# A.   CORRUPTION LEVEL AND DYNAMICS OF PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO CORRUPTION

Coalition 2000 Corruption Monitoring System (CMS) results show that in 2002 **corruption did not increase but it did not decline either; corruption continued to rank among the top four critical problems faced by Bulgarian society** along with unemployment, poverty, and low incomes.

| FIGURE 1. | IMPORTANCE OF CORRUPTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEMS BULGARIANS FACE TODAY* (GENERAL PUBLIC) (%) - OCTOBER 2002 |
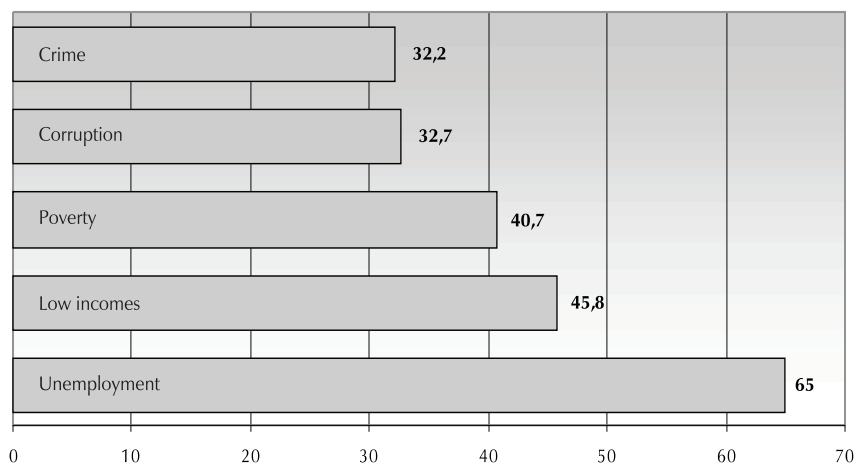
Source: Corruption Monitoring System (CMS) of *Coalition 2000*.
(*) Note: 1) % of those citing each factor 2) The respondents cited up to three answers and the percentage therefore exceeds 100.

Coalition 2000 Corruption Indexes

The corruption indexes are the main output of the Corruption Monitoring System (CMS) of *Coalition 2000*. Their values are updated quarterly based on empirical survey data. The corruption indexes assume values from 0-10. The closer the value of the indexes is to 10, the more negative are the assessments of the respective aspect of corruption.

Index numbers closer to 0 indicate approximation to the ideal of a „corruption-free" society. Corruption indexes are computed for the general public and for the business sector and include:

Attitudes to Corruption

● **Acceptability in principle** - this index reflects the extent to which various corrupt practices are tolerated within the value system.

● **Susceptibility to corruption** - measures citizens' inclination to compromise on their values and principles under the pressure of circumstances.

Corrupt practices

● **Corruption pressure -** measures the frequency of attempts by public sector employees to exert direct or indirect pressure on

citizens in order to obtain money, gifts, or favors.

- **Acts of corruption -** reflects the involvement of citizens in various forms of corrupt behavior, i.e. accounts for the *actual number corruption cases.*

Assessments of the spread of corruption

- **Spread of corruption -** registers citizens' assessments of the spread of corrupt practices among public sector employees.

- **Institutional spread of corruption** - reflects public perceptions of the spread of corruption by professional groups.

- **Practical efficiency of corruption -** shows citizens' assessments of the extent to which corruption is becoming an effective means of resolving personal problems.

Corruption-related expectations

- **Expectations regarding the development of corruption** - reflects assessments of the potential of Bulgarian society to cope with corruption.
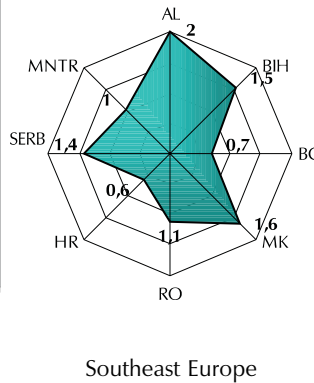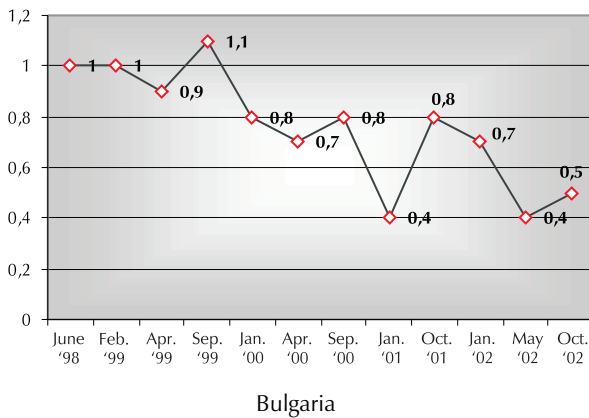
A.1. Level of Corruption

