



**CIVIL SOCIETY
SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT**

CISOMO II: Civil Society Solidarity Movement II

**PROJECT NUMBER:
602046-CITIZ-1-2018-EL-CITIZ-CIV**

D2.2 Bulgarian Integration Practices' Insights Report

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**Lead
Organization:
AEPB**



Civil Connections
Building robust communities



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INTRODUCTION

About CISOMO II

CISOMO II (Civil Society Solidarity Movement II) is a European initiative that promotes civic engagement, social inclusion, and solidarity, especially in the context of migration. The project builds upon the outcomes of the original CISOMO project and focuses on expanding Thematic Living Labs—innovative spaces where civil society, migrants, and local communities collaborate to address integration challenges and foster democratic participation.

Bulgarians's Role in CISOMO II

As a key partner in the CISOMO II consortium, EUROPEAN PROJECTS IN BULGARIA plays a driving force's role in applying the project's methodology to the Bulgarian context. Through its active involvement in Work Package 3, the organization contributes local knowledge, supports advocacy and community-led initiatives, and facilitates intercultural dialogue. Its efforts ensure that the Bulgarian civil society landscape is both represented and strengthened within the broader European framework of the project.



ABOUT THE EUROPEAN PROJECTS IN BULGARIA

EUROPEAN PROJECTS IN BULGARIA is a Sofia-based non-profit organization committed to advancing European integration through civic education, intercultural dialogue and active citizenship.

With a strong focus on grassroots empowerment, the association designs and implements projects that address social inclusion, migration, gender equality and democratic engagement.

With an extensive experience in EU-funded initiatives, EUROPEAN PROJECTS IN BULGARIA serves as a dynamic bridge between local communities and broader European civil society networks.



STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT WITH EU VALUES

It aligns its mission and kind of activities with the core values of the European Union, including human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights (including the migrants' rights).

Through its work in CISOMO II, the organization actively promotes citizen engagement, social cohesion and inclusive dialogue, particularly in support of migrant and refugee communities.

Its initiatives contribute to the EU's broader objectives under the European Democracy Action Plan and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, reinforcing a shared European vision rooted in solidarity civic participation and equality.



MIGRATION LANDSCAPE IN BULGARIA

Bulgaria, situated at a key geographical crossroads between Europe, Asia and the Middle East, has experienced increasing migratory pressures over the past decade. As a frontline EU country, it serves both as a transit and, increasingly, as a host nation for migrants and refugees, particularly from Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine.

While national efforts have aimed to improve border control and asylum processes, challenges persist in the areas of integration, social inclusion and public perception. Civil society organizations, such as EUROPEAN PROJECTS IN BULGARIA , operates to bridging institutional gaps by fostering intercultural understanding, supporting vulnerable communities and promoting long-term integration solutions.



LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

The Legal and Policy Frameworks for the CISOMO II project, particularly in the context of Bulgarian integration practices, are primarily guided by the National Strategy on Migration, Asylum, and Integration (2015-2020).

This strategy aligns with European Union policies, emphasizing legal migration channels, the integration of migrants into Bulgarian society, and the establishment of a common European asylum system.

The framework also promotes compliance with EU standards on social inclusion, equal opportunities, and non-discrimination.

Additionally, Bulgaria benefits from EU funding mechanisms like the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF) to support integration efforts, ensuring a collaborative approach to migration management across the EU.



STAKEHOLDER ECOSYSTEM

With a diverse range of actors collaborating to facilitate migrant integration is accomplished in Bulgaria. Key stakeholders include government bodies such as the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior, responsible for asylum and migration policies, and local authorities involved in the implementation of integration programs. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as EUROPEAN PROJECTS IN BULGARIA play a critical role as well in providing support services and advocating for migrant rights.

Other important stakeholders include European Union institutions, which provide funding through programs like the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF), as well as community-based organizations and migrant groups themselves, whose participation is crucial for ensuring that integration efforts are tailored to local needs and experiences. This collaborative ecosystem ensures a multi-dimensional approach to successful integration.



