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An illustration of a group of diverse people walking across a crosswalk. The crosswalk consists of alternating red and blue stripes. The background is a dark purple with large, light purple geometric shapes. The people are shown from a top-down perspective, walking in various directions.

# Global Organized Crime Index 2025

Crime at a crossroads

Europe



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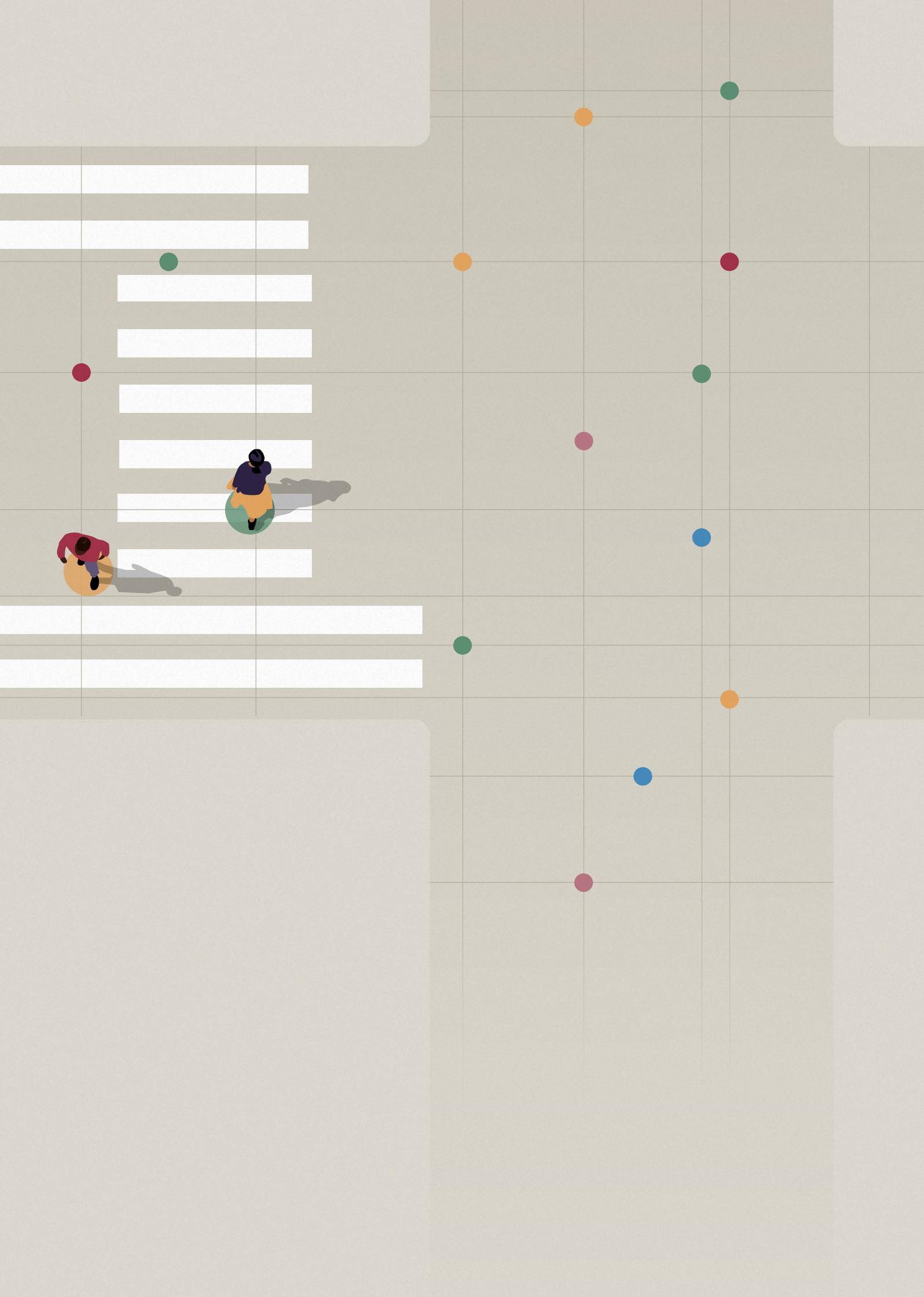
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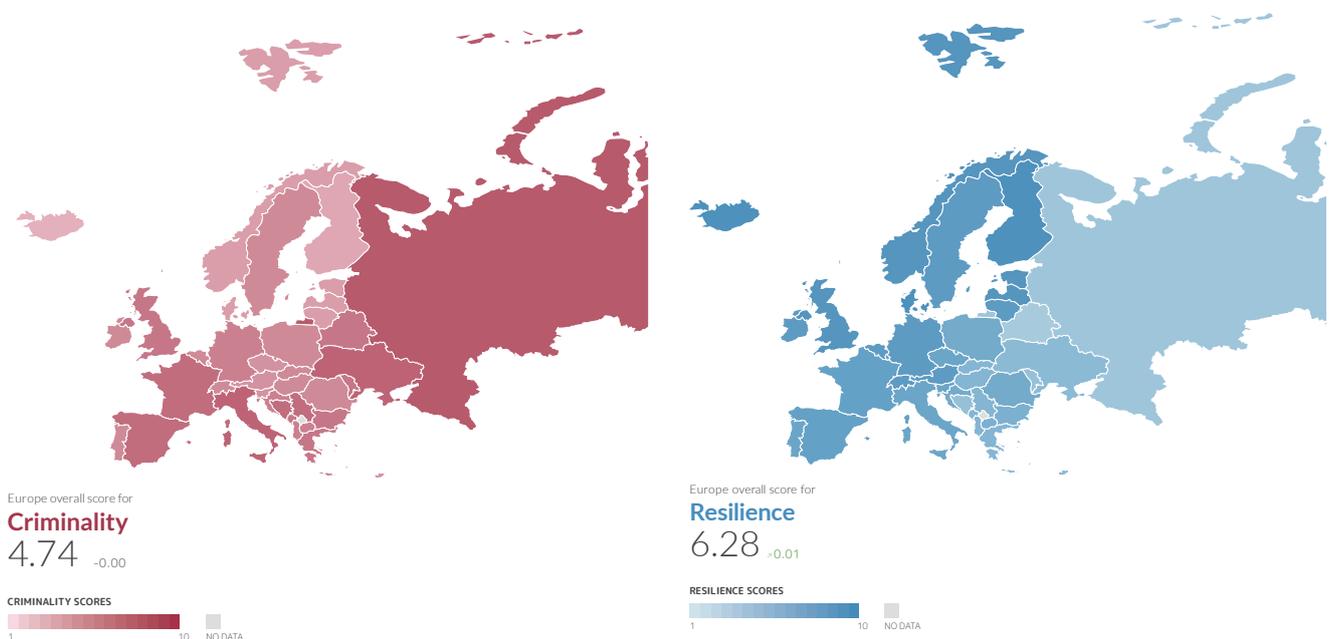
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# INTRODUCTION

Although Europe is generally considered to be a stable continent, composed of countries that are largely characterized by democratic regimes, accountable political systems and open civil societies, it presents a range of vulnerabilities that are exploited by diverse criminal actors. The continent's large legitimate economy and favourable business environment create significant opportunities for criminal enterprises to infiltrate key supply chains, particularly through money laundering and collusion with public officials, as well as through ports and airports. At the same time, growing digitalization and reliance on technology have allowed criminal groups operating in Europe to become increasingly sophisticated. They are diversifying their portfolios of illicit activities, expanding their reach to a greater number of vulnerable people and broadening their appeal, making the recruitment of young people a pressing concern.

