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Summary

Project number 2673
Report title The administrative approach on organized crime. A study on the progress in 2012 (Bestuurlijke aanpak georganiseerde criminaliteit. Onderzoek naar de stand van zaken in 2012).

The study was commissioned by the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC), Ministry of Security and Justice in The Hague.

A printed copy of the full report can be ordered from Arena Consulting or Pro Facto. The digital version can be downloaded from the websites of the WODC, Arena Consulting and Pro Facto.

*Arena Consulting Group BV
Diepenveenseweg 152
7413 AV Deventer*

*Pro Facto BV
Ossenmarkt 5
9712 NZ Groningen*

*E: info@arenaconsulting.nl
I: www.arenaconsulting.nl*

*E: profacto@pro-facto.nl
I: www.pro-facto.nl*

Following previous studies in 2009 and 2012, this report contains the state of affairs and development in the administrative approach to organized crime in 2016. The research question was fourfold:

1. In 2016, what was the state of affairs concerning the administrative approach?
2. What are the main differences between 2012 and 2016?
3. How do municipalities appreciate the cooperation in RIECs context?
4. What conclusions can be drawn from this / from the previous questions?

The research was conducted by means of a digital survey of the municipal heads or coordinators of public order and safety and a series of talks and workshops. In total, 69% of municipalities completed the questionnaire in whole or in part. The findings of the study are summarized as follows.

Status quo and development since 2012

Based on the digital survey the situation in 2016 and the shifts in perceptions of respondents compared to 2012 are summarized as follows:

Awareness and Visibility: The awareness of the presence of organized crime is widely spread (97%). The insight into specific crime has been increased from 55% to 75%. Municipalities have very mixed insights into the geographical scale on which different types of crime are present. They have the best insight into the geographical scale of cannabis cultivation and OMG's. However, municipalities have little insight into the geographical scale of human trafficking (33%), property abuse (31%) and money laundering (29%). 36% of respondents claim that organized crime is more or less structurally present in the municipality and 57% of them also see the impact of it on society: decay, a sense of unsafety and undermining. The latter is a change compared to 2012.

Administrative embedding: All respondents but one, acknowledge that the municipality has a role in tackling organized crime; 89% has a formal policy to fill in that role. The goal of the approach is broad, in which according to respondents the countering of undermining is of particular concern. In terms of content, the priority for most municipalities is the tackling of cannabis cultivation and OMG's. The latter is a change compared to 2012.

Organizational embedding: The number of municipalities with a more or less well-defined working structure for the approach doubled compared to 2012 (from 35% to 71%). The available capacity has also increased from an average of about 0.5 FTE to 1.4 FTE. However, the organization remains fragile. Especially in smaller municipalities. Evaluations (17%) and peer evaluation (33%) are limitedly deployed. Information exchange usually takes place on demand (64%) and there are few facilities for the digital exchange of information (23%).

Collaboration: The collaboration between the partners has been intensified since 2012. Municipalities mostly have intensive contact with the police (82%), other municipalities (64%), the RIECs (87%) and partly with the tax department (38%) and the district attorney (52%). Information exchange is usually done upon request and not actively (64%). For the municipalities, the main sources of information are the police (82%), the own organization (78%) and the RIECs (74%). Digital provisions for the exchange of information are limited (23%).

Implementation Strategy: Municipalities differ in how they implement the approach: actively carrying out an own program (24%), actively monitoring developments and acting accordingly (19%), signaling for partners (34%), focusing on addressing undesirable excesses and incidents (12%), a using beep-system (9%) and other (2%). The most determining factors for the implementation strategy are the vision of the mayor (19%), knowledge and expertise of the organization (30%) and previous experience with incidents

and visible effects of crime (28%). The tools that municipalities have are considered (fairly) effective by 90% of respondents.

Effectiveness: There are hesitations on whether the approach is also effective on a policy-level, i.e. are the underlying ambitions such as countering undermining realized? Only about one-third of the respondents indicated that there is something structurally achieved with the approach. Only on the aspect of preventing unintentional facilitating of criminals, 47% is positive about the effects of the approach.

Appreciation of the cooperation with (the) RIECs

The digital survey gives the following impression of the appreciation for the cooperation with (the) RIECs.

Familiarity and general impression: Almost all municipalities (95%) say they are very familiar with the plans of the RIECs. 66% characterizes the RIECs as a partnership as well as a facility office. The other municipalities see the RIEC either as partnership (25%) or as a facility office (9%).

Valuation of the RIEC-organization: Overall capacity and expertise of the (office facility) RIECs is appreciated highly. Compared to 2012 there is an increase in the appreciation of the capacity (from 58% to 77%) and knowledge of issues (from 69% to 82%), information-analysis (from 67% to 78%) and legal matters (64 % to 79%).

Valuation of methods, products and information: Overall, the methods of the RIECs are valued positively, similar to 2012. Most of the positive appreciation is for the co-orientation (89%), accessibility (89%) and customer service (79%). The least of the positive appreciation is for paying attention to local development and situation (55%). The valuation of responsiveness has decreased (from 68% to 58%).

Valuation of added value: compared to the response of 2012, the added value of the RIECs decreased according to the respondents. This applies in particular to the approach to environmental crime (from 45% to 20%), money laundering (from 65% to 49%), abuse of property (from 60% to 38%) and human trafficking (from 62% to 44%). An exception is the approach to OMG's (from 64% to 67%). This is possibly due to the fact that municipalities have accumulated more knowledge and experience.

Conclusions

Based on the digital survey and reflections thereon, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The general awareness of the presence of organized crime is high but an overall sense of urgency (and active attitude of local authorities) is not yet present.

2. The approach should be considered an integrated approach, instead of being considered a separate administrative approach. The local or regional triangle of the mayor, the police and the district attorney should primarily be in charge.
3. Municipalities see the fight against organized crime not as a separate task, but as part of a wider social problem and as a public task.
4. The local organization for the approach has been strengthened since 2012, but the embedding is still fragile. Especially in smaller municipalities.
5. Cooperation has greatly intensified since 2012 and gets more direction. While the RIECs are developing more profile, they are also in part still searching for their role and position. This makes for a developmental task to consolidate RIECs cooperation.
6. It is still unclear what the factual effect of the approach is. The impressions differ. The direct effect of a single action - such as closing a building - is widely recognized. The policy-effect - does the approach help in decreasing organized crime? - is less clear.
7. In a potential forth measurement (i.e. 2020), in addition to the digital questionnaire it is advisable to focus more on in-depth research on case-level and the involvement of local administrators as respondents.