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Legislation of Organised Crime and the Organisational Framework and Opportunities for Countering Criminal Organisations in Hungary

Doctoral Dissertation Theses

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Budapest, 2020
I. Key research aims and summary of the research

The expansion and cross-border nature of organised crime dealt with by several disciplines present significant challenges to the legislator, to those applying the law and to researchers. This dissertation explores the current issues raised by organised crime from substantive and procedural criminal law standpoints, and from the perspectives of criminal justice, criminology, forensic science – including crime statistics and criminal strategy –, comparative law and legal history. The research was primarily aimed at revealing if combating organised crime is effective and what measures should be taken to increase its effectiveness and, furthermore, if substantive criminal law in force is suitable for the method known as dual approach, which involves both criminal associations and criminal organisations, for bringing criminal group members to justice.

The research was set out to complete the following tasks:
– Definition of the concept of organised crime and clarification of the conceptual system.
– Analysis and comparison of international legal instruments for organised crime and the criminal law responses of Hungary and the surrounding states to organised crime.
– Categorisation and investigation of the structure of organised criminal groups.
– Analysis of strategies and investigative tools to eradicate organised crime.
– Statistical analysis of organised crime.
– Analysis of the evolution of substantive criminal law and the procedural tools to combat organised crime (covert tools, witness protection, undercover operatives, sequestration / asset recovery and agreements with offenders).
– Presentation of the organised crime-related tasks of bodies participating in the fight against organised crime and classification of such bodies according to various criteria.
– Analysis of the judicial practice related to the committing of crimes in a criminal organisation (evidence for establishing the commission of crimes in a criminal organisation, sentencing, etc.).

II. Research methods and description of investigations and analyses

The methodology was related to the above-defined research tasks, with the points of reference being either the foreign or Hungarian literature or, in other cases, judicial decisions, legislation and organisational regulatory instruments.

The author participated in several internship programmes over the course of five years with research being conducted at the Curia, the Rapid Response Police at the Hungarian Bureau of Investigation and the National Protective Service.

Also, much effort has been made to obtain judicial decisions over nearly 15 years related to the commission of crimes in criminal organisations, and to analyse and evaluate these decisions based on criteria created by the author. A compilation was created to show what type of evidence can serve to establish commission in a criminal organisation, sentencing practice was examined and the flagship cases of organised crime were reviewed.
The legislative provisions related to organised crime were examined from the perspectives of legal history and comparative law; furthermore, the stages of crimes pertaining to criminal organisations and the offenders were analysed. The investigations and analyses carried out are presented below when detailing the tasks determined by the author.

III. Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation comprises four parts. Part One, entitled ‘The basis for combating organised crime’ contains the following sections: The definition of organised crime and its conceptual system; international legal instruments and the substantive criminal law responses of surrounding states related to organised crime; the categorisation and structure of organised crime groups; strategies aimed at eradicating organised crime and the presentation of investigative tools; and organised crime statistics. Part Two contains the substantive and procedural legal regulation of organised crime and Part Three encompasses the organisational structure for combating organised crime. Part Four presents the judicial practice of establishing the commission of a crime as part of a criminal organisation through the lens of specific criminal organisation ‘types’ and flagship cases.

IV. Detailed presentation of the methods used during the completion of specific tasks, investigations, analyses and research findings, and potential for further use

Defining the concept of organised crime and clarification of the conceptual system.

According to Michael LEVI, a professor at Cardiff University, organised crime is similar to a psychiatrist’s Rorschach test, the strength of which is also its greatest weakness: almost anything can be deciphered from it.¹ What constitutes organised crime? The answer depends on who reflects on the question, since everybody has their own perception and opinion about organised crime.

The definition may serve as a basis for the responses of positive law to organised crime and it can also be a point of reference in the course of establishing strategies related to organised crime. How can anything be combated if conceptual clarity is lacking, i. e. if the nature of a phenomenon is not precisely clarified?

Numerous researchers have dealt with the topic of organised crime; however, there are serious contradictions between researchers and law enforcement professionals in connection with the definition of organised crime. Despite the above, the author has attempted to classify the conceptual definitions of organised crime based on foreign studies, specialist publications and Hungarian professional articles. The first category includes criminological definitions, divided into foreign and Hungarian subcategories, while the second category involves the definitions of certain organisations related to organised crime.

