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THE SOCIAL RE-USE OF SEIZED AND CONFISCATED ASSETS: GOOD POLICIES AND PRACTICES





**THE SOCIAL RE-USE
OF SEIZED
AND CONFISCATED
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AND PRACTICES**

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■ LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAPSK	Agency for the Administration of Sequestered and Confiscated Assets
AABE	Agencia de Administración de Bienes del Estado
AGRASC	Agence de gestion et de recouvrement des avoirs saisis et confisqués
ALAS	Latin America Startup Alliance
AMD	Armenian Dram
AMI	Appels à manifestation d'intérêt
ANABI	Agenția Națională de Administrare a Bunurilor Indisponibilizate
ANBSC	National Agency for the Administration and Destination of Assets Seized and Confiscated from Organised Crime
ANEEJ	Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice
ARMA	Asset Recovery and Management Agency
ARIS	Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme
AVAD	Association for Assistance to Victims of Crime
BGA	Bureau de gestion des avoirs
CAB	Criminal Assets Bureau
CAC	Commission for anti-Corruption

CAUSE	National Crime Agency
CBA	Office for the Administration of Seized Assets
CIAF	Commission for Illegal Asset Forfeiture
COGAMI	Galician Confederation of Persons with Disabilities
COPOLAD	Cooperation Programme Between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union on Drug Policies
CSAC	Civil Society Advisory Council
CSO(s)	Civil Society Organisation(s)
DG ENEST	Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood
DINCOTE	Museo de la Dirección Nacional Contra el Terrorismo
EaP	Eastern Partnership
ENGIM	Ente Nazionale Giuseppini del Murialdo
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
FBiH	The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FIC	Financial Intelligence Centre
FIU	Financial Investigation Unit
GBP	Great Britain Pound
GFAR	Global Forum on Asset Recovery
GI-TOC	Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime

GMP	Greater Manchester Police
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
KES	Kenyan Shilling
KPKONPI	Commission for Counteracting Corruption and Illegal Asset Forfeiture (Bulgaria)
KZT	Kazakhstani Tenge
LARMO	Libyan Asset Recovery and Management Office
LNS	Laboratoire National de Santé
LPRF	Libyan Phased Repatriation Fund
MANTRA	Monitoring of Recovered Assets in Nigeria through Transparency and Accountability
MILDECA	Mission for the Fight Against Drugs and Addictive Behaviours
MLA	Mutual Legal Assistance
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
MPTF	United Nations Multi-Purpose Trust Fund
NCA	National Crime Agency
NCBF	Non-Conviction-Based Forfeiture
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organisation(s)

NRA	National Revenue Agency
NURDOR	National Association of Parents of Children with Cancer
OABI	Office for the Administration of Seized Assets
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner
POCA	Proceeds of Crime Act
PRONABI	Programa Nacional de Bienes Incautados
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIA	Security Industry Authority
SPMD	Property Management Directorate
ToR	Terms of Reference
TWIST	Towards a New Social Entrepreneurship Model
UK	United Kingdom
UNCAC	United Nations Convention Against Corruption
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNTOC	United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime
USD	United States Dollars
US	United States
WHO	World Health Organization



INTRODUCTION

This guide compiles a number of national policies and practices for the social re-use of seized and confiscated assets, offering policymakers and practitioners practical models to adapt and implement more effectively within their own jurisdictions and, most importantly, to ensure that recovered assets are channelled to affected citizens. This guide was developed through open-source and desk research and, for certain countries, supplemented by direct discussions with officials involved in the social re-use of recovered assets. The list of countries included in this report is not intended to be comprehensive, nor is the guide meant to serve as an analysis or an evaluation of the efficiency of asset recovery or asset management mechanisms. It is, however, a useful tool for identifying success factors, as well as gaps and weaknesses specifically related to the social re-use of recovered assets.

This guide outlines a set of recommendations for officials in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region on best modalities for the transparent management of seized and confiscated assets, as well as on allocating recovered assets towards high-priority development needs.

Social re-use is an essential phase in the asset recovery cycle (an intermediate phase for temporarily seized assets, and a final phase when deciding on the use of assets fully adjudicated as confiscated in favour of the State). It is also one of its inherent goals: ensuring that recovered assets are liquidated and/or otherwise effectively used (“optimized”), either to assist victims or to address high-priority development needs, in areas such as health care, education and/or employment.¹

When implemented transparently, this process helps strengthen public confidence in the rule of law, even in communities historically affected by the presence of organized crime (for example, areas in Italy where the mafia has operated), or in communities which may have otherwise lost faith in the justice system.²

The recovery and reinvestment of illicitly-acquired assets directly support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 of the UN 2030 Agenda, which aims to promote peace, justice, and strong institutions. In particular, it targets SDG 16.4 to “significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime” by 2030 and SDG 16.5 which aims to “substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.”³

The above conveys the importance of the restorative dimension of asset recovery. It moves beyond a narrow focus on security and punishment, placing victims and communities at the centre. It is a restorative process whereby harm is repaired and the common good is rebuilt. This approach calls for integrated, cross-sectoral strategies in the fight against serious and organized crime.⁴ The social re-use of recovered assets is also a strong reminder to communities and citizens that fighting crime is not only about obtaining convictions against offenders, but about, justifiably, taking their profits and assets and putting them to effective use for the benefit of society as a whole.

Key international references to the importance of transparent management and disposition of recovered assets ⁵

United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)	While the UNCAC does not explicitly mention the term “social re-use”, it explains its importance, especially in Chapter V, Article 57. Paragraph five, for example, encourages States Parties to consider agreements regarding the final disposal of recovered assets. Overall, the UNCAC highlights that returned assets should be used directly to fulfil anti-corruption principles, repair the damage caused, and achieve development goals (e.g., through social re-use).
Global Forum on Asset Recovery (GFAR), Principles for Disposition and Transfer of Confiscated Stolen Assets in Corruption Cases	Principle 5 (five) states that “Where possible, and without prejudice to identified victims, stolen assets recovered from corrupt officials should benefit the people of the nations harmed by the underlying corrupt conduct”. Principle 10 (ten) underscores the importance of involving civil society in the return process, especially with respect to contributing to identifying ways to remedy the harm.
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Recommended Principles on Human Rights and Asset Recovery	Principle 7 (seven) specifies that “Receiving States should allocate returned assets in an accountable, transparent and participatory manner.” Principle 8 (eight) states that “Receiving States should use recovered assets in a manner that contributes to the realization of human rights”.
European Union – Directive 2014/42/EU (Asset Recovery)	Article 10 (3) encourages Member States to enable confiscated assets to be used for public interest or social purposes.
European Union – Directive (EU) 2024/1260	Recital (38) emphasizes that the social re-use of confiscated property promotes justice and resilience in communities affected by organized crime. It encourages Member States to allow such property to be used for public interest or social purposes, either by retaining it as State property for justice, law enforcement, or community benefit, or by transferring it to local authorities for social projects, while respecting national budgetary autonomy.
Council of Europe – Guidelines for the Management of Seized Assets	The Guidelines promote the concept of “social re-use” of confiscated assets. This includes direct social re-use, such as transforming confiscated property into community facilities, and indirect social re-use, where proceeds from the sale of assets fund social programmes, crime prevention initiatives, or community development projects.

This guide will also outline, through successful examples, the different modalities available to countries for the return and/or receipt of recovered assets. A key focus is on ensuring transparency. This can, for example, be achieved by involving Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in monitoring the allocation of recovered and re-used funds, as well as seeking their input on how recovered assets can be best optimized for local communities, for victims of crime, or for other priority needs.

Additionally, in today's context, some countries may be reluctant to return assets due to concerns that they could be misused or misappropriated again.⁶ To address this, formal arrangements, such as win-win agreements or Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), are sometimes established between the requesting and requested jurisdictions. These instruments define the terms governing the return, management, and monitored use of the returned assets.

Establishing systems for the efficient and effective management and disposition of seized and confiscated assets also contributes to minimizing waste. This is particularly relevant when dealing with assets that are perishable, subject to deterioration, or that require special care (such as animals, vehicles, or food), which may be economically burdensome for the State to manage and can lose value or become unusable if not promptly or properly handled.

Ensuring that a State's stolen assets are returned to the citizens, or that profits from organized criminal activity are recovered and put to good use, contributes to restoring public confidence in a specific community or country, as well as in justice and the rule of law. These are key objectives of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)'s [asset recovery programme](#).

UNICRI's asset recovery experts have long advocated for countries to establish effective mechanisms for the transparent management and disposition of recovered assets. The Institute also provides technical and expert legal advice in drafting legislation to ensure that any recovered assets are indeed channelled to social re-use, considering international guidelines as well as worldwide good practices.

This may include legislation requiring that a certain percentage of recovered assets be directed to high-priority development sectors, such as the health or education. Good examples include directing recovered assets towards improving the salaries for nurses, doctors, teachers, police, and judges; building hospitals and schools, and funding initiatives to reduce unemployment.⁷

Through these measures, States can attempt to address the impact of organized crime while also tackling the economic and other incentives that may encourage individuals to engage in organized criminal activity, which affects communities and families directly.



Albania offers one of the most illustrative examples of how recovered assets can be redirected to serve communities. In recent years, the country has shown that with the right legal reforms, institutional leadership, and support from civil society, it is possible to turn the proceeds of crime into tangible public benefits. Through a combination of national legislation and support from the European Union (EU), Albania has managed to operationalize social re-use into practical action, demonstrating a model that is both effective and replicable for other countries.

Legal Framework and Institutional Mechanism

The legal foundation for Albania's social re-use practices is established by Anti-Mafia Law No. 10192/2009, which created a Special Fund for Crime Prevention.⁸ Article 37 of the law specifies that proceeds from confiscated assets are to be channelled toward legal education, and social initiatives, including assistance to victims of organized crime and support for disadvantaged groups, and it identifies local government units and non-profit organizations among eligible beneficiaries.⁹

The Agency for the Administration of Sequestered and Confiscated Assets (AAPSK) is responsible for managing these assets and plays a central role in their allocation, in close collaboration with local institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs).¹⁰

Under the Albanian model, the AAPSK may assign confiscated properties through use agreements to public institutions and, via project frameworks, to CSOs. This framework enables NGOs to transform seized assets into social enterprises or community spaces, ensuring that the benefits of asset recovery reach local populations.¹¹ Funding support from the EU, which has allocated over EUR 1.8 million since 2016, has

further reinforced these efforts and promoted long-term sustainability.¹²

Case Examples

Confiscated Assets Used for Social Experimentation (CAUSE, 2018–2020)

The CAUSE project, financed by the EU and implemented with the AAPSK, demonstrated how confiscated properties can be re-used to serve social objectives. Notable examples include:¹³

- **KeBuono! Social Pastry - Legality, Inclusion, and Awareness as Ingredients for a Better Community (Fier):** This project was implemented by *Ente Nazionale Giuseppini del Murialdo* (ENGIM), an Italian NGO specializing in vocational training and social inclusion, in partnership with *Qendra Sociale Murialdo*, a local NGO supporting marginalized youth and families. The building, formerly used as a nightclub, was confiscated from a trafficker and renovated for social purposes. In addition to producing pastry goods, KeBuono! functions as a community hub, hosting activities for children, adolescents, and parents, with a focus on legality and non-violence.

The project provided vocational training to young people, including former convicts and families of incarcerated individuals, and employed women and girls from vulnerable backgrounds, with approximately 75% of the staff composed of those affected by or at risk of crime. Over 700 children participated in activities organized with nine local schools, and four awareness campaigns were conducted on Roma culture, substance abuse prevention, disability inclusion, and gender-based violence. The pastry shop continues to operate under a five-year use agreement through the AAPSK and remains a space for social enterprise and community engagement.¹⁴



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- **KinFolk Coffee Library (Durrës):** From 2019 to 2020, a bar previously linked to organized crime was repurposed into a youth-centred cultural and educational venue. The project, led by *Fondacioni Arsimor Shqiptar*, aimed to reduce juvenile delinquency through inclusive, community-based programming. Activities included language and chess courses, reading cafés, acting classes, and seasonal schools. Over the course of implementation, the initiative has employed young people and engaged more than 150 local youths and their families. The project has provided a safe space for learning and interaction, fostering a positive link between asset recovery and youth empowerment.¹⁵

- **Social Crafting Garage (Saranda):** A building confiscated from an organized crime network was converted into a training and employment centre for women affected by organized crime. The project was implemented by an Albanian NGO focused on migration and reintegration, and promoted the crafting of beach stones into decorative and cultural items that reflect local folklore. Following vocational training in stone craftsmanship, women and girls who had been victims or at risk of organized crime offences such as trafficking, sexual abuse, and domestic violence were employed thanks to the vocational education training provided through the initiative. In addition to generating

economic opportunities, the Social Crafting Garage aims to serve as a broader social hub, hosting festivals and exhibitions and offering a safe space to support the social and economic reintegration of trafficking survivors.¹⁶

Towards a New Social Entrepreneurship Model (TWIST, 2022–2025)

Building on the success of CAUSE, the TWIST project is a three-year initiative funded by the EU and implemented by a consortium of Italian and Albanian CSOs (including Libera and Partners Albania), in cooperation with the AAPSK. TWIST facilitated the institutionalization of the social re-use of confiscated assets by strengthening CSOs participation in decision-making, promoting social entrepreneurship,

and fostering local partnerships. TWIST engages Albanian citizens, particularly marginalized groups and those impacted by or at risk of being affected by organized crime, through practical, community-level actions. Sub-grants typically run about 12 months, with budgets ranging from approximately EUR 11,700 to EUR 65,000.¹⁷

The following examples illustrate how this vision is being put into practice:

- **New Art and Activism Center (Durrës):** Established by the CSO *Durresi Aktiv*, this cultural hub is located in a 67 m² apartment formerly owned by a criminal group. It now promotes artistic creativity and civic engagement through exhibitions, workshops,

and public events, offering a platform for local artists to showcase their work in painting, sculpture, and traditional crafts. The centre serves not only as a gallery but also as a community-building initiative, connecting young artists with institutions and the public.¹⁸

- **Tirana Green Living 2 (Centre for Culinary Education):** This entity seeks to strengthen entrepreneurial activity by offering services and creating employment opportunities for vulnerable groups and individuals at risk of exploitation by organized crime groups.¹⁹
- **Roskovec ArtCream:** This project engages women affected by domestic violence in artisanal production as a sustainable livelihood model.²⁰

Collectively, these projects reinforce TWIST's overarching objective of building a more inclusive, resilient, and just society through the social re-use of resources once tied to criminal activity.

Innovative Re-use Examples

- **Mobile Libraries:** In 2021 alone, numerous vehicles used for drug and human trafficking were confiscated from criminals in Albania.²¹ As part of a broader regional effort to promote the social re-use of criminal assets, and in response to the need to bring education to villages in remote communities, many of these vehicles were redesigned, often with help from children, and transformed into mobile libraries that now serve rural areas in Dibra and Shkodra. This project, implemented in partnership with GIZ, AAPSK, and local municipalities, helps to turn instruments of harm into tools for education.²²
- **Toka Jonë ("Our Land") Farm Project (Shijak):** As part of the EU-funded initiative "Our Land," in collaboration with AAPSK, the Albanian NGO

Adad Malore is implementing a community-based project on confiscated agricultural land in Shijak.²³ Titled "Social, Healthy, and Sustainable Farm", the initiative aims to empower local youth and community members through socio-economic development in agriculture, with a particular emphasis on increasing technical knowledge of citrus farming.²⁴ Training sessions are held on best practices in citrus orchard development, covering topics such as planting conditions, timing, and modern agricultural techniques. The orchard serves as a good example of repurposed agriculture and functions as a vocational educational tool across the Durrës District and beyond. The farm also shows how social re-use projects can contribute to local economic development.

