

UNDERSTANDING THE INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE A PART OF TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIME – A KEY FACTOR FOR CREATING A SUCCESSFUL POLICY TO FIGHT AGAINST THIS KIND OF CRIMINALITY

Ancuța Elena FRANȚ*

Abstract

The background for this research is the alarming growth of transnational organised crime in contemporary world. We have found out that, while many studies focus on the meaning of organised crime and criminal activities, little research has been conducted on the analysis of the individuals who actually create the organisations which involve in transnational criminal activities. We consider this to be a flaw in the overall theoretical framework regarding the analysis of transnational organised crime. This is because understanding the reasons why individuals become a part of transnational organised crime may lead to finding potential alternatives for these individuals, so they eventually choose not to act as members of transnational organised crime. This is the reason why we focus this study on finding the reasons why ordinary people commit crimes as a part of organised criminal structures. Also, we aim at finding theoretical solutions for offering these people the possibility to choose other way of life than being a criminal offender. Our research is based on a systematic review of the literature existing on this topic and, also, on a critical analyse of the legislation which, at international and national level, tries to combat the phenomenon of transnational organised crime.

Keywords: transnational organised crime, preventing organised crime, sense of belonging, education, Iceland

Introduction

This paper focuses on a topic which has been poorly analysed in the scientific literature, namely the individuals who form organised crime (von Lampe, 2012; Robins, 2009).

As we will see below, researchers usually analyse organised crime as an independent entity, but this understanding of organised crime is certainly not very

* Ancuța Elena FRANȚ is lecturer at Faculty of Law, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi; e-mail: ancuta.frant@uaic.ro.

useful when trying to dismantle the structures which sustain organised crime. If we want to find appropriate means to fight against organised crime, we must acknowledge the fact that organised crime cannot exist without the individual contributions of its members. It results that, if there were no individuals willing to become part of local or transnational organised crime, organised crime would cease to exist. Of course, this is a utopian view, but we must aim high in order to be sure that at least some effects are produced. Our approach is consistent with researches which highlight that human security (which is severely threatened by transnational organised crime) can only be achieved if we focus on each person (Ştefanachi, 2017). In a similar manner, preventing transnational organised crime must also focus on the individuals who are part of such criminal structures. It seems that, wherever we look at the current issues of our society, it becomes clear that solutions can be found only if we take into account and if we value each individual.

In this paper we will carry out a scientific quest aimed at finding whether our assumption is correct, namely that understanding the individuals who are a part of transnational organised crime can lead to efficient preventive measures. In order to fulfil our goal, first we will undergo a scientific literature review and, after that, we will seek for examples of successful policies against transnational organised crime, based on a proper understanding of individual's needs and feelings.

1. The relevance of analysing the individuals who are part of transnational organised crime

As we look towards the scientific literature addressing the issue of transnational criminality, we observe that, in what regards other forms of criminality, like terrorism, researchers have carried out a deepened analysis on the role of individuals. However, regarding the transnational organised crime, it was not given the same attention to the individual (von Lampe, 2012). We must highlight that transnational organised crime and terrorism are two different kind of criminal activities, although they have common traits (Mullins and Wither, 2016).

We must specify that, by saying that not enough attention has been given to the individuals in analysing transnational organised crime, we do not say that the individuals have been *ignored* as part of transnational organised crime. Actually, a considerably large part of the scientific literature referring to transnational organised crime takes into account the relationships between members, which are at the core of transnational organised criminal structures. What we mean to say is that little attention was paid to understanding the personal reasons which sit behind someone's resolution to become a part of transnational organised crime (von Lampe, 2012).

As we will see below, it is difficult to obtain information directly linked to the individuals who are a part of transnational organised crime. Because first-hand information is scarce, we must infer information about these individuals from other information, regarding the criminal structure as a whole, or the overall background in what regards the social, economic, educational and political circumstances.



Anyway, no matter how hard it is to carry out a research approaching the individual who is a part of transnational organised crime, it is an activity which is worthy to be carried out. This is because the individuals and the relations between them are actually the core of transnational organised crime. If we properly understand the reasons which motivate the individuals to become part of criminal structures, we can search for appropriate methods to compensate those reasons, and this can lead to prevent someone to become part of transnational organised crime. This is a logical assumption, based on the fact that in every particular case when a person decides to adhere to transnational organised crime there must be a reason which sits at the foundation of that person's decision.

