

Part 3: “Clean Future” Public awareness campaign

3.1. Designing the “Clean Future” awareness campaign

The Public awareness campaign is the third component of the *Coalition 2000* process alongside the corrupt practices monitoring in Bulgaria and the Policy Cycle activities within the framework of the public-private partnership, which include the development of concrete anti-corruption laws and measures.

When defining the term “awareness campaign,” we should point out the following main parameters: The comprehensive nature of the awareness activities aimed at positioning the anti-corruption initiative in the public domain, as well as changing public attitudes and perceptions.

- ✓ The mutual complementarity and gradation of these activities (combining the typically informational with the long-term educational tasks aimed at achieving behavioral modifications and initiating anti-corruption activities).
- ✓ The dual nature of the various activities—aimed both at accomplishing specific goals and at changing public attitudes and perceptions (use of the Corruption Indexes and the Corruption Assessment System’s other products for the purposes of the awareness campaign, townhall meetings convened both as an element of building anti-corruption structures at the local level and as a campaign form/focus, etc.).
- ✓ The strategic organization and subordination of these activities, and their timing and placing (center-periphery), meant to guarantee success within a set timeframe, etc.

These parameters make possible and promote the idea of this component of the anti-corruption initiative precisely as a “campaign.”¹ At the same time, the name “Clean Future” was selected in order to mark the anti-corruption initiative’s long-lasting character, as well as the *Coalition 2000*’s main positive message—creating conditions for transparency and accountability in society. In addition, this name evokes the most popular anti-corruption effort at national level—the Italian campaign “*Mani pulite*”, or “Clean Hands.”

In the process of designing the awareness campaign strategy, aims and tools the *Coalition 2000* experts were targeting the very typical ambiguity of both the general public and the elites in this country on the problem of corruption. This is especially valid for the interaction between the public and the private sector: for a large part of the general public it is fairly unclear which interaction mechanisms are legitimate and what the “normal” state of affairs actually means.²

¹ A negative association exists between the term “campaign” and its derivative in post-communist countries meaning sporadic, short-term activities. In this case, though, it presupposes carrying out a long-term set of activities and forming lasting societal attitudes. Therefore, it should not be equated with passing marketing campaigns or with the electioneering activities typical of the political practice in the context of the fluid democratic situation.

² It should be noted that in the pre- 1989 period the private sector was considered illegitimate on the whole and that people of the older generations still consider private initiative more or less bordering on the illegal.

The Anti-Corruption Action Plan for Bulgaria (ACAP) **defined the following related objectives of the awareness campaign:**

- ❖ To provide further impetus to the positive changes already in progress in public consciousness, moving from resignation to dissociation and resistance against the practices of corruption in its diverse manifestations.
- ❖ Catalyzing broad public opposition against corruption implies awareness of the phenomenon, of its essence and workings, as well as of its consequences for the individual and society as a whole.
- ❖ The formation of public intolerance of corruption should also result in stronger public demands for institutional change guaranteeing transparency and accountability of the administration, as well as for new moral standards in public life.³

In addition, some more specific aims were defined in targeting the political and business elites:

- i. To mainstream a concern for corruption within the national institutions,
- ii. To increase understanding of the causal factors and the variety of manifestations of corruption among the staff of national institutions,
- iii. To influence behavior, and
- iv. To create a receptive attitude to the many structural, procedural and administrative changes that will have to take place throughout the public institutions.

In order to achieve them some techniques were borrowed from the **social marketing model**.⁴ This model is based on the assumption that curbing corruption could be produced following a three stage process including:

Cognitive change. This stage of the social marketing strategy involves problem diagnostics and assessment, identification of target audiences and appropriate messages, and tailoring these messages to the specific audiences through research and subsequent monitoring (used to track the effectiveness). The most important result of the activities at this stage is the formulation of a research based impact strategy.

Inducing affect. At this stage the major objective is to convert messages into emotional/moral commitments. This would mean that target audiences would not only understand the messages they are exposed to; they would also internalize messages, make them their own “moral standard.”

Behavior change. This final stage is the most difficult to achieve, as it involves inducing people to change some aspects of their actual behavior. The final result of a successful change in this respect would include transforming moral disapproval into an action agenda of the public.

³ Clean Future. Anti-Corruption Action Plan for Bulgaria, Sofia, 1998, p. 42.

⁴ See Kidra, G. S., Stapenhurst, R., Social Marketing Strategies to Fight Corruption, The Economic Development Institute of the World Bank, 1998.

With a view to accomplishing the objectives of the awareness campaign, *Coalition 2000* concentrated its efforts on the development of the following **main stages**:

1. Defining the problem: informing the public about the spread of corrupt practices and about their socio-economic and political aspects; positioning the corruption problem in a global and national context (i.e., how it relates to the priorities of the international community and to the other aspects of the transition in Bulgaria).
2. Formulating an anti-corruption message (directed to society as a whole, and also to the separate target groups and to individuals).
3. Increasing the popularity of anticorruption as a social cause, and of the social agenda in the fight for transparency and accountability.

There was a consensus among *Coalition 2000*'s experts that the national scope and aims of the anti-corruption initiative made it imperative that the awareness campaign should also be national and will have a long-term impact. It was decided that it should be launched through the means of mass communication and other public information channels. Its outset should be marked by publicizing the *Coalition 2000* anti-corruption potential and the first forums planned. The following steps were defined as of essential importance:

- To specify the subject of the campaign, its target audience and forms of implementation. (Defining the term of corruption would help differentiate in people's minds traditional expressions of gratitude from the unethical, and often criminal acts of bribery, as well as identify the less straightforward forms of corruption);
- To determine the priority social groups within the framework of the campaign, placing an emphasis, in addition to the political and business elite, on the younger audience without, however, ignoring other age groups (in relation to the young audience it will be necessary to devote special efforts to alerting young people to the problems and threats posed by corruption);
- To make use of the most effective and tested forms of social marketing, including audio-visual tools, posters, promotions, thematic campaigns, etc.

The anti-corruption awareness campaign is similar to the various communication methods used to shape public. During the post-communist transition, favorable conditions emerged for the development of a civic initiative aimed at formulating and asserting democratic values. At the same time, these values encountered the bureaucratic reflexes of the authorities and the lack of clear role differentiation between state institutions and non-governmental organizations. Under these circumstances, *Coalition 2000* was the first attempt to introduce the public-private formula in an anti-corruption awareness campaign—a circumstance with rather positive implications, but also entailing some difficulties. Among the first are advantages of the public-private partnership in this area, such as the leading role of civic organizations, complementarity of efforts, more flexible reaction in line with public reactions to the anti-corruption messages, etc. At the same time, *Coalition 2000* had to solve complex problems related to coordination of activities entirely under civic control with those of state institutions. The awareness campaign is by definition decentralized and involves individuals, organizations, the media and

institutions exclusively on a voluntary basis. This type of interaction is more difficult to carry out organizationally, and it precludes the concentration of optimal social resources. One has to mention the specific nature of the anti-corruption issue which requires the overcoming of deeply-rooted attitudes and perceptions reconfirmed by everyday experiences, a process that involves the introduction of moral and behavioral correctives in each person's actions, as well as the promotion of a new public anti-corruption climate. In other words, a campaign with such peculiarities requires far more diverse efforts with various targets: individual behavioral dispositions, public ethics and values such as honesty and transparency, and last but not least—the political sphere which is the object of consistent and continuous efforts aimed at generating and accelerating the necessary legal-institutional reforms.

Taking into account this complex nature of the anti-corruption awareness campaign, *Coalition 2000* noted in the Anti-Corruption Action Plan the serious risks faced by the campaign.⁵: Most of these concerns have been valid. The logic and objectives of *Coalition 2000*, as well as the initiatives and activities within its framework, have encountered different forms of resistance in the context of the subsequent public debate on the corruption-anticorruption set of problems which is part of the Awareness campaign itself.

3.2. Campaign tools, forms and activities

As was already noted, the efforts to change the existing social perceptions and attitudes were aimed at several target groups:

1. The general public in the country
2. The political and professional elite
3. The international community

Defining the target audience

Identifying the general public as a target group was aimed at achieving maximum support from more people in society as a whole.

