

HUMAN SMUGGLING IN SEE

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FIELD COORDINATOR FOR KOSOVO

4 JULY 2023



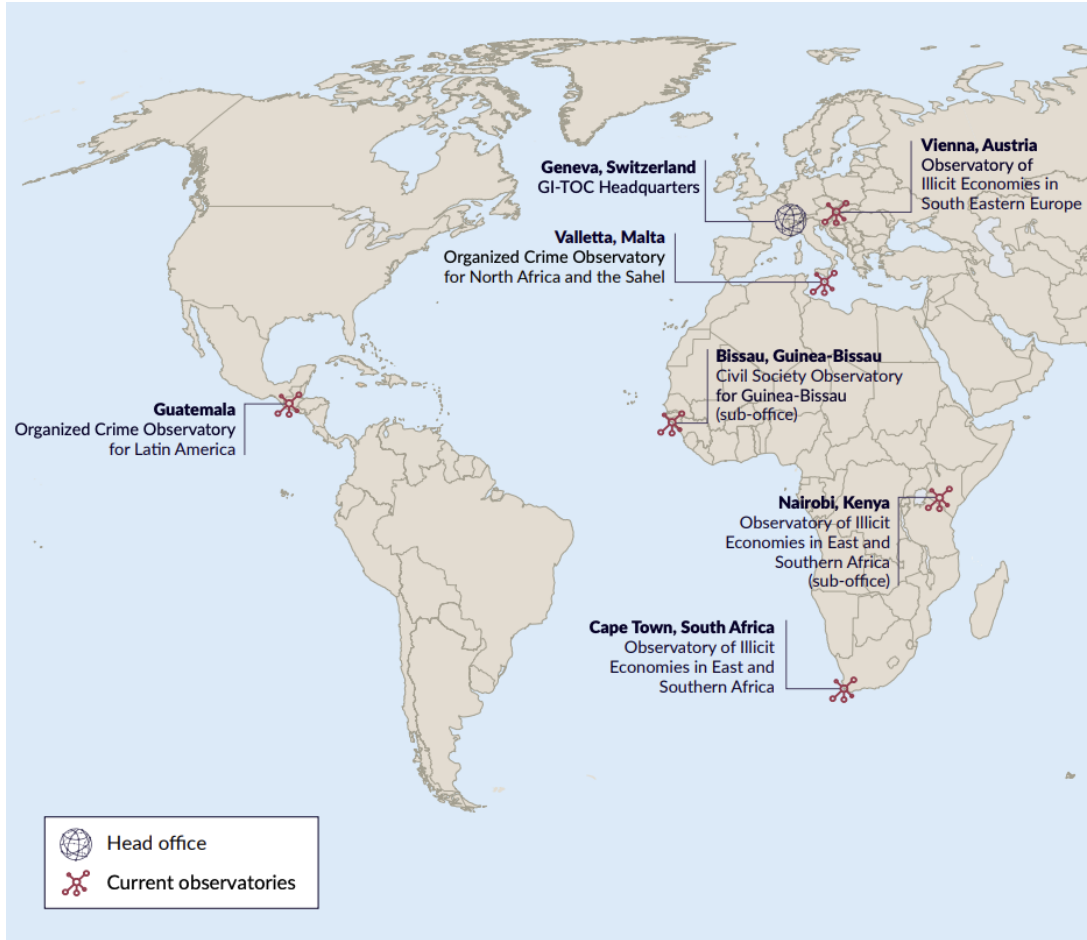
**GLOBAL
INITIATIVE**
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME



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GLOBAL INITIATIVE

OUR STORY



- GI-TOC is an independent civil-society organization established in 2013
- A network of more than 500 independent and prominent law-enforcement, governance and development practitioners.
- SEE-Obs was established in 2018 in the London Summit.
- Three major areas of work:
 - Research and analysis
 - Support to local civil society together with the Resilience Fund
 - Discussions and debates

