

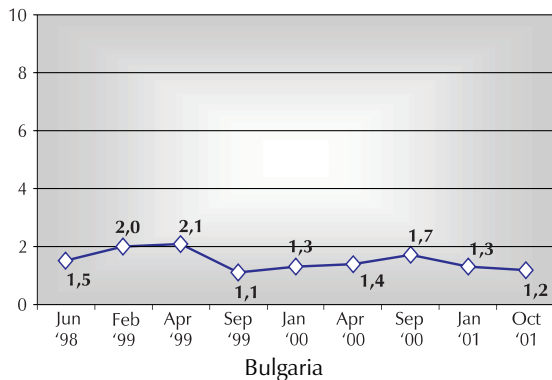
## E. DYNAMICS OF CORRUPT BEHAVIOR AND CHANGE IN PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS CORRUPTION

The findings of the Corruption Monitoring System (CMS) of *Coalition 2000* show that the evolution of Bulgarian society's attitude towards corruption has got to a new stage in 2001. Indeed, **corruption and its specific manifestations are now in the center of public opinion and civic criticism. Political confrontation often focuses on this issue and the possible instruments for dealing with it.** As a result of these developments in the public space the following notable changes in popular attitudes and Bulgarian citizens' patterns of behavior have occurred:

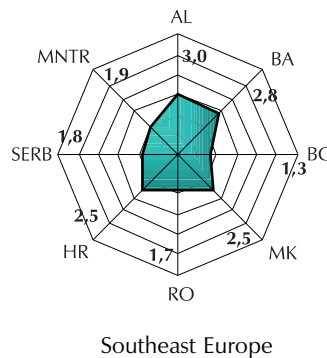
**The Bulgarian public increasingly perceives corruption as one of society's major problems.** Only unemployment and poverty outrank it. The importance of the phenomenon of corruption has noticeably grown over the last two years. Whereas in 1999 the average monthly share of the citizens putting corruption among the top three problems of society was 36%, in 2000 it was 39% and in October 2001 - 45%. One of the factors which contribute to this evolution of public opinion is the cumulative effect of the media coverage of corrupt practices; it also represents indirect evidence that still anti-corruption measures have not been effective enough in bringing down corruption to an acceptable level adequate to the heightened public sensitivity to the problem.

- **The public perceives that the phenomenon of corruption is still widespread in Bulgarian society.** The absence of notable fluctuations in the „spread of corruption“ index values suggests that this popular assessment is unlikely to change in the short run which also implies that corruption continues to be perceived as an extremely **effective instrument for addressing private problems**. The general conclusion which can be drawn is that even in 2001 according to the citizens of Bulgaria the **social realities** conducive to corruption remain unchanged.
- **A positive tendency towards higher moral standards and lower public tolerance towards corruption has emerged.** The Corruption Monitoring System has detected a twofold process shaping the public opinion: first, the rejection of corruption at the level of moral values and principles, and, second, an increasing public sensitivity to the actual manifestations of corruption. Nevertheless, the „susceptibility to corruption“ index continues to be twice as high as the „acceptability in principle“ index which suggests that in Bulgaria corrupt behavior is sustained by the pressure of circumstances rather than by the society's value system.