Observations

Albania's experience in the social re-use of recovered assets provides excellent examples that can be of use to policy makers and practitioners from other countries. Albania's approach revolves around three interlinked elements: a clear legal mandate, a dedicated institutional authority, and strong partnerships with civil society. The country's approach shows how confiscated properties can be turned into viable, locally driven initiatives with direct benefits for vulnerable groups. The involvement of civil society in managing and monitoring these assets has been essential to ensuring transparency and sustainability; when community organizations are consulted and involved, such programmes and projects generally prove to be more sustainable. Furthermore, the Albanian model has proven to be closely aligned with broader development goals, by linking asset recovery to employment generation, education, and social cohesion.



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Angola and Switzerland established a cooperative framework for the restitution of Angolan assets frozen in Swiss accounts following criminal investigations. These agreements channelled recovered funds into humanitarian and development projects, targeting sectors critical to Angola's post-conflict reconstruction and longterm economic growth.²⁵

Legal and Institutional Framework

In late 2005, Switzerland and Angola signed an agreement for the restitution of approximately USD 21 million. This led to the creation of the Swiss-Angolan Socio-Humanitarian Programme, jointly managed by the Swiss Embassy in Luanda and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).²⁶ Under the agreement, recovered funds were earmarked for humanitarian projects in key sectors such as education, demining, hospital infrastructure, vocational training, water supply, and the reintegration of displaced persons through local capacity building.²⁷

In addition, the agreement marked a turning point for renewed cooperation between the two countries with Switzerland re-opening its embassy in Luanda in 2009.²⁸

In 2012, a second restitution agreement was signed, returning an additional CHF 39.5 million (approximately USD 43 million).²⁹ As with the first agreement, the funds were to be used exclusively for development projects directly benefiting Angola.³⁰

Case Examples

■ 2005 Restitution – Swiss-Angolan

Socio-Humanitarian Programme: Funds supported priority humanitarian projects in postconflict Angola, including the development

of hospital infrastructure, vocational training initiatives, improvements to water supply, and community-based reintegration programmes for displaced persons.³¹

■ 2012 Restitution – Education Sector

Investments: Under the second restitution agreement, funds were allocated primarily to education sector initiatives. This included the construction of an agricultural school and the rehabilitation of a technical college. These projects were also intended to contribute to the development and diversification of Angola's economy by strengthening vocational and agricultural education.³²

Observations

The Angola–Switzerland restitution agreements provide an example of how asset recovery can be tied to targeted socioeconomic objectives in a post-conflict context.

The use of jointly managed implementation mechanisms, with oversight from the SDC,³³ contributed to transparency and ensured that funds were directed towards agreed upon development priorities.

The focus on vocational and agricultural education in the second restitution aligns with long-term strategies for economic diversification, while the humanitarian projects under the first agreement addressed urgent needs in Angola's post-war recovery.

Argentina is progressively developing a model for the recovery and social re-use of assets confiscated from organized crime, as well as of underutilized state-owned properties. Although the country does not yet have a specific national law regulating social re-use, momentum has been building through civil society-led initiatives, institutional reforms, and pilot projects. These efforts form part of a broader strategy to enhance transparency, promote reintegration, and redirect illicit or underused resources toward the public good.

Legal and Institutional Framework

Argentina does not yet have a dedicated national law specifically authorizing the social re-use of confiscated assets. However, progress is being achieved through both state institutions and civil society.³⁴

The *Agencia de Administración de Bienes del Estado* (AABE), established in 2012, is responsible for managing state-owned assets, such as land and buildings no longer used by public institutions. While AABE was not originally designed to manage assets confiscated through criminal proceedings, it has assumed responsibilities for certain assets subject to judicial measures when transferred to the State. In these cases, the AABE may assign properties for public or social use, under its “*asignación de uso*” powers.³⁵

Launched in 2021, the *Bien Restituido* initiative was established to promote the social re-use of assets confiscated from organized crime, filling a gap left by the absence of a dedicated public policy. Led by *Libera* (Italy) and local partners - such as *Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia* (ACIJ), *Fundación Multipolar*, and *Circolo Giuridico di Argentina*, under the umbrella of

América Latina Alternativa Social (ALAS) - and funded by the European Union Delegation in Argentina, the initiative has sought to push for legal reform, raise awareness, and build connections between NGOs and justice system actors.³⁶

In December 2022, a bill to allow the social re-use of confiscated assets was introduced in Congress, with multi-party sponsorship. While it was considered a significant step forward, the proposal, as of the drafting of this report, remained stalled due to wider political and legislative challenges.³⁷

Argentina is also actively engaged in international cooperation efforts. It participates in the Cooperation Programme Between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union on Drug Policies (COPOLAD III) regional exchanges on social re-use of confiscated assets and is involved in the Latin America Startup Alliance (ALAS), a civil society network supported by *Libera*. This engagement promotes regional exchange of good practices and alignment with global standards.³⁸

Case Examples

Bien Restituido has shown that social re-use of confiscated assets can be achieved through small-scale, community-driven projects.³⁹

■ **Terzo Tiempo Bakery – Rosario:** A delivery van confiscated from organized crime was reassigned to the *Terzo Tiempo Bakery*, a cooperative supporting the reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals. Funding also enabled the purchase of an industrial oven, which helped expand operations.

■ **Casita Azul – Mar del Plata:** A property previously used for human trafficking was transferred to local associations engaged

in the Anti-Human Trafficking Roundtable Network. The property was converted into a memorial space and a support centre for women victims of gender-based violence and trafficking.

■ **San Cayetano Textile Cooperative – Buenos Aires:** This cooperative, working with drug rehabilitation patients and homeless individuals, uses confiscated fabric to produce handmade accessories. Demand is high enough that the Cooperative is now seeking access to a permanent space with adequate infrastructure to expand its work.

■ **Playroom for Children – Villa 21-24, Buenos Aires:** An apartment confiscated from a drug trafficker was given to the parish of Don Facundo, a priest affiliated with the movement of *curas villeros* (street priests). It has been transformed into a playroom for local children, providing a safe space in a community heavily affected by violence and drug abuse.

In addition to these efforts, the AABE has reassigned underutilized state properties for social purposes.⁴⁰

■ **In Villa 31 (Barrio 31), Buenos Aires:** AABE authorized the social and educational uses

of underused state property as part of the re-urbanization plan, including a 490.68 m² property assigned to *Parroquia Cristo Obrero* to expand a day centre for children and youth, and an 8,042m² property granted to *Fundación Hogares Argentinos* to improve the *Instituto de Enseñanza Filii Dei*, which serves more than 1,800 students).⁴¹

Some of the properties reassigned by AABE may not be clearly traceable to criminal proceedings; nonetheless these examples reflect the potential of asset re-use for advancing social inclusion and public value. Where assets have been seized or confiscated in a criminal or related proceeding, they also provide excellent opportunities to demonstrate to the public that the justice system is working in a holistic manner.

Observations

Argentina's experience reflects the challenges of promoting social re-use of criminal assets in the absence of binding legislation. Nonetheless, the *Bien Restituido* initiative demonstrates how civil society can play a leading role in developing operational pilots, building capacity, and advocating for change.



Armenia provides a relevant example of how a high-value recovered asset can be managed transparently and repurposed in a way that benefits both local and national development priorities. While the country does not yet have a dedicated legal framework for the social re-use of confiscated assets, the Golden Palace Hotel case illustrates how recovered assets can be leveraged to support public objectives through auction mechanisms, civil society consultation, and incentives for reinvestment.

Case Example: Golden Palace Hotel

In 2019, the Golden Palace Hotel in Tsaghkadzor, a luxury property valued at approximately USD 15 million, was voluntarily transferred to the State by the family of a former head of the Armenian Customs Committee, who at the time was under investigation for alleged money laundering.⁴²

The hotel was subsequently put up for public auction by the State Property Management Committee of Armenia and, after several rounds, was sold in February 2022 for AMD 5 billion (approximately USD 10 million) to a local company.⁴³ As part of the sales deal, the buyer committed to investing an additional AMD 4.5 billion (around USD 9 million) over five years to improve and modernize the hotel facilities, with penalty provisions in place if these obligations were not fulfilled.⁴⁴

Although the final sale price (AMD 5 billion) was lower than earlier estimates of the property's value, the inclusion of these investment commitments, together with the earmarking of 30% of proceeds for the Tsaghkadzor community, were regarded as measures that helped balance concerns about potential loss to the state while ensuring that part of the recovered value directly benefited the locality where the asset is situated.⁴⁵



Repurposing for Social Impact

In addition to the economic development purpose, the hotel was used during two major emergencies:

- **March–May 2020:** The Golden Palace Hotel served as a government-designated isolation centre during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. More than thirty individuals, identified as close contacts of Armenia’s first confirmed COVID-19 case, were housed at the hotel as part of the national containment strategy.⁴⁶
- **Late 2021 onwards:** The Golden Palace Hotel temporarily hosted displaced families from Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) who had been affected by the 44-day war. This arrangement was initiated by the Government of Armenia and local authorities, in coordination with NGOs.⁴⁷ These decisions were taken in coordination with NGOs, which also contributed donations and services, such as providing daily meals and essential support.⁴⁸

Observations

The Golden Palace case shows how recovered assets, in this instance transferred voluntarily to the State, can be integrated into national development strategies when accompanied by clear use conditions, public oversight, and broad benefit-sharing mechanisms. Nevertheless, it is important that, in cases such as the one mentioned above, a monitoring and reporting system be established to ensure ongoing compliance by entities involved, in this instance, the company that acquired the hotel. To strengthen transparency and build public trust, the introduction of a vetting system and clearer participation criteria for bidding processes could also be considered. Such measures would help reinforce the credibility of the process and address concerns about the eligibility of companies with prior legal or financial issues (or, in worse cases, with ties to criminality or corrupt public officials).⁴⁹ The case may serve as a foundation for developing a more systematic policy framework on social re-use in Armenia, especially if supported by future legislation and institutional capacity-building.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) has developed mechanisms to ensure that confiscated assets are not only removed from criminal use but also redirected towards social purposes. Through the Seized Property Management Agency of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, confiscated vehicles, businesses, and real estate have been reassigned to public institutions or used directly to meet urgent social needs, such as housing refugees and disaster-affected populations.

Legal Framework and Institutional Mechanism

The system is based on the Law on Confiscation of Illegally Acquired Property by Criminal Offense (Official Gazette FBiH No. 71/14). Confiscated assets must first be offered at public auction, announced in the Official Gazette and in at least two daily newspapers with nationwide distribution. If the property is not sold at the first auction, a second auction may be held at a reduced starting price, but not below 50% of the assessed value.

If, within one year after these auctions, the property still remains unsold, the law permits it to be donated to an institution primarily financed from the Federation budget, allocated for humanitarian purposes, or, if necessary, destroyed.⁵⁰

The Seized Property Management Agency of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, established under the Law on Confiscation of Illegally Acquired Property by Criminal Offense, is mandated to manage temporarily and permanently confiscated assets. Its responsibilities include storing, safeguarding, selling or renting such property and maintaining records. It may also, where ordered by the court, oversee temporary administration in seized companies until their disposal. Revenues derived from the sale of confiscated

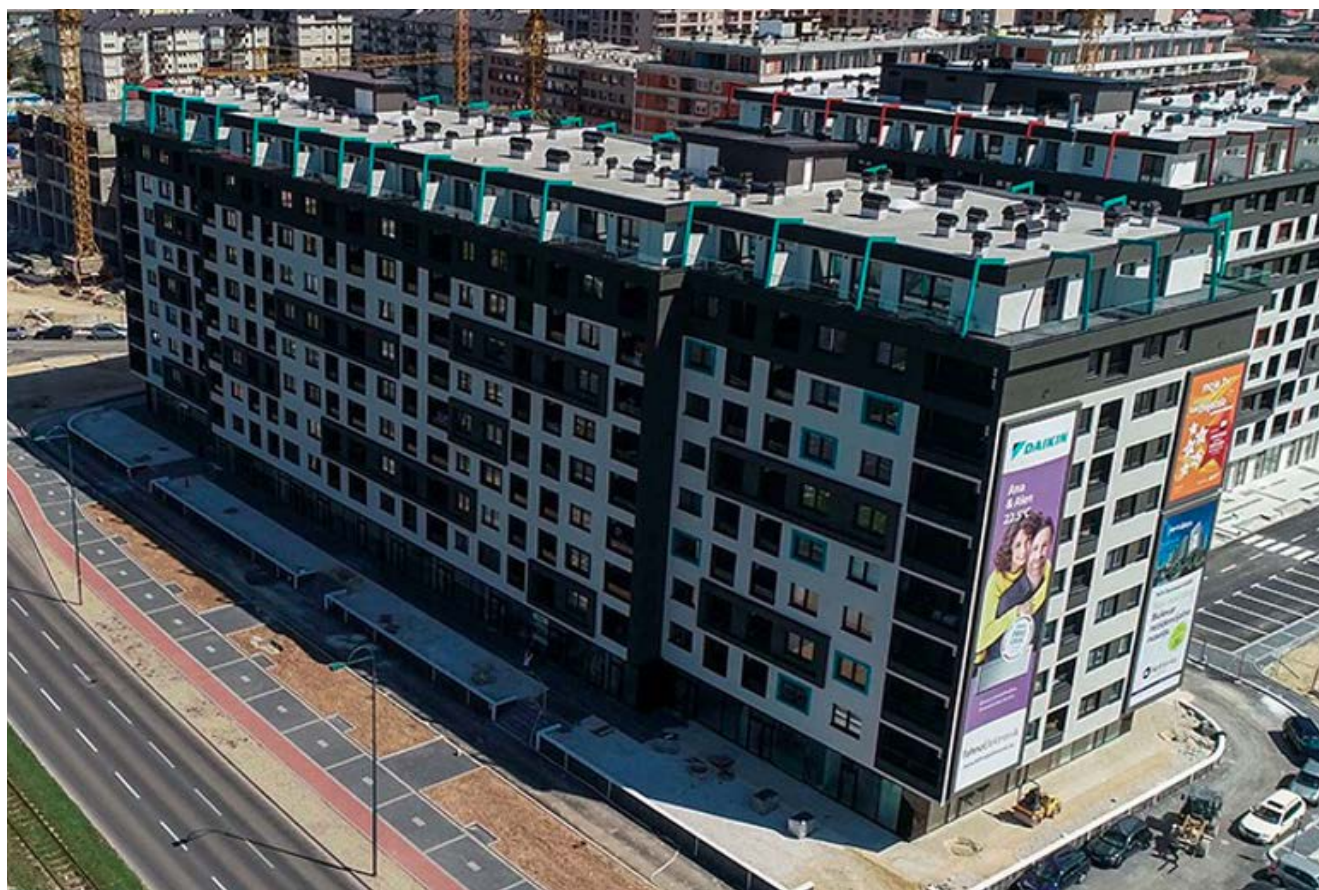
assets are transferred to the Federation budget, while, where expressly decided, permanently confiscated monetary assets may be kept in special-purpose accounts managed by the Agency, pursuant to Government decisions.⁵¹ Decisions on donations (and on destruction) of confiscated property are adopted by the Government of the FBiH, often based on proposals from the Agency.⁵²

Case Examples

- **Opel Insignia for Police Academy:** A vehicle previously used in drug trafficking, after two failed public auctions, was donated to the Federal Ministry of Interior for educational use in the Police Academy in Sarajevo.
- **Mercedes Atego for Civil Protection:** A confiscated cargo truck, also unsold after two auctions, was donated to the Federal Administration of Civil Protection. The truck has since been used in humanitarian relief operations, including support to Turkey during the 2023 earthquake response.