THE ORGANIZATION

2022-2023



102 staff members



41 nationalities



Working in 34 countries



Annual income of more than CHF 14 million by the end of 2022



600+ network members



120+ publications in 2022



70+ podcast episodes in 2022



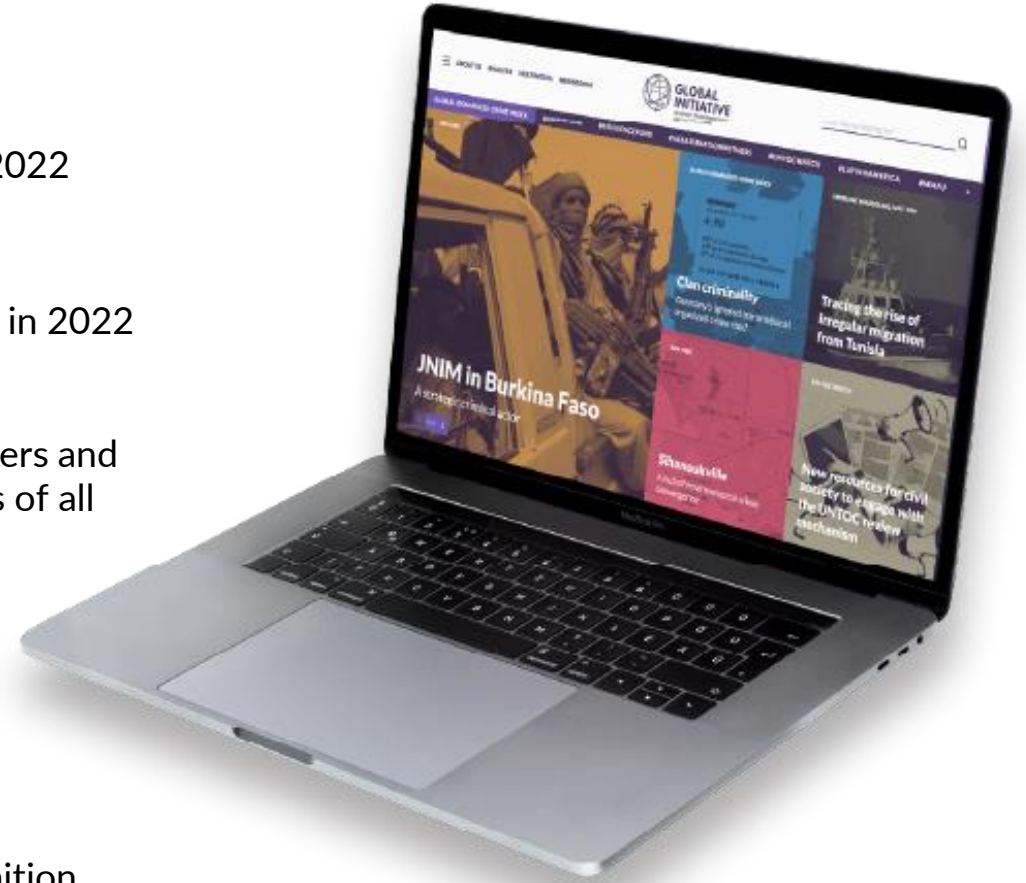
396k main website users and 1.5 million page views of all digital projects



7 regional observatories



Growing name recognition



2

WHAT IS HUMAN SMUGGLING?



PROCUREMENT, IN ORDER TO OBTAIN, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, A FINANCIAL OR OTHER MATERIAL BENEFIT, OF THE ILLEGAL ENTRY OF A PERSON INTO A STATE PARTY OF WHICH THE PERSON IS NOT A NATIONAL OR A PERMANENT RESIDENT

Art. 3, Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime

Human smuggling

- Cross-border crime
- Transportation or fraudulent documents
- Even if the migrant enters into the journey voluntarily there are significant risks
- High profit and low risk of detection/punishment
- Linked to other forms of serious and organized crime

