Co-funded by the European Union

RESTART

Reclaiming Spaces, Building Communities

Mapping Social Reuse Practices of Confiscated, Abandoned, and Unoccupied Assets Across Europe

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This publication was produced by the consortium of the project ‘RESTART - *A new paradigm to protect the EU’s core values and strengthen democratic participation through the public and social reuse of assets*’, co-funded by the European Union under the CERV programme.

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- **Eine Welt e.V. (Germany)**
- **Repubblika (Malta)**
- **Asociația pentru Cooperare și Dezvoltare Durabilă (Romania)**
- **BASTA! - Belgian Antimafia: Steps Towards Awareness asbl (Belgium)**

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1. ABSTRACT

This research examines the **social reuse of confiscated assets** across 5 European countries (Germany, Malta, Romania, Belgium, and Italy) within the EU-funded project RESTART, employing a qualitative methodology based on **case studies and semi-structured interviews**. It analyses how assets seized from organised crime can be transformed into instruments for **social inclusion, community development, and local regeneration**.

The findings reveal uneven levels of implementation across Europe. While in Italy confiscated assets represent a consolidated policy tool, in other countries the analysis extends to **vacant or abandoned properties**, reflecting differing legal frameworks and levels of institutional capacity. Common challenges include **bureaucratic delays, limited access to funding, and weak community engagement**, alongside occasional risks such as **intimidation or economic pressure**.

Within this context, **Directive (EU) 2024/1260** opens new opportunities by strengthening provisions on **asset recovery, management, and reuse**, and by encouraging Member States to adopt **social reuse strategies**. The cases analysed demonstrate that civil society organisations are key actors in operationalising these provisions, fostering **active citizenship, social innovation, and a culture of legality**.

The research highlights the need for **coordinated, multi-level governance**, combining institutional support with community involvement. It underscores that effective implementation of the Directive could enhance the **sustainable and socially oriented reuse of assets**, contributing to broader EU objectives of **rule of law, social cohesion, and territorial resilience**.

2. About RESTART

The project **RESTART – *A new paradigm to protect the EU core values and strengthen democratic participation through the public and social reuse of assets*** is a European initiative aimed at promoting active citizenship and safeguarding fundamental rights through the concrete practice of public and social reuse of confiscated, abandoned, or unused assets.

RESTART is **co-funded by the European Union under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)** (Project ID: 101146600) and coordinated by the Italian organisation **Libera. Associazioni, nomi e numeri contro le mafie**, in partnership with members of the CHANCE European network: **Eine Welt e.V. (Germany), Repubblika (Malta), ACDD (Romania), and BASTA! (Belgium)**.

As required by EU funding rules, *the views and opinions expressed are those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), which cannot be held responsible for them*.

The project addresses the growing impact of organised crime across Europe by fostering a culture of democratic legality and encouraging citizens to take an active role in their communities. In particular, it promotes a bottom-up approach in which local actors are directly involved in **transforming assets once linked to criminal activities into resources for collective benefit**, thereby strengthening social cohesion and public participation.

From an operational perspective, RESTART combines research and participatory activities. These include the **mapping of good practices in the social and public reuse of confiscated assets**, the development of shared strategic tools such as a common manifesto, and the organisation of a series of events at national and European level, including a national forum and five **open capacity-building youth camps**.

The youth camps represent one of the project's most distinctive components. Held in 5 European countries, they bring together young participants to engage in training sessions, study visits, and hands-on activities. These experiences aim to demonstrate how confiscated or neglected spaces can be regenerated and repurposed as centres of community life, social innovation, and civic engagement.

Across these activities, the project addresses several key thematic areas, including:

- the promotion of **democratic participation and fundamental rights**;
- the fight against organised crime and corruption through civic engagement and transparency tools;
- the development of the **social economy** and collaborative governance models;
- **urban and territorial regeneration** through the reuse of assets;
- the empowerment of young people as active agents of social change.

Within this framework, the social reuse of confiscated assets emerges not only as an effective tool to counter the economic power of criminal organisations, but also as a powerful symbolic process. Spaces once associated with illegality are returned to the community and transformed into shared goods, generating new opportunities for inclusion, sustainability, and local development.

3. METHODOLOGY

Due to its legal culture, the central role it plays in the fight against organised crime, and its position as one of the pillars of Libera's work, the issue of **confiscated assets** is at the core of this mapping report in Italy. However, as the social reuse of confiscated assets is not yet a central focus in other countries, the analysis of social reuse practices has been broadened to include not only confiscated assets but **also unoccupied and abandoned properties**.

The mapping presented in this report was developed through a collaborative and multi-step methodology involving all project partners. Initially, each partner conducted a **preliminary screening of social reuse experiences** within their respective countries, collecting key baseline information and compiling it into a shared dataset. This first phase enabled the identification of a broad pool of relevant case studies.

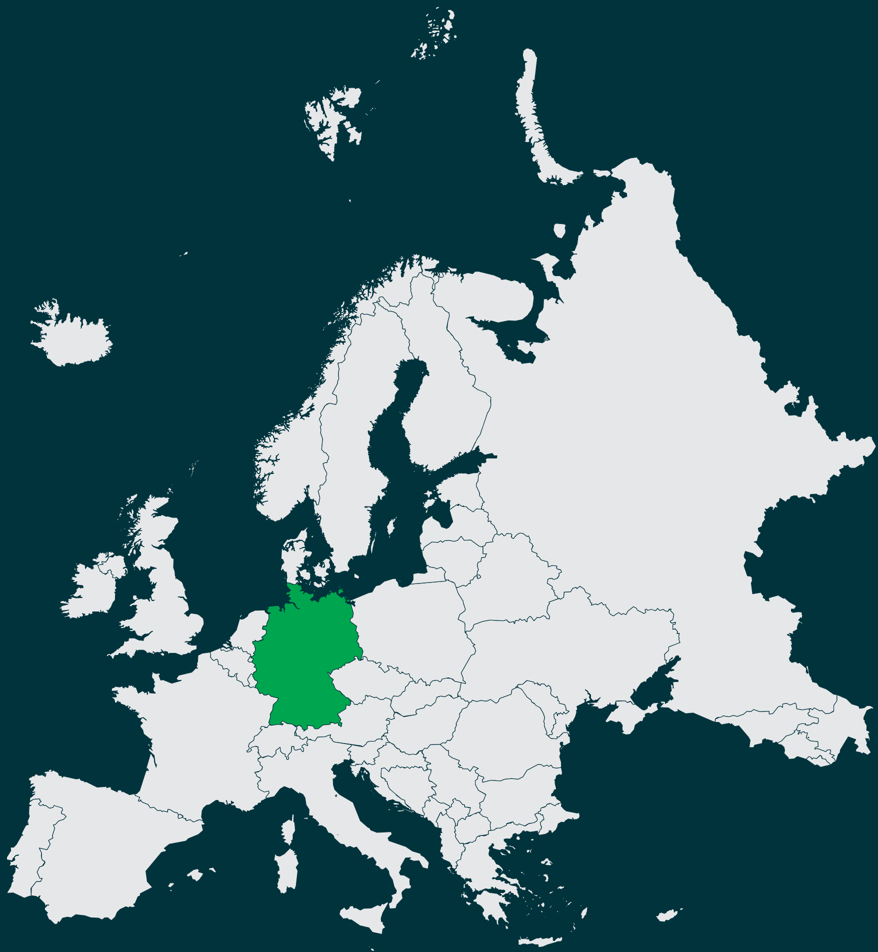
Subsequently, the partnership jointly reviewed the shortlisted experiences during a dedicated meeting, with the aim of ensuring their coherence and relevance with the overall objectives of the research. This collective validation process contributed to refining the scope of the mapping and establishing a shared understanding of selection criteria.

A common research framework was then defined. In particular, Libera developed a **standardised interview template**, designed to gather consistent qualitative and contextual information from the selected organisations managing the assets. Based on this tool, each partner carried out **semi-structured interviews** with the identified stakeholders at national level.

The interviews were transcribed and systematically analysed. Building on this material, each partner produced a **synthetic document summarising the key findings** emerging from the interviews, highlighting recurring themes, challenges, and good practices.

To ensure coherence across national contributions, the partnership elaborated **shared guidelines for report writing**, defining both the structure and the analytical approach. Following these guidelines, each partner drafted a **national report** focusing on the experiences identified in their country.

Finally, all contributions underwent a **review and consolidation process**, leading to the development of the present mapping report, which integrates the results collected across the different participating countries into a comprehensive and comparative overview.



Germany

Places Reclaimed for the Common Good

Lichthaus Kino im Straßenbahndepot – **Weimar**
Kühlhaus Görlitz e.V. – **Görlitz**
IG Fortuna | Kino der Jugend e.V. – **Leipzig**
Gleis Eins e.V. – **Lobstädt**
Geyser-Haus e.V. – **Leipzig**
Alte Spitzenfabrik – **Grimma**
Offener Freizeittreff Mockau – **Leipzig**

4.1. National Context

This report examines how associations advance the social reuse of abandoned or underused buildings, **converting neglected spaces into publicly accessible assets** that deliver practical local services and strengthen community life. In so doing, they engender stable, inclusive settings for everyday participation – such as **safe spaces for young people**, cultural activities, hands-on workshops, and community events – transforming derelict premises into active **social and cultural hubs**. In a broader context in which organised crime is increasingly networked and financially enabled, and right-wing radicalisation is on the rise – often exploiting vulnerabilities among minors and other at-risk groups – these projects contribute positively by reducing social isolation, strengthening civic trust, and expanding legitimate opportunities and community belonging at the local level.

Threat assessments carried out by both the German government and the EU describe organised crime as increasingly transnational and network-based.[1] Groups are rapidly adapting by using digital technologies and complex logistics, as well as money laundering and the abuse of legitimate commercial structures to hide, transfer and reinvest their proceeds.[2] In the German context, a wide range of **criminal markets** are relevant, with drug offences consistently ranking among the main categories of crime, alongside property offences and crimes related to the economy and the financial sphere. Money laundering and tax/customs offences are key enablers of these crimes.[3]

There are various **organisational forms**: there are **mafia-type** structures, including Italian mafia organisations such as the 'Ndrangheta, Camorra and Cosa Nostra. At the same time, public debate and the attention of law enforcement agencies have focused on **'clan-type'** structures organised around extended **family network**s and other groups sometimes associated with particular regions or marginalised communities.[4] Another visible form is **biker-type** organisations ('rocker' groups), which can combine intimidation, violence and profit-driven criminal activity with the use of legal businesses. Across these forms, cooperation between actors and networks is a recurring feature, enabling coordination of operations and the management of high-profit activities.[5]

Economic and financial dimensions are increasingly central. **Money laundering** functions as a key enabling mechanism that connects many crime types and facilitates the integration of illicit proceeds into the legal economy.[6] A recurring concern is the misuse of sectors capable

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[1] Bundeskriminalamt (BKA), *Bundeslagebild Organisierte Kriminalität 2024 (Wiesbaden: Bundeskriminalamt, 2025)*, 2–3, https://www.pvtweb.de/fileadmin/user_upload-/Dateien_zum_Download/organisierteKriminalitaetBundeslagebild2024-BKA.pdf (accessed January 28, 2026).

[2] Europol, The Changing DNA of Serious and Organised Crime: European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (EU-SOCTA) 2025 (The Hague: Europol, 2025), 4–6, https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/EU-SOCTA-2025.pdf (accessed January 28, 2026).

[3] Europol, Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment (IOCTA) 2024 (The Hague: Europol, 2024), 4–8, https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Internet%20Organised%20Crime%20Threat%20Assessment%20IOCTA%202024.pdf (accessed January 28, 2026).

[4] Di Maggio, Baruzzo, and Rispoli, Free Your Ideas Report (Torino: Edizioni Gruppo Abele, 2019), 39–45, https://www.chance.international/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Free-your-ideas_def_EN.pdf (accessed January 28, 2026).

[5] Europol, EU-SOCTA 2025, 5–7.

[6] Ibid., 12–16.

of storing value and obscuring ownership, particularly where real-estate-related schemes and professional facilitation provide channels to camouflage criminal proceeds.[7]

A significant and growing concern is the involvement of **minors and adolescents**. Criminal networks may target young people because they are easier to influence and can be used for high-risk, low-threshold tasks, while the organisers remain insulated from direct exposure.[8] Recruitment appeals to adolescents with promises of quick money, status, belonging, excitement and gifts, but also involves 'push factors' such as stress at home, marginalisation or victimisation. Online environments are intensifying this dynamic.[9] Beyond minors, the groups most at risk of being drawn into or harmed by serious organised crime are primarily defined by **structural vulnerability and opportunity structures, rather than identity**. Elevated risk is associated with poverty and social exclusion, disengagement from education, unstable housing, limited future prospects and strong exposure to delinquent peer groups. In trafficking and exploitation contexts, people in vulnerable situations may be targeted.[10]

Civil society is affected in multiple ways. Communities may experience indirect harm in the form of **violence, intimidation and corruption risks** associated with lucrative illicit markets, particularly where trafficking and money laundering intersect with legitimate supply chains and cash-intensive sectors. At the same time, public understanding is shaped by the risk of stigma and misattribution. Framing organised crime as an ‘imported’ phenomenon or synonymous with migration can reinforce discriminatory narratives and obscure its broader structural and economic impact.[11]

In Germany, there is a strong presence of **radicalised right-wing groups** that use this narrative to spread their ideas of racial supremacy. Resentment-based worldviews can translate into approval and support for radicalised right-wing and neo-Nazi circles, contributing to a climate that is more hostile to pluralism and democratic coexistence.[12] The socio-spatial conditions determining vulnerability can be observed, in particular, in rural regions of eastern Germany. These regions are characterised by demographic homogeneity and centre-periphery structures. There is a lack of local support structures for the most vulnerable individuals, making these areas ideal for radicalised right-wing proselytism.[13] Finally, **awareness-raising strategies** have adapted to contemporary youth communication spaces by moving from traditional recruitment and propaganda formats to social media platforms such as TikTok.[14]

Several of the projects interviewed focus on **disadvantaged areas and regions**, including rural or peri-urban contexts where social exclusion, polarisation, and the risk of radicalising narratives can be present. In this sense, they act as a **bulwark for democratic dialogue**. By supporting inclusive models, they help preserve the everyday infrastructure of democracy at

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[7] Ibid., 27.

[8] Europol, IOCTA 2024, 4–8.

[9] Luyten, Baltikauskaite, and Chahri, Recruitment of Minors into Organised Crime, (EPRS, European Parliament, 2025), 6–9, https://www.euda.europa.eu/system/files/documents/2025-07/recruitment-of-minors-into-organised-crime.pdf (accessed January 28, 2026).

[10] Europol, EU-SOCTA 2025, 31–32.

[11] Di Maggio, Baruzzo, and Rispoli, Free Your Ideas Report, 45–50.

[12] Oliver Decker, et al., Vereint im Ressentiment: Autoritäre Dynamiken und rechtsextreme Einstellungen (Leipziger Autoritarismus Studie 2024), (Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2025), 55, https://www.boell.de/de/2024/11/13/vereint-im-ressentiment-autoritaere-dynamiken-und-rechtsextreme-einstellungen (accessed January 28, 2026).

[13] Ibid., 112.

[14] Ibid., 117.

local level, including respectful debate, recognition of plural identities and protection of minorities. Their **preventive and educational** impact is tangible: they reduce social isolation, offer alternative narratives and a sense of belonging, and strengthen civic awareness and critical thinking, particularly among young people who might otherwise be exposed to radicalising messages.

The **confiscation of criminal proceeds** forms part of Germany's response to organised crime. Since the **2017 reform of criminal asset recovery**, courts have generally been required to confiscate assets obtained through or for an unlawful act.[15] However, when it comes to the '**social reuse**' of confiscated assets, **Germany lacks an operational framework** comparable to the dedicated regimes found in some other European countries. In practice, once the rules for prioritising victim compensation have been applied, the proceeds usually go to the local **states' treasuries** in line with general budgetary principles.[16] The implementation of **Directive (EU) 2024/1260**, which promotes the reuse of confiscated assets for public or social purposes and emphasises justice and community resilience, could shape future discussions in Germany about the legal framework and development of more structured approaches in the coming years.[17]

We would also like to highlight how difficult it can be to achieve a shared understanding of the 'social reuse' of property. Based on our interviews, this concept is particularly challenging to explain in a German context because it is rarely recognised or labelled as such. While similar practices certainly exist, they are more commonly described through other frameworks, such as social entrepreneurship, community development or social projects aimed at strengthening democratic dialogue.

This **conceptual gap** also became apparent during our research process, particularly when we attempted to identify organisations willing to participate in interviews. Out of the more than thirty projects we contacted, **only about a third agreed to be interviewed**. In many cases, we received no response to our requests, and in a couple of instances, interviews were cancelled at short notice. Most of the interviews we ultimately secured were made possible thanks to personal connections through our association and the support of our stakeholders, which helped build credibility and trust. In some cases, **trust-building** required an additional step: we had to reassure interviewees of our good faith and clarify that we were not involved in structures that could harm or compromise them. This highlights the **sensitivity of the topic** in certain environments and the importance of clear communication and trusted networks when engaging with projects that promote social cohesion and democratic resilience.

[15] German Federal Republic, Gesetz zur Reform der strafrechtlichen Vermögensabschöpfung, Bundesgesetzblatt I, in Bundesgesetzblatt Teil I, n. 22 (2017), 872–894, esp. 873–874, http://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?startbk=Bundesanzeiger_BGBl&jumpTo=bgbl117s0872.pdf (accessed January 28, 2026).

