

## SOCIOLOGICAL PROGRAM

In 2022, the Sociological Program focused its work on the following areas:

- **Migrant integration and prediction of migration flows.** In the context of the war in Ukraine, the Sociological Program continued its involvement in activities aiming to predict migration flows and provide successful migrant integration.
- **Social inclusion of vulnerable groups.** CSD produced policy analyses and practical measures to support the prevention and reduction of gender-based violence. Additionally, CSD studied how national legislative practices in EU Member States align with the EU legislation in the fight against racism and xenophobia. This resulted in an analysis on policy interventions targeting youth who are not in employment, education, or training in Bulgaria.
- **Governance of religious diversity and preventing religiously motivated radicalisation.** Continuing its work on the topic, the Sociological Program prepared analyses and recommendations on how governments can prevent religiously inspired radicalisation through specific approaches to managing religion. This also contributed to knowledge development on state–religion relations through an analysis of typologies on the governance of religion in Southeast Europe.
- **Energy citizenship and energy democracy.** CSD laid the foundation of an international interdisciplinary Policy Advisory Group in support of energy citizenship in the EU and organised a Citizen Action Lab to encourage energy citizenship among women in Bulgaria.

## I. Migration, integration and prediction of migrant flows

War, violence, human rights abuses, and natural and man-made disasters, as well as various individual factors, will continue to influence how people move: whether forcibly displaced, seeking international protection or aspiring to improved livelihoods for themselves and their families. Advancements in technology and communication, climate change, and the increasing global polarisation of thought and belief are some of the phenomena that not only impact migratory movements, but also increase the demand for innovative, effective, and rights-compliant solutions that help governments and societies manage migration and aid those in need. Such solutions should be conceived, developed, and implemented in full compliance with the foundational values of the European Union – including respect for dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, democracy and the rule of law.

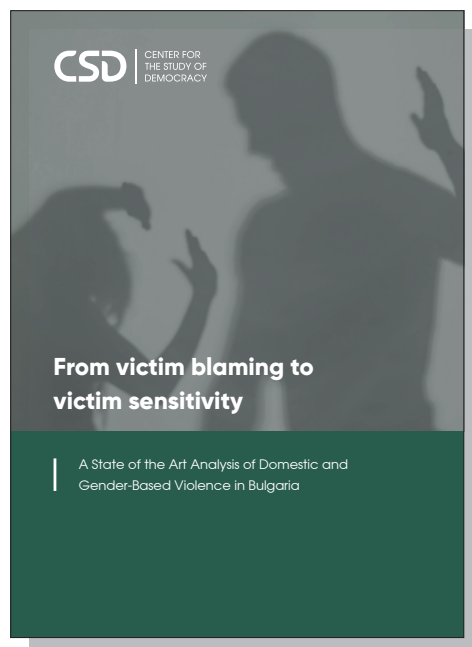
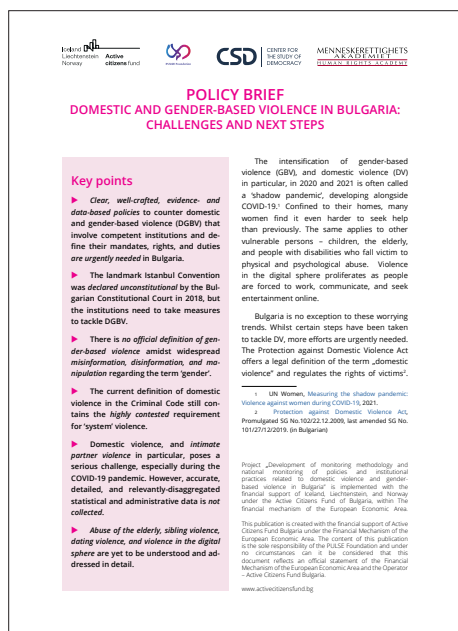
These are some of the key takeaways from an international policy conference, which took place in Brussels and online on 21–22 June 2022 and was co-organised by the Center for the Study of Democracy and the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS). During the two-day event, policy-makers at the national and EU level, civil society representatives, journalists, and researchers were engaged in productive dialogue regarding innovative tools and comprehensive measures for migration and asylum reception and management.

## II. Social inclusion of vulnerable groups

In 2022, CSD co-authored the report *From Victim Blaming to Victim Sensitivity: A State of the Art Analysis of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence in Bulgaria*. It presents the results of the first piloting of a new bespoke policy tool – *the Methodology for Monitoring Policy and Insti-*



*CSD's Gergana Tzvetkova (first from the right) delivers the conference's concluding remarks.*



tutional Practice in Relation to Domestic and Gender-Based Violence. The report is accompanied by a *policy brief* that un-

derscores the need for meaningful and comprehensive policies and practices to counter this type of violence. One of the



*Piloting of the training curriculum for human resource specialists in the Bulgarian public administration*

brief's key recommendations calls for a detailed centralised register of cases, victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, while another highlights the need for establishing technologically advanced and widely-accessible reporting services for victims and individuals with knowledge about victims.