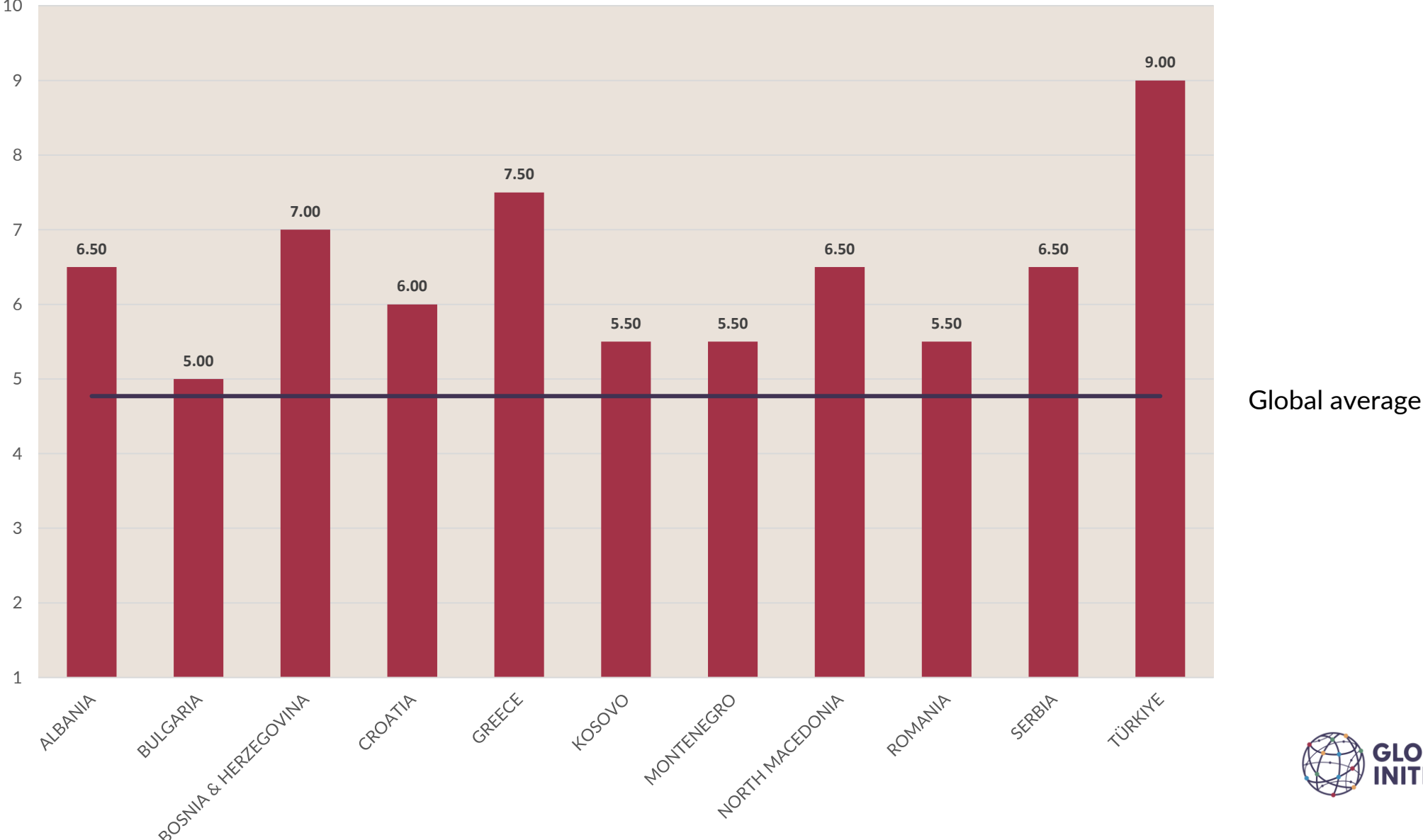




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PREVIOUS WORK ON SMUGGLING WITH MIGRANTS

