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## *Balkan Public Agenda*

*In-depth Interviews*

*Sofia*

*February, 2000*

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## I. TECHNICAL REPORT

### 1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

IDEA International assigned to Vitosha Research the administration of series of indepth interviews (IDI), which are part of the qualitative approach of the international survey "Balkan Public Agenda".

The main goal of the indepth interviews conducted in Bulgaria was to monitor the public agenda as perceived by the representatives of different groups of Bulgarian elites.

The indepth interviews were conducted according to the IDI Guideline designed by IMAS in collaboration with IDEA International and with the network of research institutes in all the countries involved in the project.

One additional block of questions (6. Reforms) designed by the Bulgarian TITAN member, Deyan Kiuranov, was included in the IDI Guideline too.

### 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Representatives of the following groups of elites were interviewed: Army, Police, Judiciary, Government, Parliament, Private Sector President Office, Foreign Institutions, NGOs, Mass-media and Intelligentsia.

The respondents were selected by random sampling on the basis of the list preliminary prepared by Vitosha Research. The randomized list was prepared by IMAS Bucharest.

#### LIST OF THE INTERVIEWED RESPONDENTS

Type of respondent	Code of respondent	Institution	Date/ Time of conducting the interview
Army	(R1)	Ministry of Defense	27.02.2001, 12:00 - 13:00
	(R2)	Ministry of Defense	23.02.2001, 13:00 - 14:15
Police	(R3)	Ministry of Interior	14.02.2001, 13.50 - 14.45
	(R4)	Ministry of Interior	22.02.2001, 14:00 - 14:55
Judiciary	(R5)	Bailiff's Division	02--21.02.2001, 9:30 - 10:30
	(R6)	Bailiff's Division	21.02.2001, 10:15 - 10:55
Government	(R7)	Ministry of Agriculture and Forests	19.02.2001, 15:30 - 16:10

	(R8)	Ministry of Labor and Social Policy	20.02.2001, 9:00 - 9:35
<b>Parliament</b>	(R9)		07.03.2001, 12:00 - 13:00
	(R10)	Bulgarian Socialist Party	21.02.2001, 14:00 - 14:40
<b>Private Sector</b>	(R11)	Restaurant owner	21.02.2001, 20:15 - 21:00
	(R12)	“Eastern Finance” Financial House	26.02.2001, 13:00 - 14:10
<b>Public sector</b>	(R13)	Bulgarian National Bank	02.03.2001, 15:00 - 16:15
	(R14)	Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS)	26.02.2001, 15:00 - 16:00
<b>President office</b>	(R15)	President’s Office	20.02.2001, 15:00 - 15:30
	(R16)	President’s Office	23.02.2001, 16:30 - 17:20
<b>Foreign Institutions</b>	(R17)	USAID	22.02.2001, 15:00 - 15:45
	(R18)	UNDP	21.02.2001, 17:00 - 17:50
<b>NGO</b>	(R19)	"Challenges" Foundation	16.02.2001, 13:00 - 14:00
	(R20)		24.02.2001, 15:15 - 16:00.
<b>Mass-Media</b>	(R21)	Megapress ltd.	19.02.2001, 17:00 - 18:45
	(R22)	“Monitor” newspaper	28.02.2001, 14:00- 15:00
<b>Intelligentsia</b>	(R23)	Artist	20.02.2001, 19:00 - 21:20
	(R24)	Research Associate at the Institute of Sociology, Lecturer at the University for Bulgarian and World Economy	21.02.2001, 16:30 - 18:00
	(R 25)	Architect	22.02.2001, 12:00 - 13:30

## II. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

### 1. MAJOR ASPIRATIONS, FEARS, INTERESTS AND CONCERNS WITH REGARDS TO THE CURRENT SITUATION IN BULGARIA.

The problems of the country at present, as pointed out by a representative of the media, "are so numerous that in order to solve them we will need decades and the combined efforts of our society as a whole" Most often our respondents perceive these problems as being economic problems though in many of the opinions given they can hardly be separated from the political factors and processes.

**According to most of our respondents all serious problems can come down to one thing - the extremely grave economic situation.**

- Other problems are mentioned as well - **those of the economic development, opportunities for production and investment, and Bulgaria's position on the foreign markets. Its loss of market share internationally** are mentioned as the cause for the woeful economic situation and the stagnant economy. Single opinions emphasize the economic deterioration infiltrating a number of sectors - the decline of major industries, idle enterprises, the closure of entire branches in the economy.
- **Unemployment and widespread pouperization of the population** are a serious problem of our society according to the representatives of the country's elite. **High crime rate** is added to them. The individual person is helpless against crime, without any protection whatsoever from the state. A lot more worrying is large-scale crime against the state and the nation's interests, but this is a topic that "*can hardly be discussed because everything there sinks in the Twilight Zone*" Traditional trust in the law-enforcement forces/system, the court system and the judiciary is decreasing after a torrent of events which showed that not everything is as it should be in these institutions.

*"People have strong doubts that the activities of the police often intermingle with those of thugs and organized crime rings, the so-called mafia."*

According to the respondents crime is resulting from the economic problems of the country.

- In addition to crime some other problems are pointed out as resulting from the economic ones: **malfunctioning administration, corruption, malfunctioning healthcare and education, the lack of a stable banking system, difficulted hindering private initiative** . All the above mentioned problems are considered from the point of view of the restructuring of the economy and as resulting from the reforms.
- What is also emphasized is the "*unprecedented despair of the people*" with regards to the lack of any distinct future prospects for the development of the country , doubts that Bulgaria is on the right path that will lead it to the desired higher living standard for the nation.

Part of the respondents come to the logical conclusion that **political problems are only a projection - no matter whether right or not - of these major economic problems.** Not even the undeniable positive achievements such as macroeconomic stabilization, the promise to be excluded from the group of countries on the Schengen list and others, can come close enough to the immediate needs of the people and from this point of view they look insignificant.

- In the area of politics what comes to the front is the lack of a political leader and party on which to rely for the future.

**There is some kind of secondary identification with the previous system of government not in the sense that today people prefer socialism as a distinct prospect for the development of the country as a whole, as a political idea or as a social practice, but for the good memories about a past of better material stability, confidence in the future, state guaranteed healthcare. All this pictures in a positive and legitimate way the previously existing society from a purely economic point of view.**

- A representative of political elite claims that the country's major problem is that:

*" the past 10 years witnessed the birth of a corrupt political elite that avoids responsibility and deludes the ordinary citizens that it is working for them while at the same time all its activities aim at its own enrichment."*

- The most important problem in the words of a **representative of the science elite** is the desire for leadership and immunity of the governing party.

*"Those in power have moved so far away from the ordinary people that they have become unable to see what is going on in the country."*

- Among the other problems mentioned are the **situation on the Balkans and the ecological problem that is going to be more acutely felt in connection with the disclosure of facts about the depleted uranium.** This is believed to be the problem that is definitely going to reflect on the economic problem - investments.
- The **forthcoming elections** are considered a burning issue since our election system has serious disadvantages.

***Which of the problems mentioned is likely to be resolved during the next several years?***

Most of the respondents think that it is **difficult to point out a single one.** All the problems are interwoven and they should be considered as a whole. Economic problems should come first.

There is a **grain of hope that the economic problems** can be solved to some extent - this included **extending production, fostering private initiative**, etc. Most respondents believe that a moment will come when things will become irreversible, business environment will be clearly defined, the economic situation too - from this moment on there will be only constant improvement which, in its turn, will solve the unemployment problem. There is a grain of optimism in the prospect outlined by a representative of the non-governmental organisations too:

*"Existing despair will most probably be the easiest problem to solve. Because at a certain moment people will realize the need to do something real to change their living conditions."*

**Most of the respondents, however, do not show optimism** - apparently these are problems that cannot be solved with one attempt. The difficulty arises from the fact that society should generate one basic principle, thought, basic idea to guide it.

As a factor on which the **solving of the problems** depends are mentioned the **institutions of the executive and legislative powers**. Results will come if there is a clear-cut programme and strategy to follow, if priorities are fixed and kept and not replaced by group or corporate interests. The existing problems can be solved by the means of a very good government programme of the next government accomplished with the help of good laws passed by parliament. Foreign investors should have incentives to put their money in Bulgaria.

