

CSIS-EKEM POLICY REPORT

Confronting Unconventional Threats in Southeast Europe



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The CSIS-EKEM project is designed to provide policy recommendations for a more effective U.S.-Greek approach toward the Western Balkan countries. With this goal in view, CSIS and EKEM established a joint Task Force in November 2009, consisting of two Working Groups – one based in Washington, D.C. and the other in Athens.

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Policy Report Two

Confronting Unconventional Threats in Southeast Europe

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The Western Balkan region consists of those states that emerged from the defunct communist Yugoslavia—including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo, together with Albania and excluding Slovenia—which joined the European Union (EU) in 2004. Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in February 2008. To this date it has been recognized by 66 states, including the United States. Five EU member states, including Greece, have not recognized Kosovo's independence.

The fall of communism and the ensuing Yugoslav wars of the 1990s rendered the region especially vulnerable to organized crime, human trafficking, smuggling, and corruption. Officially tolerated or politically sponsored criminality was commonplace due to the enduring legacy of communism and international sanctions during the wars of Yugoslav succession. In many cases, the smuggling of goods was necessary for survival, and corruption was rampant to keep the grey economy afloat. The pervasiveness of politically connected criminality obstructed the reform process, consolidated the control of special interest groups, diminished public confidence in the transition process, generated fear among the public about reporting on criminal activities and official corruption, and jeopardized economic stability and development. These conditions compromised the region's transition to democracy and market-driven economies and rendered state weakness pervasive in most cases.

NATO intervention aiming at ending the violent conflicts in the Balkans was coupled with significant investment of political capital and funding on behalf of the international community to help the region's post-conflict recovery. A coordinated and effective European strategy, through the EU enlargement process, became the driving force for reform and stability in the region due to the conditionality mechanism, all the while providing economic support and technical guidance. Tackling organized crime and corruption became priorities in a longer-term goal of pushing the region toward Euro-Atlantic integration. A significant number of multilateral, regional, and bilateral initiatives, as well as national strategies, to eradicate these threats were launched. Recovery,

however, has been slow and the initiatives have yielded varying results. Political commitment has been lagging in many countries, but as prospects of EU membership near, public demand for reform has gained leverage over politicians who wish to retain their posts. Although challenges persist, the outlook for the region looks more promising than it has over the past two decades.

The Challenge: Lingerin g Threats

The transition process among all of the Western Balkan countries has faced many challenges, including state-sponsored criminality. Weak state institutions allowed criminal elements, the secret police and profiteers, to increase their powers through opaque privatization deals, as well as from sanctions busting during the 1990 Yugoslav wars. This is not lost on the local populace, which often by necessity has relied on such methods to function in their communities. To wean the populace off such practices will almost be akin to the well-established practices of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR). The former Yugoslav citizen must have confidence that basic services will be delivered, that the government can protect his or her family, and that some type of market economy can support his or her livelihood. A lack of confidence on the part of citizens continues to undermine efforts to establish a well-functioning society. Further, the process of building accountable democratic institutions across the region is still incomplete, uneven, and fragile. Regional cooperation in combating unconventional threats is also undermined

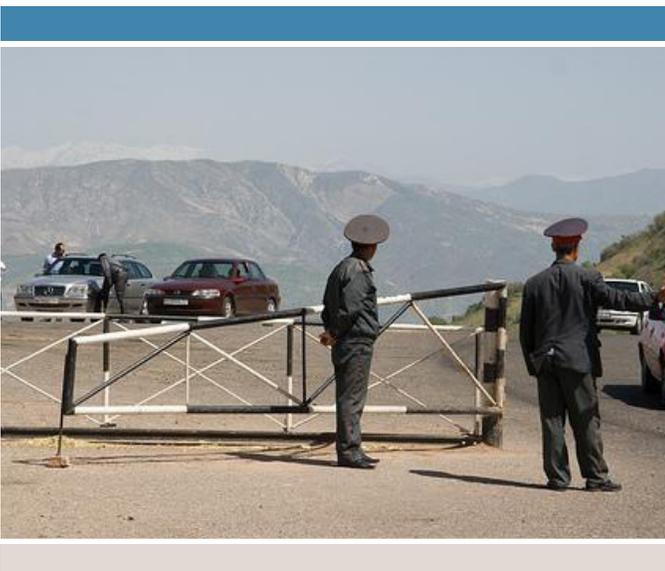
by the varying pace of institutional reform and by continuing mistrust between political elites. In this context, the major challenges facing the region are discussed below.