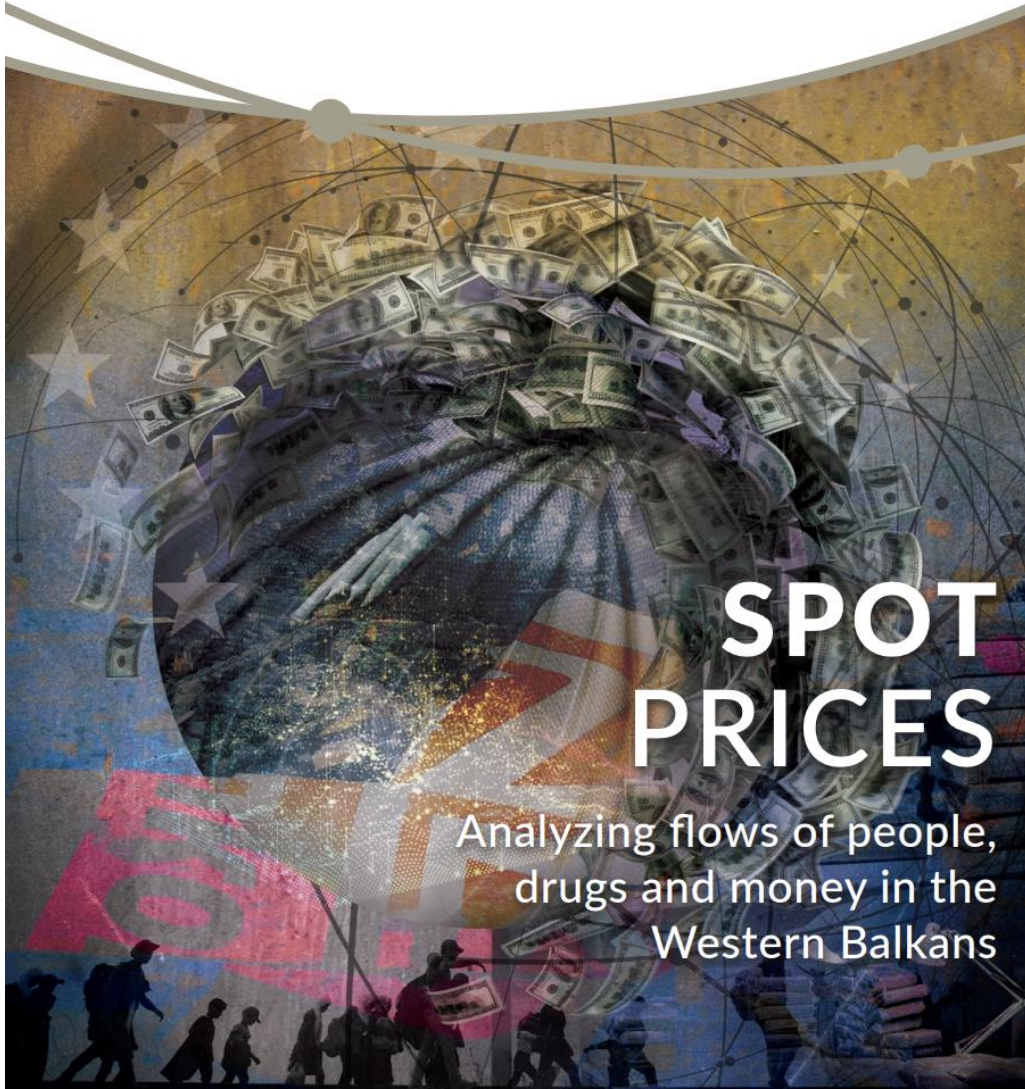
ORGANIZED CRIME INDEX 2021 – HUMAN SMUGGLING





