# Sociological program

In 2020, the Sociological Program focused its work on the following areas:

- **Integration of migrants.** To address the challenges of managing migration flows in the European Union, the Sociological Program has been engaged in efforts to provide policy solutions for forecasting migration and integrating refugees and asylum-seekers to minimise social tension and conflict. Alongside this, CSD has also been contributing to the creation and implementation of a novel ICT tool designed to facilitate the reception, relocation, settlement and integration of migrants.

- **Social inclusion of vulnerable groups.** Acknowledging the importance of the full public inclusion of vulnerable and systemically marginalised groups, the Sociological Program conducted a study to assess the disinformation campaigns and fake news concerning the Roma ethnic community in Bulgaria. Additionally, in contribution to efforts for the full and unqualified enjoyment of women's rights in 2020, a cutting-edge monitoring tool for critical assessment of Bulgarian efforts to prevent and counteract domestic and gender-based violence was conceptualised.

- **Radicalisation leading to terrorism and group-focused enmity.** CSD's ongoing collaboration with a global network of partners on the issues of governing religious diversity and building resilience to violent religious radicalisation has resulted in the development of a comprehensive indicators toolkit applied in 23 countries, a comparative analysis uncovering major structural factors and divergences between policy and practice, as well as a collection of best practices on building resilience. Group-focused enmity, engaging stakeholders in constructive dialogue and identifying promising practices to combat intolerance, hatred and discrimination in Central and Eastern Europe continued being key research areas in 2020.

## I. Integration of migrants

In September 2020, as part of the ITFLOWS initiative CSD joined a large multidisciplinary international team of academic institutions, non-profit organisations and companies tasked with developing and testing an ICT-enabled tool to map models of migration. This will not only enhance understanding about the motivations and reasons behind global migration, but also will help reduce possible tensions and conflicts between the migrants and the citizens of the destination countries. The ICT-tool is expected to also facilitate the reception, relocation, settlement and integration of migrants by coordinating the activities of a small group of policy experts and relying on the findings and results of the tool's testing. CSD has been working towards the formulation of recommendations and good practices for policy-makers, national governments and EU institutions.

## PREDICTING AND MANAGING MIGRATION FLOWS

In five steps:

Making accurate models and predictions on migration in the European Union

Creating an ICT-based tool for municipalities and civil society organisations

Providing policy solutions for the management irregular arrivals and asylum systems in the EU

Minimizing potential risks of tension and conflict between migrants and EU citizens

Providing policy solutions for optimizing integration of refugees in the European Union

## II. Social inclusion of vulnerable groups

In order to contribute to the efforts for public inclusion of vulnerable and systemically misrepresented groups, CSD worked on assessing and analysing the disinformation campaigns and fake news concerning the Roma community in Bulgaria. The study reveals that the social and economic crisis which stemmed from the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the underlying mechanisms for media hostility against

**Popularising Fake News among the Roma**

## FAKE NEWS
### TOOLS AND NARRATIVES

**CREATED SENSE OF AN IMMINENT THREAT**

"COVID-19 is made up as a fake excuse to limit people's freedoms and liberties!"

**ESTABLISHED IMAGE OF A FAR-AWAY AND UNFAMILIAR ENEMY**

"Bill Gates is a powerful billionaire, who wants to control the world's population by implanting microchips."

**COMPREHENSIVE STORY-TELLING MATCHING PEOPLE'S LIVED REALITY**

"Mandatory vaccinations will be forced upon the population by the corrupt government to tamper with people's liberty!"

**A SURGE OF GRADUALLY DISSEMINATED STORIES**

"Vaccinations will be executed forcefully - just like children are taken away from their parents by the Social Services."