Corruption

Corruption is partly a legacy of the communist period in a system where it was a customary part of everyday life. Corruption is pervasive and underpins all criminal activities across the region, especially smuggling and human trafficking. A 2009 UN-Gallup poll conducted in Serbia found that citizens see corruption as the third most pressing problem after poverty and unemployment. Fifteen percent of the 1,000 persons surveyed reported having paid a bribe to gain access to standard public services. The Corruption Percentage Index (CPI) of 2009, for example, prepared by Transparency International, ranks many Western Balkan countries in the high 80s and 90s (out of 180 countries examined), much worse than the current EU average. Although perceived corruption levels tracked by Transparency International have been improving across the region, much work remains to be done. Ultimately, in order to foster and maintain an aura of evenhanded treatment and in order to establish an effective deterrent against further corruption, cronyism, and retribution by power brokers who ascended to their position by illicit means, a process must be put in place to reassure the populace that such behavior is no longer tolerated in their society. Citizens must feel safe and protected from retributive measures in order for corruption to be comprehensively confronted.

Legacy of Communist Security Services

Under communist rule, the state organized its own criminal activities using its secret services. In various Balkan states, the secret police were closely involved in cigarette smuggling and other illicit trading during the turmoil caused by the collapse of Yugoslavia. Members of the former secret police have since ascended to positions of economic and political power due to the advantage that they wielded at the beginning of the transition. Many benefited unfairly from privatization, securing state assets for minimal funds. Although lustration laws have been passed in most Western Balkan countries, the implementation of such laws has been very slow; some are even considered counterproductive.





The Albanian experience, for instance, which introduced a lustration law during 2009, proved that such efforts could have a negative rather than a positive net effect, casting doubts on similar ways of reducing corruption. The law excludes from public service those who held senior positions in the Albanian Communist Party and collaborated with the former secret services between November 1944 and December 1990. Many senior judges and prosecutors who are currently involved in combating corruption will be affected by the law. Lustration is therefore a double-edged sword; it can obscure those who leveraged their positions of power under communist rule to profit under the emerging democratic systems, yet it can also exclude individuals who are committed to reform. Regardless of the means chosen by an individual country to carry out its “house cleaning,” transparency remains the surest method for gaining the trust of citizens.

Human Trafficking

The Western Balkan states have been an important transit hub for human smuggling. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that approximately 200,000 women are trafficked in and through the region each year. Before the Yugoslav wars, the Balkans served as a transit region for trafficked persons from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to Western Europe. The arrival of international peacekeepers to the region following the conflicts of the 1990s increased the demand for commercial sex services. In a March 2008 study, *Crime and Its Impact on the Balkans*, the UN office

on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated that international personnel during peacekeeping efforts accounted for 30 percent of the demand for prostitution and 70 percent of its revenue in the region.

Furthermore, the new visa liberalization regime through which select Western Balkan countries gain visa-free access to the European Union (EU) potentially adds more concerns with regard to human trafficking. This became evident also in the recent asylum mini-crisis in which EU countries like Belgium and Sweden became inundated with asylum seekers from Serbia and FYROM.

The problem of human trafficking is particularly heightened by the desire for migration. Many young people leave developing countries in search of a better life and risk becoming victims of suspicious transactions in prosperous countries. Efforts to prevent trafficking of human beings and to prosecute those who have facilitated and participated in such crimes have received the attention of governments, international institutions, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Only Croatia and FYROM are considered by the United States to have met the minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking (Tier 1 ranking), whereas Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia have not fully complied with international standards, although they are making efforts to do so. Kosovo remains unranked due to a lack of information about trafficking in and through the territory.

Working with international organizations and NGOs, governments have passed harsher sentences for traffickers and have allocated money for the protection of trafficking victims who are rescued. These efforts are helping, but more can be done. Funds must be increased for prevention campaigns that explain how traffickers lure their victims. Perhaps a bit unconventional, the Hollywood films *Trade* and *Taken*, which vividly depict the deceit, corruption, and violence of human trafficking, could be screened in the region. The films would attract a wide audience and make the concept of trafficking more understandable to someone who has never had any exposure to it. New research shows that trafficking victims are well-educated women with multiple language skills who are lured by the prospect of working abroad. Such Hollywood films would target this group. More efforts must also be made to identify trafficked persons. In 2008, Albania assigned

female police officers to organized crime units to help identify trafficked women. These efforts should be continued and become a standard practice across the region.