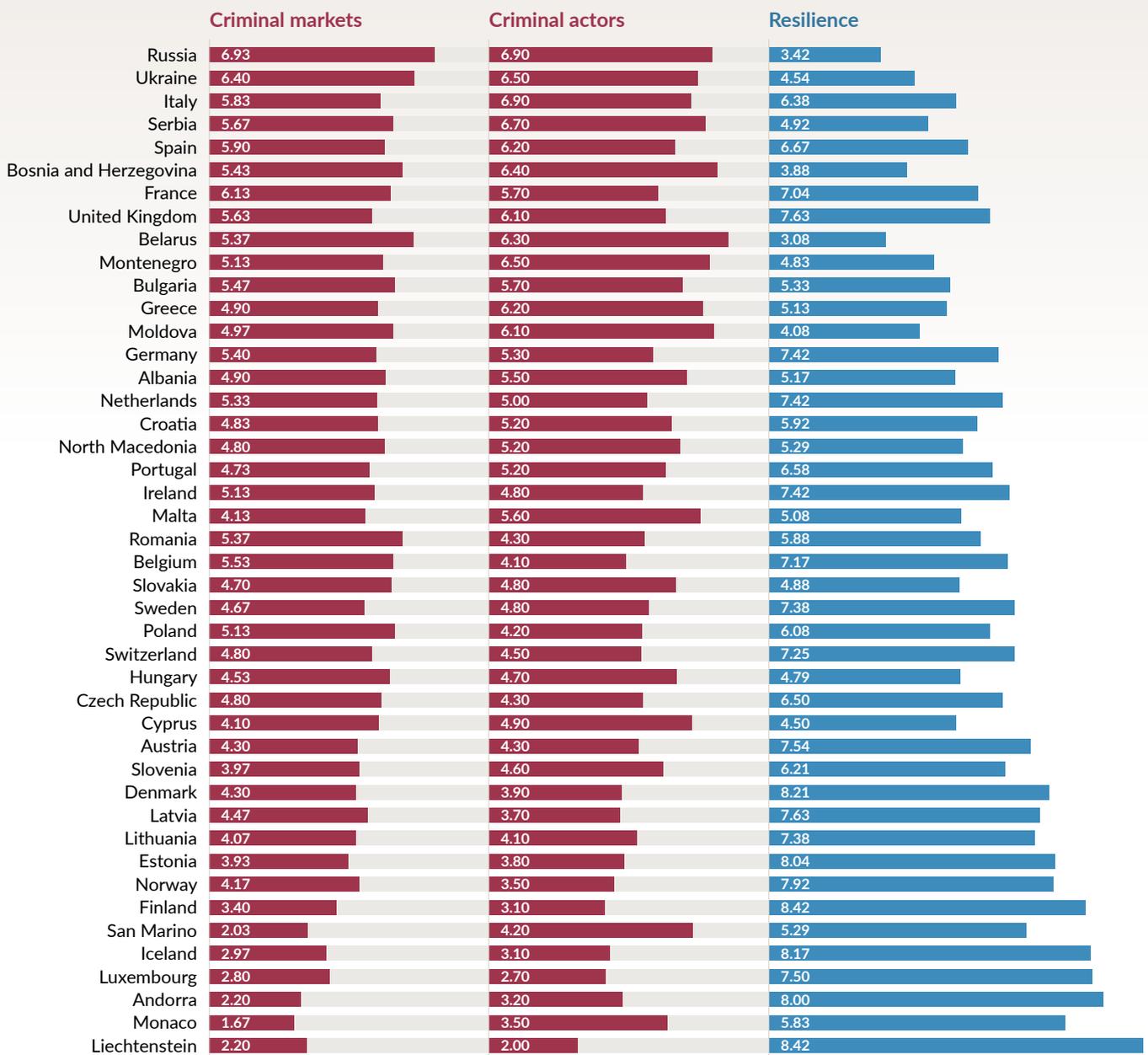


**FIGURE 1** Criminology and resilience, Europe, 2025.

The armed conflict in Ukraine is a source of developing threats to Europe's internal security and represents potentially fertile ground for increasing criminal activity. Since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, criminal actors have adapted to the conflict environment. A potential ceasefire or peace agreement may also create new opportunities for illicit networks to exploit. Continuous monitoring of the developing situation, the sectors most at risk, the likely scenarios that could unfold, and the way the criminal underworld adjusts to external changes is essential to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the future trajectory of organized crime across the continent.

## Europe: main findings

- Worldwide, Europe remains the second-lowest continent for criminality after Oceania, but there is significant variance among its 44 countries in terms of criminal markets and resilience.
- Financial crime is the most pervasive criminal market in Europe, while the continent leads worldwide in cyber-dependent crimes.
- Within drug markets, cocaine and synthetic drugs are salient, recording the sharpest increases across the Index iterations since 2023. Cannabis and heroin trades have declined, in line with global trends.
- The presence of criminal actors has grown steadily since 2021. Foreign actors remain the most concerning actor type, with the largest overall rise since 2021.
- Europe maintains its position as the highest-scoring continent for resilience, marking steady improvement since 2021.



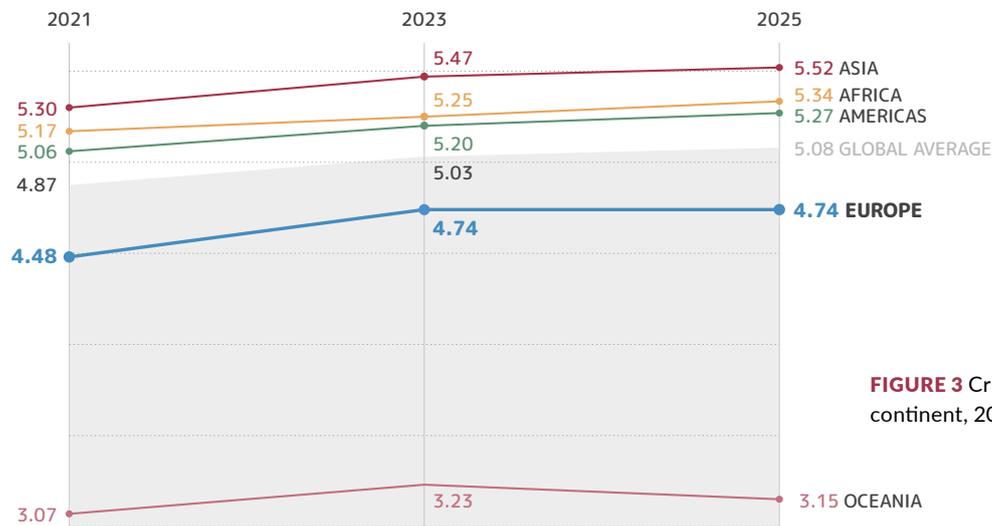
**FIGURE 2** Index scores by European country, 2025.

NOTE: Countries are ranked from highest to lowest based on their overall criminality average, calculated as the mean of the two components: criminal markets and criminal actors.

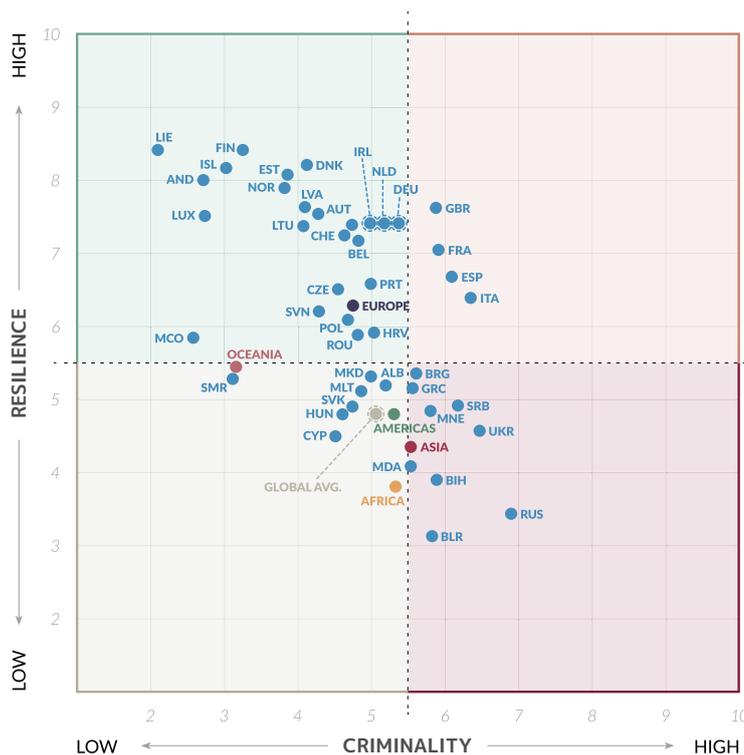
# EUROPE COMPARED TO THE REST OF THE WORLD

The latest Index results suggest that levels of organized crime have remained stable across Europe while increasing in most other regions. However, this masks the fact that the situation is dynamic when looking at criminal actors and markets at a disaggregated level.

For example, at a national level, 24 out of 44 European countries have high resilience and low criminality, meaning that they make up more than half of all countries in the world in that quadrant. At the same time, it is noteworthy that of the nine countries characterized by high resilience and high criminality, four are from Europe (France, Italy, Spain and the UK), while nine European countries suffer from high criminality but low resilience.



**FIGURE 3** Criminality shifts by continent, 2021–2025.



**FIGURE 4** Vulnerability classifications, 2025.

Europe continues to be a global hotspot for cyber-dependent crimes. These sophisticated crimes, ranging from ransomware attacks to malware distribution and cryptocurrency fraud, often target strategic entities such as government institutions, major corporations and critical infrastructure, with threats originating from within and beyond the continent. Europe also ranks second globally in other forms of crime, notably financial crimes – the continent’s most pervasive criminal market – and most drug markets, including cocaine, synthetic drugs and heroin. The prominence of drug markets, in particular, underlines Europe’s expanding role as a destination, transit hub and consumer market for a wide range of substances. Cocaine remains a particularly significant driver of Europe’s illicit economy, making it the second-highest scoring continent globally for this drug, after the Americas.