[16] Ibid.

[17] European Parliament and Council, Directive (EU) 2024/1260 of 24 April 2024 on asset recovery and confiscation, art. 19(1), in Official Journal of the European Union, 2024, 22, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX%3A32024L1260 (accessed January 28, 2026).

4.2. Social Reuse Practices in Germany

Lichthaus Kino im Straßenbahndepot – Weimar

Legal name	Lichthaus GmbH, Lichthaus im Straßenbahndepot
Asset location	Am Kirschberg 4, 99423 Weimar, Germany
Website	http://www.lichthaus.info/

Lichthaus is located in a **former tram and trolleybus depot** in Weimar that became vacant in 1997. Shortly after its closure, the site was informally reused by local cultural actors, hosting festivals, exhibitions and events organised by institutions such as Kunstfest Weimar and Bauhaus University, establishing it as an important cultural hub.

Following Weimar's designation as **European Capital of Culture in 1999**, a citywide film programme was developed, eventually leading to the creation of Lichthaus as a permanent **arthouse cinema**, which officially opened in 2003 after extensive renovation and regulatory approval processes.

Today, Lichthaus combines film screenings with a **cinema bar and community space**, hosting cultural events, markets and social initiatives. The site is shared with other cultural institutions, including the German National Theatre, and features the Rebecca Horn installation[18] within the tram depot building. In recent years, a major recurring use has been the DNT summer theatre, which began on the site around 2021 and has continued annually. Lichthaus supports this by providing catering and benefits from the increased public footfall and a shared site identity. Across its development, the work has included ongoing practical coordination with authorities (safety and approvals), site maintenance and adaptation, and substantial volunteer engagement – especially in the earlier phase.

Over time, Lichthaus has expanded its audience beyond students and alternative scenes to include broader and more diverse publics. The venue's role therefore extends beyond screenings to **cultural mediation**, establishing it as a reference point for those seeking cultural experiences outside classic heritage institutions.

[18] Rebecca Horn's 'Concert for Buchenwald': a memorial installation using silent, worn instruments to evoke Holocaust remembrance.

Kühlhaus Görlitz e.V. – Görlitz

Legal name	Kühlhaus Görlitz e.V.
Asset location	Am Bahnhof Weinhübel 2, 02827 Görlitz, Germany
Website	https://kuehlhaus-goerlitz.de/

Kühlhaus Görlitz is a former **GDR cold-storage warehouse** that became abandoned after reunification and was socially reused from 2008. At the outset, the site was in **severely degraded condition**, lacking electricity and water, and affected by **vandalism, neglect, and structural damage** (broken windows, stolen cables, leaking roofs). Initial efforts focused on clearing, repairing, and securing the complex while gradually opening it to the public.

Over time, the initiative built trust with the private owner and shifted from a subsidy-based sociocultural project to a more **self-sustaining model**. While cultural and educational activities continue, the site has diversified into offering **open workspaces for creatives, long-term tenancy opportunities, and tourism-related uses**.

A key feature is the flexible use of space, allowing tenants and small businesses to develop their own environments within heritage constraints. The site also hosts **inclusive public events** and acts as a platform for external organisations, including cross-border initiatives such as the German-Polish circus camp.

In addition, Kühlhaus has attracted **institutional and research activities**, strengthening its role in regional development. Despite ongoing **bureaucratic and planning challenges**, the project is supported by strong networks and volunteer engagement. Its key contribution lies in transforming a derelict industrial site into a **dynamic, multifunctional cultural and economic hub**.

IG Fortuna | Kino der Jugend e.V. – Leipzig

Legal name	FORTUNA Kino der Jugend e.V.
Asset location	Eisenbahnstraße 162, 04315 Leipzig, Germany
Website	http://ig-fortuna.de/

The IG Fortuna/Kino der Jugend[19] is located in a former 19th-century gasworks complex in Leipzig, later converted into a cinema and abandoned in the 1980s. Since 2021, it has been subject to **civic-led sociocultural reuse**, following years of activism to prevent its demolition.

The initiative began in 2015 as a **grassroots campaign** involving local communities and cultural organisations. Through advocacy, public events and political engagement, it secured the building's preservation and developed a reuse plan. Before obtaining access, activities were held outdoors to maintain public interest and support.

After obtaining a **temporary usage agreement in 2021**, the association expanded activities, though limited by the building's **poor condition and lack of heating**. The site remains partially unsafe, requiring ongoing **maintenance, safety measures, and restricted access**.

Today, the project hosts **seasonal cultural activities**, including exhibitions, film screenings and concerts, attracting local residents, visitors and cultural networks. Events such as Open Monument Day have helped strengthen public engagement and visibility.

Despite persistent **bureaucratic delays and unresolved property transfer**, Kino der Jugend functions as a **heritage rescue initiative**, combining public engagement, low-threshold cultural programming, and incremental rehabilitation. Its key contribution lies in preserving cultural heritage while fostering **community participation and collective ownership**, even in a context of limited institutional support.

[19] 'IG Fortuna | Kino der Jugend' combines the name of the supporting citizens' initiative (IG Fortuna), with the cinema building it is reviving (Kino der Jugend); 'Fortuna' also references the venue's earlier historic cinema name.

Gleis Eins e.V. – Lobstädt

Legal name	Gleis Eins e.V.
Asset location	Eisenbahnstraße 2, 04575 Neukieritzsch OT Lobstädt, Germany
Website	https://gleis1-ev.de/

Gleis Eins operates in the former station building in Lobstädt, a rural village around 30 km from Leipzig. The building was abandoned by Deutsche Bahn[20] in 2014 and, after several unsuccessful attempts by businesses, began its social reuse in 2024. The association rents roughly one third to half of the building, which remains an active S-Bahn[21] stop. At the time of access, the spaces were **renovated but empty**, lacking heating and basic infrastructure. Initial efforts focused on **gradual furnishing and adaptation**, enabling the space to host activities.

The project aims to create a **sociocultural hub** in a rural context, combining creative workshops with community-oriented programming. Existing activities include **screen printing**, with plans for woodworking, ceramics, and additional creative facilities. Alongside this, seasonal events such as **concerts, exhibitions, and workshops** are organised, supported by developing technical infrastructure.

A central feature is the emphasis on **low-threshold community engagement**, including flea markets and informal gatherings that encourage participation across diverse social groups. The initiative also fosters **inclusive spaces**, engaging local residents, visitors, and vulnerable groups, including migrants and LGBTQ+ individuals.

[20] Germany's national railway company, operating much of the country's rail infrastructure.

[21] Commuter train system that links a city centre with its surrounding suburbs and nearby towns. It typically offers a 30-minute service frequency.

The project relies on **networks and partnerships**, including collaboration with local organisations and a refugee shelter. Financial sustainability is pursued through **membership fees and project-based funding**, with ongoing efforts to secure structural support.

Overall, Gleis Eins represents a **bottom-up reuse initiative** that transforms an underused public building into a **participatory cultural space**, promoting social cohesion, creativity, and dialogue in a rural area.

Geyser-Haus e.V. — Leipzig

Legal name	Soziokulturelles Zentrum GeyserHaus e.V.
Asset location	Kleiststraße 52, 04157 Leipzig, Germany
Website	https://www.geyserhaus.de/

Geyser-Haus is a sociocultural centre in northern Leipzig, located in a historic building that underwent long periods of vacancy before being renovated and repurposed in the early 1990s. Since then, it has developed a strong profile focused on **"close-to-life" social work**, providing practical support and safe spaces, particularly for **children and young people**, as well as services for families and older adults.

Its core activities address everyday challenges, including educational and social difficulties, through **long-term, relationship-based support**, contributing to improved stability, reduced risk of marginalisation, and more positive life perspectives.

Alongside its social mission, Geyser-Haus runs an extensive **cultural programme**, including concerts and theatre performances, some attracting up to 2,000 visitors and international artists. While this has enhanced the city's cultural offer, it initially created tensions with residents over noise and crowding, which were gradually managed through dialogue and regulation.

Community involvement has been central from the outset. Local residents supported early renovation activities and remain engaged through **regular meetings**, feedback mechanisms, and inclusive initiatives.

The project's **key contribution** lies in combining **social support and cultural production**, fostering inclusion, community cohesion, and long-term local engagement, while maintaining a stable relationship with the surrounding neighbourhood.

Alte Spitzenfabrik – Grimma

Legal name	YOPE gGmbH
Asset location	Dornaer Weg 2–4, 04668 Grimma, Germany
Website	https://alte-spitzenfabrik.de/

Alte Spitzenfabrik is a former lace factory abandoned since the 1960s and reactivated for **social reuse in 2014**. The site, privately owned but co-managed with an association, hosts a **youth-led sociocultural centre** run by YOPE gGmbH, based on principles of **self-governance and empowerment**.

A central activity is the long-standing **Crossover Festival**, a free, low-threshold event rooted in youth culture and organised through a **peer-to-peer model**, passing knowledge across generations. The site also supports ongoing community events, creative activities, and **youth-built infrastructure**, including skate and social spaces.

Initially in **very poor condition**, the building required extensive volunteer-led renovation. Development remains ongoing, with efforts focused on improving basic infrastructure and expanding facilities to ensure long-term sustainability.

The project operates in a context of **political and social challenges**, including the fragile status of youth spaces (e.g. dismantled facilities) and a local environment influenced by far-right dynamics. In response, Alte Spitzenfabrik functions as a **safe and inclusive space**, promoting democratic values and participation.

Its **key contribution** lies in fostering **youth engagement, cultural production, and community resilience**, transforming an abandoned industrial site into a participatory hub sustained through volunteer work, partnerships, and diversified activities. The GmbH[22] structure supports income generation through the container café, which also contributes to sustaining regular activities and diversifying programming despite ongoing administrative and political obstacles.

[22] German limited-liability company (GmbH) that is officially recognised as non-profit.

Offener Freizeittreff Mockau

Legal name	Kindervereinigung Leipzig e.V.
Asset location	Klingenthaler Straße 14, 04349 Leipzig, Germany
Website	https://kv-leipzig.de/freizeittreff/oft-mockau/

Offener Freizeittreff Mockau is located in a former municipal nursery built in 1977, later used as a family centre until 2017 before falling into disrepair. Following renovation, it was reopened in 2023/2024 as a **youth centre** managed by Kindervereinigung Leipzig e.V.

Its core activity is a **daily open youth club**, providing a **safe and supervised space** for children and teenagers, particularly important in a neighbourhood with limited youth infrastructure. The programme is **needs-based**, continuously adapted through dialogue with young users, families, schools, and local stakeholders.

The centre also engages in **community outreach**, participating in local events to rebuild trust after the closure of a previous youth facility. Special attention is given to inclusion, including efforts to better support **families with migration backgrounds**.

Operational challenges include maintaining the large outdoor area and ensuring sufficient resources for activities such as **daily meals**, which are important for some users but constrained by funding. The centre also aims to provide **access to equipment and services** (e.g. digital tools) that may be lacking at home.

Its **key contribution** lies in offering an **inclusive and responsive social space**, strengthening community ties, supporting young people's well-being, and addressing local social needs through adaptable, everyday practices.

4.3. Future Perspectives

The impacts of social reuse

Across Germany's federal system, the social reuse of unused buildings matters at several **interconnected levels**, from EU and national policy frameworks down to the street-level realities of neighbourhoods and small towns. The seven interview cases show why this kind of reuse is a form of **social infrastructure** that stabilises communities, increases informal guardianship over places, and can indirectly **reduce the space in which illicit economies thrive**.

At state level, social reuse is important because it turns unused assets into functioning public value, and it offers a **preventive approach** to social problems – such as youth exclusion, rural isolation or political polarisation – those German states otherwise have to address later through more expensive measures.

At the **local community** level, social reuse is where the **strongest impacts** are most visible. For example, Offener Freizeittreff Mockau's everyday presence brings large numbers of children and teenagers into a structured, supportive environment. This kind of infrastructure reduces isolation, provides trusted adults, and offers alternatives to risky street environments: factors commonly associated with **lower vulnerability** to recruitment into harmful peer networks. In rural Lobstädt, Gleis Eins shows how reuse can rebuild social fabric: cooperation with local actors are all ways of bridging social ties between different social realities. In Grimma, Alte Spitzenfabrik shows social reuse as a **democratic safe space** and youth-led cultural production in a difficult political climate.

Organised crime increasingly destabilises communities and exploits vulnerabilities; strengthening local social infrastructure, especially youth work, is a classic **resilience strategy** even if it is not branded as 'crime control'.

Emerged needs from the civil society

Across the seven interviews, the needs that come out most clearly for both local communities and the examined associations, are the following:

- **Stable, long-term funding** and not only short, project-based grants. Several projects describe a constant lack of financial resources and the drain of having to move from grant to grant, which reduces time for actual community work and planning. A recurring need is also more paid hours so teams can design better programmes, fundraise properly, and respond to needs consistently.

- **Basic building infrastructure and investment** (renovation, safety, utilities). A repeated need is to make old buildings usable long-term: functional and heated spaces, and reliable budgets for maintenance and renovation.

- **Security of tenure** and clear property arrangements. Projects that are tenants describe how insecure planning can be. Others show that ownership or municipal agreements strongly affect whether a place can be developed seriously.

- **Recognition** and 'legibility' with institutions and the public. Several interviews imply that these initiatives often have to explain and justify themselves repeatedly (what the place is, why it matters, why it should be supported), and that a clearer framework and shared understanding would reduce fragility.

Next steps

Today, the social reuse of abandoned assets in Germany is too often treated as an exception – something that survives through personal networks, improvised agreements, and constant explanations – rather than as a recognised public purpose with clear rules. Directive (EU) 2024/1260 points the way: it frames the social reuse of confiscated property as a visible counter-message for justice and legality, a tool that reinforces the rule of law in communities affected by organised crime, and a way to build resilience against criminal infiltration. It encourages Germany to enable reuse for public-interest or social purposes, including assignment to organisations working in the public interest. **We therefore stress the need for a stronger German legislative framework for social reuse – one that names the concept, standardises procedures, and creates reliable conditions for local communities.** Our fieldwork experience shows how fragile and informal the field still is.

Germany is already able to confiscate assets linked to crime, but what is missing is the next step: a clear national law that says, 'Once confiscated, these buildings can be transparently reassigned for public and social use'. In practice, confiscated value in Germany usually ends up in state budgets, and there is no widely known, standard pathway to turn a seized building into a youth centre, community hub, women's shelter, cultural space, or social enterprise. Germany's system is strict in evidentiary terms and often requires authorities and courts to prove the criminal link to the asset; but even when confiscation succeeds, **there is no comparable social reuse regime – no clear definition, no standard assignment process, no long-term legal security, and no practical support for renovation and maintenance.**

Directive (EU) 2024/1260 gives Germany a timely opportunity to change course: it promotes the idea that socially reusing confiscated assets sends a powerful message about justice and strengthens community resilience, and it requires Germany to adopt a national asset recovery strategy by 2027 that can include measures for social reuse. Our message to policymakers and the public is simple: criminal assets should not quietly disappear into general budgets. **Germany needs a modern law that creates transparent rules and funding for social reuse, empowers municipalities to allocate confiscated buildings to trusted public-interest organisations, and ensures communities** – especially those under pressure from poverty, extremism, or criminal networks – **gain safe spaces and real opportunities instead of abandoned 'grey zones.'**

Malta

Places Reclaimed for the Common Good

Dar il-Qawsalla (Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement - MGRM) – **San Ġwann**
Dar Niki Cassar (YMCA Malta) – **Il-Belt Valletta**
Dar Tereza (Richmond Foundation) – **Cospicua**
OASI Centre (OASI Foundation) – **Victoria**

5.1 National Context

Corruption, Civil Society, and Legislative Stagnation

The 2019–2020 **political crisis** in Malta, precipitated by high-level political links to the assassination of journalist **Daphne Caruana Galizia**, exposed systemic vulnerabilities that permitted a pervasive "**culture of impunity**" to take root. This breakdown of institutional integrity necessitates a transition towards **restorative justice**, where the proceeds of crime are repurposed to repair the symbolic and material harm inflicted upon the public. The social reuse of confiscated assets, which is so far non-existent in Malta, would be a strategic requirement in the work of dismantling the links between the legal and illegal economies and reclaiming the state from corrupt influence.

The Role and Impact of Repubblika

The NGO Repubblika has emerged as a cornerstone of the movement for institutional accountability. Beyond leading the **2019–2020 protests** that forced the resignation of Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, the organisation has maintained rigorous monitoring of the **rule of law**. Most significantly, Repubblika was instrumental in pushing for the "hospitals' inquiry," an investigation into state-level corruption that proceeded despite aggressive attempts by current Prime Minister Robert Abela to discredit the inquiry and belittle the prosecution.

Through its partnership with the European CHANCE network, Repubblika advocates for the **Italian model** of asset management. This framework, inspired by the organisation *Libera*, ensures that **criminal wealth is returned to civil society** in a transparent, restorative manner, preventing the state from shielding the inner circles of the political elite from the consequences of their actions.

Corruption and Organised Crime in Malta

The 2019 crisis revealed a sophisticated **nexus of corruption** between business entities and political figures. Central to this was the shell company *17 Black* owned by Tumas Group CEO Yorgen Fenech, who stands charged with masterminding the murder of Caruana Galizia. *17 Black* was allegedly linked to Panama companies belonging to high government officials Keith Schembri and Konrad Mizzi. Leaked financial intelligence suggested a planned income from *17 Black* for these officials' companies, allegedly tied to a gas-fired power station investment.

