

## MEASURING ORGANIZED CRIME IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: THE UNODC APPROACH

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### Summary

The aims of this paper is to examine the availability of statistical data on crime, and specifically on organized crime (OC). When it comes to organized crime, definitional questions make the task of identifying the proper data and assessing its availability for collection and analysis particularly complicated. Despite these definitional issues, the statistical framework took a holistic approach in measuring both the who and the what of organized crime. The concept of OC was divided into five dimensions: state response, enablers, OC activities, organized criminal groups (OCGs), and economic value (see Figure 2). Within those five dimensions, 19 sub-dimensions, and 364 unique indicators were identified that could contribute to measuring OC. These 364 indicators became a “wish list” against which availability of data was assessed. In order to more accurately capture instance of crime linked to organized crime, a number of indicators required disaggregation between total number of persons/cases regarding a particular criminal activity and the same criminal activity that involved organized criminal groups. For this reason, indicators within the framework often appear in pairs, such as, “total number of cases of trafficking in persons” as well as “total number of cases of trafficking in persons involving an organized criminal group”. The paper discusses how availability of data can elucidate important factors about countries’ capacities to measure patterns and trends of OC and finally, present some practical solutions to improve the availability of this data.

### Key words

Organized crime, data, assessment, Western Balkans, indicators

## 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

The question of the existence of organized crime (OC) has long been settled, yet the scope and patterns of the problem and its effects on society are questions that still call for a solid answer. Particularly in the region of the Western Balkans, evidence-based findings indicate that OC activities are particularly significant in a number of areas, such as drug or firearms trafficking, and that some factors, such as corruption and poor economic performance, enable organized crime. However, due to the lack of advanced statistical and analytical tools to monitor levels, trends and patterns of OC, it has not been possible to understand whether progress is being made in the fight against OC or, on the contrary, organized criminal groups maintain or even increase illegal activities. In this context, UNODC, under its project “Measuring and assessing organized crime in the Western Balkans: Supporting evidence-based policy making,” (MACRO), set out to develop a framework for a standardized, comprehensive and replicable measurement of organized crime with statistical data as its base.<sup>2</sup>

Although data is the basis of measuring any phenomenon, when it comes to organized crime, definitional questions make the task of identifying the proper data and assessing its availability for collection and analysis particularly complicated. There is no universally accepted definition of “organized crime”, and the definitions that do exist often focus on groups and fail to capture what is commonly meant by the term, which can be either a particular type of criminal organization or organized crime activity, often referred to interchangeably. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime offers a definition of “organized crime groups”, encompassing those engaged in a wide range of profit-driven criminal enterprises.<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Crime Trends Survey used by UNODC to collect data on homicide related to organized crime largely follows this definition.<sup>4</sup> Another view sees organized crime as a set of serious

<sup>1</sup> This paper was developed by the UNODC Research and Trend Analysis Branch under the overall coordination of Angela Me and in collaboration with Kristiina Kangaspunta and Tejal Jesrani, within the MACRO project. The publication was written by the author, as an output defined as Research Brief under the title “Measuring Organized Crime: Assessment of Data in the Western Balkans.

<sup>2</sup> The main objective of the project is to establish a mechanism to collect available data and develop a consolidated methodology to produce regular analytical reports on OC in the region, focusing on trends and patterns of illegal activities by OC, including information on their economic value, on the modus operandi of organized criminal groups and on the response of criminal justice systems to OC. This, it is expected, in turn, will strengthen existing efforts in the region to fight organized crime.

<sup>3</sup> While not defining organized crime per se, Article 2 of the Convention reads:  
“Organized criminal group” shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit;  
“Serious crime” shall mean conduct constituting an offence punishable by a maximum deprivation of liberty of at least four years or a more serious penalty;  
“Structured group” shall mean a group that is not randomly formed for the immediate commission of an offence and that does not need to have formally defined roles for its members, continuity of its membership or a developed structure

<sup>4</sup> The CTS acknowledges that “definitions used by national law enforcement bodies may include additional elements and may in some cases deviate from this definition.”

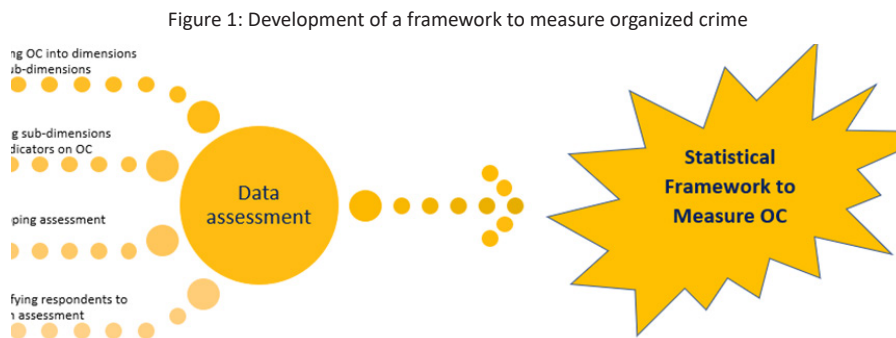
criminal activities providing illegal goods and services for profit.<sup>5</sup> The distinction between the different concepts of organized crime regarding criminal organizations (who) or profit-making criminal activities (what)<sup>6</sup> is reflected in previous analyses by UNODC<sup>7</sup> making a distinction between territorial and trafficking groups.