1.1. The difficulties existing in analysing the individuals who form transnational organised crime

The lack of a profound analysis on individuals who form transnational organised crime is partially based on the difficulties existing for the researchers to get in touch with the members of transnational organised crime. It is undeniable that getting in touch with the active members of transnational organised crime would put researchers at risk. Moreover, the members of organised crime would put themselves or/and their families at high risk if they tell information about the criminal structure. Also, it is unlikely that active members are willing to offer valid information about themselves and about the criminal structure, due to the confidentiality obligations which exist within organised crime (von Lampe and Johansen, 2004). Given this situation, usually the cases when researchers can have a conversation with persons involved in transnational organised crime refer to *former members* of transnational organised crime, who were convicted for criminal activities performed within the criminal organisation (von Lampe, 2012). Still, even if the person was convicted, even if the criminal structure is no longer active, this does not mean that former members are willing to share their experiences. This could be because there is still a risk of being sanctioned for telling the secrets of the former organisation or simply because of the personal choice of being faithful to the criminal structure, even if this structure can no longer involve in illegal activities.

1.2. Analysing the individuals involved in terrorism vs. analysing individuals involved in transnational organised crime. A short comparison

At a first glance, we notice that the same difficulties referring to obtaining information about persons involved in transnational organised crime exist in analysing the individuals who commit terrorist attacks; still, there are some specific features which facilitate the acquiring of knowledge regarding persons involved in terrorism, as we will further show. These features may explain why there are more scientific studies which analyse the individuals involved in terrorism (von Lampe, 2012).



First, it is easier to analyse the psychological motivations which determine a person to commit a terrorist attack, as they generally rely on ideological grounds. This analysis can be efficiently performed even without a direct contact with the person who commits the terrorist act, by studying the background of the individual's evolution (for example, the political, social or religious context of the country where the individual has lived).

Second, sometimes terrorist attacks are committed by persons who are not part of a bigger terrorist structure. In these cases, people act on their own will. This means that, when such a person is brought under the custody of the authorities, before or after a conviction for a terrorist act or for an attempt to commit such an act, he or she does not fear for consequences if telling information. This information can refer to the illegal act and/or about the persons themselves. Even more, usually a terrorist attacker wants the world to know the reasons why he or she committed the attack, as this is regarded as a way to spread the knowledge about the ideology which sits as the core of the terrorist behaviour.

The situations presented above contrast with the situation of a person who is a part of what is generally known as transnational organised crime. Obviously, a person who is a part of such a criminal structure does not act on his or her own will, but according to a plan which applies to the whole organisation. Offering information means creating a breach in this plan, and this could attract terrible consequences for the traitor. This is one of the most important reasons why keeping the secret regarding all aspects of the criminal structure, including about their own person, is usually a vital obligation for members of transnational organised crime.

2. General traits of the individuals and of the relations between the individuals who form transnational organised crime

In our attempt to draw a sketch of a person who is likely to become a part of transnational organised crime, it is important to notice that, contrary to what we may think, the relations established between members of transnational organised crime are not always oriented towards making profit by illegal means. Often, persons involved in organized crime are connected through intricate relationships, which are even based on feelings of attachment and care for their fellow offenders. Studies show that, inside different forms of organised crime, there is a true social network, based on mutual respect between members (von Lampe, 2016).

The existence of such complex relationships between individuals who are a part of transnational organised crime leads us to the conclusion that at least *some* forms of organised crime actually represent well-defined societies, where individuals can find social fulfilment, in the same way that a person can find social fulfilment in the what we may call the *normal* society (meaning the society where people do not indulge in illegal deeds). Such a conclusion offers us a better understanding of the reasons which may keep a person inside a criminal structure, as we will further present.