**ACCEPTABILITY IN PRINCIPLE**  
(BULGARIA, 1998-2001; SOUTHEAST EUROPE, JANUARY 2001)



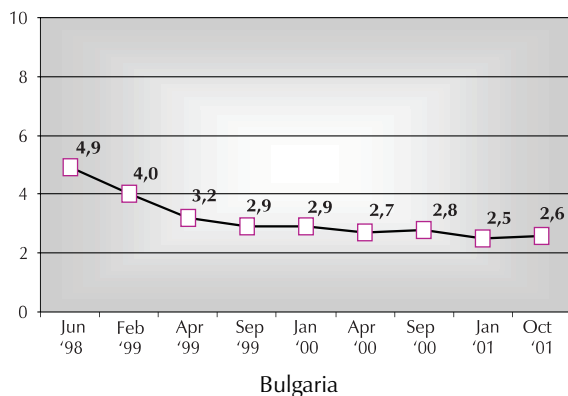
Source: CMS of Coalition 2000; SELDI



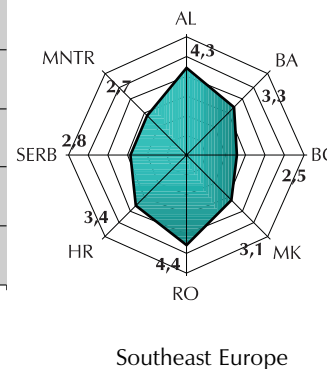
• A slightly positive trend has emerged with regard to the pressure to pay bribes felt by citizens from public sector employees. Nevertheless, corrupt practices are still largely the outcome of direct and indirect coercion. This is also a matter of personal choice involving practical considerations binding both sides of a corruption-marked interaction. The frequency of the acts of corruption remains stable and unchanged -

in this respect year 2001 was no different from the previous years.

**SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CORRUPTION**  
(BULGARIA, 1998-2001; SOUTHEAST EUROPE, JANUARY 2001)



Source: CMS of Coalition 2000; SELDI



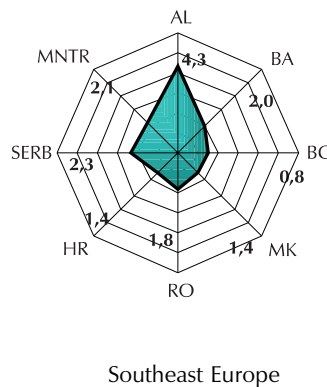
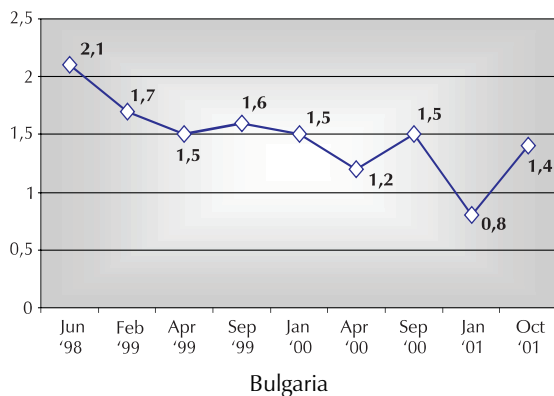
• The shift in the focus of public criticism from everyday corruption to grand corruption has been steady and consistent. In 2001, the lower levels of public administration were paid less attention as the Bulgarian public concentrated on the actions of the political class and the higher ranks of the government. This implies that at the level of mass consciousness the phenomenon of corruption is viewed primarily as a problem of the exercise of power and is conceived in political terms.

In turn, the efforts to curb corrupt practices are perceived as an integral part of the process of democratization of the country.

- There is also a continuing expansion of the range of corrupt practices subject to stronger civic criticism. **Unlike the previous year, in 2001 political corruption acquired specific dimensions, definite forms and public personifications.** At its core one can find privatization, nepotism, the manner of financing, the budget allocation of the institutions, the misuse of resources and influence as well as the specific political figures engaged in such practices. The civic demand for transparency and accountability concentrated on the technology of state power and the means of controlling it.
- As a result of the two processes noted above a **noteworthy change**

has occurred in the public's focus on **the activities of state institutions and the rates of spread of corruption in them**. In 2001 the top institutions ranked in corruption were the customs administration, the tax administration, the Judicial system and the police but at the same time the legislative and the executive branches of power, as represented by MPs and ministers, were defined as **centers of grand corruption**.

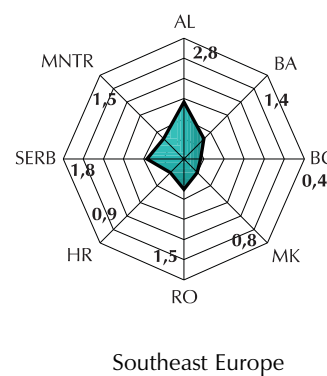
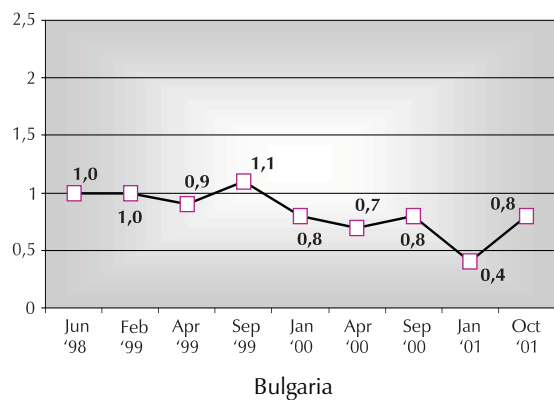
**CORRUPTION PRESSURE**  
(BULGARIA, 1998-2001; SOUTHEAST EUROPE, JANUARY 2001)