However, despite these issues, progress can and should be made in the measurement of organized crime. This Research Brief will describe the crucial first steps toward the development of the framework used for MACRO: identifying the data that could be relevant to measuring organized crime and assessing its availability. The assessment's main goal was to aid the development of a standardized, comparable set of indicators on which to base custom-made regional data collections that could be replicated to assess trends as well as the impact of policy or operational interventions. However, the data assessment was also undertaken to evaluate data reporting systems on organized crime, to identify gaps in the information on OC that would be better suited to other types of data collection, and to identify areas that required capacity building in the statistical services in order to improve the quality and availability of data.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Dimensions, sub-dimensions and indicators of the statistical framework

Developing a methodology to measure such a complicated set of crimes necessitates several preparatory stages (see Figure 1): structuring the dimensions and sub-dimensions of the framework; selecting a group of relevant possible data points or indicators within those sub-dimensions; developing tools to record and analyze this information; identifying relevant respondents at the national level to inform on data collection processes and availability of the selected data points or indicators; undertaking the actual data assessment; and most importantly, analyzing the results and finalizing the framework for data collection.



<sup>5</sup> Paoli, Letizia and Tom Vander Beken (2014) Organized Crime. A Contested Concept. In Paoli (ed), Letizia, The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime, New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> See UNODC, *The Globalisation of Crime*. Vienna: UNODC, 2010; also, UNODC, *Transnational Organized Crime in Central America and the Caribbean: A threat assessment*. Vienna: UNODC, 2012.

In the present case, structuring the dimensions and sub-dimensions of the theoretical framework was inspired by the model developed by Transcrime in 2012, which divided the concept of organized crime into five dimensions, related sub-dimensions, and within those, indicators for measuring organized crime.<sup>8</sup> For the purpose of the current work, five dimensions of state response, enablers, OC activities, OC groups, and economic value were used (see Figure 2). Those dimensions were then split into 19 sub-dimensions based on the stage of the criminal justice process (with regard to state response), the type of activity or the type of information requested.

Figure 2: Dimensions and sub-dimensions of the Framework to measure organized crime



<sup>8</sup> Transcrime- INEGI Centre of Excellence (2012), A framework for the quantification of organized crime and assessment of availability and quality of relevant data in three selected countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Elaborating the sub-dimensions of the framework required identifying criminal activities on which to focus. It was decided to focus on criminal activities that are most commonly associated with organized crime. <sup>9</sup> This encompassed all the criminal offences included in the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,<sup>10</sup> namely, participation in an organized criminal group, money laundering, corruption and obstruction of justice. Criminal justice data on cases of participation in an organized criminal group, as stipulated in Article 5 of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime is a logical place to start when considering which data may be relevant to measuring and assessing organized crime. However, it would not be sufficient to only consider cases of participation in an organized criminal group as that particular crime may not always be charged due to lack of evidence or other prosecutorial decisions or, even if charged, may not be preserved in the statistical records of a case that involved organized crime, for reasons that will be discussed later in this brief (see Section 4.3.2). On the other hand, it would not have been sufficient either, to only collect information about cases that have been traditionally associated with organized crime, such as drug trafficking, as not all of them are committed in the context of organized crime.

The framework needed to capture crimes committed in the context of organized crime. A number of indicators within the statistical framework required disaggregation or differentiation between total number of persons/cases regarding a particular criminal activity and the same criminal activity that was carried out by organized criminal groups. Accordingly, indicators for each crime type appear in pairs, e.g., “total cases of trafficking in persons,” as well as, “total cases of trafficking in persons linked to active organized criminal groups.” Adding this disaggregation not only allowed for specificity in measuring OC involvement, but also for comparisons between OC and non-OC involvement within crime types and comparisons of OC involvement between crime types.

The criminal offences included in the three Protocols<sup>11</sup> to the Organized Crime Convention were also included among the sub-dimensions of the theoretical framework, namely trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in firearms. In addition, drug trafficking as well as drug production and manufacturing were included, as well as trafficking in counterfeit goods, other goods and finally, cybercrime. Homicide was also included in order to serve as a proxy for the level of violence used by organized criminal groups. As the use of violence is more often associated with hierarchical, structured, Mafia-type OCGs, as opposed to more loosely organized criminal networks,<sup>12</sup> homicide data could serve as an indicator of which structures are predominant in the Western Balkan region. For each of these crimes, already existing UNODC data collection efforts were consulted to harmonize, supply previously submitted information, and prevent duplication of requests to the beneficiaries of the project wherever possible.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See UNODC, *The Globalisation of Crime*. Vienna: UNODC, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> General Assembly resolution 55/25 (2000).