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■ Hotel Walter for Ukrainian Refugees:

Shares of the company Emiran d.o.o., which owns Hotel Walter, were confiscated following a Supreme Court ruling and became Federation property. The hotel, managed by the Agency, was made available for refugee accommodation, providing up to 80 beds. The costs were covered by permanently confiscated funds deposited in the Agency's special-purpose account.

■ Housing for Landslide Victims (2024):

In response to the landslide, the Seized Property Management Agency of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina made available 11 residential units under its management. The Municipality of Stari Grad leased these apartments from the Agency at a preferential rate, ensuring that

affected citizens could be accommodated without bearing any housing costs.

Observations

Bosnia and Herzegovina has established a functioning framework that enables confiscated assets to be redirected towards public benefit, with practical examples demonstrating their use for institutional support and urgent social needs. While implementation to date has primarily involved state institutions, there may be opportunities in the future to expand cooperation with CSOs to broaden community-level impact. As transparency and reporting practices continue to evolve, they may provide a useful avenue for showcasing positive experiences and reinforcing trust in the system.

BULGARIA

Bulgaria is one of several EU Member States with both national legislation and concrete cases of social re-use of confiscated assets.⁵³ The country has developed a hybrid model for social re-use, combining direct allocation of confiscated properties with the earmarking of a portion of proceeds for social purposes.

Legal Framework and Institutional Mechanism

Bulgaria's Countering Corruption and Forfeiture of Illegally Acquired Property Act establishes a formal mechanism for the social re-use of confiscated assets. According to Article 168(5), at least 30% of the value of the property confiscated in favour of the State shall be allocated for social purposes, with the detailed conditions and procedure determined by an act of the Council of Ministers.⁵⁴

The legal framework allows confiscated property to be provided for use and administration by budgetary organizations and municipalities for

the performance of their statutory functions. For movable property, the law provides for assignment to competent institutions for storage during the collateral phase and, after confiscation, for management or sale as decided through the Inter-institutional Council and Council of Ministers.⁵⁵

Implementation of the legal framework for the social re-use of confiscated assets was managed by the Commission for Counteracting Corruption and Illegal Asset Forfeiture (KPKONPI) and finalized through decisions by the Council of Ministers. Following institutional reform in 2023, the former KPKONPI was restructured into the Commission for Anti-Corruption (CAC) and the Commission for Illegal Asset Forfeiture (CIAF). While CIAF conducts forfeiture proceedings, post-confiscation decisions on re-use or sale are adopted via the Interdepartmental Council and the Council of Ministers, with implementation by the National Revenue Agency (NRA).⁵⁶



Social Context and Challenges

Bulgaria is characterised by the presence of multiple ethnic groups, including the Roma, who may often be marginalized or disadvantaged, with children unable to access education or lacking opportunities for societal integration.⁵⁷ In this context, socially re-used assets offer a tangible tool for building social inclusion and equitable access to public goods.

Case Examples

- **Guest House Conversion (Gradec, Sliven Province):** A confiscated guest house and restaurant complex was repurposed into a local police station. The property was forfeited following a court ruling and later transferred by decision of the Council of Ministers to the Ministry of Interior.

This initiative demonstrates how confiscated assets can be redirected to strengthen local governance and serve communities directly affected by organized criminal activity.⁵⁸

- **Registry Office Establishment (Nessebar, Burgas Province):** A residential property previously operated by a convicted drug

trafficker was seized by the State under a 2010 court ruling. After three unsuccessful public auctions, the NRA requested a change in the property's legal status. In 2016, the building was designated as public state property and transferred to the Registry Agency. It now functions as a local administrative office.⁵⁹

Observations

Bulgaria's legal requirement to earmark 30% of confiscated asset value for social purposes makes it one of the most advanced frameworks in the EU for social re-use. The country allows both direct and indirect re-use, and official bodies are in place to oversee the process. Most documented cases reflect institutional re-use rather than community-based or civil society-led initiatives.

Strengthening public reporting on how the 30% threshold is met, and clarifying opportunities for local engagement would enhance the long-term impact of Bulgaria's asset recovery regime. Working closely with community-based organizations would also help counter the perception that recovered assets might be directed to public institutions over "community-identified" needs.



Canada has developed a decentralized but robust system for the seizure and re-use of assets linked to criminal activity. Although it lacks a unified national authority, the country's asset recovery system is driven by provincial civil forfeiture regimes, which enable the non-conviction-based forfeiture (NCBF) of property suspected to be linked to unlawful conduct.⁶⁰ The proceeds are reinvested in public-interest initiatives, particularly those aimed at crime prevention, victim support, and community safety.

Legal and Institutional Framework For National Cases

Civil forfeiture began with Ontario's Civil Remedies Act (2001), enabling the Attorney General to initiate civil proceedings against assets suspected of being proceeds or instruments of crime, even in the absence of criminal convictions.⁶¹

Other provinces, such as British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Quebec, and New Brunswick, have adopted similar regimes, each managed through respective ministries or civil forfeiture offices. As of the drafting of this publication, only Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador have not introduced legislation establishing a civil forfeiture regime.⁶²

Case Examples – Provincial System

These provincial authorities work with the police⁶³ and are responsible for every stage of the civil forfeiture process, from asset tracing and seizure to liquidation and reinvestment. Once recovered, proceeds are managed by provincial authorities, such as Ontario's Ministry of the Attorney General or British Columbia's Civil Forfeiture Office, and distributed through competitive grants to NGOs,

municipalities, and indigenous communities to support targeted social and public safety initiatives.

- **In 2021**, Ontario reinvested CA\$ 1.5 million in cash and proceeds seized from criminals through the Civil Remedies Grant Program, supporting 18 community-based projects focused on helping victims of crime and preventing intimate partner, family, and gang-related violence.⁶⁴
- **In 2025**, the Government of British Columbia allocated CA\$ 7.5 million in civil forfeiture proceeds to support 166 community-based projects across the province. Administered by the Civil Forfeiture Office under the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, the funding supports a wide range of initiatives aimed at enhancing public safety, supporting victims of crime, and preventing violence.⁶⁵



One of the beneficiaries was the North Okanagan Youth and Family Services Society. © Liam Verster

- **In 2025**, Saskatchewan allocated more than CA\$ 1 million from its Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund 66 to support police services, the provincial Victims' Fund, and community-based safety initiatives. Of that amount, over



CA\$ 564,000 went to police agencies across the province, with a matching sum deposited into the Victims' Fund, in accordance with legislation.⁶⁷

Policy Gap

International good practice emphasizes the importance of transparent and accountable decision-making in the social re-use of confiscated assets, including clear selection criteria, external audits, and public reporting. While some Canadian provinces publish grant recipient lists, there is no national framework ensuring alignment with these standards.⁶⁸

With no federal coordinating body or unified policy mandate, practices and standards vary significantly across provinces.

Legal and Institutional Framework International Cases

When illicit funds are held abroad, Canada may pursue their return through:

- **Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs)** under the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act (1988), enabling formal cooperation in investigations, seizures, and forfeitures.⁶⁹
- **The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)** (Article 54), which mandates States Parties to enable enforcement of confiscation orders and provide mutual legal assistance in corruption-related cases.⁷⁰

Federal Asset Management and Social Re-use

In Canada, proceeds from confiscated assets are centrally managed by the federal Seized Property Management Directorate (SPMD) under the Seized Property Management Act, which recovers its operating costs from sales revenue. Net proceeds may be shared with domestic or international partners, but there is no statutory requirement mandating their social re-use or for earmarking them for specific public purposes.

Unlike countries with designated asset recovery funds, Canada retains discretion over how recovered assets are allocated. They may support victim compensation, law enforcement, or be credited to the Seized Property Proceeds Account, depending on internal policy and intergovernmental agreements.⁷¹

Observations

Canada has established a functioning civil forfeiture system at the provincial level, where seized assets are reinvested in crime prevention, victim support, and community safety initiatives. These mechanisms are transparent, grant-based, and governed by provincial law. At the international level, Canada actively participates in asset recovery efforts and supports frameworks such as the UNCAC, which promotes the repatriation and responsible use of recovered assets.

France manages confiscated assets through the Agency for the Recovery and Management of Seized and Confiscated Assets (*Agence de gestion et de recouvrement des avoirs saisis et confisqués*, AGRASC), created in 2011 under the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Budget. Although the sale of assets, primarily real estate through public auctions, remains the principal method of disposal, AGRASC has progressively developed social re-use mechanisms that allow confiscated real estate to be transferred for community benefit.⁷² This approach remains limited in scale but is expanding through pilot projects and open calls to civil society.

Legal and Institutional Framework

AGRASC is responsible for managing, selling, auctioning, or otherwise disposing of seized assets in criminal proceedings, including real estate, vehicles, cash, financial products, and businesses.⁷³ Judges or investigating magistrates may authorize pre-conviction sales to avoid depreciation.

Historically, proceeds from confiscated assets have been directed primarily to the State budget. In the specific case of confiscations linked to drug trafficking, a share of the proceeds is allocated to the Inter-ministerial Mission for the Fight against Drugs and Addictive Behaviours (MILDECA), while under Article 706-164 of the French Code of Criminal Procedure, proceeds may also be used to compensate victims. Since 2021, a legal framework has allowed certain confiscated real estate to be retained in State ownership and loaned free of charge to NGOs, foundations, or public bodies for social purposes.⁷⁴

The process involves public Calls for Expressions of Interest (*Appels à manifestation d'intérêt*,

AMI), published on government platforms, where associations, foundations, and social housing organizations can apply to receive confiscated property to serve community needs. Criteria include measuring the social impact of the proposed use, financial sustainability, and capacity to effectively manage the property.⁷⁵

Case Examples

- **Marseille Villa – Accommodation for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings:** In 2023, the Marseille Criminal Court ordered the confiscation of a luxury villa, previously owned by an individual convicted of large-scale cocaine trafficking, in a northern district of the city. Managed by AGRASC, the property was not sold at auction but instead allocated for social re-use to the Association for Assistance to Victims of Crime (*Association d'aide aux victimes d'actes de délinquance*, AVAD) and *La Caravelle*, two local NGOs working with women victims of domestic violence and other offences.⁷⁶ Today, the villa operates as a secure accommodation centre for women victims of crime and domestic violence.
- **Saint-Denis – Community Social Hub** (Ongoing) – In 2024, AGRASC launched a public call for expression of interest (*appel à manifestation d'intérêt*, AMI) for the social re-use of a confiscated property in Saint-Denis. The building had been seized from an individual convicted of sexual exploitation in prostitution.⁷⁷ It was decided that the property will be allocated to the Jorbalan Shelter Association (*Association Foyer Jorbalan*, AFJ), which provides protection to victims of human trafficking networks.
- **Albi and Joué les Tours – Open Calls for Social Projects:** Other recent AMIs involve properties in Albi and Joué les Tours. These

calls invited NGOs, foundations, or public bodies to propose socially beneficial projects, such as social inclusion initiatives, vocational training programmes, cultural activities, or services for vulnerable groups, with the properties transferred free of charge. Applicants must demonstrate the project's social impact, financial and operational sustainability, and their capacity to manage the property. In the case of Albi, the allocation is for a renewable three-year term. However, where the applicant is a social housing organization undertaking rehabilitation works, the term may be set for a much longer duration, up to 99 years. Similar conditions apply in Joué les Tours, with a concomitant obligation to properly maintain the property for public benefit.

Other examples include:⁷⁸

- **2021 – Paris:** Apartment confiscated from an Italian organized crime figure specializing in money laundering. Allocated to Nest Association (*Amicale du Nid*), an NGO working against human trafficking, to house a woman victim of human trafficking who is rebuilding her life after decades of exploitation.
- **2022–Guadeloupe:** A villa was confiscated and allocated to the Judicial Supervision and Investigations Service (*Service de contrôle judiciaire et d'enquêtes*, SCJE) to accommodate and rehabilitate perpetrators of domestic violence.
- **2022 – Hérault:** Studio apartment confiscated and allocated to the Housing Centre *L'Adages - La Maison du Logement* for temporary housing

of displaced persons from Ukraine.

- **2023 – Coudekerque-Branche:** Building confiscated and allocated to *Foncière Habitat et Humanisme* for social housing for vulnerable people. The allocation is for 75 years.
- **2024 – Saint-Étienne:** Apartment confiscated after being used for prostitution and allocated to *Association Renaître*, a public operator specializing in housing and support for people in precarious situations. The organization already manages 150 housing units in the Saint-Étienne region.
- **June 2024 – Brittany:** House confiscated and allocated to the Association *Solidaires pour l'habitat* (Soliha) for housing support to vulnerable people. The allocation is for 25 years

Observations

France's recent experience with social re-use demonstrates a growing commitment to directing confiscated assets toward restorative, socially beneficial purposes. Additionally, pilot cases show how targeted allocations can support vulnerable populations. These initiatives rely on partnerships between state institutions and NGOs with proven operational capacity. The range of uses, safe houses, community housing, and other social services, illustrates the potential of this model to address both immediate protection needs and long-term social inclusion. Continued expansion of the social re-use programme, supported by transparent calls for expressions of interest and clear selection and property maintenance requirements, could strengthen public trust and maximize the social value of confiscated assets.



© Agence de gestion et de recouvrement des avoirs saisis et confisqués (AGRASC)

Honduras has made strides in asset recovery through the Office for the Administration of Seized Assets (OABI), the institution responsible for managing, preserving, and disposing of seized and confiscated property. The country faces persistent challenges related to weak public institutions and the entrenched presence of organized crime, particularly in connection with drug trafficking and gang-related violence.⁷⁹ However, the legal framework for asset management established by Honduras plays a crucial role in fighting illicit networks.

Legal and Institutional Framework

Under the 2015 *Ley Especial contra el Lavado de Activos* (Special Law against Money Laundering), Article 88 establishes the distribution of assets managed by OABI:⁸⁰

- 45% are to be allocated to the security and justice sector, with a focus on investigative units;
- 45% are to be allocated to crime prevention programs; and
- 10% are to be allocated to the budget of the OABI.

Case Example: Joya Grande Zoo

Honduran law enforcement has seized a number of assets linked to crime, especially drug trafficking.⁸¹

One high-profile example is the *Joya Grande Zoo*, seized in 2013 from the notorious drug trafficking group known as *Los Cachiros*. Following the seizure, the zoo was intentionally kept open to the public, providing employment for individuals, including veterinarians, and washhousing hundreds of animals of

approximately 60 different species.⁸²

However, over time, the zoo fell into neglect and eventually closed. The decline seems to have stemmed from several issues, primarily the lack of funding, salary disputes, and management problems. Additionally, the zoo was originally designed and built by non-experts, meaning that significant investments would have been necessary to ensure it met long-term safety and operational standards.⁸³

A spokesperson for the OABI explained that “it is extremely complicated to run confiscated businesses created for the sole purpose of money laundering or the entertainment of criminal organizations, as these businesses are not self-sustainable.”⁸⁴ Only volunteers are currently operating at the now-closed zoo, to ensure that the animals do not suffer.