This audience includes both law-abiding citizens and participants in corrupt transactions. It was also taken into account that the latter have different kinds of

⁵ “As in the case of any social marketing campaign, this may also provoke certain negative reactions, which need to be predicted and defused by limiting their scope. Since the issue of corruption does not appear to have an immediate bearing on the basic needs of Bulgarians, it will be difficult for the message to make its way to their consciousness.

The greatest obstacle to achieving the desired impact with the campaign is the unappealing nature of its subject and the public's weariness of direct propaganda. It is therefore necessary to use non-traditional forms of social marketing striking the proper balance between accessibility and originality. The one thing to avoid at all cost is boredom, unattractiveness and traditionalism in the implementation of the campaign. There is a reason to expect serious behind-the-scenes opposition, including through the mass media, from the circles affected by the anti-corruption campaign. It is also necessary to bear in mind the risk of politicization of the campaign. This could take place either by way of identifying anti-corruption actions with narrow party interests or through attempts to limit their scope in the service of the political or individual interests of certain parties or leaders.”⁵

motivation and are in various ways responsible for illegal deals. On the one hand, these include political and bureaucratic corruption actors who can play either active or passive roles in corruption transactions. What constitutes corruption in this case is that they illegally re-distribute goods, and benefit personally in return. This is in fact privatization of public authority and state/municipal resources. On the other hand, participants in corrupt transactions include clients of potentially or actually corrupt officials or politicians. Although most of them denounce corruption as a social evil, they rely on it for solving their personal problems and view this phenomenon mostly as a “necessary evil.” This category also includes, of course, those Bulgarian citizens who do not condemn corruption and accept it as a normal type of transaction under the conditions of a market economy.

The *Coalition 2000* expert group on the campaign communication strategy recommended narrowing this target group to the sub-group of young people between 18 and 30 years of age based on the argument that they were less involved in corrupt practices and would dissociate from them more easily. Besides, the young generation typically rejects the totalitarian past, including its corruption traditions.

When addressing the political and professional elite, the communication program had to consider two categories: representatives of the old-type bureaucrats who have often privatized public functions and resources, and representatives of the modern-thinking politicians and technocrats who are not afraid of.

The campaign focused also on NGO representatives, members of the organization itself, and experts at all program levels.

Mass media representatives both at the national and local level can be identified as an additional audience.

The support of the mass media is of key significance for the successful impact on public opinion. At the same time, securing it demands constant efforts and insight into this sector’s priorities and specific nature.

Various means and methods were selected for conveying the messages to the audience in accordance with its characteristics. Numerous print, audio and visual methods were used. The campaign was also put in a timeframe with defined cycles.

For the purposes of the campaign, two types of promotional instruments were used—direct and indirect: Information days

- townhall meetings,
- anti-corruption events,
- competitions for a logo, posters and anti-corruption caricatures, newspaper articles,
- analytical publications in specialized newspapers and magazines,
- press conferences, etc.

The expert group on the campaign communication strategy discussed different versions of the main message. Two opposite views were formed. The first one relied on an aggressive impact upon the audience through an explicitly formulated logical relationship: corruption–crime–punishment. The proponents of this kind of message and campaign pointed out the need for a “shock therapy” against widespread attitudes of tolerance to corruption. The message, according to them, had to provoke and incite both the audience’s conscience and sub-conscience by evoking negative associations of

corruption participation and even tolerance. More specifically, this approach relied on unlocking the latent guilt complex of many citizens in the post-communist countries (because of their participation in corruption transactions), as well as on fear-based protective reactions (through demonstrations of how the corrupt are punished).

The second approach, advanced by part of the experts, involved limiting the campaign and respectively formulating the message entirely on the grounds of positive suggestions. Such an approach stemmed from the campaign's motto ("Clean Future"). Its supporters underlined the advantages of the non-confrontational types of messages which could not only generate positive dispositions but also create favorable attitudes toward the initiative itself, i.e. they could potentially solve two related tasks: 1) suggest anti-corruption behaviors and ethos, and 2) legitimize the *Coalition 2000* initiative.

After a series of focus-group discussions aimed at testing the different communication strategies, both types of messages were approved to be used selectively depending on the concrete situation. Hence, two project ideas were selected in the poster competition held by the Coalition. The first—the positive one—was graphically developed through the image of a smiling child in a swing hung on the globe. The poster features the slogan "Clean Future" and the *Coalition 2000* logo. The second poster was a drawing by a famous cartoonist depicting a typical grotesque bureaucrat with coins instead of eyes. The caption is formulated aggressively and appeals to civic activism: "Do you know him?"

In a box: the poster published in the newsletter, issue 2, 1999, last page ("Clean Future")

Some slogans and scripts were also selected, with an eye to producing anti-corruption oriented video for the purposes of the campaign. In the end, the selected video scripts contained an aggressive anti-corruption message formulated in three versions: "Corruption is crime!", "Corruption is humiliation," and "No to corruption!". Each of the clips closes with the *Coalition 2000* logo, which on the one hand identifies the author of the anti-corruption message, and on the other—further positions the initiative in the public domain. All the three video clips had to expose the most common and at the same time the only form of corruption lending itself to visualization—bribery.

In a box: Three shots from the video clips

The above-mentioned slogans have the advantage that they show a criminal act which discredits equally the person who gives the bribe and the one who takes it. Several short plot lines demonstrate the misuse of office on part of policemen, customs officers, lawyers and physicians. These situations are typical for many people. At the same time, they are the most common situations that reinforce passive and complicit attitudes among citizens in their dealings with state officials. On the other hand, this type of message—in this case the videos—can entail some risk factors. The major risk is the unwillingness of

the authorities to engage with negative-denunciatory messages which, on the one hand, refer to the behavior of officials at different institutions, and on the other—contradict the official line for praising the reforms and the political coalition which implements them. Another type of resistance comes from a “timidity” traditional for transition societies with reference to depictions of the shortcomings of those in power. These and/or other considerations pushed the management of the Bulgarian National Television (BNT) to refuse to air the *Coalition 2000* videos. Later, the *Coalition 2000* videos were to some extent redeemed. They were shown on private cable channels in Bulgaria, at different anti-corruption forums, including ones abroad, and on CNN.

An important element of the campaign was the circulation of the radio “Mister 10 percent,” composed by the most popular rock musician in the country and a symbol of the protest against the communist regime—Kiril Marichkov (lyrics by Alexander Petrov).

In a box: the text of “Mister 10 percent”

In a box: “Art against corruption”—photo of Marichkov and Petrov from the “Clean Future” newsletter, issue 3, summer 1999, last page

In a box: Concert in the Student Town

In the context of the overall awareness campaign, the following print forms for the dissemination of information and messages were used: news releases, books, newspaper and magazine articles, newsletters and advertisements, brochures, handbooks, electronic newsletters, and facsimiles.

Audio forms: speeches, news conferences, townhall meetings, round table discussions, interviews, face-to-face discussions.

Visual forms: television events, videotapes, photographs, slides, movies, banners, posters, etc.

Clean Future awareness campaign impact

Within the framework of the awareness campaign civil society, in cooperation with the independent media and representatives of state institutions, was able to set a number of tendencies in societal attitudes towards the corruption phenomenon:

- ✓ 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 states:
 - raising the problem of corruption (1998);

- acknowledgement of the existence of such a problem by the government(1999);
 - outlining the actual scope of the problem through a series of investigative publications (1999-2000).
- ✓ A new tendency emerged towards a shift in the public criticism from everyday corruption to grand corruption. While traditionally the manifestations of this phenomenon were sought primarily in the activities at the lower levels of public administration, gradually 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 grand or political corruption. Topics and problem areas that used to be taboo until recently, such as privatization of large enterprises, political and economic clientelistic 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.
 - ✓ There is less tolerance towards traditional forms of corruption within society. Those forms are increasingly associated with crime, a tendency which testifies to a permanent value re-orientation of Bulgarian citizens from tolerance towards corrupt practices to their exclusion from the sphere of normal and acceptable behavior. It seems, though, that society is only half there: people reject unequivocally the willingness of others to be involved in corrupt acts, but they are still tolerant to their own participation in "petty" corruption.
 - ✓ To a great extent, changes in societal attitudes made possible the realization of one of the important goals of the Coalition—the change in the legal environment aimed at limiting the opportunities for corruption. Such a combination of priorities (efforts to catalyze social support and legislative changes) proved successful in the long run. It suffices to note that a number of normative acts (such as the Law on Civil Servants, the Law on Access to Public Information, the Law on Public Procurement, the Law on Administration, the Law on Administrative Services for Natural and Legal Persons, the Law on Combating Corruption and Financial Crime, etc.) were adopted thanks to the pressure and atmosphere within society created during the campaign.