This environment is sustained by a "**grey area**" of **professionals, entrepreneurs, and wheeler-dealers who facilitate the laundering of illicit funds** and the recirculation of criminal proceeds back into the legal economy. This mechanism reinforces the "mafia-state" dynamics that sparked unprecedented civil unrest following the assassination of Caruana Galizia.

Legislative Failures and Community Impact

Current frameworks and a pattern of legislative stagnation fail to provide a deterrent against organised crime and corruption, resulting in a betrayal of the spirit of the law. Among the key failures are:

- **Failure to implement comprehensive legislative reforms** recommended by an independent board of inquiry into the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia, which had found a culture of impunity spread throughout state and regulatory bodies.

- **Absence of convictions**: Despite rampant evidence of corruption, the state has failed to secure a single successful conviction against high-level figures.

- **Judicial system crisis**: The Association of Judges and Magistrates has stated that the system is "on the brink of collapse" due to a severe lack of human resources and fundamental defects in administration.

- **Misuse of "persons of trust"**: High-risk appointments for government roles continue to bypass transparent recruitment, fostering nepotism and corruption.

This systemic failure necessitates a model where NGOs can reclaim criminal instruments for the public good, transitioning from state-sanctioned impunity to community-led restoration.

However, Malta has **no history of socially reusing assets confiscated** directly from crime. The **Proceeds of Crime Act (2021)** covers the identification and confiscation of proceeds of crime and laundered property, and contemplates the restitution of confiscated assets to the victims of crime or for societal benefit. Under the law, the **Asset Recovery Bureau** ensures the transfer of confiscated assets from the accused to the government in accordance with court decisions, and “in a manner that ensures the greatest benefit to the government”.

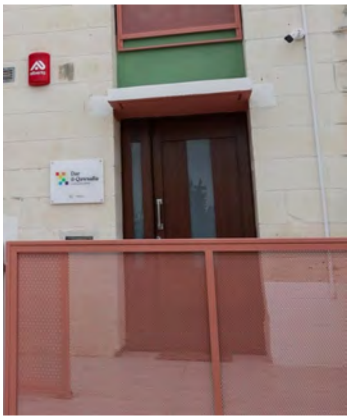
So while the law does permit reinvestment into society, which theoretically opens the door for community-oriented initiatives, it does not explicitly mandate social reuse of confiscated assets. There are no known cases as yet of this practice taking place in Malta.

5.2 Social Reuse Practices in Malta

Because no examples of the social reuse of confiscated criminal assets exist in Malta, Repubblika conducted **four interviews with NGOs** involved in the successful reuse of previously **abandoned or unoccupied properties**. Three of them are examples of the operation of the current government’s Specialised Housing Programmes, and the fourth of the Catholic Church’s historically important contribution to social causes. All of them demonstrate the **potential for success of extending the social reuse principle to confiscated assets**. The following presents the information gathered from the four interviews.

Dar il-Qawsalla (Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement - MGRM)

Asset location	16 Vjal In-Naspli, San Ġwann, Malta
Website	https://maltagayrights.org/dar-il-qawsalla Dar il-Qawsalla in the news




The Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement (MGRM) is a **voluntary organisation** dedicated to achieving full equality for LGBTIQ people in Maltese society. It provides **information, consultation, psycho-social welfare services, and training** to enhance the quality of life for LGBTIQ individuals, their families, and friends.

Dar il-Qawsalla, located at 14, Vjal in-Naspli, San Gwann, is a **previously government-owned**, unoccupied terraced house spanning 260 sq m over two floors. It used to be part of a government housing estate and became vacant after an elderly woman passed away, remaining unoccupied and **in a dilapidated state for five years** before being awarded to MGRM. Renovations, completed in January 2025, included **structural repairs** to the second floor and the addition of a kitchen on the roof, effectively turning it into a two-and-a-half-storey house.

The project received **government funding** from the Housing Development Fund (HDF) as a Specialised Housing Project administered by the Housing Authority. The Chamber of Architects was involved in providing architects through a design competition funded by the HDF, ensuring the property was designed to serve its social mission.

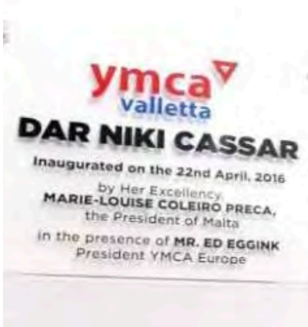
Dar il-Qawsalla employs two full-time staff members and two volunteers for asset management. The manager acts as a coordinator for day-to-day operations and therapeutic services, having been involved since the project's inception. The **shelter** is designed to accommodate six residents (two in each of the three bedrooms). It serves as a second-stage shelter for LGBTIQ adults over 18 who face housing problems, homelessness, discrimination, and other socio-economic challenges. Residents are expected to be semi-independent and pay a small fee. Renovations concluded in January 2025 and it began operating soon after, currently providing therapeutic services and serving as a meeting point for MGRM members and activists pending final internal procedures and licensing to operate as a full residential shelter. Once fully operational, **residents can stay for up to two years** to prepare for independent living.

Located in a residential area, Dar il-Qawsalla has **successfully integrated with the local community**. MGRM engaged neighbours from the start, holding open days to explain the project, which garnered positive feedback. Ongoing efforts include organising community meetings for the elderly. Collaboration with the Housing Authority has been "very impressive," including follow-up visits and planning future schemes with MGRM and other NGOs. Media reaction has been positive, though some negative social media comments were noted. No community objections were raised, and local residents, including the elderly, showed support.

Alex Caruana, the Community and Outreach Executive at MGRM, noted difficulties with worker reliability during renovation, causing delays, and challenges in obtaining planning permits for structural changes. His advice for other associations is to ensure a sufficient budget (considering rising costs like during COVID-19), focus on fundraising, regularly stocktake, and crucially, involve the community.

Dar Niki Cassar (YMCA Malta)

Asset location	30 St. Nicholas Street, Il-Belt Valletta, Malta.
Website	https://ymcamalta.org/residential-facilities/ Dar Niki Cassar in the news



YMCA Malta is a voluntary organisation providing support, assistance, and **reintegration services for the homeless**. It also focuses on the positive development of young people, offering social services to the underprivileged, and fostering the well-being of youth and the elderly.

Dar Niki Cassar in Msida is one of four properties managed by YMCA Malta. The Msida property was **abandoned and unoccupied for a long time**, described as dilapidated with trees growing inside, before its ownership fell to the government. YMCA previously operated a smaller residential service for the homeless, also named Dar Niki Cassar, in Valletta since 2005. In 2014, YMCA moved to the larger Msida location to accommodate more residents, be more centrally located, and scale up its services, including **psychosocial support**. The property was officially inaugurated in 2016 by the then President of Malta, Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca.

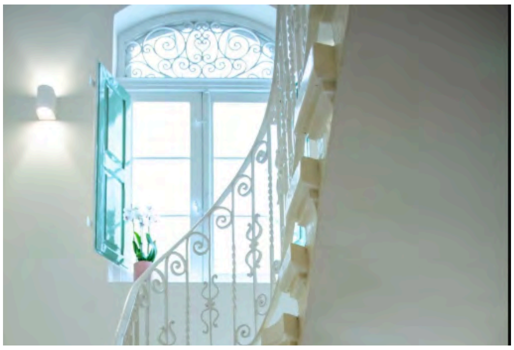
The **Housing Authority** made the Msida house available to YMCA, granting them half ownership and use of the other half for 90 years, and also funded its refurbishment. The Family Ministry contributes funds for human resources to provide care and support to residents.

Dar Niki Cassar employs six staff members and has ten volunteers. The CEO of YMCA Malta, Anthony Camilleri, oversees all activities, including the residential service at Dar Niki. The **shelter** can accommodate a maximum of **34 beneficiaries**. Beneficiaries include individuals, families, and children of any age, nationality, or gender experiencing homelessness or rooflessness. As a first-stage shelter, residents follow an individualised "Residential Course in Independent Living" care plan, with a mentor, daily duties, meetings, and weekly goals. They receive **full-time support and 24/7 care**. YMCA collaborates closely with *Appogg*, the government's social work agency, for assessments and care plan implementation. The house is divided into dormitories, with efforts to keep families together. Residents typically stay up to 18 months, with some moving to second-stage shelters for further support before achieving independent living. The resident population is diverse, comprising Maltese (now a majority since COVID-19), Europeans, and third-country nationals, with varied socio-economic backgrounds.

Msida is a centrally located, heavily built-up residential area. While YMCA had experienced community resistance in the past, the local community has accepted Dar Niki Cassar. **Increased public awareness** of homelessness, often viewed as a temporary situation, has led to greater sympathy and assistance from neighbours. Media coverage of homelessness in Malta is generally sympathetic.

Dar Tereza (Richmond Foundation)

Asset location	Triq il-Karmnu, Cospicua, Malta
Website	https://www.richmond.org.mt Dar Tereża in the news

The **Richmond Foundation** is a voluntary organisation providing **comprehensive mental health services for adults and children**, including assisted living, treatment in the community, training, support groups, and counselling.

Dar Tereza is a pre-19th century house located in Cospicua. The 350 sq m property was severely damaged during World War II, neglected, and became **structurally unsound**, partly inhabited by squatters. Its ownership was divided, and after the owners died without heirs, it became officially unoccupied. Richmond acquired the property from the government four years prior to its opening in 2024, with its path into government hands possibly linked to a Church-State agreement. The project involved combining two existing houses into a single, larger residence.

Like Dar il-Qawsalla, Dar Tereza received **government funding** from the Housing Development Fund (HDF) as a Specialised Housing Project administered by the Housing Authority for internal works. Equipment and furnishing were funded by the Voluntary Organisations Project Scheme, with a total government investment of €620,000. The **Chamber of Architects** contributed through a design competition, ensuring the property's design met its social mission.

Dar Tereza employs eight staff members (seven for client support, one for management) and does not use volunteers. The manager oversees the property's operations, client applications, service delivery, and staff support. The house has a capacity for seven families, but typically accommodates five to ensure high-quality service, with each family having its own bedroom and bathroom. Beneficiaries are **adult mothers with diagnosed mental health challenges** who can care for their children (not older than early adolescence), are followed by a psychiatric team, and require support for their children's upbringing. The residential program lasts up to three years, during which women work on finding employment and housing, building savings, and developing parenting, communication, and budgeting skills. Richmond's staff collaborate with government child protection services and social work agencies for referrals and care planning. The aim is to empower these women, providing them with a **safe, healthy environment** to make their own decisions and raise their families.

Situated in an old residential part of historic Cospicua, Dar Tereza experienced a "very smooth transition" into the community, with no marked reaction from neighbours, according to Richmond's head of therapeutic services and programmes Tracy Zammit. Richmond implemented an "**open door policy**," reserving a room for community activities and holding meetings to explain the home's purpose, fostering integration. Collaboration with the Housing Authority and Chamber of Architects has been very positive. Media coverage welcomed the project as filling a service gap. Zammit notes that the presence of Dar Tereza **helps reduce the stigma around mental health**, as neighbours get to know residents and offer support, creating a positive, reciprocal relationship.

The difficulties encountered in opening and running the home have included increased costs and the need to conform to strict planning regulations within an Urban Conservation Area. This required architects to find compromises for structural alterations. Zammit's key advice is to ensure that a proposed project truly responds to a real **unmet need** and purpose, rather than simply becoming "yet another institution".

OASI Centre (OASI Foundation)

Asset location	5, Triq Wied Sara, Victoria, Gozo
Website	oasi.org.mt

The OASI Foundation, a **voluntary organisation** based in Gozo, focuses on the **prevention of addiction, therapy, and rehabilitation** for individuals suffering from addictions including substance use, alcohol, and gambling. It was the first organisation in Malta to recognise alcohol as an addictive substance requiring specific attention and treatment.

The OASI Centre, located at 5, Triq Wied Sara, Victoria, Gozo, comprises two privately owned, previously **abandoned old farmhouses**. These properties, originally belonging to a Gozitan family, were left unoccupied when the children emigrated. The Church in Gozo, keen to support drug addicts, acquired these farmhouses through an exchange of land and handed them over to the OASI Foundation, which was founded by a priest, Fr Emmanuel Cordina, in 1991. The farmhouses required **extensive renovation** and structural works. Services began in one property in 1992 (prevention, outpatients), with a seven-bed residential service opening in the same property in 1998. The second property, previously unoccupied, became the main residential unit in 2009, with the first property now used for administration and outpatient therapy.

The Gozo Ministry provided funds for renovation and supplied masonry students for structural works. Operational financing is primarily from the government through a **Public Social Partnership (PSP)**, covering 80% of costs based on verified services provided (bednights, therapy hours), with the remaining 20% from OASI's own fundraising efforts and some EU funding.

OASI employs 13 full-time staff (including therapists) and a few part-timers, supported by 32-35 volunteers (including priests and yoga instructors). The CEO, Noel Xerri, oversees all operations. The centre treats approximately 60 people at any given time, including 11 to 15 residents. Beneficiaries come from all strata of society and include individuals with diverse backgrounds, from illiterates and homeless people to doctors and former mayors. The foundation adopted the **12 Steps model** of Alcoholics Anonymous as its official treatment approach in 1992.

Located on a quiet country road on the outskirts of Rabat, Gozo, OASI initially maintained a low profile, which, coupled with a priest's involvement, fostered a favourable reaction from neighbours. Today, there is more mingling with the community, and relations are generally good, with reciprocal support. Media coverage was initially high due to drug abuse being a national concern, but it was not negative. OASI collaborates with other NGOs like Sedqa and Caritas, particularly in training, and receives significant help and donations from the local community.

Xerri finds it challenging to define "positive experiences" in addiction treatment, noting that success is not always straightforward. The biggest difficulty he has encountered is **property maintenance** due to a shortage of human resources, often leading to long delays for needed projects. OASI now plans to set up a **half-way house** for recovering addicts, acknowledging the deterioration of familial and community support. Noel's advice for other associations is stark: "Don't do it for the glory. It's a sleepless adventure".

5.3 Future Perspectives on Social Reuse of Confiscated Assets

Repurposing confiscated real estate offers a unique opportunity for expansion of the government's Specialised Housing Programmes beyond the use of abandoned or unoccupied properties. By harnessing the Programmes' operational principles – inclusive domestic design combined with specialised services provided by NGOs – the state could utilize confiscated assets to boost its provision of "soft landings" for **vulnerable populations**. Assets once produced by harm could be transformed into spaces that foster **well-being**.

A Roadmap for Reform

EU Directive 2024/1260, which serves as the European version of the Italian "Rognoni-La Torre" law, mandates that member states prioritise the use of confiscated property for the public interest. The directive has a November 2026 implementation deadline.

In this context, Repubblika envisages that the government take the following steps towards the effective implementation of the social reuse of criminal assets:

1. The EU directive necessitates a **transition away from privatisation**. The government must immediately ensure that criminal assets stop being auctioned to "grey area" wheeler-dealers at reduced prices, with a view to transferring them instead to the **third sector** for social purposes.

2. In adopting the directive, Parliament must amend local legislation to make social reuse the primary destination for confiscated property, rendering privatisation an "absolutely residual" possibility.

3. **Allocate state funds** specifically for the refurbishment of confiscated real estate, as is already done for abandoned properties under the Specialised Housing Programmes, and also provide financial support for the start-up phases of NGO-led activities.

4. Do all this in close **consultation with NGOs**, by establishing and enshrining a formal, structured consultation mechanism for civil society on a national level.

The Albanian Model

For Malta, Albania could provide a viable model for the road ahead. The situation in Albania in 2016 – a year marking the start of important judicial reforms – was analogous to Malta's situation in 2026: Albanian policymakers and law enforcement institutions lacked awareness and understanding of the importance and benefits of the social reuse of confiscated assets. No promotion of this practice was taking place. The agency charged with the management of confiscated assets was weak and largely unknown to the public, as well as lacking in sufficient human and technical capacities. Furthermore, it had a low number of confiscated assets under its administration.

In 2019, the novel concept of "returning illegally obtained assets to the community" was introduced into Albanian law, reflecting a **radical change** in mindset and approach of the state to such assets.

Crucial to this transition were the interventions of Partners Albania, an independent non-profit organisation that works to support civil society. Among the initiatives taken by Partners Albania were the **training** of agency administrators, promotion and publicity about social reuse, and reaching out to NGOs with a view to the creation of social enterprises in this space.
The same path forward could be followed by Malta if the “pressure from above” imposed by the EU directive could be combined with “pressure from below” exerted by Repubblika or another leading NGO.

Restoration of Public Confidence

The incorporation of criminal assets into Malta's current practices of reusing property for social good would:

1. Directly **combat corruption** by reducing illicit financial flows
2. Transform criminal proceeds into the **creation of well-being**, representing a tangible ‘payback' to the community.
3. Help **repair the symbolic damage** caused by the mafia state.
4. Provide visible proof that the **justice system** can rebuild the common good.

The social reuse of confiscated assets is not merely a legal obligation; it is a moral imperative for Maltese democracy. By returning stolen wealth to its citizens, the state demonstrates that the interests of the community will always supersede the greed of the corrupt.

