

SECURITY PROGRAM

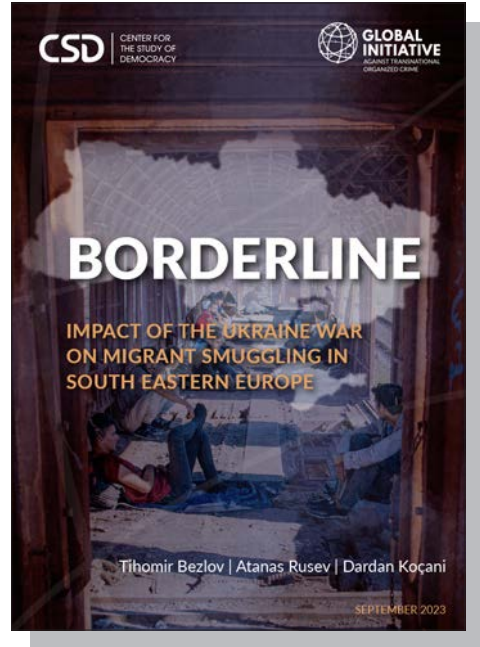
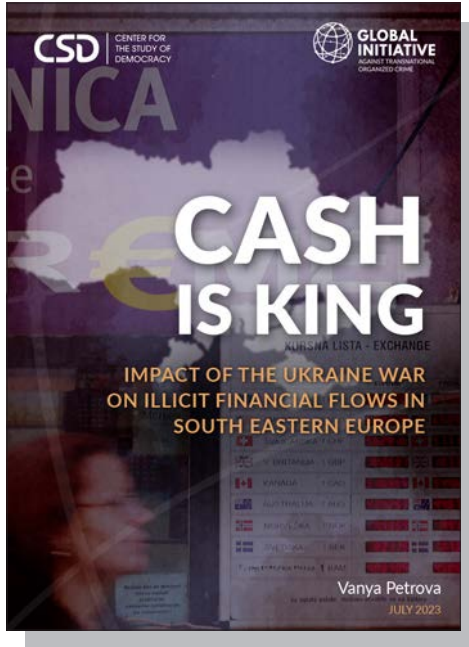
In 2023, the Security Program's efforts were focused on the following areas:

- **Risks of organised crime.** CSD continued its research on a variety of organised crime markets: vehicle theft, trafficking in human beings, cybercrime and firearms trafficking. CSD analysed the enablers of car theft in Bulgaria and contributed to the development of a barrier model to prevent and disrupt organised vehicle crime in the EU. The war in Ukraine was also analysed with emphasis on its impact on the major criminal markets such as people smuggling and illicit financial flows. CSD continued to improve judicial cooperation in the recovery of illicit assets by investigating practical obstacles to the implementation of relevant EU primary legislation. The Center also contributed to combatting trafficking in firearms by identifying effective and innovative practices of firearms registries in the EU and neighbouring countries. CSD elaborated the innovative Cyber Security Survey for Businesses instrument and a web-based prototype platform for digital reporting of cybercrime to law-enforcement authorities.
- **Countering radicalisation and right-wing extremism.** CSD analysed radicalisation and violent extremism among Bulgarian youths from ultra-conservative communities and among football fan groups. The study revealed that the agenda of such communities tends to intertwine with that of far-right, populist parties, and is closely linked to conspiracy theories and Russian propaganda. CSD researchers contributed to the development of a learning hub on radicalisation and organised trainings for prison and probation staff working with radicalised and violent extremist inmates.
- **EU policies in the field of migration and home affairs.** CSD organised a stratcom training for Western Balkan policy-makers devoted to the reintegration and rehabilitation of returning foreign terrorist fighters. The Center also contributed to the review of the Proposal for a regulation addressing situations of instrumentalisation in the field of migration and asylum. The assessment focused on the proposal's relationship with existing EU law and the compatibility of the proposal with the EU's general principles of subsidiarity, proportionality and the rule of law.
- **Protection of EU external borders.** CSD participated in an EU-wide research on the development and application of new non-intrusive inspection technologies and risk analysis tools designed to facilitate the flow of cargo across EU land and maritime borders and improve the capacity of customs to detect hidden illicit and hazardous goods.

