

# Empirical Study on the Perception of Organized Crime in Romania

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**Abstract.** The forms of manifestation of organized crime are threats that affect any society, the most vulnerable being the democracies in the process of formation. Concerning national security is the strategic context in which these non-traditional threats take place [1]. Internally, the new democracies are facing a series of changes: the transition from a totalitarian regime to a democratic regime, from a centralized economy to a market economy. Most strategic documents drawn up and adopted in developed countries to prevent and combat crime have as a priority the fulfillment of four major objectives: anticipation, prevention, deterrence and response. The aim of the paper is to develop methods for investigating organized crime, in order to develop effective strategies for preventing and combating related crimes. The information was collected between September 2019 and November 2019, being analyzed, processed and interpreted afterwards.

**Keywords:** *Strategy, Crime, Economy, Romania, Globalization.*

**JEL Classification:** *M29; P40*

## 1. Introduction

Romania, as part of the international community, has adopted administrative and legislative measures in the field of defending the freedom and dignity, life and bodily integrity of Romanian citizens and foreigners on national territory, thus entering the global context generated by the measures adopted at international. The prevention and fight against organized crime is carried out in accordance with the main points of the international conventions that refer to the fight against this phenomenon, to which Romania has acceded, respecting the domestic and international laws that refer to human rights.

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The legal provisions related to the technical activities of informing and combating the phenomenon of organized crime refer to the performance [2], for a limited or permanent period, depending on the specifics of the case, on the entire national area subject to threats, of a coherent and versatile set of specific investigative and control activities and technical

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measures on objectives with different destinations, with the main purpose of discovery, with a view to neutralizing all threats.

A special effort has been made to create an appropriate legislative framework, in accordance with the European rules in force [3]. The provisions of the Criminal Code as well as those of the Code of Criminal Procedure are adapted to the requirements of international agreements and are able to create conditions for the effective fight against organized crime, but also for maintaining active cooperation with EU member states in this sector [4].

Trying to compile statistics that refer to the phenomenon of organized crime is still a thorny issue, a controversial topic among researchers; Even the research that had as a starting point the attempt to quantify the phenomenon received strong criticism; EUROPOL's annual reports on organized crime threats do not contain quantifiable measurements.

The methodology for assessing organized crime began to take shape in 2004, when it was decided at European level that a New European Common Approach (NECA) was needed [5], with the focus shifting from criminal groups and their activities to the current operational procedures and methods of gathering information.

## **2. Romania and Organized Crime**

The phenomenon of organized crime is a major threat to national security and state integrity. This reality is proved by the size and complexity of the phenomenon, which affects the official measures, but also the legislation and knowledge of public opinion, being an obstacle to the development of national interests. Attempting to limit and socially control the effects of organized crime requires firm administrative, political and legislative action [6].

Therefore, if the attitude is passive, the manifestations of organized crime will increase, thus becoming a major problem for national security, affecting important areas such as administration, economy, justice and political life; all this resulting in damaging the image of our country internationally.

The design and elaboration of the strategy to fight organized crime on the Romanian territory has as starting point the current stage and the perception of the situation at international and national level, but also the contemporaneity and predictability of threats and dangers regarding state security.

Organized crime is considered to be the main risk factor at the moment, but circumstantially, depending on its future evolution, will be periodically assessed as a threat to national security, in close connection with the effectiveness of the control measures that are established by national security regulations.

The integration of organized crime as a high-risk phenomenon for national security could be reflected in the normative acts that have as main sector of activity national security and would lead to the efficiency of measures taken to eradicate other risk factors that harm national security and integrity.

From another perspective, this would be the signal given by the national authorities to the European, Euro-Atlantic and global institutions, in order to intensify collaborations in the fight against organized crime, which has seen a strong transnational focus due to globalization [7]. At a concrete level, the classification of organized crime as a major risk on state security would result in future proposals of the Supreme Council of National Defense in the form of fundamental directions to prevent and combat the phenomenon.