<sup>11</sup> General Assembly resolution 55/25 (2000).

<sup>12</sup> Fijnaut, Cyrille, *European Union Organized Crime Policies* (2014). In Paoli (ed), Letizia, *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*, New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>13</sup> For instance, in the case of drug manufacturing, production and trafficking, UNODC’s Annual Reports Questionnaires were consulted in order to maintain consistency among the requested information as well as to fill in data points where available.

The sub-dimensions were then divided into 364 unique indicators in the framework. These indicators comprised a sort of “wish list” of data against which assessment would take place. In order to standardize the assessment process, data assessment guidelines were formulated.<sup>14</sup>

## **2.2. Institutions**

Regarding the selection of institutions to provide information about data availability, the internal constitutional structure of a given country/territory and the specific competences of the institutions were considered carefully. The institutions primarily seen as potential statistical data providers about OCG and their activities were the law enforcement (including border police and customs offices), prosecutors, courts (and where possible judicial and prosecutorial councils) and prisons. In addition to these, particular attention was given to the national statistical offices, as these are the institutions in charge of collecting, processing and reporting on crime related data collected from the above-mentioned data providers. It was also seen as crucial to include various agencies that deal with or could potentially be in position of collecting organized crime and criminal justice related data such as Financial Intelligence Units, agencies that deal with proceeds of crime, various ministries (justice, for example), anti-corruption agencies, and centers for protection of victims of trafficking. In the context of the MACRO project, both the institutions and the persons were selected with the assistance of and in coordination with the members of the MACRO National Technical Groups.<sup>15</sup>

## **2.3. Data availability assessment**

The assessment took place via structured interviews with selected officials from national criminal justice institutions that collect data on crime, in particular to elicit information regarding what kind of organized crime data was collected as well as what was done with it.<sup>16</sup> During November and December 2017, 140 interviews with representatives of 57 institutions in 6 countries/territories of the Western Balkan region took place. The team conducting the interviews consisted of the UNODC project team member, UNODC National Project Officer in a given country and an expert on organized crime.

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<sup>14</sup> See Measuring Organized Crime: Data Assessment in the Western Balkans, Annex B.

<sup>15</sup> National technical group (NTG) is a group formed by respective governments in the region, that have the main task to coordinate the collection of standardised data from all relevant institutions and check their completeness and consistency. The NTG is composed of representatives of the institutions dealing with organized crime cases. Representative of the national statistical office is usually the president of the NTG. NTG meets on a regular basis, twice a year, in order to review undertaken activities and assist the UNODC team in the implementation of activities.

<sup>16</sup> See Annex B, Data Assessment Guidelines for more information.

Figure 3: Number of assessment interviews

	Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kosovo (UNSCR 1244)	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia
<b>Period</b>	20-22.11.	13.11.-26.12.	29.11-1.12.	4-6.11.	24 - 28.11	10-13.11.
<b>Institutions</b>	9	15	9	8	11	7
<b>Persons interviewed</b>	23	28	22	18	38	17

Most of the interviewees worked in the analytical unit of a given institution, i.e. the unit processing data received through various types of forms and records. Nevertheless, very often, the team had a chance to talk to those who deal with OC on an operational level and who fill in various forms and records with regard to the cases they had worked on. Occasionally, decision makers of a given institution (minister, director, etc.) were interviewed as well.

The duration of the interviews varied, ranging from 30 minutes to 4 hours. On average, the interviews lasted 90-120 minutes depending on the number of persons present at the meeting, but also on the position of the institution within the anti-OC framework and the number of records the institution possessed.

### 3. THE OUTCOMES

The results of the data availability assessment were summarized in national reports (data availability assessment reports) which enabled the finalization of the statistical framework to measure and assess organized crime as well as a regional table that compiled the national information by the availability status of data in each country. The availability status was divided into three categories: readily available, not readily available or not available.

#### 3.1. The data availability assessment report

The reports described the process of data registration, collection and analysis of each interviewed institution, with information on the main registries used, the flow of the data (from initial recording to the final statistical processing), and the content (which information is collected, i.e. what is contained in the registries/book of records). At the same time, information gaps that would be better suited to other types of data collection (such as qualitative interviews) were identified. These gaps also pointed out areas that required capacity building in the statistical services in order to harmonize statistical methods and standards with international good practices.

The assessment reports represented a baseline/snapshot of the data availability and quality to inform the statistical framework and design the data repository. The data repository was consequently customized to each beneficiary to reflect their individual data availability and needs, while ensuring a good level of regional comparability and comprehensiveness.

Each report contained a color-coded table of the availability status of the indicators. Cells were colored green to indicate that the data was readily available, with the name of the responsible agency noted in the cell. Cells were colored yellow to indicate that the data was not readily available but could be made available given extra time and effort (usually implicating manual extraction of the data from files, forms or registries). Finally, cells were colored red to indicate that the data were simply not available (and were better suited to other types of data collection, such as qualitative, and the provision of technical assistance).

