

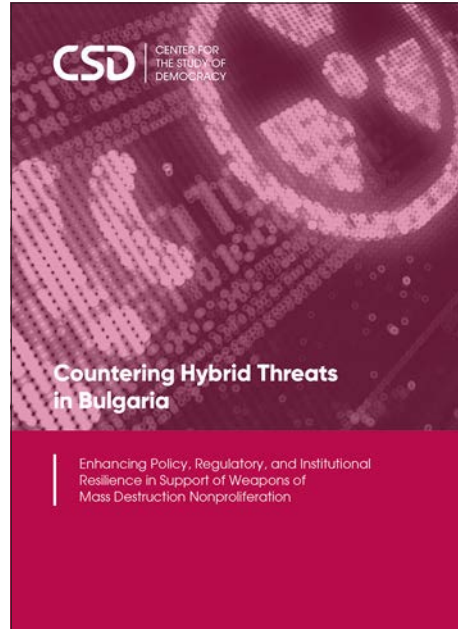
Law Program

In 2023, the Law Program focused its efforts in four domains: good governance, justice and security, legal empowerment and capacity building, equality and diversity, and fundamental rights.

- **Good governance, justice and security.** Work focused on strengthening the capacity of judicial and law-enforcement services for countering and responding to malign interference, including chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats. Steps were also taken to promote the introduction and implementation of safeguards to protect whistleblowers.
- **Legal empowerment and capacity building.** CSD's capacity building activities encompassed training prison and probation service staff on working with convicted children, educating HR specialists from the public administration on identifying and supporting victims of domestic and gender-based violence, assisting Greek and Cypriot judges and prosecutors in developing a training curriculum on child-friendly justice, and training lawyers on the EU rule of law acquis.
- **Equality and diversity.** As a founding signatory of the Bulgarian Diversity Charter, CSD continued to promote the values of diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I). In addition to ongoing efforts to attract new signatories to the Charter and promote its activities at the national and international level, the Center started exploring new dimensions of DE&I management focusing on inclusive communication in corporate environments.
- **Fundamental rights.** As a member of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency's network FRANET, CSD supported the Agency in its studies on national child protection systems, fundamental rights of children displaced in Bulgaria following the Russian war of aggression, investigations of fundamental rights violations and criminal offences at the borders, political participation of persons with disabilities, and fundamental rights situation of displaced persons from Ukraine and asylum seekers and migrants coming along the Western Balkan route and from Belarus.

I. Good governance, justice and security

CSD expanded its research and analysis of foreign malign interference focusing on coercive and subversive activities that involve the misuse of hard-to-detect chemical, biological, radioactive, and nuclear materials and related information. CSD held an expert-level national workshop that gathered law-enforcement, criminal justice, defence, and foreign policy practitioners, as well as academia and civil society experts. The event mapped the prerequisite infrastructure and capabilities for **implementing an integrated approach to countering hybrid threats in Bulgaria**. CSD's analytical study on reinforcing the norms and institutions against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) helped the development of a national framework for enhancing resilience against malign interference.



(L-R): CSD Senior Analyst Dr. Tatyana Novosiolova, Dr. Velizar Shalamanov, Institute of Information and Communication Technologies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and CSD Law Program Director Dimitar Markov at the national workshop “Integrated Approach for Countering Hybrid Threats in Bulgaria”, Sofia, 28 June 2023

In July 2023 CSD, in collaboration with the NATO Center of Excellence on Crisis Management and Disaster Response (CMDR), delivered an international pilot training course on cognitive warfare. The course featured a [practical exercise](#) on countering WMD-related disinformation.

In partnership with New Strategy Center, Romania, CSD organised an international conference on [countering WMD hybrid threats in the Black Sea region](#) which focused on disinformation as an instrument of malign interference. The conference was attended by leading experts in the field of international security and strategic communications from Bulgaria, Romania, UK, and the USA.

CSD continued to contribute to improving the integration and social inclusion of migrants by actively participating in [PERCEPTIONS](#) – a joint effort of 25 research institutes and law-enforcement authorities from 15 countries, exploring the impact of novel technologies and social media on perceptions of Europe in countries abroad. In addition to evaluating the operation of the PERCEPTIONS Crystal Engine through a workshop and a survey with national stakeholders, the Center's experts took part in the PERCEPTIONS Final Symposium and contributed to several publications such as the regular editions of the PERCEPTIONS Newsletter and an article on fostering inclusion for refugees and migrants and building trust in the digital public space.