Observations

While there is still potential to rehabilitate this specific site, the *Joya Grande Zoo* stands as a broader symbol: an opportunity to transform what once represented the wealth and power of a criminal organization into a resource for the wider community. Unfortunately, without adequate planning, funding and staffing, that potential remains unrealized. Greater involvement of CSOs, as well as perhaps the private sector, could have supported sustainability.

Economically, the mafia has drained Italy of billions of euros through extortion, drug trafficking, illegal gambling, and the infiltration of legitimate businesses. Construction, agriculture, and even renewable energy sectors have been tainted by mafia control. This system keeps money flowing into criminal networks, stifles free competition, discourages investment, and keeps certain Italian regions economically behind the rest of Europe. Politically, the mafia has long exploited corruption and weak governance to infiltrate politics, trading votes and influence for protection, and investigations continue today to expose ties between clans and elected officials.

In light of the above, Italy has developed one of the strongest anti-mafia legal frameworks in the world. Various assassinations in the 1980s and 1990s became turning points, galvanizing civil society and prompting reforms that allowed for tougher prosecutions, asset confiscation, and protection for informants. Confiscated mafia properties have since been repurposed as community centres, farms, and schools, transforming symbols of crime into resources for society. This was a profound cultural shift. One of the most striking ways Italy has fought back against the mafia is through the confiscation of assets. This strategy hits the mafia where it hurts most: their wealth and the prestige that comes with it. By taking away these assets, the Italian State undermines both the criminals’ financial base and social image.

This transformation has a double effect. Economically, it disrupts the mafia’s ability to launder money and forces them to constantly find new ways to hide their profits. Symbolically, it strikes at their aura of invincibility. A house once feared as “untouchable” becomes a visible sign of the State’s presence and society’s refusal to bow to intimidation. For many communities in Sicily,

Calabria, and Campania, seeing mafia wealth redistributed into public goods is an act of moral repair.

Legal and Institutional Framework

■ **Rognoni-La Torre Law (Law 646 of 1982):**⁸⁵ among others, it criminalised mafia membership (through Art. 416-bis), made confiscation of mafia-linked assets mandatory, and allowed seizure of disproportionate or illicitly obtained property from suspected mafia members. Subsequent decrees established that judicial administrators oversee assets from seizure to final allocation. For the first time, confiscated real estate could remain state property for institutional use or be transferred to public bodies, while company assets could be transferred to public enterprises Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act “ should not be in Bold nor Italic to preserve production and jobs, sold, or liquidated, with final decisions made by the Minister of Finance on the Prefect’s proposal.

■ **Law 109 of 1996:**⁸⁶ it introduced the involvement of public opinion in fighting organized crime, providing that confiscated assets given to local authorities could be used not only for institutional but also for social purposes, preventing their return to criminals and visibly restoring legality and dignity. Through a number of subsequent reforms, and because of the growing number and complexity of confiscated assets, a single centralized body was established.

■ **Law 50 of 2010:**⁸⁷ the National Agency for the administration and destination of assets seized and confiscated from organized crime (*Agenzia nazionale per l’amministrazione e la destinazione dei beni sequestrati e confiscati*

alla criminalità organizzata - ANBSC) was created.⁸⁸ Under the Ministry of the Interior, it manages, in cooperation with the judicial authority, the entire process of seizing and reallocating real estate, movable assets, and businesses from organized crime, ensuring their return to communities for social or institutional use. The ANBSC is headquartered in Rome and has local regional offices, it supports judicial authorities, resolves issues, and directly oversees assets from confiscation to final destination.

The Agency's mission is to return assets confiscated from the mafias to the communities affected by organized crime. During the "judicial" phase, from seizure to confiscation, it supports the Judicial Authority in managing assets and facilitating their provisional assignment. Its work continues through the "administrative" phase, overseeing assets from confiscation to final allocation. Even after allocation, the Agency monitors their proper use to ensure effective social and legal reintegration, and may revoke allocations in cases of misuse. By coordinating with all involved actors, the Agency plays a key role in reinforcing the visible presence of State institutions, promoting legality, and maximizing the social value of confiscated properties.

The Destination of Real Estate

Article 48, paragraph three, of the Anti-Mafia Code⁸⁹ regulates the destination of confiscated real estate. Assets can be retained by the State for justice, public order, or governmental purposes; used by the Agency for economic aims; transferred to local authorities for institutional, social, or economic purposes; assigned free of charge to third-sector entities for social use; or sold as a last resort, with priority given to returning property to the affected community.

Case Examples

■ **Suvignano Estate:** The Suvignano estate represents a major victory for legality, a place where social and environmental value is created. It represents the largest confiscation ever carried out in a region of central-northern Italy. The Suvignano Agricultural Company was seized in 1996 from a construction entrepreneur linked to the Sicilian mafia and confiscated by final court decision in 2007. In 2018, the ANBSC transferred its shares and assets to the Tuscan Regional Agency for Agricultural and Forestry Heritage, tasked with promoting public-interest activities such as biodiversity protection and agricultural research. This was the first application of Article 48, paragraph 8-ter of the Anti-Mafia Code, in which an enterprise was allocated by concession rather than sold.

Today, the estate cultivates durum wheat, barley, and oats, and hosts livestock including pigs, sheep, and horses. Two buildings have been converted into agritourism facilities offering around 40 beds and swimming pools. The Suvignano estate also hosts annual initiatives that engage hundreds of young volunteers in cultural and educational activities promoting democracy, legality, and the right to work. In 2023, for instance, high school students took part in a workshop addressing the problem of illegal labour recruitment and exploitation in Italy.⁹⁰

Other initiatives include discussions and roundtables on the Tuscan model of territorial governance for the social and institutional re-use of confiscated assets, highlighting how collaboration between local authorities, the region, and civil society organizations functions in practice.⁹¹ In addition, the property includes a "Path of Legality," which is a one-hour

guided route through the estate, marked by symbolic signs highlighting Suvignano's history, anti-mafia culture, and agro-forestry activities. It is conceived as a "Path of Awareness and Responsibility": inclusive and multimedia, with signs in Braille and QR codes for further online resources. Visiting this place is both meaningful and necessary. It is important to recognize that such beauty was once in the hands of the mafia, and it represents a commitment to ensuring it does not happen again. One of the intrinsic responsibilities of this confiscated property is to develop projects that also foster productive economic activities, because economic sustainability is a cornerstone of legality.

The estate also houses the "Hall of Legality," dedicated to Giovanni Falcone, symbolically located in what was once the residence of the mafia boss from whom the property was seized. Suvignano hosts testimonies from victims of organized crime in Italy, giving them space to share their stories and experiences in the fight against organized crime.⁹² The estate also features a restored ancient church and, of particular historical and architectural importance, the "hunting lodge": a four-story 19th-century villa built by noble Sienese families, now in urgent need of restoration.

To address this, the managers have applied for funding under European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and the Development and Cohesion Fund (FSC). These resources support projects ranging from renovating confiscated properties for civic re-use to strengthening institutional capacity, fostering legal education, and promoting social inclusion. Access to such funds would provide a vital boost, extend production chains and create jobs.

However, under government Resolution 61/2020 (National Strategy for the Enhancement of Confiscated Assets through Cohesion Policies - Plan for the Enhancement of Exemplary Confiscated Assets in Southern Italy and Allocation of FSC 2014–2020 Resources), funding is currently restricted to exemplary assets in Southern Italy. Amending this provision would make it possible to extend support to properties across the country, including the Suvignano estate, which stands as a powerful symbol of the State's reclaiming of assets in the fight against the mafia.

■ **Gym of Legality:** Located near Rome, the over 1,800-square-metre building was confiscated under the Anti-Mafia Code in 2018, following seizure proceedings that begun in 2016, from individuals involved in money laundering and connected to Roman mafia families. Already at the seizure stage, a memorandum of understanding was signed in 2017 between the court, the Region, and the NGO Asilo Savoia to implement the social inclusion project "Talent and Tenacity: Growing in Legality". After renovation works, the building was inaugurated in 2019 as the "Gym of Legality". Following the property's confiscation, administration passed to the ANBSC, which in 2023 transferred it to the Municipality of Rome for final allocation. The gym operates as a startup delivering sports and social activities to the local community, including martial arts, dance and fitness.⁹³

On the fifth anniversary of its inauguration, under the same project and with authorization from the Rome Court, a 20-year renewable lease agreement was signed to secure the continued use of the property for socially

oriented sports activities. The Gym became a symbolic centre for the territory's revitalization, also creating employment opportunities for young athletes, developing their skills as instructors and personal trainers. Beyond fostering social interaction and promoting health and well-being, its sports activities serve as a tool for collective growth and cultivate a sense of responsibility toward the community. The gym also provides free programs for disadvantaged groups and ensures high-quality services for all at affordable rates, with special concessions for targeted groups⁹⁴ such as those aged 65 or over, large families and recent mothers.⁹⁵ Since its establishment, over 7,000 people have subscribed to a membership, many of whom have received it free of charge. Notably, the gym offers free martial arts classes for children under a unique national agreement with the Carabinieri Sports Centre. Other key free initiatives include tailored gentle gymnastics for psychiatric patients and regular activities for children at the nearby Save the Children *Punto Luce* centre.⁹⁶

Observations

Legislation against organized crime continually evolves to keep pace with changing criminal dynamics, and the management and allocation of confiscated property reflect this ongoing adaptation. A key goal is to minimize the time between seizure and effective use, which is particularly critical for companies that must operate within market dynamics. Progress has been made in accelerating allocations and ensuring assets are assigned thoughtfully, yet the process is not without challenges: bureaucratic delays often slow the handover of confiscated properties, and some communities are hesitant to use them for fear of reprisal.

The Italian model continues to attract international attention for its scale, complexity, and emphasis on social and institutional re-use, with other countries seeking insight for potential adaptation. Effective management of confiscated assets demonstrates national efficiency and depends on the sustained collaboration of institutions and civil society.



In Ireland, recovered illicit funds, primarily seized by the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB), are generally returned to the state budget rather than being directly re-used for social purposes. In recent years, there has been a policy shift towards ensuring that the proceeds of crime are used to benefit communities.⁹⁷

Legal and Institutional Framework

The Government has approved the Proceeds of Crime and Related Matters Bill 2025 on 8 July 2025 and published it for introduction. It is now proceeding through the Oireachtas (Ireland's national parliament) pending enactment. The Bill represents a significant reform of Ireland's civil asset forfeiture laws. It strengthens the State's powers to identify, freeze, and confiscate assets suspected of being linked to criminal activity, and the Minister has underlined that proceeds of crime should be channelled into community initiatives via the Community Safety Fund.⁹⁸

Ireland's Community Safety Fund, managed by the National Office for Community Safety, ensures that funds seized from criminal networks are reinvested to enhance public safety, well-being, and opportunities. Initiatives include projects tackling anti-social behaviour, drug-related issues, domestic violence, and youth crime. Since its establishment four years ago, the Fund has invested over EUR 7 million in community-focused projects.⁹⁹

Case Examples

In 2024, more than EUR 3 million recovered from Irish gangs was allocated to 33 local community projects across the country, including in Limerick, Cork, and Dublin.

These projects included employing community safety wardens to work with residents and businesses to prevent crime, as well as delivering an eight-week educational programme addressing anti-social behaviour linked to e-scooters, e-bikes, and scramblers.¹⁰⁰

Another example was the hiring of outdoor education instructors to engage disaffected youth, using facilities such as a skatepark to deliver skills-based training.¹⁰¹

Observations

Ireland's evolving approach reflects a growing commitment to ensuring that recovered criminal proceeds are used to support community safety and development. The Community Safety Fund provides a practical mechanism for linking asset recovery with tangible local benefits. As the Proceeds of Crime and Related Matters Bill 2025 is implemented, it will be important to maintain transparency in project selection, monitoring, and impact assessment to reinforce public confidence in the re-use of confiscated assets.



In Kazakhstan, assets returned under the 2023 law are directed toward social needs.¹⁰² In 2023, the Government enacted the new Law on the Return of Illegally Acquired Assets to the State, which ensures that recovered assets serve to benefit the people of Kazakhstan.¹⁰³ Chapter Five, Articles 32 and 33, established a State Fund and Management Company to oversee these resources. The fund supports social and economic initiatives for the benefit of the wider population.¹⁰⁴

Legal and Institutional Framework

Kazakhstan's asset recovery efforts are managed under the 2023 law on the return of illegally-acquired assets. The law regulates the tracing, return, and use of illicit assets and introduces safeguards to ensure transparency and accountability. A key feature is the creation of a State Fund, administered by a State Management Company, to channel recovered funds into public interest projects. The framework aligns with the government's principle that "all returned funds should work for the benefit of Kazakhstanis".¹⁰⁵

Case Examples

According to official releases in mid-2025, funding was approved for 406 social-infrastructure projects financed from returned assets, with 333 already underway; subsequent updates put the approved allocation at about KZT 318 billion. Key initiatives include:

- **The construction of 43 new schools** across the country benefiting approximately 55,000 students funded by assets recovered from corrupt officials.¹⁰⁶
- **The construction of 16 socially significant facilities, including seven schools** (one of them a music school), two sports complexes,

two kindergartens, a multifunctional hospital, a hostel, and a regional ambulance centre.¹⁰⁷

- **The inauguration of a medical clinic** in Arnasai, in June 2025, built with confiscated assets. Equipped with modern technical devices, the clinic can accommodate up to 45 patients and serve over 2,000 residents in the rural area.¹⁰⁸



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- **A former luxury residence** in Astana was transformed into a psychological and pedagogical centre for children, while a large estate was renovated into a free summer camp for children from low-income families. The camp can host up to 1,400 children per session, serving over 7,000 each year.¹⁰⁹
- **The approval of two flagship projects** by the Office of the Prime Minister, which include the establishment of a rehabilitation centre for children with musculoskeletal disorders in Astana, and a vocational training centre in Almaty aimed at supporting approximately 400 individuals with special needs.¹¹⁰

International Recovery of Illicit Assets

In terms of international recovery, Switzerland returned over USD 160 million linked to illicitly-acquired assets to Kazakhstan in 2007 and 2012.

In 2007, Switzerland repatriated an initial tranche of about USD 115 million in bribery-related funds frozen in Geneva. To ensure integrity and public benefit, a tripartite agreement was signed between Switzerland, Kazakhstan, and the World Bank, with the United States also involved in the oversight process.

The agreement led to the creation of the BOTA Foundation, an entity independent from unilateral government control or influence.¹¹¹

The funds were transferred in instalments to the Foundation, which was overseen by a board of trustees. Disbursements could be suspended at Switzerland's request in cases of suspected mismanagement.

The agreement also provided for the establishment of two supporting measures:

- The Public Finance Management Review Programme, implemented by Kazakhstan with World Bank support over five years to assess and improve fiscal planning and governance; and
- Kazakhstan's implementation of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative Programme, also supported by the World Bank, to strengthen transparency in the natural resources sector.

The BOTA Foundation focused on programmes for disadvantaged youth, including:¹¹²

- Subsidizing youth apprenticeships to facilitate entry into the labour market;
- Providing scholarships and conditional cash

transfers to young people from low-income families; and

- Awarding grants to local and international NGOs.

Through a separate agreement, the World Bank provided technical assistance to BOTA in areas such as procurement, financial management, grant systems, and strategic planning. As a result, BOTA ultimately benefited over 208,000 people, improving access to education, health, and social services, and strengthening local institutional capacity.¹¹³

Despite its success, the Foundation-based approach proved administratively complex.