At the moment, organized crime, as a threat to national security, would confirm at the legislative level a truth already known and perceived, both by society and by the authorities. Moreover, this knowledge could open new approaches to more drastic rules and

offer the possibility of a more active involvement of institutions, but also of citizens, in the fight against organized crime which has a strong impact on the development of the economy and security of citizens [8].

### 3. Case study

The researched community was represented by people from educational, social, legal and economic institutions that come into direct contact with the phenomenon of organized crime.

The researched unit was represented by exponents from both management and execution positions. 20 of the respondents are part of the Directorate for the Investigation of Organized Crime and Terrorism (19.6%), 19 belong to the Media (18.6%), 18 are from the Crime Investigation Department (17.6%), 16 work within the Romanian Intelligence Service (15.7%), 14 work within the Border Police (13.7%), 8 work in Prosecutor's Offices and Justice Courts (7.8%), and the lowest value is registered by respondents who are lawyers (4.9%), i.e. 5 people.

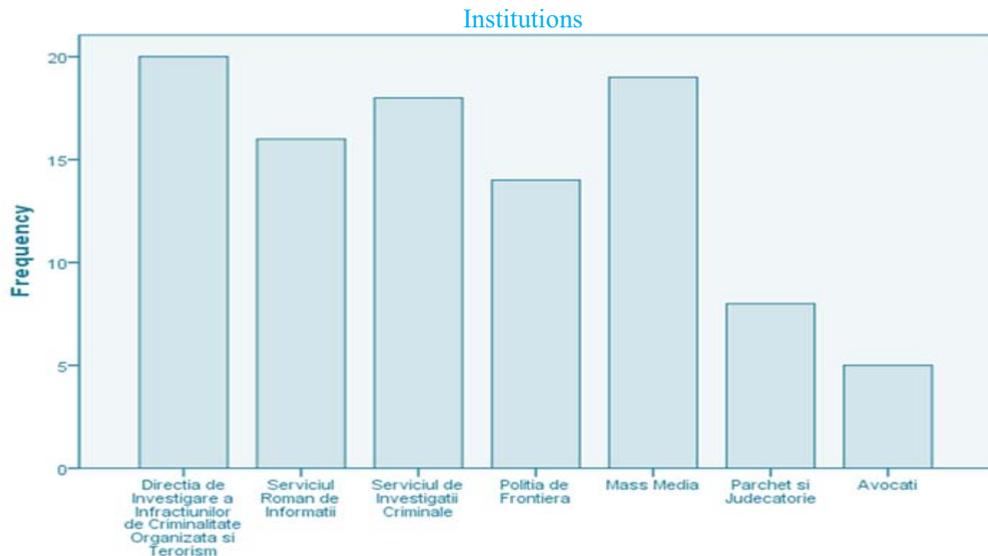


Fig. 1. Developed by the author

The research hypotheses were classified into:

Central hypothesis: The fight against crime is a strategic objective that helps to create a strong and credible image of state institutions and the continuous improvement of the management system.

Derived hypotheses:

- The implementation of proactive measures within the management system is necessary in order to improve the staff within the state institutions;
- Strategies to combat crime are vertically functional, but not horizontally functional;
- Information received by citizens is considered to have a high level of transparency.

The opinion poll on organized crime in Romania was conducted using a questionnaire, which includes 10 items grouped into several categories: - Socio-demographic data;

- Socio-demographic data;
- Perceptions of organized crime;

- Knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding organized crime.

The questionnaire was mostly composed on the basis of closed-ended questions, which had the role of quantifying opinions around indicators concerning organized crime; The questions that had open answers, although difficult to codify, played a major role in gathering additional information, thus consolidating the answers received to the closed questions.

After applying the questionnaires and centralizing the answers, the data were processed and interpreted statistically for each item.

**Item 1 - How familiar are you with the term “organized crime”?**

Analyzing the answers regarding the familiarity of the term *organized crime*, it appears that the respondents who know the term very well are in proportion of 96% and only 4% know the term at a generic level (fig. 2).