The *Coalition 2000* CMS measures two types of corruption-related phenomena: 1) corrupt behavior, and 2) attitudes and perceptions related to corruption. The assessment of corrupt behavior is the most important indicator measuring the **actual level of corruption** in the country (the average monthly incidence of cases of corruption). Corrupt behavior takes two basic forms: **bribes demanded** by public sector employees (Corruption Pressure Index) and **bribes offered** to public sector employees by the citizens (Personal Involvement in Corruption Index). The indexes reflect actual cases of involvement in various corrupt practices acknowledged by the citizens. They register the **actual frequency of involvement in corrupt practices** (i.e., the level of corruption-related victimization), **and not attitudes or opinions about corruption**.

The Personal Involvement Index **showed a marginal but steady decline in the period 1998-2002, and relative stability in 2002**. The index value for October 2002 was 0.5, representing a monthly average of about 130,000 actual acts of corruption (about 2% of the population indicated that they had given money, a gift, or had done a favor in order to have a problem of theirs resolved). The declining index values since 1998 are indicative of certain achievements in curbing corruption. The comparison between Bulgaria and the remaining countries of Southeast Europe under this indicator also provides some grounds for optimism. However, although **the level of corruption in the country did not increase in 2002**, in absolute terms the number of instances of corruption was alarmingly large. The overall effect of the efforts made could be considered to be deterring: corruption neither grows nor decreases.

The Corruption Pressure Index values in the period 1998-2002 showed an **unstable decline (improvement) tendency.** This index reflects the extent to which public officials interpret objective realities as an „atmosphere of impunity and freedom". As a rule, its values are lower than that of the Personal Involvement Index since not all demands „to get something" lead to actual corruption transactions. The index values suggest

FIGURE 2.   INVOLVEMENT IN CORRUPT PRACTICES*
                 (BULGARIA 1998-2002; SOUTHEAST EUROPE, JANUARY 2002)

Bulgaria   Southeast Europe

Source: CMS of *Coalition 2000*; SELDI
(*) Note: The maximum value of the index is 10.0 indicating the highest possible level of
               corruption. The minimum value is 0.0 indicating total absence of corruption.
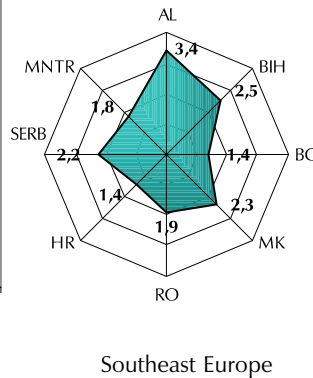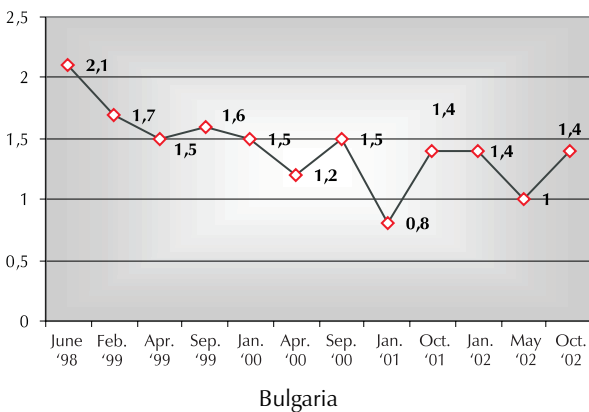Legend: AL - Albania; BIH - Bosnia and Herzegovina; BG - Bulgaria; MK - Macedonia;
               RO - Romania; HR - Croatia; SERB - Serbia; MNTR - Montenegro.

that the administrative environment created by the present government did not deteriorate in the course of the year, but then neither were there any more tangible improvements.

Both indexes reflect the level of corruption and are primarily related to low-level everyday corruption. Of the 130 thousand acknowledged cases of involvement in corruption, the most frequent bribe-takers were traffic police officers, low-rank administrative officials, and those working in healthcare. As evident from the data (see Figures 1 and 2), after the steady decline since 2000, both indicators registering personal corruption-related experience in terms of personal involvement and corruption pressure remained at the same levels. In this respect everyday life of ordinary Bulgarians still has not changed. According to expert estimates, **with 5-6 thousand requested bribes or cases of abuse of public office per day, the institutions concerned should investigate several hundred perpetrators a month**. This necessitates fundamentally different mechanisms for control, investigation, and punishment, which should initially have the capacity to handle 3-4 thousand cases a year.

