



RECOMMENDATIONS

15th session of Working Group 4,

"Justice, Freedom, and Security" (Chapter 24)

30 October 2024

“Challenges in the fight against financial crime in the Republic of North Macedonia: The importance of efficient financial investigations”

1. Consistent implementation of national strategies, in particular the concept of *intelligence-led policing (ILP)* in all law enforcement agencies. To successfully tackle organized crime, it is mandatory to conduct financial investigations in parallel with criminal proceedings, especially in cases of money laundering and financial crime. The Ministry of Interior, the Financial Police and the Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime should strengthen their financial forensics capabilities, develop a system for automatic data exchange and ensure efficient confiscation of illegally acquired property. This will prevent further funding of criminal networks and increase transparency in economic flows.
2. Active use of instruments for operational and strategic cooperation in the fight against organized crime. For the effective fight against organized crime, it is necessary to strengthen inter-institutional and international cooperation by improving the exchange of information between the Ministry of Interior, the Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime, the Financial Police, the Financial Intelligence Administration and the Customs Administration, as well as by activating them in regional and European mechanisms such as Europol, Interpol, EUROJUST and OLAF. The implementation of *Joint Investigation Teams (JITs)* will allow for better coordination in the fight against transnational crime, while the development of platforms for confidential data exchange will improve the monitoring of financial flows and increase the efficiency of investigations. In addition, the country's increased participation in initiatives such as SELEC (Southeast European Law Enforcement Center) will allow for the exchange of experiences and access to advanced analytical tools for detecting organized criminal networks.
3. Creating an inclusive civic, multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary approach. For the effective fight against organized crime, it is necessary to continuously update and implement the National Strategy for Combating Organized Crime, involving the Ministry of the Interior, relevant ministries, civil society organizations and the academic community. Favorable results in this type of crime where the perpetrators are always one step ahead of the institutions will be achieved by engaging experts from the judiciary, economics, security and digital technologies, as well as by increasing transparency and accountability by regularly reporting on the progress and effects of the measures implemented.





4. Improving information systems, forensic analysis, and specialized investigation units. To combat organized crime more effectively, it is necessary to strengthen intelligence and operational capacities through the development of advanced digital tools for data processing and analysis, improve financial investigations, and strengthen digital forensics capacities. This should be carried out by the National Coordination Center for Combating Organized Crime, in coordination with the Ministry of Interior, the Financial Police, the Prosecutor's Office and the Customs Administration, by hiring new personnel, conducting specialized trainings and improving technical resources for monitoring and detecting criminal activities.

5. Development of interoperable information exchange platforms for the detection of criminal activities. The digitization of institutions is key to more effective tracking and detection of criminal activities, which requires the development of interoperable platforms for the automatic exchange of information between the Ministry of Interior, the National Coordination Center for Combating Organized Crime, the Financial Intelligence Administration and the Financial Police. This should be implemented through the implementation of electronic systems for data exchange, digitization of criminal records and investigative procedures, as well as the introduction of advanced tools for the analysis of financial flows, which will improve the identification and processing of criminal groups.

6. Continuous monitoring of the priorities of the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats – EMPACT. Support to the EU-EMPACT priorities is key to improving the fight against organized crime in North Macedonia by aligning national policies with the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats (EMPACT). This should be implemented by the Government, the Ministry of the Interior and the Organized Crime Prosecutor's Office, through improved cooperation with European authorities, active participation in international investigations and exchanges of experts with EU Member States. These measures will allow for the adoption of European best practices and the strengthening of national capacities to deal with criminal threats.