



GREASE

Religion, Diversity
and Radicalisation

Online Workshop

Governance of Religion and Violent Radicalisation in Eastern Europe

2 June 2021

Online - Zoom - 9.30- 11.00 CEST

A regional workshop from the GREASE research project organised by the Center for the Study of Democracy

Languages: English & Bulgarian (audio translation service provided)

Introduction

Background

The end of Communism marked a changing role of religion in the countries of Central Eastern, South Eastern and East Eastern Europe¹. In contrast to their atheist nature during Communism, these countries have largely embraced a stronger focus on religious affiliation, though mainly in the framework of pronouncedly secular systems of state-religion relations. Recently, the role of religion in the region has become even more significant, be it through its instrumentalization to achieve EU-accession goals or as an ideological tool to consolidate political power internally. In the complex reality of rising nationalism bordering on xenophobia – and attacks on vulnerable religious minorities in some of these countries – governing religion and religious diversity has become an important task on the political agenda. To further complicate things, parallel processes of radicalisation, some of them violent, have marked the post-Communist reality in some of these states. Policy and public debates around counter-terrorism measures and security-led responses to the perceived threat of violent radicalisation risk amplifying diversity challenges, including ethno-religious ones. Such dynamics raise important questions. Among them:

Workshop Focus

- What is the relationship between religion and the management of religion on the one hand, and processes of radicalisation and violent extremism on the other?
- And how can policies aimed at countering violent extremism in the region avoid exacerbating problems related to diversity management?



Programme

Opening

Dr. Liliya Yakova | Director, Sociological Program, Center for the Study of Democracy

Rositsa Dzhekova | Director, Security Program, Center for the Study of Democracy

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Sub-Regional Perspectives on Religion and Violent Radicalisation

Perspectives on the North Caucasus

Dr. Ekaterina Sokirianskaia | Director, Conflict Analysis and Prevention Centre, Russia

Perspectives on Bulgaria

Prof. Dr. Evgenia Ivanova | Department of Political Science, New Bulgarian University, Bulgaria

Perspectives on Central Eastern Europe

Prof. Dr. Egdūnas Račius | Department of Area Studies, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

Perspectives on the Western Balkans

Prof. Dr. Sead Turčalo | Associate Professor, Department of Peace and Security Studies, Dean of Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Discussion