*How familiar are you with the term “organized crime”?*

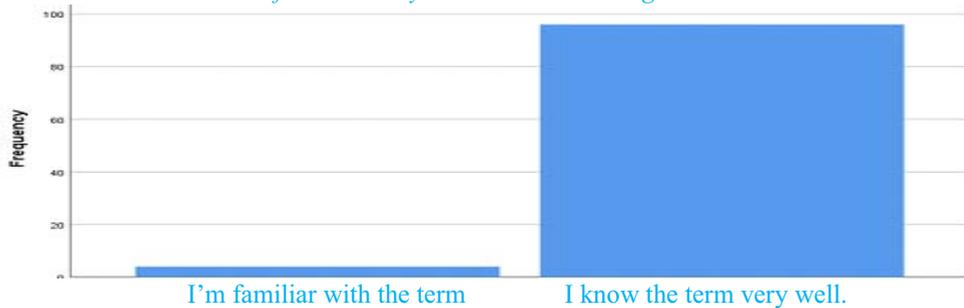


Fig. 2. Developed by the author

**Item 2 - On what channels have you seen or heard awareness campaigns on the effects of organized crime on society?**

The main source of information about on the activities of organized crime is represented by television with 55%, followed by radio with 24%, other sources being the print-based media with 13% and internet with 8% (fig. 3).

The figure below highlights very well the discrepancy between the media sources of information, with most respondents receiving information about organized crime through television networks.

*On what channels have you seen or heard awareness campaigns on the effects of organized crime on society?*

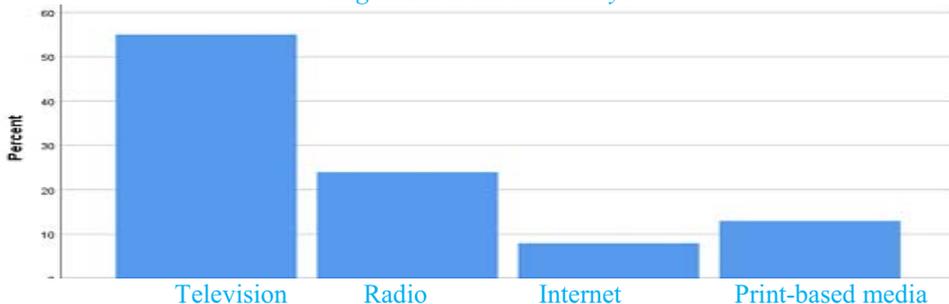
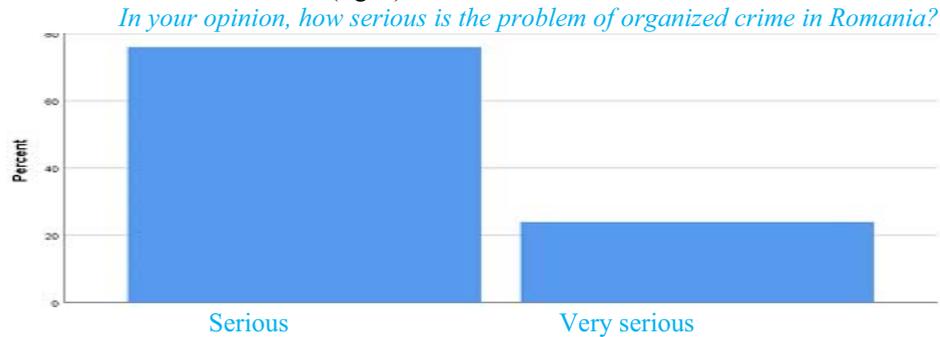


Fig. 3. Developed by the author

**Item 3 - In your opinion, how serious is the problem of organized crime in Romania?**

Following the analysis of the answers given by the respondents, it emerged that 24% of the respondents consider that this is a very serious issue, and those who consider that it is only a serious problem have a percentage of 76%.

More than half of the respondents of this question consider that the problem of crime in Romania is a serious issue. (fig. 4).