Applying a descriptive and synthesising method during the research, the author examined the standpoints taken by ALBANESE, CRESSEY, ALBINI, FINCKENAUER, MALTZ, ABADINSKY, Endre BÓCZ, Ágnes CZINE, Valér DÁNOS, László KORINEK, Mihály TÓTH and Péter BÁRÁNDY in connection with the definition of the notion of organised crime and the definitions created by governments and states (e.g. the definitions approved by the Department of Justice of the United States of America, the FBI, Interpol, the BKA and the CRI).

As a cross-over between organised crime and similar phenomena (international crime, cross-border organised crime, white-collar crimes, professional crimes, etc.), the conceptual definition of organised crime presents us with a fundamental problem; therefore, an attempt was made by the author to delimit and analyse the concepts pertaining to organised crime (e.g. organised criminal group, criminal organisation, mafia and gang).

The following can be concluded with regard to the definition of the concept:
– Organised crime is an abstract and multi-faceted phenomenon with no universal definition in existence.
– Organised crime is in constant evolution; therefore, any temporal or spatial definitions are impossible.
– Organised crime is not a criminal law category, but criminal law must reflect on this phenomenon.
– The term ‘mafia’ is to be avoided in forums on organised crime. Instead the terms ‘organised criminal group’ or ‘criminal organisation’ should be used.
– The basic form of organised crime manifests in the existence of a criminal organisation or criminal association organised for an extended period of time and comprising at least three members.

The question arises as to whether organised crime as interpreted by criminology only comprises the substantive criminal law notion of criminal organisation or whether criminal association can also be included in this category. In the author’s view, the idea in which organised crime is identified with the acts and activities only of criminal organisations is erroneous. In a broader sense, organised crime includes crimes committed in a criminal association organised for an extended period and comprising a minimum of three perpetrators. The number of members in a criminal association is set at three persons because a group can be defined to include at least three members. In regard to crimes committed in an organised manner, a thorough deliberation is required when establishing and delimiting criminal association and criminal organisations.

The section of this dissertation on the definition of the concept and the clarification of the conceptual structure of organised crime can be utilised by criminologists, university students and non-professionals with an interest in defining organised crime.

Analysis and comparison of international legal instruments for organised crime and the criminal law responses of Hungary and surrounding states to organised crime.

This research could not be complete without elaborating on the international legal instruments and documents related to organised crime; therefore, the Palermo Convention, action plan, common position and framework decision related to organised crime as well as other documents adopted by EU bodies, including reports, resolutions and communications, related to organised crime were reviewed. Moreover, there was justification for an analysis into how similar or different are the substantive criminal law responses of Hungary and surrounding states to organised crime.

Descriptive and comparative methods were used during the analysis of international legal instruments related to organised crime, while descriptive, analytical and comparative methods were used for studying the substantive criminal law responses of Hungary and surrounding states to organised crime.

The developmental path of the international fight against organised crime can be illustrated as follows: Firstly, the necessity of such a fight was recognised; this need then generated the conceptual definition of criminal organisations, since it was necessary to define what should be fought against. Subsequently, the concepts to be used for at least weakening, if not eradicating, the positions of criminal organisations were elaborated. Following the
creation of a legislative framework, priorities were designated for measures to make combating criminal organisations even more effective. It became important to train police officers dealing with organised crime and develop international cooperation, as well as to recognise the fact that the most effective tool in the authorities’ arsenal is to deprive a criminal organisation of its driving force: its financial assets.

The author examined the substantive criminal law notions of surrounding states regarding organised criminal groups and the specific crimes (e.g. Participation in a criminal organisation, Creating, controlling and supporting a criminal group, Gangsterism, Association for committing a crime, etc.).

There exists a dual category approach in Hungary (criminal association/criminal organisation), Austria (criminal association/criminal organisation), Slovakia (organised group/criminal group), Ukraine (organised group/criminal organisation) and Slovenia (criminal association/criminal organisation) towards responses provided by substantive criminal law for organised crime, while in other countries examined by the author there is only a single category or concept of organised crime.

