

European Program

Political and economic developments in Bulgaria in 1998 were an important contributing factor to the accession preparations of the country. In its 1997 Opinion on Bulgaria's application for EU membership, the European Commission concluded that "Bulgaria is on its way to satisfy the political criteria." In November 1998, the Commission noted: "A reform orientated majority under the leadership of the United Democratic Forces (UDF) has helped to secure support for market economy reforms and further integration of the country with the European Union and other Euro-Atlantic bodies."

In this context, as an interdisciplinary institute, CSD has been increasingly focusing on providing a link between domestic reform policies and the implementation of the EU accession strategy. The European Program has therefore sought to make an impact in assisting the latter by way of two main formats – producing analytical studies and policy recommendations and facilitating the exchange of experience in order to foster a cross-section of the expert community in European integration.

I. Policy Studies

The main output of the Program in 1998 was the volume "Bulgaria and the European Union: Towards an Institutional Infrastructure". Developed as a result of projects with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the EU Integration Secretariat at the Council of Ministers, and published in both English and Bulgarian with the financial assistance of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, the book included policy analysis and impact studies in eleven areas of EU accession, as

well as policy and legislative recommendations.



The volume was the first publication of its kind in Bulgaria not only in terms of the scope and depth of its analysis and recommendations, but also in the process of its development. With over 40 experts and policy makers involved in its preparation, it was a collaboration and networking exercise in the area of accession between the public and private sectors with an impact beyond the production of the research itself.

Overall, the publication aims at preparing the groundwork – legislative, policy, etc. – for an adequate institutional setup of accession. The main purpose of the publication is summarized in the Introduction:

The accession to the European Union in particular has been accepted as the determining factor of the reform process. The key to the success of both is the development of the institutional infrastructure of political democracy and market economy.

Eleven areas of accession were covered by the studies:

- The Democratic Process and Institutions, the Rule of Law, Human Rights and the Protection of Minorities
- Central Bank and Financial Services
- Convertibility of the Lev, Liberalization of Capital Movement and Current Payments in Bulgaria
- Competition
- Company Law
- Common Foreign and Security Policy
- Customs Union
- Securities Markets Legislation
- Environmental Policy and Legislation
- Instruments for the Development of Regional Cooperation
- Telecommunications

The studies in each subject area were developed by teams of experts coming from governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, the business community and other public and private bodies. As in other similar initiatives, this allowed the Center for the Study of Democracy to incorporate the expertise of a larger cross-section of the Bulgarian polity and to maintain the public-private dialogue on these key issues. Furthermore, the input of various institutions and stakeholders was ensured through a process where the opinion of leading Bulgarian experts and policy makers was solicited on the draft versions of the studies before their publication.

The overall editing of *Bulgaria and the European Union: Towards an Institutional Infrastructure* was done by Dr. Maria

Yordanova, CSD Law Program Coordinator, Dr. Ognian Shentov, CSD President, Mr. Stanislav Daskalov, President of European Movement Bulgaria and former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mr. Boyko Todorov, CSD European Program Coordinator.

Bulgaria's Participation in EU Structural Policies was the topic of the Program's next policy analysis project. Its output was a study on the institutional, budgetary and other implications of Bulgaria's preparation for participation in the structural funds of the European Union. An updated version of the paper produced as a result of the project will be published in both English and Bulgarian in 1999. The purpose of the publication is to provide an informational and awareness background to the work of the government administration at a time when Phare assistance will be gradually phased out to be replaced by, inter alia, pre-accession structural policy instruments.

The study was developed by a team of experts from both the public and private sector and emphasized the following areas:

- Financial and budgetary aspects;
- Social policy aspects;
- Regional development;
- Transport;
- Telecommunications.

The study identified the most appropriate options for the participation of Bulgarian regions, municipal authorities, and other regional and local bodies (including NGOs) in activities within the framework of the regional policy of the EU. It emphasized opportunities for public bodies, private organizations and individuals in the sphere of social affairs (employment promotion, equal opportunities, etc.) to benefit from the social development policies of the EU. Specific emphasis was placed on the telecommunication and transport infrastructures, social policies and budgetary preparations.

A subsidiary objective was to improve the knowledge of the public authorities – both central and local – about this crucial issue relating to Bulgaria’s EU membership, by providing information on their future roles and responsibilities. Thus a *Structural Funds Guide* was produced as a reference document in Bulgarian, completed with some samples of successful projects from Greece, Portugal and Spain.

II. Facilitating Dialogue

The European Program aims, among other things, to provide a platform for public-private dialogue in the area of European integration. One way of accomplishing this is to provide a mechanism by which the expertise and technical and policy input of the private sector in Bulgaria – NGOs, businesses, the academic community - could be made available to the public institutions on matters of EU integration.

Furthermore, CSD seeks to facilitate the interface of various input in the integration process. In October, CSD held consultations with Mr. Franz Kaps, Senior Partnership Advisor at the Office of Vice President of the World Bank who is involved in the cooperation between the Bank and the European Union, on the role of non-governmental organizations in the process. As the World Bank will make a contribution to the preparation of countries of Central and Eastern Europe for EU membership, its experience in working with NGOs will be of particular significance.

The public-private interface is also sought through *Forum Europe 2000* - a series of breakfast meetings bringing together an audience of Bulgarian public and private institutions with guest speakers from the European institutions and states. Its recent guests included Ambassador Claus Grube, Undersecretary at the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Eikka Kosonen, Head of the EU Secretariat at the



Mr. Eikka Kosonen, Head of the EU Secretariat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland at the *Forum Europe 2000*.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, and Mr. Guy De Vel, Director of Legal Affairs and the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe. With the support of the Center for the Study of Democracy, Mr. De Vel's visit was instrumental for Bulgaria's joining the Criminal Law Convention of the Council of Europe and the monitoring mechanism of the Convention, GRECO.

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Integration into the wider European structures, including the EU, requires the active

participation of all sections of Bulgarian society, public and private. In 1998, there was a marked trend of increased involvement of non-governmental organizations in facilitating the adoption of European policies and legislation. Thus, while the initial stages of Bulgaria's association with the EU have been carried only through government channels, NGOs in Bulgaria already possess the capacity to produce policy-oriented and legislation compatibility research, provide training, conduct awareness activities and monitor the process of integration.



CSD is information centre of the publications of the Assembly of the WEU. In July, Mr. Lluís Maria de Puig, President of the Assembly visited the Center.