Compared to other continents, Europe ranks third for the presence and influence of foreign actors, private-sector actors and mafia-style groups, but fourth for criminal networks and state-embedded actors.

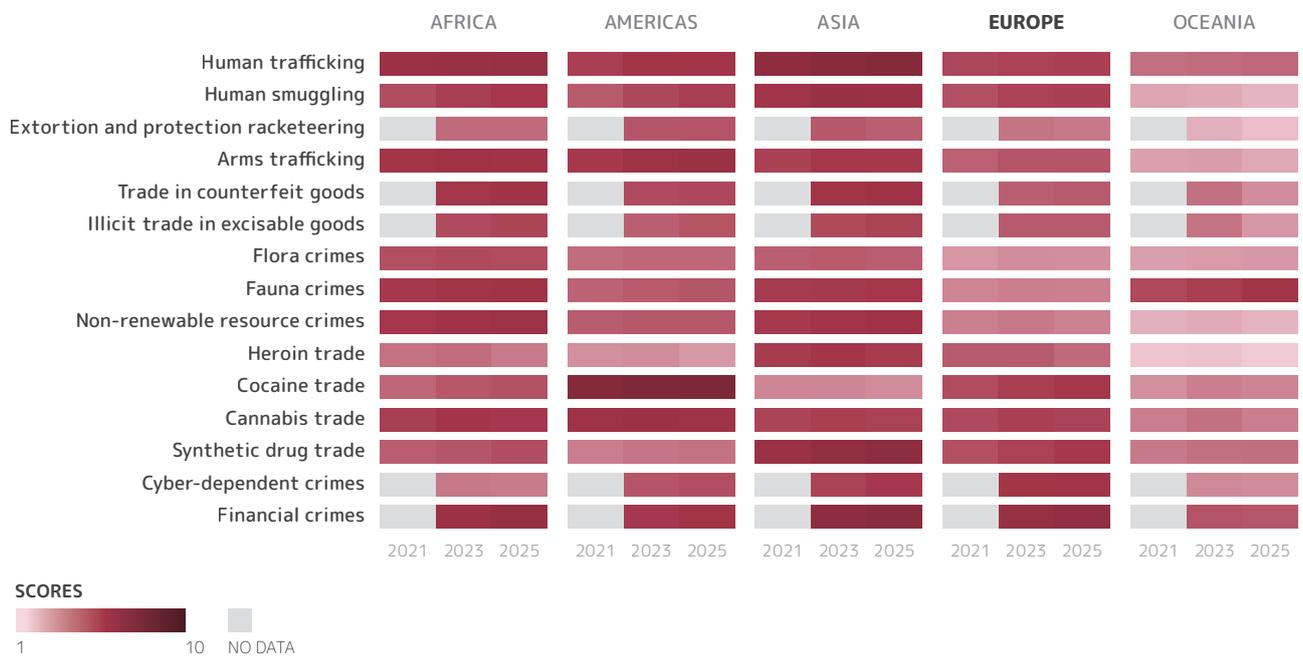


FIGURE 5 Criminal market shifts by continent, 2021–2025.

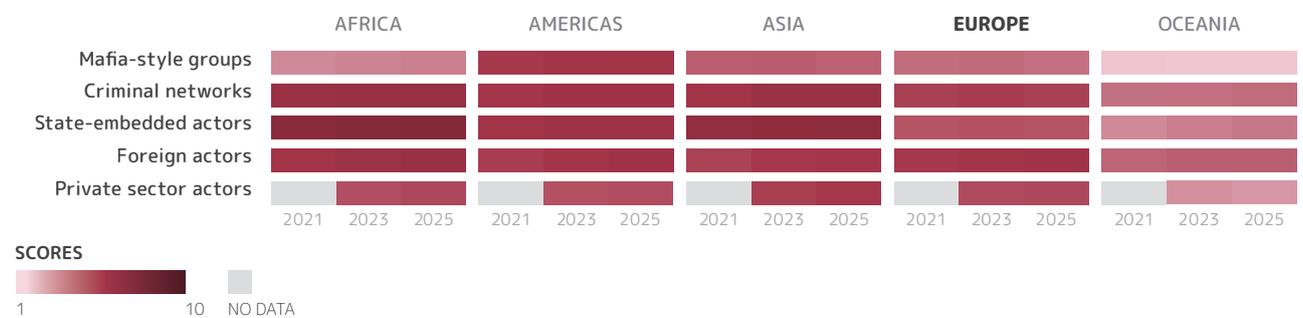
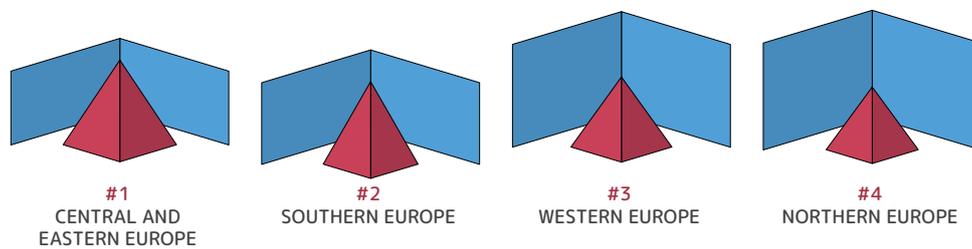


FIGURE 6 Criminal actor shifts by continent, 2021–2025.

From a resilience perspective, Europe's response to organized crime has been relatively effective. The continent's average score for resilience stands at 6.28 in the 2025 Index, maintaining its position as the highest-scoring globally and marking a steady upward trend since 2021. Europe outperforms all other continents in each of the 12 resilience indicators covered by the Index. Although particularly high scores are recorded for 'international cooperation', 'national policies and laws' and 'territorial integrity', even comparatively weaker areas – such as 'anti-money laundering' and 'government transparency and accountability' – still surpass other continents.

Nevertheless, Europe's relatively strong performance should not be equated with fully effective or sufficient measures. There is still significant room for improvement, as a sustained decline in criminality has yet to be observed. On the contrary, criminality continues to expand and adapt, and the constantly shifting global landscape underlines the need for Europe continuously to update its resilience strategies to keep pace with emerging threats.

