

A CHANCE FOR EUROPE



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The international nature of organised crime is a fact. According to Europol's 2021 Serious and Organized Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA), **70% of criminal groups operating in the European Union are active in more than three EU countries.** Of those, 65% are composed of members of more than one nationality. In this scenario, supported by judiciary and law enforcement inquiries and investigations, it is necessary to **build networks** and provide **global answers to a global problem**, organised crime. For years we have continued to witness chronic problems in our **"House of Europe."** These include the number of people falling into **trafficking networks**, the persistence of **wars** and **violence**, and the gap in opportunities to access **education, health care, infrastructure** and **decent living conditions** for people living in the continent. Organised crime finds its most

fertile ground in social injustice and inequality. Therefore, 20 years after the United Nations Palermo Convention and more than two years of global pandemic, we, the European civil society gathered in the CHANCE Network, **call for the creation of a more equitable society** as a powerful tool to **eliminate organised crime and corruption.** We ask Europe and the European institutions to involve civil society; its role is crucial to achieve this goal. The scandal that swept through the European Parliament in recent months should serve as a reminder and a call to action for civil society to take the lead and start raising awareness in their communities to make representatives aware of our priorities for the Europe of the future. We call on political leaders and political parties to commit, each according to their functions and mandate, to giving real answers to our demands.

We have A CHANCE FOR EUROPE. We cannot waste it!

1 ORGANISED CRIME: A EUROPEAN PROBLEM

We call for

> The European Parliament and other national and EU institutions to recognise that organised crime is a European problem, stemming from inside its borders and with its roots in social inequalities and grey areas existing in our countries.

> The establishment of a Permanent Forum of civil society on organised crime, between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European civil society.

2 RECLAIM COMMON GOOD(S) FROM ORGANISED CRIME

While it is true that mafias seek economic capital, they also aim at organising the territory according to their structures and needs, gaining a higher social positioning and, therefore, also “social capital”. Organised crime takes advantage of the State’s absence and the power vacuum it generates. Huge sums of laundered money are an excellent tool for investing, creating fake jobs, imposing new rules, and perpetuating distorted social networks that allow organised crime to maintain the long term control over the territory.

Control of the territory, meant as the geographical space and the communities that live in it, must be regained from organised crime groups by means of confiscation. We must plant new seeds to develop a new social capital and a new economic model capable of providing jobs, dignity and services to people. The social reuse of confiscated assets is a powerful tool to pursue these objecti-

ves. It allows the State and social enterprises to join forces to repair the damaged social fabric, creating cohesion and a virtuous economy and allowing for social inclusion whilst strengthening the democratic system.

To create and strengthen the mechanisms for public and social reuse of assets confiscated from organised crime and mafias,

We ask:

> To make the provision for social reuse of confiscated assets binding alongside other forms of management in the new proposal of directive on asset recovery and confiscation.

> To review participatory mechanisms to interinstitutional meetings on the management of confiscated assets to ensure the adequate involvement and dialogue with CSOs.

And to the EU and member States we ask

> The establishment of a special fund to support civil society’s projects in confiscated assets.

3 CORRUPTION, THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Corruption and money laundering mechanisms allow the infiltration of organised crime in our democracies through what is known as the grey zone. With strong institutions and competent administrators, civil society, in particular journalists and monitoring communities, play a key role in denouncing and combating the pervasiveness of corruptive dynamics and in raising awareness about the damage they create. In light of this,

We call for the European Commission:

> To formally recognise the role of civil society organisations in monitoring EU expenditures.

> To explicitly support strong provisions for meaningful stakeholder access to beneficial ownership registers as proposed by the European Parliament.

We also call for EU institutions and Member States:

> To grant/strengthen the involvement of civil society organisations in the co-programming of interventions and initiatives established within the RFF plans.

4 PROTECTION, JUSTICE AND REPARATION FOR VICTIMS OF ORGANISED CRIME AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND THEIR FAMILIES

The ultimate price for the presence and persistence of organised crime in our societies is paid by those who are directly victimised, either falling into human trafficking networks or being killed, wounded or otherwise harmed by organised crime whilst having nothing to do with its activities. They and their families should be protected and be able to obtain justice and reparation in a system centred around them and their needs.

To establish this victim-centred approach, we ask the EU institutions and Member States:

> To establish a permanent round table among institutions, the victims and their families, and civil society organisations.

> The institution of an Advocate for the Victims of Trafficking and Organised Crime at EU level, ensuring full and comprehensive implementation of the EU Directives for the victims’ rights and for protection of victims of human trafficking.

5 PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH FROM THE ECOMAFIAS

Ecomafias are criminal organisations that create economic systems based on the depredation of natural resources and destruction of the environment, causing serious damage or risk to the environment and/or human health. Moreover, substantial public investments in renewable energies and waste management constitute a new, enormously attractive market for mafias.

The European Union is on the right path to acquire a valid framework for tackling the profits of organised crime from environmental crimes thanks to the new Directive proposal currently in discussion.

We therefore call the European Parliament and Council

> To speedily approve the new Directive proposal on the protection of the environment through criminal law, in the amended version as voted by the European Parliament before the end of its current mandate.

And we call the Member States

> To start the necessary adjustments for a quick ratification of the new Directive.