Consequently, in 2012, Switzerland directly mandated the World Bank to manage the return and use of an additional USD 48 million. These funds stemmed from a separate money laundering case and were returned as part of a settlement agreement. The recovered assets were earmarked for initiatives such as improving energy efficiency in public buildings, including hospitals and schools.¹¹⁴

Observations

Kazakhstan offers a strong example of how recovered assets can be reinvested in society. The country has pursued foundation-led and internationally supervised models. In both approaches, Kazakh state institutions were not given direct control over the returned assets. Instead, funds were managed by either an independent foundation or the World Bank, ensuring international oversight and accountability.

Libya represents a unique example of a country with an exceptionally large volume of stolen assets, primarily located in foreign jurisdictions and linked to former leader Muammar Gaddafi and his close associates. Current estimates suggest that more than USD 60 billion in stolen Libyan assets are located in foreign jurisdictions. However, Libya's persistent political fragmentation and institutional instability, combined with international sanctions, pose major challenges for the safe and effective return of these assets.

Legal and Institutional Framework

To address these challenges, Libya established the Libyan Asset Recovery and Management Office (LARMO) in 2019 through Decision No. 1496.¹¹⁵ LARMO is the national entity tasked with tracing, recovering, and managing stolen assets. Acknowledging the risks associated with returning assets directly to a fragile environment, LARMO is currently drafting, with the support of the EU and UNICRI, a Libyan Phased Repatriation Fund (LPRF). The LPRF aims to provide a secure and transparent platform for both receiving and protecting recovered assets, from which economic and social projects for the benefit of the Libyan people can be funded.

Purpose of the distribution(s):

- Limited amounts may be reserved to support the work of the LARMO; and
- Support for Libyan social, economic, and humanitarian projects, according to established priority needs of the country.

Structure of the Fund:

- A decision-making body, the "Board", with veto powers envisaged for the Chairman, as well as representatives from the East, South and

West of Libya, and a United Nations or other international organization official;

- A "Committee", tasked with receiving and considering distribution applications for the funding of Libyan social, economic and humanitarian projects, and making recommendations to the Board on such applications.

The draft LPRF includes the process and content for applications for funding, based on defined assessments and related criteria, monitoring and reporting systems, as well as other more in-depth information on the appointment and role of the entities and individuals involved.

Case Example: Cultural Asset Recovery

The recovery and return of cultural assets carry a symbolic, cultural, and social value that goes far beyond their material worth. While this may not seem directly aligned with the concept of social re-use, restoring cultural heritage can be just as essential to a community's healing and identity as building a hospital is to its physical well-being.

It restores dignity, reinforces cultural continuity, and fosters a shared sense of belonging – foundations upon which sustainable, inclusive development can be built.

In 2018, Libya signed an MoU with the United States on cooperation in the field of the return of cultural property.¹¹⁶

While the primary goal of the MoU is to facilitate the return of stolen Libyan cultural artefacts, it also brings broader benefits. Notably, the United States committed to providing technical assistance to the Libyan government to help safeguard its cultural heritage, in line with the 1970 UNESCO Convention.¹¹⁷



© Libyan Asset Recovery and Management Office - Ceremony for the Repatriation of Libyan Cultural Artifacts

A successful example of this is when the United States announced the return of Libyan cultural goods, valued at more than USD 500,000 in early 2022. The 'Bearded Man' and the 'Veiled Head of a Lady', which are dated between 300-400 B.C., were both looted from Cyrenaica in the 1980s and 1990s. Thanks to the investigation carried out by the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, its Antiquities Trafficking Unit and US Homeland Security Investigations, the pieces were successfully repatriated to Libya, with support from UNICRI.¹¹⁸

The repatriation ceremony, which took place in Tripoli in March 2022, represented a positive opportunity to raise awareness and give visibility to the repatriation of illicitly-obtained cultural assets. It also highlighted the importance of the international fight against the trafficking of antiquities. The statues are now on display at the Libyan National Museum,

for the benefit of the wider public, who now have access to this invaluable shared cultural heritage.

Observations

Libya's case illustrates both the potential and complexity of asset recovery in conflict-affected environments, highlighting how the experience of asset recovery can serve as a valuable tool for national reconciliation.

The development of the LPRF signals a proactive attempt to ensure transparent and accountable use of returned assets, even before actual repatriation takes place. It also highlights the importance of involving international partners and designing transparent distribution frameworks that reflect national inclusivity and public trust. In parallel, the country's engagement in recovering cultural heritage demonstrates that the social re-use of assets can extend beyond financial considerations, reinforcing national identity.

Luxembourg has developed a framework that channels the proceeds of confiscated assets into projects for public benefit, following an indirect social re-use model, whereby confiscated assets are sold and the proceeds directed to finance social or public interest projects, rather than transferring the physical asset itself to a social purpose. This approach aligns with the EU's confiscation and asset recovery policy, which encourages Member States to ensure that criminal proceeds are reinvested into society.¹¹⁹

Legal and Institutional Framework

Luxembourg's system began in 1992 with the creation of the *Fonds de lutte contre le trafic de stupéfiants* (Fund to Combat Drug Trafficking), which earmarked confiscated proceeds from drug trafficking cases for prevention, rehabilitation, and other crime-related measures.¹²⁰ In 2010, the fund's scope was expanded and renamed the *Fonds de lutte contre certaines formes de criminalité* (Fund to Combat Certain Forms of Criminality), to also include proceeds from money laundering and other serious offences.

The fund takes the form of a public establishment with legal personality under the Ministry of Finance, meaning that it is an independent public law entity with its own budget and the ability to act in its own name.¹²¹

The Fund and the *Bureau de gestion des avoirs* (BGA) are separate institutions with distinct mandates: the Fund allocates money, while the BGA handles asset management and liquidation.

The Law of 22 June 2022 created the BGA within the Ministry of Justice. It is a body responsible for the physical and financial management of seized and confiscated assets, including real estate, vehicles, valuables, bank accounts,

cryptocurrencies, and cash.

The BGA safeguards asset value, arranges sales or destruction, and transfers the proceeds to the Fund or to the State treasury.¹²² The Fund is a dedicated public establishment whose resources are earmarked for crime-prevention, enforcement, and rehabilitation projects, and it is through this Fund that NGOs and other organizations receive financing for social re-use purposes.¹²³ In comparison, the State Treasury (*Trésorerie de l'État*) is responsible for the government's general budget, where funds are pooled with all other state revenues and can be spent on any public service or priority, such as infrastructure, healthcare, education, social welfare, defence, or general administration.¹²⁴

Case Examples

■ *Stëmm vun der Strooss* – “Sanem Caddy”

Project: The Fund committed and disbursed EUR 400,000 in 2023 to this initiative, which processes surplus food into meals for people in need, while providing job opportunities for socially disadvantaged individuals.¹²⁵

■ *Jugend an Drogenhëllef* – “Les Niches”

Supervised Housing: In 2023, approximately EUR 115,700 was committed to support temporary housing for people recovering from drug dependency, with support with rental deposits and guarantees to help them access stable accommodation.¹²⁶

■ *Laboratoire National de Santé (LNS)* – **Drug-Checking and Wastewater Analysis:**

The LNS received funding to operate mobile drug-checking services, which allow individuals to anonymously test substances for dangerous additives or contaminants, and to conduct wastewater analysis for monitoring community-level drug consumption trends.¹²⁷

■ *Administration des Douanes et Accises* –

Special-purpose vehicle: Customs authorities obtained funding to acquire a special operations vehicle.¹²⁸

Observations

Luxembourg's framework establishes a clear division of responsibilities between the BGA, which manages and liquidates confiscated

assets, and the Fund, which allocates the resulting proceeds. This separation enhances accountability and allows each body to focus on its core mandate.

The Fund's targeted grants reflect a sustained commitment to prevention, rehabilitation, and law enforcement initiatives, ensuring that the value of confiscated assets is reinvested in social initiatives.



The Republic of Moldova (hereinafter “Moldova”) provides a compelling example of bilateral asset return cooperation grounded in transparency and social impact. In line with Article 57(5) of the UNCAC, which encourages case-by-case agreements for the final disposal of confiscated property, in 2021 Moldova and the United Kingdom (UK) signed an MoU to guide the return of stolen State funds.¹²⁹ The agreement emphasizes both accountability and the reinvestment of recovered assets into socially beneficial programmes.

Legal and Institutional Framework

The MoU between the UK and Moldova set out the terms under which GBP 458,068 in confiscated assets were to be returned and repurposed. These funds had been seized from Luca Filat, son of former Moldovan Prime Minister Vladimir Filat, following a UK court decision in 2019.¹³⁰

The judgment was based on an investigation by the UK National Crime Agency (NCA) and on Luca Filat’s inability to demonstrate the legitimate origin of the assets. The court concluded, on the balance of probabilities, that the funds stemmed from his father’s criminal conduct in Moldova.

The MoU outlined specific arrangements regarding both the monitoring and the disbursement of the returned funds. In particular, the MoU required that the returned funds be used to support social assistance in the Republic of Moldova, benefiting people with severe disabilities.¹³¹

The agreement also prohibited any direct or indirect benefit to individuals involved in the underlying corruption, including legal entities linked to former Prime Minister Filat.

This provision established clear boundaries regarding the use of the repatriated assets and contributed to enhancing public perception and the broader sense of fairness.¹³²

Case Example

The confiscated GBP 458,068 were allocated toward the hiring of more than 560 full-time personal assistants in Moldova. These assistants supported individuals with severe disabilities by providing services such as personal hygiene assistance, household management, and help with daily tasks, for a period of four months.

To ensure transparency and accountability, the MoU appointed a local CSO, Keystone Moldova, to carry out independent monitoring in an effort to further enhance transparency and accountability.

The agreement established clear guidelines on how such reporting is to be performed, namely through intermediate monitoring reports, as well as a final report.¹³³

Observations

This MoU is a positive example of cross-border cooperation, which adds credibility to the Moldovan State, by laying out the exact and transparent procedures and rules on how recovered assets will be utilized and managed. This is done, *inter alia*, by transparently outlining which entity is responsible for specific tasks, as well as by allowing the public to easily access information on how such assets are being liquidated and distributed.

The independent monitoring role played by a CSO also illustrates how civil society participation can reinforce accountability and public trust.

New Zealand has developed a targeted approach to the reinvestment of confiscated criminal assets through the Proceeds of Crime Fund, placing a strong emphasis on harm reduction and community resilience. Rather than establishing a system for the direct re-use of physical assets, New Zealand focuses on redirecting liquidated proceeds to fund strategic, evidence-based projects that address the root causes and consequences of serious and organized crime.

Legal and Institutional Framework

The Proceeds of Crime Fund, created in 2009 to distribute assets forfeited under the Criminal Proceeds (Recovery) Act, is administered by the Justice Sector Directorate within the Ministry of Justice, and its performance is overseen by the Secretary of Justice and the Ministry of Justice.¹³⁴

The purpose is to use confiscated funds for a wide range of targeted projects that aim to reduce violent crime. Specifically, interventions should tackle drug-related harm, retail crime (as a prevention of violent crime) and organized crime, including money laundering and terrorism financing.¹³⁵ The Fund’s Terms of Reference (ToR) outline roles and responsibilities, funding criteria and eligibility, as well as reporting requirements, such as submitting performance and progress reports every six months.¹³⁶ Sources indicate that through asset confiscation, the proceeds of crime contributed to funding of approximately USD 30 million in community programmes in 2021.¹³⁷

Case Examples

- **Methamphetamine Harm Reduction – Bay of Plenty:** This initiative led by the Ministry of Health and financed through the Proceeds of Crime Fund for the Bay of Plenty with a budget of over USD 4 million, applied a community-based and holistic approach combining clinical

and healing treatment.¹³⁸ The objective of the programme was to substantially reduce the harm caused by the consumption of methamphetamine, as well as to work with local police to increase focus on prevention. In detail, the programme facilitated the renovation of a small healthcare facility with psychologists and medical professionals available 24/7.¹³⁹

- **Surf Therapy for At-Risk Youth:** In 2022, New Zealand police received over USD 1 million through the Fund to implement the “Live for More Surf Therapy Programme” initiative.¹⁴⁰ The programme helps young people overcome barriers to traditional support by offering a welcoming and empowering experience, through a combination of surfing with structured therapeutic activities to improve mental, physical, and social well-being.¹⁴¹ The initiative also offers counselling, as well as the enhancement of practical life navigation skills, mentoring and cultural sessions to support young men in building positive life pathways and reducing risks of justice involvement or substance abuse.¹⁴²

Observations

New Zealand’s experience illustrates how centralized funds can effectively channel confiscated criminal proceeds into community-led interventions. The country’s model ensures that recovered funds are strategically reinvested in areas of high social need, with a particular focus on evidence-based harm-reduction strategies. Community-driven initiatives, such as those addressing substance misuse and youth empowerment, highlight the added value of involving local actors in programme design and delivery. Transparent reporting and oversight further reinforce public confidence that confiscated assets are being used to deliver tangible social benefits.

Nigeria has been involved in several landmark international asset recovery cases. In the early 2000s, Switzerland became the first country to return stolen assets to Nigeria in the context of two high-profile corruption cases involving former Head of State General Sani Abacha and his son. In total, Switzerland returned over USD 700 million under a framework with the participation of both the World Bank and CSOs to monitor the use of the funds.¹⁴³ This pioneering initiative marked a turning point in promoting transparency and accountability.

Since then, Nigeria has entered into several bilateral and multilateral agreements through which assets have supported programmes aimed at improving social security, enhancing the health and education sectors, as well as key infrastructure, such as electricity in rural areas and better road access.¹⁴⁴

Legal Framework and Agreements

The repatriation of the first Abacha asset return in the early 2000s was governed by a Memorandum of Understanding between Switzerland, Nigeria, and the World Bank, and was supported by Swiss restitution legislation. This legal arrangement mandated that the funds be used for development purposes and included provisions for independent monitoring by the World Bank and Nigerian CSOs.¹⁴⁵

The 2017 repatriation of approximately USD 320 million from Switzerland followed a tripartite agreement between Nigeria, Switzerland, and the World Bank. Under this agreement, the World Bank acted as the supervisor of the assets, along with CSOs as a third-party monitoring mechanism.¹⁴⁶ The funds were distributed in tranches to finance a cash-transfer project aimed at strengthening

social security for Nigeria's most vulnerable populations.¹⁴⁷

A separate tripartite agreement was signed in 2020 between Nigeria, the United States, and the Island of Jersey, for the repatriation of USD 300 million in assets. Article 3 of the agreement indicates that the returned assets must be used solely to finance specific projects, as well as fees in relation to monitoring.¹⁴⁸ The infrastructure projects, as agreed by the Nigerian National Assembly, are the construction of the Lagos to Ibadan expressway, the Abuja-Kano Road, and the second Niger bridge.¹⁴⁹

Case Examples

- **Abacha I:** Over USD 700 million was returned from Switzerland in several tranches between 2005 and 2006 under a framework involving World Bank and CSO monitoring.¹⁵⁰
- **Abacha II:** in 2017, USD 320 million was returned through a tripartite agreement between Nigeria, Switzerland, and the World Bank); and was used to finance targeted cash transfers.
- **Jersey Agreement (2020):** over USD 300 million was repatriated and earmarked for major infrastructure projects (Lagos–Ibadan Expressway, Abuja–Kano Road, Second Niger Bridge).¹⁵¹
- **Ireland MoU (2020):** Over USD 6 million linked to criminal activities perpetrated by the former Nigerian Head of State was allocated to co-finance the same three infrastructure projects outlined in the Jersey-Nigeria agreement. However, unlike the Jersey-Nigeria agreement, this MoU does not specify which parts of the projects were to be funded.¹⁵²
- **US Return (Bayelsa):** USD 950,000 was repatriated for healthcare infrastructure.¹⁵³



Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Involvement

Civil society has played an important role in monitoring recovered assets. In 2018, the Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ), through its Monitoring of Recovered Assets in Nigeria Through Transparency and Accountability (MANTRA) project, coordinated large-scale oversight of cash transfers across 11 states, involving more than 45 CSOs and reaching over 30,800 beneficiaries. A second phase followed between 2019 and 2020, covering 19 states and the capital region. This phase involved 112 CSOs, regional partners, and an audit firm, with a sample of 43,152 beneficiaries (13% of the

total). These monitoring efforts were specifically linked to the 2017 return of approximately USD 320 million from Switzerland under the Abacha II case, with funds disbursed through the National Social Investment Programme.¹⁵⁴

Observations

Overall, the Abacha I and II cases set an important precedent for the recovery of stolen assets. ANEEJ and other CSOs played a key role in fostering trust in the transparent use of these recovered funds, helping to reassure foreign jurisdictions and, in turn, contributing to further asset returns. These cases also highlighted the value of third-party monitoring, clearly defined frameworks for repurposing, and robust reporting requirements.