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SPOT PRICES

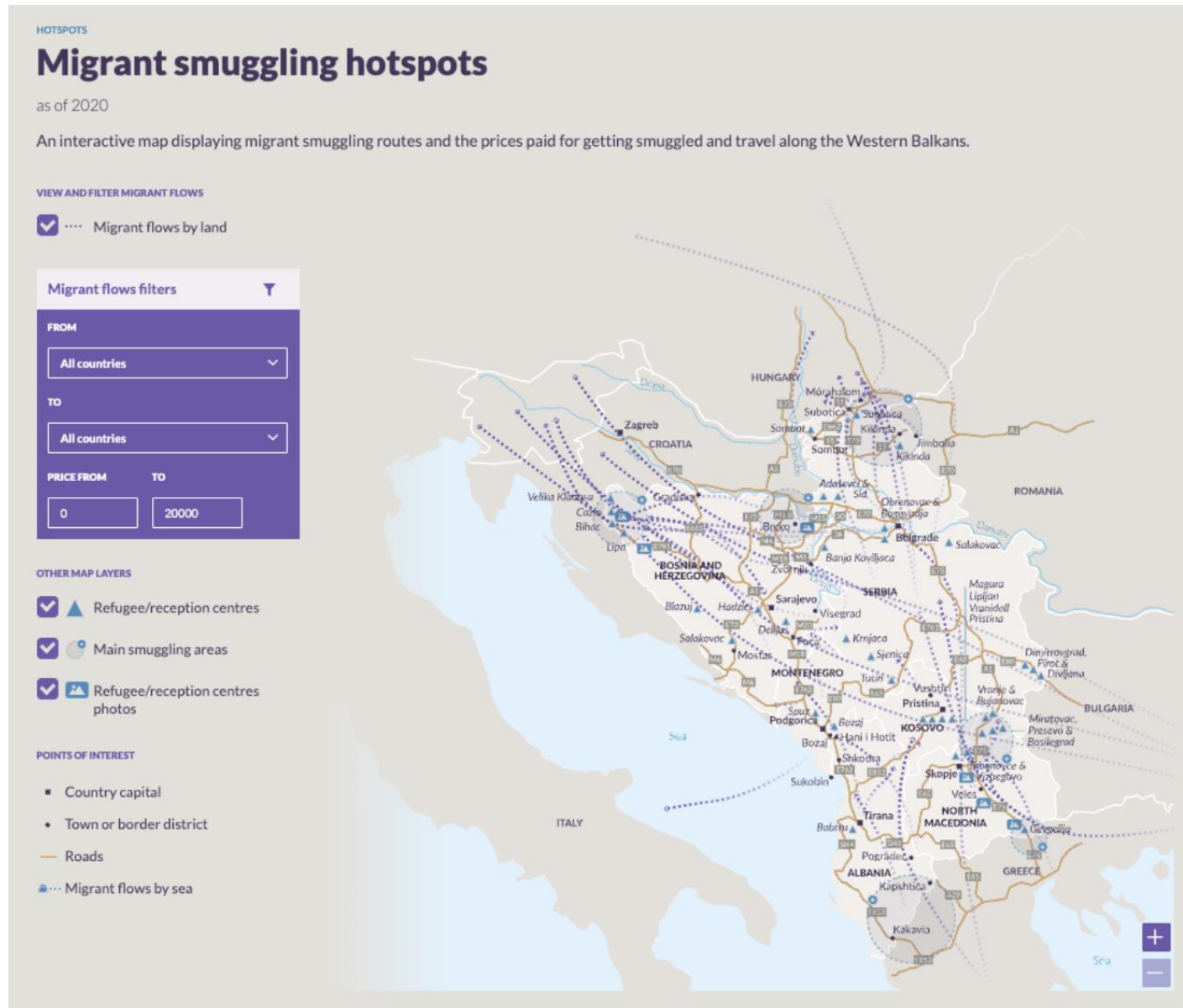
Analyzing flows of people, drugs and money in the Western Balkans

WALTER KEMP | KRISTINA AMERHAUSER | RUGGERO SCATURRO

MAY 2021



DIGITAL TOOL ON MIGRANT SMUGGLING HOTSPOTS



THE FIXERS

- Put migrants in touch with smugglers
- Suggest routes and safe houses
- Lookouts or scouts
- Taxi drivers
- Operate within the country
- Police and border guards involved in some cases



THE GATEKEEPERS

- The most organized and lucrative forms of smuggling appear to be around the borders
- Well-equipped and well-connected
- Open the door to the next country
- Act as guides
- Arrange transportation
- Paid higher than fixers



THE PACKAGE DEALERS

- Highest profit
- High degree of sophistication and planning, as well as transnational networks, documents and access to vehicles
- Deals often made in Türkiye and Greece
- Travel to one of the WB countries or all the way to Central or Western Europe
- Mostly used by families



SELF-HELP

- Low-budged approach
- Rely on their own wits and contacts
- Information acquired in camps, social media
- Might eventually ask services of fixers and gatekeepers



SIZE AND VALUE OF THE HUMAN SMUGGLING MARKET IN WB

Zone 1

Greece and North Macedonia border
range of €11.8 millions to €17.7 millions



Greece and Albania border
range of €7.5 millions to €11.5 millions



range of €19.3 millions
to €29.2 millions

Zone 2

Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU border



range of €7 millions
to €10.5 millions

Zone 3

Serbia and Hungary and Romania border



range of €8.5 millions
to €10.5 millions

Total range of €34.8 millions to € 50.2 millions

RISK BULLETINS

- The Bosnian border town of Gradiška: a hotspot of organized crime and a gateway to the Schengen zone
- Unaccompanied minors are facing perilous journeys on the Western Balkan migration route to the EU
- An increasing number of Albanians are crossing the English Channel from France using small boats
- Bosnia and Herzegovina faces law enforcement challenges in countering human smuggling
- Brcko: A market for organized crime.
- Despite the closure of the Balkan route, efforts are intensifying to stop migrant smuggling through Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Where are the women? Gender and migration in the Western Balkans