From the perspective of regional security, the exterior borders of the European Union are now most relevant, while its internal borders are less so. EU aspirants must take care not to present a security liability to the EU community as they solicit entry into the entire Schengen zone. If the protection of common EU interests (such as entry restrictions and guidelines, economic stability, and cordial bilateral relations) can be assured, support for the entry of EU aspirants may increase.

Drug Trade

In the 2008 UN Balkan study, *Crime and Its Impact on the Balkans*, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) cited heroin smuggling as one of the biggest criminal problems facing the Western Balkans. The shortest heroin route from Afghanistan to Europe traverses the Balkans and fuels 90 percent of Europe's heroin market. Southeastern Europe has become a bridge between Middle Eastern and Central Asian drug producers and the lucrative Western European drug market. Yugoslavia's collapse into civil war in the early 1990s meant that heroin traders needed to find a more secure route from Afghanistan—through Turkey, Bulgaria, FYROM, and Albania—to Western European markets. Albania, in addition to being on the heroin transit route, is also an important cannabis producer for Europe. Bosnia's strategic location has turned the country into one of the main transit countries for drug trafficking. Kosovo has become an ideal storage site for heroin smuggled due to its porous borders and closely knit criminal gangs. Once in Kosovo, heroin is repacked and sent westwards through Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The first collaborative anti-drug effort between Albania and Italy recently accounted for the arrest of 23 suspects from four countries and the seizure of 1.3 tons of marijuana and 10 kilograms of heroin in February 2010. The operation, code named "Sunrise," began in March 2005. Similar large-scale cooperative efforts between Western Balkan and EU prosecutors and anti-Mafia authorities could help make greater strides in combating the drug trade. The European

Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction constitutes another important initiative in the region, providing reliable factual information concerning drug addiction and its consequences.

Illicit Trade of Legal and Stolen Goods

The West Balkan region remains a hub for smuggling an assortment of legal commodities, including fuel, cigarettes, and stolen goods. This is due to the region's close proximity to Italy and other EU states, high corruption levels, and insufficient law enforcement. During the UN embargo in the 1990s, smuggling was a primary source for local economies and accounted for between 20 and 40 percent of their GDP. Smuggling is a major problem in areas where there are no border checkpoints, such as between northern Kosovo and Serbia. Following Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008, Serbian militants burned down the border stations and control over customs ended. The area became a haven for smugglers until European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) customs officials began working in the border regions at the close of 2009.

Enormous sums of money are lost by states from tax and tariff avoidance. This fact has convinced some elected officials to begin the difficult struggle against long-entrenched criminal groups while risking their lives and those of their families. For example, former Serbian prime minister Zoran Djindjic was assassinated in March 2003, one year into his public campaign to eradicate corruption and crime in the country. The international community must publicly support the efforts of governments and individuals to reinforce their efforts and provide greater recognition and encouragement for the work being accomplished.

Money laundering is also a serious threat to stability and security due to the vulnerability of local financial systems, existing corruption levels, organized crime, and the absence of effective monitoring systems for cross-border currency transactions. Money laundering can also be related to the financing of terrorism. In the U.S. Department of State's recent report on money laundering and financial crimes, Albania and Serbia are listed among the "jurisdiction of concern" countries. Serbia has recently adopted a new "National Strategy against Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing," and other countries have made similar efforts, but more must be done.

Illicit Arms Trade

The Balkans region has been frequently viewed as the predominant source of Europe's illegal gun trade, especially for smaller shipments destined for organized crime and terrorist groups. Clients for arms originating from the Balkans have included the Basque ETA, the Real IRA, Palestinian groups, and various other insurgent movements. Although the postcommunist democratic governments have increased oversight over military equipment, reports of illicit arms transactions continue to surface in different parts of the region. Due to an increase in arms trafficking after 2001, there have been many UN, U.S., and NATO campaigns to disarm civilians in the Balkans, especially in recent years. At the same time, the weapons that remain pose a risk in the more unstable parts of the region, such as Bosnia and northern Kosovo. Since 2002, both the UN Development Program (UNDP) and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe have cooperated under the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC). A cash-for-weapons program (with no questions asked) would also help to remove these arms from the streets.

