
1999: Expanding a Successful Model

Building on almost a decade of assisting domestic reforms, in 1999 CSD started a transformation process turning it into a regional focal point for socio-economic analysis and policy advice in Southeast Europe (SEE). There are three building blocks in this process:

Human Capital Dimension. CSD has been pooling together a critical mass of professionals in the area of socio-economic analysis capable of addressing complex research tasks concerning the development of the region as a whole. CSD will place a special emphasis on the professional advancement of young researchers, which would ensure a smooth transition between different generations of experts.

Merging Analytical Capacity with IT. CSD, in cooperation with its partner organization in this area – the Applied Research and Communications Fund - has been upgrading its communication infrastructure ensuring an easy access to the global information resources, and refocusing its research efforts to address the problems of the emerging Internet economy. CSD's understanding of this topic is that the rules of this new economy could be utilized to accelerate the socio-economic development of SEE countries and allow their successful integration into the European social and economic fabric.

Networking Capabilities. In 1999 CSD has been working towards the creation of a network of socio-economic research centers in SEE which will work in close cooperation, coordinate research agendas, exchange experts and staff and be involved — either bilaterally or multilaterally — in the analysis of crucial development problems confronting their countries.

ESTABLISHING ALLIANCES FOR TRANSITION

CSD was established at a time when hopes for a radical break with the communist past were running high. Soon it became clear that the transition will take both time and vision.

The desired result was not just public policy reform but a fundamental institutional change in society, politics and economy. Traditional approaches were, therefore, inadequate. In a context of profound transformation of institutions and attitudes, it was necessary to find mechanisms that will help root out vested interests and ensure public support. Building unusual alliances turned out to be one of them, probably the most successful one.

A society in transition needs unconventional mechanisms to reform itself – after all, it is old convention that has to be transformed. Thus CSD's "building bridges" mission emerged as a natural consequence of an organization whose independence and

capacity were widely recognized. When back in 1997 discussions began with local and international partners, notably USAID-Bulgaria, about the possibility of launching an anti-corruption initiative in Bulgaria, CSD decided to look back on the most successful models of work it had employed thus far. Even a cursory review showed that reform issues were tackled most effectively when the Center had managed to bring together the key supporters of reform – institutions, persons, media.

Made possible by CSD's political, institutional and financial independence, this mediating role soon brought widespread recognition. The ease with which *Coalition 2000* took off the ground confirmed that there had been a pressing need for a mediator, a "neutral ground" where the institutions of the executive, legislative and judicial powers, the private sector and civil society could meet and work out joint solutions. The Coalition became the institutionalization of an approach which CSD had been testing and applying since it was established at the end of 1989.

1999 was the year during which almost 10 years of experience in building partnerships for reform came to real fruition. Already Secretariat to a major collaborative effort – *Coalition 2000* – last year the Center applied this reform model successfully in two other areas – judicial reform and corporate governance. In both cases, the Center, through years of collaboration with Bulgaria's leading policy makers and experts, managed to involve the key stakeholders in those sectors.

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