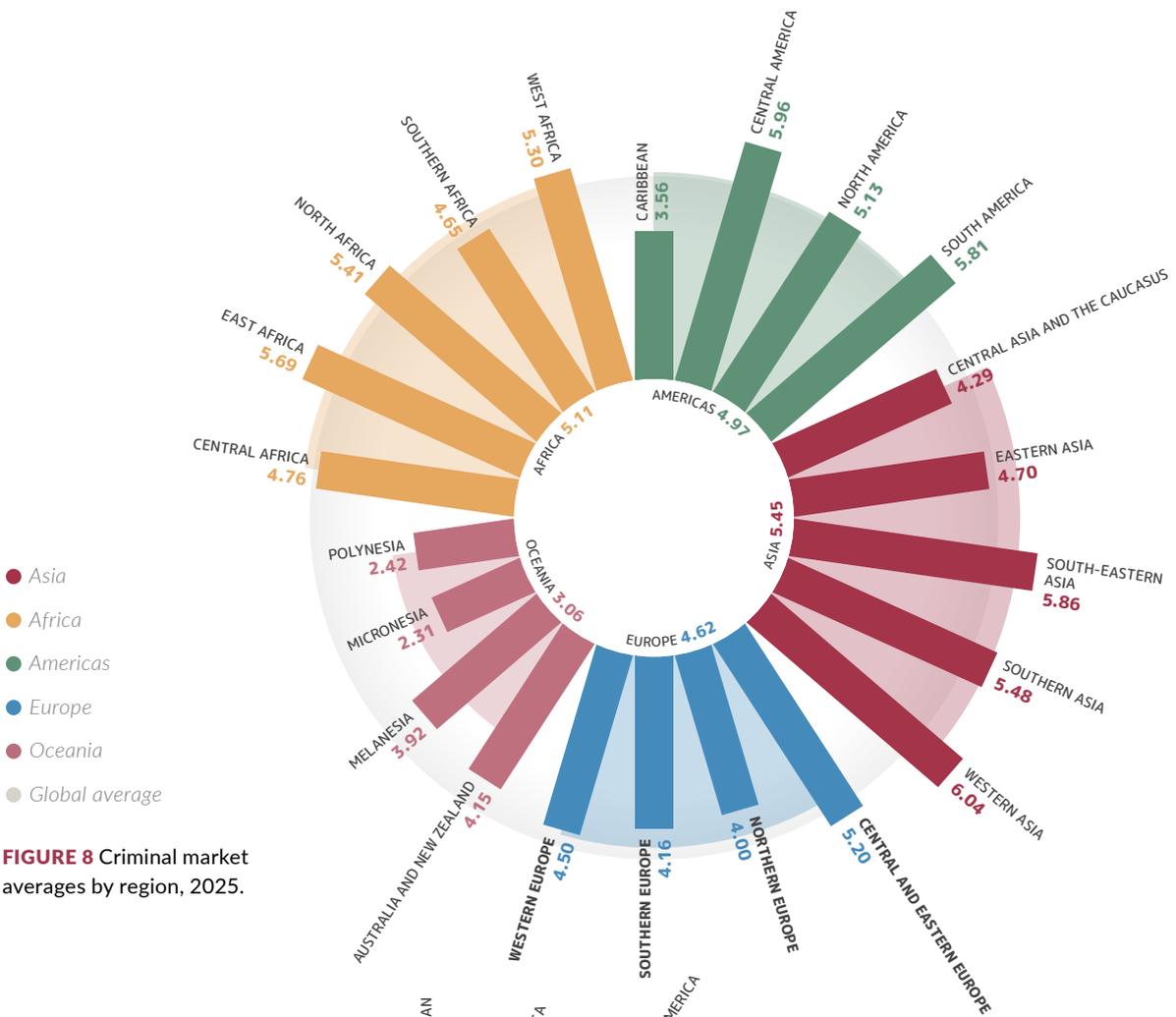


REGION	CRIMINALITY		CRIMINAL MARKETS		CRIMINAL ACTORS		RESILIENCE	
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE	5.36	-0.01	5.20	0.00	5.52	-0.01	4.99	-0.03
SOUTHERN EUROPE	4.75	+0.02	4.16	+0.02	5.34	+0.01	5.68	+0.02
WESTERN EUROPE	4.42	-0.01	4.50	+0.02	4.34	-0.04	7.53	+0.05
NORTHERN EUROPE	3.87	+0.01	4.00	+0.03	3.75	0.00	7.89	0.00
<b>EUROPE AVERAGE</b>	<b>4.74</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>4.62</b>	<b>+0.02</b>	<b>4.87</b>	<b>-0.01</b>	<b>6.28</b>	<b>+0.01</b>

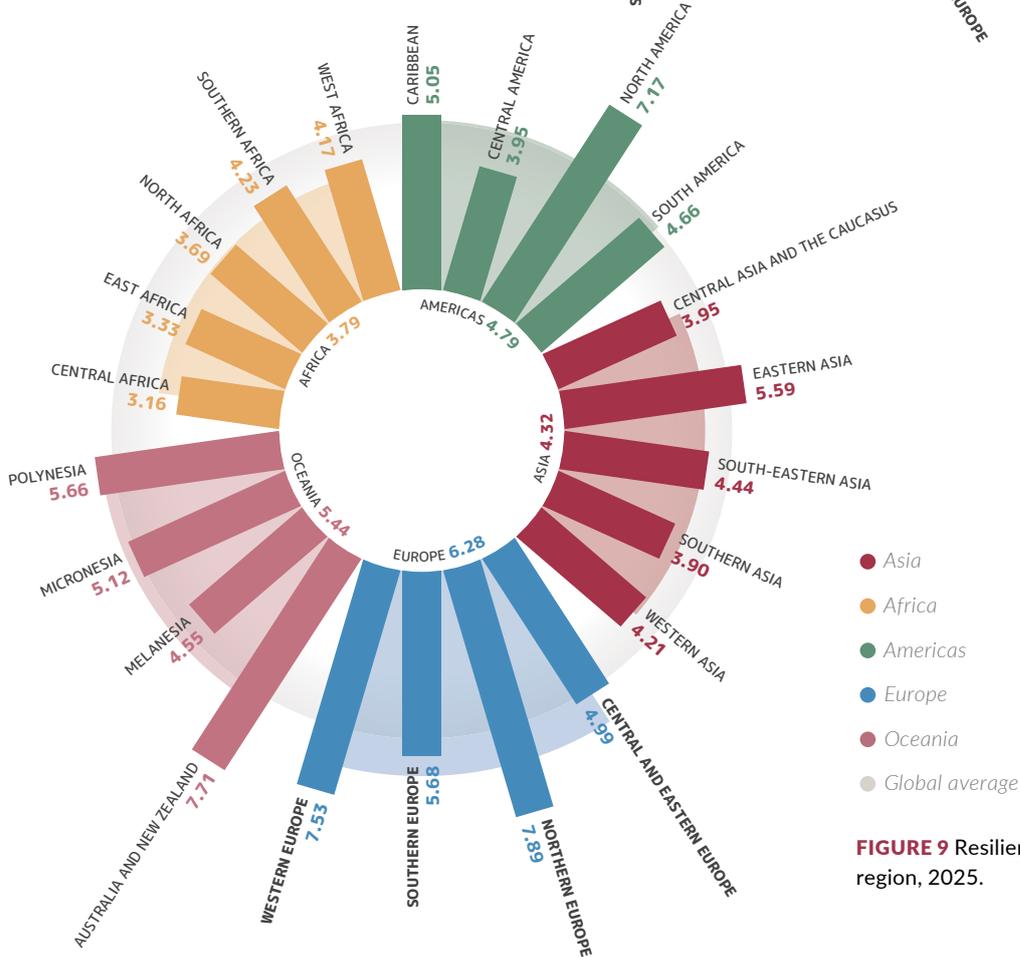
**FIGURE 7** Criminality and resilience by region, Europe, 2025.

At the regional level, when comparing the four regions of Europe with the 18 other regions of the world covered by the Index, the overall picture for criminality and resilience largely mirrors the continental trend. Still, some nuances are worth highlighting. While Central and Eastern Europe ranks among the 10 regions globally with the highest levels of criminality, Northern Europe falls well below the global average. Overall, criminality levels have been rising across the continent since 2021, with Southern Europe and Western Europe recording the largest cumulative increases.

The continent performs strongly on resilience, with all regions ranking in the global top 10 and Northern Europe achieving the highest score worldwide (7.89). Changes in resilience between 2021 and 2025 have been positive across all regions, though generally minor. Southern Europe recorded the most progress.



**FIGURE 8** Criminal market averages by region, 2025.



**FIGURE 9** Resilience averages by region, 2025.

# CRIMINAL MARKETS

Of the several criminal markets in Europe that are becoming increasingly concerning, financial crimes pose the greatest threat to the security and integrity of the continent's economic systems. For the second consecutive edition of the Index, they remain the most pervasive market. These crimes often include increasingly complex and sophisticated fraud schemes, largely occurring online, such as investment fraud, business email compromise and romance scams.<sup>1</sup> Financial crimes also include offences such as embezzlement and tax evasion. They are particularly facilitated by corruption, as state actors often enable or shield perpetrators in exchange for favours when not directly involved in these crimes themselves.

Because of the wide range of activities and drivers they encompass, financial crimes in Europe are inherently transregional. Central and Eastern Europe and Western Europe score highest in this market. In Western Europe, illicit financial activity is largely concentrated in advanced economies with highly digitalized payment systems and open financial markets – notably the UK, Germany and Switzerland. By contrast, in Central and Eastern Europe, financial crimes tend to be concentrated in countries with authoritarian governance or entrenched corruption, such as Russia, Belarus and Moldova.

Cyber-dependent crimes have also emerged as a particularly pervasive and steadily growing market in Europe, ranking second continentally with a score of 5.67. Like financial crimes, they are inherently transnational, constantly shifting to exploit vulnerabilities linked to globalization, digitalization and rising geopolitical tensions. While both financial and cyber-dependent crimes are often considered non-violent, they still have significant societal impacts. Given that these crimes are largely unaffected by countries' resilience levels, existing global enforcement efforts remain ill-equipped to address them.

