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THE MISSING INCENTIVE: CORRUPTION, ANTICORRUPTION, AND REELECTION

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**PLENUM 1: DAS ANTI-KORRUPTIONS-BÜNDNIS UND DIE RENAISSANCE DER
BÜRGERLICHEN ÖFFENTLICHKEIT – EIN MODERNER KREUZZUG ZUR
MORALISIERUNG VON POLITIK UND GESELLSCHAFT?**

Anticorruption campaigns in post-communist democracies are running out of steam. There is a silent consensus that the war on corruption has failed to obtain the expected results.

"Do democratic governments in post-communist Eastern Europe have incentives to launch anticorruption campaigns?" is the question that really interested us. That is why the current failure of the anticorruption programs has contributed to the lack of political will and to the institutional weakness of the governments in transition countries. The possibility that uncorrupt governments do not have incentives to launch anticorruption campaigns was never discussed. The present paper tests that silent assumption. The result was unexpected: it turned out that translating successful anticorruption policies into electoral advantage is a principal difficulty. The launching of anticorruption campaigns does not improve the reelection chances of the government.

The interpretation of the dynamics of the politics of corruption perceptions in Bulgaria invites unexpected conclusions. The findings of this paper could be read simply as a Bulgarian pathology. It could be read as an example of the particular nature of corruption perceptions in the transition countries. But they could also be viewed as an example of a general problem with anticorruption politics. The findings of the paper suggest that it would be more productive to pursue anticorruption policies avoiding anticorruption rhetoric as a major instrument for justifying reform policies.