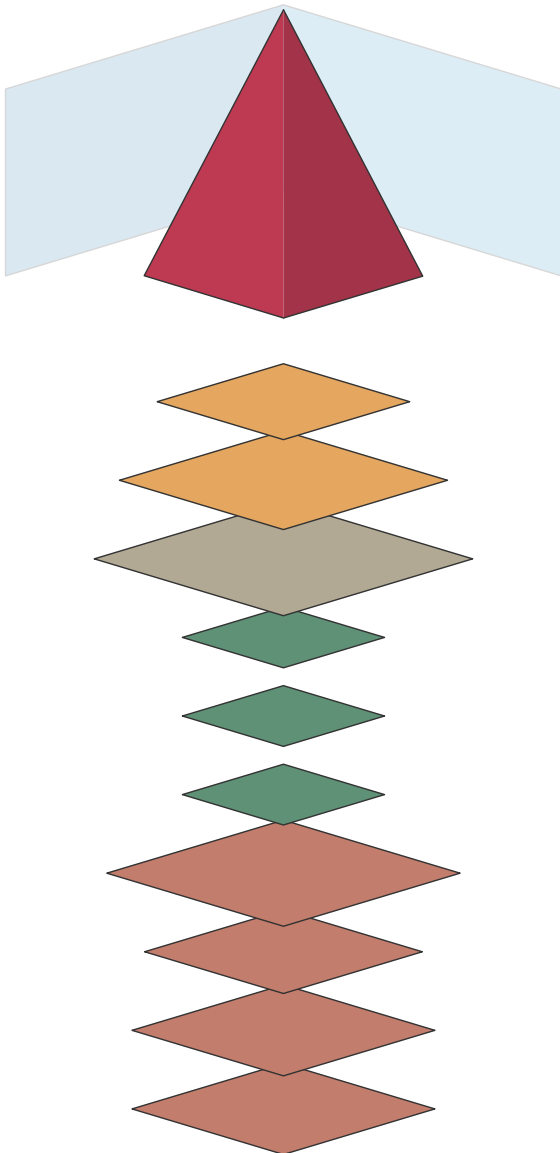




# SERBIA



## 6.21 CRIMINALITY SCORE

33<sup>rd</sup> of 193 countries  
2<sup>nd</sup> of 44 European countries  
2<sup>nd</sup> of 17 Central & Eastern European countries



### CRIMINAL MARKETS 5.55

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	6.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	7.50
FLORA CRIMES	4.00
FAUNA CRIMES	4.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	4.00
HEROIN TRADE	7.00
COCAINE TRADE	5.50
CANNABIS TRADE	6.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	6.00



### CRIMINAL ACTORS 6.88

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	6.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	7.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	8.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	6.50



## 4.92 RESILIENCE SCORE

93<sup>rd</sup> of 193 countries  
37<sup>th</sup> of 44 European countries  
11<sup>th</sup> of 17 Central & Eastern European countries



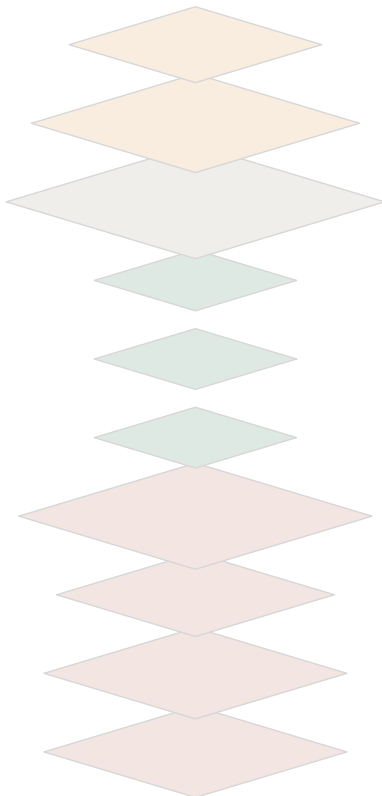
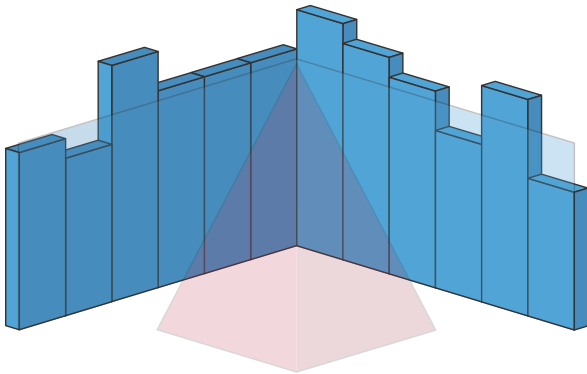
Funding provided by the United States Government.



ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.



# SERBIA



4.92

## RESILIENCE SCORE

93<sup>rd</sup> of 193 countries

37<sup>th</sup> of 44 European countries

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**POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE** 4.50

**GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY** 4.00

**INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION** 6.00

**NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS** 5.00

**JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION** 5.00

**LAW ENFORCEMENT** 5.00

**TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY** 6.00

**ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING** 5.50

**ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY** 5.00

**VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT** 4.00

**PREVENTION** 5.50

**NON-STATE ACTORS** 3.50



6.21

## CRIMINALITY SCORE

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**CRIMINAL MARKETS** 5.55



**CRIMINAL ACTORS** 6.88



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# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Serbia is a country of origin, transit point and destination for human trafficking. Women and children are trafficked into neighbouring and EU countries for sexual exploitation and forced labour, and men are trafficked for forced labour, usually in the construction industry. There is a smaller domestic market for the sexual exploitation and forced labour of victims from countries such as Moldova and Russia. The number of formally identified trafficking victims has risen in recent years in Serbia.

Serbia has been heavily exposed to the migrant crisis. This is due to its proximity to EU states and because it forms part of the Balkan migrant route – the main route running from south to north through Serbia and into Croatia. Although some border crossings are facilitated by smugglers, most irregular border crossings take place without criminal facilitation and there is no violence associated with this market.

### TRADE

Serbia is a hub of illicit firearms trafficking and is a major weapons producer, with large quantities of arms being diverted into the illegal market. Since the 2011 Arab Spring, the illicit firearms trade has become highly profitable and large quantities of firearms are trafficked to armed groups in Syria and conflict areas in the Middle East. Organized-criminal groups first smuggle arms into Central European states such as Croatia and Hungary, and then on to western states such as France and Belgium. Trafficking operations usually involve several politically well-connected individuals with links to organized crime groups. Mafia-style groups dominate the illicit firearms trade.

### ENVIRONMENT

Most flora crimes, such as logging, occur in either privately owned forests where there is inadequate security, or in state-owned forests where theft is facilitated by corrupt forest rangers. There is poor state control of illegal logging, and corruption is widespread among the agencies and officials tasked with protecting forestry. The criminal networks involved in illegal logging are small and the market is not pervasive throughout Serbia. Illegal loggers usually come from Podujevo in Kosovo in special vehicles with the appropriate equipment to cut down trees quickly. There is an active fauna crimes market in Serbia, predominantly targeting bird species, resulting in some 200,000 birds being poached each year, usually by EU nationals. Serbia

is also a destination country for exotic and illicit wildlife. Illegal fishing of sturgeon and sale of sturgeon caviar is also an issue in the country, albeit on a smaller scale compared to neighbouring Bulgaria and Romania.

Fuel is the most commonly smuggled resource from Serbia and is usually destined for Kosovo. The illicit fuel trade occurs alongside a small oil-trafficking market. Illegal sand and gravel excavation along the Drina river has damaged ecosystems and polluted drinking water. The Serbian criminal groups involved in this market are usually also involved in the drug- and arms-trafficking markets.

### DRUGS

The heroin market is among the most pervasive and violent criminal markets in Serbia and involves several organized-crime groups. Serbia acts as a transit country, as local groups cooperate with foreign criminal networks to move heroin from Afghanistan into the Balkans. Serbia also has the highest number of heroin users in the Western Balkans. Serbia is a transit and destination country for cannabis, although there is evidence of increasing domestic cultivation. Cannabis from Albania and Turkey is trafficked into Serbia and moved predominantly into Central Europe. Due to the affordability of cannabis, there is a large market in Serbia, but there appears to be very little violence associated with it.

Serbia is a source, transit and destination country for synthetic drugs and is the main source of synthetic drugs in the region. Synthetic drugs are produced in small quantities in hidden labs throughout Serbia and are mainly exported to Western Europe, neighbouring states and the Middle East. There is, however, a small but growing domestic market. Serbia is a transit and destination country for cocaine, with the dominant Serbian criminal groups collaborating with trafficking groups from Montenegro. However, the violence between rival Montenegrin groups often takes place in Serbia and there are ongoing assassinations. The growing demand and availability of cocaine suggest that the domestic market is growing.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

Overall, mafia-style groups in Serbia enjoy significant protection from political figures and prosecutors, as evidenced by the fact that no high-profile murder or drug-trafficking cases have been prosecuted. Serbian mafia groups are highly active internationally and are predominantly involved in the drug- and arms-trafficking markets. In Belgrade and Novi Sad, criminal networks are widespread and strongly interconnected, controlling various local criminal markets, and acting as satellite networks of the country's mafia-style

groups. The networks use intimidation to maintain control of local communities, extorting businesses, controlling criminal markets and maintaining political links.