FIGURE 3.   CORRUPTION PRESSURE
                 (BULGARIA 1998-2002; SOUTHEAST EUROPE, JANUARY 2002)

Bulgaria   Southeast Europe

Source: CMS of *Coalition 2000*; SELDI

A.2.   Effectiveness of Government Action

Public expectations regarding the radical reduction of corruption are fairly high. The evolution of public assessments of the activities of the government in this respect was contradictory. On the one hand, there was a significant **decrease** of the share of those who think that the Government was not making any particular efforts to find effective solutions to the problem. The decline in negative evaluations is indicative of **public trust in the declared readiness to fight corruption and in the activity of the**

FIGURE 4 **ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNMENT ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS ***
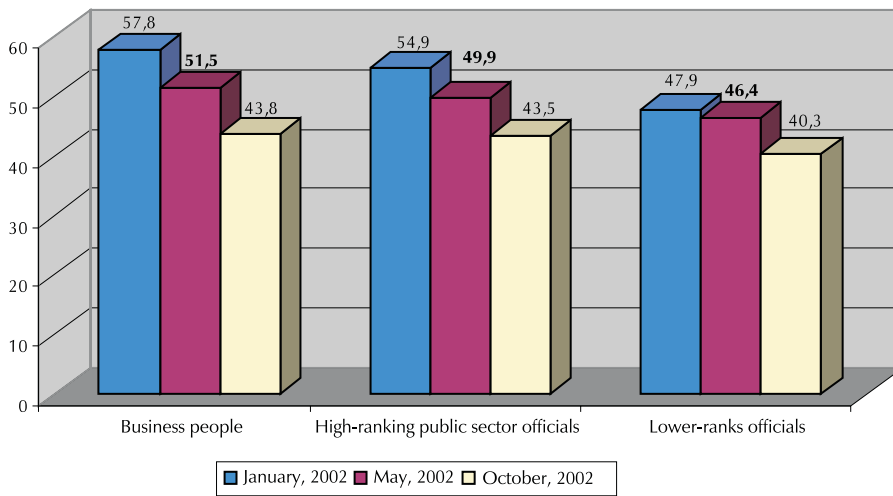

Source: CMS of *Coalition 2000*
(*) Note: Relative share of the answers „The Government is not doing anything"

government to date (Figure 4). On the other hand, a considerable part of the public (41-44 %) still thinks the government is not doing anything to counteract corruption.

The comparison between the corruption situation „under the present government" with that „under the previous government" reveals the way in which the public reacts to the process of accumulation of corruption allegations against the government. In this respect the data suggest that despite the buildup of **intense critical attitudes to the present government, this has not led to its evaluation by public opinion as more corrupt than the preceding government** (Figure 5). By contrast, evaluations of Ivan Kostov's cabinet (1997-2001) grew more unfavorable than those of the previous government already in early 1999, with the difference increasing considerably to the last parliamentary elections (July 2001).