At the same time, a number of **problems** emerged in the process of disseminating the campaign messages. They all related to difficulties in combining the ethical and rational messages targeted at individuals. This is the most ambitious task of such campaigns, since the comprehension that curbing corruption is in the interest not only of society but also of individuals is at the heart of changing individual attitudes towards this phenomenon.

- ✓ The anti-corruption thesis is easier to internalize in situations where individuals are forced to pay *corruption taxes* for public services that are presumably free of charge, thus violating their basic rights. In this case, however, the people

- themselves do not have distinct pro-corruption attitudes, i.e., anti-corruption awareness efforts just reconfirm the already existing attitudes of intolerance towards this phenomenon.
- ✓ We already mentioned the resistance against the awareness campaign among representatives of some professional groups.. The predominant reaction among representatives of the authorities was imitative, i.e., limited to the verbal condemnation of corruption.⁶
 - ✓ The *Coalition 2000* experience showed that it is most difficult to convey the anti-corruption messages to the young people. First of all, this difficulty can be attributed to the devastating influence of the corrupt environment as an educational model for the new generation. The latter accept corruption to a great extent as a fact, and participation in and even observation of corrupt practices does not stir anti-corruption ethical or rationalist impulses. Moreover, young people are far more skeptical towards social marketing. Because of that, the anti-corruption message directed to the young had an aesthetic rather than an ethical emphasis. Experience demonstrated, however, that such a message remains rather generally formulated and is not embraced by the young audience. What is missing in this case is an existing sufficiently convincing behavior model which embodies the abstract thesis.

3.3. Defining the framework of the anti-corruption debate

The comprehensive nature of the campaign, as well as its reliance on the mass media and other instruments of public communication for accomplishing its objectives, demonstrate the significance of the task of shaping and channeling the anti-corruption public debate in such a manner as to stir widening public support for the values of transparency and accountability.

Naturally, the anti-corruption debate in Bulgaria did not begin with the *Coalition 2000* activities. Prior to the awareness campaign, it was unfolding at several levels, with various participants. In the area of political confrontation, the active parties were representatives of the political elite, regardless of their party affiliation. Within the public sphere, the active party were the media which created opportunities for a broad discussion on the problem. On the other hand, an active participant in this debate was the community of analysts and political scientists who periodically disseminated various messages within the public sphere. All these areas intersected, and concrete events were interpreted in different ways and often had unforeseeable consequences.

The most important feature of the corruption debate was that it was taking place in the field of **party confrontation**. In this context, it was extremely difficult to talk about corruption beyond the immediate party aspects of the problem. On the one hand,

⁶ The cooperation of *Coalition 2000* with a candidate for mayor on the eve of the local elections (October 1999) provides a trivial example in this respect. Initially, the candidate expressed full support for the Coalition's ideas for the transparency of local government, and even incorporated the appeal for eliminating corrupt practices in the municipality into his election campaign. After he was elected, however, the new mayor forgot his election promises, did not implement the joint idea to establish an Ombudsman (public mediator) institution in the municipal administration, and terminated all interactions with the anti-corruption initiative.

those in power were suggesting that corruption was limited to the few cases that were being investigated or prosecuted. Understandable attempts were made to redefine the debate by presenting counteraction against corruption as an opposition conspiracy against the democratic alternative to the post-communist rule. In the long run, those in power began to see every criticism against corruption within the government as an attack against the government in general.

At the other extreme were the statements of the opposition that the scope of corruption in Bulgaria during the analysed period (1997-2001) was without a precedent in Bulgarian history. As in all political debates in the last decade, the opposite side's arguments on the corruption issue were not accepted constructively, did not inspire counter arguments, and were used solely for the internal consolidation of political parties and for a total negation of the opponent's thesis.

As far as the substantive debate on corruption is concerned, in the context of the awareness campaign the **following main concepts about the nature of corruption and the counteraction against it** emerged:

❖ **Formal-legal**

The proponents of this concept limit all manifestations of corruption to its incriminated forms. This view is supported by a significant part of the professional legal community. The incomplete legal definition of the term "corruption" in Bulgarian jurisprudence facilitates its reductionist interpretation by jurists. Such an approach is to a certain extent unavoidable because of the typical adherence of this professional group to the strictly legalistic aspects of anticorruption.⁷

In fact, the dominance of the formal-legal interpretation made it possible for leading politicians to insist that corruption was not a serious problem facing the country.⁸

❖ **Market-liberal**

The champions of this view think that no special measures against corruption are necessary, and that the solution to this problem is macroeconomic: the prerequisites for corruption will disappear when the state relinquishes its participation in the economy. In its more extreme versions, such an approach regards anti-corruption initiatives as unnecessary and even counterproductive.⁹ Some of the top government officials, adhered to such a concept.¹⁰

⁷ Such a position, for instance, is maintained by the jurist Alexander Dzherov (Democratic Party): "Since there are no corruption lawsuits, I can say that there is no proven corruption in the state leadership." (See the *Sega* daily, June 13, 2001.)

⁸ As the respected *Capital* weekly notes, on this issue the position of Ivan Kostov, leader of the Union of Democratic Forces and Prime Minister in the period 1997-2001, ranges from "there is no corruption in Bulgaria" to "give me some evidence." (*Capital* weekly, April 12, 2000.)

⁹ According to the political scientist Ivan Kristev, for instance, "...all attempts to conduct anti-corruption policies have invariably increased the role of the state, and have been anti-market and anti-liberal in nature... If the government really wants to reduce corruption in this country, it should not fight it, but rather continue to reform the state by decreasing regulations, enforcing anti-trust measures, simplifying the tax laws, and promoting competition. (See the *Capital* weekly, October 24, 1998.)

¹⁰ For example, at the conference "Foreign Investments, Transparency, and Economic Growth," held in Sofia in 1999, Ivan Kostov said that by the end of the year 2000 the reforms in Bulgaria will be over, and that this was the best way to fight corruption. (*Capital* weekly, October 24, 1999.)

In opposition to this view, *Coalition 2000* experts and other NGO representatives pointed out that the very forms and mechanisms for carrying out some of the reforms, and most of all the privatization of state property, generate corrupt practices. This leads to the paradox that “the very way in which the state is relinquishing its participation in the economy gives rise to corruption.”¹¹ Subsequently, the *Coalition 2000* theses were circulated by various public actors who attacked the clientelistic privatization model of the UDF government.

❖ **Etatist-institutional**

The proponents of this approach put an emphasis on the intra-institutional control and the activation of the whole law enforcement system: police, secret services, and the judicial system. This approach also involves disparaging attitudes to or the outright rejection of the participation of NGOs in the fight against corruption. One of the typical critical remarks directed to *Coalition 2000* was that by publicizing facts and assessments of the widespread corruption in Bulgaria it was tarnishing the international image of the country. A direct implication of this line of thought is that publications and statements proving the existence of corrupt practices in Bulgaria drive away potential investors and impair the chances of the country for a faster integration into the EU and NATO.

❖ **Egalitarian**

The adherents to this thesis proceed from the opposite assumptions. They equate corruption with the ideas of class exploitation and robbery popular under communism, and respectively anticorruption—with the egalitarian social criticism and agenda. Such an ideological treatment of the problem obscures its real parameters, and transfers the task of civil society to achieve transparency and openness of state institution into the sphere of political confrontation.

❖ **Pro-corruption**

It is fair to say that the thesis about the utility of corruption as “oiling” socio-economic mechanisms is in fact absent from serious publications and other media channels, and is formulated solely as a scholarly hypothesis within the framework of expert discussions on this topic.

