

# Introduction

The global crisis that the pandemic caused in 2020 was also the core issue of 2021, and the new normal of working at the office alongside working from home is apparently here to stay. With a lot of resilience, CSD continued to work in this hybrid format in a number of key areas:

- countering corruption and state capture, especially in the Western Balkans by establishing a new regional good governance platform, and across Europe by applying state capture monitoring instruments at the sectoral level; further analysing authoritarian economic and media influence;
- prioritising energy governance, energy security and green transition and charting paths to a low-carbon future in the current policy debates in Europe;
- providing assessments of organised crime risks in emerging markets, countering radicalisation among youth and right-wing extremism;
- promoting fundamental rights and equality, integration of migrants, diversity and social inclusion; assessing the influence of technology and social media platforms on human rights, the quality of public debate and democracy.

For over 20 years, CSD focused on coalition building and monitoring to counter corruption – both administrative and political. *Clean Future* – the Anti-Corruption Action Plan adopted in 1998, gained credit and was used in other countries as a model for mapping out national anti-corruption priorities. At that time, the Bulgarian anti-corruption plan was considered the most comprehensive and ambitious document of its kind. The SELDI initiative, established in 1999 and successfully functioning up to the present day, applied this approach and the corruption monitoring instruments (followed by tools to monitor anti-corruption policies and measures) in the region of Southeast Europe. The *Corruption Monitoring System* (CMS) was acknowledged as the best national-level CMS and included in the United Nations anticorruption toolkit. In 2003, a CSD representative took part in the high-level political signing conference for the United Nations Convention against Corruption, where CSD's experience was showcased. In the last 5–6 years, the Center has focused its efforts on tackling political corruption and its most treacherous manifestation – state capture, which is institutionalised political corruption. Once again, CSD developed and piloted in a number of European countries an innovative instrument for measuring state capture – the *State Capture Assessment Diagnostics*.

This is the reason CSD is extremely content that 2021 became a turning point in the development and implementation of a global policy response to corruption. This endeavour was led internationally by the USA, who established the fight against corruption as a core U. S. national security interest. More comprehensive anti-corruption measures and policies began to emerge also in the EU. This makes us truly hopeful that the joint efforts of governments and civil society will be able to effectively rein in corruption and transnational organised crime and reverse the rise of authoritarianism and the erosion of democracy.



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