

Organized corruption: Political financing in the Western Balkans

PRESS RELEASE

**New report shows tangled web of power, patronage and politics**

A new report by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) shows how money buys power in the Western Balkans. Entitled *Organized corruption: Political financing in the Western Balkans*, the report provides an in-depth analysis of the role of political power in shaping the political economy of corruption in the region.

Building on the GI-TOC’s *Infrastructure of Integrity* series (2021), this report looks at what the lead author Ugi Zvekić describes as ‘organized corruption’ – a crooked ecosystem that allows for systemic illicit financial gains and the manipulation of social support for political benefit. The report focuses on three types of political financing: financing of political parties and elections, political influence and control over state-owned enterprises, and the use of and control over public procurement.

An analysis of the legal and institutional frameworks in each of the Western Balkan countries shows that important structures are in place, but implementation is often lacking. Furthermore, control mechanisms in most countries are weak, as is the engagement of civil society. The problem is compounded by a political culture in which those who gain power seek to feather their own nests and exploit public resources for private gain.

One of the most revealing sections of the report shows how state-owned enterprises have often become de facto assets of ruling parties, at national and local levels. This practice, described as ‘partocracy’, enables the administration of public companies in the interest of political parties or those connected to them. ‘The misuse of public companies as “election prey” is not unique to the Western Balkans, but its impact in the region has serious political and economic consequences,’ warns Zvekić.

The report calls for deep reforms to counter organized corruption in the Western Balkans, particularly in light of the control exerted by political parties over public enterprises and procurement processes. It also highlights the need for promoting a culture of integrity, dismantling organized corruption and institutionalizing civil society’s oversight role in all six countries of the region.

*Organized corruption: Political financing in the Western Balkans*, authored by Uglješa Ugi Zvekić, Sunčana Roksandić and Bojan Dobovšek, will be available online from 23 June 2023. On 27 June, the GI-TOC will host a webinar to launch the report ­– [sign up](https://gitoc.heysummit.com/talks/organized-corruption-political-financing-western-balkans/) for the event or visit the [report homepage](https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/organized-corruption-political-financing-western-balkans/) for more detail.

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| ABOut the global initiative (GI-TOC)  The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime is a network of professionals working on the front lines of 2 the fight against the illicit economy and criminal actors. Through a network of global civil society observatories on the illicit economy, we monitor evolving trends and work to build the evidence basis for policy action, disseminate the expertise of our Network, and catalyze multisectoral and holistic responses across a range of crime types. With the Global Initiative's Resilience Fund, we support community activists and local non-governmental organizations working in areas where crime governance critically undermines people's safety, security and life chances.  ABOUT THE OBSERVATORY OF ILLICIT ECONOMIES IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE (SEE-OBS)  The Observatory is a platform that connects and empowers civil-society actors in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The Observatory aims to enable civil society to identify, analyze and map criminal trends, and their impact on illicit flows, governance, development, interethnic relations, security and the rule of law, and supports them in their monitoring of national dynamics and wider regional and international organized-crime trends. The Observatory was launched as an outcome of the 2018 Western Balkans Summit in London, a part of the Berlin Process. |

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