In the area of good governance, CSD is stepping up its efforts to promote the introduction and implementation of safeguards to protect whistleblowers. CSD supported the government in the process of transposing the *EU Whistleblowing Directive* by contributing to the development of the transposing legislation and providing comments on the



different draft laws submitted to parliament. After the adoption of the law, the Commission for Personal Data Protection, designated as the Bulgarian central authority for external reporting and follow up, invited CSD to participate in the development of the law's implementing package (secondary legislation, reporting guidelines, templates, etc.). Beyond national efforts, CSD continued to be an active member of the Southeast Europe Coalition on Whistleblower Protection (SECWP). In 2023, the Center's experts took part in the Coalition's annual meeting, attended an international conference on the transposition of the EU Whistleblowing Directive in Southeast Europe, and co-authored the report *Transposition of the EU 2019/1937 Directive on Whistleblower Protection in Southeast Europe: Challenges and Lessons Learned*.

CSD also continued to actively participate in the preparation and consultation of draft legislation related to good governance and the rule of law, including

the draft amendments to the Constitution and the government's concept note on the legal regulation of lobbying.

II. Legal empowerment and capacity building

Since 2017, CSD's initiative ARISA has united the efforts of organisations from across Europe to strengthen the rights of those suspected, accused, or convicted of a crime. Building on prior efforts to advocate for the presumption of innocence and associated fundamental rights in the context of information disclosure and media coverage of criminal cases, CSD showcased its work in this field at two prominent international events.

During the workshop "New Perspectives on Trial by Media" organised by the University of Leicester, CSD delivered a presentation highlighting common **malpractices** and suggesting **standards** for public disclosure of crime-related information. At a thematic discussion of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, dedicated to the implementation of the 2021 Kyoto Declaration and hosted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna,

CSD made a statement advocating for a collective commitment to upholding the presumption of innocence and countering bias in criminal justice systems.

In 2023, the ARISA initiative shifted its focus to promoting the **rights of convicted children**. Drawing on its long track record of research on correctional services and child-friendly justice, CSD identified significant deficiencies in the treatment of juvenile offenders in Bulgaria and other EU Member States. Notably, prison and probation staff working with convicted children lack access to training programs tailored to the specific needs and rights of minors in conflict with the law. CSD conducted a study intended to bridge this gap by needs assessment combining empirical research, fieldwork, and exchange visits to Portugal and Italy. The visits enabled prison and probation staff from Bulgaria, Italy, Portugal, Greece and Spain to gain valuable observations at juvenile detention facilities, community centers and juvenile prisons, and to participate in discussions with counterparts. CSD highlighted some of the key insights during its presentation at the national legal forum LexTalks 2023 organised by the National Network for Children.



CSD Analyst Maria Stoyanova (middle) during the CCPJC Thematic Discussions on the Implementation of the Kyoto Declaration, Vienna, 21 September 2023



CSD Analyst Maria Doichinova (third from the left) at the national legal forum LexTalks 2023, Sofia, 30 November 2023

As a partner in the **CHILDFront** initiative, CSD utilised its expertise in child-friendly justice to assist Greek and Cypriot judicial schools in developing an innovative and practice-oriented learning tool for judges and prosecutors who work with children in different justice branches.

Together with Save the Children Italy, CSD compiled a repository of **best practices** on what has already been achieved in judicial training on child-friendly justice in the EU and beyond. CSD also contributed to the training of Greek and Cypriot judges and prosecutors, who in turn will become trainers for their col-



CSD Analyst Iliana Boycheva leads a training session for judges and prosecutors from Greece and Cyprus, Rome, 24 October 2023



leagues in Greece and Cyprus. A key part of the training was a study visit to Sofia, including a local court and prosecutor's office, a court hearing, and experience sharing discussions with Bulgarian colleagues.

Another area of CSD's training and capacity building efforts is the strengthen-

ing of the EU rule of law *acquis*. In January 2023, CSD joined the Light initiative (Litigating change: training lawyers on the EU rule of law *acquis*), which aims to enhance the capacity of lawyers in five EU countries with particularly pressing rule of law problems: Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Poland and Romania. Some of the key findings of the CSD research are the low level of recognition of EU law not just among lawyers, but also within the judiciary, a lack of knowledge among lawyers of how to utilise European mechanisms designed to reinforce the rule of law, and overwhelming reluctance among clients to participate in strategic litigation – most often due to perceived judicial corruption.

Capacity building is also among the key activities of CSD's initiative SHE, which aims to prevent domestic and gender-based violence through targeted training and awareness raising. In the context of heightened public sensitivity on the issue due to several serious cases of domestic violence becoming public, CSD continued its comprehensive training campaign in the public administration. Started as a specialised training for HR specialists, the campaign expanded its outreach to include public officials in



Greek and Cypriot judicial trainers during the study visit to the Sofia Regional Court, 27 October 2023

various positions from a variety of institutions at the national and local level. So far, more than 350 public officials have been trained to identify, refer, and support victims of domestic violence.

CSD used some of the materials developed for the trainings to run a dedicated information campaign on the risk of domestic and gender-based violence. The campaign combines a [series of videos](#), social media posts, a [blog article](#), and a dedicated [press conference](#) and will culminate in a national conference planned for early 2024.