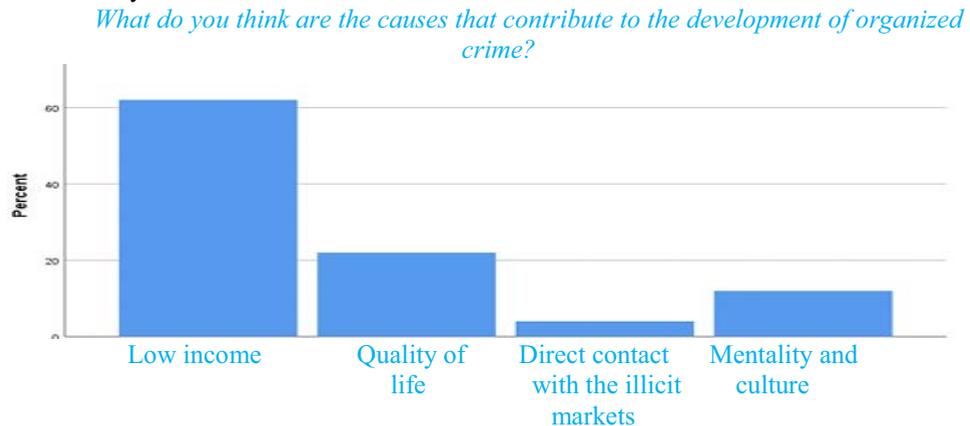


**Fig. 4.** Developed by the author

**Item 4 - What do you think are the causes that contribute to the development of organized crime?**

Respondents believe that the low level of income of citizens contributes to the development of organized crime, followed by quality of life (fig. 5).

Although the living environment can be considered an important factor in the development of organized crime, it is overtaken by other conditions related to society and the economy.



**Fig. 5.** Developed by the author

**Item 5 - Do you think there is a link between organized crime and corruption?**

When asked about the causality between corruption and organized crime, 83% of respondents totally agree with a link between the two, 9% totally disagree, and those undecided amount to 8 percent.

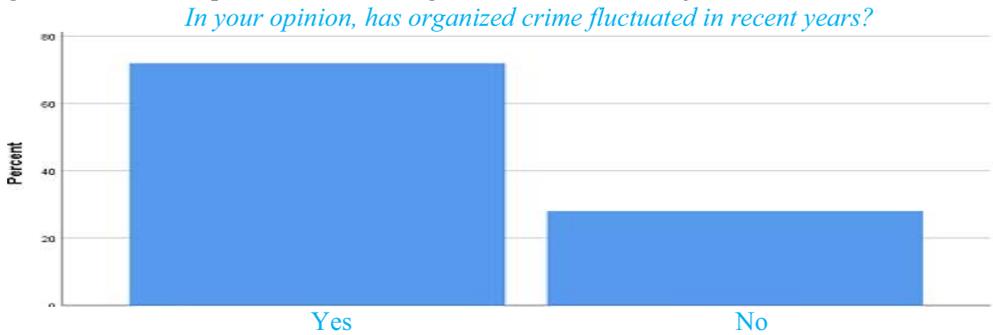
The answers to this question can be very well influenced by the individual perceptions of the respondents, the values of the graph demonstrating a certain homogeneity of the answers.



**Fig. 6.** Developed by the author

**Item 6 -** *In your opinion, has organized crime fluctuated in recent years?*

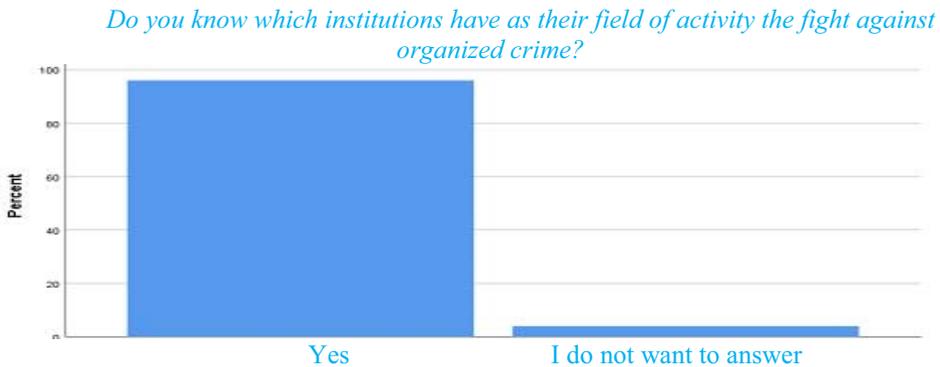
When asked the question that is trying to determine how crime evolved, it turned out that 72% of respondents believe that the phenomenon had fluctuations in the direction of growth, 28% of respondents considering that it did not have major fluctuations.