The public debate generated by *Coalition 2000* enhanced the popularity of another concept about the phenomenon under discussion. It highlighted the need for civic control as a form of prevention of corrupt practices. This position, upheld within the framework of *Coalition 2000*, regards corruption as a social evil eroding the basic structures of social relations, and hence—a matter of serious concern for the nation. Through its efforts, *Coalition 2000* was consistently championing the understanding that corruption was not limited to the provisions of the Criminal Code, but was also a phenomenon whose scope could and should be assessed in order to counteract against it effectively. In addition, this approach does not regard corruption as a “threat to the system of government,” but as a threat to the social integrity of the nation, as a potential time-bomb capable of blowing up public support for the reforms. Tolerance of corrupt

¹¹ Corruption Assessment Report 1999, p. 15.

practices alienates citizens from the process of reforms, and undermines their sense of involvement. If those in power turn a blind eye on the existing corruption, the inevitable hardships will be distributed unfairly—concentrated upon some social strata while others, with access to the benefits of public office, are being relieved. Moreover, the dynamics of these attitudes should be monitored and measured, and the measuring can become an important source of information for the decision makers.

Such an attitude presumes a clear understanding of the complex nature of the corruption problem. Consequently, the awareness campaign was necessary not only for presenting the phenomenon more adequately; without it most citizens will inevitably remain an object of manipulation—either through a politicized anti-corruption rhetoric, or through efforts to render meaningless the idea of fighting corruption.

3.

In its efforts to influence the anti-corruption debate, *Coalition 2000* set the following **main goals**:

- An obvious goal of *Coalition 2000* was to react against the pervasive formal-legal view on the problem and against the general tendency, common even among the elites. As it was stated earlier, such an endeavor is of key significance for lifting constraints before public initiative, and in this particular case—for motivating the representatives of the elites to actively participate in anti-corruption activities. In other words, those attitudes against corruption, which can be described as quiescent and leaning towards delegating anti-corruption activities to law enforcement agencies, were targeted first and foremost.
- Another aspect of the awareness campaign was overcoming the continuing confusion of terms like “bribes,” “tips” and “gifts.” Given the fact that for a society like the Bulgarian one gift giving as an expression of gratitude comprises part of the national tradition, the absence of any legal differentiation between these terms additionally complicates the task of separating the permissible from the unacceptable, the legal from the illegal. Because of that, in media appearances and publications of *Coalition 2000* the need to adopt clear rules for gift giving was repeatedly stressed. This problem has two aspects: on the one hand, by consciously or unconsciously upholding the ambiguity of societal attitudes on this issue, the authorities facilitate the mimicry of corrupt activities and their perpetrators who can state that non-monetary bribes given or taken by them are an expression of traditional gratitude. On the other hand, societal attitudes towards corrupt practices can be diluted when exchanges of gifts, which are normal for this country, are presented as a form of corruption.
- Placing the emphasis on “soft corruption” (nepotism, favouritism, trade in influence, conflict of interests, etc.) as considerably more dangerous for society is especially important for stimulating public intolerance towards them. The danger lies not only in the destructive consequences of such phenomena for society as a whole, but also in the general tendency to link them to the social practice of using “liaisons”.

Another campaign priority was the correct positioning of the corruption problem. The main goal in this respect was the eradication of the most widely spread explanatory models justifying or ignoring corrupt practices which induce skepticism or rejection of anti-corruption measures among citizens. The main points of these models are as follows:

- Corruption is a very limited phenomenon which can be attributed only to the few officials accused of taking bribes, and therefore, this is not a social/political problem.
- Corruption is widespread, but it is unavoidable for solving the personal problems of citizens. Hence, one's own participation in corrupt transactions and bribe giving can be excused (unlike accepting bribes which is condemned by the majority).
- Corruption as a phenomenon typical of human nature does not inflict big losses on the economy and society. A modification of this thesis is the notion that corruption is even useful in some cases as an "accelerator" of the reform processes.
- Bulgaria is not more corrupt than any Western state, and anticorruption is not necessary since "we are not so bad."

The **anti-corruption thesis** was presented in several directions:

- ❖ Presenting statistics of societal attitudes towards corruption (since the Corruption Indexes of *Coalition 2000* clearly proved that the public was convinced in the seriousness of the problem, they were used as an argument against unfounded assertions of the opposite).
- ❖ Disseminating comparative data about the corruption rating of Bulgaria (the Index of Corruption Perceptions of Transparency International, and other assessments).
- ❖ Developing and disseminating explanatory models which show the relation between corruption and poverty, corruption and a weak interest of foreign investors, corruption and drastic social inequality, corruption and the destabilization of democratic institutions, etc.
- ❖ Suggesting the idea that participation in corrupt transactions has a boomerang effect on individuals, and that in the long run this is an illegal tax which they pay for the enrichment of criminals.
- ❖ Legitimizing anticorruption as a rational and ethical approach aimed at limiting the destructive socio-economic consequences of corrupt practices, consolidating public trust in democratic institutions, and establishing a civic mode of behavior and modern standards for interactions between state officials and citizens.
- ❖ Refuting the thesis that the anti-corruption debate undermines the chances of Bulgaria for integration into the international community: in public appearances initiated by the Coalition, participants emphasized that it is precisely anticorruption as part of the policies of a given state that improves its image in international relations.
- ❖ Defending the thesis about the untenability of egalitarianism as a political philosophy, and also differentiating the anti-corruption idiom from the rhetoric of proponents of that philosophy.

3.4. The role of the media in the awareness campaign

The media are a major element in every information campaign. However, they have their own momentum and logic of development. Even independently from other political actors, the media often initiate political acts which are really or seemingly focused on the corruption phenomenon. It was precisely this capacity of the media that became the focal point of the *Coalition 2000* monitoring of the media output during 1999 and 2000.

3.4.1. Media coverage of corruption

Because corruption by its very nature involves a violation of the stipulated “rules of the game,” or activities regulated by unspecified, though necessary rules, it is a covert (invisible) social relation. That is why its media exposure is extremely important, to the extent that the media constitute in a sense the very basis for the public discourse on corruption, and are also a potential instrument for achieving anti-corruption results. During the whole period of the awareness campaign, the corruption issue received increasing coverage in the newspapers, and also in the electronic media that were monitored. In a leading weekly, corruption was justifiably named “the word of 1999”. It remained such in 2000, and in 2001 it became a leitmotif of the election campaign, one of its most prominent themes which determined the re-structuring of the political sphere after the parliamentary elections of June 17 the same year.

The media monitoring of *Coalition 2000*

The media monitoring of corruption conducted by Coalition 2000 is aimed at outlining the quantitative parameters of the presence of this issue in the national print and electronic media, uncovering the qualitative features of the media coverage of corruption (taking into consideration also its potential significance in shaping social attitudes and opinions), and disseminating information about the media coverage of the activities of Coalition 2000 and the other anti-corruption initiatives. The media monitoring involves 12 national newspapers, including 9 dailies and 3 weeklies, as well as certain program slots in the electronic media. The newspapers include: Democrazia, Duma, Trud, 24 Chasa, Sega, Standard, Novinar, Pari, Monitor, and the weeklies Capital, 168 Chasa, and Banker. The electronic media are: the Bulgarian National Radio, Bulgarian National Television, Darik Radio, Nova Television, and 7 Dni Television.

The methodology and techniques of the media monitoring are based on the concept of corruption as a social relation, a transaction between two parties. Because corruption by its very nature involves a violation of the stipulated “rules of the game,” or activities regulated by unspecified, though necessary rules, it is a covert social relation. That is why its media exposure is extremely important, since by covering the problem the media can become an instrument for achieving anti-corruption results.

The registration map for monitoring the print and electronic media consists of 26 indicators. They can be clustered in several groups:

- indicators of quantitative and qualitative parameters of the media coverage of the corruption issue (volume, place, author, type of the communication item);
- indicators of the level and specific features of the media treatment of the corruption issue (sphere of manifestation, type of the corruption act, intensity, appearance of anti-corruption exposures and activities);
- indicators of the discourse aspects of the media coverage of the corruption issue (main theses set forth, key words, titles, intonation characteristics).

The research methods employed make it possible to find out the most important parameters of the media coverage of the issue of corruption in a given period, to perform a comparative analysis of the traits and tendencies of that coverage in different periods, and also to outline the areas of media exposure which affect attitudes and opinions on corruption in society.

The results of the media monitoring—started at the beginning of 1999 and continued through the second half of 2000—were presented in regular quarterly summary reports. In addition, separate analyses were prepared on specific media problems registered in the monitoring process. Also, the media monitoring itself became a subject of a number of media publications.