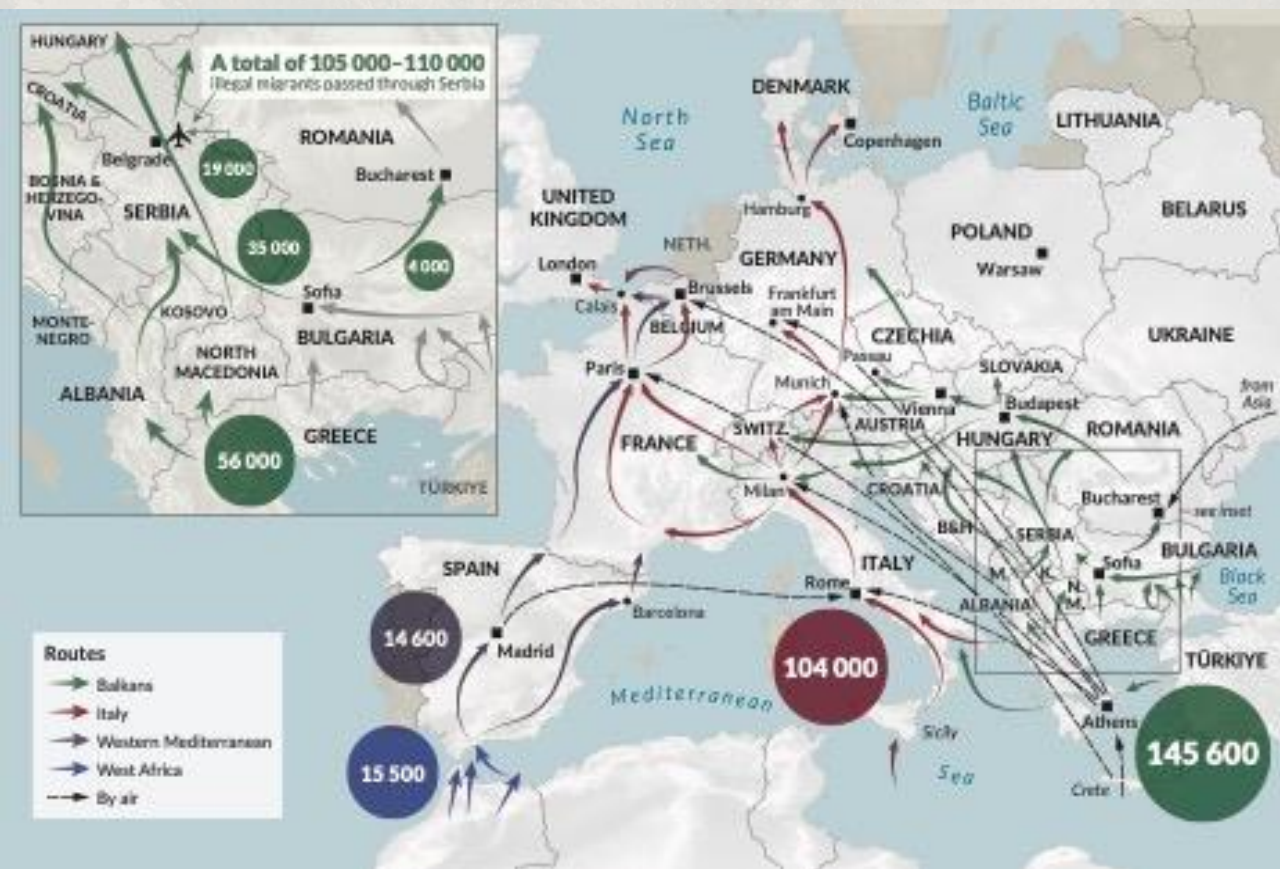
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THE WAR IN UKRAINE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

JOINT RESEARCH WITH CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF DEMOCRACY (BULGARIA)

- SMUGGLING WITH MIGRANTS
- DRUG TRAFFICKING
- ILLICIT FINANCIAL FLOWS
- FUEL SMUGGLING

THE RESURGENCE OF WESTERN BALKAN ROUTE



- The war in Ukraine and the biggest wave of asylum seekers coincided with surge of irregular migration from MENA region
- Frontex reported in 2022 the highest number of irregular entries since 2016
- 45% occurred along the Western Balkans route - 145 600
- Bulgaria and Greece, reported a total of 37 507 registered irregular migrants (18 778 in Greece and 18 729 in Bulgaria)
- Serbia – entry point for people from India, Tunisia, Cuba and Burundi