Illegal Immigration

Illegal immigration is a phenomenon with many social, political, and economic implications. Throughout the 1990s, the Western Balkan states were countries of origin for illegal immigrants, making the policing of the European Union's extended land and sea borders extremely difficult. The EU roadmap toward visa liberalization for the Western Balkan region may prove to be a supportive and positive development toward the minimization of illegal immigration, but while border control remains weak across Southeast Europe and Turkey, the region will most likely continue to function as a transit hub for migration routes. At the same time, illegal immigration continues to flourish due to the lack of a functioning legal framework among these countries. For instance, Turkey continues to defy applying the 2001 Re-Admission Protocol signed with Greece and is unwilling to accept the responsibility for returned immigrants who have illegally migrated to Greece. Similarly, Serbia, during 2009, rejected up to a third of all cases of readmission of its citizens from certain Western European countries.

Islamist Radicalism

The war in Bosnia in the early 1990s attracted Muslim volunteers from around the globe. Numerous reports at the time mention arms trading, jihadist ideology, and the creation of Islamist training camps, raising concerns about the threat of Islamist radicalization in the area. Although most of these fighters did not stay beyond the war, except the few who were granted citizenship, their influence on local societies must continue to be monitored. Although Islamist propaganda faces strong resistance from within a largely secularized Bosnian society, even small numbers of militants can have a destabilizing impact in functioning democracies such as the United Kingdom, as well as in the divided and institutionally vulnerable Western Balkan states. Bosnian police operations, such as the recent one in Gornja Maoca, are important to apprehend militants with violent tendencies. However, cross-border police collaboration must be enhanced across the region to combat any latent jihadist threats.



Cyber Warfare

Terrorist activities have reached new realms in the information age. Cyber warfare, involving the crippling of information systems, has both economic and psychological effects. Disruptions are costly and can involve the shutting down of power grids and the siphoning of sensitive information. A cyber warfare group called the Black Hand attempted to undermine the reconstruction of Kosovo after the 1999 war by disrupting Internet communications, which were heavily relied upon since landline phones were rare and cell phone coverage was poor. The reliance on mobile communications makes the region extremely vulnerable to cyber attacks that could be manipulated by criminal elements or groups intent on sabotage.

The Opportunity: Building on Successes

EU Integration

The most powerful EU tool for reforming the Western Balkans is the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP). Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAAs) ensure commitments by countries wishing to join the European Union for political, economic, trade, and human rights reform. SAAs have been signed by all Western Balkan countries, and three have been ratified by all EU member states (FYROM, Croatia, and Albania), which is necessary for the SAA to take effect. The SAA obliges countries to harmonize standard practices and legislation with the European Union in several domains, including anticrime and anticorruption campaigns. The SAA gives the European Union a strong legal basis to assist SAA countries in specific areas, monitor progress, and use hard conditionality when agreements are not fulfilled, such as freezing EU funds for noncompliance with EU regulations.

The European Union has forged close ties with all countries in the region, having granted them either candidate status (Croatia and FYROM) or potential candidate status (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia) and has provided them with economic support and multilevel guidance. The SAAs, the CARDS program (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation), the visa liberalization process, and cooperation with Europol are a few examples of EU policies and

programs that target organized crime in the region, both directly and indirectly.

In recent years, EU “enlargement fatigue” has affected accession prospects for the Western Balkans. However, neighboring EU countries, such as Austria, Slovenia, and Greece, continue to actively push for their Euro-Atlantic integration, most recently with the Greek initiative to include all Western Balkan countries in the European Union by 2014.

The EU agency that deals directly with external border security, FRONTEX, constitutes another important EU-related initiative. FRONTEX serves in combating illegal immigration and border control, in the context of cooperation with third countries that pursue the same goals and follow EU guidelines, such as the Western Balkans and Turkey. In operation since 2005, FRONTEX has been active in the East Mediterranean route, used by migrants and traffickers from the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. At a time when migratory pressures on the European Union’s southern borders are bound to increase, FRONTEX has assumed a key role in establishing effective sea border control and ensuring maritime security, thus considerably reducing the waves of illegal and clandestine immigration, as well as trafficking, affecting the Western Balkan states.

