

# Introduction

CSD's work during the past year was inextricably linked to the ongoing policy debate over Europe and the West's response to Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, and the question of how to mitigate its effects on both a European and a global scale.

The Kremlin is undermining Europe's ability to form a unified response to its aggression by making full use of its most powerful foreign policy weapon – energy. European leaders can no longer turn a blind eye to the region's excessive dependence on Russian fossil fuels and the Kremlin's increasingly brazen energy blackmail. CSD expanded its efforts to expose the Kremlin Playbook on energy and the oligarchic networks of state capture, illicit finance, disinformation, and strategic corruption that have enabled Russia's weaponisation of energy. In 2022, CSD rolled out the Energy and Climate Security Risk Index, a powerful practical tool to align Euro-Atlantic policies and aid the creation of a true European energy union which addresses EU Member States' main energy and climate vulnerabilities. CSD has engaged policy-makers in Brussels, Berlin, Rome, Sofia, and Southeast Europe, with the goal of better defining national and regional policy priorities that will help loosen Russia's geoeconomic grip in Europe. Achieving this decoupling will only be possible with the smart acceleration of Europe's green transition, though; to this end, CSD has already provided data-driven solutions detailing how short-term energy security concerns necessitating traditional energy responses can be aligned with long-term transition priorities. In Bulgaria and Romania, CSD has championed the development and promotion of offshore wind energy, which can have a significant positive effect on energy security.

Of course, none of these goals will be met if Europe does not continue the fight against state capture, both internally, in its immediate neighborhood in the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership, and globally. It is CSD's hope that the practical recommendations and tools it has already developed for this purpose, most notably the State Capture Assessment Diagnostics (SCAD), will continue to inform the anti-corruption policy debate and accelerate transformations towards better governance in Europe.

Delivering on the promise of a rule-based democratic transition in the Western Balkans, Ukraine, and Moldova will be critical for asserting the EU's status as a global geopolitical player, and in line with this goal, CSD has continued to press forward with public-private partnership solutions for better governance in Southeast Europe. Throughout 2022, CSD worked with partners from civil society and the government to develop joint solutions for attracting constructive capital to Bulgaria and North Macedonia; ultimately, this influx of capital will increase prosperity for citizens of both countries and strengthen EU and NATO economic security.

Europe's future is at stake in Ukraine. The Kremlin's unprovoked assault on Kyiv has reminded us of the importance of fundamental democratic values, and how they underpin Europe's transformational power. CSD will continue its efforts to uphold fundamental rights for the most vulnerable groups: victims of crime, migrants, women, and any other communities targeted by discrimination and prejudice.



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