**Fig. 7.** Developed by the author

**Item 7 -** *Do you know which institutions have as their field of activity the fight against organized crime?*

96% of the respondents stated that they know the institutions whose field of activity is to fight organized crime, while only 4% did not want to answer or did not know.

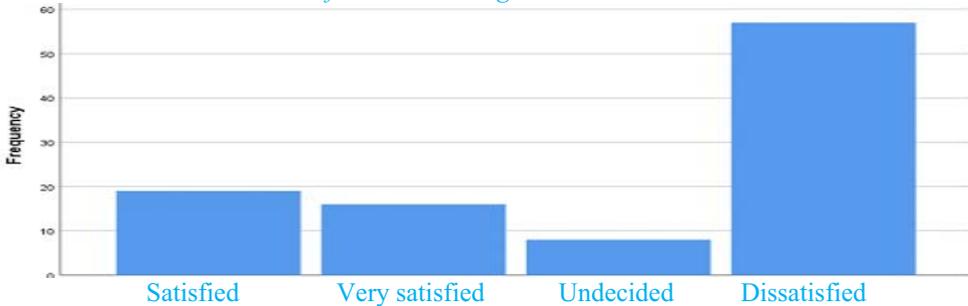


**Fig. 8.** Developed by the author

**Item 8** - How do you assess the relationship with the institutions empowered to provide information on organized crime?

At item 8, 57% of the respondents are dissatisfied with the way they relate to the institutions empowered to provide information about organized crime, the percentage of those who are satisfied and very satisfied being only 35%.

*How do you assess the relationship with the institutions empowered to provide information on organized crime?*

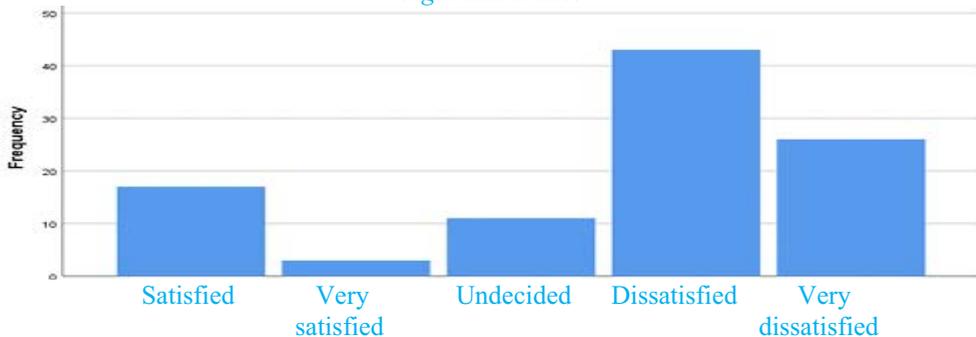


**Fig. 9.** Developed by the author

**Item 9** - *What is your degree of satisfaction with the inter-institutional communication between your institution and the institutions with responsibilities in the fight against organized crime?*

43% of respondents are dissatisfied with the degree of inter-institutional communication, 26% are very dissatisfied, while the percentage of satisfied and very satisfied respondents is only 20%.

*What is your degree of satisfaction with the inter-institutional communication between your institution and the institutions with responsibilities in the fight against organized crime?*



**Fig. 10.** Developed by the author

**Item 10** - *What is your opinion on the inter-institutional collaboration between your institution and the institutions with responsibilities in the fight against organized crime?*

41% of the respondents involved in the study are very dissatisfied with the inter-institutional collaboration, 34% are dissatisfied and 25% declare they are satisfied and very satisfied.