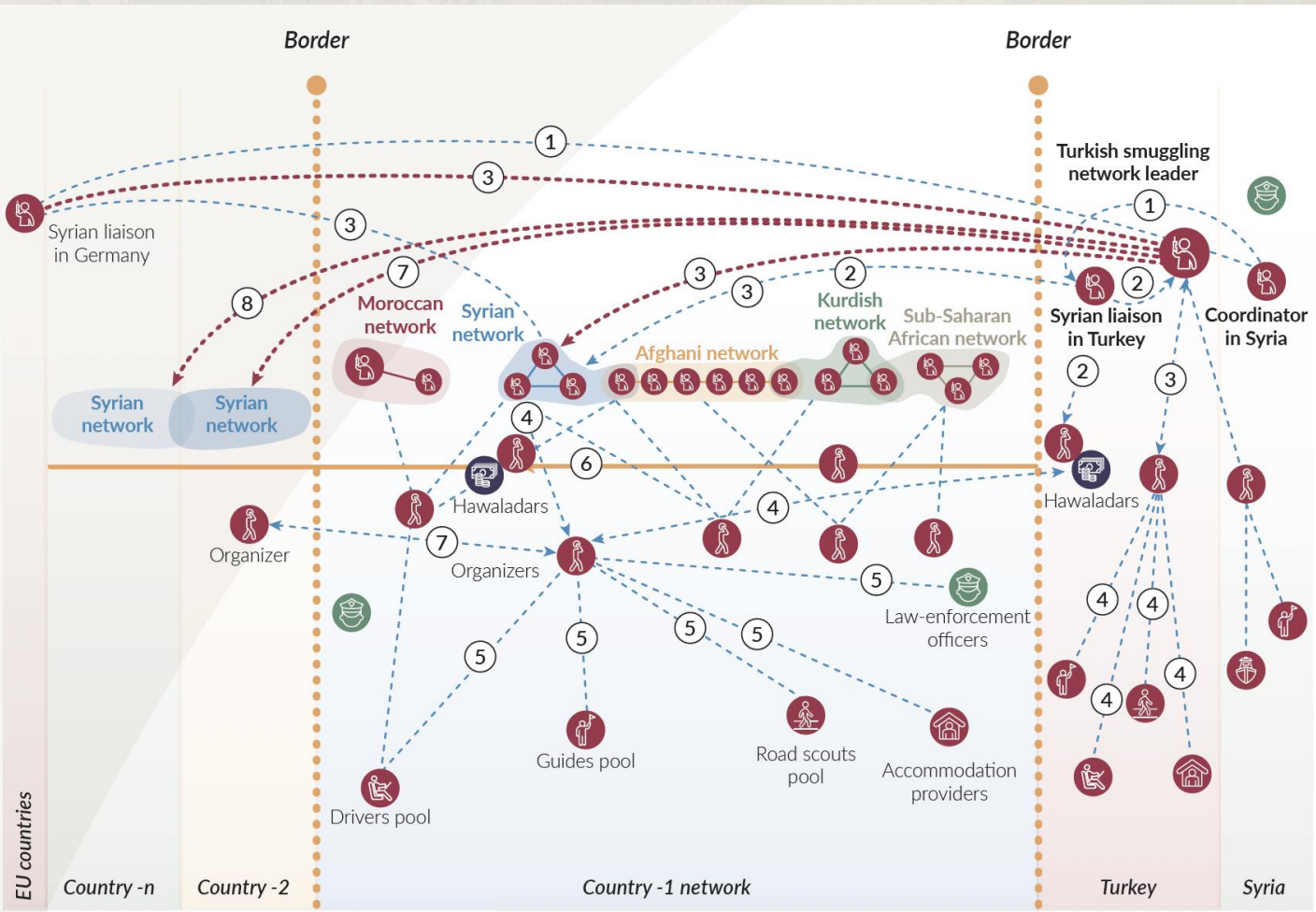
IMPACT OF THE WAR ON UKRAINE ON HUMAN SMUGGLING NETWORKS