FIGURE 5 **SPREAD OF CORRUPTION: COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE PRESENT SITUATION AND THE SITUATION UNDER THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT (JULY 1998 - DECEMBER 2002)**
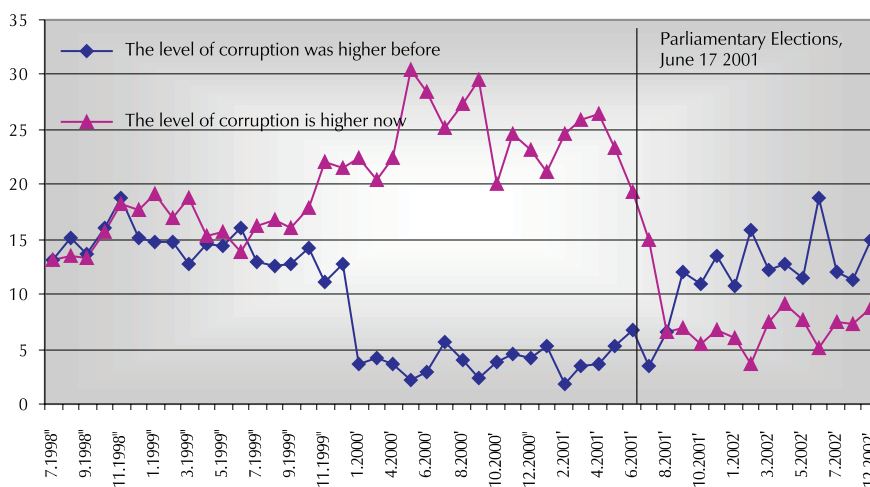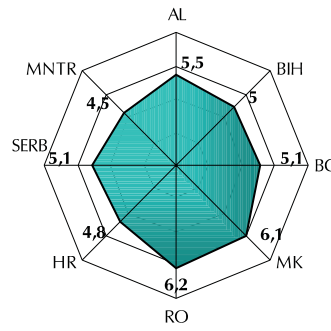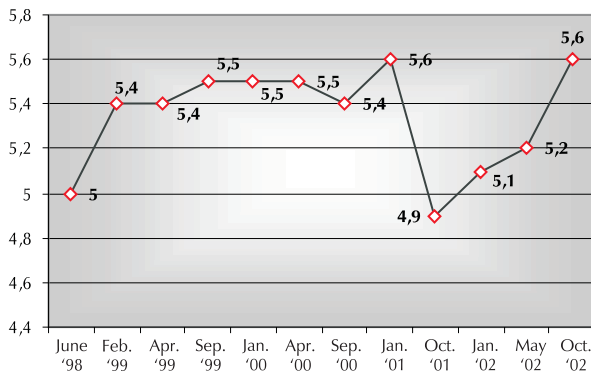

Source: Early Warning Report, UNDP

It should be noted that such attitudes were registered despite the drastic fall in trust in Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha's cabinet (down from 50 % in August 2001 to 28 % in December 2002) and despite the increase of pessimistic evaluations of the country's economic prospects.

The higher public expectations from the government when it first came to power were mirrored in the hopes that the corruption problem would be resolved (October 2001). A year later **trust in those in power and optimism as to the capability of Bulgarian society to deal with the problem of corruption have shrunk considerably** (Figure 6). Such an outlook on the situation

FIGURE 6	CORRUPTION EXPECTATIONS
	(BULGARIA 1998-2002; SOUTHEAST EUROPE, JANUARY 2002)

Bulgaria

June '98	Feb. '99	Apr. '99	Sep. '99	Jan. '00	Apr. '00	Sep. '00	Jan. '01	Oct. '01	Jan. '02	May '02	Oct. '02
5	5,4	5,4	5,5	5,5	5,5	5,4	5,6	4,9	5,1	5,2	5,6

Southeast Europe

AL 5,5; BIH 5; BG 5,1; MK 6,1; RO 6,2; HR 4,8; SERB 5,1; MNTR 4,5

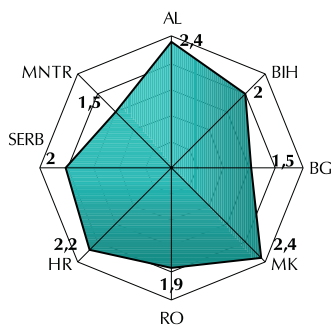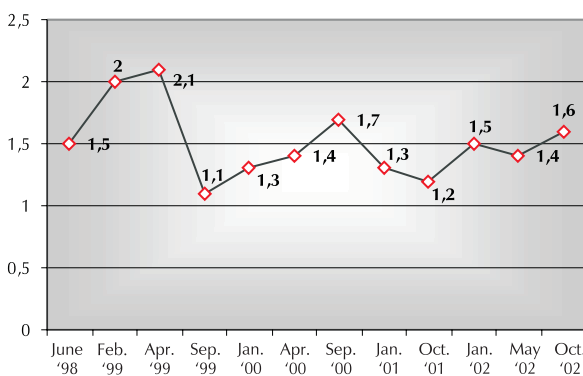Source: CMS of *Coalition 2000*; SELDI

inevitably affects the assessments (attitudes and perceptions) of corruption dynamics and manifestations.

A.3. Value System and Ethical Preconditions

Notwithstanding that corruption is a problem primarily of the social system, rather than a matter of personal choice and values, the moral rejection of corruption is a prerequisite for its reduction. Of the multitude of corruption-related public attitudes, the *Coalition 2000* CMS monitors two main groups of indicators. First, indicators reflecting the extent to which various practices are identified as corrupt behavior and are considered unacceptable (Acceptability in Principle Index). Secondly, indicators reflecting people's subjective inclination to use corruption as a problem solving tool (Susceptibility to Corruption Index). The values of these two indexes appear to have settled permanently at relatively low levels. The Corruption Acceptability in Principle Index assumed its lowest values in February 1999, which is indicative of a **firmly established moral rejection of corrupt practices and their perception as socially unacceptable**.