Successful initiatives in the region need to be buttressed. The reforms adopted in the Western Balkan security sector as a result of the visa liberalization process have contributed to more efficient border protection and increased security through the introduction of biometric passports. Progress has been made in harmonizing national legislation with international and EU norms. Extradition agreements have been signed between some countries in the region, allowing for the transfer and prosecution of criminals. Agreements between Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and between Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were signed in February 2010. Such agreements are necessary for increasing punitive measures to deter transnational crime. More pressure must be placed on individual states for the passage of additional agreements. Furthermore, bilateral agreements must be signed with Kosovo regardless of its status to ensure that there are no gaps in regional cooperation. Such agreements will likely require considerable involvement by the United States.

Regional Initiatives

The importance of the European Union in promoting regional reform in the struggle against organized crime is also visible in the pressure Brussels exerts on the Western Balkans. The combined priorities of post-conflict reconstruction and Euro-Atlantic integration necessitate effective regional cooperation, especially in the area of security.

The more successful initiatives have engaged Western Balkan governments, as well as observer states and international organizations. Perhaps the most effective program has been the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) founded in 1996 to combat transborder crime. For more than a decade, SECI facilitated cooperation between police and customs authorities and organized task forces on human trafficking and migrant smuggling; antidrug trafficking; antifraud and antismuggling operations; financial and computer crime; stolen vehicles; antiterrorism; container security; and environmental crimes. Working with Interpol and the World Customs Organization, SECI operations identified and eliminated several transnational human trafficking networks and precipitated the arrest of cigarette and drug smugglers.

One such initiative was “Operation Mirage,” a 10-day regional effort targeting human traffickers during which nearly 600 traffickers were identified and 207 were arrested. Almost 500 victims of human trafficking were found and released from their captors. Another SECI initiative, “Operation Danube,” was launched in December 2006 and was based on information collected regarding a criminal network that transported illegal migrants through Serbia to Western Europe. Five countries in Southeast Europe joined forces—supported by the SECI Center—to dismantle the international criminal group through synchronized investigations and information exchanges between officers from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, FYROM, Serbia, and Slovenia. In May 2007, 72 persons were arrested on suspicion that they had organized migrant transports. Such initiatives have not eradicated human trafficking from the region, but they illustrate the potential of regionally coordinated and cooperative efforts.

Linked with Europol, the SECI Center in Bucharest has 12 members (all 10 Balkan countries from Slovenia to Turkey, plus Hungary and Moldova) and 13 permanent observers. All 12 members maintain 24 police and customs officers at the SECI center.

In addition to SECI, the 1999 Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe was launched to stimulate regional cooperation and assist in the process of EU integration. The Pact’s 2003 declaration in Sarajevo aligned the Western Balkan judiciaries to the 2003 UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. This UN Convention, which has been ratified by all West Balkan states, legally obliges its signatories to adopt complementary laws on crime. This alignment has helped to facilitate the extradition of criminals caught in neighboring countries, which was not possible earlier when criminal legislation lacked compatibility across the region.

In February 2008, the pact was replaced by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Several initiatives and task forces are working successfully under its auspices. The RCC has contributed to the campaign against corruption and organized crime through the activities at the SECI Center and the Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG) by providing technical expertise together with regional and international support. On November 13, 2009, the director of the SECI Center and the RCC deputy secretary general signed a memorandum of understanding to develop cooperation in preventing and combating transborder organized crime to promote the principles of rule of law and strengthen regional cooperation. In contrast to these successes, two other regional instruments for fighting organized crime in the region, SPOC (the Stability Pact’s Initiative to Fight Organized Crime), created in Sofia on October 3, 2000, and SPAI (the Stability Pact’s Anti-Corruption Initiative) are mostly dormant.

