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Leadership and Structures

Those seeking to study trafficking of human beings (THB) and smuggling of migrants (SoM) processes can start from the perspective of the manner in which the entrepreneurship works, or from the perspective of the demand from the customers who make use of the business, generally through the middlemen. A third perspective is also possible, through analysis of the functioning of the middlemen on the intermediate structure, but the analysis then becomes far more complex and likely provides less of an overview. Having regard to the composition of the files studied, those who are principally responsible in this illegal business can be detected by means of an analysis of financial investigations, telephone taps or other investigative techniques. This brings the leadership fully into the picture, particularly the qualitative aspects of the leadership and the contribution they make to the structure of the business.

A first point of interest in analysing the files and networks is the different kinds of leadership and founding structures that are found among the 53 large-scale networks in the judicial files. A fundamental distinction that we notice is between the clan-based and the business-based networks, with as a further development their internationalization and their inter-ethnic collaborations. Another important distinction is between the business networks and the mafias and mafia-like organizations. A directly related question, then, is when and how a clan or a business network becomes a mafia or a mafia-like network. In the business-based networks, it will be interesting to see how the positions of firms may change from being completely illegal, to being partly legal combined with partly illegal.

The manner in which traditional small-scale Albanian entrepreneurs operated in the 1990s is very characteristic of the clan-based approach. They ran their operations by perverting elements from the
Kanun culture. The Romanian Roma are among the entrepreneurs who seek clan support. Their approach is to indoctrinate their mostly Roma victims with a perverted interpretation of the Roma Kumpania structure. The criminal comradeship businessmen of ex-Soviet provenance (e.g., Bulgarians and Russians), on the other hand, do not use so-called blood relations. Their trust relations are based on partnerships, sometimes with historical roots, for example being a former member of a security service. Their aim is to realize their projects through firms, which is their founding structure, not through a clan or family. But how do they organize the business? Two scenarios are possible: hide the criminal activities as much as possible in the margins of legal activities, or invest directly in a criminal enterprise without concerns about legality. Over the years, a number of them have evolved into mafia-like enterprises and even into true mafias. However, true mafia entrepreneurship or strong links between comradeship entrepreneurs and true mafias are apparent in 27% of the files and 36% of the networks. In the files, the entrepreneurs who invest in SoM combined with THB are always mafiosi. Clan- and family-based leadership may also use firms as instruments and most often they do, especially the ones that survived after the 1990s. For all of the entrepreneurs there is an additional challenge, namely the need to internationalize the business and to invest in inter-ethnic collaborations.

1. Clan networks not using company structures (41 files, 24 networks)

When drawing up our categories, some files and networks are necessarily included in more than one category based on their nature. Thus simply adding the number of files and networks does not provide a total for all categories combined. Moreover, the same network can sometimes be found in more than one file. It explains the difference with Table 1.1 at page 3.

In a case dating from 1999, the fathers of two different Albanian families played an important conciliation role between the two criminal groups. After a shoot-out between the two clans, there was a meeting between the two fathers who would together decide on war or peace. They reached a settlement which everyone had to strictly observe afterwards.

Clan networks are based on so-called blood relationships, characterized by ‘individualized trust’. They can be found in the files that report on ‘old Albanian’ and Roma Romanian clans that are involved in THB (and also in some Indo-Pakistani networks). They form a substantial