I. Organised crime

Organised crime and the war in Ukraine

The Balkan region is a crossroad for the trafficking of a number of illicit commodities, and a geographic hub for the smuggling of migrants attempting to en-



Regional conference "Impact of the Ukraine War on the Illicit Economies in South Eastern Europe", Pristina, 14 December 2023

ter Western Europe. The war in Ukraine has increased the opportunities for organised crime in the region, which lacks the necessary toolkit to counter the negative trends related to organised crime and is thus particularly vulnerable. The war brought about a new surge in irregular migration, a displacement of drug trafficking routes, new opportunities for fuel smuggling and increased illicit financial flows. CSD, in close collaboration with the Southeast Europe Observatory of the Global Initiative against Organised Crime (GI-TOC), analysed the emerging trends and risks in the year after following Russia's invasion in Ukraine. The research mapped the contributing factors and drivers for the resurfacing of migrant smuggling as one of the hottest organised criminal markets in the Balkan region and the effects of new developments in this and other organised crime activities on illicit financial flows. The studies on [people smuggling](#) and [illicit financial flows](#) were presented at the regional conference "Impact of the Ukraine War on the Illicit Economies in South Eastern Europe" held on 14 December in Pristina. The conference brought together experts from international institutions, academia, media, and civil society, who emphasised the need for adequate response to the emerging risks of organised crime in the context of the war.

Organised vehicle crime

Over the last ten years, Europol has considered motor vehicle crime to be a significant criminal market affecting the European Union and its Member States. Organised property crime, particularly motor vehicle theft, has been confirmed as an EU crime priority in the 2nd EU Policy Cycle. CSD contributed to a [study of organised vehicle crime](#) aimed at developing measures to prevent the online distribution of stolen vehicles and vehicle parts in the EU. CSD cooperated with

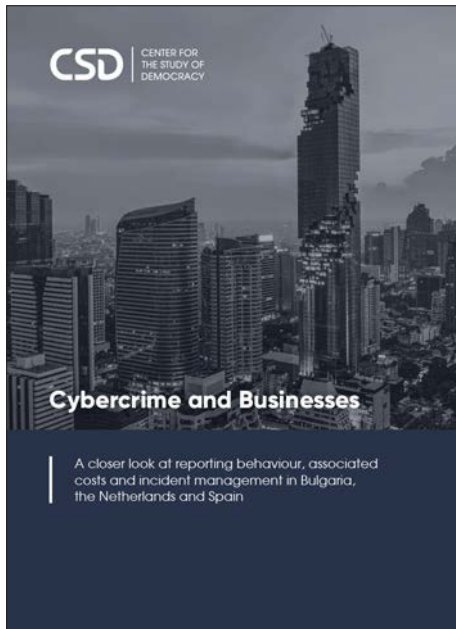
Universiteit Gent and the Dutch Stichting Centrum voor Criminaliteitspreventie en Veiligheid (CCV) for the analysis, which covers six EU Member States – Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands. CSD analysed the latest developments in the stolen vehicles market in Bulgaria and suggested a barrier model to prevent and disrupt this criminal activity on the national level.

Drawing on the national studies CSD, CCV and Ghent University constructed an EU-wide barrier model for the prevention and disruption of organised vehicle crime and fencing stolen cars and car parts. The model was presented at the international conference "A Barrier Model Approach to Motor Vehicle Crime" hosted by Ghent University on 14 December. The conference gathered participants from Interpol, Europol, the EMPACT working group on organised property crime, EUCPN, ENAA, DG HOME of the European Commission, academics and experts from law-enforcement agencies.



Cybercrime

CSD led a [study on cybercrime against businesses](#) in three EU Member States –



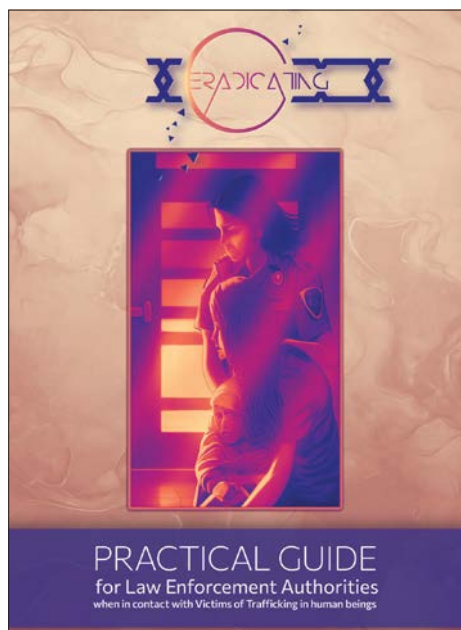
Bulgaria, the Netherlands, and Spain. This analysis provides significant insights into the prevalence of cybercrime victimisation, reporting behaviors, and associated costs among businesses. The analysis shed light on shared trends and distinctions among these countries, underscoring the importance of tailored cybersecurity strategies and effective incident management.