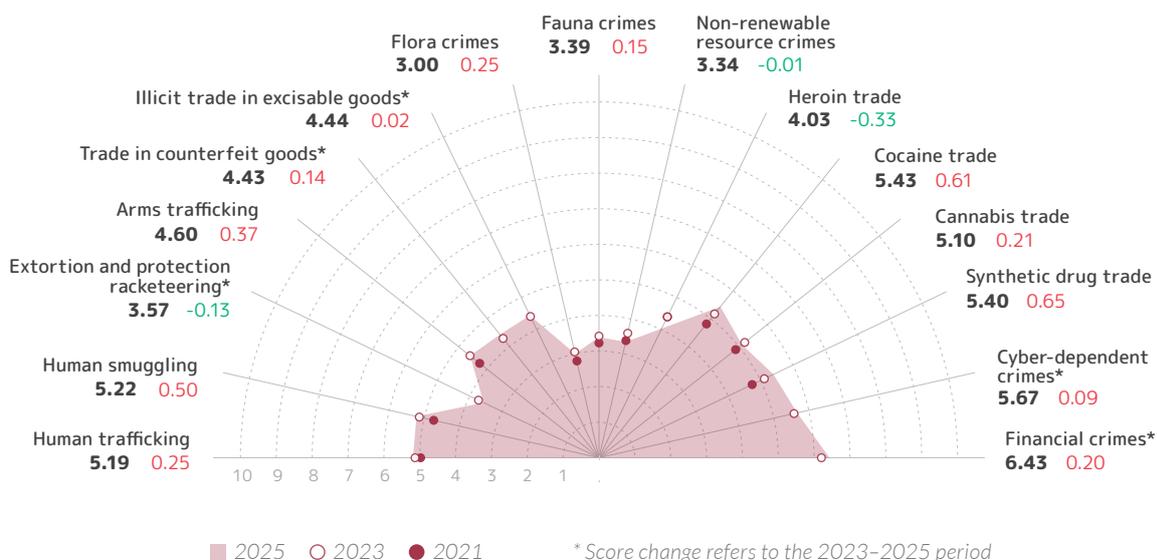


FIGURE 10 Criminal markets, Europe, 2021–2025.

Within the continent, Central and Eastern Europe and Northern Europe lead in cyber-dependent crimes, despite differences in economic and technological development. Across the continent, increasingly sophisticated cyberattacks target critical infrastructure, governments, businesses and private citizens, aiming to steal data or gain unauthorized access to digital assets, including sensitive information. At the same time, the boundaries between profit-driven and ideologically motivated cyberattacks are blurring. Hybrid and traditional cybercrime actors are increasingly intertwined, with state-sponsored groups often disguising themselves as cybercriminals or exploiting them to obscure their involvement and disruptive objectives.<sup>2</sup> This trend is exemplified by the high scores of Russia and Ukraine, reflecting the heightened prominence of cyberattacks against the backdrop of global geopolitical balances.

Notable shifts have also been observed in Europe's drug markets, where demand and supply remain high. In particular, the cocaine trade and the synthetic drug trade have developed into pervasive and influential illicit economies, recording the largest increases among drug markets on the continent since the first edition of the Index. Despite this rapid growth, average scores for these markets remain below those of the Americas for cocaine and below Asia for synthetics. Nonetheless, the interconnectedness between these regions is deepening, with Europe functioning as a gateway for cocaine shipments from Latin America and as a major production and destination hub for a wide range of synthetic drugs, including amphetamines, methamphetamine, MDMA, synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic opioids.<sup>3</sup>

Cocaine is a primary source of revenue for numerous organized crime groups in Europe, where consumers tend to have relatively strong purchasing power. However, despite being more expensive than other illicit drugs, it has never been as cheap as it is now. Compared to 10–15 years ago, the drug has become more affordable, selling for roughly €50– €70 per gram in many markets.<sup>4</sup> The drop is partly explained by oversupply, a crack cocaine epidemic (particularly in Western Europe), a growing number of consumers and intensified competition between criminal networks over control of supply chains.<sup>5</sup>

Cocaine reaches the continent through several routes. Shipments commonly depart by sea from South America and move through the Caribbean or West Africa (an increasingly significant transit hub) en route to Europe. A growing number of foreign nationals, including Europeans, are active in South America to help streamline and professionalize the trade into Europe. The illicit processing of cocaine products now also takes place in several EU states, with authorities dismantling a rising number of laboratories in recent years.<sup>6</sup> The drug is often imported in intermediate or chemically altered form to bypass controls, with final processing carried out in the EU before distribution for local sale or re-export. Laboratories for cocaine processing or extraction are concentrated in Western and Southern Europe, both of which are also key consumer markets. Southern Europe, in particular, has seen a sharp rise in cocaine activity, reflecting the central role of countries such as Italy, Portugal and Spain in the trade. These countries sustain large domestic markets and act as major transit corridors, with ports serving as critical entry points where cocaine is frequently concealed within legitimate cargo shipments.

## Shifting European entry points for cocaine

Europe is a major consumer market for cocaine from South America. Produced mainly in Colombia, Bolivia and Peru, with Ecuador and Brazil serving as primary transit countries, the drug has become widespread,<sup>7</sup> and in 2024 an estimated 4.6 million Europeans used it.<sup>8</sup> Ports are the main entry points, with record seizures reported across the continent but particularly in Western and Southern Europe.

In 2024, notable declines in cocaine seizures were recorded at key Western European gateways, especially Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands. Belgian customs intercepted 44 tonnes of cocaine at Antwerp's port, a sharp drop from the 121 tonnes seized in 2023.<sup>9</sup> At Rotterdam, seizures fell from 45.5 tonnes to 25.9.<sup>10</sup> Experts attribute these declines to tighter law enforcement controls, including Rotterdam's decision to scan all containers arriving from South America and strengthened cooperation with regional authorities and businesses.<sup>11</sup>

Despite stricter security at Europe's largest ports, cocaine supply has expanded, indicating that the market has not weakened. Instead, traffickers have quickly adapted, shifting operations to secondary entry points. Falling seizures at

Antwerp and Rotterdam have coincided with rising use of smaller, less-monitored ports, such as Southampton in the UK, Nynäshamn in Sweden and Vado in Italy, suggesting a deliberate strategy to evade enhanced controls.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, traditional Southern European entry points have reasserted their role in the cocaine trade. Spain recorded its largest single seizure in 2024, when authorities intercepted more than 13 tonnes of cocaine hidden in a shipment of bananas from Ecuador.<sup>13</sup> Investigators suspect that the consignment was destined for distribution across Europe. Record-breaking cocaine seizures in Portugal in 2024 reinforced the country's role as a pivotal hub in trafficking routes into Europe.<sup>14</sup> Media reports suggest that the Primeiro Comando da Capital, which dominates Brazil's drug trade and is active in Paraguay and Bolivia, has expanded its international activities into the country.<sup>15</sup> According to recent reports,<sup>16</sup> the PCC is infiltrating prisons, exploiting vulnerabilities in logistics chains and expanding its drug trafficking and money laundering networks, including systematic attempts to channel illicit funds through financially fragile football clubs in Portugal.<sup>17</sup> ■

In the case of synthetic drugs, while some criminal networks continue to rely on imports, production is becoming increasingly dispersed, enabling greater manufacturing closer to European consumer markets. Nonetheless, most precursors still originate in Asia, with China the principal supplier.<sup>18</sup> Drugs such as MDMA, amphetamines and methamphetamine are produced in several European countries for domestic consumption and export. Large-scale laboratories are concentrated in Belgium and the Netherlands, while Poland has also emerged as a hub for synthetic drug production, with significant sites for synthetic cathinones.<sup>19</sup>

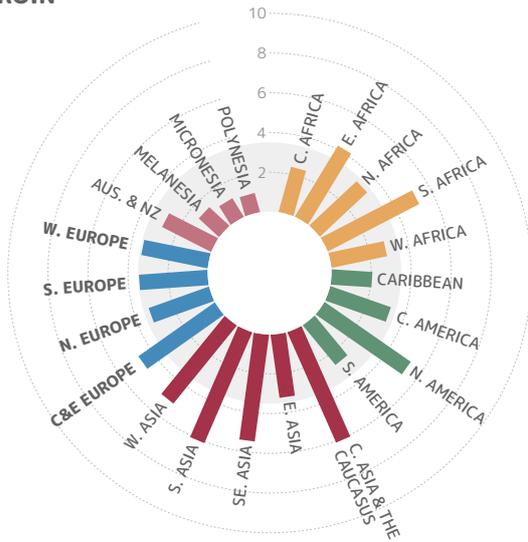
Central and Eastern Europe stands out as the highest-scoring region for synthetic drugs and has registered the sharpest increase since 2021. The region is a key hub for production and trafficking, with high prevalence scores in Russia and Ukraine. Synthetic drugs are also expanding quickly across Northern, Western and Southern Europe. Spain, Italy, France and Ireland have recorded notable increases in their synthetic drug scores since 2021, reflecting a market increasingly flooded with new mixtures that heighten appeal and attract new consumers.