A new initiative was launched to train human resource (HR) specialists in the Bulgarian public administration on how to identify, refer, and support victims of domestic violence among their designated workforce. This continued CSD's years-long efforts in contributing to ending gender-based violence in Bulgaria. In coordinating the work on an awareness-raising training program for HRs, the Sociological Program demonstrated how research institutions can contribute to raising the capacity of various professionals to protect vulnerable and abused individuals. CSD successfully piloted the training program among a pool of participants from eight different public bodies, and formulated an advanced

version of the training curriculum. The program is intended as a best practice example of key guidelines and practical measures to prevent domestic violence and support victims' reintegration in Bulgarian society.

In 2022, CSD also focused on [analysis related to NEETs](#) (youths who are not in employment, education or training) above the age of 25. Having entered the labor market after the economic crisis of 2008, so-called millennials have experienced unprecedented obstacles to employment and successful economic integration across the EU. However, millennials aged 25–35 are a systematically underrepresented group in interventions and research efforts in EU Member States. Special efforts were focused on the evaluation of the policy framework in Bulgaria, reviewing existing programs in the country to support this target group and produce a critical evaluation of a state-funded initiative for the economic integration of these youths in Bulgaria. In preparation for this upcoming evaluation, CSD conducted a number of studies to analyse existing interventions. First, CSD analysed the profile of NEETs in Bulgaria, leading to the conclusion that Bulgarian NEETs come mostly from ethnic minority groups and reside predominantly in poor, rural areas. Next, CSD discovered that Bulgaria lacks strategic documents and legislation addressing the issues of this target group. Finally, CSD created an archive of national and EU-funded initiatives supporting youth employment in Bulgaria and carefully analysed the existing evaluations of these initiatives.

Racism, xenophobia and racial discrimination were another focus of the work of the Sociological Program in 2022. CSD contributed to a European Parliament [study](#) on protections against racial discrimination and xenophobia and assessed the effectiveness of the national



legislation of Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania in supporting the implementation of the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan. Existing issues of racism and anti-gypsyism in these EU Member States have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Notable progress in the implementation of national anti-racism legislation, and the closing of legislative and policy gaps remains stalled for now.

### III. Governance of religion and preventing religiously-motivated radicalisation

Issues related to the connection between the governance of religion and religiously inspired radicalisation remained on the research agenda of the Sociological Program. The risk factors for radicalisation in three Southeast European countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Bulgaria – were studied in depth. Among these factors are unequal treatment of religious minorities in government funding, perceptions of discrimination against certain religious minorities by the state, increased government restrictions on religion, treatment of some religious minorities as a security risk, societal mistrust and instances of hate crimes against religious minority groups.

The presence of such risk factors requires specific policy responses from state authorities, local religious organisations and EU institutions, based on an understanding of the links between the governance of religious diversity and religiously motivated radicalisation. In support of such prevention efforts, CSD designed a set of policy [recommendations](#) for these stakeholders.

A collaborative effort with leading religion experts from Europe and Canada focused on the typologies of governance of religion in Southern and Southeast



Europe. An in-depth [study](#) demonstrated that despite existing differences in the regimes of state-religion relations in these countries, they all share a common legislative trend to support freedom of religion and toleration of all religions. In some of these states, however, legislation and actual policy practices diverge.

### IV. Energy citizenship and energy democracy

Against the backdrop of the energy crisis in Europe and concerns regarding heavy dependence on Russian gas and oil, increasing energy self-reliance remains a critical task on the agendas of policy-makers. In 2022, CSD continued to support EU efforts aimed at encouraging citizens to become prosumers, i.e. to gain energy independence by generating their own energy. The Center contributed to fostering active citizen participation in the energy system by setting up an international interdisci-

plinary Policy Advisory Group which works to enhance the policy relevance and applicability of international studies on energy citizenship and energy democracy.

The **Citizen Action Lab**, held in the Northern Bulgarian town of Belene in October 2022, explored the potential for energy citizenship among local women. Participants engaged in group discussions on the role of energy in their lives, their level of acceptance of low-carbon technologies, and their attitudes towards the creation of an energy community as a way of addressing energy poverty in the community and region. During anal-

ysis of the Lab's results, CSD discovered that the participants demonstrated a lively interest in energy matters and active involvement in energy-related decision-making in their households. Nonetheless, energy citizenship among the participants was generally confined to the individual level and there were few examples of collective efforts directed at increasing energy efficiency or taking up renewable energy technologies. Barriers to active citizen engagement, particularly through the establishment of renewable energy communities, included burdensome administrative procedures, limited information, and insufficient financial resources.



*Women from the town of Belene and the region during a Citizen Action Lab organised by CSD, 20 October 2022*