Figure 4: Regional table of data availability

Crime	INDICATOR	Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kosovo	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia
Total	Total number of people arrested	Police	Police	Police	Police	Ministry of interior/palico	Police
	Total number of people arrested for participation in an organized criminal group	Police	Police	Police	Police	Ministry of interior/palico	Police
Organized crime	Total amount of assets seized by type of asset	Police	Agency for Management of Seized Property	Police/Prosecutorial Co	Police/Prosecutorial Co	Ministry of interior/palico	Managing Confiscated Assets
	Total amount of assets confiscated by type of asset	Police	Agency for Management of Seized Property	Police/Prosecutorial Co	Police/Prosecutorial Co	Ministry of interior/palico	Managing Confiscated Assets
	Total amount of assets seized by type of asset linked to active organized criminal groups	Police	Agency for Management of Seized Property	Police/Prosecutorial Co	Special prosecutor's office	Ministry of interior/palico	Managing Confiscated Assets
	Total amount of assets confiscated by type of asset linked to active organized criminal groups	Police	Agency for Management of Seized Property	Police/Prosecutorial Co	Special prosecutor's office	Ministry of interior/palico	Managing Confiscated Assets
	Total amount of assets seized by type of asset linked to active organized criminal groups	Police	Agency for Management of Seized Property	Police/Prosecutorial Co	Special prosecutor's office	Ministry of interior/palico	Managing Confiscated Assets
Homicides	Total number of people arrested for intentional homicide	Police	Police	Police	Police	Ministry of interior/palico	Police
	Total number of people arrested for intentional homicide linked to active organized criminal groups	Police	Police	Police	Police	Ministry of interior/palico	Police
	Total number of people arrested for attempted homicide linked to active organized criminal groups	Police	Police	Police	Police	Ministry of interior/palico	Police
	Total number of intentional homicide for which the offender has been identified by the police (clearance rate)	Police	Police	Police	Police	Ministry of interior/palico	Police
Money Laundering	Total number of people arrested for money laundering	Police	Police	Police	Police	Ministry of interior/palico	Police
	Total number of people arrested for money laundering linked to active organized criminal groups	Police	Police	Police	Police	Ministry of interior/palico	Police
Human Trafficking	Total number of people arrested for human trafficking	Police	Police	Police	Police	Ministry of interior/palico	Police
	Total number of people arrested for human trafficking linked to active organized criminal groups	Police	Police	Police	Police	Ministry of interior/palico	Police
Smuggling of migrants	Total number of people arrested for smuggling of migrants	Police	Police	Police	Police	Ministry of interior/palico	Police
	Total number of people arrested for smuggling of migrants linked to active organized criminal groups	Police	Police	Police	Police	Ministry of interior/palico	Police
	Total number of people arrested for facilitating illegal migration	Police	Police	Police	Police	Ministry of interior/palico	Police
	Total number of people arrested for facilitating illegal migration linked to active organized criminal groups	Police	Police	Police	Police	Ministry of interior/palico	Police

### 3.2. Regional table

Based on the designation of the availability status of the individual indicators, a regional table was created, featuring all indicators, divided into dimensions (with their sub-dimensions) and all countries/territories covered by the assessment. This table provided an opportunity to draw conclusions about the availability of indicators at the regional level. In order to finalize the regional statistical framework to measure OC, the “green” and “yellow” indicators were included in and form the framework for measuring and assessing organized crime in the Western Balkan region.



#### 4. DATA AVAILABILITY FINDINGS

The assessment of data against the statistical framework of OC showed that while in general, the majority of the indicators were available, most of the data in the “wish list” specifically on OC and on crime disaggregated by OC involvement was either not readily available or not available at all. More specifically:

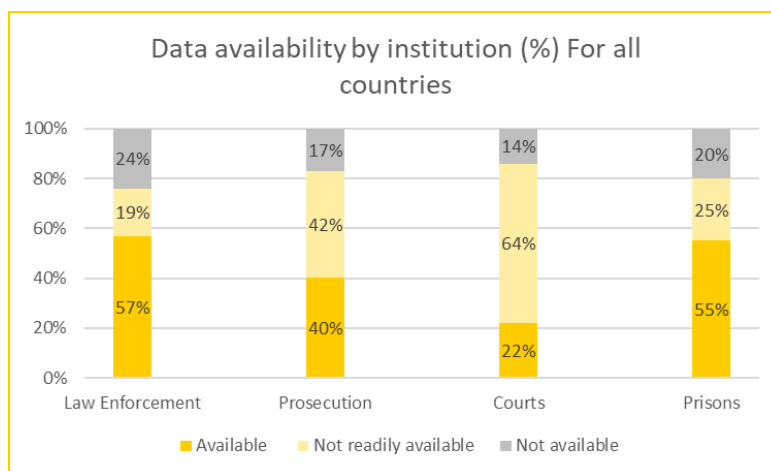
- **Most countries do not have statistical systems in place to record OC.** Regarding the dimensions of organized crime groups and economic value, there are not currently systems in place to be able to record, report and analyze this information, with the exception of one interviewed institution which kept a sophisticated database on all active organized criminal groups.
- **Available data varied greatly among different crime types.** Within different sub-dimensions of the framework, particularly among different crime types, availability of data varied greatly. This reflects common problems related to data collection on international crime statistics including imprecise definition of terms, incorrect classification, confusing coding structures, differences in the units of count and procedural differences. It also emphasizes that the main aim of crime and criminal justice statistical systems in the assessed countries/territories is not to assist in understanding criminal phenomena, but to record their actions for administrative purposes. However, it was particularly striking that, when a specific crime phenomenon had received increased attention from the international community and had been the subject of global or regional data collection efforts, the availability of data regarding that criminal phenomenon was significantly better. In other words, the availability of specific types of crime data is often dependent on what kinds of requests are received, and particularly when they are received with sustained regularity.
- **Even when data on crime is available, linkages with OC are not.** With regard to the dimensions of state response, enablers and OC activities in the framework, data regarding instances of crime was largely available. However, instances of crime linked to OC was not readily available. For instance, data could be collected on the total number of cases of trafficking in persons but not on the total number of cases of trafficking in persons involving an organized criminal group. This information may be collected by agencies in various forms (books or hard copy criminal justice records), but it is not entered into electronic databases. As a result, it becomes a considerable strain on time and human resources to access it.
- **The flow of cases through the criminal justice system is difficult to follow.** The inability to trace cases with a consistent identifying number from investigation, to prosecution to adjudication hampers efforts to understand how cases develop as they progress through the criminal justice system and what kinds of factors can lead to successes or failures in prosecutions and convictions of organized crime cases.
- **The principle offence rule can obscure organized crime involvement.** The principal offence rule, used to record data, may obfuscate the instance of crime committed in the context of OC, as very often multiple offences and those with lesser penalties are not captured in the statistical data recording systems. This is of particular relevance in the case of OCGs that, as a rule, commit multiple criminal offences.

#### 4.1. State response

Regarding the dimension of state response within the statistical framework, the system does capture a large amount of information. On average, about 80% of the “wish list” indicators could, in theory, be obtained from the criminal justice system.

The institutions assessed to provide the most easily available data are the law enforcement agencies and prisons (see Figure 5). Courts and prosecutors are in the possession of a lot of information in their records (not strictly court verdicts or decisions, but also indictments and evidentiary materials). Yet, very few of the indicators were assessed as being readily available since this information is not a part of regular reporting systems. These reporting systems, as elaborated earlier, are designed not to help understand crime, but to provide evidence for efficiency of the system. Since, not all of the data that is being recorded is transferred to the databases or being used for regular statistical reporting, if the data were requested, it is not likely that the extra human resources needed to report on this data will be expended.<sup>17</sup>

Figure 5



With regard to collection and reporting on crime related data, the assessment interviews confirmed that it is not possible to trace a case through the criminal justice process, from investigation to prosecution to adjudication with one unique identifier. While this does not affect the availability of data per se, it severely hampers efforts to directly measure case attrition and analyze what factors lead to successes or failures in prosecutions and convictions of organized crime related cases. For example, when a law enforcement agency investigates an organized criminal group which consists of 10 people and deals in drugs, it subsequently completes the investigation and submits the report to the prosecutor. At a later stage, the prosecutor may discover that what was assumed to be one group is actually split into two groups: 6 persons who deal drugs and 4 persons who launder the money. This new information however, will not

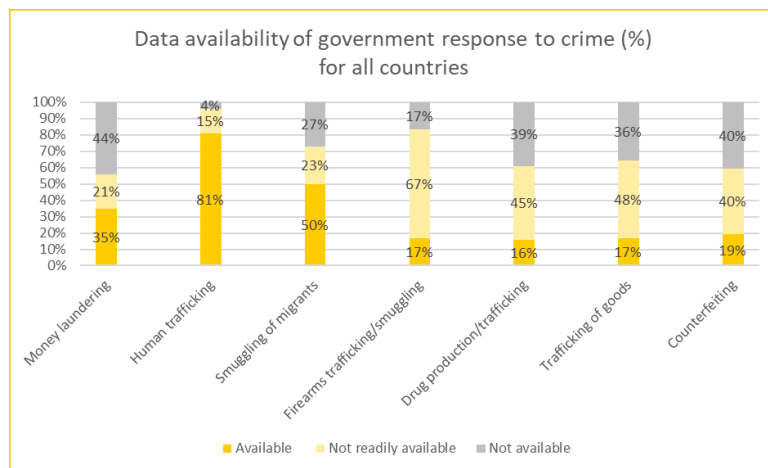
<sup>17</sup> For detailed overview of the data availability, see Measuring Organised Crime: Assessment of Data in the Western Balkans, Annex A.

affect the data recorded by the police, nor will it change anything in the data submitted to the repository for purposes of analysis. On the other hand, a traceable case number would enable a more transparent and deeper analysis of the patterns and trends related to organized crime.

