
INTRODUCTION

The present study derives from a process, known as *Coalition 2000*, which joins together representatives of non-governmental organisations and State authorities, as well as independent experts and journalists. Launched in 1997, this initiative aims at restricting the corrupt practices in our society and establishing control thereover. In this sense *Coalition 2000* forms an intrinsic part of the efforts to proceed with the institutional and legal reforms in the country and to implant civic democratic culture in the context of Bulgaria's much desired accession to the European Union and its integration in the political space based on developed democracy.

Within the framework of the *Coalition 2000* process, the public concepts and attitudes *vis-a-vis* the phenomenon of corruption have been regularly monitored. The outcome of that monitoring has shown that Bulgarians tend to attribute considerable importance to transborder crime and to the corruption thereof among civil servants. According to public opinion polls in the country, corruption in the customs system is the most disturbing instance of abuse in social life as a whole and in the state sector in particular. The threats stemming from this type of crimes are also revealed by expert estimates showing that a large portion of the shadow economy in the country is connected to the smuggling of goods and to funds resulting thereof.

The great social jeopardy generated by the interweaving of the interests of these two opposite groups - perpetrators of transborder crimes and corrupted civil servants - has propelled the need to analyse the phenomenon of smuggling and to identify the adequate measures for its monitoring and efficient combating. The significance of this problem was emphasised in the *Annual Corruption Assessment Report, 1999* drafted by *Coalition 2000*, which referred to a "thriving trafficking in consumer goods with an explicit illicit origin" (p. 19).

This publication offers a summary of the surveys and discussions of a specialized expert group with the **Center for the Study of Democracy**, the latter acting as a secretariat for *Coalition 2000*. The opinions and suggestions submitted below are the sole responsibility of the authors, including Vesselin Minchev, Bulgarian Academy of Science – Economic Institute, Georgy Boyadzhiev, head of "Investigation of Crimes Against Monopoly of Foreign Trade and Public Health" Department, Specialized Investigation Service, Yovo Nikolov, special correspondent, "Capital" weekly, Krassimir Dobrev, "Sega" daily, Petkan Iliev, University of National and World Economics, and Tihomir Bezlov, Center for the Study of Democracy. The analysis is focused on the processes, which predetermine the practice of trafficking and the related phenomenon of corruption in Bulgaria. Their most frequent forms have been identified along with the prevention and control strategies applied. An emphasis is laid on the dyad of trafficking *and corruption* in the context of the current criminogenous situation in the country and the ever-expanding transborder elements of criminality. The problem has been deliberately discussed as a national one, as if it were isolated from global crime. Thus, the transborder nature of the crimes in question has been actually seen as a stage in the way to transforming the phenomenon from a national into a transnational one, i.e. as a last degree of crime globalization.

In view of prevention policy and given the need to control trafficking and corruption, the authors have taken due account of the principles outlined in the Political Declaration and the Global Action Plan (Naples, 1994).

In addition, the publication is part of the efforts of the experts involved in *Coalition 2000*, the representatives of specialized state agencies, scholars and investigating journalists to contribute to restricting the corrupt practices, breaking down the smuggling channels and, hence, cutting off the link between transborder crime and the hidden economy in this country.