Criminal law in the states studied in the research sets forth at least one special crime for organised crime, with the most common criminal behaviours being: participation, creation, support and affiliation. The Austrian legislation is deemed anomalous in the sense that it criminalises participation in both criminal associations and criminal organisations.

In the author’s view, codifiers can benefit from the section of this dissertation related to the study of international legal instruments for organised crime and the criminal law responses of Hungary and surrounding states to organised crime in the case of an eventual Criminal Code amendment, because the findings of the research can serve as valid points of reference for such an amendment.

Categorisation of organised criminal groups and study of their structures.

The reader of this dissertation may wonder why a study examining the types and structures of organised criminal groups is needed. According to LE, it is of key importance in the course of weakening criminal gang activities to better understand the structure and operations of organised criminal groups.²

The typology pertaining to organised crime is divided into three groups: The first group comprises the organised criminal group model which places emphasis on the structure and operation of such a group. The second group model focuses on the activities of organised criminal groups, while the third model includes the social, cultural and historical conditions that facilitate organised criminal activities.³

Descriptive and analytical methods were used in the sections of this dissertation which are related to the types of criminal groups and their structures.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime conducted a survey⁴ on the structure, number of members, cross-border operations, violence, corruption, identity, political impact and intrusion into lawful economic activities of organised criminal groups. The UNODC issued a report in 2002 on the study of 40 criminal organisations in 16 countries. This report created the 5 models of organised crime: the standard hierarchy, the regional hierarchy, the clustered hierarchy, the core group and the criminal network model.

³ Id.
In the author’s view, the above models serve as the basis for the typology and structural study of organised criminal groups.

Few of the studied criminal organisations – including groups that harm national budgets, human trafficking groups, drugs trafficking and producing groups, groups that commit non-violent crimes against property, and groups that commit violent crimes – can be classified as a standard hierarchy, the majority being more loosely organised groups corresponding to the core group or criminal network.

A typology is useful, since law enforcement should apply different strategies to different varieties of organised criminal groups; moreover, a typology serves as a point of reference for determining the trends of organised crime.

**Analysis of strategies and investigative tools for eradicating organised crime.**

The nature and characteristics of organised crime require complex and multi-faceted solutions and methods. Since organised crime came into existence, state authorities and researchers have been intrigued by what instruments and strategies it is worth applying in order to reduce the room for manoeuvre of organised crime. The extent to which strategies against organised crime are established depends on the given period of time and country, with a spectrum ranging from general to detailed strategies.

Strategies and investigative tools are listed together because the cross-over between them is evident, i.e. the above categories cannot be clearly divided. Some authors refer to a given concept as a strategy against organised crime, while others see it as an investigative tool.

Descriptive, analytical and comparative methods have been applied by this author in relation to strategies and investigative tools.

Many authors have stressed the importance of a more proactive and intelligence-based approach to organised crime. The number of strategies shows a high variation, with certain authors mentioning only a few strategies, while the Canadian researchers list nearly twenty of them.

The author has synthesised the revealed strategies and determined that strategies related to organised crime consist of static and dynamic elements.

The static elements, the basis for combating organised crime, are:
1. Creation of a suitable legislative context (substantive and procedural criminal law rules, etc.)
2. Provision of resources: a) Provision of technical resources
   b) Provision of human resources

The dynamic elements are:
1. Criminal prosecution; use of investigation teams
2. Asset forfeiture (sequestration, confiscation, financial investigation)
3. Administrative approaches – administrative decisions (e.g. withdrawal of permits, tightening of authorisation procedures), reward notification, signalisation, legal/physical border closures, etc.

The section of the dissertation on strategies and investigative tools connected with organised crime can be used by security policy professionals and investigative authorities during their work.

**Statistical analysis of organised crime.**

The question of the extent of organised crime in a given country may be raised in numerous forums. It is extremely difficult to establish the proportion of all crime that is represented by organised crime; however, the “measurement” of organised crime is
unavoidable when discussing it or when analysing the organised crime situation in a country. One of the sources for determining the volume of organised crime is crime statistics; therefore, a statistical analysis was a goal of this dissertation.