One of the most pressing concerns is the emergence of synthetic opioids as a serious threat across the continent. Although they account for a smaller share of the synthetic drug market than in North

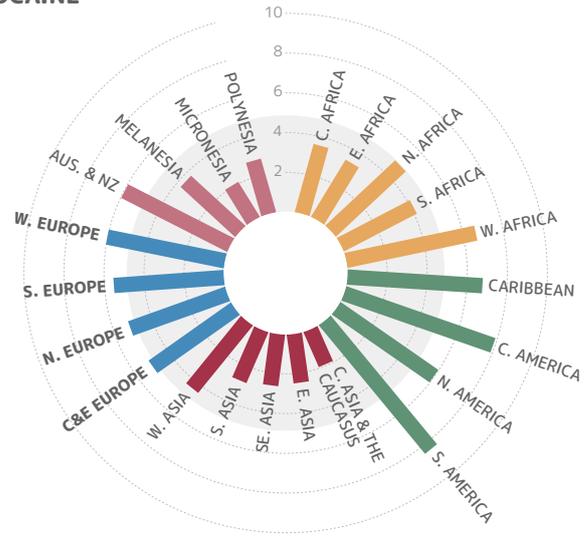
America, they are playing an increasingly significant role in the synthetic opioid component of the Baltic states' synthetic drug markets and are raising alarm in several other EU countries.<sup>20</sup> There are growing indications that heroin users may be shifting towards prescription opioids, such as oxycodone and tramadol, as well as readily available substances such fentanyl and, to a lesser extent, nitazenes.<sup>21</sup>

Heroin is showing signs of decline in Europe, with the market scoring 4.03 in 2025. The quality of heroin reaching European markets has gradually deteriorated and wholesale prices are rising in some

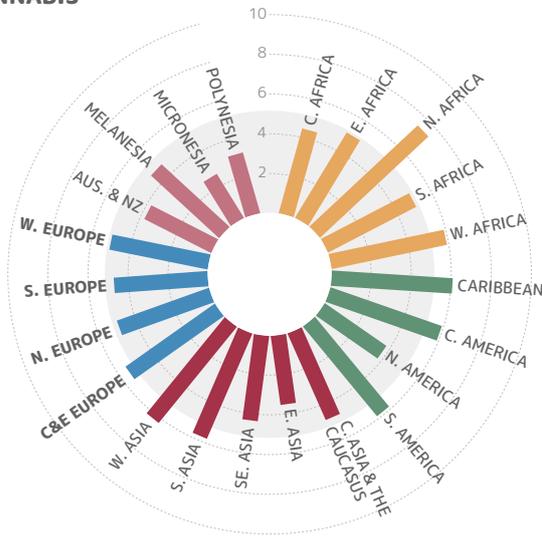
**HEROIN**



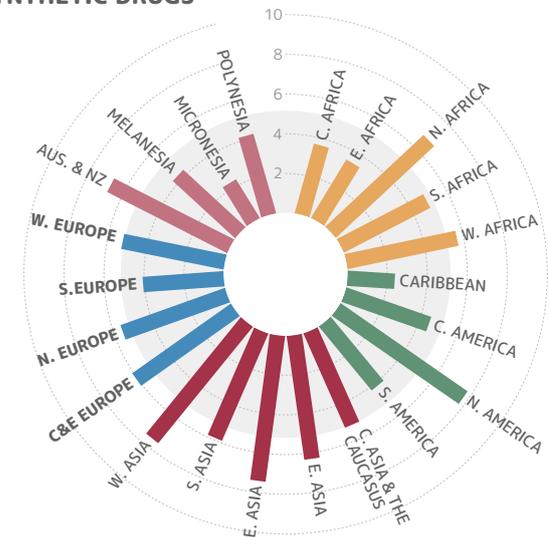
**COCAINE**



**CANNABIS**



**SYNTHETIC DRUGS**



● Asia ● Africa ● Americas ● Europe ● Oceania ● Global average

**FIGURE 11** Drug markets by region, 2025.

countries. This occurs as traditional supply sources are drying up, particularly after Afghanistan's 2022 poppy cultivation ban. Yet Europe remains the world's second-largest heroin market after Asia, sustained by abundant Afghan stockpiles, adaptive trafficking and emerging sources such as new cultivation in Myanmar. Recent police operations confirm that heroin continues to be transported hidden in trucks and cars on traditional pathways through Central Asia and the Balkans, as well as on less common trafficking routes.<sup>22</sup> However, signs of tightening supply suggest that shortages are emerging.

Cannabis remains the most widely consumed illicit drug on the continent. Although new products and forms of this drug are emerging, herbal cannabis and cannabis resin dominate. However, levels of use and trends reported in recent data appear heterogeneous.<sup>23</sup> The market is experiencing mixed dynamics, largely influenced by legalization and decriminalization trends in several countries, which are reshaping patterns of consumption and distribution across regions.

Europe is also significantly affected by other criminal markets, including human smuggling and human trafficking. Connections exist between these markets, particularly in cases involving long and costly journeys, where irregular migrants may be exploited to repay smuggling debts – either by the networks that facilitated their travel or by other criminal groups operating in cooperation with the smugglers.<sup>24</sup> As in previous iterations of the Index, Central and Eastern Europe is the highest-scoring region for human trafficking and human smuggling. Smuggling networks remain entrenched along the Western Balkans route, with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia forming a key corridor for onward movement into Western Europe.<sup>25</sup> Despite crackdowns, the route remains one of the most dangerous for irregular migrants, as smugglers often use hazardous transport and concealment methods, leading to fatalities.

While Central and Eastern Europe scores highest, human smuggling and human trafficking are far-reaching and widespread across the continent, facilitated by porous borders and extensive, well-connected trafficking and smuggling routes. Southern and Western Europe are particularly involved in some of the most heavily populated migration corridors, which mainly stretch from Africa and Asia. Many European countries are final destinations for smuggled people, who are frequently absorbed into trafficking networks at the end of their journey, facing forced labour or sexual exploitation. This is reflected in the high scores for both markets in countries such as Italy, Spain, France, Germany and the UK. In the UK, human smuggling largely occurs across the English Channel, where criminal networks generally transport migrants from East Africa and Western Asia in overcrowded, unsafe small boats departing from France. A growing trend involves criminal networks luring Vietnamese nationals with false promises of high earnings in the UK, facilitating their travel to Europe on forged tourist visas before smuggling them clandestinely into the UK, often in trucks or on small boats from France.<sup>26</sup>

Commodity-based markets such as counterfeit goods and illicit trade in excisable goods remain moderately pervasive. By contrast, environmental crimes – particularly flora crimes – have only marginal influence. Although regional variations exist, their overall impact is significantly lower than in other parts of the world.

# CRIMINAL ACTORS

Criminal actors' presence in Europe has been increasing since the first iteration of the Index, with a 0.11-point rise between 2021 and 2025. The most concerning category remains foreign actors, which recorded the largest overall increase since 2021. Groups with varying levels of organization, composed of members operating outside their home countries – which may be within or outside Europe – are expanding across the continent and engaging in a wide spectrum of criminal activities.

The number, nature, composition and organizational structure of foreign actors differ depending on the country, the market, the available opportunities and the stage of the illicit supply chain in which they operate. While foreign criminal groups based on a single dominant nationality or ethnicity still play a significant role in some markets, they are increasingly becoming heterogeneous, multi-ethnic and interconnected organized criminal groups. Most networks comprise between two and 10 nationalities, and in some cases more. Many groups consist of EU and non-EU nationals.<sup>27</sup>

When networks are homogenous they are typically bound together by a shared national identity. That is the case, for example, for Italian mafia groups involved in drug trafficking, extortion and money laundering across Germany, France and Spain, or Romanian groups specializing in property crime, VAT fraud and human trafficking in the UK and along the Balkan route. When networks are not homogenous, they tend to rely on other cohesive factors to maintain their structure and operations. These include regional bonds, shared non-EU backgrounds, family ties, subcultural elements and language links.