Concrete instruments for the solution of the unemployment problem are creation of subsidized employment programmes - through the budget, both central and local, through international projects, through money given from accession funds, through public investment in the development of large-scale infrastructure projects. The second way is through encouraging businesses to create jobs.

The representatives of the government believe that the state has its role by providing legislative help, tax preferential treatment for businesses that create additional employment, by employment programmes for specific groups of people on the one hand, and on the other by increasing the qualifications and skills of this part of the labour force that is actively seeking employment. Some respondents share the opinion that many serious companies leave Bulgaria simply because they cannot find the needed labour force that meets the requirements of the respective international companies.

Another opinion is that **people should not expect the state** to take care of everything - this contradicts the tendency towards a market economy from which the state must withdraw.

**Accession to the European Union is the right direction for Bulgaria**. This, however, should not be simply pronouncements and meaningless words but a genuine integration that should start with making Bulgarian legislation compatible with the legislation of the European Union and then continue with specific programmes and projects. With the assistance of the International Funding Institutions and incorporation into the EU the development of the economy might be stimulated, provided that Bulgaria is given access to international markets.

## 2. ECONOMIC ISSUES

- The major economic problem in the opinion of the respondents is **the lack of capitals and investments, the lack of money**. At the same time some respondents

think that Bulgaria offers no attractive opportunities for investors.

*" Everything that was of any interest has been taken possession of, ruined, devastated, looted" .*

Stagnation on the capital market is also registered as a negative factor.

- Second, the problems in the economy are also seen as a consequence of the **unsuccessful privatisation processes**. What is emphasized here is the slow progress of the structural reform along with its lack of transparency. Some respondents stress that the reform has made it possible for a small group of people to take possession of basic facilities and make fortunes.

*"At present it is these people that have become "the powerful ones". Everything that happens in the country depends on what they want".*

- A third major problem is **the lack of effectively functioning market**, of a genuine competitive environment , a market where available products can be sold. This problem is connected with the loss of traditional foreign markets.

*" Our markets are very limited, the domestic market is stagnant. It is only through joint ventures and the influx of foreign investment that we can look for market share abroad" .*

- The rate of unemployment is named as an economic problem as well.

***The following are mentioned by individual respondents :***

- **The negative legacy** - foreign debt which drains a great part of the gross domestic product.
- **The monetary ideology of governing** pursued unrelentlessly by the Ivan Kostov's government resulting in serious problems in the economy, the most significant being low productivity.
- **The level of qualification and professional skills of the labour force**, which is getting lower.
- **Corruption** is also identified as a serious economic problem facing the country.

***Causes for the economic problems:***

- COMECON membership prior to 1989
- Plundering the state and the nation's wealth; bankruptcies in the banking system several years ago; the existence of pyramidal structures draining free capitals
- Lack of interest in Bulgaria on the part of wealthy countries . "Bulgaria doesn't seem to be an attractive East European country".

***Causes for the lack of investments according to the respondents:***

- Bad , inadequate legislation

*"Our legislation is such that people are made to move their businesses out of the country - offshore companies or other ways of registration abroad."*

- The way in which the reform is being conducted
- Shortage of well-qualified labor force

***Obstacles for the overcoming of the existing economic problems:***

- Lack of a unified single transition strategy, its constant alteration by each new government.
- Lack of economic stability and economic growth. Extremely volatile economy despite a seemingly stable government. The absence of definite privatisation policy is included here too.
- Stumping out the middle class:

*"The Bulgarians forming the middle class should be the ones on whose initiative we should rely; they should be given greater freedom and some guarantee that the business they have set up will survive - for example, this could be done by offering them low-interest loans to start their business".*

- Corruption, corrupt government.
- The fact that :

*" everything was built on the presumption that the socialist development will progress quickly, that the gigantic industrial plants will always have the markets of the Soviet Union and the COMECON countries. With the collapse of all this, those huge markets were lost. This naturally resulted in closing down of respective enterprises, which in its turn brought about high unemployment".*

***Factors that will step up the solution of the economic problems:***

Most of the interviewed emphasize **internal factors** as being crucial for solving the existing economic problems:

- Formulating a clear-cut strategy and setting clear priorities for the development of the economy: what should be developed, where, available resources that should be utilized; creating a stable business environment. Stability not only like the one that it is said to be existing due to the IMF, i.e. financial stability, but stability in setting priorities and specific programmes.
- Creating the necessary legislative basis that will not lead to resentment or vagueness. A simplified legislation that must not be subject to changes as far as the economy is concerned, that will correspond to the situation and, legislation of definite, strict rules ; greater responsibility on behalf of the government with regards to large-scale privatisation deals.

- To develop legislation favouring investment, to pursue a policy of tax reliefs for all entrepreneurs, including Bulgarian ones, for investments in machines and equipment. Not only foreign investors should be given preferences - Bulgarian investors should be treated on an equal basis with foreigners with regards to favourable re-investment conditions for starting new productions, for new technologies and know-how.
- Creating a normal political setting; uniting the nation on the basis of several guiding national concepts concerning the economy, foreign policy, defense and social welfare.
- Formulating and pursuing a policy which fosters the introduction of new technologies. This can be either a special tax policy or a special crediting policy.
- Wise economic policy and management of available resources - both human and technical.

***Some other factors also mentioned :***

- Creating conditions for the development of big businesses, which will bring about the development of medium-size and small businesses and result in employment opportunities and profits. We should make efforts to revive production.
- Fight for our own survival

*" Some people still long for the "state-mother" that takes care of everything. Everyone should become responsible for his/her own life and business".*

- To be increased the level of transparency of what is being done - *"to reduce corruption ( it cannot be eradicated) within reasonable limits"*  
The process must start with those in power. Parliament must not be an institution used only in order to defend the interests of the ruling party.
- The elections should be won by a democratic majority otherwise they may lead to a government that will start spending.

**The role of the state** is to create favourable conditions for businesses- it should not take over the functions of capital because this will lead to other negative consequences. The state should assure prospective investors that there are favourable conditions for returns on investment . The economy should be a true market economy. The government's role should be restricted to simply controlling whether the laws are observed or not.

Others believe that the work of **the Council of Ministers and Parliament** is crucial. They are expected to make appropriate decisions and take action to ensure the country's integration in Euro-Atlantic structures.

***The influence of International Organizations on the Bulgarian economy***

Most respondents believe that their role is of great significance: The support of MVB is defined, on the one hand, as financial and, on the other, as providing "know-how" and market protection on the foreign markets.

As a whole the opinions, according to which achieving stability in the country is possible only with the support of foreign institutions and if they withdraw the country will collapse, prevail.

**A small part of the respondents** express mixed feelings - they believe that the international financial institutions have a positive role as far as they helped us introduce the currency board system, but at the same time we should not forget our national interests.

*" Otherwise we would turn into a colony without any rights whatsoever. "*

On the one hand, it is believed, that they play a negative role because they restrict government spending on social welfare but, on the other hand, they taught us the rules of financial discipline, i.e. you can spend as much as you have earned.

A third group is determined that the solution of the economic problems should be based mainly on internal factors . External factors, represented by the international community have auxiliary functions. But on the first place we should think of how to mobilise and utilize the internal resources.

*" If they come in a favourable environment, the results will be positive. At the moment, however, they simply sink in the "sands" of our disorganised and chaotic state which is the reason why we can't make a considerable step forward".*

**The opponents of international institutions support** claim that the interests of different institutions intermingle.

*" Their activities towards Bulgaria are unfavourable. They claim they have good intentions and want to help us while actually they impose their will and harm the country which will be felt for years in the future. The documents that Bulgaria signs at present bind the country to those institutions and make the country dependent, not a sovereign state. From now on we will have to "play according to their rules".*

Therefore the first concern of every Bulgarian government should be to seek for new opportunities. This means:

*" to counteract the EU, and to try to find the balance: to look for both partners and markets to the east, to the south and even among the Eskimos, so to say. We should hold no scruples or work on the presumption that somebody in the EU will get angry".*

Here is the opinion of the representative of the media

*" The protection of some rich institutions such as the European Community and NATO for example, is to a large extent an illusion, because a second Marshal Plan can hardly be expected. Nowadays such concern as the one there was after the Second World War in 1945 does not exist. Now everything is different and such large amounts of money will not be invested."*

The **international institutions** that are most often mentioned are:

- IMF, which has the greatest influence at the moment and sets the rules; EU , which can exert influence through its accession funds; the World Bank; the EBRD; CEFTA

### *Specific expectations*

Most of the respondents **do not expect any significant or sudden changes in the economy** during the next year even after the elections. They expect the situation to remain almost the same with possibly only slight improvement.