Romania

Places Reclaimed for the Common Good

Ongoing social reuse project – **Râmnicu Vâlcea**
Centrului de Asistență Umanitară și Socială Nicolina – **Iași**
Favorit Cinema – **Bucarest**
George Enescu House – **Iași**

6.1. National Context

Institutional and civil society perspectives

The following insights emerged from the interviews conducted as part of the mapping activity.

For institutional actors like ANABI, corruption and organised crime are viewed through a formal, forensic lens. Corruption is defined by the **illegal transfer of public assets to influential individuals**. Organised crime operates by exploiting vulnerable groups, laundering illicit gains, and penetrating the legitimate economy. Criminal networks often contest seizure orders, trapping assets in prolonged litigation.

In contrast, civil society leaders such as those from FONSS and Pro Patrimonio describe a more subtle and systemic form of corruption: a "corrupt state" marked by a lack of long-term vision and a disconnection from collective identity. For Pro Patrimonio, the failure of public authorities to protect cultural heritage represents a form of structural corruption, where neglect and inaction allow historical assets to deteriorate or be stripped of value through problematic restitution processes. In this perspective, organised crime extends beyond traditional networks, encompassing the opportunistic exploitation of legal fragmentation and unresolved property rights.

The Favorit Initiative Group highlights a prolonged struggle against administrative inertia, where political changes and increasing costs are often used to justify delays in community-led projects. From this viewpoint, public authorities may deviate from the original purpose of investments unless sustained civic oversight is maintained. Ultimately, interviewees frame corruption not only as the misappropriation of funds or assets, but as a broader erosion of **community potential**, producing both physical and social forms of "ruin" that civil society is then compelled to address.

Institutional and legal framework for social reuse of assets

From an institutional perspective, the **National Agency for the Management of Seized Assets (ANABI)**, established by **Law no. 318/2015**, plays a central and coordinating role in managing **confiscated assets** and facilitating their reintegration into the **public** or **social domain**. The Agency is responsible for identifying and monitoring eligible assets, ensuring **transparency** through their publication on an online platform, and coordinating the procedures for their transfer to public authorities or other beneficiaries.

ANABI operates as a key intermediary between **judicial authorities**, the **Ministry of Finance**, and local communities, assessing whether assets should be reused for public benefit rather than liquidated through sale. In addition, it provides information to the public and technical support to organisations interested in submitting **reuse proposals**, thus encouraging broader participation. In recent years, its mandate has expanded to include the transformation of **proceeds of crime** into resources for **crime prevention** and **victim protection**, reinforcing the social dimension of asset recovery policies.

The legal framework underpinning these activities originates with **Law no. 318/2015**, which introduced the possibility of public and social reuse through the **free transfer of immovable property** to public authorities. This framework was further clarified by **Law no. 216/2016**, which established evaluation criteria and introduced a **45-day deadline** for potential beneficiaries to express interest. A major reform came with **Law no. 230/2022**, which strengthened the system by redirecting confiscated resources towards **legal education**, **prevention initiatives**, and **victim assistance**, and by creating the **National Support Mechanism for Crime Prevention** as a key institutional tool.

The history of public and social reuse of confiscated properties

ANABI became operational in 2016 and began implementing the legal framework for the **public reuse** of confiscated assets. During this initial phase, three formal requests were submitted, but none were completed. The main obstacle was linked to **property valuation disputes** under judicial appeal, which effectively blocked the transfer process. Out of 35 assets published that year, only three were legally eligible for reuse, demonstrating early structural constraints.

In 2017, the Agency prioritised **transparency and visibility**, increasing the number of published assets to 58 and receiving 17 expressions of interest. However, only one concrete case was pursued and subsequently withdrawn, highlighting the difficulty of translating interest into successful outcomes.

In 2018, ANABI upgraded its digital platform by introducing **open-data features** and more detailed legal and geographical information. It also created dedicated sections for assets eligible for reuse. Despite these improvements, no formal applications were submitted. According to **Law no. 216/2016**, if no interest is expressed within the 45-day deadline, the assets revert to the **standard sale procedure** managed by ANAF, limiting opportunities for social reuse.

In 2019, another significant attempt involved a high-value property in Bucharest, but the procedure was not finalised. The first successful case occurred in 2020, when a confiscated property was transferred to the **Ministry of Justice** under **Government Decision no. 797/2020** and repurposed for institutional use. This marked an important milestone in the operationalisation of the framework.

Between 2021 and 2022, the number of available properties continued to grow, yet all submitted applications were rejected due to **non-compliance with legal requirements**, underlining the complexity and rigidity of the procedures.

A turning point came in 2023 with the implementation of **Law no. 230/2022**, which strengthened the **social reuse** dimension. In 2024, a landmark case saw a confiscated property transferred free of charge to the municipality of Traian and converted into a **social care facility** for elderly people. This was the first instance of a direct return of a confiscated asset to a local community for clear social benefit.

This model was subsequently replicated: in 2025, a property was transferred to **Râmnicu Vâlcea**, and in 2026 another asset in Craiova was designated for **inclusive housing** for adults with disabilities. These cases illustrate a gradual shift towards more impactful and community-oriented uses of confiscated property.

Despite these positive developments, challenges remain. There is a lack of **updated and comprehensive data** on the final status of many assets, and confiscations of real estate remain relatively rare. Most confiscation decisions still concern **money or movable goods**, limiting the overall potential for property-based reuse.

The Evolution of the Romanian social reuse framework: a new paradigm for CSOs' financing and victim support

Initially, **Law no. 318/2015** introduced a mechanism for distributing confiscated funds among public institutions, allocating a share (15%) to projects proposed by **civil society organisations (CSOs)**. However, implementation proved weak: in 2017 only some institutions used their allocated resources, and no CSO projects were funded.

In 2018, **Emergency Ordinance no. 114/2018** abolished this distribution system, redirecting all proceeds of crime to the **state budget** as general revenue. Subsequent attempts to restore the mechanism failed, and in 2020 a legislative proposal was declared unconstitutional. As a result, confiscated resources were no longer directly linked to **social or victim-support purposes**, limiting their societal impact.

This situation changed significantly with **Law no. 230/2022**, which reformed the framework and reintroduced a structured approach to **social reuse**. A key innovation was the creation of the **National Mechanism for Supporting Crime Prevention**, designed to prioritise funding for **legal education**, **crime prevention**, and **victim assistance**. The mechanism includes practical tools such as an **emergency fund** and a **voucher system** to address urgent needs, including food, healthcare, and accommodation.

The mechanism became operational in January 2023, with ANABI authorised to allocate the 15% share of funds to social projects. Following **public consultations**, the first **grant programmes** were launched, and by 2024 several initiatives focusing on victim protection and prevention received funding, with a total allocation exceeding 824,000 lei.

These developments represent a crucial step towards linking **asset recovery policies** with **social impact**, enabling confiscated resources to support civil society and vulnerable groups. Overall, the evolving framework marks the emergence of a more **integrated model**, where justice, prevention, and social reinvestment are increasingly interconnected.

6.2 Social Reuse Practices in Romania

Ongoing social reuse project in Râmnicu Vâlcea

Asset location	Strada Știrbei Vodă 69, 245900 Râmnicu Vâlcea, Romania
Website	https://anabi.just.ro/bunuri/imobil-situat-in-municipiul-ramnicu-valcea-strada-stirbei-voda-nr-69-judetul-valcea

The **National Agency for the Management of Seized Assets (ANABI)** represents the cornerstone of Romania's integrated system for **asset recovery**, combining support to criminal investigations with the management and **social reuse of confiscated assets**. Established by **Law no. 318/2015**, ANABI aims to improve the enforcement of confiscation orders and ensure compensation for **victims of crime**. Its functions include tracing illicit assets, managing and selling seized property, and coordinating national procedures, while also promoting reuse initiatives in line with European commitments and the **National Anticorruption Strategy**.

A practical example of this framework is the **2025 social reuse project in Râmnicu Vâlcea**. The asset, originally an industrial complex (workshops, offices, warehouses), had been illicitly transferred as a **bribe** and later confiscated following a final court decision in 2018. Its reuse was delayed for years due to **legal disputes over ownership**, which required resolution before any transfer could proceed.

Once the legal situation was clarified, ANABI completed valuation procedures (approximately €362,100) and made the asset publicly available. The **local council** requested its allocation for conversion into a **kindergarten**, addressing both rapid urban growth and a shortage of educational facilities. The transfer was finalised through a **government decision**, moving the property to the municipality for **social purposes**.

Despite administrative challenges – such as eviction procedures and competing legal claims – the process ensured full compliance with legal requirements. Although renovation works had not yet begun by the end of 2025, the project is expected to start in 2026, illustrating how confiscated assets can be transformed into **tangible benefits for local communities**.

Centrului de Asistență Umanitară și Socială Nicolina

Asset location	Șoseaua Nicolina nr. 141, Iași, România
Website	https://centrurefugiati.ro/

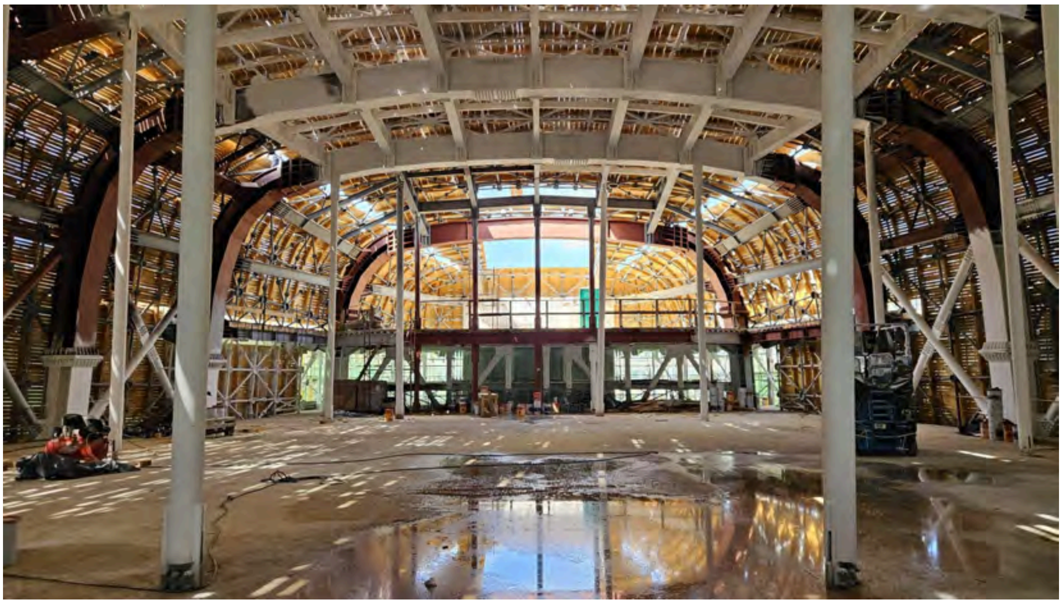
The **Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations for Social Services (FONSS)**, established in 2014, represents a key national platform for **civil society organisations (CSOs)** providing social services in Romania. Initially founded in the North-East, it now brings together 44 organisations working with **vulnerable groups**. FONSS acts as an intermediary between local actors and policymakers at national and European levels, promoting **policy reform**, strengthening community-based services, and raising awareness of social inclusion. Through its three strategic pillars – support for CSO participation in public policy, development of sustainable social services, and public advocacy – it enhances the capacity of its members to influence **social legislation**.

A concrete example of FONSS's operational role emerged in 2022, following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. The organisation led a major **humanitarian response**, transforming an abandoned industrial building in Iași into a large-scale **refugee transit centre**. In partnership with local authorities, FONSS coordinated a network of CSOs to manage daily operations, providing **emergency accommodation**, food, and integrated services. The facility hosted nearly 400 beds, included an industrial kitchen, and offered **medical, psychological, and legal support**, alongside dedicated spaces for children and a "humanitarian store".

The project required complex logistical and administrative coordination. The building was adapted for residential use through partition systems and large-scale supply management, supported by numerous volunteers. FONSS also ensured financial sustainability by managing grants and redistributing funds to partner organisations. Close collaboration with the City Hall and emergency authorities guaranteed compliance with **safety standards**. Overall, the initiative illustrates how coordinated civil society action can rapidly repurpose underused assets into essential infrastructure for **social support and crisis response**.

Favorit Cinema

Asset location	Bulevardul Drumul Taberei 24, Bucarest, Romania
Website	https://www.facebook.com/initiativafavorit/



The **Favorit Initiative Group (GIF)** is one of Romania's longest-running examples of **civic activism**, established in 2009 to transform the abandoned Favorit Cinema in Bucharest into a **community cultural centre**. What began as a grassroots effort – initially based on **door-to-door consultations** with local residents – evolved into a sustained 15-year campaign combining **advocacy**, public engagement, and institutional dialogue. By maintaining an **apolitical approach**, the group successfully built relationships with local authorities, ultimately contributing to the transfer of the building from central institutions to the Sector 6 City Hall in 2015.
GIF's strategy relied on a wide range of participatory tools, including **mass petitions**, public debates, community events such as "Favorit Reborn", and awareness campaigns through **photography exhibitions**. A key turning point came in 2014, when a roundtable helped unlock the administrative deadlock surrounding the asset. Once the municipality took control, the group shifted from advocacy to **collaboration and monitoring**, working closely with architects to ensure the future centre would include flexible spaces for cultural and community activities.
Since the start of reconstruction in 2019, following the demolition of the original structure, GIF has continued to engage residents through **site visits**, newsletters, and social media, ensuring transparency and community involvement. Despite financial challenges linked to rising construction costs, the project advanced, with a final contract signed in 2023 and completion approaching. Today, GIF has formalised its structure into an association and is preparing to take part in the **future management** of the European Favorit Centre, with the aim of ensuring it remains an **accessible and community-driven space**.

George Enescu House

Asset location	Șoseaua Nicolina nr. 141, Iași, România
Website	https://centrurefugiati.ro/

The **Pro Patrimonio Foundation**, established in 2000, is an international non-profit organisation dedicated to the **conservation and revitalisation of cultural heritage** in Romania. Created in response to the post-communist context, it aims to rebuild a sense of **social and cultural identity** weakened by decades of neglect. Operating across Romania, the UK, and France, the Foundation promotes heritage as a **shared civic responsibility** and a driver of community development. Its approach treats tradition as a **dynamic resource**, combining preservation with contemporary use through projects such as the "60 Wooden Churches" programme, the restoration of the **George Enescu House**, and the development of traditional craft centres. Supported by a wide network of volunteers, Pro Patrimonio combines **hands-on restoration**, education, and advocacy.

A key example of this approach is the long-term intervention on the **George Enescu House**, initiated in 2014 when the building was in a state of near collapse. The project began with complex legal work to resolve **fragmented ownership**, a necessary step before any physical restoration. Once stabilised, the Foundation carried out **minimal-intervention conservation works**, preserving the authenticity of the structure while halting its deterioration. At the same time, it invested in **capacity-building**, organising workshops to train local workers in traditional construction techniques.

The reactivation of the site transformed it into a **living cultural space**, hosting concerts and educational activities for children, thereby reconnecting the community with its heritage. Pro Patrimonio also developed a **sustainable management model**, involving local residents in the upkeep of the asset and encouraging a sense of ownership and pride. Throughout the process, the Foundation combined technical intervention with ongoing **advocacy**, engaging local authorities and ensuring that the project contributed not only to preservation but also to **community regeneration and social value creation**.

6.3. Future Perspectives

The aim is to advocate for a more robust **national framework** that strengthens the **social reuse of confiscated assets** and extends this approach to properties abandoned by public authorities. The current legal system often results in assets deteriorating due to overly rigid procedures and limited reuse pathways. A more **flexible and proactive regulatory environment** is therefore needed to enable the timely transformation of confiscated or neglected properties into resources for **social solidarity and local development**.

As part of its strategic direction, ACDD has submitted "CiviScan", a project proposal under the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme. This proposal builds on CHANCE's good practice model to support a transition from **administrative neglect** to **active social reuse**. It aims to create a publicly accessible platform displaying the status of confiscated properties, preventing them from disappearing into legal uncertainty or physical decay. It also proposes a decentralised network of **"civic monitors"** – citizens and local CSOs trained to identify abandoned assets and advocate for their reuse – and promotes a shift from **asset liquidation** to community-based reuse, such as youth centres, social enterprises, and cultural hubs. Key actions include national asset mapping, advocacy, and capacity building.

At the institutional level, these efforts align with ANABI's mandate as the central authority for **asset recovery and management**. The Agency is working to better engage beneficiaries, improve coordination with ANAF on confiscation data, and clarify legal procedures. CSOs are required to submit **concrete and detailed project proposals**, grounded in a clear **needs assessment** and supported by formal local decisions. Timely responses to asset availability notices and coordination with national authorities are essential to complete the transfer process.

Overall, the research highlights that the **social reuse of confiscated and abandoned assets** acts as a bridge between **state-level justice** and **community development**. At the national level, it reinforces the principle that "crime does not pay", restoring value to the public domain. At the local level, it prevents the degradation of assets and enables their transformation into **community resources**. Case studies demonstrate how neglected properties can become humanitarian hubs or cultural centres, fostering inclusion and preserving identity. However, achieving this potential requires a more **proactive state approach**, reduced bureaucracy, and stronger partnerships with civil society. Without such changes, assets risk becoming lost opportunities; with them, they can serve as sustainable tools for addressing **local social needs**.