Peru has developed a robust legal framework for asset recovery, most notably through the 2018 enactment of the *Ley de Extinción de Dominio* (Non-Conviction-Based Confiscation Law), which enables prosecutors to recover illicit assets without a criminal conviction.¹⁵⁵

Since its adoption, the law has been applied to a series of high-profile cases.¹⁵⁶

Legal and Institutional Framework

In Peru, the *Programa Nacional de Bienes Incautados* (PRONABI), under the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, is the national agency responsible for managing seized and confiscated assets.

PRONABI receives, registers, safeguards, and disposes of these assets through sale, leasing, destruction, or allocation, and it publishes monthly updates on the assets under its administration, including details by region, type of asset, and type of crime.¹⁵⁷

PRONABI operates independently from investigative and prosecutorial bodies.

Peruvian legislation permits *interim* sales of seized assets with fewer procedural constraints, and PRONABI implements these provisions as part of its asset management functions. When *interim* sale is not possible, the law allows interim use, provided that the beneficiary institution offers guarantees to prevent depreciation and protect State interests.¹⁵⁸

Confiscated funds in Peru have also been used to strengthen the infrastructure of the criminal justice system for asset recovery, effectively self-financing the country's capacity to recover stolen assets and creating a multiplier effect in future recoveries.¹⁵⁹

Case Examples

■ PRONABI Vehicle Allocation – Nationwide:

In May 2025, PRONABI assigned 16 confiscated vehicles to various public institutions. These were provided “in custody” to the Peruvian National Police, the Superior Courts of Justice of Lima East and Lima North, Integrated Health Networks in Aguaytía, Cusco Sur, Jaén, and Cajabamba, the Hospital of Pampas, and the municipalities of Huacho, Huarochirí, El Parco, and Ayavi. This allocation strengthened institutional capacities in public security, justice, and health.¹⁶⁰

■ PRONABI's Eight-Year Achievements:

Since its creation, PRONABI has been described by the Minister of Justice and Human Rights as a “strategic tool” in the fight against organized crime and in “turning illicit activity into opportunity.” Over eight years, it has handed over 1,800 assets to more than 32,000 institutional beneficiaries, benefiting over five million citizens, especially in rural, remote, and disadvantaged areas. Achievements include managing more than 16,000 assets, generating over PEN 17 million through auctions in the past two years, converting 13 aircraft into scrap metal for the State, and transferring more than PEN 32 million to support anti-corruption and anti-organized crime measures.¹⁶¹

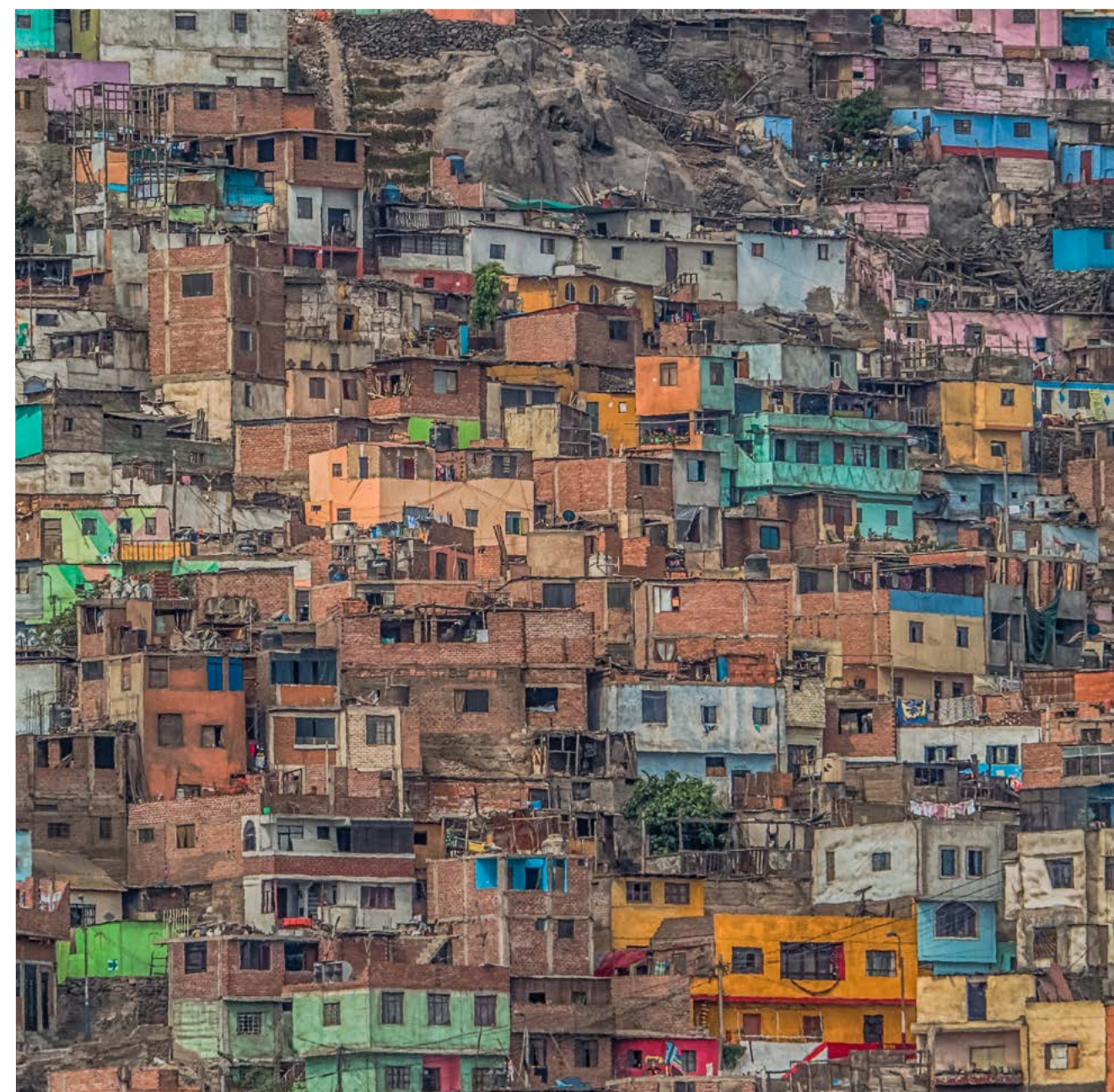
Observations

Peru's asset recovery system has demonstrated strong legal and operational capacity, with PRONABI playing a central role in strengthening public institutions and delivering tangible benefits to communities, including those in rural and disadvantaged areas. These achievements highlight how asset

recovery can be used not only to reinforce the justice system but also to generate visible social value.

At the same time, the 2024 amendments to the *Ley de Extinción de Dominio* introduced procedural and scope changes which, according to some experts, may affect the law's effectiveness in certain cases of corruption and

organized crime.¹⁶² Looking ahead, developing a formal mechanism for transferring confiscated assets to non-governmental organizations, community projects, or other social initiatives could broaden the public benefits derived from asset recovery, ensuring that the system continues to deliver inclusive outcomes.



Romania has developed a comprehensive legal framework to ensure that confiscated assets are channelled towards public and social benefit. The establishment of the National Agency for the Administration of Seized Assets (*Agencia Națională de Administrare a Bunurilor Indisponibilizate*, ANABI) in 2015 marked a significant step in strengthening asset recovery and re-use policies.

Legal and Institutional Framework

Law No. 318/2015 created ANABI as a specialized agency for managing seized and confiscated assets.¹⁶³ In line with EU Directive 2014/42 on the freezing and confiscation of instrumentalities and proceeds of crime, Article 35 of Law No. 318/2015 also allows for confiscated real estate assets to be transferred free of charge to associations and foundations active in social fields.¹⁶⁴ Through Law No. 230/2022, Romania established the National Crime Support Prevention Mechanism to increase the social impact of confiscated assets, with a focus on victim compensation and funding related projects.¹⁶⁵ This is the mechanism through which resources are allocated to implement activities and projects with a focus on legal education, crime prevention, and victim assistance, as well as to enhance the capacity of asset recovery institutions. According to Article 37(2) of Law No. 318/2015, the funds from the mechanism are allocated as follows:

- a) 20% to the Ministry of Education;
- b) 20% to the Ministry of Health;
- c) 15% to the Ministry of Internal Affairs;
- d) 15% to the Public Ministry;
- e) 15% to the Ministry of Justice; and
- f) 15% to associations and foundations

engaged in social activities and victim support.

Case Examples

■ **Villa in Traian, Bacău County:** A villa valued at approximately EUR 4 million was confiscated in a case of tax fraud and embezzlement and transferred free of charge to the municipality of Traian. Identified for social re-use in 2024, it is the first confiscated building in Romania to be officially allocated for conversion into a home for the elderly. In collaboration with local NGOs, the municipality plans to develop residential and support services for senior citizens, although bureaucratic procedures and the need for renovation funding have delayed implementation.¹⁶⁶

■ **Project-Based Funding to Local Associations:** ANABI manages a range of grants that support civil society initiatives.

■ **It Starts with You:** Education, Prevention, Action against Crime aimed to help young people develop the skills and knowledge needed to recognize, prevent, and report incidents of violence, drug use, and trafficking in persons. Activities included 20 training sessions, a visit to the Parliament in Bucharest, and a flash mob titled, It Starts with You: Promote Respect for the Law! to raise awareness on the risks associated with violent behaviour, drug use, and trafficking.¹⁶⁷

■ **Justice for Victims with Intellectual or Psychosocial Disabilities** aimed to support over 200 people with disabilities, as well as victims of trafficking in persons. The project delivered tailored services and advocacy campaigns.¹⁶⁸ The final conference of the project offered a professional platform for dialogue, bringing together experts, public institution representatives, and civil society

actors to identify legislative and operational barriers that limit victims' effective access to their legally guaranteed rights.¹⁶⁹

Observations

Romania's model combines direct allocation of confiscated assets to public institutions and NGOs with grant-based funding for targeted projects. The legal provisions enabling the free transfer of real estate to associations and foundations encourage long-term social re-use,

while the grant programmes broaden the reach of recovered asset benefits.

The case of the Villa in Traian, illustrates both the potential and the challenges of this approach. While the planned conversion into a home for the elderly could provide an important community service, bureaucratic procedures and funding needs highlight the practical obstacles that can delay implementation and may also affect public perception of the justice system's effectiveness in delivering benefits to citizens.

Serbia has established a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for the seizure and confiscation of criminal assets. Confiscated properties and goods have been repurposed for public and social use, including conversion into kindergartens and the reassignment of vehicles to state authorities. Due to its geographical position, Serbia is a key transit route for drug and trafficking in persons.¹⁷⁰ Despite ongoing challenges, the country has demonstrated how criminally derived assets can be successfully repurposed for public benefit. International organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)¹⁷¹ and the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC)¹⁷² have played an important role in promoting awareness, facilitating policy dialogue, and supporting institutional engagement around the social re-use of confiscated assets.

Legal and Institutional Framework

Serbia's legal framework for the seizure and confiscation of criminal assets is overseen by the Ministry of Justice's Directorate for the Administration of Seized Assets.¹⁷³ Under Serbian law, confiscated and seized assets may be re-used for social purposes. While the framework exists, CSOs have yet to be significantly involved compared with other countries.¹⁷⁴

Case Examples

■ NURDOR's House of Hope – Belgrade:

A villa formerly owned by a convicted drug trafficker¹⁷⁵ was confiscated by the Serbian authorities.

The property was awarded for temporary use to the National Association of Parents of Children with Cancer (NURDOR),¹⁷⁶

a Serbian NGO dedicated to supporting children diagnosed with cancer and their families.¹⁷⁷ The villa was transformed into a facility for families in need of accommodation while their children undergo medical treatment. It provides free accommodation for families from outside Belgrade whose children are undergoing cancer treatment in Belgrade. In addition to housing, the facility offers psychosocial support, allowing children to receive outpatient therapy while staying in a supportive, family-centred environment. This initiative was made possible through a partnership among state institutions, NURDOR, and private donors, and remains a vital component of Serbia's paediatric oncology support system.¹⁷⁸

- **Rehabilitation School – Novi Sad:** In 2014, one of the villas confiscated from a drug lord in Novi Sad was officially handed over by Serbia's Directorate for the Administration of Seized

Assets to the Elementary and Secondary Boarding School Milan Petrovic. The property was repurposed to provide support to children with developmental disabilities and their families. The facility, supported by the Ministry of Justice and the City of Novi Sad, provides week-long stays for children, their siblings, and parents, where they learn life skills together in a supportive environment.¹⁷⁹

Observations

Serbia's experience illustrates how a robust legal framework for confiscation can enable the effective social re-use of assets.

Although implementation remains limited in scale, several initiatives highlight the value of promoting coordination among government institutions, civil society, and international partners.

Sustaining these efforts will require ongoing capacity-building and strengthened cross-sectoral collaboration.



© NURDOR – National Association of Parents of Children with Cancer



To address the persistent challenges of drug trafficking and its proceeds, Spain established a dedicated legal mechanism for managing and repurposing confiscated assets. The focus has been on ensuring that asset seized in connection with drug-related crimes are returned to society in meaningful ways.

Legal and Institutional Framework

In 2003, Spain created the Fund for Confiscated Assets from Illicit Drug Trafficking (*Fondo de Bienes Decomisados*), managed by the Ministry of Health through the National Plan on Drugs. The Fund is responsible for selling, auctioning, or transferring assets confiscated in drug trafficking cases.¹⁸⁰

Case Examples

- **Laion Sailboat – Galicia:** The Laion sailboat is a notable example of asset re-use in Spain, illustrating how confiscated property can be transformed into a tool for social inclusion. Originally linked to drug trafficking profits, the sailboat was directly transferred by court decision to the Galician Confederation of Persons with Disabilities (*Confederación*

Galega de Persoas con Discapacidade - COGAMI). This arrangement enabled COGAMI to make long-term investments, such as installing cranes to make the boat accessible to individuals with reduced mobility. Today, the sailboat is used for taking people with disabilities on sailing trips along the Galician coast, promoting leisure and social integration.¹⁸¹

- **Villa in El Campell – Alicante:** A confiscated villa previously used by a drug trafficker was temporarily reassigned to the municipality of El Campell. However, due to limited use, the mayor has expressed concern that the State may reclaim the property for auction.¹⁸²

Observations

Spain's framework for the management of confiscated drug assets has made their social re-use possible. However, cases such as that of El Campell underscore that temporary or uncertain access to assets may prevent local authorities or organizations from investing in their use. In contrast, the Laion sailboat demonstrates how permanent or long-term asset transfers can empower organizations to turn confiscated assets into valuable community projects.