Part of the hopes refer to a new right of centre government that will continue the work of the current government, continuing in the same direction but at a faster pace and establishing more clearly and definitely the priorities in the economy.

**Improvement** is expected in the following areas:

- Obtaining higher level of trust on the side of international institutions towards Bulgaria
- Efforts should be made to eliminate the negative effect of the existing tax and economic legislation and to shorten some procedures
- To continue the process of stabilization accompanied by low inflation, gradual rise in the level of income and advancement of large-scale infrastructure projects
- To try to make a breakthrough at the Russian market and the Arab countries market which will help the economy to recover.

**Worsening** is expected:

- If the newly-elected National Assembly forms a weak government not trusted internationally (in Europe and world-wide)
- Investments can decrease due to the ecological pollution on the Balkans
- Unstable economic development and more serious problems because we are at a critical point and going out of this situation is difficult.
- The situation at the moment does not provide hope for any stability to be achieved over the next 4-5 years

### 3. POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

#### *The role of people like you with regards to the decision-making process*

In this part of the interview respondents do not only explain their role in the decision-making process but give their views on democracy and political institutions.

**Respondents that do not hold senior administrative positions** think that their role in decision-making is insignificant, mainly restricted to their right to vote at elections when they approve or reject a given party policy. Most of them consider themselves good professionals. They say that no one in Bulgaria is interested in what ordinary people think.

*"Even when people take the initiative, the most they get is media coverage of the event but no real results."*

**Those respondents that are part of the political and government elite** believe they can influence decisions only at their level. They state they participate actively in their area of decision-making and can exercise influence on either accepting or rejecting a decision.

**A representative of the NGOs** states that:

*" democracy consists of clear-cut rules and principles and institutions to exercise controll over the way these are followed. At present our country is far from this idea because it has none of the above. No one knows his/her right place, why they are there or what their duties are. This is equally true for ordinary citizens and the ruling institutions as well".*

Another respondent claims that there cannot be democracy since the middle class, the backbone of society, does not exist.

*" In a country where the majority of people is poor and only a few are rich democracy is simply impossible".*

**One respondent who works for an international organization** says that Bulgarians think of democracy only in terms of the extent to which their own interests are concerned or those of their company. People do not realize how important it is that everyone should observe the laws and take in consideration the existing economic situation in the country.

However, the prevailing opinion is that:

*"The public opinion in Bulgaria is worth nothing. This has been true for the whole period of changes. That is the reason why the indifference of ordinary people has reached incredible heights."*

There is an interesting opinion claiming that **ordinary people** have the disposition and the wish to be an active part of the processes in the country but there are no ways to apply this attitude to real life.

*" Political Parties are afraid of the initiatives of the population. The reason for this is that they have not yet realized their real role and function in a pluralistic society".*

**Who makes these decisions:**

- **Politicians, party members, influential party members, outstanding figures holding senior positions in the executive power or the legislative branch** are those who take the decisions; legislation can never be out of politics; strategic decisions as to the economic and political development of the country are made by those in power and the political elite as a whole.
- The international community makes decisions but they are only to remind or help - giving advice or recommendations for the future of the country.
- Local government has more or less limited powers; local authorities can make decisions only within their jurisdiction.

**Most trusted:**

- The President, the institution of the President, is definitely the most trusted. **Reasons:** currently the President as a political institution is respected and looked at in a positive way abroad and this institution is not involved in scandals, or at least not to the extent the rest are. Its widely-open and caring for everyone.
- The International community because

*"globalization is so extensive that even if a country makes an attempt to move away from the correct rules for fair play, the others quickly make it go back to the right course of action".*

- Parliament

*" Because Parliament is the one to make the laws."*

- None of the institutions at present covers the idea of the people for a truly democratic form for creating political life. Disappointment from what is constantly promised is great.

**The least trust :**

- The judiciary.

*" There is wide-spread corruption there."*

- Political institutions

*" a very weak opposition, no positive ideas coming from it, opposition that seeks political advantages from every difficulty or failure of the government in our wretched country".*

- Party leaders.

*" They are people disassociated from their electors who have entrusted them with power. The constant splitting up, transferring from one parliamentary group to another takes place, without doubt, with the approval of the political parties".*

- The police force . They should guarantee our safety which currently is very low.

*" The feeling that criminals are not punished and people are not given protection forms a moral system in ordinary citizens which makes them unpredictable even at the time of elections".*

#### ***The greatest influence on everyday life:***

- Economic problems that concern all of us daily.
- Family and friends
- Work.

*" My contacts with people. Their objections to one or another decision, their suggestions".*

- Spiritual destitution.

#### ***Evaluating the work of leaders/members of political institutions:***

As a whole, respondents show little trust for institutions.

*" They apparently do not follow the same course, which is unreasonable".*

Prevailing grade for **political institutions** is 3 on a scale from 2 to 6. Respondents think that *"the cauldron is still boiling"*. Bulgaria is still in the period of party formation and consolidation. There are not enough "bridges" among the parties, by means of which they could push forward the development of the country . In many cases the party activities are determined by the party interests, not the interests of society.

**The judiciary** is rated **the lowest**. It is thought to be the most corrupt institution, very ineffective and inept.

**The army** is ranked low , but at least its grade is not negative.:

*" the best thing that can be said about the army is that until now it has not been involved in the ongoing conflicts. So, its negative side, i.e. the fact that it is not active, is actually its advantage."*

#### ***Rating the work of President, Parliament, central administration, local government, local administration:***

The **highest rating** is given to the President and the respective institution. The comment on his personal qualities is the following:

*" A person that can be trusted. Highly-educated , intelligent, presentable." . " He somehow managed to stay away from the political reality, he is a man with dignity, he preserved his attitude to all Bulgarians and remained impartial".*

Despite his limited powers, the President has a very active position:

*" what he did to return bad laws to be corrected, how he presents Bulgaria abroad, his constant discussions and talks with the government and also the opposition parties".*

**The representative of BSP** defines the institution as *"a beautiful illusion"* and the President himself as *" a populist and demagogue"*.

There are **other extreme opinions** that the Bulgarian President is *" an dummy"*. His high rating is explained with the fact that nothing depends on him.

*" Actually, what the current President does is simply a play. He does not have to fulfill what he has said. This is the easiest way to win support and positive attitude".*

The rating of Parliament as an institution is that:

*" For the timebeing there is nothing better"*

*"It did a lot of work but hastily and some of its laws are bad."*

*" Some legislation is passed but it is constantly being changed. On the whole, the activities of Parliament are characterised by irresponsibility "*

Some of the respondents think that the parliament would be much more effective if it focussed its work on solving the problems in Bulgaria considering their actual priority.

There are much more **extreme oppinions**

*" Bulgarian Parliament is a total absurdity"*

*" We cannot trust people who know they are in power for a few years only and then will be replaced by others. They provide mutual opportunities for enrichment to each other".*

### **Central government**

How it is evaluated can be seen in this opinion:

*" the government started very well but is about to end in a bad way. At the beginning positive steps were taken for achieving financial stability and for the elimination of the need for visas"*

For the **representatives of the executive power** - the government is the engine of changes. The evaluation that dominates is the one that characterises the Prime Minister and government as authoritarian. The opinion about the other representatives of the executive branch is the following :

*" There are one or two of the Ministers that know why they are appointed. One of them is Peter Jotev, who is honest, and the other one is Ivan Neikov who managed to keep things under control"*

The opinion about **local authorities** is that these two are a consequence of what is above them - they are too slow in solving problems. People that hold government positions feel some kind of safety. Various laws about administrative procedures allow them plenty of time to prolong the solution of problems.