"MOST OF THE INFORMATION IN SOME RANDOM SITES IS JUST A LIE THAT AIMS TO INTIMIDATE PEOPLE AND MAKE THEM EVEN MORE AFRAID"
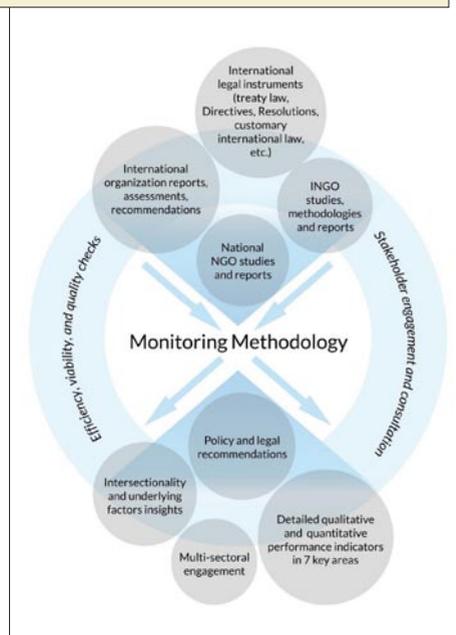
HEALTH MEDIATOR, LOM

the Roma community. The health crisis has provided the tools for reassertion of already existent stereotypes into media storytelling approaches, which disproportionately blame the Roma communities for the negative economic and public health consequences of the pandemic. The ambiguous handling of the public emergency situation led to the dissemination of fake news, disinformation and conspiracy theories, which gained popularity among members of the Roma communities.

CSD's study concludes that the main effort to challenge disinformation and media hostility in the Roma community rests on the shoulders of Roma activists and health mediators, who have been a reconciling force and channel for institutional relations. The findings of this study are intended to guide future efforts in building Roma people's media and online literacy. Fostering critical thinking and empowering the members of ethnic minorities to be self-sufficient in navigating pools of conflicting information is considered a foundational step in challenging fake news and Roma people's exclusion from public media spaces.

In 2020, violence against women (VAW) continued to be a headline topic for many an international and national organisations working with women or on issues related to the full and unqualified enjoyment of women's rights. Acknowledging the worrying tendencies in this area, namely the lack of sufficient progress in safeguarding women and girls from violence globally, regionally, and locally, alongside the 2019 decision of the Bulgarian Constitutional Court to declare the Council of Europe *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence* (the Istanbul Convention) unconstitutional, and the persisting inability of the criminal justice sys-

tem to effectively address the severity of violence against women nationally, CSD has aimed to contribute to efforts for effectively preventing violence and guaranteeing victims' rights. Upon the backdrop of the Bulgarian and Norwegian legal and policy framework, governing the prevention of domestic violence and the protection of women – victims of violence, the CSD team, together with practitioner organisations from Bulgaria and Norway, laid the foundations of a novel, comprehensive, and deep-reaching methodological tool for assessing the effectiveness, appropriateness, scope and reach of the Bulgarian legal framework, strategic documents and institutional practices in dealing with domestic and gender-based violence.



**Monitoring Methodology Inputs and Outputs**

The Methodology has its roots in a considerable number of international legal instruments, international organisa-

tions' recommendations, progress reports and assessments of Bulgaria, relevant NGO studies, research initiatives, and human rights monitoring methodologies, as well as independently developed indicators on the effectiveness of the police and the judiciary in addressing cases of domestic and gender-based violence. It provides guidance on assessing the compliance of legal instruments, policies and institutional practices with applicable international obligations and standards, particularly regarding the extent to which they meet the needs of the victims. Thus, the overall objective of this endeavor is to create a robust tool fit for recurring critical assessment of the improvements and challenges within the Bulgarian legal/policy framework and institutional practice in addressing domestic and gender-based violence, and for yielding key recommendations for policy-makers and legislators in line with both legal and political international obligations. A resume of the tool was published in *Methodology for Monitoring Policy and Institutional Practice in Relation to Domestic and Gender-Based Violence in Bulgaria*.

