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The political and organisational dimensions of Organised Crime in the Western Balkans: Presentation of empirical findings

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Abstract

This presentation will give an overview of several recent projects on organized crime in the Western Balkans. The main focus will be primarily, but not exclusively, on ethnic Albanian organized crime groups coming from Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and their ties to other local and foreign groups. Ethnic Albanian organised crime is a highly publicised topic, but there is a very limited scientific research on it. The presentation will tackle questions such as:

What role did the Albanian culture and societal organization play in the rise of ethnic Albanian organized crime groups?

How do ethnic Albanian groups differ from other Western Balkan groups (Serbian, Macedonian...)?

Which were the key milestones in Albania's trajectory from the low point of near collapse of public order to today's level of acceptable public safety?

How can we measure Albania's improved performance in this area?

Various cases will be discussed in order to illustrate the structure, culture and action of Balkan organized crime groups. The political dimension of organized crime in the Balkans will be discussed, too. The presentation will also elaborate on the methodology used to collect data in each of the projects as well as on the methodological challenges the researcher faced in investigating irksome topic such as organized crime. The findings are mainly based on interviews with several serious ethnic Albanian offenders, victims of trafficking, law enforcement officials from more than ten countries and NGO representative as well as on public survey results (900 respondents) and investigated police files.