**The prevailing opinion** is that it is totally dependent on central government, as a result they are rather slow when they have to make decisions. Local government should be given more powers and the state should withdraw.

#### 4. CIVIL SOCIETY

Major sources of information

According to how frequently they were mentioned the order is the following:

Official documents, shorthand records, different printed materials; contacts with people, personal observations; television; all electronic media, newspapers, internet, radio.

##### *Authenticity and appropriateness*

The basis on which information authenticity is checked is described like this:

*"When the same, or very slightly differing information is received from three different sources, then it is authentic and trustworthy".*

**The most trustworthy sources** mentioned are : the radio, "*because pluralism there is still greater than in TV.*" The one mentioned is Radio Darik. Examples of trustworthiness include several TV programs of the **national TV** - "Ekip 4" and "Panorama" .

There is another opinion mentioned :

*"National television is the official speaker for the government , therefore private televisions are more trustworthy with more authentic information."*

Newspapers mentioned are "Kapital", "Dnevnik"

*"Serious newspapers which do not publish too much gossip. One can find more information and analyses there. There is no political partiality. Lots of opinions can be found without one being imposed on the others."*

##### *Non-governmental Organisations*

There is unanimous opinion that this is the **non-government** sector which is an essential element in the fabric of society and its capacity should be made full use of. In a normal society this sector complements or overtakes to a great extent the functions of the government administration, controls a lot of government bodies and often serves as a catalyst in society .

This sector, which expresses public opinion, has very small influence on the policy of the country or decision-making.

*"They are like traffic lights at a very busy crossroads. NGOs are like the yellow light that appears between the green and the red lights with regards to a specific problem - whether social, economic or any other problem. In most cases the drivers, who concentrate on the red and green, hardly see the yellow light at all. Things go on in the same way".*

The real influence of NGOs is almost none and the sector is defined as "dummy". It is **the strongest** in the capital city. An unpleasant conclusion is reached - that an NGO without a lobby in Parliament is doomed. This is why there is no such sector in the country.

Some respondents rise the question about the connection between those in power and NGOs.

*"There are signs that some institutions are taking over the functions of NGOs. The so called "think-tanks" which became real generators for public opinion are trying to exert influence. What is inevitable with them is that they turn into structures of the political situation - they try to addapt to the needs of the governing party".*

Not many believe **that NGOs can do something sensible**. Most organisations of this kind are formal, only to justify the use of a given sum of money. It is hard to believe that their goals are to achieve some social results, as they claim.

An interviewed **representative of the private sector** has an even more extreme attitude towards the NGO sector - he does not trust them and does not believe how sincere their pronouncements are, he sees them as formal arrangements

*" whose aim is to launder money and which are part of a highly-organised system for manipulating society. Some previously chosen people obtain the right to set up and head such organisations".*

There is an opinion, however, that their role has been growing over the last several years, that they are working, their activities are felt. There are many organisations in a variety of areas, pursuing a variety of goals. Some kind of public formations are developing. The most often mentioned positive examples are the non-profit organisations involved in social work and focusing on groups of people with specific problems. They deal with humanitarian aid mainly.

### **Examples of efficient NGOs:**

Only the following organizations were mentioned more than once: "Open Society" and Center for the Study of Democracy.

**Others** mentioned are: Bulgarian Industrial and Business Association (BIBA) - " they are professionals there", The Chamber of Industry and Commerce; 13 Centuries Bulgaria Fund; the representative offices of German political foundations "Hanz Seigel

and Konrad Adenauer", "Centre for Liberal Strategies", "Future for Bulgaria"; "Euro Roma", Antipoverty Centre, "Democracy and Security" foundations, the Atlantic Club.

**Professional organizations, trade-unions, business organizations:**

Here **negative opinions and distrust** in trade unions in Bulgaria are **predominant**.

The opinion that most of them are very vague about the exact number of their members, the number of people whose interests they protect was expressed.

*"However, it is disputable considering the absence of working economy, the thousands unemployed in the streets; it is a paradox not to have strong professional organizations. If they existed - why is all this?"*

*"Some, such as "Podkrepa" , endeavor to be the constant opposition to everything without presenting specific solutions to problems, while trade unions such as KNSB (Confederation of the Independent Trade-Unions in Bulgaria) grope about on the surface and ponder how to fill the space left for them by the government and "Podkrepa".*

They are believed to be heavily dependent on current interests and highly politically involved. In reality they proved to support current policies and their own leaders instead the interests of the worker. The very fact that we have such low percentage of trade-union formation at a time when people need protection indicates that the trust in such types of organizations has been depleted to a great extend. They simply could not find the right tone in the dialogue with the public.

**Positive examples** of the role of trade unions are **sparse** in the respondents' answers; it is considered that of the whole non-governmental sector only the trade unions and the organizations of the employers have found their place fast. Their activity is deemed as necessary, firmly established part of the overall development of society.

**Specific example** of the protection of the interests of workers in a

given industrial sector are the actions of the trade-unions of the "Balkan" Airlines Company and Sopot machine military works.

*"People trust the trade-unions and if some social or labour disputes occur, the trade unions are thought to have the potential for solving the problem".*

The other positive opinion is about the activity of **business associations**

*"There are some very reliable ones, which try to harmonize the interests of entrepreneurs and succeed in uniting their members and expressing their interests."*

**Religious organizations**

The role of the church in supporting the moral principles of society was emphasized.

*"It is something that comes as an opposition to the situation during socialism".*

The church as an institution is believed to exist but it is distant from the people.

*"Naturally, as everything else in Bulgaria, both Synods went out of their way to put off people and especially young generations from going to church".*

The opinion that Bulgarians are on the whole tolerant to the existence of religious organizations was demonstrated but the freedom given to various religious sects is not accepted.

*"If they exist, they obviously have the right to be registered here but it is not very clear to me if the institutions performing the registration are well informed about their activities".*

Religious organizations are considered to be one of the most self-contained at the moment, one of the most marginal, with the least influence on public life.

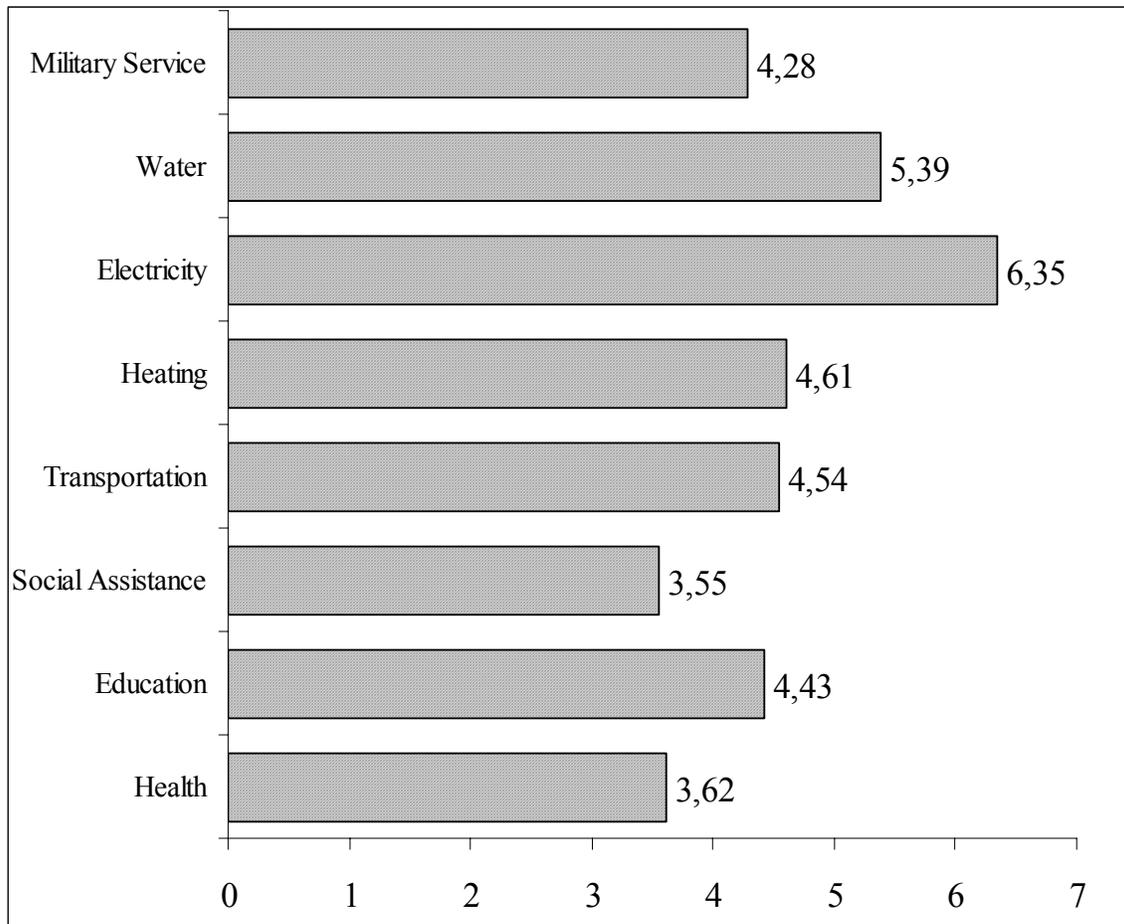
*" I can say this because their existence ( I am talking about the national ones) is hardly noticeable especially in social policy ".*

Attention is also paid to the politicization of the institution.

