

CSO CASE STUDY 7

Title: Introduction of Anticorruption Education in the Bulgarian Secondary Schools

Country: Bulgaria

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Introduction to the case (issue, location, date, organisations involved, prevailing policies and policy climate)

The *Coalition 2000* initiative (www.anticorruption.bg) was launched in April 1998 with the aim to counteract corruption in Bulgarian society through a process of co-operation among NGOs, governmental institutions and citizens. Over the past seven years, *Coalition 2000* has become a trustworthy source of information for both national and international policy-makers, by providing information about the most corruption-susceptible areas in the public and political life in the country, and helps design measures for curbing corruption in those areas and monitors the success of such measures.

In 2003 education was identified by the *Corruption Monitoring System of Coalition 2000* as a corruption-susceptible area, as was illustrated by the sharp increase in the number of publications in the media on corruption cases in the higher and secondary education institutions. University professors and school teachers were also persistently rated by the general public in the top five most corrupt professions in Bulgaria. Therefore, the *Coalition* chose anticorruption education in both universities and secondary schools as one of the most pertinent areas to work in at the time.

Type and extent of policy change (legislation, policy documents, practice; period over which change took place; etc.)

The policy change that was achieved as a result of the joint efforts of *Coalition 2000* and its partners – governmental institutions, universities and public schools, and nongovernmental organizations and media - was the introduction of *Anticorruption* classes in the official curricula of the Bulgarian secondary schools in the fall of 2004. By the end of 2004, 25 secondary schools introduced *Anticorruption* as a separate subject, whereas more than 130 other schools introduced anticorruption topics in the curricula of other civic education subjects (Philosophy, Ethics, Rule of Law, etc.). Since the Ministry of Education and Science could not produce teaching and study materials for this new subject on time, *Coalition 2000* was officially requested by the Ministry to donate 1000 copies of its publications: *Corruption in 100 Answers* manual and *Anticorruption* textbook to support the smooth introduction of the new subject at the secondary schools during the first year and to aide the process of preparing future teachers in the faculties of Pedagogy at the university level.

Some thoughts on the explanation of the policy change

a) The political context

Anticorruption education was a pertinent issue to work on in 2003 and 2004, since a further and more effective development of the educational reform in the country was on the agenda, including the adoption of the *Strategy for Development of the Secondary Education in Bulgaria*, which put a special emphasis on the role of civic education in the

Bulgarian school. Furthermore, in the *2004-2005 Program for the Implementation of the National Anticorruption Strategy*, the Bulgarian government defined as one of its priority areas the cooperation with the civil society for the introduction of anticorruption education as a separate subject in the Bulgarian schooling system.

Other local organizations and actors that worked in cooperation or parallel to *Coalition 2000*' network towards implementing anticorruption measures and legislature in the period 2003 - 2004 included:

- The *governmental Anticorruption Commission*: it analyzes and summarizes incoming information for anticorruption measures and actions undertaken and evaluates their effectiveness. It is also responsible for developing ethical codes and organizing training courses on anticorruption topics for public officials.
- The *parliamentary Anticorruption Committee*: it is responsible for drafting appropriate legislature or proposing amendments to existing laws and regulations to support the implementation of the National Anticorruption Strategy.
- Bulgarian branch of *Transparency International*: it focuses on scientific and sociological researches on corruption trends and the success of anticorruption measures in Bulgaria and establishment of on-line resource centers on anticorruption and good governance topics.

As it could be seen from the information presented in the previous paragraphs, in the period 2002 – 2004, after the adoption of the *National Anticorruption Strategy* in Bulgaria, there were many and different actors, which worked towards the implementation of anticorruption measures and legislature in the country. However, most of them had a very specialized field of activities, which did not or could not involve much cooperation with the other actors. In addition, they did not seek feedback about the success of the implemented anticorruption measures and did not publicize much their activities to the general public and business organizations, which were the immediate source of information whether corruption levels in the country increased or decreased.

b) International factors

Enhancing civic and anticorruption education in the Bulgarian schooling system was also in line with the national priorities set forth with respect to the pending accession of the country to the European Union. 2005 was announced as the *Year of Democratic Citizenship through Education* by the Council of Europe, therefore, anticorruption education clearly fell into the priorities of the Bulgarian Ministry of Science and Education.

Other initiatives that had an impact in shaping the policy process are:

- The *Open Government Initiative Project (OGI)*: a USAID-funded project running in the period 2002-2005, is dedicated to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Bulgarian government to prevent corruption, enhance transparency and accountability and promote rule of law, especially in the area of public auditing, procurement, and public administration.
- *Major donor programs* in Bulgaria, which provide small grants to local initiatives of civil society organizations focusing on anticorruption issues. Those include: the Democracy commission at the US Embassy in Bulgaria, Open Society Foundation and EU Phare program. Most of the funding provided by these donor programs is for topic-oriented, and not comprehensive, anticorruption projects in the range of 5,000 to 25,000 Euro.

c) The nature of research-based evidence (content, source, reliability) and mechanisms used to get the evidence into the policy process

The [Corruption Monitoring System](#) (CMS) and the [Media Monitoring System](#) (MMS) of *Coalition 2000* consist of a set of quantitative and qualitative monitoring instruments and generates information about the structure and dynamics of corrupt behavior, the scope and dynamics of corruption related attitudes, assessments and expectations of the general public, of public sector officials, and of specific social and professional groups. The corruption perception indexes produced by the CMS are produced twice per year and widely publicized in the Bulgarian media and accepted by the policy-makers and the society as a trustworthy source of information. The periodic reports and case-studies produced by MMS evaluate how the media presents specific corruption-related issues to the society. The data provided by this mechanism was successfully used to initiate and produce a specific policy change in the area of civic and anticorruption education in the secondary school system in Bulgaria.

d) The ways CSOs tried to affect policy change (strategy and activities)

Coalition 2000 and its partner network of local NGOs, on the contrary, applied quite a versatile and multidisciplinary approach in devising and implementing anticorruption activities. Moreover, in all those activities it sought publicity and a cooperation with all the major actors in the country: members of the governmental and parliamentary committees and ministries, university professors and NGO and donor community experts became members of its Steering Committee and in almost all working groups within the *Coalition* such as: gray economy, anticorruption education, legal reform, sociological surveys, small grants, etc.