#### 4.2. Criminal activities

The assessments revealed that data availability significantly differs depending on the type of criminal activity in question. Whereas a majority of the indicators on trafficking in persons were available, very few indicators on firearms trafficking, drug trafficking, smuggling and trafficking of goods or counterfeit goods were readily available. The assessment revealed that quite a lot of information is being recorded regarding trafficking in firearms, yet very little of that information is used for regular reporting.

Figure 6



One of the reasons so many indicators are available for trafficking in persons could be that across the region, national institutions to monitor and combat trafficking are commonplace. Trafficking in persons has received considerable and sustained attention in the region, so countries/territories have faced various requests for data on the state response to this crime from domestic and international governmental and non-governmental organizations. Over time, forms and data recording for the state response to trafficking in persons were upgraded so that today it is available. It appears that the more often data on a particular criminal activity is requested from the region, the more likely it is that the institutions will upgrade their systems of data recording, statistical processing and reporting. It may be the case that if data on OC and OCGs were requested more often, it might bring more attention to the systems in place in countries/territories to record, process and report data on OC and OCG.

Furthermore, the “principal offence” rule, a rule that defines how simultaneously committed criminal offences are recorded, seems to hamper proper understanding and assessment of organized crime in the region. The application of the principle offence rule results in a situation in which only the most serious offence is recorded for statistical purposes. Other offences,

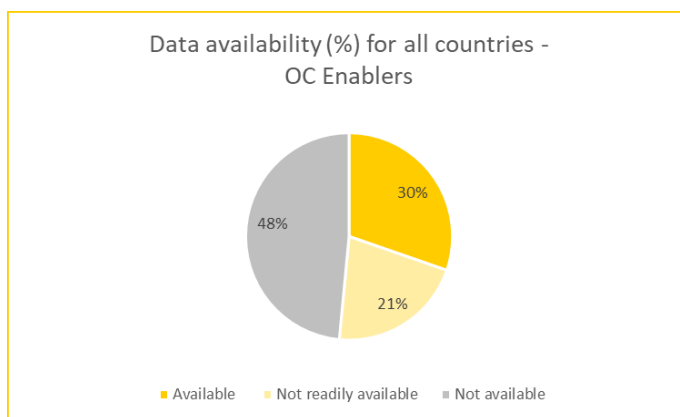
although available as information in case files, remain outside of the statistical reports. For example, an OCG of 10 persons are involved in drug trafficking; three of them subsequently are involved in money laundering; and two of them, in the course of the criminal operations, bribe police officials. All these activities are, beyond any doubt, related to or committed within the context of organized crime and each one of these 10 persons participated in several punishable criminal offences. However, statistically, only the most serious offence will be recorded. For some of them it might be “participation in an organized criminal group”, for another “drug trafficking”, and for the others “money laundering” or “bribery”.

Which of these will be recorded depends on the sentences prescribed for all offences. In the case of OCGs, that as a general rule commit multiple offences simultaneously, this poses a serious problem for the recording and reporting of data on instances of crime linked to organized crime. Obviously, over a certain period of time, the total number of OC related offences will be significantly different from reality.

### 4.3. Enablers

Enablers is a dimension that has three distinct sub-dimensions: corruption, obstruction of justice, and the use of technology for the commission of crimes by OCGs. At first glance, it seems that most of the data, almost 80%, on enablers is available. Deeper analysis of the results of the data availability assessment, however, suggest that the situation differs with regard to the sub-dimensions of the component.

Figure 7



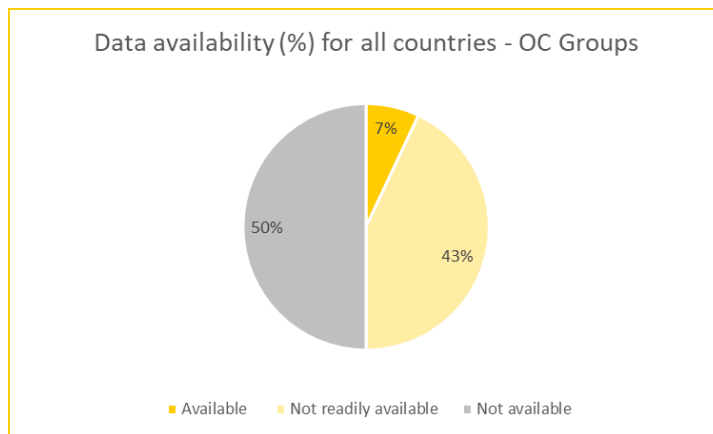
For example, with the exception of Albania, other countries/territories can provide almost all information for indicators related to corruption. At the same time, all countries/territories can provide data on indicators related to the obstruction of justice. A set of indicators that could be seen as the most problematic is the one related to the use of technology for the commission of crimes by OCGs. As above, this is probably due to a lack of requests received for the informa-

tion, resulting in data that is collected, but not preserved in statistical reporting.