*"Bulgarian Orthodox Church is known for the interference of politicians in its affairs. But the most indicative thing is that there is no functioning system of values in Bulgaria at the moment. The Church is the last institution that can provide it. The Church in Bulgaria has a negligible percentage of social support."*

## 5. PUBLIC SERVICES

FIGURE 1. MEAN VALUES OF SOCIAL SERVICES



The highest grade of the different social services by the 10 point ranking system is 6, 35 for electrical supply and 5,39 for water supply. All other grades are below the average. Social assistance and health care have the lowest ranking - 3.55 and 3,61 respectively.

The reason for the lowest ranking of **social assistance** is that there is no mechanism for social protection and support of the people in need at the moment.

*"Watching the people who scavenge the garbage bins - I cannot comment favourably on this."*

Other common reasons are that even people who pay their social security contributions regularly cannot in effect benefit efficiently from this health care system.

More often **physicians** are defined as "*wonderful doctors who can competently solve your problem*", but the flings are aimed at the reform ; administrative officials only should not be left to outline the framework of the structural reform in healthcare but a

decision should be reached through discussions in society as a whole - the practising physicians and the patients.

**Public transport** is defined as "*extremely badly organized, inconvenient, dingy, uncomfortable, expensive, etc*".

**Electrical** and **water supply** get an average ranking, because they are regularly provided but are criticized for the high monopolistic prices.

**Education** is commented as

*"having vague concepts on the overall educational design; a lot of private schools, secondary schools, colleges have emerged - some of them with a dubious quality of education."*

The reasons for the low ranking of the **military service** are the decline in the level of training provided to the servicemen, the incidents in the army etc.

**Privatization:**

The effort to privatize public services has been negative for the time being.

*"Obviously we are again blundering with respect to this - instead of borrowing the positive aspects of the established European practices, we are always materializing ideas in such a way that they leads to a negative outcome."*

The opinion that the privatization of the mentioned public services has its positive and negative sides was expressed. It would be a good decision provided the state creates mechanisms for exercising effective control. Otherwise they will be unpredictable. Only after these structures start working properly the advantages of the privatized institutions will become evident. However there should be public or communal services so that people in need or people with less means can use them.

**The opponents of privatization** express the opinion that:

*"there are certain spheres which should remain within the domain of the state."*

➤ In particular **transport** : **public transport should not be** privatized. The same applies for primary education. Even if privatization takes the "right" course, **healthcare** should not be 100% paid . The same can be said to apply for education. Electric supply should be the last to be privatized.

In most cases **privatization** is considered to be the right decision. The question is how exactly privatization is done and what happens during this privatization..

As far as military service is concerned , it should become professional; a small, disciplined, professional army should be created.

## 6. REFORMS

### *Direction*

As far as the **direction** of the reforms is considered, the unequivocal opinion is that as a whole it is **correct since a new type of society with active market economy, up-to-date, efficient legislation** is being pursued, **which consequently will result in advancement of the state and hence in raising the standard of living of the people.** The opinion that market economy and democratic institutions have no alternative is dominant.

**Doubts whether this is the only correct direction** are also voiced. "The only right thing that we have done for the past ten years is that we have been changing instead of standing still. Doubt is instantly expressed:

*"the direction is correct, but the pace with which the reform is being effected is somewhat slow and even sluggish".*

Now we are at a stage when we are mainly experiencing the negative aspects - economic as well as social. This shakes people's faith to some extent.

It is also emphasized that the blueprint is correct but it is obviously being carried out with a lot of detours. Otherwise, the liberalization of life, its democratization is going in the right direction. The protraction of this transition strategy, the dawdling of issues which have been already clarified led to the loss of faith.

Some of the respondents make comments that there has not been any clear idea for the transition strategy declared in public.

There are representatives of the **political elite** who believe that the reforms in the economy do not go in the right direction not because someone misdirects them but because there are objective as well as subjective reasons for this.

*"Unfortunately liquidation, closing down, dismissal are the synonyms of reforms in Bulgaria".*

*"Everything is being destroyed and no one has a conceptual method of creating anything".*

### *The last 10 years*

The interesting thing here is that **most of the representatives of the government, the political elite** and others, were direct participants in the process of accomplishing the reforms and some of their opinions will be simplified if they are merely classified in the categories of "approves", "disapproves" the conducting of the reforms.

A respondent who claims to be one of the founders of the opposition against the Communist Party thinks that at the very beginning of the transition there was no concept of an economic model among the people from the Union of the Democratic Forces.

*"Things then revolved around depoliticizing, the dissolution of the primary party organizations, how to name the head of state - president or presiding officer, things of*

*this sort which were distracting the attention. There was not a clear estimate and no accounts were squared about what resources Bulgaria had. Naturally, such things happen in a major change such as this colossal transition and one cannot expect everything to go smoothly. But it was really a pity to miss the chance for Bulgaria in such a disgraceful way".*

As far as the evaluation of the reforms is concerned, the opinions are not so absolutely unanimous and they tend to split. **Negative evaluation**, from frustration to open castigation and repudiation of everything, **is predominant**.

Respondents share that many hopes have been thwarted for the past ten years. There are very strong pessimistic feelings and no perspective for development here, in the country, is seen.

When an attempt is made to divide the responsibility between the different governments which ruled during these years it is hard to make the distinction if it is assumed that all of them

*" succumbed to one destructive concept which was to a great extent imposed from outside. Absolutely everything was denounced as vestige form the totalitarian regime. This is complete insanity, it is absurd, because you cannot build without foundations. After acknowledging what was left ,a sensible estimation should have been made and havoc avoided."*

A **representative of the non-governmental** sector thinks that there is a great disappointment.

*"The reason - the distortion of the notion of what is personal commitment, personal responsibility of everybody in the course of the reforms. If we expect someone else to make our reforms we shall suffer failures."*

The decade of reforms or transition did not provide the answer to the simple question - What is the target and where does this transition lead to.

A **representative of the mass-media** defines the situation as tragic. "

*"Even if someone had devised a plan for the distraction of the country he would not have had arranged it so brilliantly - to ruin the agriculture and then to start thinking about how to bring it into being again. The same applies to food industry. What is going on with Balkan airlines right now is very indicative of the reforms."*

The gloomy evaluation continues with the statement that the hopes for prosperity and economic development are completely shattered. They are superseded by unpredictability and absolute uncertainty.

According to the **representatives of the government elite** if the accomplishment of the reforms is presented graphically "this will be a zig-zag."

*" All the countries in Central and Eastern Europe or the "excellent students" had only one peak in unemployment - '91 - '92 - simply because they accomplished the restructuring then. Bulgaria has reached such a peak of unemployment three times because of the unwillingness and the lack of courage to carry out the structural*

*reform. Indecision, fear, lack of courage to accomplish the reforms and the illusions that we can escape this is what characterizes the transition in Bulgaria (I do not count the last 3-4 years)".*

This part of **the respondents who are not so foreboding** believe that things have developed for the better. There are some rudiments of market economy but at the same time it is not functioning efficiently.