It is important to highlight the fact that, if we were to summarize in few words the primary needs fulfilled by being a part of transnational organised crime, this would be a certain *sense of belonging* felt by members (von Lampe, 2016). This sense of belonging relies on the fact that usually members of organised crime see that they and fellow members have some common traits, which are, at the same time, different than those of the persons who are not part of a criminal structure (or are members of a different criminal structure). This consciousness about the common features that keeps together the members is obvious when we think of criminal structures like Outlaw Bikers or Outlaw Motorcycles (Lauchs and Gilbert, 2017). However, this kind of consciousness exists also on structures which do not rely on a specific activity commonly performed by all of its members. In a simple way of understanding criminal organisations, maybe the very fact that members are involved in illegal activities is enough to create the feeling that members are connected and that they belong to a certain community. As psychologists show that the sense of belonging is a basic human need (Allen and Kern, 2019), we can understand that the quest for fulfilling this need is an important reason which explains why some people choose to adhere to criminal organisations.

2.1. The relationships existing inside criminal structures based on family ties

As reality and scientific literature shows, in some cases, organised crime is based on family ties. Actually, organised crime which grows on family relations is emphasized as a distinct and prominent category of organized crime (Paoli, 2014). Some of the most renowned criminal structures, like Cosa Nostra, rely on family relationships (Paoli, 2004; Sergi, 2017). It is obvious that, in this kind of organisations, the pre-existing family relations greatly enhance the feelings of belonging which typically develop inside a criminal structure.

The criminal structures based on family relations also have some specific features which reflect on the individuals' decisions. Often, becoming part of the criminal structure is perceived as an *obligation* for the members of the founding family. Refusing to become a part of the criminal structure is not only seen as disrespectful for the organisation, but also for the family itself. The consequences of a refusal can have a devastating impact, as he or she would no longer benefit from the family's support. For a person of a young age, who cannot obtain by himself or herself the means of existence, becoming a part of the family's criminal organisation can be the only possible choice.

Also, the effects of being part of a criminal structure based on family ties are specific when we think of a member of the family who wants to *leave* the organisation. Although it is hard in all cases, leaving a criminal structure formed by one's own family is considerable harder than in other situations. Still, some may argue that when a member of the family decides to leave the criminal organisation, it is possible that it is a lower risk that he or she to be killed or severely injured, because of the affection which typically exists between the members of a family, even when the family is involved in criminal activities. However, this is not always



true, as the rules which normally apply in a family are perverted when the family is transformed in a criminal structure. Also, the previously reasoning applies, in what concerns the fact that, if a person leaves such a criminal organisation, he or she would not have the support of the family; and it is known that family's support is extremely important in critical situations, and leaving a criminal organisation certainly is a critical point.

In what concerns preventing the adherence of a member to a criminal structure based on his or her own family, it is obviously very hard to take efficient measures in order to prevent such an adherence. As we have shown above, becoming a member of such a structure is often seen as compulsory. Often, the prevention, in these cases, only depends on the determination of a member of the family to stay out of the illegal organisation, assuming the associated risks.

2.2. The relationships existing inside criminal structures which do not rely on family ties

Inside the criminal structures which do not rely on family ties there is certainly a shift in the approach concerning the relations between members. Here, the relations between members usually do not pre-exist. The relationships between the members of the criminal organisation develop only *after* a person becomes a member of the structure.

This has important consequences in what regards the reasons which determine a person to adhere to organised crime. As we have seen, when the criminal structure has a family at its core, it is almost an obligation for the family members to involve in the illegal activities committed by the family's criminal organisation. But, when a person does not have such 'family obligations', it is important to understand the reasons which motivate him or her to become a criminal offender inside a criminal organisation.

As we try to understand these reasons, we go back to what we have highlighted before, namely *the basic need of belonging*, which often is an important reason which motivates a person to become part of organised crime. In other words, the promise of the fulfilment of this need becomes a mean of recruitment, as the potential member is lured with the somehow idealistic image of personal fulfilment as a consequence of becoming part of organised crime.

If it is hard to find proper means to prevent the adherence to family-based criminal groups of members of those families, it seems easier to find methods to prevent the adherence to criminal organisations of persons who do not have previous connections with the illegal structure. At least this is the theoretical approach, but, as we will see in the following lines, things are not as simple as they might appear.

In addition to what we have stated before, it is important to mention that the adherence to a criminal organisation cannot be simply reduced to an act of searching the fulfilment of the need of belonging. Usually, this quest for social bonding overlaps on other basic needs. Often, poverty is a key factor which drives a person



to taking the decision to become member of an illegal criminal structure. It infers that finding proper ways to fight poverty can also be an efficient mean to fight against transnational organised crime.