Research was conducted to determine the changes in the numbers of registered criminal offenders, registered offenders committing crimes as part of criminal associations and registered offenders committing crimes as part of criminal organisations in the period from 1998 to 2017. Further research was conducted on gender, nationality, criminal record and age group of registered offenders committing crimes as part of criminal organisations.

The number of defendants committing crimes as part of criminal organisations cannot be established based on court statistics. Since committing a crime as part of a criminal organisation is not an aggravating circumstance, the statistics form (individual statistical form on criminal proceedings against an adult defendant that ended in a final judgement) does not include any reference to criminal organisations.

Through studying the 20-year period, it can be established that the number of registered criminal offenders is decreasing, while the number of registered offenders committing a crime as part of a criminal association or criminal organisation shows an upward trend. Between 0.1 and 4.3 out of 1,000 registered offenders committed their crime as part of a criminal organisation.

Registered offenders committing a crime as part of a criminal organisation in the period from 2010 to 2017 were:
- $84.8\%$ male and $15.2\%$ female;
- $87\%$ of Hungarian citizenship;
- $20.3\%$ with a criminal record;
- $21\%$ belonging to the age group of 35 to 39 years old.

It must be stressed that the above conclusions are based on ENyÜBS (unified investigative authority and public prosecutor statistics) data. Changing of the court statistical system may be justified and expedient in order to show it in the record if the commission of a crime by a convicted defendant occurred as part of a criminal organisation.

The section of the dissertation on crime statistics may be used as a point of reference for further research and analysis by criminologists, security policy and crime analyst professionals.

Analysis of the evolution of substantive criminal law and the procedural tools to combat organised crime (covert tools, witness protection, undercover operatives, sequestration / asset recovery and agreements with offenders).

The definition of organised crime is subject to discussion, with criminologists, sociologists and law enforcers having different views; however, everyone should agree that the key to successfully combating organised criminal groups lies in defining the forms in which organised crime manifests itself in substantive criminal law.

During the research, the author examined how special substantive criminal legislation on organised crime changed and developed in Hungary from the perspectives of legal history and comparative law.

The question may be posed of what belongs to the criminal law toolbox for fighting against organised crime. Appended here is criminal association as an aggravating circumstance, participation in a criminal organisation as a sentencing criterion, the criminal law provision for participation in a criminal organisation in the specific section of the Criminal Code, and two legal institutions, a criminal law measure and a specific code section crime, which can be effectively applied to eradicate and weaken organised criminal groups. Confiscation is significant in depriving organised crime of its financial basis, while witness
protection can be regarded as instrument of substantive law against coercion during procedures by authorities.

Special regulation of criminal law relating to organised crime began in 1997, with several stages of change until the legislation in force today was created. The changes in the definition of the criminal organisation are included in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in the definition of criminal organisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between 15 September 1997 and 28 February 1999</td>
<td>Criminal associations with division of labour created to continuously commit crimes and aimed at generating regular profits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1 March 1999 and 31 March 2002</td>
<td>Criminal associations created to continuously commit crimes, which are based on the division of tasks, a system of hierarchy and personal contacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1 April 2002 and 9 July 2019</td>
<td>A group of three or more persons acting in concert, organised for an extended period of time and aimed at committing intentional crimes that are punishable by imprisonment of at least five years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between 10 July 2019 and today</td>
<td>A group of three or more persons acting conspiratorially in concert, organised hierarchically for an extended period of time and aimed at committing intentional crimes that are punishable by imprisonment of at least five years.</td>
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The concept of the criminal organisation remained unchanged for nearly two decades; however, in 2019, the elements of hierarchy and conspiratorial nature were included in the definition. The above decision on criminal policy, which can be both supported and criticised at the same time, has resulted in the reduction in the severity of organised crime announced in the early 2000s.

In addition to outlining an overview of the Hungarian substantive criminal legislation related to organised crime, the author also took stock of the procedural instruments for combating organised crime (hidden devices, witness protection, undercover operatives, sequestration / recovery of assets, agreements with offenders), since there was a reason to examine whether any adequate procedural instruments were available to law enforcement authorities.