**The legal reform** is considered to have begun as early as 1990 with the adoption of the new Constitution, and the political reform - with the adoption of some new laws.

*"Actually the reform of the system, the economy, has begun to develop faster only during the administration of the present government. There was stagnation, there was backwards movement".*

According to some respondents' opinions, things advance better with the opening up to the world, with the attempts to be integrated.

*"The ruling government which took all the responsibility and assumed this very onerous task succeeded in convincing the outside world and the Western countries and institutions that Bulgaria really wants to follow the path which other countries have walked along; as a result we were invited in the European structures, then our firm and unequivocal orientation to membership in NATO was also accepted very well."*

**Optimism**, insofar as it is present, is related to the fact that things will advance in a better direction in the near future.

*"And if the standard of living of the average person improves things will become irreversible - they will be, figuratively speaking, both manufacturers and customers of these products."*

TABLE 1. CLASSIFICATION OF THE INSTITUTIONS/GROUPS BY THE DEGREE OF RESPONSIBILITY THEY HAVE FOR CONDUCTING REFORMS

Institution Rank*/Score**	Government	Ruling party	Political class	The population as a whole	President	Foreign powers	Vice-President	Other
I	10	8	2	3	1	0	0	0
Score	140	112	28	42	14	0	0	0
II	6	7	6	2	1	2	0	0
Score	54	63	54	18	9	18	0	0
III	5	5	7	2	3	1	0	1
Score	30	30	42	12	18	6	0	6
IV	0	1	7	6	7	2	1	1
Score	0	5	35	30	35	10	5	5
V	0	2	2	2	9	3	5	2
Score	0	8	8	8	36	12	20	8
VI	1	1	0	5	3	5	10	0
Score	3	3	0	15	9	15	30	0
VII	2	0	0	4	0	12	5	1
Score	4	0	0	8	0	24	10	2
VIII	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Score	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Total score	231	221	167	133	121	85	68	21

\* In rows "Rank" (I ÷ VIII) in each cell the number of respondents, who have ascribed the corresponding rank (I ÷ VIII) to the corresponding institution/group (i1÷i8), (Nx), is written down.

\*\* The score of each institution for each rank is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Rank I} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 14;$$

$$\text{Rank II} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 9;$$

$$\text{Rank III} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 6;$$

$$\text{Rank IV} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 5;$$

$$\text{Rank V} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 4;$$

$$\text{Rank VI} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 3;$$

$$\text{Rank VII} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 2;$$

$$\text{Rank VIII} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 1$$

TABLE 2. CLASSIFICATION OF THE INSTITUTIONS BY THE DEGREE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR REFORMS HAVING GONE NOT AS WELL AS THEY COULD HAVE

Institution Rank*/Score**	Government	Ruling party	Political class	The population as a whole	President	Foreign powers	Vice-President	Other
I	11	6	5	2	0	0	0	0
Score	154	84	70	28	0	0	0	0
II	7	9	6	2	0	0	0	0
Score	63	81	54	18	0	0	0	0
III	4	7	9	1	2	0	0	1
Score	24	42	54	6	12	0	0	6
IV	2	2	2	5	8	5	0	0
Score	10	10	10	25	40	25	0	0
V	0	0	1	5	8	5	4	1
Score	0	0	4	20	32	20	16	4
VI	0	0	1	6	6	1	10	0
Score	0	0	3	18	18	3	30	0
VII	0	0	0	3	0	13	8	0
Score	0	0	0	6	0	26	16	0
VIII	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Score	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Total score	251	217	195	121	102	74	64	11

\* In rows "Rank" (I ÷ VIII) in each cell the number of respondents, who have ascribed the corresponding rank (I ÷ VIII) to the corresponding institution/group (i1 ÷ i8), (Nx), is written down.

\*\* The score of each institution for each rank is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Rank I} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 14;$$

$$\text{Rank II} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 9;$$

$$\text{Rank III} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 6;$$

$$\text{Rank IV} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 5;$$

$$\text{Rank V} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 4;$$

$$\text{Rank VI} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 3;$$

$$\text{Rank VII} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 2;$$

$$\text{Rank VIII} = N_x (i1 \div i8) * 1$$

*Adopting of more authoritarian methods.*

**The prevailing opinion is that the adoption of more authoritarian methods will not lead to a greater success in reforms.**

Strict laws, government administration which observes these laws, and naturally we the people living in this country should obey the laws in order to resolve things in Bulgaria instead of using authoritarian methods.

*"There should be determination on the part of the government but not violence and oppression, but firmness in the attainment of goals, assertion of interests."*

According to a **representatives of the military elite**

*"Political power may be gained by force but you cannot rule with force. Political means should be used and they should be sure that what they do will not lead them to prison for example."*

There are opinions that a more authoritarian version of the reform is hardly possible since we are already witnessing a strong concentration of power.

*" Although the system of administration is authoritarian, it is obvious there are no reforms. What else could be said."*

There is a suggestion for a combined version:

*"Bulgaria probably needs to find a middle course between dictatorship and democracy - if a political figure appears who possesses both the qualities of the dictator and is at the same time a democrat, a reformer. A gradual fusion is necessary - to put to the fore more authoritarian methods of administration at one moment and more moderate forms of administration at another. At the moment what we have is a medieval attempt at dictatorship dependent on the interests of certain well known circles. The interests of the country are pushed to the background."*

There are a couple of supporters of the adoption of such methods which might produce a greater impact.

## 7. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### *Influence of the international institutions over the agenda of our country*

It is generally agreed that the international organizations do have an impact and differences only arise in the way this impact is evaluated.

They are seen to exert a positive influence through our inclusion in various programs, the financing of the respective projects, by providing technical assistance and information about the reforms in other countries. It is believed that since there are definite criteria and requirements for our affiliation with the European Union, it is logical for our plans to comply with these criteria and requirements.

It is further noted that there is a currency board in Bulgaria and that we depend on the loans from the World Bank. Our EU accession is conditional on extensive amendments to

our current legislation, which is being done. The same applies to NATO. Pegging the national currency to the German mark, and now the Euro, has more or less stabilized the U.S. dollar exchange rate and has ensured relative stability of the economic processes.

The greatest hopes for the country's development are said to be pinned on the support of the international institutions. It is possible to negotiate important agreements, mainly related to economic advancement and financial stabilization.

*"But the question is whether this will be done by taking our country's interests into consideration. We should not demonstrate readiness to pay any price but clearly formulate certain conditions ourselves, so as to safeguard our own interests".*

The general opinion is that relations between the international institutions and this country should in any case develop on the basis of mutual regard for our respective interests. Unless we clearly state our own interests we cannot expect an adequate response from the international institutions.

There are respondents who do not consider the influence of the international institutions too favorable:

*"I'll not go as far as saying they are dictating us what to do, but throughout these years Bulgaria has clearly been making a lot of efforts to accommodate those institutions. It's just that we've been in a dependent position and whenever the question would arise why something has been done in a particular way rather than another, the government's response has been – such were the requirements. This is an acknowledgement that many of the things are being dictated from the outside, by international organizations."*

Those who oppose making adjustments to international organizations think that:

*"Had the West envisioned a better fate for Bulgaria, it would have been clear 10 years ago. The West will tolerate anyone, as long as the communists are kept out of government. That seems to be the greatest fear of the West. Look what happened with Yugoslavia and how much money was spent to get Miloshevitch out of the game."*

Furthermore, they believe that the international community is only concerned with its own problems.