3. Possible measures to prevent the adherence to transnational organised crime.

As we have seen above, it looks easier to prevent the adherence of a person to criminal structures which do not rely on family relationships. This is because, when a person adheres to a group without having a prior obligation, he or she are often looking for fulfilment of their social need to be a part of a group, to connect with other persons, thus achieving the sense of belonging. This leads us to the following question: would these individuals still want to adhere to organised crime if their social bonding needs were satisfied in other ways? In what follows, we will try to find an answer to this question.

Before analysing the possibilities, we must point out that, in our view, the answer is two-fold. First, we will analyse the situation of those persons who would not become part of organised crime if he or she had an alternative. Second, we will analyse those cases when people choose to become part of organised crime despite having an alternative.

3.1. Offering a viable alternative to becoming a member of organised crime - a possible mean of prevention. The Icelandic model

Some persons who adhere to organised crime would certainly not become members of such structures if they had an alternative for fulfilment of their basic needs. By *basic needs* we do not refer only to the basic need of belonging, but also to other basic needs, among which the need to obtain the means for a decent life is highlighted. It is understood that people who have a decent job, which provides them enough economic power for a decent life, usually do not get involved in illegal activities, alone or inside criminal structures. If the economical good situation is accompanied by a supporting family and satisfying social connections, the reasons which would motivate a person to adhere to a criminal structure tend to nonexistence.

This has important consequences in what regards the prevention of adherence to criminal structures, because it shows that there is a good chance that a person would not adhere to a criminal structure, if he or she had other viable alternatives for fulfilment. The problem is, however, to be able to provide these viable alternatives.

It is important to notice that in countries with a high living standard (like Scandinavian countries), organised crime is significantly lower than in other countries, which struggle with economical and social issues (Korsell *et al.*, 2011). So, it seems that the access to a satisfying legal income is important in reducing people's interest in engaging in illegal activities. In this context, we must also mention that, indeed, Scandinavian countries do seem to have a specific way to deal with criminality, while having an overall specific legal culture (Dariescu, 2019). Anyway, we do not want to give the impression that in Scandinavian countries



organised crime is inexistent. Actually, organised crime exists in Scandinavian countries and the level is rising (Johnson, 2020). Much of the recently developed organised crime in Scandinavian countries is related to immigrants (Skardhamar *et al.*, 2014). However, there is a sort of organised crime in Scandinavian countries (noticeable, in Sweden), which typically is not connected with immigrants, the so-called Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs (Rostami and Mondani, 2019). But, even with the rise of organised forms of criminality, European Nordic countries still exhibit a lower rate of organised criminal structures, while being ranked among the countries with the highest life standards¹. We believe that the values of these two parameters are not random and that it must be a connection between the high life standard and the low rate of organised crime.

Following our reasoning presented above, it results that states are responsible for taking efficient measures in order to prevent organised crime, “simply” by the way they organise their economical system. We used quotes for the word “simply”, because we wanted to highlight the fact that achieving a strong economy seems to be very hard. Still, once achieving a strong economic system, this proves to be the solution for dealing with many issues, including criminality.

It is important to notice that a high Gross Domestic Product (GDP) does not necessarily indicate that all the citizens have decent living conditions (Kapoor and Debroy, 2019). This is, for example, the case of United States of America; despite having high GDP, the country has a high rate of poor people and, consequently, high crime rates, including organised crime (Hoynes *et al.* 2006). This signifies the fact that, in order to ensure high living standards for its citizens, a country must succeed in creating legal opportunities for its citizens to gain enough income, in order to afford a decent life. If there are citizens who do not gain enough, but the country’s GDP is high, this only signifies that the country experiences high disparities between social classes. In other words, there is a big gap between rich people and poor people, and this is a recipe for the emergence of organised crime and, further, for transnational organised crime.