Mihály TÓTH listed covert data and information gathering, agreements with offenders, the use of undercover operatives and provisions pertaining to witness protection within the procedural instruments for combating organised crime.\(^5\) With the new Criminal Procedure Act’s entry into force, the regulation of covert data gathering was amended such that the use of hidden devices replaced covert data and information gathering in the list of the above instruments.

The author also includes sequestration and recovery of assets in the procedural toolbox for combating organised crime, since one of the most efficient instruments against organised criminal groups is the forfeiture of assets obtained through illicit means.

During research, the author used a descriptive method when presenting procedural instruments, with emphasis placed, due to constraints of length, on instruments related to the forfeiture of assets obtained through illicit means and agreements with offenders (prospect of avoiding criminal prosecution, not reporting the crime and termination of proceedings subject to the accused’s cooperation with the authorities). A successful, legally binding forfeiture of assets, especially in relation to organised crime, presupposes sequestration carried out during the investigation, the key to which lies in successfully discovering such assets. At the end of the court stage of criminal proceedings, the

accused – especially those tied to organised crime – do not normally possess any assets that can be forfeited; therefore, the tasks of asset search and asset investigation by law enforcement agencies and asset recovery activities carried out through seizure, are indispensable.

Any person collaborating with the authorities can play a significant role in both uncovering crimes and providing evidence for them; therefore, the state must provide immunity in certain circumstances, especially in the case of organised crime. Confessions by the cooperating accused are rare in the procedures examined in this research; however, suspects collaborating with the authorities play a considerable role in the vast majority of the flagship cases related to organised crime.

The instruments for combating organised crime have gone through enormous development in the past three decades. The above-mentioned instruments make up integrated unit; in other words, the opportunities to successfully combat organised crime are emerging from a mosaic of procedural instruments and legal institutions.

The section of this document on the toolboxes of substantive and procedural criminal law to combat organised crime can be useful for codifiers; moreover, it may serve as educational material in training on organised crime.

Discussion of the organised crime-related tasks of bodies participating in the fight against organised crime and classification of such bodies according to various criteria.

The provision of resources is manifested in the organisational structure and the cohesion of specific bodies. In the same way as substantive and procedural legal instruments, the individual entities complement each other in the matrix of fighting against organised crime. The author believed it worthwhile to study the tasks of each entity related to organised crime, and to classify these bodies with an emphasis on legislation and organisational regulatory instruments.

Descriptive, analytical and comparative methods were used when examining the different entities.

The entities can be classified in a variety of ways from the perspective of organised crime. The basis for the classification may be:

– the directness of the relationship with organised crime, i.e. whether the specific entity comes into direct or indirect contact with organised crime;

– whether the entity is primary or supportive, i.e. whether the organisation in question carries out its primary tasks with a view to eradicating organised criminal groups (e.g. by conducting investigations), or it provides support for the entities carrying out the primary functions;

– how indispensable the entity is in the fight against organised crime, i.e. whether the fight against organised criminal groups can be successful without the entity in question or not; and

– the classification of the entities by branch of government.

In Hungary, the volume and structure of organised crime does not justify the creation of special public prosecutor’s offices or courts conducting procedures related to crimes committed exclusively as part of a criminal organisation.

Education related to organised crime and the design of strategies to eradicate organised crime can benefit from the section of this document on the organisational framework.
Analysis of judicial practice relating to crimes committed as part of a criminal organisation (evidence for establishing the commission of crimes as part of a criminal organisation, sentencing, etc.).

Court decisions serve as a primary source for researching organised crime. It is essential to study legal practice on the committing of crimes as part of a criminal organisation, since it provides feedback for law enforcement authorities, and the analysis and study of the structures and scopes of activities of criminal organisations becomes available based on final judgments.

On the basis of additional court judgments obtained, the author examined sentencing practice – including the degree of the sentence and the degree of imprisonment –, the stages of crimes, offenders and the evidence for commission of crimes as part of a criminal organisation.

