



Policy Forum

Anti-Corruption, Democratic Resilience and Economic Security

9 November 2023

Sredets Hall, Sofia Balkan Palace Hotel, and Zoom

*Opening Remarks of Dr. Ognian Shentov, Chairman,
Center for the Study of Democracy*

Dear Prime Minister,

Dear Ms. Kövesi,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today's policy forum is dedicated to two key topics:

- What reforms and policies are needed to make anti-corruption efforts deliver;
- How to model (and also, how to comply to) the requirements of the milieu, especially in the wake of the radical changes brought about in Europe by Russia's war in Ukraine.

First, there is no other way **to make democracy deliver** and build resilient democratic institutions than public-private partnership and coalition building both at the national and the regional level. No other social technology to do this has been invented yet. A great example from Bulgaria's recent past was the national anticorruption *Coalition 2000* established 25 years ago. This was an initiative that mobilised society at large, especially on the eve of our accession to the EU. *Coalition 2000's* tool the *Corruption Monitoring System* measured the lowest ever level of administrative corruption in the period 2005–2006.

Regretfully, so many years later, we are back on trying to solve these same problems, while state capture reigns and political/institutionalised corruption is high. Paradoxically, we seem to find ourselves in a situation where everything is harder than it was 25 years. This is why we have gathered to discuss the possible measures and policies against state capture and the available tools to measure it, to objectively assess the progress or regress in this area.

Second, all those internal political processes are developing in a fast changing environment. In the last couple of years, **economic security** has surfaced as one of the major issues of that environment.

These issues have always been significant, structural, but only now they are moving to the center of the political process, at the core of global politics.

Tackling strategic corruption (that is, corruption related primarily to Russian economic and political influence) and strengthening Europe's and its partners' economic security calls for a new layer of measure to enhance our resilience to corrosive capital. Investment screening, alongside other instruments such as imposing sanctions, controlling dual-use goods, monitoring state aid and illicit financial flows, are becoming inseparable from the emerging economic security policies of EU and NATO Member States.

Today, we are excited to continue these efforts with our long-standing partners from the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative, our partners from the Regional Public Private Partnership Platform and the Center for International Private Enterprise in Washington D.C.

Let me finish by thanking and giving the floor to the Ambassador of Norway to Romania, Bulgaria and Moldova, Siri Beate Barry. The kingdom of Norway remains an indispensable partner for the EU in safeguarding our common economic and investment security and in building democratic resilience through regional cooperation.