index suggests that in the short term no substantial changes are likely to occur in these evaluations. This conveys that in Bulgaria corruption continues to be a highly effective tool for addressing private problems. The more general conclusion is that **the social environment is generating the pre-conditions for corruption has not undergone any serious changes.**

- The expectations of Bulgarian public opinion regarding prospects to reduce corruption are moderately pessimistic ones. The

capability of Bulgarian society to deal with corruption does not only imply a change in public attitudes, which, although positive and necessary, is insufficient to address this grave problem. There is a need for essentially new social mechanisms that should be legally regulated, morally acceptable, and effective in practice.

- The monitoring of corruption-related perceptions and attitudes of businesspersons indicates that the business elite in Bulgaria unanimously notes the existence of established channels through which corrupt practices are sustained. They run in parallel to the officially

INVOLVEMENT IN CORRUPT PRACTICES



Source: *Coalition 2000*

regulated relations between the political elite, public administration, and business managers. Corruption occurs in such areas as public procurement, privatization auctions and tenders, the issuing of licenses or permits for legitimate activities, the payment of taxes, etc.

ASSESSMENTS OF THE LEVEL OF SPREAD OF CORRUPT PRACTICES IN THE BUSINESS SPHERE (%)

Corrupt practices	Low spread level	High spread level
Acceptance of bribes by officials and politicians for influencing the state procurement	7,1	82,7
Acceptance of bribes by officials and politicians in privatization tenders	5,0	85,2
Acceptance of bribes by officials and politicians in issuing licenses	10,7	79,5
Acceptance of bribes by officials and politicians in hiding or reducing taxes	19,6	66,4
Acceptance of money or gifts for performing one's professional duties	15,2	75,0

Source: *Coalition 2000*, Business Elite Survey (October, 2000)

According to public opinion, in the year 2000 the **three major factors** favoring the spread of corruption in Bulgaria were:

- the quest for fast enrichment by those in power;
- the low salaries, and
- the imperfect legislation.

Above all these results are indicative of how Bulgarian citizens perceive the problem of corruption and respectively, of the areas in which counteraction is expected. Save for the level of remuneration, which is closely dependent on the level of economic development of the country, the data of CMS of *Coalition 2000* clearly indicate that

what the public expects is an honest and disinterested political class, on the one hand, and clear-cut legislation, on the other. In this respect, specific disclosures and in-depth approach to corruption marked the past year. Along with disappointments, dealing with the problems [of corruption] in their specificity raised the critical attitude towards the concrete practical steps of the political class and the anti-corruption policy of the government. Thus the **new expectations go considerably beyond the actual anti-corruption measures and the demonstrated resolve of the political class to seriously confront the problem of corruption.**

The analysis of the evolution of public attitudes and the dynamics of corrupt behavior in the period since mid-1998 indicates that the country has passed through **several distinct stages**:

- raising the problem of corruption (1998),
- acknowledgement of the existence of such a problem by the political and executive power (1999),
- outlining the actual scope of the problem through a series of disclosures (1999-2000).

What is crucial at present is the speedy and pragmatic transition to the next stage in the evolution of the problem of corruption - working out and enforcing comprehensive solutions. Such are the expectations of the public and the strategic interests of Bulgaria.