Belgium

Places Reclaimed for the Common Good

Communa ASBL – **Forest**
Community Land Trust Brussels – **Bruxelles**
ENTRAKT SCRL – **Anderlecht**
LES PROPRIÉTÉS COLLECTIVES (formerly Fédicoop) – **Liège**
Foyer du Sud – **Forest**
Temporary Brussels – **Bruxelles**

7.1 National Context

According to the latest GI-TOC, Belgium scores 4.82 on the ***Global Organized Crime Index***, reflecting a **moderate level** of organised criminal activity. Organised crime in Belgium is active across multiple illicit markets and operates through both domestic and transnational networks.[23]

One of the most significant markets in Belgium is human smuggling and human trafficking, with the country serving as a key hub for these activities. Human trafficking for **labour and sexual exploitation** remains prevalent, while the economic exploitation of vulnerable groups is on the rise. Victims primarily originate from Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe, however cases involving Belgian and Dutch **minors** being sexually exploited have also been reported. In human smuggling operations, the 'impostor' method is commonly used. Criminal groups frequently exploit legitimate businesses to facilitate these activities, and migrants are often subjected to debt bondage, coercion and violence.[24]

The drug market is another major area of organised criminal activity in Belgium, with the country acting as both a destination and a major transit hub. **Cocaine** dominates this market and enters primarily through the **Port of Antwerp**, which has increasingly replaced the Port of Rotterdam as a key entry point,[25] partly due to limited inspection rates. This has attracted diverse criminal networks, including Western Balkan groups, the 'Ndrangheta and groups labelled under the controversial umbrella term '**Mocro Mafia**'[26]. In recent years, the balance of power within the Port of Antwerp has been destabilised by violent clashes between rival 'Mocro Mafia' criminal groups, which escalated sharply in 2012 after the disappearance of a container carrying approximately 200 kilograms of cocaine, which was never delivered to Dutch 'Mocro Mafia' clients. The incident was attributed to the "*Turtles*", a drug gang from the Borgerhout district.[27][28]

The ensuing violence undermined the control of 'Mocro Mafia' criminal organisations over the port, creating a window of opportunity that was strategically exploited by Albanian groups and the **'Ndrangheta**, who leveraged their extensive international connections to source **cocaine directly from Colombia and Ecuador**.[29]

Other drug markets, including heroin, cannabis and synthetic drugs, remain active, with production concentrated along the Belgian–Dutch border and increasingly linked to online distribution. Belgium also functions as a **source and transit country for arms trafficking**.

[23] Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. (2025). *Belgium profile: Global Organized Crime Index 2025*. OCINDEX.NET, p. 1.Consulted on 31 January 2025, from: https://ocindex.net/assets/downloads/2025/english/ocindex_profile_belgium_2025.pdf
[24] Ibid, p.3.
[25] Ibid.
[26] The term "Mocro Mafia" is used with sensitivity and awareness of its potential to stigmatize. Although widely used in media and public discourse to refer to certain criminal networks, the term has been criticized as stigmatising for broader groups of people of Moroccan descent who are not involved in criminality, and for implying a unified "mafia-like" structure that does not accurately reflect the fragmented reality of organised crime groups in the Netherlands and Belgium.
[27] Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. (2025). *Belgium profile: Global Organized Crime Index 2025*. OCINDEX.NET, p. 3. Consulted on 31 January 2025, from: https://ocindex.net/assets/downloads/2025/english/ocindex_profile_belgium_2025.pdf
[28]Gratteri, N. (25 September 2025). *Cocaina, l'oro bianco*. Minutes from 1:21 to 1:26. In Lezioni di Mafie. La7. Consulted on 2 January 2026, from https://www.la7.it/lezioni-di-mafie/rivedila7/lezioni-di-mafie-cocaina-loro-bianco-25-09-2025-612124
[29]Gratteri, N. (25 September 2025). *Cocaina, l'oro bianco*. Minutes from 1:21 to 1:26. In Lezioni di Mafie. La7. Consulted on 2 January 2026, from https://www.la7.it/lezioni-di-mafie/rivedila7/lezioni-di-mafie-cocaina-loro-bianco-25-09-2025-612124

Firearms are often smuggled alongside narcotics and are linked to violent incidents associated with drug trafficking networks.[30]

Organised crime in Belgium is closely intertwined with the legal economy. Criminal groups **launder illicit profits** through sectors such as car washes and luxury goods, while proceeds are sometimes channelled through offshore locations. **Professional facilitators**, including lawyers and notaries, have been implicated, while companies have been linked to sectors such as **diamond and timber trafficking**.[31]

From a broader societal perspective, the report notes an increase in public **distrust of political institutions**, influenced by factors such as rising xenophobia, corruption scandals and the perceptions of government inertia. While Belgium has a high **resilience** score of 7.17, indicating robust institutional capacity and consistent efforts to combat organised crime, the public still perceives criminal organisations as infiltrating state institutions.[32] In this context, initiatives such as ARIEC (District Information and Expertise Centre)[33] and DIOB (Directorate for Integrity Assessment of Public Authorities) [34], which provide administrative oversight and integrity assessments for public authorities,[35] serve as examples of measures aimed at strengthening governance and reducing opportunities for criminal influence.

Asset confiscation could build on these governance measures and could serve as a complementary tool to further strengthen institutional resilience and community security. Also in Belgium it could become a pivotal instrument in the fight against organised crime, enabling public authorities to target the assets, tools, means and added value derived from criminal activities. Beyond this core function, asset confiscation offers three additional benefits.

Firstly, it demonstrates **resistance by public authorities**, thereby undermining the criminal display of power and control within a territory. Secondly, it acts as a **preventive measure** by disrupting criminal operations and reducing the risk of future crimes. Thirdly, it creates the conditions for the **repair and recovery** of affected territories, communities and victims, making space for initiatives oriented towards the public good. In this context, appropriate legislative frameworks at both national and European level play a crucial role in ensuring that confiscated assets are effectively reintegrated into society, allowing these places to contribute to territorial recovery and to the prevention of organised crime.[36]

At EU level, **Directive 2024/1260** establishes a legal framework for asset recovery and confiscation, encouraging the social reuse of confiscated property (Article 19), ensuring

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[30] Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. (2025). *Belgium profile: Global Organized Crime Index 2025.* OCINDEX.NET, p.3. Consulted on 31 January 2025, from: https://ocindex.net/assets/downloads/2025/english/ocindex_profile_belgium_2025.pdf
[31] Ibid, p. 5.
[32] Ibid, p 2 & 7.
[33] ARIEC supports municipalities and mayors in the administrative approach to organised and undermining crime by providing expertise, indicator and practical tools.
[34] DIOBis a Belgian federal body that assists public authorities in conducting integrity assessments when there is a risk of criminal influence on administrative decision-making.
[35] BeSafe. (17 November 2023). *Parliament definitively approves the Administrative Enforcement Act.* Consulted on 2 January 2026, from AD Veiligheid & Preventie. Parlement keurt wet bestuurlijke handhaving definitief goed | BeSafe
[36] Militello, M., Mosca, M., Storci, F., Ciardiello, D., Kouider, S. K., Scialla, C., & De Biasio, C. (2025). *Social Economy Policies for Combating Organised Crime*. Zenodo, p 14-20. Available at: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17288073

safeguards against re-acquisition by criminals (Article 20), and requiring national strategies (Article 25).[37]

Belgium has not yet fully implemented these provisions, although some mechanisms exist. The **Law of 22 May 2003** allows the administrative transfer of movable and immovable property between federal public services and, and in certain cases, the free transfer of low-value movable goods to Public Centres for Social Welfare (CPAS/OCMW) and certain accredited organisations. At present, the **Central Office for Seizure and Confiscation (COSC)** is primarily responsible for the management of confiscated assets, while the Federal Public Service Finance oversees their disposal through public auctions, notably via ***Fin Immo*** for real estate and ***Fin Shop*** for movable goods.[38] The COSC manages assets from the moment of seizure until the final confiscation decision. Once confiscation becomes definitive, responsibility is transferred to the Federal Public Service Finance, which is tasked with disposing of the assets. However, the lack of systematic tracking of assets' origins creates the risk that they may be repurchased by criminal actors, undermining prevention goals and potentially conflicting with EU requirements and particularly with Article 20 of Directive (EU) 2024/1260, which requires safeguards to prevent the re-entry of criminal assets into the legal economy.[39]

These practices illustrate both the potential and limitations of public and social reuse. For example, movable goods have been allocated to the Federal Police and to municipalities affected by flooding, while immovable property with no market value has been transferred to the federal authorities. However, this framework is largely confined to the federal public sector and was not designed to support the systematic social reuse of confiscated criminal assets. As a result, unlike countries such as Italy or France, Belgium does not yet have a dedicated and mature legal framework for social reuse, and current practice remains limited.[40] Nevertheless, there are notable examples of social reuse, such as the

[37] European Parliament. Directive (EU) 2024/1260 on asset recovery and confiscation. (2024). Official Journal of the European Union, L 2024/1260, 2.5.2024. Consulted on 25 January 2026, from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1260/oj/eng
[38] Belgian Law of 22 May 2003 on the organisation of the budget and accounting of the federal State. (2003). Belgian Official Gazette. Consulted on 25 January 2026, from https://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/article.pl?language=nl&numac_search=2003003367
[39] Belgian Public Prosecutor's Office. (n.d.). *Central Office for Seizure and Confiscation (COSC).* Consulted on 31 January 2025, from: https://www.om-mp.be/fr/politique-gestion/ocsc
[40] Militello, M. (3 June 2025). *The Public and Social Reuse of Confiscated Assets A tool for prevention, resistance, and reparation* [PowerPoint slides presented at Caserta meeting]. Available at: 1 - BASTA 03-06 RINSE Caserta.pptx - Google Slides

Agusta-Dassault case[41][42], *Finshop*[43][44] and the initiative *Les Ateliers du Midi*[45], which repurposed confiscated assets for the common good.[46]

Despite these limitations, the current situation in Belgium allows for cautious optimism. Institutional interest has been growing in recent years. On 18 September 2024, a **legislative proposal** (56K0236) was submitted to the Belgian Chamber with the aim of introducing the social reuse of confiscated assets, although no specific legislation has yet been adopted.[47] This interest was also reflected in the 2024 Drugs Fund[48], and the 2025 federal government agreement[49] explicitly refers to the public and social reuse of confiscated assets. At the request of the President of the Justice Committee of the Belgian Parliament, BASTA was asked to provide an advisory opinion on the proposal law n. 0236/001 (56th legislature)[50]. Following analysis and consultations, BASTA submitted an advisory opinion co-signed by twelve other entities, including NGOs, social enterprises, academics, and think tanks from various fields such as criminology, social economy, social justice, public health, and migration[51]. In 2025, BASTA drafted a legislative proposal on the public and social reuse of confiscated assets. The proposal was subsequently further developed and enriched during the RESTART Capacity Building Camp, thanks to the active participation of a wide range of stakeholders and young people from diverse backgrounds.The resulting co-created proposal was then reviewed by jurists and magistrates and revised in light of their legal observations and recommendations. On 22 June 2026, BASTA! presents it to the public during a round-table discussion organised within the framework of the European PREVENT (ISF) project and dedicated to the ambitious implementation of the European Directive on asset recovery and confiscation.

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[41] Pasinato, G., Baruzzo, G., & Giannone, T. (2021). The social re-use of confiscated assets in Europe: A first mapping (Monitoring Europe!). Libera and CHANCE Network, p 20. Consulted on 31 January 2025, from: https://www.confiscatibene.it/sites/default/files/blog-upload/The%20social%20re-use%20of%20confiscated%20assets%20in%20Europe_a%20first%20mapping.pdf

[42] The *Agusta scandal* was a major Belgian corruption case in the 1980s involving bribes paid by the Italian helicopter manufacturer Agusta (and partly Dassault) to secure defense contracts. In 1998, the Belgian Hof van Cassatie (Court of Cassation) convicted several high-ranking politicians for passive corruption, and company executives for active corruption. The court also ordered the illegally obtained funds to be confiscated and redirected to public social services, such as the OCMW/CPAS, for use in general welfare, including care institutions.

[43] Belgium's FPS Finance donated surplus goods from FinShop to help victims of the 2021 floods, with Minister Van Peteghem supporting the action in Seraing.

[44] 7sur7. (2021, August 18). *Le SPF Finances offers goods to flood victims, Minister Van Petegem present in Seraing to support the action*. 7sur7.be. Consulted on 31 January 2025, from: https://www.7sur7.be/belgique/le-spf-finances-offre-des-biens-aux-victimes-des-inondations-le-ministre-van-petegem-present-a-seraing-pour-soutenir-l-action~ab4c7795/

[45]Les Ateliers du midi used to be an illegal textile factory ,accused of labour exploitation of the workers. This asset was sold at auction to the Saint Gilles's Municipality in Brussels. After the acquisition, it became a place involved in the promotion of vocational training and the development of work-integration social economy activities: available to job seekers wishing to attend professional courses and to get a job.

[46] Militello, M. (3 June 2025). The Public and Social Reuse of Confiscated Assets A tool for prevention, resistance, and reparation [PowerPoint slides presented at Caserta meeting]. Available at: 1 - BASTA 03-06 RINSE Caserta.pptx - Google Slides

[47] Chamber of Representatives of Belgium. (2024). *Proposal for a law amending the Act of 4 February 2018 on the tasks and composition of the Central Office for Seizure and Confiscation, in order to assign a social purpose to real estate seized in connection with offences referred to in Article 324bis of the Criminal Code, for the benefit of associations or legal persons acting in the public interest* (Parliamentary document No. 56-0236/001). Consulted on 31 January 2025, from: https://www.lachambre.be/kvvcr/showpage.cfm?section=/flwb&language=fr&cfm=/site/wwwcfm/flwb/flwbn.cfm?legislat=56&dossierID=236

[48]Militello, M. (3 June 2025). *The Public and Social Reuse of Confiscated Assets A tool for prevention, resistance, and reparation* [PowerPoint slides presented at Caserta meeting]. Available at:. 1 - BASTA 03-06 RINSE Caserta.pptx - Google Slides

[49] Belgian Federal Government. (2025). *Government agreement 2025-2029*. Government of Belgium, p. 150. Consulted on 31 January 2025, from: https://www.belgium.be/sites/default/files/resources/publication/files/Regeerakkoord-Bart_De_Wever_nl.pdf

[50] Belgian Chamber of Representatives. (n.d.). Proposal of law to amend the Law of 4 February 2018 on the Central Organ for Seizure and Confiscation in order to allow the social reuse of confiscated real estate (Proposal No. 0236/001, 56th legislature). Consulted on 31 January 2025, from: https://www.lachambre.be/FLWB/PDF/56/0236/56K0236001.pdf

[51] S-Com. (2025). *Annual report 2024 (Rapport annuel 2024)*. Consulted on 31 January 2025, from: https://www.scom.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Annual-report-20242.pdf

Belgium also benefits from a strong social economy sector with experience in reusing vacant properties, which is recognised at EU level as a driver of local development and a counterbalance to organised crime.[52] Taken together, these institutional and socio-economic factors provide a strong practical foundation for the implementation of systematic social reuse programmes.[53]

[52] Pape, M. (2024, December 15). *An economy that works for people: An action plan for the social economy – Q4 2021 / Up to €15 billion per year*. European Parliament Consulted on 31 January 2025, from: . https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train.

[53] Militello, M., Mosca, M., Storci, F., Ciardiello, D., Kouider, S. K., Scialla, C., & De Biasio, C. (2025). *Social Economy Policies for Combating Organised Crime*. Zenodo. Available at: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17288073

7.2 Social Reuse Practices in Belgium

Structure of realities, workers and finances

In Belgium, the social economy sector includes non-profit organisations, enterprises, cooperatives, foundations and mutual health funds. Between 2017 and 2021, the sector generally expanded, despite a slight decline in 2020 and a decrease in Flanders[54], while employment increased across all regions.[55]

The organisations analysed in this study, all based in Brussels, **focus on the social reuse of vacant properties**, though many are unfamiliar with confiscated assets. Most (66.7%) are non-profit associations (ASBL/VZW)[56], alongside a smaller share of limited liability companies[57] and public administrations. This composition reflects structured governance systems capable of managing complex projects, often supported by internal coordinating bodies. All organisations maintain partnerships with public authorities, particularly at the local level, reinforcing their role within civil society.

Financially, these entities rely heavily on **public funding**, which represents between 70% and 100% of their income in most cases (83.4%). This support comes mainly from regional institutions such as the Brussels Region, Brussels Environnement, or EU-linked funds, or from connected funds e.g. *W.ALTER*[58] and *Vesta*[59] (between 100% and 70%). Support is often provided through programmes such as CRU (Urban Renovation Contracts) and CQD (Sustainable Neighbourhood Contracts). Even entities that challenge the authorities' approach to the social economy and the system acknowledge the essential role of public authorities in these processes.

Organisations frequently **collaborate with authorities** to identify new locations and projects for implementation. This cooperation can also be influenced by regulatory and financial incentives; for example, in several municipalities fees are imposed on vacant buildings, encouraging public and private actors to avoid leaving assets unused or abandoned.

Access to national or European funding remains limited due to the relatively small scale of many organisations. Private funding is marginal (1–10%), and only a minority involve citizen contributions, mainly for property acquisition and neighbourhood-based initiatives.

