In their study of SoM around the Mediterranean Sea, Di Nicola and Musumeci found that the associated financial transactions occurred in a wide variety of ways: via a large number of very different financial agencies, via couriers, via informal banking systems, via economic activities that rely on liquidity payments or on payments in cash (Di Nicola & Musumeci, 2014: 42). In earlier chapters we showed that relying on traditional cultural customs is worth considering as a methodology when expanding one’s business. This can also play a role in money laundering, especially where the legal structures lack any provisions for countering it. In this respect, one can think of informal, culturally defined banking exchange systems. We have to bear all of this in mind when studying the financial transactions.

However, we shall stick to one clear rule. We shall avoid rough extrapolations, conjectures and large estimates for which there are no grounds in our files. It is all too easy to talk about multiple millions of dollars or euros. It is too simplistic to talk about numbers in cases where the difference in the estimations between the lowest and the highest number is too large to be adequate or useful. We wish to stick, as we have throughout our study, to irrefutable, business facts that cannot be disputed on any point.

1. Profits

Women as commodities

First case:

An Albanian network (Kol, 1997–1999) that kidnapped, bought and sold girls sent money transfers worth 100,000 euros to its own clan.
One girl was bought in Italy for 620 euros. Another victim was rented out for 1875 euros per month for a period of three months. The network also bought two trucks with the proceeds of sex work. One victim was promised 10,000 US dollars to send to her family. In the end, she received 960 dollars.

Second case:

Some former Soviet networks hired girls out to people for a set period, e.g. for a month. In a case dating from 1999, no less than 2500 euro was paid for the monthly rent of a girl. In another case from 1999, a girl was rented out for three months for which the monthly payment was 1750 euro.

Third case:

In the Ar. case, a file from 1998 to 1999, Bulgarian girls who had been recruited some years previously as waitresses were then sold for the price of 2000 German marks. After being resold for 3000 German marks, they were put to work in a sex work bar where the bar owner got half of the takings. This is a very violent case. One of the Albanian defendants was also sought for the murder of one of the Bulgarian victims.

In most of the old Albanian cases, no agreements were made between victims and traffickers. These situations involved real slavery. The girls were forced under threat of violence to hand over their money to the bar manager or the pimp. The sex work victims had to work daily shifts of 12 and sometimes up to 18 hours and to keep a record of their earnings. Normally the minimum rate for a customer was 25 euros, for which he got ten minutes with the girl. The girls earned on average 250 euros and sometimes up to 1000 euros a day. In some cases, the victim was obliged to work until she had brought in 500 euros. The pimp came each day to the clubs where the girls worked to collect the money. He would ask the managers how many customers the girls had had so that he knew what they had earned. The managers also reported what the customers had drunk. In the case of street sex work, a café was used as an operating base and the girls were given a mobile phone and had to report to the pimp after each client. In the files, we also found a system of financial penalties for the victims. In an Albanian loverboy case, the victim had to pay 7500 euros in extra debt after an attempt to escape.