Source: CMS of Coalition 2000; SELDI

**These popular perceptions have undergone positive evolution since the parliamentary elections of June 2001 which brought a new parliament and government to office.**

**INVOLVEMENT IN CORRUPT PRACTICES**  
(BULGARIA, 1998-2001; SOUTHEAST EUROPE, JANUARY 2001)



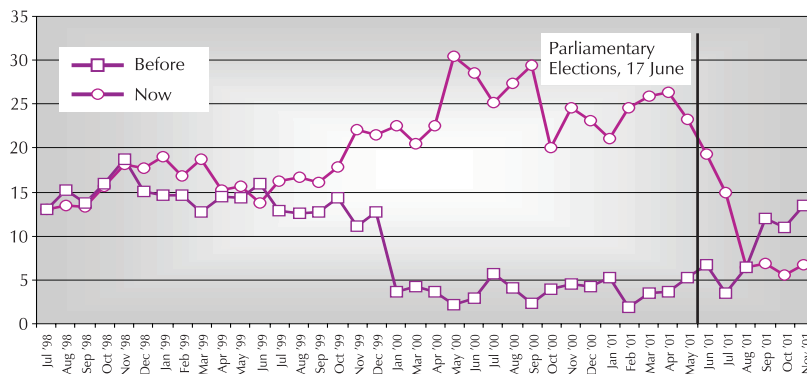
Source: CMS of Coalition 2000; SELDI

The focus of public attention on **the mechanisms of exercising state power** has led to a change in the citizens' perceptions of the factors for the spread of corruption. In 2001, the relative weight of the leading factor, namely, the use of public office for personal gain, increased substantially. The causes of the spread of corruption originating from the inefficiency of social control (legislative, judicial, and administrative), however, remained unchanged.

**This indicates that in Bulgarian society there is still a lack of sufficiently viable instruments for restricting the use of political power for personal, group, or party interest.**

- A very symptomatic development occurred in year 2001. Citizens used the parliamentary elections as an instrument to exercise control over the political class. The retrospective CMS data indicates that in the 12 months preceding the elections public assessments of the rate of corruption, compared to earlier periods after 1990, were extremely unfavorable to those in power. Regardless of their accomplishments in the field of foreign policy, as well as the financial stabilization, the political force dominating the legislature and the executive was perceived as corrupt in general, in particular, involved in the grand corruption

**SPREAD OF CORRUPTION: COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE PRESENT SITUATION AND THE SITUATION UNDER THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT**



taking place in high-risk zones such as privatization, public procurement, customs, etc. A comparison of the dynamics on the issue of when corruption was greater - before or now? with that on indicators, such as moral acceptability and corruption pressure, one can see dramatic fluctuations of the index values.

- The public's increasing sensitivity to grand corruption was most conspicuously revealed

in the parliamentary elections of June 2001. In those elections the **public's anti-corruption attitudes found a proper political instrument** for punishment of the political authorities which were most closely associated with grand corruption through active involvement or foot-dragging in counteracting it, and to give a chance to others who adopted the anti-corruption cause. The political force which won the parliamentary elections (NMSS) made the fight of corruption a key priority in its election campaign which clearly contributed to its success.

- The fact that anti-corruption rhetoric and anti-corruption strategies enjoy strong demand is a proof of the Bulgarian public's increased sensitivity to this subject.
- At the same time one cannot help noticing a negative tendency in the public's perception of corruption. Within this perception, corruption exists in two modes:
  - Grand corruption (in the sphere of the government, politics, the abuse of instruments of power, etc.).
  - Petty corruption (in the sphere of everyday life, access to public services, social control over the citizens).

The excessive interest in grand corruption weakens the sensitivity to small corruption, makes it „the lesser evil“, something we can live with, and often something we cannot even live without.