A prominent example of a nationally heterogeneous network is the criminal group known as the 'Mocro' mafia, which consists of many nationalities and revolves around key Moroccan members. It often cooperates with Belgian, Dutch and Spanish criminals and keeps close ties to Morocco. It is primarily active in cocaine trafficking, with secondary involvement in cannabis trade and money laundering, and operates mainly in Belgium, France, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands.<sup>28</sup> Although

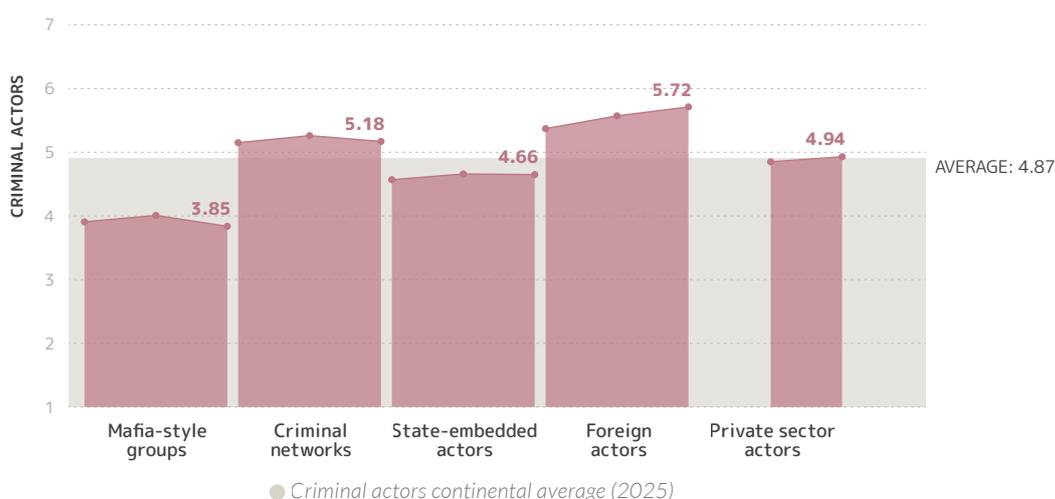
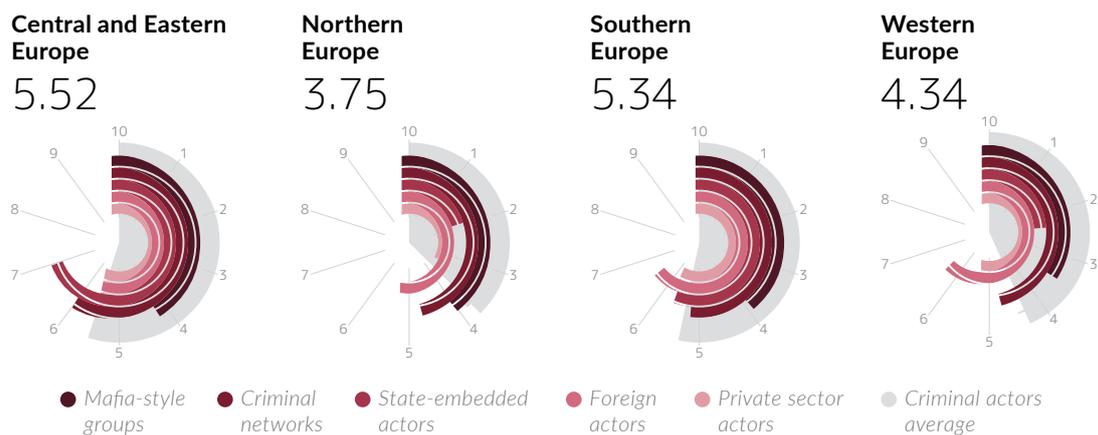


FIGURE 12 Criminal actors, Europe, 2021–2025.

relatively few in number, networks composed of Latin American nationals are also present and are active in cocaine trafficking across Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. Most members are Brazilian or Colombian, although other nationalities are also involved. Their cohesion stems from the cocaine trade itself, reinforced by shared language and cultural ties with Portuguese and Spanish nationals.<sup>29</sup>

Foreign actors are widely distributed, with a strong presence in Southern Europe, Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, and Northern Europe. Northern Europe has seen the sharpest increase since 2021, largely due to the expansion of gangs involved in drug-related violence, especially Swedish ones, spreading into neighbouring countries such as Norway and Finland. This expansion has sparked growing calls to curb gang-related violence and organized crime in the region.

Some foreign groups also collaborate with domestic criminal networks. These networks are generally loose, decentralized and informal. While their membership is fully national, they are increasingly expanding their international reach, adopting more fluid and digitalized operating models. Domestic groups are especially prominent in Central and Eastern Europe and Southern Europe, where less hierarchical, flexible structures are the norm.



**FIGURE 13** Criminal actors by region, Europe, 2025.

Private-sector actors are the third most pervasive actor type in Europe. Their role is often pivotal, as they act as mediators or facilitators, enabling the laundering of illicit funds through schemes to disguise their origins and integrate them into the legal economy. These services typically require professional expertise or exploit digital methods such as virtual currencies, online gaming and international trade systems. The financial (banks, investment firms and insurance) and non-financial (real estate, construction, tourism and public procurement) sectors are routinely exploited for laundering purposes.<sup>30</sup>

When these activities intersect with bribery and corruption – particularly within the public sector – they create a vicious cycle where financial misconduct merges with political power, undermining trust in governance.<sup>31</sup> Proceeds from corruption are often transferred to offshore jurisdictions and tax havens to evade detection. Yet state-embedded actors in Europe are not solely linked to fraud and money laundering. Although generally less pervasive in Europe than elsewhere (scoring 4.66), public officials at various levels are sometimes implicated in schemes where they either directly participate or tacitly facilitate criminal activity (such as by turning a blind eye), for instance by enabling drug trafficking through strategic checkpoints such as ports.

Mafia-style groups are the lowest-scoring criminal actors on the continent. Since 2021, all regions except Southern Europe have recorded a decline in this indicator. Still, such organizations wield notable influence in specific contexts. Central and Eastern Europe, for example, registers the highest regional average for this actor type and contains countries such as Montenegro, Albania and Serbia, which remain particularly affected by mafia-style groups, including those that operate transnationally, including in Latin America and West Africa. Russia's criminal landscape is also influenced by mafia-style groups. Within this category are the 'thieves-in-law', a highly organized criminal association with deep historical roots. Although relatively few in number, they exert significant influence over domestic and transnational criminal enterprises, engaging in activities such as extorting businesses through so-called taxes and controlling organized crime in prisons.

Mafia-style groups are also active in Southern Europe. Italy stands out, consistently scoring 9.0 for this indicator since 2021. Traditional organizations such as the 'Ndrangheta demonstrate resilience and adaptability, extending their influence into political and economic spheres while maintaining dominance in transnational markets such as cocaine trafficking. In Northern Europe, groups such as outlaw motorcycle gangs, including the Hells Angels and Bandidos, are present in several countries, engaging in illicit trade and violent crimes while collaborating with other criminal organizations.

## Biker gangs and the criminal underworld

Outlaw motorcycle gangs have strict hierarchies and close personal ties. They follow rigid internal rules and assert their identity publicly through shared symbols and clothing. The first such gangs emerged in the mid-20th century from a group of former members of the US Air Force, the Pissed Off Bastards of Bloomington, who later changed their name to Hells Angels MC and became the model for all subsequent associations.<sup>32</sup>

There is debate over whether outlaw motorcycle gangs qualify as organized crime groups. Many of them operate as legal leisure clubs, with only a small fraction involved in crime. Members of these groups may run legitimate businesses in sectors such as security, sex work or tattoo shops. Some gangs engage in violent offences – such as assault, murder or robbery – without fitting the

definition of organized crime. In some cases, individual members participate in organized crime independently of the club.

Nonetheless, formal structures and international networks make outlaw motorcycle gangs susceptible to criminal exploitation. When engaged in activities such as drug trafficking, arms smuggling or extortion, they resemble mafia-style groups due to their rituals and cohesion. Prominent European gangs include the Outlaws, Hells Angels, No Surrender, El Diablo, MC Mongols, Satudah MC and the Bandidos. Despite law enforcement crackdowns, they are active across Europe, including Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Spain. They are often linked to far-right extremist circles and involved in turf wars. ■

# RESILIENCE

In line with the results of the 2023 Index, Europe's highest-scoring resilience indicators are 'international cooperation', 'national policies and laws' and 'territorial integrity', followed by 'law enforcement'. Institutional and security-based measures thus continue to be prioritized over other types of responses.

While Europe consistently outperforms other continents across all resilience indicators – suggesting that its collective response to organized crime is more effective – weaknesses persist. Areas such as 'government transparency and accountability', 'anti-money laundering', 'economic regulatory capacity' and 'non-state actors' continue to lag. While these scores are above global averages, they are the lowest among the European resilience indicators.