The coordinated approaches of the SECI Center and RCC initiatives remain important. Regional initiatives with international participation help to transfer technical skills needed for dismantling criminal enterprises. At the same time, national governments are stepping up their efforts to fight organized crime and corruption as part of their bid for eventual EU membership. In fact, today, the best carrot for making progress in the struggle against crime and corruption can be the prospect of EU membership. At the same time,

Europol, through the development of implementation packages for Western Balkan countries, has contributed to the anticrime campaign. Since 2007, all Balkan capitals have signed strategic agreements with Europol. FRONTEX also signed a Border Police Directorate agreement with Croatia in 2008, as well as independent agreements with Serbia, FYROM, Albania, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Progress in other areas has also been registered. All countries in the region adopted the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the main international instrument in the campaign against organized criminal activities. The Council of Europe's conventions on fighting organized crime, corruption, and trafficking have also been ratified by governments across the region. National strategies to tackle organized crime, corruption, and smuggling have been adopted by some countries and lenient communist arms control laws were replaced with much stricter legislation. Punitive measures have been strengthened against traffickers and arrests made, although some observers argue that they still do not go far enough to deter criminals. Reports of noncompliance and lack of cooperation between states have been reported by the media, which is an important step in exerting strong public pressure on politicians.

At the same time, there is a shortage of comprehensive data for tracking the transnational aspects of organized crime and for monitoring the coordination of anticrime endeavors in Southeast Europe. The economic losses caused by corruption and organized crime cannot be quantified. The number of men, women, and children who are trafficked from and through the region annually is difficult to estimate. Underground activity is often still perceived as a one-dimensional problem of law enforcement rather than a complex political, cultural, and social labyrinth that necessitates a multifaceted response. This misperception undermines well-intended initiatives. Criminal enterprises have been interwoven with indigenous political structures, extra-regional political factors, and domestic and international business interests. Such an understanding is crucial to making headway in countering transnational organized crime in the region.

Policy Recommendations

Progress is being made in combating unconventional threats in the Western Balkans. Support for incentives aimed at deterring corruption and weakening the influence and pervasiveness of criminal networks across the region must be continued. To paraphrase the 2008 UNODC report, *Crime and Its Impact on the Balkans*, the incentives to eliminate and the deterrents to prevent organized crime and corruption must be kept on course.

Short-term and Low-cost Actions

- Pursue new country-specific and regional informational campaigns to educate women and children in particular about the tactics employed by traffickers to deceive victims into sexual or labor slavery, as well as to inform persons of the resources available to trafficked victims. Trafficking victims come from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, including well-educated women with multiple language skills who are lured by the prospect of working abroad.
- Conduct broader outreach campaigns to prevent the growth of organized crime and expose official corruption. The role of media, and television in particular, is of great importance because they represent the most powerful tool for shaping public opinion against socially harmful behavior. Media outlets must be encouraged to report on anticorruption efforts and their success stories. Media can also help publicize information on citizen's rights and where to report corruption charges.
- Encourage FRONTEX, the EU agency that coordinates border security, to become more active in the fields of information exchange and technical support, while strengthening direct cooperation with each Western Balkan capital.
- Impose stiffer punitive measures for human trafficking. Although prison sentences for human trafficking are longer in some Western Balkan countries than in Western Europe, they are still insufficient in deterring criminals. In August 2009, Serbia's parliament passed amendments and supplements to its criminal

code, increasing prison sentences for human trafficking offences from between 2 to 10 years to 3 to 12 years. Minimum child trafficking sentences were increased from 3 to 5 years in prison. In France and Germany sentences are 7 to 8 years. In the United Kingdom human trafficking is punishable by up to 14 years in prison.

- The still unsettled international position of Kosovo, in terms of its blocked membership of international institutions, should not hinder efforts toward combating local and cross-border organized crime. Political efforts should be focused in that direction. Some Western Balkan countries have signed extradition agreements, which have aided in the arrest of several high profile criminals. Despite the fact that serious challenges resulting from the unsettled international status undoubtedly exist, legal alternatives and solutions (bypassing the international recognition issue) should be examined in order to include Kosovo in such agreements. It is important to ensure that Prishtina's disputed statehood (where five EU states and two Balkan states have not recognized the country's independence) does not encourage criminal organizations to view the territory as a relative safe-haven.

Medium-term and Medium-cost Actions

- Reinforce the role of the EU border security agency FRONTEX in the protection of the European Union's maritime borders by increasing human resources for such operations and improving the needed infrastructure.

- Establish an academy in Greece for the training of police and technical officers from the Western Balkans on specific topics to increase technical proficiency, build trust and support among colleagues, as well as serve as an exchange of best practices.