Another negative effect of the excessive sensitivity to grand corruption is that it generates a presumption of guilt for politicians, political parties, the public administration and, most notably, the democratic institutions of power. **Anti-institutional attitudes create an environment conducive to corruption as they legitimize mid- and lower level corruption.**

- As a result of the change at the top levels of the legislative and executive branches of power toward the end of the year a statistically significant increase in citizens' optimistic attitudes appeared for the first time since 1998. The change is largely a **result of heightened expectations from**

**the new government's anti-corruption activity rather than a reflection of real change.** Whether this positive shift will become a lasting tendency, however, will depend not so much, and not only, on the resolve of those in power not to allow corrupt practices in their own ranks. The will to reinforce intolerance to corruption in all of its forms also needs to be accompanied by proper legal norms and institutional practices.

This process is rather complex and should involve efforts in at least four different directions:

- Radical increase of transparency in the risk zones: privatization, public procurement, subsidies, licensing, customs, etc.
- Introduction of effective anti-corruption legislation.
- Completion of legislative amendments to minimize the possibilities for abuse of public office for group/party or personal gain through trade in influence.
- Institutionalization of civic control over the risk zones associated with both grand corruption and other common corrupt practices.

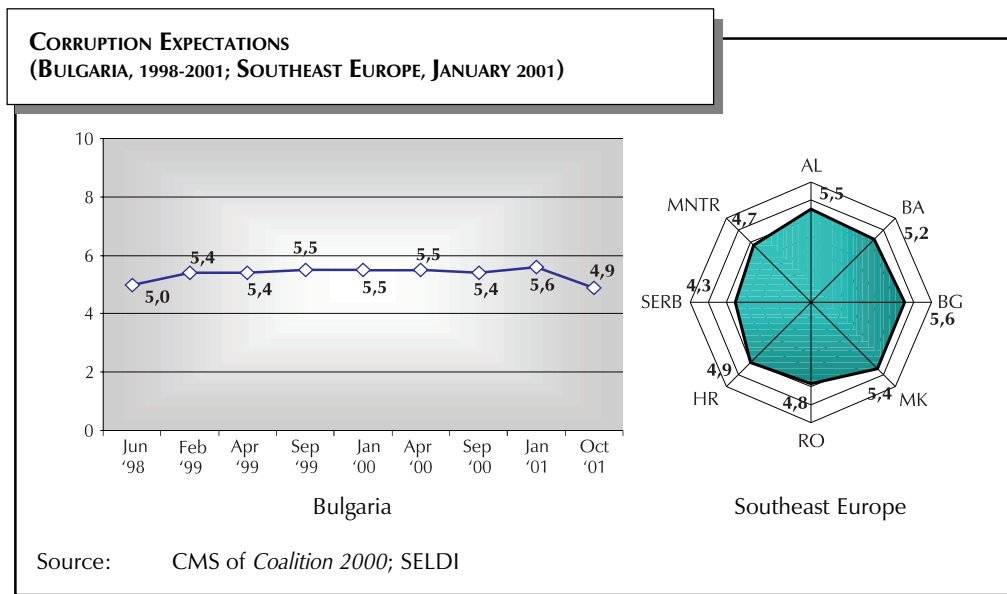
There is a strong need for new regulatory mechanisms which should be at the same time legitimate, morally acceptable and practically effective.

Based on the findings of the Corruption Monitoring System one can conclude that **the Bulgarian public associates corruption primarily with the mechanisms of political power.** Public opinion demands transparency, accountability and personal responsibility for the exercise of power. The results of the 2001 parliamentary elections heightened public expectations for effective anti-corruption policies by the government accompanied by real practical

measures. **Six months later, the demonstrated level of determination by the political class to counteract corruption has not met yet these expectations.**

The evolution of public attitudes toward the dynamics of corrupt behavior in the period since mid-1998 has gone through several successive stages:

1. Emergence of corruption as a public issue (1998).
2. Acknowledgement of the existence of corruption by the political elite and the executive (1999).



3. Outlining the specific dimensions of the phenomenon through a disclosing a number of high profile instances of corruption (1999-2000).
4. Focusing public attention on the mechanisms of exercise of political power and related specific instances of corruption (2001).

The main priority for future action is the need to move further at a faster speed to the **implementation of systematic anti-corruption measures**. This is demanded by the Bulgarian public and the strategic interests of the nation.