

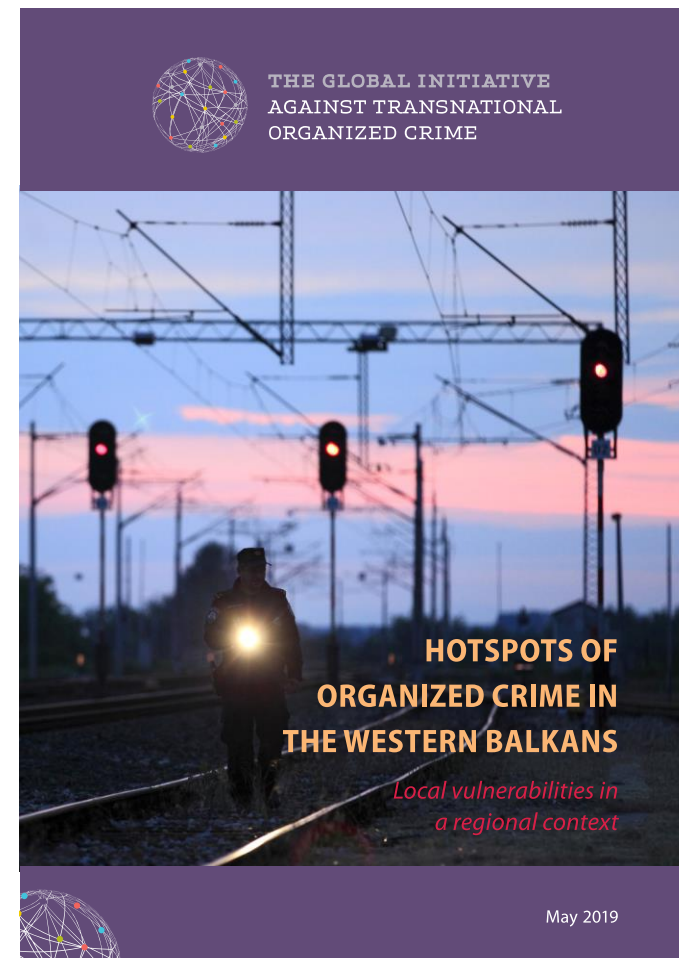
ORGANIZED CRIME AND CORRUPTION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: Some Concluding Observations

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HOTSPOTS in the WESTERN BALKANS

- Local hotspots closely connected to regional criminal dynamics characterised by clientelism/patronage politics
- Little focus on local criminal dynamics and actors in often highly localised (but connected) ecosystem
- Many local criminal groups deeply entrenched with strong external links and political protection – ‘crime governance’
- Crisis in regional civic governance – “alternative visions” and “antibodies against criminality”
- Weakness of local civil society in a context where focus is on nationally focussed incentives for change



GLOBAL HOTSPOTS OF WB ORGANIZED CRIME

The problem of organized crime in the Western Balkans has largely moved abroad. However:

- Criminals and groups come and go to/through the region.
 - Some are embedded at home.
 - Others operate in the global hotspots and use the WB to lie low, avoid exposure or find a safe haven.

Most successful groups seem to have taken advantage of networks in the 'Yugosphere', combined with opportunities afforded by global hotspots.

ANTI-CORRUPTION MAIN ISSUES

- Persisting structural shortcomings.
- Organized corruption: links political/ business and criminal establishments
- Lack of independence of anti-corruption control structures
- Need for further professional and capacity development
- Lack of an independent media
- Not sufficient civil society organizations working in anti-corruption arena.
- Insufficient research and academic silence
- Apathy of citizens and brain drain.
- Lack of independent and professional oversight.

CRIMINAL CONFIGURATION

- The Balkan route is still one of the most-trafficked from East to West and has expanded both in its geographical width as well as in terms of its content.
- The Balkan route was, for years, the transnational organized crime infrastructural investment and it still is. It is well-maintained and highly modernized to absorb the expanded intensity and diversity.
- Close linkages between organized crime and political and business environments.
- Violence, extortion, corruption and organized crime infiltration in political and economic establishments.
- **But, the WB became too small for international organized crime operations: it serves as an export-import and still transit and hiding hub**

POLITICAL COVER



The broader ecosystem of crime is characterized by clientelism, patronage and in some cases state capture.

Power in the Western Balkans is based on political clientelism.

- Criminal groups provide money and muscle in election campaigns.
- Individuals or political parties provide protection for criminal activities.
- Loose investment rules and favoritism enable money laundering both of domestic and international origin and both within and outside the WB

Political clientelism also spreads to the world of business.

- The public sector is one of the biggest employers.
- Political elites use the public sector to enrich themselves.

Political cover and business clientelism meet:

- Loose investment rules and favoritism enable money laundering both of domestic and international origin and both within and outside the WB
- WB OC on the international plane is the main mediator and facilitator

CRIMINAL CULTURAL STYLE

Limited economic opportunities

Weak rule of law

Political Cover and corrupt political establishment

Distrust in the state/government: thugs in power

Presence of organized crime in the formal economy: state capture

Illicit profit making: cultural tolerance

Illicit means: corruption/fraud/ tax evasion – cultural acceptance

CRIMINAL SYTLE PARADIGM

WHERE DO ORGANIZED CRIME AND CORRUPTION SIT IN THE WESTERN BALKANS?

- Historically organized crime and corruption belong to the '**underworld**': even UNTOC/UNCAC portray its 'underworld' image.
- Today, and in particular in the Western Balkans, only some part of organized crime and corruption is **strictly confined to the underworlds**.
- Much of it is in the **mezzo-world**: on the thin edge between illicit and licit.
- Some of it walks straight on the **promenade**.
- It is not anymore only domestic and regional but rather **international**
- **Anti-crime culture must go beyond the underworld and become a part of the dominant civil culture.**

In February 2020 at Wilton Park the UK Foreign Office hosted the Regional Conference on

Tackling Serious and Organised Crime in the Western Balkans

organized by Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, UNODC and the Siracusa International Institute of Criminal Justice and Human Rights

At the Conference the GI-TOC reports on Hotspots of Organized Crime in WB and Corruption and Anti-Corruption in WB as well as UNODC Measurement and Assessment of Organized Crime in WB and SII Illicit Trade in South Easter Europe/WB were presented and discussed

WILTON PARK CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhance collaborative approaches to sharing information and data for policy use

Enhance support for criminal justice systems

Strengthen civil society and media freedoms

Increase donor coordination and assess donor activity

- Closing the EU membership.
- Challenging the non-democratic and corrupt political and business establishments
- Increasing the responsibility of the political establishment for the respect of the internationally and domestically undertaken reform and anti-corruption commitments
- Criminal justice response to be continuously updated, adjusted and aligned.
- Promoting professionalism, independence and resilience among criminal justice personnel
- Attention to the presence of organized crime with both old and emerging forms and methods; exported and imported

- Increasing knowledge, information sharing and advancing informed policy making and evaluation.
- Establishing a regional platform for strategic directions against organized crime and corruption.
- Engaging civil society against the criminal culture, in debate and as an oversight.
- Increasing community resilience against organized crime, corruption and abuse of power
- Investing in hotspots economic, cultural and political development to practically address the factors making them vulnerable to organized crime
- Building trust at the regional level.

Regional Agenda 2

THANK YOU

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