Following are some of the most salient features of the exposure of the issue of corruption in the Bulgarian media during the monitoring period:

✓ **From generalities to specific points**

The initial hypothesis and expectations about the manner in which corruption is discussed in the Bulgarian media were confirmed by the registration of widespread writing and speaking about the issue in very broad terms. Corruption, of course, is not a transparent, obvious and overt social relation, but the overly general anti-corruption rhetoric and articulation of assumptions did not contribute in any way to greater exposure of the phenomenon. The fact that both in the press and in the electronic media corruption was most often linked to government institutions was actually rendered meaningless and was diluted by the excessively general discourse about it. Very often writings about corruption were not prompted by any particular occasion: corruption exists, corruption is everywhere, corruption is a topic of discussion in society. Although in the process of monitoring there was a shift towards efforts to find evidence and investigate alleged cases of corruption, it should be pointed out that the share of the overly general discourse on corruption remained relatively large during the whole period.

This tendency is largely a result of the belief that corruption and corrupt politicians should not be discussed unless there is clear evidence which can be upheld in court, and even unless there is a conviction. In this way, the media faced a difficult choice: either to continue uncovering cases of corruption involving concrete suspects, and risk being prosecuted for libel, or to skip any specific facts and remain in the sphere of generalities. **From short information publications to longer articles**

The expansion of the corruption theme was clearly demonstrated also by the changed genre distribution of the publications. At the beginning of 1999, there was a

considerable concentration of short information pieces related to corruption. Subsequently, during the whole 1999 the longer types of publications occupied more space, and in the last quarter of the year they comprised more than half of all registered newspaper texts. This tendency continued throughout the year 2000. The same process was observed in the electronic media: while initially the issue of corruption was present mostly in short information pieces, towards the end of 1999 and during 2000 more than one third of the registered items were of considerable duration—up to 7 minutes, up to 15 minutes, and over 15 minutes. This situation reflected a peculiar phenomenon of factual saturation—beyond a certain point, the public was no longer satisfied by “naked sensations” and mere statements of the facts, and naturally the media started to put greater emphasis on the analytical aspect of their publications. The low “efficiency factor” of newspaper articles exposing facts about corruption has probably also contributed to this trend—with no real consequences for the corrupt politicians, journalists started looking for the underlying reasons for this impunity.

✓ **From a supplementary to a main theme**

The shift in the media coverage of the corruption issue was highlighted in 1999-2000 by another indicator as well. During the initial period, even in longer newspaper texts (from 70 lines to a full page) the corruption theme was supplementary, secondary, appearing in the context of another theme. Thus the “print” existence of the issue was similar to the “electronic” one, since it was mostly short texts that had corruption as their main subject. Subsequently, though, corruption increasingly established itself as a main subject, and was registered as such in 76 percent of the newspaper texts covered by the monitoring.

✓ **Quantitative fluctuations of publications on corruption**

In different periods, depending on current political events, the media coverage of corruption had its ups and downs. A peak was registered at the end of 1999 when the government was reshuffled—at least in public perceptions, because of suspicions of corruption. A fall was registered in January 2000, and there was a peak again in the spring of 2000 in connection with the re-ignited war of mutual discreditation between former and acting ministers, in which corruption figured as one of the main accusations. From then on, the interest towards the corruption problems remained steady, and its coverage was constantly increasing through the spring of 2001, when the campaign for the June 17 parliamentary elections was launched.

✓ **From the lower to the upper levels of authority**

During the entire period of monitoring, corruption was consistently linked in the media to state institutions, the judicial system, and local government. In fact, attention was increasingly focusing on state institutions, and corruption was mostly associated with the occupation of administrative posts. This became obvious especially in the second half of 2000, when high-level state officials were identified with increasing frequency as the “top actors.” The term *dalavera* (shady deal) did not replace “bribery” as the most frequently used one, but it turned into a key notion summarizing the abuse of administrative positions for personal gain and for the

benefit of a clientelistic circle. Additionally, at the personification level, former ministers and party functionaries were identified by public opinion as symptomatic corruption figures.

✓ **The media and the information curtain**

The media “explosion” of different accusations of corruption at the upper levels of state administration during 1999 and 2000 could not clearly expose, however, the extent to which corruption processes in society were observable and controllable, and whether there was a consciously imposed media blackout. Even the debate about the cabinet reshuffle at the end of 1999—catalyzed by assertions about corruption among those in power, and itself a media catalyst—did not in practice remove the curtain of non-transparency. The situation partially changed in 2000, but the greater transparency did not lead to positive changes in the political behavior of those in power. On the contrary, the intensification of the anti-corruption debate strengthened their resistance instincts, capsulated the ruling party, and was used just for the opposite purpose—to justify the lack of action against corruption.

✓ **An escape into theoretical models**

The efforts of the authorities to apply a narrow definition of corruption had, however, yet another—somewhat paradoxical—result: the proliferation of texts outlining the typology of the phenomenon, the manifestations of corruption, “the trade in political influence,” the possible means of exercising pressure, etc. The weeklies *Capital* and *Kultura* played an extremely important role in this respect. In a series of publications they encouraged discussions of corruption going beyond its current dimensions, and thus contributed to the overall conceptualization of the problems. In this way, the public (and especially the mediators actively involved in the corruption debate) was better prepared for the further elaboration of the issue.

✓ **The party tint of the media coverage**

Assessments of the scope and range of corruption, as well as of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the fight against it, were treated differently by the various media outlets, depending on the views of the political parties they favored. The various “social worlds” of corruption remained firmly entrenched during the entire year, and became visible in the tone of the texts, as well as in the theses that were promoted. While the media favoring the opposition expressed skepticism and pessimism about the results of the fight against corruption, the pro-government media more often conveyed a position of moderate optimism. Throughout the year, the “social worlds” of corruption in the media matched the social worlds present in political discourse and in the political exploitation of the corruption issue.

3.4.2. Media exposure of corruption: typology, mechanisms, public reactions

Regardless of the serious attention of the media towards the issue of corruption, the immediate effectiveness of such publications and TV and radio programs was limited. After the initial revelations, there were very few cases when the journalists continued

their investigations, and brought the matter to its logical end—presenting evidence and proof to the appropriate institutions, and provoking a reaction on their part. Most of the corruption scandals can be considered as “closed” or as stories with an open end, without, however, visible results of the investigations and punishment for the ones guilty of corruption. These results also reinforced the above-mentioned trend in society towards disregarding and underestimating the role of public discussion. There are no moral and material incentives for the investigative journalists who, if they demonstrate professionalism and persistence, encounter great difficulties and risk their careers, and in some cases their lives, too.

In its efforts to contribute to overcoming these obstacles and to encourage the anti-corruption streak in investigative journalism, *Coalition 2000* conducted monitoring of the media stories exposing corruption. This made it possible to analyze the types, mechanisms, and the impact of such publications, and to describe and classify the public offices held by those affected by them. The leading investigative journalists were informed about the results of the analysis; in other words—this product of the activities of *Coalition 2000* also became part of the awareness campaign. Here are the main conclusions of the monitoring of the media exposures:

Types of media exposures

There are two types of public exposures of scandals with corruption elements in the Bulgarian media: strictly corruption scandals (non-political), and political scandals with elements of corruption.

The first type of scandal exposures involves abuse of an administrative position in the economic sector for personal/group gain. They have political ramifications to the extent that the interests and actions of individual politicians from the ruling majority (mainly ministers in the economic area) are interwoven with those of the officials and/or groups accused of corrupt practices. The public hypothesis in these media stories outlines a corruption model linked to the creation of a system for criminal group enrichment. Such allegations contain also suspicions of the existence of a clientelistic co-relation between the interests of the managers of state-owned companies and the interests of members of the upper-level state administration, and the specialized institutions (the Privatization Agency, etc.).

Most of the stories exposing scandals belong to the second type. Thus, for instance, 9 of the 12 such stories which evoked wide public reactions in 1999 can be classified in this category. Like the other registered cases of scandal exposures, they have a corruption element. Such political scandals thus fall under the broader definition of corruption including a collective (in this case party) gain. In these cases, representatives of the authorities use their political influence both for personal gain, for re-directing resources towards a particular political party, and for establishing clientelistic enrichment schemes.

Mechanisms of corruption exposure

1. Whistleblowers

- Journalists

In most cases, the hypothesis of a corruption act is formulated by a journalist on the editorial staff of the newspaper where the story is published for the first time. Usually, journalists refer to an unnamed source (who is often called a “well informed source”). Of course, it is routine for every investigative journalist to have sources with access to official information. The downside is that the journalists themselves can be used by a particular institution or by individual officials as channels for deliberate leaks of information, especially in the case of state security and law-enforcement agencies.