## III. Radicalisation leading to terrorism and group-focused enmity

Over the course of 2020, CSD continued its collaboration with a network of partners from across the world (Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and Asia-Pacific) in developing analyses and policy-relevant instruments concerning the management of religion and religious diversity, and building resilience against violent religious radicalisation. CSD designed and developed a *State-Religion Governance Indicators Toolkit* to measure four sets of variables which can be applied to any country: (1) level of autonomy and freedom of

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**Comparative analysis insights**

1. In the majority of the country cases, legislative frameworks may encourage independence and freedom of religious institutions/groups from the state. However, such expectations are not always met in practical reality. Similar is the situation when it comes to the level of rights of religious minority groups in the country cases – legislation across most of the assessed states argues for more rights than religious minorities enjoy in practice. Out of all countries in the study, Italy, Spain, Morocco, Russia and Malaysia are reportedly characterised by the lowest levels of actual rights of religious minority groups.

2. In terms of existing structural drivers shaping radicalisation in the country cases (such as state of civil liberties, human rights protection, level of adherence to the rule of law, level of state illegitimacy, government restrictions on religion, wealth disparity, uneven economic growth), Turkey and Russia score the highest levels of government restrictions on religion, level of restrictions on civil liberties and human rights, as well as high levels of group grievances. Following Russia and Turkey are countries from the MENA region (Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon) and countries from South and Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, India).

## Comparative analysis insights (continued)

3. In terms of perception-based factors contextualising radicalisation (i.e., the social experience and interpretation of structural and material conditions), the data indicate that:

   a. Political and economic grievances are the highest in Lebanon and Tunisia, and Greece in Europe, followed by Western Balkan countries. Such grievances are generally lower in the Asia and Asia-Pacific region.

   b. Perception of threat of violent extremism is high across all regions in the sample. For Lebanon, Indonesia, France and Belgium, over 80% of the population perceive ISIS as a major threat or think that terrorism/violent extremism is a big concern.

4. In terms of the incidence and impact of terrorism over the past 5 years, the highest ranking country cases are Egypt, India, Turkey, Lebanon, France, the UK and Russia.

5. Results on the comprehensiveness of preventing and countering violent extremism frameworks show that out of the country sample the most consistent strategic policy and legal framework approach is present in Belgium, France, Germany, the UK and Australia, whereas Lithuania, Slovakia and Hungary completely lack a dedicated strategy to prevent and counter violent radicalisation and extremism.
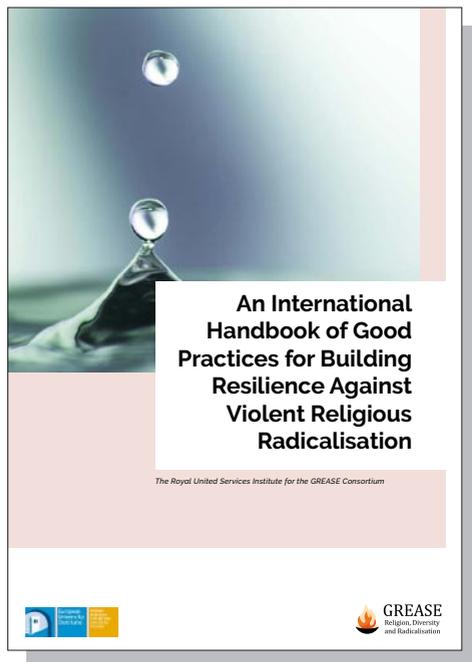
religious institutions/groups from the state, (2) status/rights of religious minority groups in the state, (3) factors contextualising violent (religious) radicalisation, and (4) level of radicalisation prevention measures. CSD piloted the Toolkit and based on it, together with its network of partners, developed country assessments for 23 country cases from around the world (Albania, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, Morocco, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Kingdom). CSD produced comparative analyses on the four sets of variables.