*"They don't need Bulgaria. Or rather, their only concern is to make sure another Kosovo-like conflict does not flare up. And when something of the kind happens they come running because they realize things are connected and they're aware of the consequences. And that's when they intervene."*

**TABLE 3. RATING OF THE COUNTRIES/REGIONS DEPENDING ON HOW CLOSE THEY COME TO EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STANDARDS**

Country	Croatia	Bulgaria	Montenegro	Serbia	Romania	Macedonia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Albania	Kosovo
Rank*/Score**									
I	15	9	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Score	225	135	0	0	0	0	15	0	0
II	5	5	6	3	2	0	2	0	0
Score	50	50	60	30	20	0	20	0	0
III	1	8	1	4	3	5	2	0	0
Score	7	56	7	28	21	35	14	0	0
IV	2	0	2	5	5	4	5	1	0
Score	12	0	12	30	30	24	30	6	0
V	0	2	4	4	5	5	1	1	1
Score	0	10	20	20	25	25	5	5	5
VI	0	0	4	3	6	8	2	0	0
Score	0	0	16	12	24	32	8	0	0
VII	0	0	4	1	2	1	5	5	5
Score	0	0	12	3	6	3	15	15	15
VIII	0	1	1	1	0	0	5	11	4
Score	0	2	2	2	0	0	10	22	8
IX	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	6	14
Score	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	6	14
Total score	294	253	129	127	126	119	117	54	42

\* In rows "Rank" (I ÷ IX) in each cell the number of respondents, who have ascribed the corresponding rank (I ÷ IX) to the corresponding country/region (i1 ÷ i9), (Nx), is written down.

\*\* The score of each institution for each rank is calculated as follows:

Rank I = Nx (c1 ÷ c9) \*14;      Rank IV = Nx (c1 ÷ c9)\*5;      Rank VII = Nx (c1 ÷ c9)\*2;  
 Rank II = Nx (c1 ÷ c9) \*9;      Rank V = Nx (c1 ÷ c9)\*4;      Rank VIII VIII = Nx (c1 ÷ c9)\*1  
 Rank III = Nx (c1 ÷ c9)\*6;      Rank VI = Nx (c1 ÷ c9) \*3;      Rank IX = Nx (c1 ÷ c9)\*1

### *Trust in EU*

Regarding the specific international organizations, respondents declare a varying degree of trust. Among those listed, the European Union definitely enjoys the greatest trust.

The European Union is believed to be conceived as an instrument for resolving conflicts and differences. EU could help develop the strategic sectors in this country, it could help establish new environmental standards, as well as new standards in the relations between the political powers.

*"The idea of European integration has imposed changes in the legislation, new contracts have been signed between Bulgarian and foreign companies. All of the bans in force inside the European community have come to apply to us, as well. All the more that the European community has set unconditional terms for our accession – "you will join Europe, but you have to do this or that".*

If Bulgaria is accepted by this organization this would have a great impact. It would open new markets, and there would be some political stability.

EU can increase the subsidies, it can increase the technical assistance to Bulgaria and facilitate our inclusion in international projects that will allow our further development. Those are structural projects that will open up the country and improve communications in the region and with Europe.

*"It can definitely help us solve our economic problems. Once we are a member of EU the difference between the rich countries and the poor will shrink as much as 80%, because they transfuse from the rich to the poor. Portugal and Greece are good examples, they are still getting special aid. I hope this will be an impetus for our economic development. Besides, the present political strife will diminish. Our politicians will have to comply with the common goals and common decisions for the community."*

**The opponents of these views** believe that EU is concerned not so much with *who* wants to join, but *what they are* at the moment. They are led by the idea of gaining control over more countries, rather than the general development of Europe.

There exist certain doubts whether under the circumstances Bulgaria should have been in such a hurry to integrate itself with the European structures. It would have been better to preserve a certain independence.

There are also those who believe that our wish to join Europe is not likely to come true soon. Simply because we are backward in our economic development.

### *The Stability Pact*

**All of the respondents claim to have heard of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.** But when asked for more details, **they find it hard to say what it is** and what kind of projects implement.

What people do know is that this is a framework agreement that has still not been fulfilled, a regional initiative that is not working yet and has not produced any results. An undertaking that clearly does not have serious support from the big countries in Europe.

It is further known that the Stability Pact is intended for the countries in the Balkans with the aim of stabilizing the political situation in this region and that it could help, provided the funds allocated are used for their true purpose and to the benefit of the countries from the region.

Regretfully, **the predominant opinion** is that it constitutes *“something that is much larger on paper than in reality”* and that its overall significance is far smaller than what it should, and could, be.

The **international development programs** could be helpful if they involve large structural and infra-structural projects and have the money. That is when they would be of importance and would in some way further the development of these countries. Working under a common project or under a common aegis, for instance of the Pact, it will be possible to overcome some of the regional disagreements and tensions, to overcome certain anachronisms, to implement a scheme of integration of each country with its neighbors.

In **favorable terms**, the Stability Pact is regarded as a

*“somewhat abridged version of the Marshall Plan, which played its role with respect to Germany after the end of World War II. In our context this would mean bringing in foreign investments and integrating the Balkan economies with the European ones, facilitating their better performance.”*

In **negative terms**, the Pact was seen in the following way:

*"Those are people who get salaries and pensions of 12 to 15,000 dollars, going about and looking self-important. What Stability Pact? Let's launch a few missiles in the direction of Greece and see how they will react then. Those are just superficial, symbolic bodies."*

### *Trust in NATO*

Unlike trust in EU, here opinions are divided, although the supporters once again prevail.

**The realists believe** that our membership implies some pledge of loyalty to NATO as an organization and that it is therefore normal to request from Bulgaria what they would ask

from any other member country. Insofar as Bulgaria would become part of a common strategy for European, and hence world, security perhaps we **will have better guarantees for our national security.**

*"The advantages of NATO membership are stability and security. The very affiliation will reassure the rest of the world that Bulgaria is a stable country. This will lead to greater investment security, which is probably the greatest benefit in this respect. Furthermore, any doubts on the part of Turkey towards us will be dispelled the moment we become part of a collective system of security and defense. In other words, this would also help avert potential conflicts."*

Respondents point out that this is a good way of refurbishing our army. The present state of the army is deemed extremely inadequate so joining NATO is perceived as a salutary move. But we should be aware of the social price of bringing the army up to NATO standards.

Another argument in support was the possibility **to develop high defense technologies** here, which is profitable and would create jobs.

**The supporters of our affiliation** with this bloc believe this is more than necessary since Bulgaria needs a stable partner on a global scale. Left on its own, the country could hardly cope with the problems of the region in which we live.

The **opponents** of affiliation advanced the following arguments:

*"There is still no decision concerning the compensation that we should get for supporting NATO. So Bulgaria has only suffered losses from all these NATO initiatives implicating the region in some way or another. Perhaps the fact that Bulgaria chose to side with NATO did play a role in pushing it a little ahead of Romania in the EU accession process. I don't know if NATO is really going to commit itself with regard to Bulgaria."*

Those that deny the NATO's significance advance the following arguments:

*"We don't need it. Bulgaria can find political solutions to its problems without resorting to external, military power."*

*"Attitudes towards NATO have changed drastically since the conflict in Serbia. The share of people with unconditional trust in NATO goals has declined, while the percentage of the skeptically inclined has increased."*

*"In this case NATO intervention has bred dissension in the Balkans. "I don't think we should welcome this with some kind of admiration since, after all, we are the ones who live in the Balkans. At some point NATO will withdraw but we'll stay here."*

*"NATO's concern for us is really their covert aspiration to dominate the Balkan region. So all that fine talk about security and rearmament can only provoke suspicion and mistrust."*

### ***What could Bulgaria be requested to do if it joins NATO?***

*"To support the common policy of NATO members";*

*"To adhere to the common priorities, the common armament standards"*

*"To cooperate in any undertaking which they deem right but which we may not necessarily consider right ourselves"*

*"To update the equipment, train the army commanders, bring the army up to NATO standards"*

*"To set up NATO military bases, allowing them to establish themselves in the Balkans";*

*"There is not much they can ask. We are a small country, small territory, so I do not see what they could possibly ask".*

*"They don't need military bases here. Who would we attack from these bases? Turkey and Greece are NATO member countries and there are military bases there. They don't need that, they didn't even use the air corridor they requested from us."*

**Respondents do not agree with all the conditions that according to them NATO might set.** Some oppose setting up military bases, and others believe that at some point Bulgarian politicians need to clearly formulate their own position, to state their own terms and demands, and declare exactly what they expect from affiliation with NATO.

Not everyone has a negative attitude to possible NATO requirements. Another perspective on "*relinquishing the national sovereignty*" is compliance with the common rules and the common decisions.