So, it seems that the states’ responsibility does not only infer becoming rich as a whole structure. Moreover, a successful state, one which is able to provide fulfilment for the majority of its citizens, is a state whose wealth is the result of the jointed wealth of its citizens. In order to make our assertion clearer, we compare the overall wealth of a state with a series electrical circuit. In a series electrical circuit, if one light bulb burns out, the other light bulbs will not glow, so the whole system falls down. In a similar manner, in an idealistic view, if one citizen cannot have the means to live a decent life, the state cannot be called a wealthy state, no matter how wealthy other citizens may be. As I have already said, this is an idealistic view; it is utopian to think that all the citizens of a state might have the proper means for a decent life and that is not even one single person who struggles with financial issues

¹ NUMBEO (2020), Crime Index by Country 2020 Mid-Year (retrieved from https://www.numbeo.com/crime/rankings_by_country.jsp).



(even if I do not think it is impossible, but this topic exceeds the present paper). But at least states must aim at a result as close as possible to this idealistic view.

However, reality shows that it is considerable hard for a state to provide to all of its citizens opportunities for gaining a satisfying amount of money. Still, succeeding in ensuring the welfare of the citizens is so important, that states must certainly pay great attention to achieving this goal. The importance of having satisfied citizens in what concerns their wages is far more important than in what concerns strictly the purchasing power. Having people happy with their income from legal jobs also keeps them away from the temptation of becoming members of organised crime, be it at national or transnational level.

But what if the individual has an unfulfilled need of belonging to a certain group? Is a state able to provide him or her a viable alternative, so that this individual does not seek the fulfilment of this need inside a criminal structure? The answer to this question seems to be difficult to obtain. If money is what an individual lacks, state can look for means to offer him or her a legal source for obtaining money, as money can be perceived as an objective goal. Contrary, the feeling of belonging to a certain social environment is a completely different issue, and is subjective in its nature. Sometimes it can be quantified, but, sometimes, it cannot be quantified, as it differs greatly from individual to individual.

Although it may seem an impossible mission for a state to interfere in the intimate dimension of an individual's feelings, some states have been brave enough to venture in this area. In the following lines we will present the example which Iceland can give to other countries in what regards this subject.

In Iceland, state has developed a programme designed to prevent teenagers from getting involved in potentially dangerous activities, like drinking alcohol, taking drugs, or even associating in criminal groups. The programme is based on the idea of offering teenagers an alternative to these unhealthy and/or illegal behaviours. These alternatives consist mainly in spending time in recreational activities like sport, dance, music or other forms of art, which can be performed in various specific clubs. State supports families with low income, by giving them financial help in order to offer their children the possibility to spend time in recreational activities. The programme does not stop here; it is backed up by a series of legal provisions which ban the selling of tobacco and alcohol to underage persons. Even more, it is illegal for a person aged between 13 and 16 years old to stay outside after 10 PM in winter and after midnight in summer. The programme massively relies on the help of the parents, who are encouraged to spend as much time as possible with their children, to openly speak to their children about sensitive issues and to know the friends whom their children spend time with. Also, parents play an important role in keeping their children at home at night, as we have seen that the law provides (Young, 2017).

This Icelandic programme proved to be extremely efficient. From 1998 to 2016, the percentage of persons aged 15 to 16 years old who consume alcohol dropped from 42% to 5%, the percentage of those who have used cannabis at least



once dropped from 17% to 7%, and of those who smoke every day dropped from 23% to 3% (Young, 2017).

It is also important to mention that, before resorting to this programme, Iceland had tried various other methods, but with very little to no results. Mainly, these methods which proved to be inefficient relied on presenting information to the teenagers about the negative consequences of drinking alcohol, taking drugs, or committing crimes (Young, 2017). It was only the offering of a viable alternative that worked.

At the same time, we must specify that crime rate in Iceland (including organised crime) is very low, even for the general standards of Nordic countries².

As we can see from this successful Icelandic programme, a state can take effective measures in order to prevent the involvement of its citizens in dangerous and illegal activities. We conclude that there are 2 conditions to be fulfilled in order for such a programme to be effective. First, the approach must be holistic, meaning that all the factors must be taken into account. Second, the alternative must be tangible and at hand, in order to be viable.