III. Equality and diversity

CSD, as one of the founders of the Bulgarian Diversity Charter, continued to actively promote the values of diversity, equality and inclusion (DE&I). The Charter, a joint initiative of CSD and the Bulgarian Business Leaders Forum, continued to expand its network of signatories, reaching a total of 66 members in 2023. In March 2023, the Diversity@Work Award was granted for a third consecutive year to DE&I leaders in the country. CSD took part in the follow-up

best corporate practice webinar where the champions presented their successful initiatives to a broader audience.

As a member of the EU Platform of Diversity Charters, the Bulgarian Charter joined the EU Diversity Month, traditionally celebrated in May, which was launched at a high-profile event in Brussels. CSD took part in the official opening and the ceremony of the European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Awards. During the EU Diversity Month, CSD co-organised the Bulgarian Diversity Charter Annual Meeting where the Charter's community exchanged DE&I strategies and practices and gave a warm welcome to the new signatories. To strengthen its cooperation at the EU level, in 2023 CSD joined two meetings of the EU Platform of Diversity Charters in Brussels and Milan.

In 2023, CSD explored new dimensions of DE&I management focusing on **inclusive communication in corporate environments**. CSD got involved in the regional partnership NICE bringing together organisations behind the Diversity Charters in Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Romania and Lithuania. The initiative



Bulgarian Diversity Charter Annual Meeting, Sofia, 12 May 2023

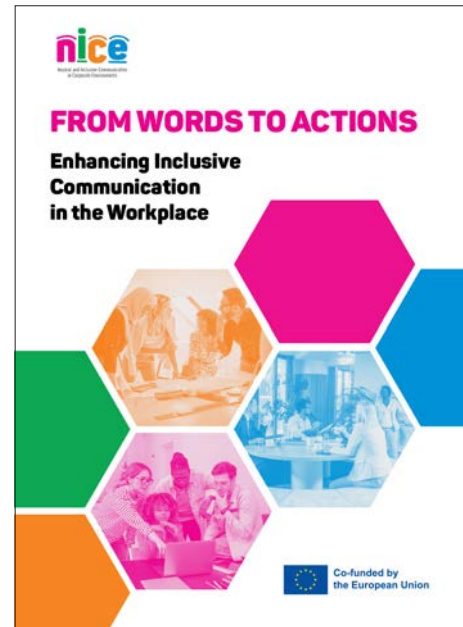


CSD Analyst Maria Stoyanova (middle) making a statement on behalf of Bulgarian Diversity Charter at the EU Platform of Diversity Charters Meeting, Brussels, 14 June 2023

puts efforts in tackling workplace discrimination by promoting the use of neutral and inclusive language.

CSD conducted a transnational survey on the topic and produced a [national](#) and a [comparative report](#) offering a pioneering research of existing policies

and regulations, promising practices, and an analysis of public attitudes and perceptions of inclusive communication in the workplace. In October 2023, CSD presented insights from the reports at the Diversity in Business Conference 2023 in Athens. Moreover, it engaged experts from Bulgarian com-





*National communication panel “Neutral and Inclusive Communication in the Workplace”,
Sofia, 7 November 2023*

panies and NGOs in a [constructive dialogue](#) during two national events concerning the existing challenges faced by employees from underrepresented groups, and the way forward to developing tools for a more inclusive work environment. The public-private dialogue continued at the international level during a transnational panel held online in December 2023.

CSD also joined forces with Lidl Bulgaria, Hewlett Packard Enterprise Bulgaria and Shell Bulgaria in an initiative to enhance the adoption and integration of DE&I principles by transferring the experience of large multinational companies to national small and medium enterprises. In the inaugural phase of the initiative, an online survey was launched to investigate the awareness and implementation of DE&I management within Bulgarian SMEs.

IV. Fundamental rights

As a member of [FRANET](#) – the multidisciplinary research network coordinated by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) – CSD continued to monitor the protection of fundamental rights in Bulgaria. In addition to its regular

contribution to FRA’s annual *Fundamental Rights Report*, CSD produced thematic country reports on the national child protection system, the fundamental rights of children displaced in Bulgaria following the Russian war of aggression, the investigations of fundamental rights violations and criminal offences at Bulgaria’s borders, and the political participation of persons with disabilities. CSD is also reporting to FRA on the fundamental rights situation of displaced persons from Ukraine as well as asylum seekers and migrants coming from the Western Balkan route and from Belarus. The reports, delivered on a monthly basis, serve as background information to feed into the regular meetings and reports of the EU’s mechanism for preparedness and management of crises related to migration.

FRA continued to publish on its website the Bulgarian country studies delivered by CSD in previous years. The reports released in 2023 included the studies on [protecting civil society](#), [protection of displaced children after the Russian aggression against Ukraine](#), [fundamental rights safeguards and remedies in relation to surveillance by intelligence services](#), and [ensuring access to digital public services for older people](#).