Collaboration with public authorities is essential not only for funding but also for identifying available assets, sometimes encouraged by regulations such as vacancy taxes. At the same

[54] SPF Économie. (2024, August 27). *L'entrepreneuriat social en Belgique*. Service public fédéral Économie, PME, Classes moyennes et Énergie. Consulted on 27 January 2026, from https://economie.fgov.be/fr/themes/entreprises/economie-durable/entrepreneuriat-social/lentrepreneuriat-social-en
[55] SPF Économie. (2024, August 27). *L'entrepreneuriat social en Belgique*. Service public fédéral Économie, PME, Classes moyennes et Énergie. Consulted on 27 January 2026, from https://economie.fgov.be/fr/themes/entreprises/economie-durable/entrepreneuriat-social/lentrepreneuriat-social-en
[56] In Belgium the legal status for non-profit organisation is ASBL (Association sans but lucratif) for the French speaking community, VZW (Vereniging Zonder Winstoogmerk) for the Dutch speaking community. This report uses the term in English: non-profit organisation, referring to Council Directive (EU) 2022/2523 article 3.11c definition, for which the organisation 'has no shareholders or members who have a proprietary or beneficial interest in its income or assets'.
[57] In Belgium there are two terms to define a Private Limited Liability Company, it is SRL (Societé à Responsabilité Limitée) for the French speaking community, and BV (Besloten Vennootschap) for the Dutch speaking community. This report uses SRL/BV, since there is not an equivalent English referral.
[58] Further information available at: https://social-economy-gateway.ec.europa.eu/my-country/belgium_en and https://www.w-alter.be
[59] Further information available at: https://www.vestadevelopment.be/en/over-vesta/

time, organisations **engage local communities** to shape projects through interviews, surveys and observation, recognising neighbourhoods as key resources.

Volunteer work plays a central role: in 83.4% of cases, projects depend significantly on unpaid contributions, and only half of the organisations provide remuneration. While companies and public bodies consistently pay staff, most non-profits lack the resources to do so, highlighting structural financial constraints rather than a lack of commitment.

Overall, the findings show that organisations working on the social reuse of vacant or confiscated assets are deeply connected to public authorities, strengthening participatory and democratic practices. However, non-profits in particular need to reinforce their financial sustainability, diversify income sources and expand their expertise-sharing activities. This would enable more effective and scalable projects, crucial for addressing social needs and contributing to the fight against organised crime.

Buildings, projects and beneficiaries

The organisations interviewed manage a significant number of projects and large buildings, typically ranging from 200 m^2 to 6,000 m^2, and often promote around ten additional initiatives each. These spaces are **rented at very low costs** to vulnerable groups (e.g. €1.25 per m^2 compared to an average of €400 per m^2 per year in Brussels). Most buildings (83.4%) are located in marginalised areas characterised by higher levels of segregation and organised crime, and are often abandoned or previously linked to illegal activities.

Temporary occupation projects are mainly concentrated in **Brussels' inner urban ring** (such as the Pentagon, Molenbeek and the North district), where demand and pressure are higher. In contrast, the outer ring presents different challenges due to lower land-use pressure. While some municipalities show limited engagement in reusing vacant buildings, the Brussels-Capital Region stands out for its proactive role, supported by consistent legislation across all municipalities and measures such as vacancy taxes, which encourage monitoring and reuse of empty properties.

A central focus of these organisations is **social housing**. Beneficiaries are primarily marginalised individuals, especially **women in financial need** (according to official figures, there are far more women in this situation than men)[60] or domestic violence. This reflects broader structural inequalities and insufficient institutional support. Data confirms the scale and urgency of the housing crisis: in Brussels alone, around 6.5 million m^2 of space remains vacant while nearly 10,000 people are homeless.[61]

Across Belgium, **homelessness** is increasing: 9,777 individuals were recorded in Brussels in November 2024 (+25% since 2022),[62] 20,363 in Flanders (including over 6,000 children)[63] and 19,387 in Wallonia, including 5,204 children.[64]

[60] Indicators.Be. (n.d.). *Risk of poverty or social exclusion.* Consulted on 29 August 2025, from https://www.indicators.be/en/i/G01_PSE/Risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion
[61] COMMUNA ASBL. (n.d.). *Rapport d'Activité 2024.* p.4, 9, 36, 55, 30. Consulted on 22 August 2025, from https://communaasbl.sharepoint.com/
[62] Bruss'help. (06-11-2024). *Dénombrement des personnes sans-chez-soi en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale.* p.12. Consulted on 29 August 2025, from https://brusshelp.org/images/Rapport_denombrement_2024
[63] Wallonie Service Public. (2024). *Rapport global 2024* p.20. Consulted on 29 August 2025, from https://actionsociale.wallonie.be/files/documents_thematiques/
[64] Wallonie Service Public. (2024). *Rapport global 2024*

In most cases (83.4%), organisations own the buildings they use, demonstrating their capacity to mobilise resources and ensure project continuity. Some also support beneficiaries in transitioning to independent living, including helping them to rent or purchase homes, which contributes to long-term autonomy and community integration. Beyond housing, initiatives may also support other vulnerable groups, such as **individuals recovering from addiction**, while fostering social cohesion through shared activities.

Overall, around 80% of buildings are used for social housing, with the remainder hosting collaborative or community-based initiatives. Despite their positive impact, organisations face **key challenges**, including high renovation costs, limited availability of suitable properties, and restrictive regulatory frameworks.

Relation with media and community

All of the organisations interviewed maintain a **website**, allowing citizens and other organisations to engage with them and learn about who they are and the projects they implement. This demonstrates a well-developed commitment to transparency. However, only 50% (3 out of 6) of these organisations had shared **activity reports**, and among those that do, one-third had not produced a report in 2024.

The relationship with both the media and the local community is generally positive. Approximately 66.7% (4 out of 6) of organisations report very favourable interactions with the media, while 33.4% (2 out of 6) describe more mixed or controversial responses. This suggests that **community reactions may differ**, even for projects by the same organisation, with some initiatives generating different levels of support among residents who are less directly involved with the organisation.

Findings regarding neighbourhood and community support were broadly similar to those observed with the media. However, the proportion of respondents reporting “substantial support” for projects decreased to 50% (3 out of 6). In 16.7% of cases (1 out of 6), support is also financial and highly significant for the implementation of projects.

Another important consideration is the presence of criminal organisations and a prevailing sense of fear and being unsafe in certain areas, which can hinder project implementation through intimidation.

p.21. Consulted on 29 August 2025, from https://actionsociale.wallonie.be/files/documents_thematiques/

COMMUNA ASBL

Siège social	Rue du Monténégro 144 - Forest
Website	https://communa.be/

COMMUNA ASBL is a non-profit association founded in 2013 in Brussels by five university friends, aiming to address urban vacancy and social needs. In a context where around 6.5 million m² of space lies empty and nearly 10,000 people are homeless, the organisation **temporarily occupies unused buildings for social purposes**. Occupation is conceived as a **transitional tool for change** rather than an end in itself.

To date, COMMUNA has occupied around 30 buildings, with 10 currently in use across Belgium and France. These spaces host diverse activities, including **social housing**, **support for vulnerable groups** (such as young people recovering from addiction), community spaces and cultural initiatives. Around **400 people** live in these projects, supported by roughly 100 tenancy arrangements and 500 project initiators. Their work focuses on four main uses: reintegration, semi-independent living, co-housing, and polyvalent community spaces.

Before occupying a property, COMMUNA assesses its suitability and may collaborate with professionals such as psychologists or partner organisations like the Community Land Trust Bruxelles. Buildings vary widely in size (200–6,000 m²).

Financially, the organisation relies mainly on public funding (about 80%), reflecting its role as a delegated public service, while tenant contributions are minimal. Most expenditure goes on staff remuneration. Around 40 employees manage projects, complemented by variable voluntary involvement within a non-hierarchical governance structure.

COMMUNA uses social media to identify buildings, build partnerships and gain support. Its projects are often located in marginalised areas, with community reactions varying from resistance to strong support. Despite sometimes being perceived as a squatting collective, its advocacy work has strengthened its credibility.

Community Land Trust Brussels

Asset location	Rue du Poinçon 53, 1000 Bruxelles
Website	https://cltb.be/en/

The Community Land Trust Brussels (CLTB) is part of a wider European network and operates through a dual structure as both a public association and a non-profit (ASBL). It focuses on providing **affordable housing** by separating land ownership from building ownership, allowing residents to purchase homes at around 40% below market value while ensuring long-term affordability and preventing speculation.

CLTB is currently developing two projects in **previously unused public buildings** in Anderlecht, totalling seven housing units, alongside several completed and planned initiatives across Brussels. Many of these properties are initially uninhabitable or have experienced prior **illegal occupation**, requiring significant renovation to become liveable.

Beyond housing provision, CLTB promotes social cohesion by **involving residents** in community activities and governance, supported by a wider membership network. The organisation employs about 20 staff, including specialised roles in real estate and project coordination.

Its work is heavily reliant on **public funding**, with limited private donations. Strong partnerships with public authorities enable project development, although occasional local or political resistance requires mediation through dialogue and compromise. Over time, media perception has shifted towards recognising CLTB's role in **social reuse and urban regeneration**.

ENTRAKT SCRL

Asset location	Boulevard de la Révision 80, Anderlecht
Website	https://www.entrakt.be/

Entrakt is a private SRL founded in 2009 that specialises in the **temporary occupation** of vacant buildings, acting as an intermediary between property owners and users. Rather than owning or occupying spaces itself, it connects artists, associations, and small businesses with affordable premises, while fostering **community-oriented** projects through shared activities and events.

The organisation operates mainly in **Brussels and Antwerp**, managing around **40–50 projects** of varying scale, including large complexes such as Lioncity (40,000 m²). Buildings are typically unused for long periods rather than abandoned, often awaiting redevelopment. Entrakt works with both public and private owners: public assets are assigned through calls, while private owners usually initiate contact.

Its business model is based on **low rents** – significantly below market rates – which cover maintenance and operations, avoiding reliance on public funding. In exchange, users actively contribute to upkeep and community life. Entrakt employs a small team of six, including roles dedicated to project management, communication and **community mediation**.

Projects are often located in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, where initial local resistance may arise. Entrakt addresses this through engagement strategies, such as neighbourhood visits and initiatives responding to local needs. Collaboration with authorities focuses on safety and regulation, while media coverage has increasingly recognised the **value** of urban regeneration through temporary use.

LES PROPRIÉTÉS COLLECTIVES (formerly Fédicoop)

Asset location	Rue de l'Académie 53A, Liège
Website	https://www.lesproprietescollectives.be/

Les Propriétés Collectives - Fédération wallonne des coopératives immobilières d'économie sociale is a non-profit ASBL established in 2023 as a federation representing 15 real estate cooperatives in Wallonia, aimed at strengthening the visibility and impact of the **social economy**. Rather than directly managing properties, it supports members through coordination, communication and legal assistance.

Collectively, its members have acquired and renovated over 100 buildings, providing 126 professional **spaces for social enterprises** and around 173 **housing units** for vulnerable groups, including women escaping domestic violence. Ownership is central to their model, ensuring that properties retain a **long-term social use**, protected from speculation and aligned with cooperative principles that limit profit distribution.

Funding combines public investment mechanisms such as W.ALTER and the Vesta programme, alongside loans and **citizen fundraising**. Innovative arrangements with municipalities, such as emphyteusis rights, allow cooperatives to renovate and use public assets over long periods while maintaining affordability.

Governance relies heavily on volunteer involvement, with many cooperatives structured as citizen cooperatives involving hundreds of members. Projects are often locally driven, with strong community support and mobilisation to preserve socially valuable spaces. This approach reinforces local development, social cohesion and the long-term protection of community assets.

Foyer du Sud

Asset location	Avenue du Pont de Luttre 68, Forest
Website	https://foyerdusud.be/

Foyer du Sud is a public housing provider (**SISP**) operating in Brussels, created through the merger of two local entities. It manages around **2,500 social housing units** across Saint-Gilles and Forest, offering affordable accommodation and a range of services, including social and technical support, through a structured organisation of approximately 98 staff.

Beyond housing, the SISP promotes **community spaces**, such as vegetable gardens and shared areas, designed to foster participation and social cohesion among residents. These initiatives, supported by regional funding and organisations like Bruxelles Environnement, involve hundreds of families and are developed through consultation with tenants. Activities began in 2022, aiming to strengthen civic engagement and collective governance, although participation levels remain uneven.

Projects are typically situated in vulnerable neighbourhoods with higher crime rates, where abandoned or underused spaces may be associated with illegal activities. In this context, Foyer du Sud seeks to **transform these areas into safe, shared environments**, despite occasional resistance and acts of vandalism. Fear of criminal presence can limit community involvement, making these interventions particularly important.

The organisation collaborates with local actors, including CPAS and cooperatives such as EcoRes, to **promote citizen participation and sustainable development**. While initial engagement has been positive, challenges remain in maintaining long-term involvement and resources, with the SISP aiming to expand activities, strengthen organisation and enhance community impact.

Temporary Brussels

Asset location	Rue de Namur 59, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium
Website	https://temporary.brussels/

temporary.brussels

Temporary Brussels is a **public administration** that coordinates **temporary occupation** projects across the Brussels-Capital Region, focusing on social, cultural and neighbourhood initiatives. Between 2023 and 2024, it mapped 126 projects, with many concentrated in central urban areas such as Brussels, Anderlecht and Molenbeek, particularly within revitalisation zones supported by CRU and CQD programmes.

The organisation works with a wide range of property types, both public and private, often made available by owners seeking to avoid deterioration. Funding is project-based and primarily public, combining regional budgets (around €2 million) with municipal contributions and a dedicated annual budget for the **Guichet**, which facilitates project development.

Temporary Brussels engages both **professionals and volunteers**, delivering projects such as emergency housing, cultural initiatives and neighbourhood activation. It also plays a key role in identifying vacant spaces through mapping activities and collaboration with municipalities, although engagement varies across local authorities.

Projects are mainly concentrated in the **inner urban ring**, where land pressure is higher, while outer areas face different challenges in activating unused spaces. Community responses vary: some residents resist change, while others actively support reuse initiatives.

Despite challenges such as high renovation costs, regulatory constraints and limited availability of suitable properties, the organisation has contributed to improving perceptions of urban regeneration through temporary use. Looking ahead, it is developing a strategic roadmap (2025–2030) to strengthen **governance, partnerships and community engagement**, while supporting new actors and expanding collaboration at European level.

7.3. Future Perspectives

BASTA!'s engagement concerning the social reuse of confiscated assets operates at both **European and national levels**. At the European level, BASTA! is a founding member of the CHANCE network (Civil Hub against orgaNised Crime in Europe), contributing to network development, capacity building, the exchange of best practices, and the development of EU projects. Joint actions focus on advocacy, aiming to raise awareness among institutions, policymakers, and other civil society organisations about the importance of social reuse of confiscated assets. BASTA! is actively involved in promoting legislation that transposes Directive (EU) 2024/1260 on asset recovery and confiscation, continuing the **advocacy work** carried out for the previous Directive in 2014 and Regulation in 2018. BASTA! also organises forums and conferences, fostering dialogue between European, national and civil society stakeholders.

At the national and local level, BASTA! has been a strong advocate for the **public and social reuse of abandoned and confiscated assets**. This proposal was included in BASTA!'s 2024 **Political Agenda** ahead of the federal and regional elections. The organisation has actively engaged with policymakers, national and local institutions, and actors in the social economy on the issue of confiscated assets. Reflecting BASTA!'s advocacy, Fedicoop (Fédération wallonne des Coopératives Immobilières agréées Entreprises Sociales) incorporated its **recommendations** into its Memorandum for the 2024 political elections.[65] In January 2025, the Belgian Federal Government Agreement finally recognised the public and social value of confiscated assets as part of its planned actions.[66]

The organisation is actively involved in **numerous European initiatives** (such as Good(s) Monitoring Europe, PREVENT, Europe HUB and RESTART), which combine research, training and practical exchanges. Through these projects, BASTA! contributes to developing knowledge, fostering youth engagement and demonstrating the effectiveness of social reuse as a tool to combat organised crime and support community recovery. In particular, it has supported the drafting of legislative proposals and policy frameworks inspired by advanced models such as the Italian system.

BASTA! also aims to strengthen its role as a research and knowledge hub by collaborating with **universities and research centres** to produce literature on the topic of social reuse. The purpose of this effort is to **demonstrate the feasibility** of using confiscated assets as a tool for combating and preventing organised crime and restoring the damage it does to social tissue, as highlighted in the 2025 report produced jointly by BASTA! and Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II.[67]

At the same time, BASTA! acts as a **bridge** between institutions, enforcement bodies and organisations involved in reuse processes (such as ARIEC), promoting coordinated action and improved governance. By positioning BASTA! and the CHANCE network at the center of

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[65] Febecoop Wallonie-Bruxelles. (2024). *Mémorandum coopératif 2024.* Consulted on 23 January 2026, from https://wallonie-bruxelles.febecoop.be/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/06/Memorandum-cooperative-FR.pdf
[66] Gouvernement fédéral belge. (2025). *Accord de coalition fédérale 2025-2029*. Consulted on 23 January 2026, from https://www.belgium.be/sites/default/files/resources/publication/files/Accord_gouvernemental-Bart_De_Wever_fr.pdf
[67] Militello, M., Mosca, M., Storci, F., Ciardiello, D., Kouider, S. K., Scialla, C., & De Biasio, C. (2025). *Social Economy Policies for Combating Organised Crime*. Zenodo. Available at: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17288073

these national strategies, collaboration is strengthened in alignment with Article 19, 20 and 25 of the EU Directive 2024, supporting both local action and broader societal impact.[68]

Overall, the report highlights that **Belgium has strong potential to expand social reuse practices**, thanks to its dynamic social economy sector and existing collaboration networks. However, these actors remain underutilised in national strategies against organised crime.[69] Strengthening their role and extending to the whole country the successful policies – such as temporary reuse frameworks –experimented in the Brussels-Capital Region would support more effective management of vacant and confiscated assets, enhancing both social impact and institutional resilience.