Some may argue that this kind of programme can only be applied to children and teenagers, thus being useless to refer to it as an example for taking measures in order to prevent adults from involving in illegal activities. And, indeed, we cannot deny that, in normal circumstances, state can neither compel adults to participate in recreational activities, nor to prohibit them to get outside at night. But, thinking this way, we are looking in the wrong direction, meaning we are looking only at the present moment, while we should look into the future. In what concerns *preventing* local and transnational organised crime, it is very important to look at the big picture, and this transcends the present-day. As organised crime is an undeniable reality of the present, the only temporal dimension where we should hope for its diminishing is the future. And, if we think this way, it appears greatly important to educate young people not to adhere to criminal organisations. As we have seen in the Icelandic programme, a great stress has been put to including the teenagers in social groups, in order to give them the feeling of belonging to a community. And, as we have presented above, often the motive that urges a person to become part of a criminal group is the need of belonging to a group which accepts the individual the way he or she is. As psychologists argue, trauma effects (as exacerbated feelings of loneliness are) often develop in childhood and are maintained through adulthood. Even more, it is important to highlight the fact that the concept of “trauma” is considered, nowadays, to be a very broad one (McNally, 2007). This means that the concept of “trauma” does not indicate only an extremely dangerous and/or a violent situation, which puts under serious threat the life or the health of a person, or a tragic event, like the death of a relative. It results that the concept of “trauma”, beyond some

² OSAC (Overseas Security Advisory Council, U.S. Department of State), (2019), Iceland 2019 Crime & Safety Report (retrieved from <https://www.osac.gov/Country/Iceland/Content/Detail/Report/2d8cdd85-eb54-4ec7-828a-15f4aeb18469>).



general-accepted meanings, has a subjectively-determined content. For example, if a child's classmates often joke about his or her physical appearance, or about his or her dressing style, this can lead to the development of some kind of trauma. This trauma can consist in having a deep feeling of estrangement from others. Anyway, if children are given an efficient way to feel that they belong to a certain group, they are less likely to develop traumas concerning this issue. Of course, life does not always offer us the possibility to be inside a certain group. Sometimes, we must spend time alone, with no friends around. An adult who did not develop childhood traumas about the feeling of belonging will have a healthy imagine about what it means to belong to a certain community, and, equally important, will know that there are some kind of groups he or she must stay away from, like criminal groups are.

Basically, this is one of the main outcomes of programmes such as the Icelandic one: growing up psychically healthy adults. Thus, Iceland shows us that people can be educated from their young ages not to get involved in dangerous and illegal activities, therefore not to become part of local or transnational organised crime. This education which has been achieved will be passed on, to future generations. It looks like a successful way to prevent organised crime, at local and transnational level.

Nevertheless, we must not forget that the success of the Icelandic programme has been possible to achieve because the whole society has been mobilized in order to reach the objective, and, also, because strong financial support has been provided by the state. Maybe the efficiency of this model has been favoured by specific circumstances, like the relatively small population of Iceland and by the high life standards which exist there. Still, above all possible discussions, a certain fact remains: that a state succeeded in preventing young people from involving in criminal activities by education, legal provisions and financial support.

3.2. Preventing individuals from becoming part of organised crime when they cannot be given a viable alternative

As we have pointed out above, it seems that offering people a real alternative to becoming part of organised crime can be an efficient measure to prevent this kind of criminality. However, this only works for individuals who are searching for a kind of fulfilment whose content is foreseeable. If a person does not gain enough money, it is reasonable to think that having a legal source for a satisfying amount of money would prevent such a person from becoming part of organised crime. If a person is seeking for the feeling of belonging to a certain group, it is reasonable to think that teaching him or her to search for this feeling in groups which are not involved in criminal acts is, also, a mean to prevent organised crime.

But what if a person has enough money and, also, has the opportunity to find the sense of belonging in groups which are not involved in criminal activities, but, still, he or she becomes member of organised crime? What viable alternative could be found in such situations?



Reality shows that, sometimes, individuals who grow up in wealthy families get involved in organised crime. Looking from outside, this situation may look very hard to understand. The main issue in these situations is, usually, not related to money, but to other personal fulfilments which can be provided by becoming a part of organised crime. The discussion is, thus, moved on the ground of Psychology. As I have already said, it is very hard to quantify personal fulfilment; what brings happiness to an individual does not necessarily make another individual happy. In the following lines we will issue some hypothesis about possible reasons which motivate some persons to become members of organised crime, although, apparently, on general standards, these persons would not have reasons to become criminal perpetrators.