WORK PACKAGE 3 OVERVIEW

Bulgarian Study Visit

Focuses on providing a comprehensive learning and exchange platform for stakeholders involved in the CISOMO II project, specifically regarding Bulgarian integration practices. The study visit aims to facilitate direct engagement with key actors in the migration and integration sector in Bulgaria, such as government agencies, NGOs and local communities.

Participants will gain firsthand insight into the policies, strategies and the best practices which were implemented in Bulgaria to support migrant integration, including successful case studies and challenges faced. The visit also fosters collaboration between stakeholders across the EU, allowing for knowledge-sharing, capacity building and the development of actionable recommendations for enhancing integration practices within the region. The overall goal is to strengthen cross-border cooperation and improve integration frameworks through shared experiences and mutual learning.



OBJECTIVES OF WORK PACKAGE 3

Bulgarian Study Visit

The study designed to enhance knowledge-sharing and collaboration on migrant integration practices. These objectives include:

-  **Facilitating Knowledge Exchange:** Allowing participants to gain firsthand insights into Bulgaria's integration policies and practices.
-  **Engaging Stakeholders:** Involving key stakeholders such as government bodies, NGOs, and local communities to share experiences and best practices.
-  **Identifying Challenges and Solutions:** Examining the challenges faced by Bulgaria in migrant integration and discussing potential solutions.
-  **Building Capacity:** Strengthening the capacity of stakeholders to implement effective integration strategies in their own regions.
-  **Promoting Cross-Border Cooperation:** Encouraging collaboration and networking among EU member states to foster a unified approach to migrant integration.



THE BULGARIAN CIVIL SOCIETY LANDSCAPE

Characterized by a diverse network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), grassroots movements, and community-based initiatives that play a critical role in addressing social issues, including migrant integration.

These civil society organizations actively collaborate with both government institutions and international bodies to advocate for human rights, social inclusion and the protection of vulnerable groups. Having this in mind, NGOs in Bulgaria are pivotal in providing services such as legal aid, language training, social support, and integration programs for migrants.

Despite facing challenges like limited funding and bureaucratic barriers, civil society actors remain instrumental in shaping policy, raising awareness and driving grassroots initiatives to ensure the successful integration of migrants into Bulgarian society. Their efforts are supported by European funding mechanisms and partnerships with international organizations, fostering a dynamic and responsive civil society ecosystem.



PILLAR I – ADVOCACY STRATEGIES AND CAMPAIGNS

Focuses on raising awareness and driving policy change to support migrant integration in Bulgaria. This pillar involves the development and implementation of targeted advocacy strategies aimed at influencing national and European policy frameworks. Key activities include organizing public awareness campaigns, engaging with decision-makers, and fostering dialogue between civil society organizations, policymakers, and the general public.

The goal is to create an informed and supportive environment for migrants, challenge stereotypes, and promote inclusive policies that facilitate their successful integration. Advocacy efforts also seek to ensure that migrants' rights are upheld, and that their voices are heard in the policy-making process, ultimately leading to the formulation of more effective and equitable integration strategies.



CASE STUDY: ADVOCACY IN PRACTICE

One highlighted example of the tangible application of advocacy strategies in promoting migrant rights and integration is from Bulgaria. It involves a cooperation of civil society organizations working together to influence national immigration policies.

These organizations launched a public campaign focused on raising awareness about the challenges faced by refugees and migrants, including access to healthcare, education and employment opportunities. Through a series of advocacy actions such as lobbying, media outreach and community mobilization, the coalition succeeded in bringing attention to gaps in the national integration strategy.

The campaign led to the inclusion of more migrant-friendly provisions in national legislation, such as increased support for language acquisition and vocational training programs. This case demonstrates the power of coordinated advocacy in creating lasting policy changes that improve the lives of migrants and promote their integration into society.





PILLAR II: COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES

Emphasizes the importance of empowering local communities in the integration process of migrants. This pillar focuses on creating and supporting grassroots initiatives that are designed and led by community members, ensuring that solutions are tailored to the unique needs of migrants and their host communities.

These initiatives include establishing community centers, offering peer-to-peer support programs and organizing cultural exchange activities that foster mutual understanding and social cohesion.