As part of the study, CSD in partnership with Ecorys (the Netherlands) and Forentec (Switzerland) elaborated an innovative *Cyber Security Survey for Businesses* instrument and a prototype web-based platform for digital reporting of cybercrime to law enforcement authorities. The survey instrument was thoroughly discussed with a top-rank expert panel including leading academics in cybercrime.

This policy instrument and the analysis were discussed on 7 December at the international conference "Cyber Threats and Solutions" in Brussels, which brought together global experts, political leaders, and cybersecurity authorities. The conference examined various approaches and strategies aimed at elevating the digital resilience of Europe's cyber environment, ultimately contributing to a safer and more secure digital landscape.

Trafficking in human beings

Trafficking in human beings remained one of CSD's main areas of work. In close collaboration with a number of well-established research institutions, NGOs and police authorities from Bulgaria, Greece and Germany, CSD developed of a practical guide and a number of educational materials for law-enforcement practitioners, instructing them how to behave when in contact with victims of trafficking in human beings. The tool will support the relevant bodies in the three



countries by providing victim protection information and advice, gender-related, child-sensitive and victim-oriented communication tips, as well as a roster of

support and relief structures for victims in the three countries.

Additionally, CSD organised a series of targeted trainings to boost the capacity of law-enforcement agencies, prosecutors, labour inspectors, social servants, municipal workers and NGOs: a training of trainers, a practical laboratory for testing prevention tools and an awareness session for businesses focused on labour trafficking in Bulgaria, as well as an international simulation exercise in Athens, Greece.

Recovery of illicit assets

In 2023, CSD continued its effort to improve judicial cooperation in recovering illicit assets by investigating practical obstacles to implementing relevant EU primary legislation. Efforts were concentrated on mitigating the disparities in training by creating comprehensive resources for legal professionals, policy-makers, scholars and the general public.

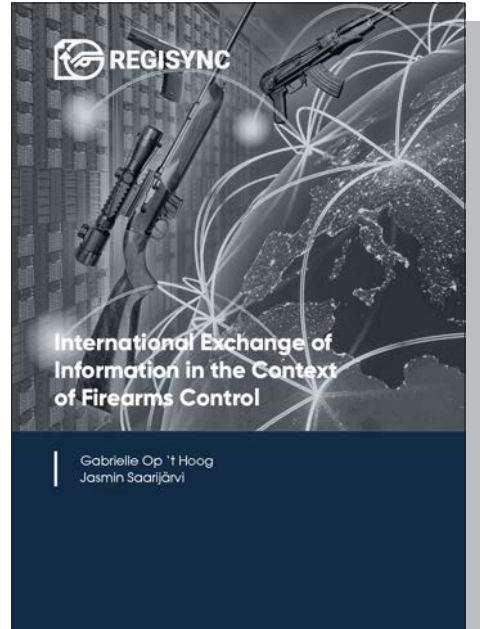


Closing conference on enhancing prevention and multi-agency cooperation against trafficking, Athens, 1–2 November 2023

The CSD team assessed the impact of the latest Regulation in the field and the primary obstacles to its implementation in the Member States. This study will inform the creation of tailored trainings and common standards for judicial practitioners.

Trafficking in firearms

CSD led a [study on firearm registries in the EU](#) and several neighbouring countries. Two reports were published: one on effective and innovative practices in European firearms registries, and another on improving the exchange of information among firearm registries and authorities, both at the national and the international level. At a closing conference, held on 24 October 2023 in Brussels and online, the policy recommendations of the study were presented to EU and international policy-makers, national firearms authorities, NGOs and academic institutions. Among the participants at the conference were representatives of the



European Commission (DG HOME), EULISA, EUROPOL, OSCE, INTERPOL, UNDP, SIPRI and the Flemish Peace Institute.



