

Diversity in organised crime

Anja Logonder, LL.M.

Authors dealing with organised crime have in recent times usually stressed a similarity between the activities of organised criminal associations and the operation of legal companies, and highlight their rationality. Given a choice between legal and illegal activities, illegal entrepreneurs make a selective rational choice, based on a calculation of what is better for them and for their companies, claim advocates of the theory of criminal enterprise. Their choices and patterns – as in companies which function within the law - follow the general economic principle of making a profit on profitable markets. Authors therefore focus on the organisation of criminal activity and on the illegal market dynamics and not on the individuals involved in these activities. With an understanding of organised criminal associations as criminal enterprises, these authors deviate from Gottfredson's and Hirschi's idea, according to which individuals involved in organised crime typically have a low degree of self-control, i.e., are impulsive, short-sighted and oriented to the present moment, inclined to the »instant« satisfaction of desires and unwilling to work for remote aims. Are individuals and the activity of members of criminal groups, which are »needed« for organised crime really so uniform? An analysis of the literature, the carrying out of an (ethnographic) research project in the field of organised crime and interviews conducted for this purpose confirm that criminal offenders do not exist in a social and physical world which is different from other parts of society. Since organised crime is a part of the diversity of the everyday world, due to its nature it attracts or needs a very diverse group of activities and people.

Key words: organised crime, organised criminal associations, operation of legal companies, comparison, legal activities, illegal activities, criminal offenders

UDC: 343.974