- Politicians

Politicians from the opposition (members of parliament, party officials, etc.) are another source of information about corruption at the upper levels of authority.

- Representatives of appropriate state institutions

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2. Reactions of those accused of corruption/abuse of authority

Based on the analysis of the monitored corruption exposures, the range of reactions of those affected by the exposures fall into the following categories:

- Rejection of the accusations

- Approaching the competent institutions

- Launching a defense with political counter-arguments

In some instances allegations of corruption are used as pretexts for repeated exchanges of accusations and counter-accusations between politicians, often under the protection of their immunity.

- Ignoring the allegations, or the so-called “tactic of the ostrich”

By keeping silent or mocking the journalists or other opponents, the accused officials imply one of two things: a) that the journalistic investigations or other exposures are simply nonsense and do not warrant comments, or b) that even if these exposures were true, they could not affect those accused because of the powerful positions they occupy.

The comparison between these reactions leads to the conclusion that society should compel the politicians to react in a responsible manner. This involves:

- ✓ Treating seriously and responsibly the accusations and criticisms directed towards them.
- ✓ Avoiding the excessive politicization of the scandal exposures/accusations even if those are made by political opponents.
- ✓ Requiring verification of the accusations by the appropriate institutions.

Obviously, the “tactic of the ostrich” is most damaging for the image of the officials involved. Such a reaction, or rather the lack of any reaction, implies disregard for the media, and indirectly for public opinion and the right of the citizens to be informed. The politicization of corruption-related exposures can be almost as dangerous.

3. Public and media response

The regular coverage of scandals is necessary for maintaining the readers’ interest. At the same time, after the initial exposures, the journalists rarely brought their investigations to their logical conclusion—presenting evidence and provoking the reaction of the appropriate institutions.

Another striking fact is that non-governmental organizations did not take a public stance on the scandal exposures, and this discouraged the journalists and created the impression that society was indifferent to such accusations. The reactions of *Coalition 2000* were an exception to the rule: the Coalition expressed public support for the anti-corruption position of the two newspapers with the highest circulation (*Trud* and *24 Chasa*).

4. Dynamics of the exposures

The overview of the corruption exposures of nation-wide significance makes evident the following feature of the unfolding of the exposures in time: 1. An active initial phase of multiplying publications generated by the exposure. 2. Follow-up publications covering the reactions of those accused and of their accusers, as well as additional discrediting facts. 3. Quick fading away of the scandal (a “high mortality rate” of corruption exposures). 4. In some cases the accusation thesis was revived after a period of several months. This raised to some extent hopes that the exposures were not entirely futile and had left a mark.

* * *

Based on the media monitoring, the following **conclusions** can be drawn:

- Few newspapers have the capacity and/or the willingness to carry out investigations based on suspicions of grand corruption, i.e., those types of abuse of authority which concern political interests and do not belong to everyday scandals/abuse of authority.
- Even when such exposures are made, they rarely have a follow-up provoked by further journalistic investigations. They have a “high mortality rate.” Hence, their social effect is also limited. A stereotypical explanation is established in society that the media only make noise around big scandals, but no real steps are taken for unmasking and punishing corrupt officials.
- There is no tradition of keeping record of corruption exposures. Most of those can be considered as “closed cases” or “stories with an open end” which, however, do not lead to visible results of the investigations and to possible convictions for the guilty parties. This also intensifies the general trend in society towards disregarding and underestimating the role of public discussion.

- There are no moral and material incentives for the investigative journalist who, if they show professionalism and perseverance, face serious obstacles and risk their careers, and in some cases—even their lives.
- The corporate solidarity of journalists is still weaker than the competition and struggles between the newspapers, and the independence of the media as a whole is often impaired by political and/or financial considerations.
- In this respect the positions of the independent press are additionally weakened by the strange passivity of the civic and professional organizations, which by definition are called to protect the freedom of speech, and by the lack of a clearly stated position of civil society as a whole.

At the same time, to a great extent under the influence of the social criticism generated by the awareness campaign, the fall of 1999 saw the emergence of a new trend which departed radically from the press reactions that had prevailed so far. Almost simultaneously the two most popular dailies—*Trud* and *24 Chasa*—started columns in which they constantly urged the authorities to dismiss corrupt upper-level officials.

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On October 26, *24 Chasa* renewed publication of its column “Why wasn’t the corrupt minister dismissed,” which was started as early as September 1997. The newspaper published only the silhouette in black of a deputy minister about whom discrediting facts had become known. Only three days later, *Trud* also started its own column “Who is?” In the following 16 days, the newspaper was printing this question above an empty space on its first page next to its head. The question was directed towards the government, and was related to a statement of the President that those in power tolerated corruption. Eventually, the daily column was discontinued, but appeared from time to time in order to remind the government that the readers expected an answer. /Īēpñ ôâēñîèèâ îð 24 ÷âñà è “Ôðóâ”/.

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3.4.3. *Coalition 2000* and the media: joint anti-corruption initiatives

In addition to providing ground for the functioning of different communication forms within the framework of the awareness campaign, the media became also an important partner in the fight against corruption. Joint initiatives for increasing the effectiveness of the public exposures were launched in close cooperation with some leading newspapers and journalists.

One such media initiative was the weekly telephone poll of 50 leading investigative journalists, organized by the Secretariat of the Coalition. Under the title “Scandal of the Week” (corruption exposure of the week), the poll and an accompanying editorial comment were regularly published in one of the most widely-read dailies—*24 Chasa*. The poll was intended to focus the attention both of the journalistic community

and of the reading public on the problems of corruption, and also to offer an adequate form for monitoring the views of journalists. The publications continued during 1999 and 2000.

In a box: a facsimile of the *24 Chasa* poll

Another form of media monitoring was the experimental introduction by *Coalition 2000* of a **register of media exposures** during the period 1998-2000, maintained by the Secretariat of the Coalition. Every media exposure of nation-wide significance was recorded on a registration card with the following facts:

- source of the exposure;
- journalistic accusatory/exposing thesis;
- reaction of the accused;
- reaction of other media;
- unfolding of the scandal, etc.

By initiating such a register and by making it available on the Internet, *Coalition 2000* set for itself several goals:

- ✓ To create a kind of “social memory” of the scandal information, which flows rapidly and usually disappears quickly from public view, thus making it easier for corrupt officials to conceal their actions.
- ✓ To assist journalists, including investigative journalists, to go back to a certain exposure, or to analyze the phenomenon over a longer period of time.
- ✓ To remind the law enforcement authorities that suspects of corruption crimes have been left unpunished, and to provoke self-approaching of these institutions.
- ✓ To foster cooperation between NGOs and the media, and to make the civic monitoring of corruption more focused.

A register of the senior officials investigated as a result of media exposures was also compiled. It contains records of the concrete exposure, the actions of the law enforcement authorities, and the current legal status of the accused high-ranking state official. The Internet version of this systematized information is also available for the journalists.

The partnership of *Coalition 2000* with the media resulted also in concrete joint initiatives involving non-governmental experts, media law experts, and investigative journalists. They were aimed at facilitating further the work of those involved in this most complex and labor-intensive media genre, and at improving the legal-institutional environment for the profession of journalism. In 2000, several seminars on the subject “Investigative Journalism against Corruption” were held in Sofia, Plovdiv, and Varna. As a result of these efforts, the Coalition published the study “The media against Corruption: Obstacles and Risks for Investigative Journalism” (in Bulgarian). It criticizes the Law on the Access to Public Information adopted at the beginning of 2000 as restrictive and creating more obstacles than opportunities for journalists, as well as the closed nature of Bulgaria’s state institutions.

Illustration: Cover of “The Media against Corruption”

One of the achievements of *Coalition 2000* was the collaboration of experts from non-governmental organizations, state institutions, and investigative journalists specializing in the sphere of trans-border crime and the traffic of drugs, goods, and people. Lasting partnerships were formed with eminent journalists, and in this way organizational and professional preconditions for a systematic exchange of information and of analytical overviews were created for the first time. In addition, the efforts of the individual journalists covering the above mentioned areas were put in a long-term context.