II. Radicalisation and violent extremism

Radicalisation among Bulgarian youths

CSD conducted a survey among youths in Bulgaria as part of a cross-country study on radicalisation and violent extremism. The analysis confirmed the young people's shared perceptions that the economic situation, religion and political processes in combination with the social media factor can be important drivers for radicalisation. Residential neighbourhoods and schools are perceived as at-risk social spaces for violence, although the majority of survey participants had not been involved in violent conflicts. The Center also investigated violence prevention

possibilities among football fans and in schools by holding a number of focus groups and interviews with professionals.

Radicalisation and violent extremism in prisons and probation

CSD contributed to the development of a learning hub on radicalisation and violent extremism, targeted at prison and probation practitioners from South-east Europe and the Western Balkans. Training materials were developed and a 3-day training for prison and probation staff from Bulgaria and Romania was held in Sofia on 30 November–2 December 2023. Trainees were introduced to modern theories and techniques in dealing with radicalised and violent extremist inmates and to mentoring schemes designed and applied in the prison systems of Norway, Spain and Portugal.

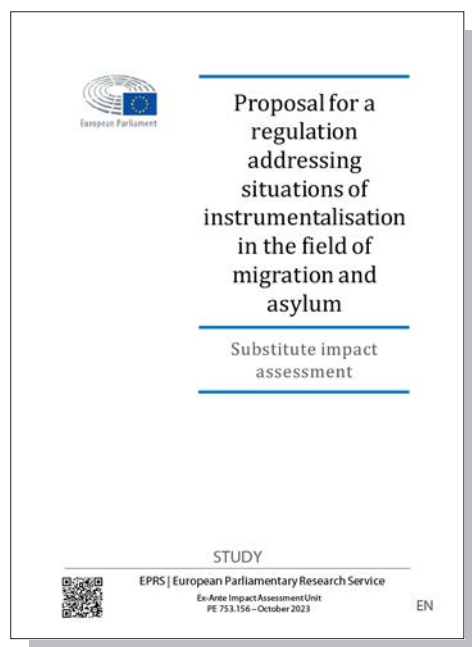
III. Monitoring and evaluation of security and home affairs policies

Support for RAN Policy Support network in the Western Balkans

CSD's long-term support for the work of the European Commission and the European Union's Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) in the field of countering violent extremism in the Western Balkans continued in 2023 as well. In November, CSD organised a strategic communication training for Western Balkan policy-makers in Skopje, North Macedonia. It was devoted to the reintegration and rehabilitation of returning foreign terrorist fighters with a special focus on women and children. During the training, participants discussed a blueprint for a public campaign on the subject and engaged with presenting it to decision-makers in their home countries.

Instrumentalisation in the field of migration and asylum


CSD, in cooperation with the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), assessed the *Proposal for a regulation addressing situations of instrumentalisation in the field of migration and asylum*. The [study](#) reviews the proposal's relationship with the EU Treaties, existing EU border, migration and asylum acquis, the legislative proposals in the 2016 common European asylum system (CEAS) reform, and those under the 2020 new pact on migration and asylum. The assessment identifies and analyses the main expected impacts of the proposal, notably the fundamental rights, societal, economic and territorial impacts, as well as those relating to EU external relations. The CSD team contributed with an analysis on the proposal's relation to existing national policy, legal and institutional framework and the expected impact in Bulgaria.



IV. Enhancing customs detection capacities at EU external borders

CSD contributed to the Horizon 2020 initiative ENTRANCE, aimed at developing and testing several new non-intrusive inspection technologies and risk analysis tools to be applied at EU land and maritime borders. Within a consortium of technology and customs partners, CSD carried out research on ethical issues involved in the developing and testing of the new technologies,

and identified the major threats to EU security at land and sea ports. CSD researchers also provided a methodology for the impact assessment of the new technologies developed to facilitate legitimate traffic and to enhance the capacities of customs agencies to detect hidden illegal goods and hazardous materials when inspecting containers at sea ports, and trains and vehicles at land borders. CSD presented its findings at a conference held in Paris on 16 November 2023.



User requirements, data sharing scheme and impact assessment model

Lead: Center for the Study of Democracy (BG) and MD Services (IE)
 Contributing partners: Smiths Detection; Belgian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Slovakian Customs

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