While resilience measures typically take longer to yield visible effects, certain patterns have begun to emerge. 'Government transparency and accountability', arguably one of the most critical indicators because of the role of oversight mechanisms and rule of law in preventing state collusion with organized crime, has consistently ranked lowest in Europe across all three Index iterations. While the continental average for this indicator has remained relatively stable, regional variations point to deterioration in Western Europe and Southern Europe between 2021 and 2025. These declines are often linked to the politicization or weakening of anti-corruption frameworks. Transparency gaps and weaknesses in public procurement further exacerbate vulnerabilities, leaving space for collusion between state and organized crime actors.<sup>33</sup>

Economic and financial resilience is another area of concern. 'Anti-money laundering' and 'economic regulatory capacity' rank as Europe's second and third lowest-scoring indicators, reflecting the vulnerability of financial systems and economic sectors to illicit infiltration. While hosting some of the world's most advanced economies, many European states have not paired this development with robust safeguards. Southern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe are particularly exposed, with several countries in

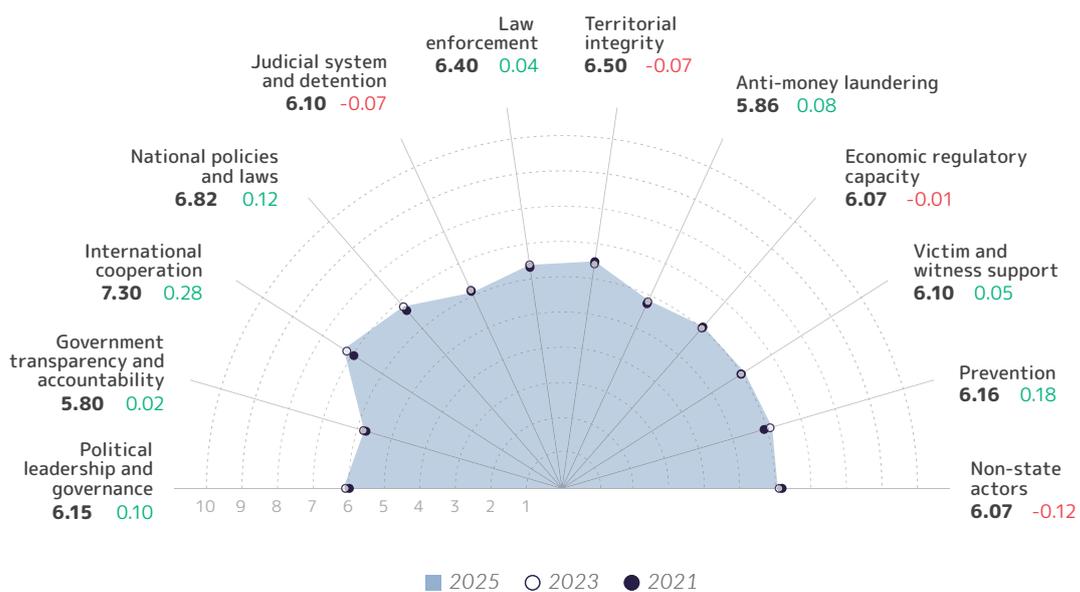
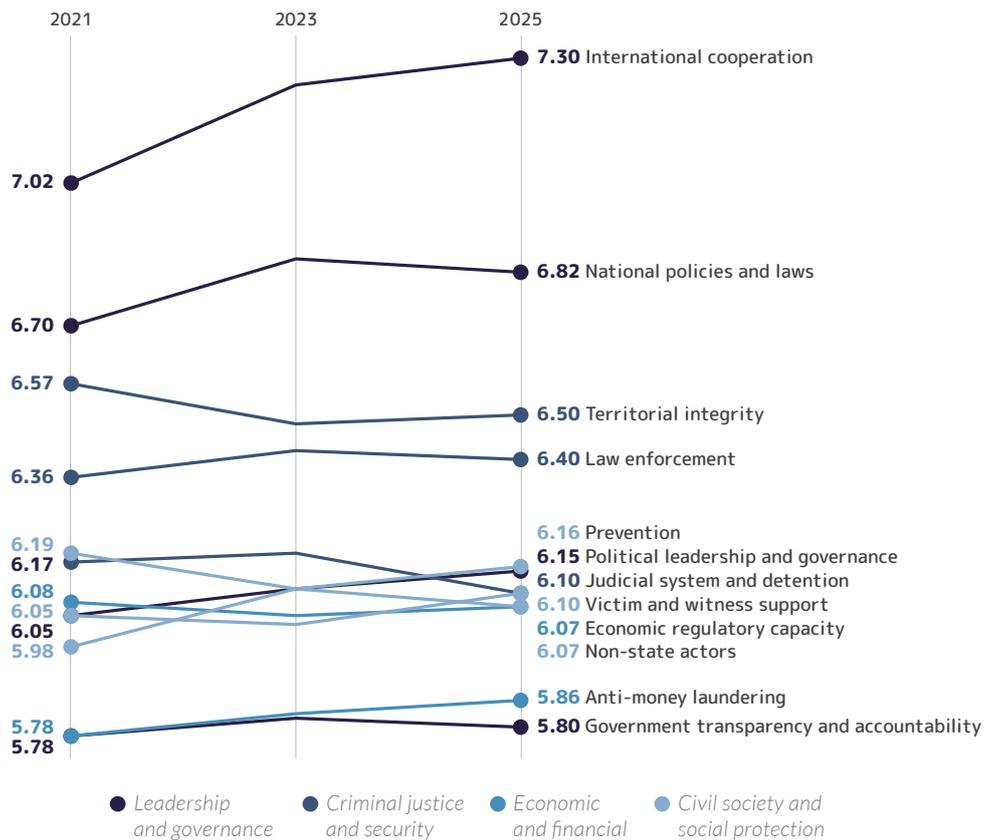


FIGURE 14 Resilience indicators, Europe, 2021–2025.



**FIGURE 15** Resilience indicator changes, Europe, 2021–2025.

these regions, such as Montenegro, Slovakia, Monaco and Cyprus,<sup>34</sup> lacking adequate tools to combat financial crime and money laundering.

The non-state actors indicator also performs relatively poorly. It has declined consistently and registered the sharpest drop of any European resilience indicator since 2021. This trend reflects shrinking civic space in Europe, where civil society has traditionally been strong. Increasing constraints on journalists, activists and NGOs engaged in anti-crime work highlight a troubling trajectory.<sup>35</sup>

Despite these vulnerabilities, Europe has notable strengths. ‘International cooperation’ is the continent’s cornerstone of resilience, increasing by 0.28 since 2021. The 2021–2023 period saw particularly strong growth, driven by renewed enthusiasm after the pandemic and exceptional unity in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. However, between 2023 and 2025 the pace of progress slowed, suggesting a loss of momentum. While cooperation within Europe remains robust, divisions at the multilateral level and concerns about the effectiveness of existing mechanisms risk curtailing its impact. Nonetheless, practical tools such as mutual legal assistance, extradition agreements, information sharing and cross-border operations function more effectively in Europe than elsewhere.

‘National policies and laws’ are also well developed. Many European countries are assessed as having advanced legislation recognizing organized crime as a distinct threat and addressing a wide range of criminal activities. Northern Europe has recorded the largest improvement since 2021. Countries such as Sweden and Denmark have adopted stricter anti-gang legislation, including harsher penalties for gang-related crimes and measures to prevent youth recruitment.<sup>36</sup> Still, across the continent, legislation is not always updated to address developing threats, and effective implementation often falls short, limiting the effectiveness of national policies.

## Sweden's fight against gang violence

Countries in Northern Europe have reported a sharp rise in gang violence in recent years, and this has drawn heightened concern in Sweden. Gang activity there largely involves targeted assassinations, explosions and occasional arson. These crimes are concentrated in cities such as Borås, Gothenburg, Linköping, Malmö, Norrköping, Örebro, Stockholm and Uppsala.

The homicide rate is now higher than that of many other EU countries, with perpetrators often being minors.<sup>37</sup> Swedish police have observed a rise in the recruitment of under-18s for violent crimes, as they face lighter scrutiny and sentencing than adults. Many are drawn from socially disadvantaged immigrant neighbourhoods. Swedish gangs have also expanded into Denmark, Norway and Finland, affecting regional security.<sup>38</sup>

However, Sweden recorded 92 cases of deadly violence in 2024 – 29 fewer than in 2023 and the lowest figure since 2014, when 87 were killed, according to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention.<sup>39</sup> Authorities attribute the decline to stepped-up surveillance, police raids and legislative measures. Recent reforms include tougher penalties for gun crimes, the creation of security zones and proposals to allow anonymous testimonies to break gang codes of silence. Some measures have also expanded internationally, including joint initiatives with neighbours such as Denmark to enhance cross-border surveillance, and cooperation with the EU on using facial recognition technology to track offenders. ■

Europe performs relatively well in terms of 'law enforcement' and 'territorial integrity'. Most countries have specialized police units targeting specific crimes and benefit from strong cross-border cooperation. Challenges persist, however, including corruption and insufficient specialized training in some jurisdictions. Territorial integrity remains a strong point, with many countries investing in border management and cybersecurity. Yet vulnerabilities exist where there are extensive land borders, major ports that attract criminal networks and heightened exposure to cybercrime due to geopolitical rivalries. These challenges are especially pronounced in Southern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe, which score considerably lower than other European regions for this indicator.

In conclusion, while Europe demonstrates relatively strong resilience overall, as reflected in its high Index ranking, certain criminal markets and actors are still expanding. This highlights the need for more effective and tailored response mechanisms.

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The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime is a global network with over 700 Network Experts around the world. The Global Initiative provides a platform to promote greater debate and innovative approaches as the building blocks to an inclusive global strategy against organized crime.



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