On 23 and 29 September 2020, the CSD team presented the Toolkit and the results from its application at two international events which engaged a variety of stakeholders including members of the European Commission, the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), the Migration Policy Group in Brussels, the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Department of the Government of Canada, as well as members of the academic and practitioner community from around the world.
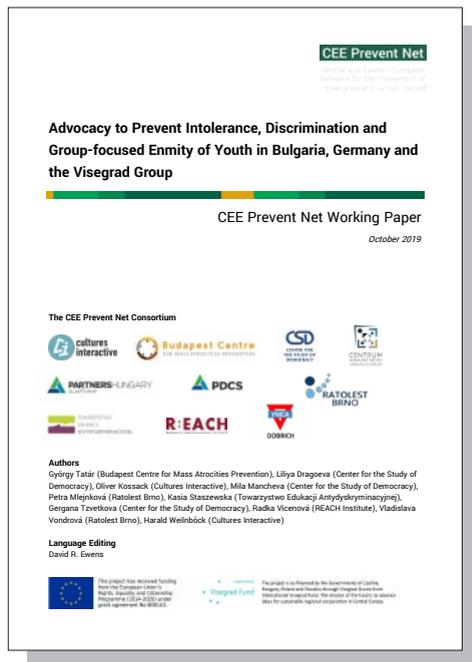
CSD was also instrumental in the development of *An International Handbook of Good Practices for Building Resilience Against Violent Religious Radicalisation*.

The Handbook was developed by the Royal United Services Institute within the framework of the GREASE initiative and features findings from case studies on resilience building against violent (religious) radicalisation from around
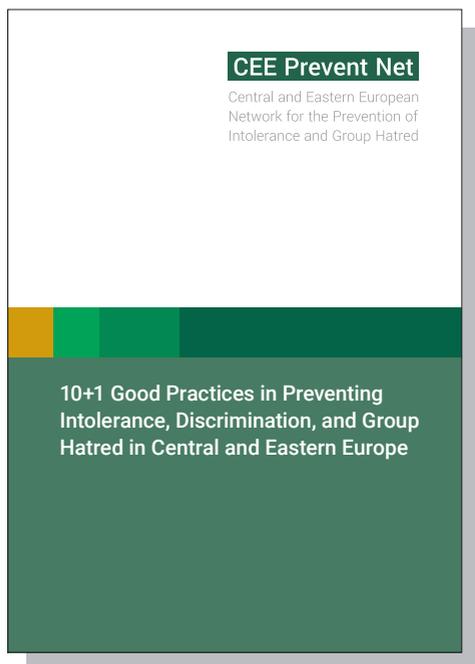
the world, also presenting a set of recommendations and good practices in this area. Among the building blocks of the Handbook are the recommendations and analyses produced by CSD on resilience building against radicalisation and violent extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

To further its efforts on countering polarisation and radicalisation, CSD continued to promote and present the working paper *Advocacy to Prevent Intolerance, Discrimination and Group-focused Enmity of Youth in Bulgaria, Germany and the Visegrad Group*, co-authored with non-profit organisations and institutes from Central and Eastern Europe. The paper offers strategies for practitioners and civil society to engage in political advocacy to prevent intolerance, discrimination and group hatred among youth. Recommendations focus on the most suitable language to be used for advocacy, the need to build robust networks and coalitions and the challeng-

es of advocacy under unfavorable conditions. Insights from the paper were presented and discussed at length during an advocacy workshop, led by the CSD team, which took place on 10 September 2020. The workshop was attended by teachers, psychologists, NGO youth workers, and representatives of local institutions in the Dobrich region, Bulgaria.

The Center further participated in compiling the compendium *10+1 Good Practices in Preventing Intolerance, Discrimination, and Group Hatred in Central and Eastern Europe*. It resulted from the dynamic exchange of ideas, practices, and methods among various organisations and civil society actors from Central and Eastern Europe. Among the compendium entries is the Cyberscout Training Program, developed and implemented by the Applied Research and Communications Fund. Its mission is to create a community of cyberscout children, who demonstrate self-aware,

**CEE Prevent Net**

Central and Eastern European
Network for the Prevention of
Intolerance and Group Hatred

**10+1 Good Practices in Preventing
Intolerance, Discrimination, and Group
Hatred in Central and Eastern Europe**

responsible, and safe online behavior
and popularise it among their peer
groups.