© COGAMI



In the United Kingdom, the proceeds from criminal confiscation are often indirectly reinvested in crime prevention, victim support, and community safety initiatives.

Legal and Institutional Framework

The recovery and reinvestment of illicitly-acquired assets are governed by two primary mechanisms: the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) and the Asset Recovery Incentivization Scheme (ARIS). POCA is a UK-wide legislative framework enabling law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies, including police forces, His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HM Revenue & Customs – HMRC), the Crown Prosecution Service, and the National Crime Agency, to identify, freeze, and confiscate the proceeds of unlawful activity in both civil and criminal proceedings.¹⁸³

ARIS determines how recovered assets are redistributed to the agencies involved in the recovery process. The Home Office encourages these agencies to reinvest the funds to strengthen asset recovery efforts or to support projects benefiting communities, such as through the Security Industry Authority and its "Grants for Good Causes" programme.¹⁸⁴ Once police forces receive their share under ARIS, it is for the local Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to determine how the funds are allocated. In practice, this has led many PCCs to establish locally-administered funds, such as the Giving Back Fund in Greater Manchester, the Community Cashback Fund in Merseyside, and the Active Citizens Fund in the West Midlands.

Case Examples

- **Greater Manchester:** Since April 2022, the Greater Manchester Police (GMP) recovered over GBP 15.7 million in criminal assets

through its Economic Crime Unit. Through ARIS, GBP 5.1 million was returned to GMP in 2022–2023 alone.¹⁸⁵ A portion of these funds is reinvested directly into local communities through GMP's Giving Back Fund, which provides grants of up to GBP 20,000 to NGOs aimed at preventing and reducing crime, supporting victims, and improving public safety.

The fund prioritizes projects that demonstrate measurable community benefit, particularly in areas affected by economic crime.¹⁸⁶ Funded initiatives have included youth empowerment and mental health programmes, critical search and rescue services in rural areas, and support to young children, as well as children affected by disabilities, through various initiatives. Others offer early intervention workshops on gang exploitation and youth violence, reintegration support for deaf individuals after prison, and the use of angling to support those suffering from mental health challenges.¹⁸⁷

- **London:** In 2023, the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime in London approved funding to support the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Cryptocurrency Investigation Team through the Home Office's ARIS. The funding enables the MPS to enhance its capacity to investigate and seize criminal cryptocurrency assets by supporting additional police staff, training, equipment, and licences. This aligns with the Police and Crime Plan 2022–2025, particularly in tackling organized crime and reducing financial incentives for offending. The National Strategic Assessment (2021) identified criminal cryptocurrency use as a high and growing risk. As the UK's financial hub, London faces the largest volume of such activity. The MPS's new team, described as a 'first of its kind' model, is expected to yield a strong return on investment through asset seizures and

inform national policing strategy in the field.¹⁸⁸

- **Merseyside:** In 2024, the PCC and Merseyside Police launched a new round of the Community Cashback Fund, designed to reinvest criminal assets seized under the POCA into communities most affected by serious and organized crime.¹⁸⁹ A total of GBP 100,000 was made available, with grants of up to GBP 5,000 offered to local groups and organizations. Altogether, nearly 10,000 people across Merseyside are expected to benefit from this targeted social re-use of confiscated criminal assets.¹⁹⁰ Projects took place across all boroughs of Merseyside.
- In Knowsley, awareness of disability hate crime was raised through school assemblies, dance was used to encourage cultural inclusion, and refugee-led workshops and language classes supported integration.
- In Liverpool, peace ambassador roles were introduced in primary schools, anti-racism education was delivered, and drop-in sessions were held to improve access to LGBTQ+ services. Additional initiatives addressed hate crime through performance, cultural education, and youth-led discussions, including a theatre piece exploring forced migration.
- In Sefton, projects supported skill-building and social inclusion, promoted positive masculinity among young boys, and offered well-being support and educational workshops for young people.
- In St Helens, affordable support was expanded for those experiencing addiction, social isolation, or homelessness, while activities were organized to help migrants integrate.
- In Wirral, community events were held, anti-racism workshops were delivered, inclusive

fitness programmes were offered for young people with special educational needs, and restorative practices were promoted to raise awareness of hate crime.

- **West Midlands:** The Active Citizens Fund, operated by the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), allocated around GBP 330,000 for 2025, with local policing units awarding grants (up to GBP 5,000) to community groups, charities, and volunteers. One example includes the Birmingham Says No youth choir project, which received over GBP 2,000 to enable young people to produce a professionally-recorded anti-knife crime music video aimed at promoting youth empowerment and public awareness.¹⁹¹
- **Security Industry Authority (SIA):** Since 2019, the SIA has run the Grants for Good Causes programme funded through the ARIS. This initiative redistributes confiscated criminal assets, allowing the SIA to support CSOs working to improve public safety, crime prevention, and community well-being. As of 2025, over GBP 273,000 has been awarded to charities and community interest companies across the UK.¹⁹² The 2023–2024 round of funding allocated GBP 72,000 to seven organizations, focusing on public safety and private security sector support. Through these initiatives, at least 25 unemployed or economically inactive individuals were trained for employment in the private security sector; 24 young people were supported into security jobs, for example through training and placements; 15 volunteers were trained in First Response Emergency Care and equipped for emergencies. Other support included the provision of workshops on personal and online safety for adults suffering from learning disabilities, anti-human trafficking training to

frontline staff at ports and airports, as well as extended support line hours for people walking home alone and 14 workshops teaching young people about the dangers of knife crime.¹⁹³ In 2024–2025, over GBP 15,000 was provided to three charities focused on countering violence against women and girls.¹⁹⁴

- **Scotland:** Launched in 2008, the “CashBack for Communities” initiative redirects criminal assets seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) into programmes for young people aged 10–25, particularly those at risk of antisocial behaviour, recidivists, or from disadvantaged communities most affected by criminality. Since its establishment, around GBP 156 million has been invested, benefiting over one million children and young people across Scotland.¹⁹⁵ In 2022, Fauldhouse experienced a spike in antisocial behaviour including deliberate fires, attacks on emergency services, and threats to local transport; 13 teenagers, already known for repeated charges and disengagement from education or employment, were identified as the main actors. In response, local organizations, with support from “CashBack for Communities”, launched targeted outreach and street-work initiatives in collaboration with Police Scotland, Fire and Rescue Scotland, and the Forestry Commission. These activities focused on positive engagement, such as forest clean-ups and outdoor projects, and notably, none of the young participants have reoffended since.¹⁹⁶ Between April 2023 and March 2024, programme-wide results included around 5,000 young people gaining accreditation in new skills, 200 securing apprenticeships or employment, 300 entering further education, and over 2,000 beginning volunteering.¹⁹⁷

Observations

The UK’s approach demonstrates how social re-use, through reinvestment of confiscated proceeds into community safety and crime prevention, can deliver tangible local benefits. ARIS provides a flexible funding channel, enabling PCCs and other bodies to tailor programmes to local needs.

However, the decentralized model means that outcomes and transparency can vary between jurisdictions. Continued emphasis on public reporting and impact evaluation will be key to maintaining public trust and maximizing the social value of recovered assets.

Scotland’s “CashBack for Communities” programme demonstrates how recovered criminal assets can be systematically reinvested in initiatives that address the root causes of crime and improve community well-being. The combination of targeted interventions and transparent reporting has contributed to outcomes in skills development, employment, and crime prevention.

Despite the ongoing war, Ukraine has continued its efforts to align with EU standards on asset recovery and management, including social re-use. While further progress is still required, the country has already established a dedicated Asset Recovery and Management Agency (ARMA) and adopted legislation in this field. Moreover, Ukraine offers initial examples of how revenues from frozen Russian assets could be directed towards the reconstruction of critical infrastructure. Ukraine's unique situation also offers a reference point for how countries currently enduring conflict may apply mechanisms for social re-use.

Legal framework

The "Law of Ukraine on the National Agency of Ukraine for the Identification, Tracing and Management of Assets Derived from Corruption and Other Crimes" established ARMA.

The Agency is the central executive body with a special status, authorized to develop and implement state policy in identifying and tracing of assets subject to seizure in criminal proceedings, as well as their management.¹⁹⁸ Its key functions include, among others, cooperation with foreign authorities responsible for asset tracing, recovery, and management, as well as engagement with other competent state bodies and relevant international organizations.¹⁹⁹

In 2024, ARMA prepared Draft Law No.11009 to amend Article 21 of its founding law and simplify the transfer of assets under management for socially important and defence-related purposes, such as accommodation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), housing for military personnel and their families, rehabilitation of veterans, and ensuring the readiness of public authorities during martial law. Although the draft was later withdrawn, its provisions were incorporated into

the Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine to Strengthen the Institutional Capacity of the National Agency of Ukraine for Finding, Tracing and Management of Assets Derived from Corruption and Other Crimes and Improve Asset Management Mechanisms" of 18 June 2025, No. 4503-IX.

This 2025 Law introduced significant reforms, including the establishment of an independent audit mechanism, a new competitive selection process for ARMA's leadership with the participation of international experts, and strengthened protocols for asset management.²⁰⁰ It also amended Article 21 of the founding law (covering movable and immovable property, securities, property and other rights) to provide that, in exceptional cases, assets seized in criminal proceedings may be transferred to enterprises, institutions and organizations administered by the Cabinet of Ministers, ministries or other central executive authorities or to companies majority-owned by the State. In certain cases, they may also be transferred to museums, galleries, reserves, libraries or State-owned archives by decision of the Cabinet of Ministers. The definition of "exceptional cases" includes requests from military authorities to use assets for the temporary accommodation of military personnel and IDPs, or for the treatment, rehabilitation, and medical-psychological assistance of the military. ARMA's practical experience under martial law, introduced by Presidential Decree No. 64/2022 of 24 February 2022, highlighted the necessity of such mechanisms to meet urgent social and defence-related needs.

A specific illustration of this is the use of sanatorium-resort institutions, which are an integral part of Ukraine's healthcare system. These facilities provide preventive, medical, and

rehabilitative treatment and represent a valuable national asset with strong potential for supporting the rehabilitation and recovery of military personnel. However, existing shortages limit access to adequate services. By enabling the transfer of seized assets to such purposes, the 2025 reforms allow ARMA to help address these critical gaps. In addition, in 2025 ARMA allocated UAH 2.75 billion (approximately USD 66 million) from the management of seized assets to the Fund for Elimination of the Consequences of Armed Aggression.

These resources were directed to the construction of infrastructure facilities, civil protection shelters, and the restoration of residential and public buildings, as well as the construction of new housing for persons who lost their homes due to military actions, and the building of healthcare facilities and other social projects. Overall, ARMA's asset management activities in 2025 generated UAH 7.13 billion (approximately USD 172 million) in revenues to the State Budget of Ukraine, confirming the practical efficiency of its operations and the significant potential of the institution for the social re-use of assets.

Case examples

Although much of Ukraine's current asset-related efforts are currently focused on reconstruction, there is growing interest in aligning these initiatives more closely with the social re-use model. While the direct confiscation of sovereign assets remains legally complex, emerging legislative frameworks are beginning to provide for this possibility, recognizing the exceptional circumstances at hand. The EU has taken steps in this regard to use the profits generated from frozen Russian funds as collateral for a USD 50 billion loan to support Ukraine's military and reconstruction efforts. The interest earned on the frozen assets is being used to repay the

loan, providing Ukraine with immediate financial resources, to address urgent needs, without waiting for the potential future confiscation of the Russian assets. In particular, this loan is intended to help safeguard economic stability and rebuild critical infrastructure, including, for instance, energy and water networks, transportation, and bridges. In addition, it can be used directly by Ukraine for its military expenditures.²⁰¹

In parallel, the Register of Damage for Ukraine²⁰² was recently established, following sustained advocacy for an international compensation mechanism financed through frozen Russian assets. The Register is tasked with recording all eligible claims, representing an initial step towards the creation of a Compensation Fund, which could serve as the principal instrument for directing these resources to compensate victims.²⁰³

Observations

Ukraine's experience underscores the need for legal and policy frameworks, both national and international, to remain responsive to rapidly evolving contexts, while upholding principles of transparency and inclusiveness, particularly through the engagement of civil society. Strengthening the current approach requires moving beyond the sole reliance on Russian frozen assets, toward a comprehensive model in which all seized, confiscated, and recovered assets are systematically redirected to high-priority development and reconstruction needs. The Ukrainian case further demonstrates the value of timely and innovative policy responses: when urgent financial resources were required, the European Union established a precedent by enabling loans backed by the interest accrued on Russian frozen funds within the Union. Finally, Ukraine's unique situation also provides insight into how countries may wish to consider social re-use in times of conflict.

In 2022, Switzerland and Uzbekistan signed a restitution agreement setting out the framework for the return of USD 131 million confiscated from Gulnara Karimova, the daughter of the former Uzbek president.²⁰⁴ The agreement also applies to any additional assets confiscated in connection with Karimova. In February 2025, Switzerland announced the return of a further USD 182 million under the same mechanism.²⁰⁵

Returned assets are intended to be used for the benefit of the Uzbek people and to advance progress towards the UN 2030 Agenda. They are managed by a UN multi-partner trust fund, the “Uzbekistan Vision 2030 Fund”, with the Swiss Federal Council serving as custodian on behalf of the population of Uzbekistan.²⁰⁶

Legal and Institutional Framework

The restitution agreement is accompanied by detailed Terms of Reference (ToR) that govern the use, monitoring, and reporting of the returned assets. The funds are to be used for the implementation of the Uzbekistan Vision 2030 Fund and cannot be directed towards certain areas, such as large infrastructure projects in the energy, transport, and telecommunications sectors.²⁰⁷

The agreement establishes a monitoring mechanism for the return and disbursement of funds, with related costs covered directly by the assets themselves. This is an important detail that removes any ambiguity regarding which national entity is responsible for financing oversight activities. Accountability provisions require both annual and final narrative and financial reports, with reporting frequency and formats tailored to each implementing entity.²⁰⁸ In terms of transparency, Switzerland and Uzbekistan agreed that all information and

documents relating to the Fund shall be made publicly available on the respective websites. The United Nations Multi-Purpose Trust Fund (MPTF)²⁰⁹ and related²¹⁰ websites provide real-time financial data, including confirmation that disbursements have already begun, as well as access to founding documents and annual reports at project level.

A Civil Society Advisory Council (CSAC), created in 2023, acts in a consultative role, comprising representatives from national and international CSOs and academia.²¹¹ The CSAC advises the Fund’s Management Committee on project selection criteria and procedures, ensuring alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. It also offers advice on matters of good governance, transparency, and accountability. Additionally, it contributes to the monitoring process by reviewing narrative reports, financial statements, and evaluations.

