



Bundeskriminalamt



4th Research Conference on Organised Crime

- OC-Research in Western European States – Great Britain, the Netherlands

in Wiesbaden on 02 – 03 November 2011

Organised economic crime in the UK – the challenges of harmonising public and private policing

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Abstract

I will not discuss detailed problems of definition, even though many might argue that economic crime is primarily a form of organised crime and money laundering is a component of any major crime for gain in which funds are stored rather than immediately consumed. The premise for my paper is that we need to think through actively the implications of the social fact that many of the things that the public police - ‘polizei’ - do in relation to crime for gain involve the active or passive consent of the private sector (and sometimes of public bodies too, where they are victims or participants in corruption). This occurs in the following contexts:

1. The reporting of crimes against business, whether or not committed by other businesses or by ‘organised crime’ personnel or by opportunists;
2. The investigation of loss/crime by corporate in-house personnel or by external accountants and/or lawyers before (sometimes) reporting to the police or regulators;
3. The reporting of suspicions by regulated bodies under anti-money laundering provisions;
4. Cooperation in the tracing and recovery of the proceeds of crime;
5. Proactive risk analysis, collation of risk data and interventions in the *prevention* of economic crime.

The recognition of this ‘plural policing’ is shown in the payment card and insurance sectors, in police-private ‘partnerships’ in other sectors of economic activity, and in anti-corruption measures, which will be discussed in the context of what we know about how those crimes are organised and what evidence there is of connections between economic and organised criminals. In the UK, this control also takes the form of private financing of police activities and units, actively encouraged by the government. The international interactions of these elements (for example via Financial Intelligence Units in developed and developing countries) are also important. Better understanding of the impacts of these changes on efficiency and effectiveness of controls is vital for rational management of economic and organised crime.