- Organize special training of Western Balkan experts at the Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence (CCD COE) in Tallinn, Estonia, to discuss cyber warfare, strategies for combating it, and resources available. The CDD COE was founded in May 2008 as a coordinating body of

experts for defense against cyber threats. It is open to NATO members only. A special session should be held that is inclusive of all Western Balkan countries, including Kosovo.

- Adopt additional measures for identifying trafficked persons. Engage FRONTEX in addressing trafficking to deliver significant capabilities in assisting Western Balkan governments, which could also apply lessons learned in other regions of Europe. The 2008 efforts by Albania to assign female police officers to organized crime units to help identify trafficked women should be adopted as a region-wide standard.

- Require transparency in all government activities, especially in privatization and business transactions. This can be coupled with the adoption of effective lustration laws based on the experiences of the more successful postcommunist models from Central Europe, including the Czech Republic.

Long-term and High-cost Actions

- Establish an extensive data bank for use by law enforcement officials, government agencies, crime experts, NGOs, and academic institutions.

- Encourage the European Union to exercise appropriate pressure toward EU neighboring states, such as Serbia or Turkey, to honor their commitments as far as readmission protocols are concerned, thus curtailing illegal immigration in the region.

- The EU should assess the potential risks and consequences associated with the visa liberalization process in the Western Balkans, to ensure better planning and avoid repeating prior mistakes.

- When necessary, place EU experts within Western Balkan government agencies dealing with anticrime efforts and fill temporary positions instead of establishing parallel assistance missions.

- Establish an evaluative task force within SECI composed of observer states responsible for conducting long-term evaluations of SECI operations. The task force would monitor the

number of arrests made through specific SECI operations, the number of cases resulting in trial, the number of convictions, the sentences given, and whether the sentences were fulfilled. To assess the success of an operation, specific information about the judicial process must be available. This evaluative group could be able to determine whether corrupt or weak judiciaries free criminals.

■ Establish an EU anti-organized crime agency in Sarajevo together with cells in each Western Balkan country that has ratified an SAA, including with EULEX in Kosovo. The agency should target “black economy” networks, which are the precursors of many criminal syndicates. Headquarters (HQ) for this EU section should be located in Sarajevo, which would send a powerful message to the citizens of Bosnia that the European Union places high importance on the country’s success. This would also allow the anti-organized crime section to benefit from the large European mission already present (EU special representative and European Commission delegation). The country cells would closely monitor the campaign against organized crime and report to the HQ, which would have a coordinating role. HQ would send reports and recommendations to the European Commission.

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ABOUT CSIS AND EKEM

This policy report of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the Hellenic Centre for European Studies (EKEM) is designed to provide concrete and focused policy recommendations for a consequential U.S.-Greek policy approach toward the Western Balkan countries. With this goal in view, CSIS and EKEM established a joint Task Force in November 2009, consisting of two Working Groups, one based in Washington, D.C., and the other in Athens. The Task Force assembles policy experts in both countries who will help formulate policy recommendations based on seven topic areas listed below.

The CSIS-EKEM Western Balkan initiative is based on two central assumptions. First, that greater cooperation, harmonization, and integration in Southeast Europe in all its dimensions, from transportation and trade to energy and security, is important for the entire region, including current EU members states Greece, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Romania. Such a process can make a significant contribution to gradually integrating all the Western Balkan countries into the European Union and NATO. Inaction, neglect, and insufficient attention by international institutions and key political players could contribute to new problems or even conflicts in the most unstable parts of the region in the years ahead.

Second, both CSIS and EKEM are convinced that a closer partnership between Greece and the United States can move forward the regional integration process. Both Athens and Washington have a stake and an impetus in securing the entire region for the Euro-Atlantic community. For Greece, stabilizing the Western Balkan neighborhood will enhance its own national security and increase opportunities for business investment and economic development. For the United States, consolidating the region’s young democracies and enhancing interstate cooperation would provide a strategic dividend after two decades of substantial U.S. political, economic, and military investment in stabilizing the Southeast European region.

A bilateral effort toward the Western Balkans by the United States and Greece over the coming years can provide added value for regional development. While Washington benefits from its global stature and respect throughout Southeast Europe, Athens possesses regional expertise, extensive multilateral contacts, and a long-term commitment to regional integration. Together, the two states can make a durable contribution while developing their own bilateral connections.