[68] European Parliament and Council of the European Union. (2024, May 2). Directive (EU) 2024/1260 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 April 2024 on asset recovery and confiscation. Official Journal of the European Union, L_202401260. Consulted on 2 January 2026, from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1260/oj

[69] Militello, M., Mosca, M., Storci, F., Ciardiello, D., Kouider, S. K., Scialla, C., & De Biasio, C. (2025). *Social Economy Policies for Combating Organised Crime*. Zenodo. Available at: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17288073

Italy

Places Reclaimed for the Common Good

AGESCI Conca d'Oro – Fondo Micciulla – **Palermo**
Al di là dei Sogni Cooperative – **Sessa Aurunca**
Calcestruzzi Ericina Libera – **Trapani**
Casa Don Diana – **Casal di Principe**
Cascina Caccia – **San Sebastiano da Po**
Case Libere – **Bordighera**
Collina della Pace Association – **Rome**
Masseria Antonio Esposito Ferraioli – **Afragola**
Nonna Roma – Slow Social Market – **Rome**
Placido Rizzotto – Libera Terra Cooperative – **San Giuseppe Jato**
Semi di Vita – **Valenzano, Bari, Casamassima**
Villa Marcella – **San Giusto Canavese**

8.1 National Context

Daily work of associations and key activities

In Italy, civil society organisations play a pivotal role in the management and transformation of assets confiscated from organised crime and corruption. Over the past three decades, this ecosystem has consolidated into a structured and recognisable model of social innovation, rooted in collaboration between associations, local authorities, and community actors. According to Libera's 2025 report *Raccontiamo il Bene*, 1332 public and social reuse experiences have been mapped nationwide, demonstrating not only the scale but also the territorial diffusion of these practices.

These organisations operate across a wide range of sectors, often combining multiple activities within the same initiative. A significant portion, 660 entities, are engaged in social policies and welfare services, addressing needs such as social inclusion, support for vulnerable groups, education, and community care. Alongside these, 55 initiatives are directly focused on production and employment, including social enterprises and cooperatives that create jobs, particularly for disadvantaged individuals. Furthermore, 116 projects work in the field of agriculture and environmental sustainability, promoting ethical production chains, land regeneration, and the preservation of local ecosystems. Cultural promotion, education, and responsible tourism also represent a major area of engagement, with 298 organisations contributing to knowledge production, awareness-raising, and the valorisation of local heritage.

What characterises these experiences is their **multifunctional and community-centred nature**. Confiscated assets are rarely used for a single purpose; rather, they become hubs where economic, social, and cultural activities intersect. In doing so, they generate employment opportunities, deliver essential services, and foster inclusive development processes. These initiatives embody a model of "positive economy", where economic value is closely intertwined with social impact and legality.

Such practices are particularly significant in fragile or marginalised areas, where public services may be insufficient and socio-economic vulnerabilities are more acute. In these contexts, social reuse contributes to rebuilding trust between citizens and institutions, strengthening social cohesion and promoting active citizenship. Confiscation, therefore, should not be interpreted merely as the end point of a judicial procedure. Instead, it represents a **strategic policy tool**, capable of activating local development processes and reinforcing democratic participation.

Since the adoption of Law 109/96, Italy has progressively developed an approach in which confiscated assets are transformed into schools, social cooperatives, cultural centres, agricultural enterprises, and community spaces. These transformations carry a strong symbolic value, reversing the power dynamics associated with criminal control of territories and demonstrating, in tangible terms, the possibility of alternative and lawful forms of development.

8.1.2 Corruption, organised crime, and the role of civil society

The evolution of organised crime in Italy has led to increasingly complex and less visible forms of operation. While violence remains a tool in certain contexts, corruption has become a more effective and discreet mechanism for expanding influence and consolidating power. Through corruption, criminal organisations are able to infiltrate public administration, manipulate decision-making processes, and access resources within the legal economy with reduced risk of detection.

In this scenario, the distinctions between organised crime, economic crime, and political corruption have become progressively blurred. Mafia organisations have adapted to globalised markets and financial systems, diversifying their investments and strengthening their connections with legitimate economic actors. This transformation has resulted in a form of power that is often embedded within legal structures, rather than operating in open opposition to them.

A key concept for understanding these dynamics is that of the **"grey area"**, which describes the network of relationships between criminal groups and sectors of civil society, including professionals, entrepreneurs, and public officials. These actors may not formally belong to criminal organisations, yet they facilitate their activities by providing expertise, access, or legitimacy. On one side, individuals motivated by profit and influence exploit opportunities offered by illicit economies; on the other, criminal groups rely on these relationships to expand their reach into legal markets and institutional frameworks.

The persistence of organised crime is also closely linked to structural inequalities and territorial disparities. In areas where public institutions are perceived as weak or ineffective, criminal organisations may fill gaps by providing informal services, employment opportunities, or protection. This generates a **cycle of dependency and social acceptance**, through which criminal power becomes normalised and, in some cases, even legitimised.

These dynamics are further exacerbated by economic vulnerabilities and social exclusion, which create favourable conditions for criminal infiltration. Illicit economies tend to intensify existing inequalities, extracting resources from communities while undermining long-term development prospects.

Within this context, civil society organisations play a crucial counterbalancing role. Their work extends beyond the management of confiscated assets to include advocacy, education, and the promotion of a culture of legality. By engaging citizens, especially younger generations, they challenge the normalisation of corruption and criminal practices. Moreover, they contribute to strengthening transparency and accountability, both at local and national levels.

Through their activities, these organisations help to break the cycle of marginalisation and dependency, offering concrete alternatives based on social justice, participation, and sustainable development. Their presence is particularly important in territories where the risk of criminal influence is highest, as they represent not only service providers but also agents of cultural and institutional change.

8.2 Social Reuse Practices in Italy

In the Italian context, the mapping process required an additional methodological clarification due to the **scale and complexity of the phenomenon under analysis**. Italy currently counts a very high number of confiscated assets – **23,026 properties assigned to public bodies, cooperatives, or associations** – as well as a similarly extensive network of **1,332 managing organisations**. Within the scope of this research, it was therefore not feasible to provide a fully exhaustive overview of all existing experiences.

For this reason, a **selection process was necessary**. A total of **21 interviews** with managing entities were carried out within the framework of the RESTART project. These were carefully selected in order to ensure a **balanced representation in both geographical terms and fields of intervention**, with the aim of capturing the diversity and heterogeneity that characterise social reuse practices in Italy.

Nevertheless, following the completion of the interviews and the drafting of the corresponding summary sheets, a **further refinement step** was required. Given the richness and volume of the material collected, including all selected cases would have resulted in a disproportionate focus on Italy compared to the other countries involved in the project.

As a consequence, an additional selection was made, allowing for the inclusion of a more **concise yet representative set of case studies**, while maintaining overall balance within the comparative framework of the European mapping.

AGESCI Conca d'Oro – Fondo Micciulla

Asset location	Via Micciulla 5, Palermo
Website	https://www.agesciconcadoro.it/

Fondo Micciulla, located in Palermo, is a confiscated property managed since the late 1990s by AGESCI Conca d'Oro, part of the **Italian Catholic Scouts Association**. The property – consisting of around three hectares of urban agricultural land and a small building – was confiscated in the early 1980s from the **Piraino mafia family** and remained unused for nearly 20 years. It was assigned between 1997 and 1998, making it one of the **first assets reused under Law 109/1996**, and among the earliest entrusted to a civil society organisation.

At the time of assignment, the asset was in **extreme disrepair**. The land was overgrown and filled with waste, a historic structure (the *Camera dello Scirocco*) was buried under rubble, and the former scout base building was uninhabitable. For over fifteen years, no dedicated public funding was provided, restoration depended entirely on volunteer work by scouts. A full renovation, completed in 2016, became possible after the Municipality of Palermo obtained PON Security funding in 2013.

The reuse process initially generated **significant conflict with the local community**, which perceived the scouts as outsiders occupying the space. This resulted in repeated acts of intimidation, vandalism and threats, particularly during the early years. Over time, continuous presence, dialogue and the creation of a stable on-site management group transformed relations. Former local aggressors became collaborators, and the asset gradually came to be seen as a shared resource.

Institutional relations were largely cooperative, albeit experimental, given the novelty of early confiscation assignments. Administrative challenges persist, particularly regarding fiscal classification and high utility and waste-tax costs. Despite limited media attention in the early years, increased activity and networking have improved visibility.

Today, the site functions as a **multifunctional educational and civic space**, hosting scout groups, schools, community activities and anti-mafia learning initiatives involving thousands of participants annually. Its added value lies in demonstrating how long-term, volunteer-based stewardship can **reclaim urban space from mafia control**, reshape community attitudes and offer young people a concrete experience of legality, participation and collective responsibility.

Al di là dei Sogni Cooperative

Asset location	Strada Provinciale 124, Maiano di Sessa Aurunca
Website	https://www.coopaldiladeisogni.it/

Al di là dei Sogni is a social cooperative operating in Maiano di Sessa Aurunca, in the province of Caserta, on a rural asset confiscated from the **Camorra**, specifically linked to Antonio Moccia, boss of the Moccia clan, later absorbed into the criminal system that gave rise to the **Casalesi clan**. The land was seized in 1991, definitively confiscated in 1994 and transferred to the municipal demesne in 1998, before the law on social reuse came into force.

At the time of assignment, the asset – 17 hectares of agricultural land and related buildings – was in a state of **total abandonment**, without water supply and secured only by walls sealing doors and windows, as the municipality feared illegal occupation and lacked knowledge on reuse opportunities. When the cooperative took charge, substantial rehabilitation was required, both structurally and symbolically, to restore the asset's productive and social function.

The reuse process was marked by **acute institutional obstacles** rather than political opposition. Local administrative bodies showed fear, limited expertise and, at times, collusion with criminal interests. Following the allocation of major public funds for renovation, the public tender was won by a company linked to the Casalesi clan, leading to defective works and prompting the cooperative's founder, Simmaco Perillo, to file a formal complaint. Shortly afterwards, the asset was subjected to a **vandal attack**, confirming the presence of intimidation linked to organised crime.

Despite this, the cooperative occupied and reopened the site in 2009, supported by civic mobilisation and solidarity from civil society. Over time, community perceptions shifted radically: from initial indifference or suspicion to widespread recognition and trust. Today, the site is fully integrated into local social life, frequented by families, children and even relatives of former Camorra members.

The project's added value lies in its **holistic social innovation**: combining agricultural production, therapeutic work inclusion, equal wages and personalised care pathways for vulnerable people. More than 60% of workers are disadvantaged individuals, including former offenders. The cooperative has reinvested significant private resources in an asset it does not own, transforming a symbol of criminal power into a national and international model of social reuse, legality and community regeneration.

Calcestruzzi Ericina Libera

Asset location	Via Francesco Culcasi, 1 - Zona Industriale, Trapani
Website	https://www.calcestruzziericina.it/

This case concerns a company asset, **Calcestruzzi Ericina**, confiscated from a **mafia-type organisation** operating in the Trapani area (linked to **Cosa Nostra networks**). Since 2008, the asset has been managed by a **workers' cooperative**, representing one of the first applications of **Law 109/1996** to business assets in Italy.

At the time of takeover, the company faced **serious operational and economic difficulties**. While structurally functional, it required **deep restructuring**, both in terms of management and market positioning. The transition to a legal and transparent business model proved particularly challenging in a sector characterised by **informal practices and unfair competition**.

The process was hindered by **bureaucratic obstacles** and forms of **institutional resistance**, especially in the early years (2008–2009), when the social reuse of confiscated enterprises was still uncommon. Episodes of **implicit obstruction** occurred within public offices, alongside broader market difficulties linked to operating transparently in a distorted economic environment.

Although the asset was not the direct target of violent attacks, there were concerns of **economic and social boycott**, reflecting a climate of pressure and hostility surrounding the initiative.

The **local community's response** was initially divided. A significant segment of civil society supported the project as a symbol of **collective redemption**, while others expressed scepticism or opposition. Over time, however, perceptions have evolved positively. Increasing engagement from **local schools**, citizens, and younger generations has strengthened community trust, transforming initial scepticism into growing recognition.

The **key contribution** of this experience lies in its strong **social and economic impact**. The project has preserved employment, promoted **ethical entrepreneurship**, and contributed to the development of **circular economy practices**. It has also demonstrated that confiscated businesses can operate successfully within the legal economy, becoming a **symbol of resilience and civic responsibility**. Crucially, the case highlights the importance of **collective action**, showing that sustained cooperation between institutions, workers, and civil society can generate long-term positive change for the community.

Casa Don Diana

Asset location	Via Urano 18, Casal di Principe
Website	https://dongiuseppediana.org/categoria.php?i=4

Casa Don Diana is a confiscated property located in Casal di Principe and managed since 2014 by the **Comitato Don Peppe Diana**, a second-level association bringing together more than 40 organisations. The asset was originally owned by **Egidio Coppola**, a Camorra member, and was confiscated in the early 2000s. For several years after confiscation, the building remained unused, despite being assigned on paper to the local health authority, due to the absence of continuous management and institutional capacity.

At the time of reassignment, the villa was structurally intact but **functionally abandoned**, lacking a clear social purpose. The turning point came in 2014, when the property was entrusted by the Prefectural Commissioner to the Comitato, together with Libera Caserta and Agesci. An earlier symbolic reopening occurred when the municipality temporarily hosted an exhibition of works from the Uffizi Gallery, attracting around 40,000 visitors and marking the first act of civic reappropriation. From 2015 onwards, the Comitato assumed full management and transformed the site into a **permanent centre for legality and civic engagement**.

Relations with local institutions were complex but not openly conflictual; the main challenge lay in overcoming **institutional inertia** rather than bureaucratic obstruction. By contrast, the relationship with the neighbourhood was initially difficult. Residents expressed discomfort with the increased presence of law enforcement accompanying volunteers. Trust was gradually built through direct engagement, door-to-door dialogue and inclusive activities. Over time, Casa Don Diana came to be recognised as a **shared community asset**.

The site has been subject to **direct intimidation**, notably a shooting attack in 2022. The response was immediate and symbolic: rather than retreating, the Comitato intensified activities and visibility, reinforcing the public nature of the space. Today, Casa Don Diana hosts cultural events, educational workshops, a legal literacy centre, a museum and activities involving schools from across Italy. It also supports restorative justice pathways by involving young people serving alternative sentences.

The social reuse of Casa Don Diana has generated strong **community value**, transforming a symbol of Camorra power into a widely recognised hub of participation, memory and social innovation, and demonstrating how collective governance can reclaim territory, trust and civic dignity.

Cascina Caccia

Asset location	Via Serra Alta, 6, San Sebastiano da Po
Website	https://cascinacaccia.net/

This case concerns **Cascina Caccia**, confiscated from the **Belfiore family**, linked to the **'Ndrangheta**. Although definitively confiscated in 1999, it was only assigned for reuse in 2007 due to **bureaucratic delays** and **local resistance**.

At the time of allocation, the property was in **severely damaged condition**: pipes filled with concrete, removed flooring, and widespread debris, indicating **deliberate damage**. Initial restoration relied entirely on volunteers working in precarious conditions.

The process faced **institutional obstacles** and strong **community opposition**, including a petition against the project. While no direct attacks occurred during reuse, the initial context reflected **hostility and intimidation**.

Over time, the **local community's response** evolved from skepticism to **growing support**, thanks to continuous engagement with schools, associations, and local authorities.

Managed by ACMOS since 2008, the project's **key contribution** lies in transforming the site into a **social and educational hub**, hosting youth activities, cultural events, and asylum reception. It promotes **active citizenship** and represents a concrete example of how confiscated assets can foster **community cohesion and a culture of legality**.

Case Libere

Asset location	Vallecrosia and Montenero (various locations) - Bordighera

The case concerns **assets confiscated from the Pellegrino family**, a prominent **'Ndrangheta** clan operating in the Bordighera area. The properties, including land in Vallecrosia and houses in Montenero, were **definitively confiscated in 2020** and **temporarily assigned for social reuse in 2023**. In 2025, the contract was awarded to the cooperative consortium by Bordighera Town Council for a period of 10 years.

The assets are now managed by a consortium of associations, including **Libera, Caritas and SPES**. At the time of allocation, the assets were in **extremely poor condition**: destroyed electrical and plumbing systems, shattered windows, structural damage, widespread waste, and visible **signs of violence**, including bullet marks.

The process was affected by significant **bureaucratic delays** and **institutional reluctance**. Although confiscation was finalised in 2020, the properties were cleared only in September 2022. Initial cooperation with **local authorities** was limited, while stronger support came from **state-level institutions** (Prefecture, law enforcement, ANBSC). Over time, collaboration improved, though local political actors remained cautious.

No direct attacks on the assets were recorded during the reuse phase. However, the wider context was marked by a climate of **intimidation and fear**, reinforced by previous **threats against public figures** opposing organised crime.