*What is your opinion on the inter-institutional collaboration between your institution and the institutions with responsibilities in the fight against organized crime?*

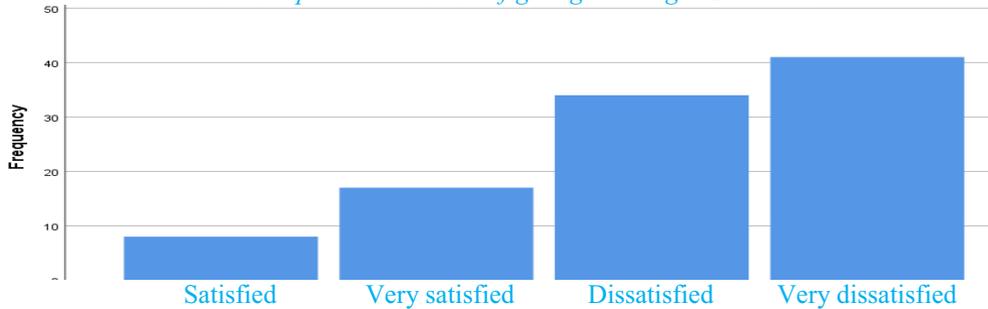


Fig. 11. Developed by the author

### Conclusion

Considering the sudden rise of organized crime on the territory of our country, simultaneously, takes place the institutionalization of criminal manifestations, due to endemic and systemic expressions of corruption, manifestation of over-adaptation within customer type relations, which along the way come to be based on the negative traits of the state and institutional structures.

Therefore, the corrupt nature of crime in Romania is represented by the reality according to which, from official positions, illegal activities have been and are being committed, constituting a threat to national security, even though is largely acknowledged that the state should function based on principles that characterize the rule of law.

National criminal benchmarks have shown that in order to stop the growing threats to national security and public order due to acts violence, economic crime, organized crime and transnational crime, all combined with corruption and endemic bureaucracy, a strategy to combat organized crime must be drawn up. For achieving a strategy adapted to current requirements, with a complex and systemically integrated structure, all domestic and international decision-makers should be involved in its elaboration.

In order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness in preventing and combating organized crime, it is necessary to create conditions for strengthening the research capacities of institutions with responsibilities in this field and to monitor crime-specific events, allocate funds and prepare human resources in the fields of justice and police, enhance the possibilities for identifying suspicious exchanges, adapt legal formalities for the confiscation of goods resulting from illicit activities and facilitate the transfer of data and information between Member States.

The results that the sociological research highlighted have the role of drawing some recommendations that may have an immediate effect in the reduction of the phenomenon of organized crime in Romania:

- Central hypothesis (validated): Fighting crime is a strategic objective that helps to create a strong and credible image of state institutions and the continuous improvement of the management system;
- Second Hypothesis (validated): The implementation of proactive measures within the management system are necessary in order to improve the staff within the state institutions;
- Third Hypothesis (validated): Crime strategies are vertically functional, but not horizontally functional;
- Forth Hypothesis (invalidated): Information received by citizens is considered to have a high level of transparency.

One of the main weapons against organized crime is macro-social policies, which should be accompanied by multisectoral measures to reduce poverty and increase the quality of life of citizens [9].

The legislative framework in Romania is perceived as comprehensive and largely reflecting the needs at the state level. The present study shows that there is a widespread perception of suspected infiltration of organized crime in all walks of life. It is essential to use the criminal code means and instruments in force against this phenomenon, without ignoring the means used at administrative level.

The collaboration between the institutions with a role in preventing and combating organized crime is a key element. The efficiency of the mechanisms for combating organized crime in Romania is based on the will and support of civil society. Equally important is the link between civil society actors and the public sector. Strengthening culture, educating and informing the public are the catalysts that contribute to reducing the pathological effect of organized crime. The public-private link is a real environment for understanding relationships, developing and raising awareness of vigilance [10].

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