By involving migrants and local residents in the design and implementation of integration activities, community-led initiatives promote active participation, strengthen social ties and reduce isolation. They also serve as platforms for sharing resources, improving language skills and providing direct support for migrants, ultimately contributing to their successful and sustainable integration into society.

FROM LOCAL VOICES TO PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Focuses on amplifying the perspectives of migrants and local communities to foster broader societal understanding and influence policy change. This approach seeks to transform local experiences and challenges into a public conversation, creating a platform where migrants' voices are heard and valued in the wider societal discourse.

By collecting personal stories, organizing community forums, and utilizing media channels, this initiative encourages open dialogue between migrants, local populations, and policymakers. The goal is to bridge gaps in understanding, reduce prejudice, and highlight the positive contributions migrants make to society.

Through these efforts, local voices are not only heard but actively shape public opinion and inform national and European-level discussions on migration and integration policies. This process helps to build a more inclusive, empathetic, and effective approach to migration, grounded in the real experiences of those directly impacted.



PILLAR III – GENDER, DIVERSITY, AND VOLUNTEERISM

Aligns with the CISOMO II project, specifically drawing from the Bulgarian Integration Practices' Insights Report. This pillar within the project focuses on promoting inclusive integration strategies, addressing gender and diversity issues among migrants, and encouraging volunteerism to support these efforts. It highlights the role of local volunteers in facilitating integration and the importance of ensuring that all migrant groups, especially women and marginalized communities, receive additionally the necessary support to integrate effectively into Bulgarian society.

VOLUNTEER MOBILIZATION IN REFUGEE SUPPORT

Plays a crucial role in the integration of migrants and refugees, particularly in Bulgaria, as part of the CISOMO II project. Volunteers are often the first point of contact for refugees, offering essential services such as language support, cultural orientation and assistance with navigating legal and administrative processes. Their work helps create welcoming environments and fosters social inclusion. Through local volunteer networks, refugees gain access to community resources and build relationships that ease their transition into society. Volunteer mobilization also empowers local communities, promoting solidarity and active participation in the integration process, while strengthening social cohesion and reducing isolation for refugees.

BUILDING CAPACITY WITHIN CIVIL SOCIETY

Another key component that focuses on strengthening the ability of civil society organizations (CSOs) to effectively support migrant integration in Bulgaria, as part of the CISOMO II project. This involves enhancing the skills, knowledge, and resources of NGOs, community groups, and volunteers who are directly engaged in migrant support.

By providing training, facilitating access to funding, and promoting collaboration among stakeholders, it successfully ensures that civil society actors are better equipped to address the diverse needs of migrants. Strengthening the capacity of these organizations helps improve service delivery, fosters sustainability and enables CSOs to advocate more effectively for migrant rights and integration policies. This approach empowers civil society to play a central role in shaping inclusive and cohesive communities.

PRACTICAL SKILLS ACQUIRED BY PARTICIPANTS

Throughout the visit, the participants engaged in participatory learning exercises, simulations and practice workshops and developed a tool set of critical skills. They received an insight into best practices of migrant integration employed in Bulgaria and advocacy skills to advance migrant rights and influence policy at national and local levels.

The experience also sharpened their ability to work with local communities and create inclusive programs, as well as enhance greater cultural awareness and appreciation of the challenges that migrants face in the process of integration. Participants also gained first-hand experience in the management of integration projects, including coordination, monitoring, and evaluation, as well as expanded their networks through the creation of connections with local actors, NGOs and government institutions to facilitate cooperation across borders.

INTERCULTURAL LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Is a key component of the CISOMO II study visit, fostering mutual understanding between participants from different cultural backgrounds. Through direct interactions with local communities, stakeholders, and migrants in Bulgaria, participants gained practical knowledge on how diverse cultural perspectives influence integration efforts.

This exchange allows participants to share best practices, explore challenges faced in various contexts and adapt successful strategies to their own environments. By learning from one another's experiences, participants enhance their capacity to implement more inclusive and culturally sensitive integration practices in their home countries, ultimately promoting stronger cross-cultural solidarity and cooperation.



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