FIGURE 7.A	ACCEPTABILITY IN PRINCIPLE
	(BULGARIA 1998-2002; SOUTHEAST EUROPE, JANUARY 2002)

Bulgaria

June '98	Feb. '99	Apr. '99	Sep. '99	Jan. '00	Apr. '00	Sep. '00	Jan. '01	Oct. '01	Jan. '02	May '02	Oct. '02
1,5	2	2,1	1,1	1,3	1,4	1,7	1,3	1,2	1,5	1,4	1,6

Southeast Europe

AL 2,4; BIH 2; BG 1,5; MK 2,4; RO 1,9; HR 2,2; SERB 2; MNTR 1,5

Source: CMS of *Coalition 2000*; SELDI

Yet the Susceptibility to Corruption Index continued to be nearly twice as high as the Acceptability in Principle Index. This shows that corrupt behavior largely occurs under the pressure of everyday circumstances and the pragmatic interests of those involved in corrupt dealings. In this sense, **a considerable part of the general public still tends to consider corrupt practices an effective, even if morally unacceptable, means of resolving private problems**.

A.4. Assessment of the Spread of Corruption

The indexes reflecting the **spread of corruption** (*Spread of Corruption* and *Practical Efficiency of Corruption*) summarize public assessments of the **corruption image** of institutions and/or people in power. Their values are in general considerably higher than those reflecting the actual level of corruption (*Corruption Pressure* and *Personal Involvement*). The dynamics of these evaluations are affected by personal experience and impressions as well as the public debate on corruption in all its dimensions (media coverage, statements by various actors, shared experience and opinions of friends and acquaintances, etc.). In the context of a more intense public debate, assessments of the spread of corruption often tend to go up, which does not necessarily mirror the actual level of corruption.

FIGURE 7.B   SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CORRUPTION
(BULGARIA 1998-2002; SOUTHEAST EUROPE, JANUARY 2002)

Bulgaria   Southeast Europe

Source: CMS of *Coalition 2000*; SELDI

Bulgarians' general estimation that **they live in a society in which corruption constitutes a serious problem** (see Figures 8 and 9) did not change substantially in the period February 1999 - October 2002. The negative changes observed in the period May 2002 - October 2002 were conditioned by several problem situations with a direct or indirect impact on corruption: the judiciary reform debates, the Bulgartabak privatization, the disclosures related to corruption in law enforcement, and others. The assessments of the spread of corruption among public sector employees in 2002 were affected not only by the exercise of power in political terms, but also by the efficiency of the institutions ensuring court and administrative control.

FIGURE 8   SPREAD OF CORRUPTION
(BULGARIA 1998-2002; SOUTHEAST EUROPE, JANUARY 2002)

Bulgaria   Southeast Europe

Source: CMS of *Coalition 2000*; SELDI

Assessments of the spread of corruption in the judiciary deteriorated. Corruption pressure exerted by all of the professional categories related to the judiciary (lawyers, prosecutors, judges) appeared to be on the rise. In the course of the year, **the focus of public interest shifted from the legislative and the executive to the cases of corruption in the judiciary**.