It can be established that, in the evidence of crimes pertaining to criminal organisations, witness testimony, search and confiscation warrants, minutes, confession of the accused, material evidence and forensic expert opinions are most commonly used. It is worth noting that in the evidence relating to the existence of a criminal organisation, the findings of covert information gathering (TIGY) / covert data gathering (TASZ) and the confession of the accused should be highlighted, since they help reconstruct the facts necessary for determining the commission of a crime as part of a criminal organisation.

The minimum sentence imposed was 8 months imprisonment, the maximum penalty was a life sentence in a high security prison, and the average period of imprisonment was 5 years for those sentenced for committing a crime as part of a criminal organisation.

The author has established the following order for the severity of sentencing (from the most severe to the least severe sentence): Crimes related to violent criminal organisations, Crimes related to non-violent criminal organisations targeting property, Crimes related to criminal organisations dealing in drugs, Crimes related to criminal organisations engaging in human trafficking and Crimes related to criminal organisations that harm the national budget.

Among the cases studied by the author, a final judgment was made for committing a crime as part of a criminal organisation in the cases of 420 offenders. They committed a total of 2,826 crimes (6.7 per accused on average), with most of the crimes being in the completed stage (92.2% completed; 3.9% attempted; 3.9% in preparation). As for the degrees of involvement, commission as an accessory is the most prevalent (41.2% accessories; 26.2% accomplices; 24.6% sole offenders; 8% abettors with an indirect degree of involvement being an infinitesimal 0.03%).

Trial court and appellate courts took differing views in many cases in terms of establishing the commission of a crime as part of a criminal organisation. The opposing decisions were studied from a dual perspective: The first being a general establishment of commission of a crime as part of a criminal organisation (at the level of criminal proceedings) and the second being a detailed study (at the level of the accused). The above distinction is justified because a more accurate situational picture can be established based on the detailed study, since in some cases, it may happen that both the trial and the appellate court agree on the issue of criminal organisation, i.e. they either establish or reject the committing of a crime as part of a criminal organisation, but in the case of some accused defendants, the two courts still differ from each other in their views. For instance, trial courts generally rule to establish the commission of a crime as part of a criminal organisation in the case of five accused persons, while the appellate courts do so in the case of six defendants.

The central issue of the general (level of criminal proceedings) study is whether there is a difference in establishing the committing of a crime as part of a criminal organisation between trial court and the appellate court practice.
The following conclusions can be drawn based on studying opposing decisions at the general (criminal procedural) and the detailed (accused) levels.

According to the general (criminal procedural) level study, judicial practice regarding criminal organisations is more unified in the case of criminal organisations engaging in human trafficking, while it is more dispersed in relation to violent criminal organisations. According to the detailed (accused) level study, a uniformity regarding criminal organisations engaging in human trafficking can be perceived; however, a division is characteristic of non-violent criminal organisations targeting property.

It can be concluded that the vast majority of opposing decisions were made in the jurisdiction of the Budapest Regional Court of Appeal, while the greatest degree of uniformity was shown by the Debrecen Regional Court of Appeal.

Based on the detailed (accused) level study, it was concluded that 34.3% of accused persons were issued an opposing sentence with regard to criminal organisations.

It cannot be stated categorically that judicial practice is not uniform; therefore, the above conclusions require clarification: judicial practice regarding criminal organisations is not completely uniform. In the author’s view, however, the lack of complete uniformity on established the commission of a crime as part of a criminal organisation is not to such a degree as to endanger legal certainty. The author takes the view that establishing or rejecting the commission of a crime as part of a criminal organisation poses no difficulty in assessing additional concepts and technical terms in substantive criminal law (e.g. voluntary commission of a crime, causing significant injury) or delimiting specific crimes (e.g. attempted murder vs. aggravated assault, or murder vs. manslaughter).

The section of this document on judicial practice related to the commission of a crime as part of a criminal organisation can be used by law enforcers and, as for flagship cases, as educational material in training on organised crime.

V. List of publications relevant to the topic

10. A White-Collar Criminal Organisation – the Zuschlag Case. (Under publication)
11. Bűnszervezet újratölve – Néhány gondolat a hierarchikus szervezettség és konspiratív működés követelményéről (Under publication)