



Dr. *Reana Bezić* holds an assistant position at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law, Chair of Criminal Law, where she is teaching criminology, victimology, comparative criminology and basics of criminal law. After graduating from the Zagreb Faculty of Law she worked as a research assistant at the Max Planck Partner Group for Balkan Criminology since 2013. Besides the International Self-Report Delinquency Study (ISRD-3) she was involved in a variety of further international projects. More recently she has been appointed as national correspondent for Croatia in the LINC project (European Sourcebook), head of the Violence Research Lab in Zagreb and co-chair of the ESC working group “European Violence Monitor”. Her areas of expertise include juvenile delinquency, crime statistics, victim rights and homicide research. Dr. Bezić earned her doctoral degree at the University of Freiburg’s Faculty of Law in cooperation with the Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law in Freiburg, Germany, where she spent several months as a Max Planck fellowship holder.

Juveniles represent the most important human capital on which societies have to rely in order to achieve sustainable progress and social change. Their delinquency is a complex phenomenon and one of the most challenging criminological and social problems. Throughout the 20th century, criminology has produced numerous studies focusing on aetiological factors and phenomenological characteristics of juvenile delinquency. However, juvenile crime research in the Balkans has remained scarce, with only few empirical studies having been carried out thus far. Such an ‘empirical black hole’ makes cross-national and comparative criminological research on juvenile crime in the Balkans far overdue.

This volume provides a first comprehensive account of the prevalence and incidence of juvenile crime in the Balkans, based on self-reports in youth populations of five countries of the region: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia. The analyses focus on differences and common characteristics among the five country samples, involving a total of 8,460 respondents. Based on these findings, further analyses are centered on indicators that might impact the development of juvenile crime. In general, this study is focused on theory-testing and the search for mechanisms that explain juvenile crime in the region. The main theory that was tested is the social control theory.

The study presents important empirical evidence for establishing, developing and evaluating prevention programmes, which are an important component of rational, evidence-based crime policies in the Balkans.

“Most modern criminological theories are based on self-reported delinquency studies conducted mainly in the United States of America. Reana Bezić changes the scene with this study that applies the same technique in the Balkans and shows the strengths and weaknesses of some classic theoretical explanations when applied in Europe.”

Prof. Dr. Marcelo Aebi, University of Lausanne

“The book at hand is not only one of the most important monographs within the Balkan Criminology publication series, but likewise a solid foundation for further empirical research into juvenile delinquency in the Balkans. The insightful analyses provided by Reana Bezić highlight the importance of interdisciplinarity in criminological research, as much as they clearly demonstrate the necessity of regional and local knowledge and expertise for accurate crime data contextualisation and its interpretation. The book is without question one of the main points of reference – an essential reader – for anyone interested in juvenile delinquency in this part of Europe.”

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Anna-Maria Getoš Kalac, LL.M., University of Zagreb

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Reana Bezić Juvenile Delinquency in the Balkans

BC 6

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A Regional Comparative Analysis
Based on the ISRD3 Study Findings



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The Max Planck Partner Group for Balkan Criminology (MPPG) is a Zagreb-based research division jointly established by the Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law in Freiburg (MPI) and the University of Zagreb’s Faculty of Law. It is headed by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Anna-Maria Getoš Kalac. The MPPG promotes, conducts and facilitates scientific research in the field of criminology and criminal justice and hosts the Balkan Criminology Network. Since 2020 the MPPG has been operating independently as the Balkan Criminology research platform, generously supported by the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime through its global programme aimed at incubating resilience in communities harmed or threatened by criminal governance, the Resilience Fund.

The MPPG’s research programme focuses on three main research areas, specifically targeting criminal phenomena that are of particular relevance to the Balkan region, or that may threaten its future security and stability: I. Violence, Organised Crime and Illegal Markets; II. Feelings and Perceptions of (In)Security and Crime; III. International Sentencing.

The MPPG’s main goals are to foster criminological research on Balkan-relevant topics including the dissemination of findings to the broader scientific community, capacity building for young academics from the region through training and PhD research, creation of a sustainable network of criminological experts throughout the Balkans, and positioning Balkan Criminology in the European research arena and beyond.



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