The shift in public attention also affected public

FIGURE 9.   PRACTICAL EFFICIENCY OF CORRUPT PRACTICES
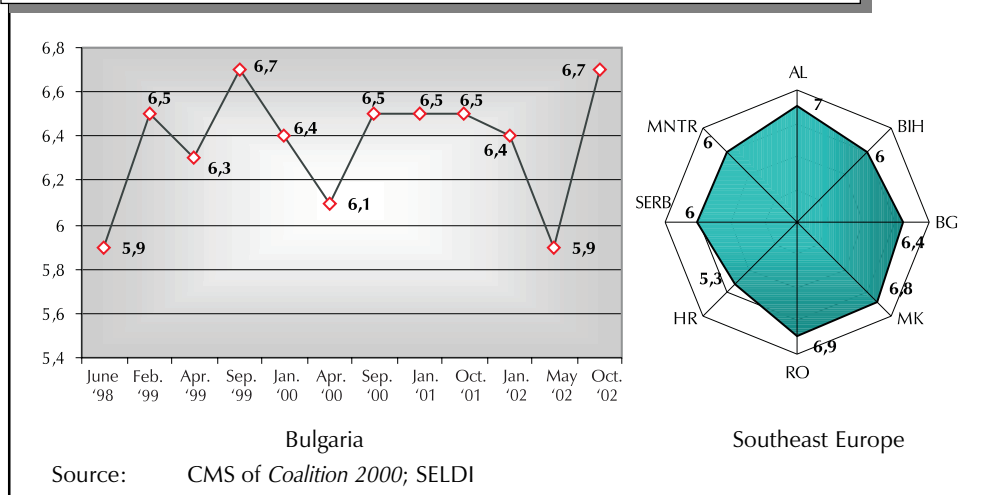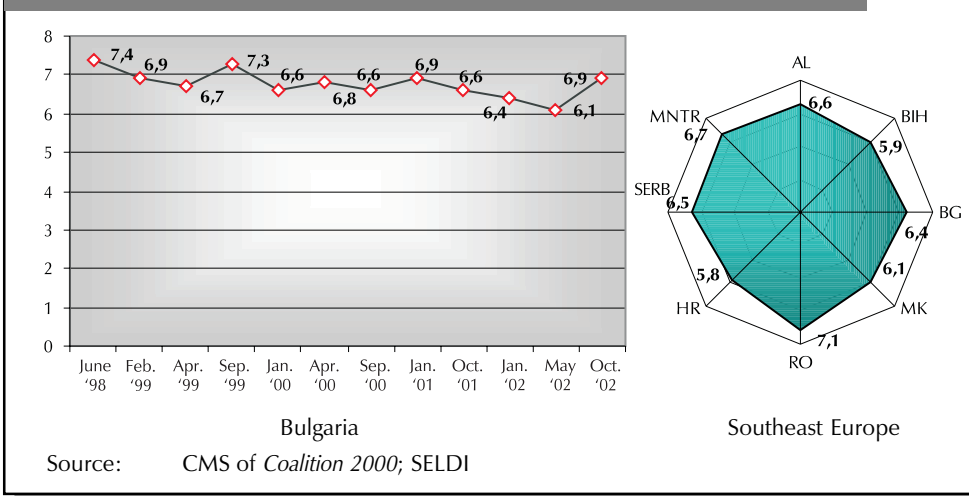   (BULGARIA 1998-2002; SOUTHEAST EUROPE, JANUARY 2002)

Bulgaria   Southeast Europe

Source: CMS of *Coalition 2000*; SELDI

perceptions of the factors of corruption. Increasing importance came to be ascribed to those depending directly on the state of the **legal framework and the operation of the judiciary**. As a result, there emerged a high level of distrust in the capacity of the governing elite and the political class as a whole to tangibly reduce corruption in the country.

The year 2002 was marked by gradual redefinition and transformation of the notion of corruption as a problem of essentially ethical nature to its perception as a **problem of the practical aspects of the technology of political power and governance**. Corruption gradually came to be considered and dealt with in terms of mechanisms, people, and institutions, rather than in the context of political and ideological disputes on whether or not corruption actually exists. The government is now expected to ensure a clear-cut political strategy to curb corruption and to implement it effectively.

In terms of popular assessments, however, **curbing corruption involves considerable risks** - real measures lead to public exposure of corrupt officials and corruption schemes and in this sense reinforce the perception of Bulgarian society as severely affected by corruption. Yet, this risk is likewise associated with **increased opportunities**. The broader coverage of anti-corruption measures within the system of the Ministry of Interior exposed the scope of the corruption problem, but likewise boosted public trust in this ministry and support for its efforts.

TABLE 1.   ASSESSMENTS OF THE SPHERES WITH THE
                HIGHEST SPREAD OF CORRUPTION (% OF
                THOSE CITING EACH SPHERE)*

General Spread	May 2002	October 2002
Customs. Custom officials.	33.2	30.4
Parliament, Presidency, Government, political elite	24.1	30.3
Court, Judiciary, Justice, Lawyers	23.5	28.5
Healthcare system (incl. National Health Insurance Fund)	25.6	20.6
In the system of the Ministry of Interior (incl. Traffic police)	20.6	19.9
Public Institutions	**May 2002**	**October 2002**
Privatization Agency	22.0	22.5
Customs	12.6	10.9
National Health Insurance Fund	2.5	2.6

Source: CMS of *Coalition 2000*;
(*) Note: The questions were open-ended and the above categories summarize the institutions
               cited by the respondents.