### ***What does regional security imply?***

- Absence of conflicts between the states, no wars, no political conflicts;
- Achieving ethnic tolerance; reducing ethnic tension in the neighboring countries;
- To preserve good neighborly relations and good interrelations within the countries themselves; non-intervention in the countries addressing domestic problems of their own;
- It is by no means just peace and non-military intervention; it is equally a matter of living standards;

*"Security implies the confidence that you're not just living day by day, the confidence to make long-term plans. For instance, that the property you're building or accumulating will not be taken away from you in one way or another. Whether because of a foreign invasion, or an explosion, or fires; security simply implies all that, it's all part of this security".*

### ***Security factors:***

- Good internal relations between the Balkan peoples;

- Balanced foreign policy of the countries in the region – overcoming nationalist aspirations and historically accumulated problems, plus preventive diplomacy;
- The external powers;
- Political stability in the respective countries;
- The economic factor.

## 8. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTITUDES

TABLE 4. ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EEU COUNTRIES.

Country	Country	Number
<b>ALBANIA</b>	• Economic backwardness (misery, poverty, wilderness, chaos, collision )	27
	• Shady deals, Mafia, drug dealing	6
	• Religious fanaticism, Islamic fundamentalism, reticent community	4
<b>BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA</b>	• War, consequences, destruction, Bulgarian contingent	10
	• Progress, Stability, They are developing very well, despite of the problems	5
	• Inter-ethnic relations, Islam, Obscurity	5
	• Patriotism, Love of freedom, The first that that have separated,	3
	• Olympiad in Sarajevo, geographic characteristics	3
	• Good relations	1
<b>ULGARIA</b>	• Desire for progress and improvement of life, desire for conducting reforms and positive changes	16
	• Lack of balance in the transition, disappointment and new hopes	6
	• Painstaking endeavors and failures, corrupted and poor leaders	5
	• Beautiful nature, see and things referring way of life	5

<b>KOSSOVO</b>	• Threat for the region, irreconcilable hostility, weapon, bombings, fear	20
	• Unclear future, instability, poverty	5
	• Hunger for peace and calmness	1
	• The heart of Serbia	1
<b>MACEDONIA</b>	• Beautiful nature, the lake of Ohrid, nice people, Macedonian lass	8
	• Seeking for the way; confusion; slowed down dynamic; they still don't know what they want	7
	• Aspirations to become Europeans; independent; enthusiasts; they work more than we do	6
	• A sister nation; friendly people; good relations; proximity	5
	• Something that they took from us; Bulgaria	2
	• Ethnic instability, underlying nationalism	2
	• Poorer than we are	2
<b>ROMANIA</b>	• Economic wandering; poverty, misery; complex economic and social problems	15
	• Politically unstable; vain efforts, fluctuations between centralism and democracy	6
	• The richest speaking of natural resources, land geographic proximity to Europe; Romanian women	5
	• Tziganes affairs, thefts	3
	• Other (good lobby, calm, competition)	3
<b>SERBIA</b>	• Attempt for developing new economic and national identity; country with great perspectives; Attempt to become Europeans; going out of conflict	13
	• War; chauvinism; nationalism; Miloshevich	8
	• Obscure country, volcano ready to erupt; it never can be known what is going on, burdened economically and politically	7
	• Other (dinar; Kosturitsa, Bregovich)	3

<b>CROATIA</b>	• First successes in a new European space; fast modernizing and transferring into something new; The richest country on the Balkans; the better alternative	19
	• Small, beautiful, ex-republic, Zagreb, the most eastern Catholics	5
	• Don't know it, It is not clear what it has been doing in the last years	2
	• Other (preserved ruins from the war to remind that....)	1
<b>MONTENEGRO</b>	• Looking for independence, step by step reforms, isolated from the central conflicts	7
	• Small country, isolated isle on the Balkans, the beaches of the Adriatic sea, winter resorts	5
	• Possible conflicts, between centralism and democracy	2
	• Don't know it, lacking individuality	2

***How do you see the people's life in the South East European region developing in the next years?***

In this respect the group of the *optimists* is quite large. The expectations are that the changes will be for the better, although the process will be slow and painful.

And this process is expected to be difficult for most of the countries, each of which is overcoming the adverse legacy of the past in its own way and at its own pace.

**The optimistic forecasts** refer to the unfolding of processes that will bring about the more rapid integration of these countries with Western Europe. "South-East Europe will have a place in its own right in a common Europe".

The **pessimistic** ones are associated with continuing conflicts in the Balkans and more specifically, in former Yugoslavia.

TABLE 6. RELATIONS BETWEEN BULGARIANS AND OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS

Ethnic groups	Relations	Number
<b>Bulgarians - Roma</b>	• Extremely negative; antagonistic; no tolerance	13
	• Normal; tolerance; potentially good	5
	• Ambivalent	4
	• Lack of desire to be solved their problems, weak desire of the Bulgarians to integrate them	2
	• To be integrated without assimilating; to be helped to overcome this low level	2
<b>Bulgarians - Turks</b>	• Traditionally; tolerance; tolerance even mutual respect and friendship	22
	• Artificial tension coming from above, no problems among the ordinary people	4
	• Should be very careful with them in order to avoid the Kosovo "alternative"	1
<b>Bulgarians - Jews</b>	• Completely integrated; there is no difference; respect, sympathy	21
	• Business, economic relations	3
<b>Bulgarians-Armenians</b>	• No contradictions; Coalescence of the ethnic groups, well-intentioned, benevolence	23
	• Some of them are criminals	1

### *Sense of belonging to the ethnic group*

The sense of national affiliation is universally shared by the respondents. They point out they are proud and happy to be Bulgarians and these feelings are sustained by:

*"Bulgarian history";*

*"One can live in peace in Bulgaria, "without any special attitude of some of the larger ethnic groups towards me";*

*"the fact that I'm Bulgarian, that I live in Bulgaria and I'm confident that Bulgaria has achieved much and will continue to do so in the future".*

What is more, this sense of belonging does not interfere with good interethnic relations. Everyone has their own self-esteem, based on their own value system.

*"I am happy I am Bulgarian myself, but I don't perceive the rest as second-rate".*

### *Intentions to leave the region/country*

Almost all of the respondents said they had not been making any plans to leave the country, citing the following reasons: because they are attached to their home, the place where they live, their children, their parents.

*“Because I have both my feet on the ground. And I am deeply attached to my country. I don’t think I could ever feel better anywhere else. The right man in the right place, as the saying goes. After all, one always feels best in one’s own country.”*

One of the respondents said he had never seriously considered leaving but that sometimes the idea crosses his mind because of the *“lack of order and clear-cut rules”*.

Only two of the respondents declared their wish to leave the country.

One of them referred to purely economic reasons and the lack of safety.

*“I would like to go somewhere and lecture in some advanced country, because I am fifty – I’m tired of struggling with life”.*

The other one, a representative of an international organization, shared she would like to leave in order to have a better life, a higher standard of living.

## 9. FINAL QUESTIONS

TABLE 7.1 FEARS

№	Fears	Number of cases
1.	<b>Dissatisfaction of the pace of the reform:</b> Fear of reform failure; of restoration of the past; of wasting of the achieved; of isolation	11
2.	<b>Economic instability:</b> Unemployment, low living standard, poor conditions for business	11
3.	<b>Social insecurity:</b> Crime, drugs, chaos, insecurity	9
4.	<b>Fears connected with ethics:</b> Lack of aim, lack of perspective, apathy, fear of dreaming, lack of willingness for including in problem solving processes	7
5.	<b>Political:</b> Conflict between institutions, polarization of social life; ineffective two-party model	6
6.	<b>Demographic:</b> Negative growth of the population; critical level of aged people and pensioners, brain drain abroad	6
7.	<b>Other</b> (unjustified fears)	1

TABLE 7. 2. HOPES

№	Hopes	Number of cases
1.	<b>Continuation of reforms</b> Support and help from the EU and NATO; to catch up with the European countries	16
2.	<b>Related to Economy</b> Improvement of living standard, restoration of production, high-tech development	
3.	<b>Mobilization of personal efforts</b> Increase of the entrepreneurship, hope in new generations, formation of elite, strengthen of the civil society	9
4.	<b>Political</b> Struggles to stop, to find / elect the right, appropriate leaders, recognition of the Bulgarian Socialist Party from Europe	4
5.	<b>Pessimistic</b> (blighted hopes)	4