First, it is worthy to notice that, no matter the context they came from, usually people become part of criminal structures at a young age (as teenagers or young adults). As we analyse people who do not fit to the general image of persons who become members of organised crime, we must necessary direct our attention towards young people who do not fit to this general image (Kleemans and van Koppen, 2020, p. 391).

Psychologists show that young people, in general, and adolescent, in particular, have a specific psychical structure. One of the causes is that the physical structure of the brain of adolescents becomes fully matured only in the early 20`s of a person. This means that adolescents are in a continuous developing process, which is reflected in their behaviour. This is why many adolescents` behaviour exhibit impulsiveness, taking risks, rapidly-shifting emotions, and a lack of concern about the consequences of the actions committed (Guy, 2015).

These psychological features explain why some adolescents seem to step out of the general frame we have drawn up upon the reasons which motivate a person to become member of a criminal structure. Still, as we have seen in Iceland, these specific teenage traits can be controlled through a programme especially designed to refrain young people from giving in to antisocial or dangerous behaviour. However, despite the undeniable great success of the Icelandic programme, the success (at least until now), is not total, because, as we have also seen above, there is still some percentage of adolescents who drink alcohol, take drugs or smoke, although the percentage of teenagers doing so is very low. The fact that we cannot prevent *all* adolescents from doing dangerous activities, despite the huge social efforts, is an argument to understand that there are people who cannot be given a reasonable viable alternative to becoming a wrongdoer; this kind of people will commit antisocial deeds in spite of having all the premises not to do so.

It results that, when adolescents become members of organised crime, it is possible that the reasons which lie underneath their decision to be found in their own unique psychical structure, defying any logical explanation. And, when this happens, unfortunately there are no viable alternatives to be offered. This is, rather, a question of personal choice.

However, we should not be discouraged by this finding. Going further on our analysis, we cannot ignore the fact that taking the decision to become part of organised crime must have some special circumstances which favoured its appearance, even for the changeable brain of a teenager. It is hard to believe that such a decision comes out of nowhere. It is possible that the adolescent taking such a radical decision to have been in contact with people involved in organised crime, for example because he or she has bought drugs, and, subsequently, has taken drugs. This means that preventing teenagers from becoming drug consumers, beyond being a measure to protect their health, may be a way to prevent their adherence to organised crime who deal with drug trafficking. Also, it is possible that the adolescent becomes friend with a person already involved in organised crime, who convinces him or her to become member of the same criminal organisation. In this context, it proves to be very important that the parents know more about their children`s entourage and help their children to keep the distance from persons who have a negative effect on them; this can usually work only if parents use a friendly manner to approach their children.

We conclude that, even if a person`s decision to become part of transnational organised crime is hard to explain, we can still identify some circumstances which greatly influenced the person in taking that decision. If we can find means to prevent the occurrence of those circumstances, we might have a chance to prevent the individual to adhere to organised crime.

Conclusions

Our scientific quest has led us to understand that, in search for methods to prevent transnational organised crime, we must direct our attention to the basic unit of a criminal structure, namely the individual. If we find efficient means to prevent the adherence of one person to organised crime, this, eventually, can lead to preventing transnational organised crime itself. Preventing a person from becoming part of transnational organised crime is not an easy task. Often, people adhere to organised crime because they search the fulfilment of a personal need, like financial accomplishment or the fulfilment of the need of belonging. In such cases, when we can identify the reasons, states can provide a viable alternative, like the opportunity to have a legal job or educating teenagers to find the sense of belonging in groups which are not related to organised crime. However, there are situations when we cannot identify the motives that urge a person to become member of a criminal structure; in such cases, all we can do is to try to influence the circumstances which may have a role in determining a person to involve in criminal activities within organised crime. In all situations, if states are searching for efficient methods to prevent transnational organised crime, they must embrace a holistic vision. This means that they must understand that organised crime is intricately linked to the well-being and to the educational level of their citizens. If states adopt laws against organised crime, while understanding organised crime *only* as a whole entity, these laws cannot have the desired effect. At the same time, legal measures which aim to



offer to each individual a better life and a better education are also provisions which can prevent transnational organised crime.

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