- Redistribution of law enforcement resources to handle refugee flows from Ukraine
 - More pressure on Hungary, Romania but also Bulgaria
 - Weakened border controls in other parts
 - Easier border crossings Türkiye-Bulgaria-Serbia-Hungary
- Increasing involvement of Ukrainian nationals in people smuggling networks in Bulgaria
 - Ukrainian criminal networks operated before 2022
 - Recruitment of Ukrainian citizens with no criminal records as drivers

SYMBIOSIS OF THE DIASPORA NETWORKS WITH HUMAN SMUGGLING NETWORKS

- Diaspora network
 - Family, friends, and acquaintances in the countries along the migration route and at the destination countries
 - Share information on various social platforms and chat groups to find the best route
 - Migrants can travel considerable distances without using the services of criminal networks
 - Self-help migrants might seek support of smugglers in crossing borders

HUMAN SMUGGLING NETWORKS



- Coordinators, local organisers, recruiters, guides, spotters, scout drivers, corrupt officials (e.g. police officers, migration officials), service providers, suppliers and other country-specific roles
- Usually loose structure but subordination among the layers
 - Coordinators or experienced criminal leaders (criminal authority)
 - Financial intermediaries (hawaladars)
 - Local organisers

THE ADAPTATION AND EVOLUTION OF HUMAN SMUGGLING NETWORKS

- During the refugee crisis of 2015-2016:
 - Balkan networks' high-level coordinators resided in key port towns
 - Criminals were of same nationality as the migrants they smuggled
- Significant organisational changes recently:
 - More chaotic and decentralized
 - Migrants started to overtake many of the roles previously occupied by nationals of Balkan countries (recruiters, drivers, guides, etc.)
 - Involvement of many foreign nationals at the lowest levels (drivers) and former migrants
 - Increasing use of encrypted internet & phone apps
 - Growth of online payments (e.g. Revolut) and money transfer services

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN INVESTIGATION OF CASES

- Human smuggling networks now developed a significantly more complex and flexible organisation
- Law enforcement in the Balkan countries reaches only the most visible layer of the low-level organisers
- Successful and large joint operations mainly led by FRONTEX, EUROPOL and SELEC
- Little cooperation among WB countries (with external involvement) to jointly investigate human smuggling networks
- Little use of Joint Investigation Teams, proactive and regular exchange of information among the WB countries
- Fighting of translational human smuggling networks is led/driven by EU agencies and EU MS

VIOLENCE OF SMUGGLING GROUPS

- Violence of smuggling groups against law enforcement agencies
 - More prevalent in countries that are less friendly with migrants
 - In Bulgaria police officers were shot and deadly hit while chasing vehicles with migrants
- Increased violence over control of territory
 - 6 cases of violent incidents in Serbia during July 2022 – March 2023: 2 killed and 13 injured;
 - Mainly at migrant exit routes rather entry points and near informal migrants' camps
 - Kidnapping and violence among rival groups in Kosovo
- Damaging of public and private property

BUILDING BONDS WITH LOCALS

- Smugglers are increasingly looking to "integrate" in local societies
- Easier integration in migrant friendly countries
- Different methods to buy friendship
- Mainly for two reasons:
 - Build a positive perception and reputation in the community
 - Ask favours in return
 - Use locals to transfer money through fast money transfers
 - Accommodation, transport, and other support



DECISION OF HUNGARY TO RELEASE CONVICTED HUMAN SMUGGLERS

- Around 2 000 smugglers convicted so far
- Government of Hungary has been complaining to the EU for lack of financial support for protecting external borders
- Decision to release 808 convicts was justified as a measure to save taxpayers money and avoiding fines for prison overcrowding
- Reaction to European Commission's decision to freeze funds of about 35 billion euro due to concerns of rule of law
- Security threat to neighbouring countries (especially Austria) and the EU
- Austria strengthened border controls

CONCLUSION

- Data is not collected in a standardized form across the region
- Human smuggling networks now developed a significantly more complex and flexible organisation
- Criminal networks employ foreign citizens
- Increased use of encrypted mobile applications
- Increased use of violence
- The war in Ukraine had indirect impact on the Balkan route

CONCLUSION (cont').

- Insufficient cross-border cooperation between the police and judicial institutions
- Western Balkan route will continue to remain one of the most active routes
- EUROPOL and FRONTEX mainly drive joint operations and investigations
- WB countries have little cooperation and Joint Investigation Teams
- Fighting of human smuggling needs be prioritized by WB governments

THANK YOU

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