

CONCLUSION

In the last few years, the Bulgarian public got increasingly interested in the problems of corruption and crime, and in particular in the smuggling of goods, drug smuggling and human trafficking. All of these activities are performed in cooperation with corrupt state officials.

Now it is widely understood that the criminal alliance between corrupt officials and organized crime, which controls smuggling and trafficking channels, causes enormous losses to the national economy and threatens security and health of the citizens. "Black" and "gray" economies deprive the state budget of badly needed revenues and create serious obstacles to the consolidation of market economy and democratic institutions in the country.

A big question remains to what extent corruption and smuggling have been considered a priority of state policy and political leaders. It seems that so far, their destructive impact on market economy, national security, democratic institutions and legal order in the country has been widely underestimated. Such underestimation of these relatively new challenges is manifested also in the lack of appropriate institutional infrastructure and working mechanisms for counteracting the trans-border crime and related corruption.

A specific feature of this problem is the fact that through their lobbies in the government, smugglers and those officials, who are on their pay-lists, hinder reform attempts of the institutions to limit corruption within their own structures. When there is no clear political will to fight smuggling and corruption, the correlation of power shifts to organized crime, and the dirty money used for financing of political parties leads to a symbiosis between the government and the criminal underworld.

In the period, discussed in this report, the government stressed the necessity of introducing ethics standard and of reducing smuggling in the country. Such policy enables the unfolding of anti-corruption reforms in particular in the two institutions, which play the largest role both in countering smuggling, and in the corrupt partnership between state officials and smugglers – the Customs Agency and the Ministry of Interior. These two institutions are in the spotlight of the present report, but this does not mean that other state institutions and services with law-enforcing functions should be neglected in the context of discussed problems.

It is necessary to accelerate the reforms, aimed at more effective control, to increase professionalism and to guarantee transparency and civic monitoring. Such steps will contribute to the fulfillment of the most important goal, as declared by the government – the increase in collection of customs and other state revenues.

The report did not discuss international and bilateral cooperation on the issue of customs reform. It nevertheless concludes that introduction of EU standards in the work of the customs is of crucial importance not only for limiting trans-border crime and corruption, but also for the successful integration of the country into the European Union.