Case Examples

The following initiatives are financed through the Uzbekistan Vision 2030 Fund, which was created under the Swiss-Uzbek restitution agreement to channel returned assets into development projects:

■ **Healthcare Project:** Implemented by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), this initiative aims to reduce maternal and infant mortality across Uzbekistan, in line with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). It operates in 277 perinatal centres, equipping healthcare professionals with advanced training and specialized life-saving equipment. The programme targets approximately 600,000 pregnant women, 600,000 newborns, and 50,000 healthcare professionals.²¹² In

2025, the first modernized maternity units funded through the repatriated assets were inaugurated, marking a milestone in the country’s healthcare reforms.²¹³

■ **Education Project:** This project seeks to accelerate progress towards SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) by integrating digital technology into schools to bridge the learning gap. This gap disproportionately affects girls and children with disabilities and is further widened by the country’s growing digital divide. Activities include hands-on training for educators, capacity building for policymakers, and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) integration to enhance teaching and learning outcomes, with the aim of fostering a more inclusive and equitable education system. The programme will provide

direct support to around 40,000 students, including approximately 500 children with disabilities, as well as 3,000 teachers across 50 pilot schools and 300 teacher educators and policymakers. Through its reforms in standards and policy, the initiative is expected to influence the wider education system, reaching more than 6.3 million students nationwide.²¹⁴

Observations

The Uzbekistan Vision 2030 Fund represents a high-integrity model for the social re-use of recovered assets in a context characterised by governance challenges. The use of a UN-managed trust fund, combined with robust monitoring provisions, transparency commitments, and structured civil society engagement, reduces the risk of misappropriation and ensures alignment with national development priorities.





KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EAP REGION

For many years, UNICRI has provided and continues to provide highly technical and legal advice to officials in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and other regions on the most effective modalities for asset management and social re-use. UNICRI is available to provide such continued assistance in relation to the recommendations below.

1 Establish a Clear Legal Framework to Govern the Management and Social Re-use of Seized, Confiscated and Recovered Assets

Where not already present, countries in the EaP region should adopt specific legislation or policies to govern the social re-use of recovered assets. The framework should outline how different types of assets are to be allocated and used for community-related purposes. In addition to establishing oversight and monitoring mechanisms, it should also specify eligibility criteria for beneficiaries and the process for selecting and approving social re-use programmes. Alternatively, or in parallel, the legal and policies framework should also provide an opportunity to create a Fund that would serve as a central repository for pooling and managing confiscated assets, allowing for strategic and long-term planning and disbursement of resources. Consideration might be given to including provisions that set out specific percentages divided by sector (e.g. no less than 20% shall be allocated to the Ministry of Education to implement relevant projects, etc.), as well as the responsible ministries.

2 Ensure that Dedicated Asset Recovery and Management Offices Exist in each EaP Country

Where not already present, countries in the EaP region may wish to consider establishing a dedicated Asset Recovery Office (ARO) and Asset Management Office (AMO). These entities should be staffed with qualified, well-trained professionals, and provided with competitive salaries to promote retention and ensure

continuous learning. Keeping personnel updated on the latest asset tracing and management techniques, including strategies to minimize management costs, will help maximize funds available for victim compensation or other public benefit initiatives, and reinforce positive public perception.

Because law enforcement authorities, such as police and prosecutors, are responsible for carrying out the actual seizure of assets, situating AMO within bodies like the Prosecutor General's office or the Ministry of Interior may risk creating the perception of a conflict of interest. An entity tasked with seizing assets should not also be responsible for managing them, as this could encourage unjustified seizures. Therefore, it is important that EaP countries establish independent and separate AMOs.

This approach helps to streamline cross-border cooperation and foster the perception that clear, structured mechanisms are in place to ensure fairness and transparency.

3 Strengthen Dialogue with Civil Society and Ensure Transparent Management and Disposition of Recovered Assets

EaP countries should consider strengthening the role of CSOs in the asset recovery process, recognizing them as valuable partners in promoting transparency, accountability, and social re-use. This involvement should extend beyond general consultation to include active participation in the drafting of relevant legislation and policy, particularly in relation to the social re-use and transparent management of recovered assets. CSOs often work directly with vulnerable

and marginalized groups and therefore possess unique insights into the needs and priorities of local communities. By drawing on this expertise, governments can better identify areas where recovered assets can generate the greatest social impact, such as funding community services, supporting victim assistance programmes, or addressing pressing local infrastructure needs. Involving CSOs in decision-making processes not only ensures that asset recovery and social re-use contribute to tangible community benefits but also helps foster public trust in the fairness and integrity of asset management systems.

4 Ensure that MLA Requests Contain Information on How Returned Assets Will be Used

When preparing a Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) request, EaP countries seeking the recovery of assets linked to crime may consider including an indicative clause outlining the intended use of any returned assets. At this preliminary stage, the clause need not set out detailed arrangements, but it should signal a commitment to principles of transparency, accountability, and, where appropriate, the participation of CSOs in monitoring the use of the returned assets. The inclusion of such an indicative clause can help establish mutual understanding and trust between the requesting and requested States from the outset, and help avoid perceptions and risks that any returned assets may be misused again. Should there already have been a successful social re-use case, in one of the EaP countries, consideration should be given to highlighting this in any informal and/or formal communication with the Requested State.

Requesting States are further encouraged to remain open to subsequent dialogue with Requested States to discuss the details of asset return, including the possibility of entering into

a formal agreement that clearly specifies the modalities for return and the purposes for which the assets will be used.

By taking this two-step approach – a) mentioning intended re-use and accountability measures in the MLA request, and b) showing openness to entering into a formal agreement), EaP countries can promote cooperation, safeguard the integrity of returned assets, and strengthen cross-border trust in the asset recovery process.

5 Create Template Agreements and Standards to Incentivize the Recovery of Assets

Countries in the EaP region should consider the possibility of entering into regular agreements (such as MoUs) with Requested States. Such agreements, which can be drafted or reviewed in coordination with, for example, an international impartial organization and adapted on a case-by-case basis, should at least include:

a. Clear modalities for the return of assets.

In the case of funds, this includes specifying the exact amounts to be returned, the number and size of instalments, and an agreed timeline for transfers. Where returns are linked to the implementation of specific projects, the timeline should clearly indicate that subsequent tranches may be withheld or delayed if agreed milestones are not met. This ensures accountability, promotes timely project delivery, and provides a transparent framework for both parties.

b. Appointment of an independent CSO or other independent entity to formally monitor the use of returned assets.

This entity would monitor whether funds are spent in line with the purposes set out in the agreement, track progress, and report publicly on findings. Its role should include verifying documentation, conducting on-site visits where appropriate,

and liaising with both government authorities and affected communities to ensure that expenditures are transparent, accountable, and directed toward the intended public benefit.

c. Implementation of programmes outlined in the agreement should be carried out by reputable development agencies and CSOs.

Leveraging the expertise, local presence, and community trust of CSOs and reputable development agencies can help ensure that recovered assets are used effectively, transparently, and in ways that deliver tangible benefits to the populations most in need. In this context, limits should also be placed on any costs for administering allocated funds.

d. Establishment of clear mechanisms for monitoring and reporting.

These mechanisms should require the production of both financial and narrative progress reports on at least an annual basis, detailing how funds have been allocated, the status of project implementation, and the outcomes achieved. Regular reporting not only facilitates oversight by relevant authorities and stakeholders, including civil society, but also helps promote transparency and public confidence that recovered assets are being managed in line with agreed objectives.

To strengthen transparency, these agreements should be publicly accessible, accompanied by regular reports on their implementation, in line with the provisions set out in the agreement. Countries should be prepared to agree on the potential sharing of recovered assets with the requested jurisdiction, particularly to cover costs incurred during the asset recovery process. Such arrangements should be discussed openly and reflected in clearly defined

distribution formulas agreed by all parties in advance.

6 Allow Public Monitoring and Accessibility to Confiscated Assets

To promote transparency, authorities in the EaP region should establish and/or maintain publicly accessible lists (e.g. official websites), detailing assets available for sale or social re-use. For the latter, these platforms should enable eligible beneficiaries, such as NGOs or public institutions, to submit applications to access and utilize these assets. By providing open and clear information, authorities foster transparency and encourage public trust in the management of recovered assets. This comprehensive oversight approach helps prevent misuse or diversion, guarantees accountability, and demonstrates a commitment to using recovered assets in ways that serve the public interest. Such transparency measures are particularly important in the EaP region, where governance reforms and anti-corruption efforts remain priorities.

To uphold the integrity of auctions involving confiscated assets, it is useful to implement vetting procedures that exclude individuals who have been convicted of serious crimes (particularly in the field of money laundering, tax evasion, organized crime, etc.) from participating. Preventing criminals from bidding ensures that illicit proceeds are not recycled back into criminal enterprises and reinforces the principle that crime should not pay. Such vetting safeguards the transparency and fairness of the auction process, protects the public interest, and helps maintain public confidence in the justice system's ability to effectively manage and repurpose recovered assets. It also prevents scenarios where many people, unaware that an auction has taken place, may see a locally-known criminal re-using such assets and

conclude that the justice system is failing.

In addition, legal and operational frameworks should include provisions for the rapid disposal or allocation of assets that are perishable, rapidly depreciating, or costly to store and maintain. Examples include vehicles, perishable goods, real estate, specialized equipment, livestock, and other animals. These assets should be subject to fast-track sales, transfers, or social re-use allocations to prevent loss of value and maximize social impact. Special provisions may need to exist for the caretaking of seized livestock and animals.

7 Take Part in Specialized and Targeted Training, Study Visits, Workshops and Peer-to-Peer Missions

EaP countries should consider investing in specialized national and regional training focused on the effective management and social re-use of recovered assets. Such training should target law enforcement and judicial officers, as well as other key stakeholders directly involved in the asset recovery process, including those responsible for asset management and disposal.

This can be achieved through study missions, particularly to asset management offices in countries with proven successful examples, workshops, and peer-to-peer missions where best practices are shared among asset recovery and management practitioners, in the form of case studies. Such initiatives provide opportunities to strengthen operational skills such as preserving (optimizing) the value of seized property, organizing transparent public auctions, and designing projects for high-priority needs.

To remain effective, these training programmes should be conducted on a regular basis and continuously updated to reflect the latest methodologies, technological tools, and

international best practices in asset tracing, management, and social re-use. This will help practitioners keep pace with evolving criminal techniques and asset types, such as virtual currencies, and innovative models for community-oriented re-use, ensuring that national systems remain agile and modern.

8 Take Part in Regional and/or International Information and Knowledge-Sharing Networks, such as the Camden Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network (CARIN) and the Balkan Asset Management Inter-Agency Network (BAMIN)

Where such participation is not yet established, countries in the EaP region are encouraged to engage with specialized informal networks, as these platforms provide valuable opportunities for practitioners to exchange operational experiences, best practices, and lessons learned in asset tracing, freezing, management, and disposal, including models for social re-use.

Engagement in such informal networks allows EaP countries to draw on the direct expertise of peers, strengthen cross-border cooperation, and build trust-based relationships that facilitate faster and more effective mutual legal assistance and asset recovery operations. Participation also offers access to capacity-building activities, including training events, workshops, and technical assistance, as well as early awareness of emerging trends, risks, and evolving criminal methodologies in preserving the value of seized and confiscated assets and repurposing recovered assets towards high-priority development needs.

In addition, involvement in networks such as the CARIN and BAMIN reinforces transparency and accountability by promoting alignment with recognized regional and international good practices, including in asset management and

social re-use. Through sustained participation, EaP countries can significantly enhance the efficiency and impact of their national asset recovery efforts while contributing to a more coherent, coordinated, and resilient global response to cross-border crime.

9 Increase the Use of Plea Bargaining and the Settlement (Reconciliation) of Criminal Cases throughout the EaP Region

EaP countries may wish to explore the adoption of more agile mechanisms for resolving criminal cases, including approaches that enable defendants to return illicitly-obtained assets in exchange for a reduced sentence.

Such mechanisms, which can include plea bargaining or other negotiated settlements, have the potential to significantly accelerate proceedings, thereby reducing the heavy caseloads faced by prosecutors and judges. Faster resolution of cases not only improves the efficiency of the justice system but can also enhance public confidence in its ability to deliver timely and effective outcomes. Moreover, by facilitating a prompter recovery of assets, this

approach can help prevent their deterioration or loss of value, thereby maximizing the benefit of recovered proceeds for the public interest.

10 Develop Annual or Bi-Annual Action Plans on the Use of Confiscated and/or Recovered Assets and Updated Needs

Asset Management Offices (or other relevant entities) within the EaP countries, should consider developing regular action plans in collaboration with CSOs. Given the unique social and economic challenges faced across the EaP region, such as post-conflict recovery, governance reforms, and community development, these plans would serve a twofold purpose: to identify priority community needs where recovered assets can have the greatest impact, and to provide an overview of the previous year's fund allocation and use. This approach promotes transparency, accountability, and ensures that asset management strategies remain flexible and responsive to the region's evolving needs. By actively involving CSOs, EaP countries can better target recovered assets toward initiatives that foster social cohesion, economic resilience, and sustainable development.



ENDNOTES

- 1 Article 35 of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and Article 25 of the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) refer to the right of victims to compensation for damage; however, this is often difficult to implement. For instance, a corrupt mayor may have stolen funds that were intended to build a hospital in a particular city district. The asset recovery process may take several years to finalise, and by the time such stolen funds are recovered, the hospital may already have been built either in that same district or nearby rendering victim restitution more difficult, or no longer relevant. Several years on, the priorities of the community may also have changed, requiring a new and updated assessment of how social reuse could be most beneficial to the citizens who directly suffered from the mayor's corruption. Funds might therefore be redirected to other social sectors, for example to build a school, library or park. For successful victim compensation examples, please see: UNODC. (2017). Study prepared by the Secretariat on effective management and disposal of seized and confiscated assets. Study Prepared by the Secretariat on Effective Management and Disposal of Seized and Confiscated Assets, at pp. 42-44 (<https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/WorkingGroups/workinggroup2/2017-August-24-25/V1705952e.pdf>).
- 2 Please see: UNODC. (2017). Study prepared by the Secretariat on effective management and disposal of seized and confiscated assets. pp. 44-45 (<https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/WorkingGroups/workinggroup2/2017-August-24-25/V1705952e.pdf>).
- 3 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions - United Nations Sustainable Development. (n.d.). United Nations. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/> ; The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025 – United Nations Statistics Division. (2025). United Nations. Retrieved from <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2025/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2025.pdf>
- 4 This message has also been communicated by Pope Francis on the occasion of the International Conference on the Social Use of Assets Confiscated from the Mafia, which took place in September 2024 at the Vatican. For more information, please see: Papa sui beni confiscati: "Il modello italiano è un buon esempio." (2024). Lavalibera. <https://lavalibera.it/it-schede-1997-papa-francesco-sui-beni-confiscati-il-modello-italiano-e-un-buon-esempio>
- 5 The list is not meant to be exhaustive.
- 6 While key Conventions stipulate that once a victim State (Requesting State) has proven its case and demonstrated that assets (located in a destination or Requested State) are the product of corruption organized crime, and should be returned, modern practice and dynamics indicate that many Requested States still hold onto the assets for a number of reasons, including concerns that they might be politically embarrassed if such assets are returned and corruptly misused again.
- 7 For more information, please see, for example: <https://unicri.org/Publication/Illicit-Financial-Flows-Asset-Recovery-Eastern-Partnership-Region> (pp. 40-47).
- 8 For the full law, please see: LIGJ Nr. 10 192, 2009 Për Parandalimin Dhe Goditjen E Krimet Të Organizuar, Trafikimit, Korrupsionit Dhe Krimeve Të Tjera Nëpërmjet Masave Parandaluese Kundër Pasurisë. (2009). <https://aapsk.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Ligji10192-ANTIMAFIA.pdf>
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