The Coalition also intends to organize round tables on the problems of communication between the “third sector” and the “fourth branch of power,” especially in the anti-corruption sphere. The discussions will focus on the need to overcome the existing divergence of the interests, on the one hand, of sociologists and political scientists, and, on the other, of journalists and the media, and on the discrepancies in their interpretations of different aspects of corruption and anticorruption.

Initiatives for stimulating investigative journalism in the sphere of corruption should also be encouraged. Such efforts could include the establishment of awards and other prizes for civic courage and professional skills in this rather risky journalistic field.

3.5. The role of the “third sector” in the awareness campaign

The awareness campaign provides a fertile ground for the activities of non-profit organizations aimed at achieving a real transformation of behavioral stereotypes and the place of corruption in them. After initiating, together with the independent media, the public debate about corruption, a number of Bulgarian non-governmental organizations made anticorruption a permanent sphere of their interests and activities. At the same time, the organized forms of fighting corruption were supplemented with spontaneous initiatives and civic actions which involved the social energy of non-governmental organizations and of citizens in general.

3.5.1. The civic commitment to anticorruption: achievements and problems

The awareness campaign outlined the independent role of non-governmental organizations within the framework of the public-private partnership against corruption. It highlighted the areas of activities and specific anti-corruption forms in which NGOs have considerable advantages over the state. At the same time, the ability of civil society to gain its own ground in the fight for transparency and accountability is an important precondition for a differentiation of roles within the framework of a multi-faceted initiative like *Coalition 2000*.

We should point out the indisputable anti-corruption effect of a number of **trends in the activities of the third sector**:

- Thanks to civic initiatives like *Coalition 2000*, anti-corruption education was introduced for the first time (we shall discuss this contribution in greater details in the next paragraph), specialized research on different aspects of corruption activities was disseminated, and all this enhanced the awareness capacity of civil society.
- The civic corruption monitoring and especially the quarterly Corruption Indexes of *Vitoshka Research* became an important and often consulted source of information about the actual levels, manifestations, and spread of corruption, as well as a measure for the progress of efforts to curb it.
- Business associations and other professional organizations involved in anti-corruption efforts started to play an increasingly active role. Business associations became very active as “lobbying groups” working persistently for abolishing many permit and licensing regulations, which traditionally provide fertile ground for discretionary power and corrupt practices. The other professional organizations (like, for instance, the unions of journalists, the Union of the Judges, etc.) are actively involved in the development and introduction of professional ethical codes stipulating that corrupt behavior is inconsistent with belonging to a particular professional community.
- A steady trend emerged towards a proliferation of anti-corruption activities from the center to the periphery through the activation of non-governmental organizations based in a number of towns and municipalities. The foundations of a national anti-corruption system were laid through applying the *Coalition 2000* formula at the local level, and through the Internet-based network “Open Municipalities.”
- The professionalization of the civic organizations involved in anti-corruption initiatives is also quite evident. Its most definitive expression was the institutionalization of local Ombudsmen (public mediators), civic monitors, as well as other forms of public mediation at the local level (for example in Shoumen, Smolyan, Varna, Sofia, and other cities).
- The improvement of the collaboration against corruption between non-governmental organizations, the media, and civil society generated new forms of cooperation, and contributed to overcoming the alienation between these social sectors. In particular, important steps were taken towards overcoming the alienation between the non-governmental organizations of the “think tank” type, the human rights NGOs, the professional organizations, etc.

At the same time, the involvement of more non-governmental organizations in the *Coalition 2000* process, as well as the experience of interactions between them and the authorities revealed some **problems**, to some extent also typical of other initiatives of the third sector in Bulgaria:

- ✓ First of all, this concerns the motivation for participation in anti-corruption activities of non-governmental organizations as a whole and of civic experts in their personal capacity. Unlike other types of projects, these have a high potential for conflict: the interests of the civic experts who

oppose corruption are incompatible with the interests both of the corrupt officials and clients of public services, and of that part of the state bureaucracy which through its actions, or rather its lack of action, creates favorable conditions for bribery. The combination of these factors requires from the representatives of the non-governmental sector involved in anti-corruption activities exemplary civic integrity. Often respected organizations and their representatives are under the influence of some power structures, and they cannot conduct independent monitoring of their work; at the other extreme are those consistent fighters against corruption who, however, are perceived as outsiders by society. The selection of organizations and experts to be involved in anti-corruption activities should, therefore, seek to establish a balance between these extremes, which is not always possible.

- ✓ The relationship between the “project existence” of anti-corruption initiatives and the principle of voluntary participation, which is a necessary prerequisite for the activation of civil society in the fight against corruption, is also related to this problem. In this, like in other spheres of the activities of non-governmental organizations, in countries like Bulgaria it is still impossible to rely on substantial charitable contributions from representatives of civil society for economic reasons. The high unemployment, which in some areas and cities reached disastrous proportions, the poverty and the low incomes make the commitment to a certain cause a luxury which most people cannot afford.
- ✓ Another significant problem related to the organizations of civil society is the corruption within the non-governmental sector itself. In a number of cases non-governmental organizations are used for “triangle schemes,” through which payments on corruption deals are made (for instance, instead of directly receiving bribes, some officials collect those under the guise of consultancy contracts from NGOs directly or indirectly connected with them). In order to avoid such situations, an emphasis was placed on the procedure for “recruiting” non-governmental organizations to the *Coalition 2000* initiative in accordance with the criteria tested in the system of Western sponsorship of non-profit initiatives.

3.5.2. Anti-corruption education—and innovative civic initiative

Anti-corruption education, where NGOs play a decisive role, is a natural continuation of the information campaign carried out mainly through the mass media. This element was not among the priorities of the “Clean Future” awareness campaign that were set from the start. In the process of the anti-corruption initiatives, however, it became clear that the complex nature of the “corruption” problem and the importance of long-term anti-corruption objectives in the context of the transition to democracy and a market economy required continuous and intense efforts. The goal to achieve changes in public attitudes towards corruption, defined within the framework of the *Coalition 2000*

initiative, is inevitably linked to efforts to foster a new civic culture, and to the establishment of a modern style of government.

The NGOs taking part in the initiative were initiators and organizers of the consultations aimed at formulating the priority areas of anti-corruption education. The participation of specialists from the spheres of public administration, the economy, sociology, political science, psychology, the media, and marketing not only contributed to avoiding a dissipation of efforts in studying this problem, but became a basis for initiating a scholarly discussion on the ways of achieving the objectives which had been set.

Another important moment in the work of the non-governmental sector was the recruitment of a broad circle of experts from different organizations and institutions of higher learning to write the first corruption handbook published in Bulgaria. This undertaking demonstrated the need for an integrated scholarly-educational discipline in this field, as well as the utility of an inter-disciplinary approach to the problems of corruption.

The handbook contains the following subjects:

- *Legal concept of corruption*
- *Models of corrupt behavior*
- *Corruption monitoring*
- *Areas and forms of corruption*
- *Abuse of political power*
- *Corruption in the judicial system and the police*
- *Corruption and the economy*
- *Corruption in international relations*
- *Financing of political parties*
- *Judicial reform against corruption*
- *Administrative reform against corruption*
- *Civil society against corruption*
- *Professional ethical codes against corruption*
- *International cooperation against corruption*

The process of editing the handbook and the subsequent seminar discussions of the book chapters became significant stages for the introduction of these problems into the academic discourse. By inviting university professors from state and private institutions to take part in the discussions, the Coalition managed to engage experts from different fields in the efforts to introduce “anticorruption” as a university course.

Eventually, the following most promising spheres for the introduction of an anticorruption course were identified:

- ✓ A university topics course in a number of social science majors (New Bulgarian University, Department of Journalism and Mass Communications at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”)
- ✓ A topics course for public administration students
- ✓ A lecture course for employees in the state administration
- ✓ Separate lectures in the system of secondary education

Setting such an ambitious task required also training the instructors needed for it. The absence of anticorruption as an independent discipline necessitates the continuing education of experts in the fields of economics, public administration, management, political science, sociology, etc., in the framework of a course of the type “training of trainers.”