#### 4.4. Data on organized criminal groups (OCGs)

Regarding the indicators defined for organized criminal groups, the general conclusion is that very little information is easily available. In principle, data for only half of the OCG related indicators is being recorded, and a significant portion is not readily available (see Figure 8).

Figure 8



With one exception, data on the number of recorded organized crime groups active in the country in the latest available year is missing across the region. The Ministry of Interior of Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, maintains a very sophisticated registry on activities of fighting organized crime that is a regional good practice.<sup>18</sup> However, with this one exception, disaggregation of OCGs by criminal activity in which they are involved is also missing and even this database is not linked to other criminal justice data such as investigation, prosecution or court records. Across the region, there is usually information about the total number of persons arrested for trafficking in persons, but it is not known how many of those were in relation with OC. Or, data on the amount of assets seized in a drug dealing case is available. Yet, data on which of those assets are linked with OC is not possible to collect. This information is potentially available in the records of prosecutors' offices or judicial and prosecutorial councils.

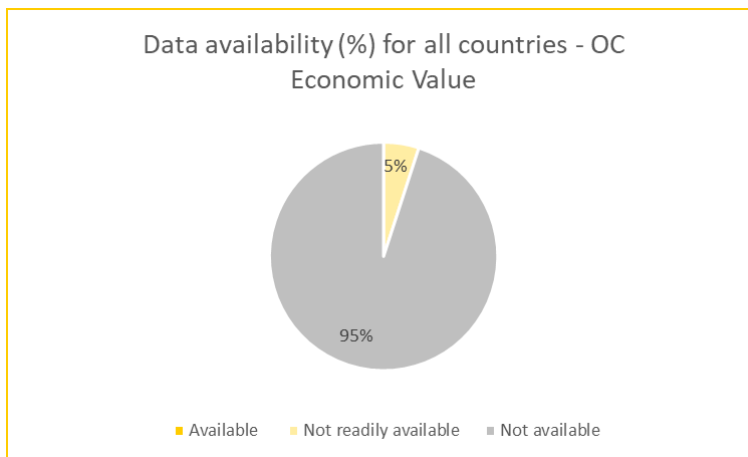
<sup>18</sup> Registry on activities of fighting organized crime contains information on operations against organized criminal groups related to organized crime groups' activities, the groups themselves, as well as individuals involved. The registry contains information on the code name of the operation, date and time of operation, location, who submitted the initial information about the suspicious activity, types of criminal offences the group is involved in, the name of the group, structure of the group, their propensity to use of violence, level of expertise used by the group, use of corruption, use of ICT, links to and relationship to other groups (supervising role, or dependent on others, etc.), international links of the group, status of the operation, domestic or international, financial investigation, number of members of the group, detailed information about the members of the group including place of residence, as well as the criminal offences the group is being investigated for, and much more.

However, it would require additional resources (time and human), to manually extract the files and analyze which cases are related to OCGs. Therefore, it can be concluded that with above-mentioned exception, the data as it is does not provide a picture of OC in any given country/territory.

#### 4.5. Economic value

The results of the data assessment showed that data regarding the economic value of organized criminal activities, (see Figure 9) is not available at all. None of the criminal justice agencies, or any other institution interviewed seemed to have systems to capture the economic value associated with the activities of OCGs, e.g., approximate income (for offender in case of trafficking in persons) by one victim per day; or an average price at the retail level by type of firearm and ammunitions; or an average price at the retail level by type of drug trafficked.

Figure 9



## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The question of the existence of organized crime has long been settled, yet the scope and patterns of the problem and its effects on our society are questions that still call for a solid answer. Policy makers, practitioners and the international community would benefit from an adequate and viable framework that will assist in understanding organized crime. In the context of the MACRO project, UNODC has elaborated such a framework with statistical data at its base. As a preliminary step towards the development of the framework, a thorough and comprehensive data assessment related to OC data availability at the national and regional level was carried out for the very first time.

The data assessment detailed in this Research Brief made clear that although there is a large amount of data available regarding some dimensions of organized crime, most of it is not stored in a way that facilitates efficient collection and analysis. Other dimensions of organized crime, such as information about groups and economic value, is non-existent in the statistical

systems. Within the MACRO project, this lack of data has been adequately compensated for. Regarding the lack of data related to organized criminal groups which would assist in understanding modus operandi, internal structures, and economic value of OC activities, the project has undertaken a series of qualitative information gathering efforts in the form of in-depth interviews. These interviews will add the viewpoints of expert practitioners, prisoners convicted of crimes most often associated with organized crime,<sup>19</sup> as well as victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants to the analysis of these dimensions of the framework.