There is a strong connection between criminal actors and politicians in Serbia, particularly in the media and in privatization and public procurement, which provides criminals with thorough protection. The country's political system and institutions, including its criminal-justice institutions, are dominated by the ruling party, with no

effective oversight from an opposition. State-embedded actors are also heavily involved in white-collar organized crime. Montenegrin criminal actors, largely in the form of mafia-style groups, dominate the criminal economies, bringing much violence into Serbia. Russian criminal actors have a strong influence in the criminal world, due to the extent of Russia's political and economic penetration in the country; there is also a growing Turkish criminal influence, especially in the Sandžak region.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Serbia has a powerful central government with authoritarian characteristics and concerning levels of criminal capture. Constitutional changes that form part of EU accession procedures are still to be adopted in areas such as political interference with the judiciary and other independent institutions. Despite moderate public confidence in the government, mass protests starting in November 2018 continued well into 2020, and corruption is perceived to be widespread throughout political institutions. There is a lack of transparency in the functioning of the government in Serbia and corruption is prevalent. There was a lack of political will and serious delays in adopting the legislation to create an anti-corruption agency, and law enforcement appears to be unable to investigate and prosecute high-level corruption cases independently. There is also a lack of effective oversight and independent regulatory bodies, as well as a lack of political will to raise standards. Although transparency is extremely low and worsening, Serbia remains one of the better performers in the region.

Despite not being a member of NATO, Serbia has ratified necessary treaties and has cooperated well with international actors. However, most of the country's international relations are burdened by the issue of Kosovo's recognition. There is a substantial backlog of extradition demands, but this is mostly due to administrative delays rather than lack of political will. Overall, there is good cooperation with EUROPOL, which has led to a series of successful investigations, and Serbian courts engage in mutual legal assistance with courts of neighbouring states. Despite the adoption of a strategy around human trafficking and money laundering, this is yet to lead to any results. As with many countries in the region, although there are a significant number of organized-crime-related laws in place, enforcement remains ineffective.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Law enforcement and judicial authorities are unable to investigate and prosecute high-level corruption cases independently despite the political influence the authoritarian government has over judicial proceedings and the security agencies. Some progress was registered in reducing the backlog of enforcement cases and adopting mechanisms to harmonise court practice; however, caseloads across the courts in the country continue to burden the judicial system. Similarly, law enforcement is not currently equipped to resist the undue political interference of the government in corruption cases. Frequent changes of leadership in investigative departments and widespread corrupt links to criminal networks also hamper investigation efforts. In addition, there is confusion between police and prosecution teams and a lack of institutional cooperation.

Serbia is landlocked and has relatively good control over its borders, however, links between organized crime and law enforcement do facilitate cross-border crime. Although there is good cooperation between Serbia and the EU and there are joint controls with EU border police officers, the country's southern and western borders remain porous, and border facilities need significant resources to improve.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Serbia has a fairly high risk of money laundering, despite improvements made in recent years. The government adopted a new law on anti-money laundering and terrorist financing; however, implementation has been poor and, as previously noted, law enforcement and the judiciary are unable to operate outside of political interference in money-laundering cases. There are strategic and systemic deficiencies in Serbia's response to money-laundering crimes, and the market often involves actors who are close to the political sphere.

Serbia has mixed success with regard to the ease of doing business, performing well in areas such as starting a business, construction permits and ease of cross-border trade. However, access to credit could be improved, and the private sector is underdeveloped and faces structural deficiencies such as a weak rule of law, unfair competition and an overdeveloped shadow economy. Overall, Serbia has a developed economy but faces many structural issues.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Regionally and globally, Serbia performs poorly with regard to protection for whistle-blowers and victims of modern slavery, including child victims. The poor implementation of both reforms and investment in victim support has not improved public trust in institutions tasked with supporting victims in Serbia. Moreover, judges in Serbia have not been consistent in assigning protected status and abstaining from penalizing witnesses and trafficking victims. Serbia broadly meets international standards in its corruption prevention mechanisms; however, they are yet to be fully implemented. High unemployment, political protection of criminals and a lack of successful high-level prosecutions do not create an ideal environment for preventing organized crime.

Since 2016, attacks on the media have risen sharply, alongside increasingly inflammatory rhetoric used against journalists by government officials, resulting in a repressive media environment. However, Serbia has a strong civil society that fights robustly against organized crime, even in the face of hostility from the government. The government does not encourage civil-society organizations and has so far resisted putting in place any strategy to improve cooperation with, and effectiveness of, civil-society organizations.

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