The publication of eight anti-corruption readers was an important step towards providing more information to the expert community and creating appropriate literature for the needs of anti-corruption education. The readers covered the following topics:

- Corruption in Parliamentary Practice and in the Legislative Process
- Counteracting Corruption in Local Authorities
- International Acts for Countering Corruption
- The Judiciary and Corruption
- Combating Corruption and Fraud in Public Administration
- Information Technologies against Corruption
- The Economic Price of Corruption
- Measuring and Monitoring of Corruption: The World Practice and the Bulgarian Experience

The anti-corruption readers contain texts on the respective topics, selected from publications by internationally recognized experts on the subject of corruption. The selection process of texts most relevant to the situation in Bulgaria brought together experts from different non-governmental organizations for workshop discussions on theoretical problems of anticorruption. The anti-corruption readers are intended for specialists in different areas and attract huge interest. The audience of these readers grew up significantly after they were published on the *Coalition 2000* web site (www.csd.bg/coalition2000).

The access to information is crucial in the process of counteracting corruption. That is why *Coalition 2000* pays special attention to providing information to other non-governmental organizations and the citizens. The press office of the Coalition, and most of all its electronic library, fulfill this function. The electronic library facilitates an informed public debate on issues relating to fraud and corruption. It stores online publications and studies in the field of anticorruption, reference links to relevant sources, sites of international organizations actively involved in anti-corruption activities. The Public Information Desk has been used as a major reference point, mainly by the *Coalition 2000* local partners, for information regarding policies, case studies, and best practices in preventing corruption. All the survey findings and policy documents

developed under the *Coalition 2000* project are available and can be ordered free of charge by a request sent via e-mail.

3.6. Lessons learned

Based on the experience of the “Clean Future” awareness campaign, the following **conclusions** can be drawn:

- ✓ The anti-corruption awareness campaign is vital for defining the framework of the anti-corruption public debate and for overcoming public tolerance towards corrupt practices; it is both an objective in itself (as an independent component of the anti-corruption strategy), and an instrument for establishing a permanent structure for civic monitoring and control.
- ✓ Optimal results are achieved where and when the public-private partnership goes beyond mere statements and acquires real meaning. The multi-faceted nature of the campaign makes possible and requires anti-corruption roles that are differentiated and yet complimentary, as well as inter-sectional control.
- ✓ The atmosphere of intolerance towards corruption facilitates the reformist efforts of state institutions, and vice versa—impedes the politics of non-transparency and unaccountability of the clientelistic government in general or of separate institutions of political power.
- ✓ Activities aimed at changing the attitudes of representatives of the professional elite yield the best results. The rationalistic nature of the anti-corruption messages targeting this audience facilitates lasting behavioral changes at the expense of corrupt practices. (The most effective explanatory model rests on the direct relationship: corrupt behavior—bad public image—loss of public trust/support—loss of power. In other words, the message is rationalized through an activation of the basic political survival instinct and the egotistic ethos of the object of social marketing. Moreover, concrete facts can be used to persuade the politicians that corrupt mayors and other elected officials have a very small chance of being re-elected. This is especially evident at the local level. The scheme was circulated within the government itself after the disappointing results for the ruling coalition at the local elections in the fall of 1999. It became a constant component of the various national and local discussions, round tables, and anti-corruption workshops. Experience shows that a similar type of reasoning quickly catches the attention and stimulates the interest of the participating elected officials, as well as of other political functionaries who have an understandable and long-term interest in the technology of power.)
- ✓ The Awareness campaign is also an important instrument for building civil society through practical collaboration between diverse non-governmental organizations (think tanks, human rights organizations, etc.), and between NGOs and the media.

Some mistakes and lapses in the planning and the implementation of the “Clean Future” awareness campaign should also be pointed out.

- ❖ The similarities between anti-corruption social marketing and the marketing of non-political issues (smoking, for instance) should not obscure the essential differences between them. The latter result from the fact that the “communication schedule” of anticorruption cannot be imposed by non-governmental organizations. The actions or inaction of the authorities have a leading role, so every attempt to apply strictly the rules of marketing in an anti-corruption awareness campaign will be doomed.
- ❖ The anti-corruption communication messages should take into consideration the actual rather than the stated intentions of the authorities: obstructions to the awareness campaign can be expected when the “political class” merely pretends to embrace anticorruption. Positive messages should be preferred, since they are more likely to go through the censorship still practiced in the state electronic media.
- ❖ Long-term efforts like the anti-corruption social marketing require more resources to improve the communication tools for delivering messages and ideas relevant to the changing political situation. It is important, therefore, to establish satisfactory collaboration with the independent media through inducing ideas, and by influencing to the attitudes of leading journalists.

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Clean Future awareness campaign calendar (1998-2000)

Activities	Description	Number	Phase I (04.1998-12.1998)	Phase II (03.1999-02.2001)
Information days	Anti-corruption Information days were organized in different towns in the country by Local Partners (Local Partners-NGOs working under the Small Grants Program). The events were advertised in advance in the local press inviting the public and grassroots organizations to attend and obtain more information and advice on various corruption-related issues.	19		1999-Smolyan, Sozopol, Tryavna, Lovech, Shoumen, Varna, Pleven, Plovdiv, Haskovo, Vratza. 2000-Chepelare, Banite, Svishtov, Nedelino, Pazardjik, Stara Zagora.
Townhall meetings	NGO representatives and citizens were able to meet with local elites and to present to them their grievances related to corrupt	13		1999-Razgrad, Smolyan, Plovdiv, Rouse.

	practices. Proposals to improve transparency in local government and measures to enhance public control over local administration were considered.			2000–Bourgas, Haskovo, Vratza, Sofia, Chepelare, Nedelino, Smolyan, Lovech, Gabrovo.
Educational radio programs	Educational essays cover different aspects of the fight against corruption on national and international level.	25		1999–ten educational anti-corruption essays by <i>Coalition 2000</i> as in kind contribution were broadcast on the national Radio, the “Christo Botev” program. 2000–15 educational essays were broadcast on the National Radio, the “Christo Botev” program, on different aspects of the fight against corruption on national and international level.
Clean Future Newsletter	The quarterly Newsletter of <i>Coalition 2000 Clean Future</i> was published in English in 1000 copies, and is distributed among local and head offices of international organizations, foreign embassies to Bulgaria and research centers abroad.	7		
Community Round Tables	The major purpose of round table discussions was to raise awareness amongst local elites of the phenomenon of corruption and the harm it causes to local communities and to mobilize support for the Anti-Corruption Action Plan of <i>Coalition 2000</i> . The underlying idea of these anti-	47		1999–19 Round Tables in: Smolyan, Liaskovets, Sofia, Pleven, Rousse, Bourgas, Shoumen, Razgrad, Haskovo, Varna.

	corruption events is that local government directly affects the daily lives of citizens and that they are a natural target of public scrutiny.			2000–28 Round Tables in: Varna, Pleven, Plovdiv, Chepelare, Sofia, Silistra, Svishtov, Montana, Banite, Nedelino, Haskovo, Shoumen, Vratza, Smolyan, Balchik, Veliko Turnovo.
Anti-Corruption Readers	<i>Coalition 2000</i> published the readers' series which covers a broad range of issues reflecting the key aspects of corruption with emphasis on best practices, corruption in transition economies, citizens participation, etc.	8		<p>International Acts for Countering Corruption, 1999</p> <p>Measuring and Monitoring of Corruption: the World Practice and the Bulgarian Experience, 1999</p> <p>Corruption in Parliamentary Practice and the Legislative Process, 1999</p> <p>The Economic Price of Corruption, 1999</p> <p>Judiciary and Corruption, 2000</p> <p>Combating Corruption and Fraud in the Public Administration, 2000</p> <p>Counteracting Corruption in Local Authorities, 2000</p>

				Information Technologies against Corruption, 2001
Monthly Electronic Newsletter	<i>Coalition 2000</i> Electronic Newsletter was published monthly (12 issues) in both English and Bulgarian on the Internet (www.online.bg/coalition2000) In this way the project was able to disseminate relevant materials, new research data, and announce project-related events and activities on a regular basis.	30		
Ombudsman-Public Hearings	Public initiatives connected to the establishment of Ombudsman institution	6		1999–Pleven, Sofia. 2000–Sofia, Razgrad
Newspaper and magazine articles and information pieces	In articles in national, regional and local newspapers, as well as in other publications, the <i>Coalition 2000</i> experts presented both the events within the framework of the anti-corruption initiative (conferences, round tables, etc.), and their own positions on important problems related to corruption in the country.	More than 200 publications in national, regional and local newspapers		
Appearances in electronic media	The <i>Coalition 2000</i> experts shared their views and assessments in dozens of interviews on different TV and radio shows.			