The **local community** initially showed **scepticism and low engagement**, reflecting the entrenched presence of organised crime and a tendency to avoid exposure. Participation from local residents was very limited. Nonetheless, perceptions have gradually evolved thanks to **educational initiatives**, **media coverage**, and **public events**.
Young people and schools have played a key role in promoting a **culture of legality**. Initiatives such as the "**E!State Liberi" camps** helped transform the confiscated properties into **collective spaces** open to the community. The project's main added value lies in its ability to promote social cohesion, civic participation and anti-mafia awareness, demonstrating how assets once controlled by organised crime can be reclaimed and converted into resources for the public good.

Collina della Pace Association

Asset location	Via Bompietro 16, Rome
Website	https://www.facebook.com/collina.dellapace/

The Collina della Pace Association is a neighbourhood-based voluntary organisation managing the **Parco Peppino Impastato** in the Finocchio area of Rome. The asset was confiscated in 2001 from Enrico Nicoletti, a leading figure and former treasurer of the **Banda della Magliana**, after decades of speculation and abuse. Prior to confiscation, the site hosted a large **illegal six-storey building**, never officially used and surrounded by abandonment, social marginalisation and informal occupation.

Following confiscation, the illegal structure was demolished in 2004. A long and complex regeneration process led to the creation of a public park, inaugurated in 2007, and later to the opening of the ***BILL - Library of Legality*** in 2016 inside two restored rural buildings. The time lapse between confiscation, redevelopment and effective use was significant, mainly due to **institutional inertia, fragmented responsibilities and political discontinuity**, particularly affecting marginal urban areas. The association itself never received formal ownership of the asset, but has maintained the park since 2013 through a municipal "green adoption" scheme.

At the moment the association took responsibility, the park infrastructure already existed but was **abandoned and rapidly degrading**. Additional investments were required to restore playgrounds, maintain greenery and ensure daily usability, largely financed through voluntary work, fundraising and sponsorships. No direct threats or acts of intimidation were reported, although the area remains socially fragile.

Initial community reactions were marked by **scepticism and mistrust**, shaped by decades of unfulfilled promises, but support increased as residents witnessed the site's transformation. Today, the park and library are recognised as **symbols of territorial redemption**, social inclusion and local regeneration. The project provides an important public space for cultural activities, education and community engagement, demonstrating how civic participation can successfully transform a former criminal asset into a shared community resource.

Masseria Antonio Esposito Ferraioli

Asset location	Via Enrico Berlinguer snc, Afragola
Website	https://www.masseriaferraioli.org/

Masseria Antonio Esposito Ferraioli is a large confiscated agricultural estate located in the urban core of **Afragola**, within the metropolitan area of Naples. The asset was originally owned by the **Magliulo Camorra clan**, led by boss Vincenzo Magliulo, and served as a strategic stronghold for criminal activities. Confiscated in the early 1990s, the property remained **abandoned for over twenty years**, during which it was illegally cultivated by third parties connected to the clan, reflecting the limited capacity of public authorities to fully reclaim criminal assets.

When the property was finally assigned in 2016 through a public call, management was entrusted to a **temporary purpose association (ATS)** composed of five organisations from the third sector and trade union sphere. At the time of handover, the estate was in **severe conditions of degradation**: large sections had been burnt, the land was used as an informal dumpsite, boundaries were unclear and even the existence of legal cadastral limits was uncertain. The managing organisations had to independently undertake land clearance, boundary demarcation and the regularisation of an illegal well.

The reuse process has been characterised by **persistent institutional obstruction** and weak public support. The municipality proved more antagonistic than facilitating, while higher institutional levels remained largely declarative rather than operational. Despite major public funds being allocated for renovation in 2018, the refurbishment of the *masseria* remains unfinished years later. The estate was also subjected to **continuous low-intensity intimidation**, including vandalism, theft of tools, forced entry and the destruction of newly planted trees, confirming the lingering control attempts by criminal networks.

Initial community reactions combined fear and curiosity, given the violent reputation of the clan. Through extensive participatory work - schools, parishes, local associations and public meetings - the project gradually gained strong civic backing. Today, over **300 families** cultivate urban gardens on confiscated land, turning former criminal property into a shared resource.

The added value of the project lies in its **collective restitution model**, blending social agriculture, education, biodiversity protection and community-building. Despite economic and institutional fragilities, Masseria Ferraioli stands as a significant experiment in reclaiming urban territory from organised crime and transforming it into a living space of participation, legality and shared responsibility.

Nonna Roma – Slow Social Market (Rome)

Asset location	Via Carlo Cattaneo 4c, Rome
Website	https://nonnaroma.it/progetto/slow-social-market/

The asset reused by Nonna Roma for the Slow Social Market is a confiscated commercial property in Rome's Esquilino district, near Piazza Vittorio. Formerly a jewellery shop likely linked to **organised crime-related activities**, it remained vacant for years and was in poor condition before redevelopment.

Before the official assignment, the space was informally used at night by **Sant'Egidio** and **City Angels** to support homeless people. The refurbishment was financed through the *8x1000* funds of the Waldensian Church, while the Municipality of Rome, with mediation by Libera, formally assigned the property to Nonna Roma in late 2023. The site was rapidly converted into a social grocery store, officially opened in December 2023. and renamed **Jerry Masslo Social Market** in memory of the South African refugee and victim of labour exploitation, thereby giving the project a strong symbolic and educational dimension..

No significant bureaucratic obstacles emerged during the assignment, largely due to the strong institutional reputation built by Nonna Roma and Slow Food Roma through previous collaborations with the municipality. The asset did not suffer threats or vandalism, and precautionary measures focus mainly on constant supervision rather than security concerns.

The local community's response has been **largely positive**. Initial awareness of the confiscation was limited, as the asset's criminal background had not been made visible. Following the opening of the market and the installation of visible signage, residents showed growing engagement through food, clothing and toy donations. Media coverage was favourable, highlighting the innovative partnership between a food justice organisation and a well-established solidarity network.

The Slow Social Market **supports around 70 families** through a points-based system, integrates social, legal and economic assistance, and offers high-quality food while reducing waste. It has transformed an abandoned property into a recognised civic hub, strengthening solidarity networks, improving neighbourhood liveability and providing an inclusive response to urban poverty where public welfare services are overstretched.

Placido Rizzotto - Libera Terra Cooperative

Asset location	Via Porta Palermo 123, San Giuseppe Jato
Website	https://www.facebook.com/placidorizzottoliberaterra/

The Placido Rizzotto Cooperative, part of the **Libera Terra** project promoted by the association Libera, was established in 2001 following the confiscation of a large number of assets previously owned by **Cosa Nostra**, predominantly linked to the **Brusca family of San Giuseppe Jato**, the **Agrigento family of San Cipirello**, as well as assets confiscated from **Salvatore Riina**, and other mafia families operating in western Sicily. These confiscations stemmed from judicial measures adopted after the conclusion of the Maxi Trial in the early 1990s.

At the time of assignment, the assets – mainly agricultural land, vineyards and olive groves – were in **severely degraded conditions**, having been abandoned for years after confiscation. Significant investments were required to restore productivity, including replanting crops, rehabilitating vineyards and restructuring rural buildings. The cooperative was granted a **30-year free loan agreement**, which enabled long-term planning and capital investment.

Relations with public institutions were generally constructive. The cooperative was created through a **virtuous partnership between Libera, local municipalities and the Prefecture**, and benefitted from access to ethical credit and cooperative funds rather than direct subsidies. Bureaucratic challenges mainly concerned the long transition phase between seizure and final confiscation, during which assets often deteriorated due to lack of care.

While no direct acts of intimidation or physical damage were reported, **initial social resistance and mistrust** from local communities posed a major challenge. Cooperatives were often perceived negatively due to past misuse of public funds in Sicily. Over time, this distrust diminished as the cooperative demonstrated economic sustainability, transparency and respect for labour rights.

Today, the cooperative enjoys **broad local support** and has contributed to job creation, social inclusion (including disadvantaged workers), environmental sustainability through organic farming, and the strengthening of local supply chains. Beyond economic impact, the project delivers strong symbolic and civic value, transforming assets once linked to organised crime into shared resources that foster legality, collective memory and community development.

Semi di Vita

Asset location	Valenzano, Bari and Casamassima
Website	https://www.semidivita.com/

The social cooperative "Semi di vita" manages **28 hectares of land confiscated** from the **Parisi clan**, a major criminal organisation linked to organised crime in Bari. The assets, located in Valenzano, were seized following the 2009 *"Domino"* operation and assigned to the cooperative in 2019.

At the time of allocation, the land was **completely abandoned**, with minimal agricultural use (only a few olive trees) and no productive infrastructure. The cooperative has since transformed it into a **fully operational organic farm**, investing substantial resources.

The project faces ongoing **bureaucratic and institutional challenges**, including uncertainty about concession renewal and limited structural support from public authorities. The cooperative also operates in a context marked by **criminal pressure**, including **theft (tractor, oil) and arson**, resulting in significant economic damage.

The **local community's response** has been mixed. Initial engagement was weak, with limited participation and lingering fear or indifference. However, targeted initiatives (public assemblies, festivals, educational activities) have gradually increased **community involvement and awareness**.

The project's key contribution lies in combining social, environmental, and legal impact: promoting **ethical agriculture, social inclusion, and civic awareness**. It stands as a **symbol of resistance and regeneration**, demonstrating the potential of confiscated assets to foster **community responsibility and a culture of legality**, despite persistent local challenges.

Villa Marcella (San Giusto Canavese)

Asset location	Vicinale Mosa 1, San Giusto Canavese
Website	https://liberapiemonte.it/2021/07/16/villa-marcella-di-levrano-luogo-di-vita-simbolo-di-rinascita/

Villa Marcella is a property confiscated from the **Assisi and Fazzari families**, linked to the **'Ndrangheta**. Although confiscated more than a decade earlier, it was assigned for social reuse only in 2019 to *Anteo Progest*, a social cooperative working on disability services, and has been named after **Marcella Di Levrano**, a young woman who was killed by the Mafia.

At the time of allocation, the villa had been **heavily vandalised** and even targeted by an attempted **gas explosion**, requiring substantial restoration supported by public funding.

The reuse process has faced significant **bureaucratic obstacles**, particularly the lack of **regional accreditation**, which has prevented the activation of its primary function as a residential care service, despite full renovation and authorisation.

No direct threats were reported during management; however, the broader context is characterised by '**omertà' and social discomfort**. The **local community's response** has been largely passive or indifferent, with limited support beyond a few associations and law enforcement.

Despite these constraints, the project has generated a meaningful **social contribution**. The villa hosts **legal education camps, events, and community activities**, keeping the asset active while awaiting accreditation. It represents a symbolic reclaiming of space and promotes **inclusion, legality, and social innovation**, even in a context still marked by silence and resistance.

8.3 Future Perspectives

Strengthening legislation and supporting local communities

Despite the achievements of the Italian model, several critical challenges threaten its effectiveness and sustainability. There is a growing concern that recent policy trends may lead to a gradual weakening of the system of asset confiscation and social reuse, particularly if economic considerations prevail over social objectives.

A first priority is to **consolidate and strengthen the existing legal framework**, ensuring full implementation of the principles established by Law 109/96 and the Anti-Mafia Code. These instruments have proven essential in transforming confiscation into a tool of social justice and collective restitution. In light of the need to align national legislation with EU Directive 2024/1260 by November 2026, this process should be seen as an opportunity to enhance, rather than dilute, the effectiveness of preventive measures. In this perspective, Libera's international campaign "**Hunger for Truth and Justice**" explicitly recognises confiscated assets as a strategic resource for justice, democracy and sustainable development, reinforcing the need to protect and expand their social reuse.

Particular attention must be paid to the risk of **increasing privatisation and commercialisation of confiscated assets**. Expanding the possibility of sale or long-term leasing to private actors may undermine the public and social purpose of these assets, and potentially facilitate their acquisition by individuals linked to criminal networks. The sale of confiscated assets should therefore remain an exceptional measure, carefully regulated and limited to cases where no viable social reuse alternative exists.

Adequate and stable financial support represents another crucial dimension. The *Single Justice Fund (Fondo Unico di Giustizia – FUG)*, established in 2008, centralises significant financial resources derived from seizures and confiscations, amounting to approximately five billion euros. However, only a limited portion of these resources is currently reinvested in social reuse initiatives. Allocating even a small percentage – such as 2% – to these projects would provide a substantial and continuous funding stream, enabling organisations to plan long-term activities and ensure sustainability. This proposal is at the core of the national campaign **Diamo Linfa al Bene** (*Let's Feed the Good*), promoted by Libera, which calls for dedicating at least 2% of the Fund to strengthen more than 1,200 social reuse initiatives across Italy and to reinvest resources taken from organised crime and corruption into community regeneration.

Financial support should address not only the initial refurbishment of properties but also the **start-up and operational phases** of projects. Many initiatives struggle due to insufficient resources during their early stages or lack of continuity in funding. This issue is particularly relevant in Central and Northern Italy, where the number of confiscations has increased significantly in recent years, but where support mechanisms remain less developed compared to southern regions.

In addition to funding, several structural improvements are needed to enhance the overall system. Transparency must be ensured throughout the entire process of confiscation and reuse, through the standardisation of data collection and publication. Public access to clear and comparable information is essential to guarantee accountability and foster citizen engagement.

Institutional capacity should also be strengthened, particularly by reinforcing the role and resources of the National Agency for Seized and Confiscated Assets. At the same time, greater investment is needed in the **training of public administration staff**, in order to improve the technical and managerial skills required to handle complex procedures.

Furthermore, policies should actively support the development of **social and worker cooperatives**, especially in relation to confiscated businesses. These entities can ensure the continuity of economic activities, safeguard employment, and contribute to local economic resilience.

Finally, it is essential to reaffirm a strategic vision in which the social reuse of confiscated assets is recognised as a **core public policy for territorial development**. Beyond their economic value, these assets represent a collective resource with strong symbolic and educational significance. Reinvesting them in communities contributes to rebuilding trust, promoting inclusion, and fostering democratic participation.

In this sense, the reuse of confiscated assets should be understood not only as a technical or administrative process, but as a broader policy aimed at countering the territorial power of organised crime. By transforming spaces once controlled by criminal organisations into places of community life, institutions and civil society can create tangible pathways towards social justice, mutualism, and sustainable development.

9. CONCLUSIONS:

Claims, Recommendations and Policy Proposals

The mapping carried out within the RESTART project highlights a shared European trajectory in the field of social reuse of confiscated, abandoned, and unused assets: despite significant national differences in legal frameworks, institutional capacity, and historical experience, all partner countries converge on the recognition that social reuse can act as a **powerful tool for community regeneration, democratic participation, and resilience against organised crime**.

Across the cases analysed, several common priorities emerge. First, the need for **more stable and long-term funding mechanisms**, capable of ensuring the sustainability of initiatives beyond short-term project cycles. Second, the importance of **clear legal frameworks and secure property arrangements**, which allow civil society organisations to invest in the long-term development of assets without uncertainty. Third, the necessity of **stronger coordination between public institutions and civil society actors**, both in the assignment and in the management phases, in order to unlock the full social value of these assets. Finally, all partners emphasise the strategic role of **local communities and young people**, whose active involvement transforms reuse practices into genuine processes of social innovation and territorial cohesion.

At the same time, the report underlines how, in many national contexts, the social reuse of confiscated assets is still treated as an exceptional or experimental practice, rather than as a fully recognised public policy. This results in fragmented approaches, administrative obstacles, and, in some cases, the continued prevalence of asset liquidation or privatisation over social allocation.

In this regard, the adoption of **Directive (EU) 2024/1260 on asset recovery and confiscation** represents a significant window of opportunity for all Member States. By strengthening confiscation tools, including forms of non-conviction-based confiscation, expanding the scope of recoverable assets (including those held indirectly or in digital form), and promoting **the use of confiscated property for social or public interest purposes**, the Directive establishes a more ambitious and coherent European framework. It also encourages greater coordination among Asset Recovery Offices and reinforces investigative capacities, addressing long-standing structural weaknesses in cross-border cooperation.

Crucially, the Directive introduces and legitimises at European level a principle already well established in some national experiences, notably in Italy: that confiscated assets should be **returned to the community as a form of social restitution**. In this sense, it has been described as a potential "European Rognoni–La Torre law", capable of harmonising national systems while promoting a shift from purely economic recovery towards broader social impact.

However, as this mapping clearly shows, the transformative potential of the Directive will depend on its **effective implementation by Member States**, with the transposition deadline set for November 2026. This will require not only legislative adjustments, but also concrete policy choices: prioritising social reuse over privatisation, allocating dedicated financial resources, strengthening institutional capacity, and establishing transparent and accessible procedures for civil society participation.

Looking ahead, the RESTART experience suggests that the combination of **European regulatory pressure ('top-down') and civil society mobilisation ('bottom-up')** will be decisive in shaping the future of social reuse in Europe. Where these two dimensions are effectively aligned, confiscated assets can move beyond their legal function and become **drivers of social justice, community empowerment, and sustainable development**. Conversely, without such alignment, there is a risk that valuable public resources will remain underutilised or disconnected from the needs of local communities.

In conclusion, the social reuse of confiscated assets emerges from this report not only as a technical or administrative practice, but as a **strategic policy field at the intersection of justice, social inclusion, and territorial development**. The coming years, and in particular the implementation phase of Directive (EU) 2024/1260, will be crucial in determining whether this potential can be translated into a coherent and effective European model.

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Belgian Antimafia: Steps Towards Awareness - BASTA! asbl

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