The main objective behind the introduction of anticorruption education pursued by *Coalition 2000* and its partners, was acquainting the young people of Bulgaria with the role and functions of the public institutions, state budget and taxes, local government, the need for transparency and feedback in the state institutions, as well as with their civil rights and obligations. Thus, they would enter into their mature life as better prepared citizens and individuals, who are intolerant to such a negative social phenomenon like corruption.

To support all the governmental efforts in the area of anticorruption education, in 2003 and 2004, *Coalition 2000* in cooperation with partner NGOs from all over the country, developed and tested a set of instruments for instruction (textbooks, on-line teaching and study materials, manuals, teaching programs), both at the university and secondary school level.

Undoubtedly, the experience of different NGOs participating in a nation-wide network, teaching pilot modules and testing different programs and methods for anticorruption education, demonstrated to public institutions the obvious need for the introduction of such topic in the civic education curricula of the secondary school system in Bulgaria, as well as in the curricula of higher education institutions, which prepare future teachers. Furthermore, that experience provided evidence of action to the Ministry of Education and Science about the benefits of designing school programs for anticorruption classes and ready-made teaching materials to support the introduction of such classes under the form of handbooks, electronic manuals and survey results.

Conclusions

This case clearly demonstrates a very fruitful and mutually beneficial partnership between civil society organizations (CSOs) and governmental institutions, where CSOs stepped in to support the governmental efforts in a policy change initiative.

- First, the CSOs provided background information, where it was lacking or insufficient (e.g. activities by the CMS of *Coalition 2000* and partner NGOs, which implemented small-scale practical projects at the local level).
- Second, the CSOs supported the governmental institutions in the design and implementation of practical tools to effect the intended policy change. For instance, the introduction of anticorruption education in the Bulgarian secondary school system was supported by the CSOs through pre-testing of teaching programs and methodologies; designing and publishing of teaching and study materials (manuals, CDs, on-line materials); developing new forms for in-class and out-of-class anticorruption education (e.g. essay contests, visits to public institutions by high-school students, the introduction of peer school mediators for resolving conflicts at the secondary school, etc.).
- In addition, the introduction of anticorruption education was a result of the activities and joint efforts of the broad network of *Coalition 2000*'s partner NGOs. In this way, the efforts of all those organizations united in a country-wide network gained legitimacy and recognition by institutions and authorities and credibility among the media, general public and donor community.
- Finally, the efforts of a broader alliance of NGOs did not go unnoticed by the donor and international community, which also recognized the *Coalition* as a successful model for public-private partnership in the devising and implementing anticorruption policies and exercised a certain pressure over the Bulgarian governmental officials and ministries involved in those policies to take into account the results of the networks' project and activities in the policy-making process and to cooperate with its members in different anticorruption areas, including anticorruption education.

Sources of documentation to support the case:

- Anticorruption portal site of anticorruption initiative *Coalition 2000*: www.anticorruption.bg
- *Strategy for the Development of Secondary Education 2005-2010*, Ministry of Science and Education of Bulgaria (only in Bulgarian): http://www.minedu.government.bg/normativni_doc/proecto_doc/strategy/srategia_proekt050104.htm
- National Anticorruption Strategy, Combating Corruption Commission, Council of Minister of Bulgaria, adopted with decision #671/01.10.2001: <http://www.acc.government.bg/en/>
- 2004-2005 Program for the Implementation of the National Anticorruption Strategy: <http://www.acc.government.bg/en/>
- Concept Paper *Prevention and Counteracting Corruption through Civic Education in the Bulgarian Secondary School. Major Recommendations and Working Areas during the Period 2004-2007* developed by *Coalition 2000*' working group and endorsed in January, 2005 (only in Bulgarian): <http://www.anticorruption.bg/bg/news/events.php?event=0&id=5327&place=3>
- Council of Europe, Education for Democratic Citizenship Initiative: http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education/E.D.C/

Basic information on the author:

Ms. Dimitrova holds a joint Master's degree in Urban and Environmental Management from Wageningen University, Wageningen and The Institute for Housing and Urban Studies, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (2001). Her thesis explored the role of micro and small enterprises in the provision of urban services. She earned her Bachelor degree in Applied Economics and Business Administration at the American University in Bulgaria, Blagoevgrad (1999). During the last five years, Ms. Dimitrova has worked as a consultant or project coordinator on multiple developmental projects in Bulgaria and The Netherlands in areas like: retraining of socially disadvantaged groups and continuous education; waste management; community involvement; micro and small enterprises' start-up of socially disadvantaged citizens, etc. At present, Ms. Dimitrova works as a Secretary of the anti-corruption initiative *Coalition 2000*, Sofia, Bulgaria.