Regarding the large amount of data that was found to be not readily available (yellow colored cells), the data collection conducted under the MACRO project nevertheless requested these indicators from the beneficiaries in an attempt to fully exploit the availability of data. It is clear from preliminary data analysis that some, although not all, of the data that was characterized as “not readily available” has been received. These measures, however, will only solve the issue of understanding OC in the Western Balkan region in the short term and are not sustainable to measure organized crime patterns and trends over time. For a long-term solution, the following actions are recommended, some relatively minor and some requiring more time and resources, that could considerably increase the amount and quality of OC data.

### ***5.1. Improving existing statistical systems to measure organized crime***

Institutions in the region should improve data processing procedures, so that the data collected through various hard copy forms and books of records are more readily available to domestic institutions and policy makers for the purpose of creating and implementing evidence-based policies. Thereby, vastly increasing the availability and quality of data. This will not only make the domestic institutions better informed of the situation with OC, but also simplify their procedures to respond to various requests for data that are, as reported, continuously coming from various interested parties.

In order to more efficiently disaggregate instances of crime related to organized crime, a couple of actions are recommended. First, the use of the principal offence rule and any other counting rules that may obfuscate the total number of OC related offences should be reconsidered. Secondly, the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS) should be implemented, and particularly the use of its event disaggregations (see Figure 10), should be introduced in order to efficiently “tag” the instance of crimes that are organized-crime related.

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<sup>19</sup> Participation in an organized criminal group, trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants, trafficking in firearms, manufacturing of drugs, drug trafficking, trafficking in goods and trafficking in counterfeit goods.

Figure 10

EVENT DISAGGREGATIONS				
At – Attempted/completed	SiC – Situational context	Geo – Geographical location of the crime	Rep – Reported by	DaT – Date and time
1. Attempted 2. Completed 3. Not Applicable 4. Not known	1. Organized-crime related	1. Required geographical division of country (1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , etc. levels) 2. Extraterritorial 3. Not Applicable 4. Not known	1. Victim	<b>Date format:</b> dddd/mm/yyyy  <b>Time format:</b> 24:00
	2. Gang related		2. Witness (non-victim)	
	3. Corporate crime related		3. Police	
	4. Intimate partner / family related		4. Other law enforcement	
	5. Terrorism-related		5. Criminal justice institution	
	6. Civil unrest		6. Not known	
	7. Other crime			
	8. Not applicable			
	9. Not known			

Source: ICCS, Version 1.0.

Once introduced, these would help to enrich the analysis and understanding of organized crime. This would, obviously, require modification of the recording systems by law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies. However, this would lead to a better understanding of crime, organized crime included, and would help law enforcement agencies, other criminal justice institutions and policymakers create better policies and strategies to counter organized crime.

In line with good practice described by the United Nations Manual for the Development of a System of Criminal Justice Statistics and as recommended by the CARDS project in 2010,<sup>20</sup> institutions that collect data on the criminal justice response to crime should consider harmonizing their case identification systems so that cases can be traced throughout the criminal justice system with an integrated file number (IFN). This will aid in efforts to understand how cases have developed from investigation to prosecution to adjudication and which factors lead to successes or failures in responding to different forms of crime, particularly organized crime. In this respect, a pilot test in one of the MACRO beneficiaries could be considered, consisting of a tripartite working group with experts from the police, prosecution and court systems in order to consider whether and how an IFN system could be introduced and extended to all criminal justice institutions.

<sup>20</sup> Please see <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/statistics/statistics-Balkans.html>



### **5.2. Developing new statistical systems to measure organized crime**

New statistical systems, such as the registry on activities of fighting organized crime, developed in Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, should be implemented regionally in order to collect, store and analyze data on organized criminal groups' structures and profiles, as well as on the economic value of their activities.

The Western Balkans is a region with very high levels of uniformity in statistical systems. For this reason, regional cooperation in harmonizing systems to collect, analyze, report and share data on OC and OCGs should be developed and supported. Good practices implemented in one country or territory should serve as models for adoption in other jurisdictions.

### **5.3. Other methods to measure organized crime**

Multiple systems estimation (MSE) methodology to capture hidden victims of trafficking in persons has already been implemented in Serbia<sup>21</sup> and is currently ongoing in Albania. If feasible, other Western Balkans countries and territories should consider implementing this method to estimate the total number of victims of trafficking in persons in their jurisdictions, as well as gain insight into the breakdown of age, gender, nationality and forms of exploitation of this hidden group.

Administrative sources (such as police or judicial statistics) cannot provide a sufficiently reliable and comprehensive analysis of crime on their own. Victimization surveys should also be implemented to help governments and the general public understand organized crime, its impact on society and how better to address it.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Please see Research Brief: Monitoring Target 16.2 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: multiple systems estimation of the numbers of presumed victims of trafficking in persons: Serbia, at [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/MSE\\_Research\\_Brief\\_Serbia.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/MSE_Research_Brief_Serbia.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Please see UNODC's Manual on Victimization Surveys, at [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Crime-statistics/Manual\\_on\\_Victimization\\_surveys\\_2009\\_web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Crime-statistics/Manual_on_Victimization_surveys_2009_web.pdf)

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