
Introduction

Since its establishment in 1990, the Center for the Study of Democracy has sought to pioneer difficult reforms and provide vision as to the future challenges facing Bulgaria and the Balkan region. CSD's strong institutional capacity has opened new avenues and areas where civil society can make a contribution to reforms. Over the years, CSD has taken the lead in advocating key reforms in areas such as the regulatory framework for non-profits, establishment of the ombudsman institution, the introduction of anti-smuggling policies and other areas.

As the international understanding of security has been developing to include now areas such as corruption, terrorism, organized crime, trafficking and smuggling, CSD has turned its attention to the governance of the security sector. This is an area of particular relevance in the process of joining the European Union and NATO. Bringing the civil society perspective to these issues is particularly timely as the ramifications of the new security threats go beyond the area of law enforcement. Thus, CSD's overall contribution has been to bridge the democracy and development agendas, on the one hand, and the security agenda, on the other.

The Center is also expanding its public-private cooperation approach to these issues. In 2003, CSD contributed to the shaping of the new security agenda in Southeast Europe. Its high profile international conference in September, brought together the NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson, representatives of international institutions, the ministers of defense and interior of the SEE countries and civic leaders in a discussion of the future security risks facing the region.

CSD's increasing impact in the field of justice and home affairs was evident in the development of the first comprehensive analysis of the consumption and distribution of drugs in Bulgaria. By combining its monitoring and analytical capacity, CSD presented to the Bulgarian and international community a snapshot of the prevalence of drug use and the mechanisms of the organized criminal networks which distribute narcotics in the country. Since its publication, CSD's study of the drug market has been a constant source of authoritative reference by government officials and investigative journalists.

Initiated and advocated for over six years now by CSD, the establishment of the ombudsman institution made a breakthrough in 2003 with the adoption of the Law on the Ombudsman and the amendments to the local self-government legislation providing for the set up of local ombudsman offices. Changes to the local government law were made possible mainly through the expert and advocacy contribution of CSD which had already worked with a number of municipalities to promote a culture of civic mediation.

Judicial reform, and its anti-corruption dimension in particular, is among the key current priorities for Bulgaria identified both by the international community and by domestic stakeholders. Although it is accelerating, especially driven by Bulgaria's EU accession prospects, reform of the judiciary has still a long way to go

and faces significant challenges. In order to assist this reform, in 2003 the Center for the Study of Democracy published a *Judicial Anti-Corruption Program (JACP)*. JACP was the first document of its kind detailing a comprehensive agenda for reducing corruption within the judiciary and enhancing its efficiency in penalizing administrative and political corruption. The Program deals with the most significant constitutional, legislative and institutional aspects of anti-corruption measures in the judiciary and combines gap analysis with extensive policy recommendations. Hailed as a “reference book” by reformist magistrates, the JACP put forward some significant reforms in the governance of the Bulgarian judiciary mostly related to increased judicial independence, accountability and efficiency in combating corruption, including within its own ranks. Some of the key recommendations made include a qualified majority requirement for the election of the country’s most senior judges and the Prosecutor General by the Parliament, and for the election of the Parliamentary quota in the Supreme Judicial Council, the governing body of the judicial branch. The JACP also suggested that a new independent institution be established to prosecute instances of corruption within the judiciary or among senior government officials.

CSD places a particular emphasis on its watchdog efforts. Aided by a significant survey research capacity at its agency *Vitoshka Research*, in 2003 the Center brought to the public attention the issue of corruption in secondary and higher education. The publication of CSD’s monitoring results sparked wide public debate on the policies and transparency mechanisms in this area which had not escaped public scrutiny until then.

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Dr. Ognian Shentov
CSD Chairman