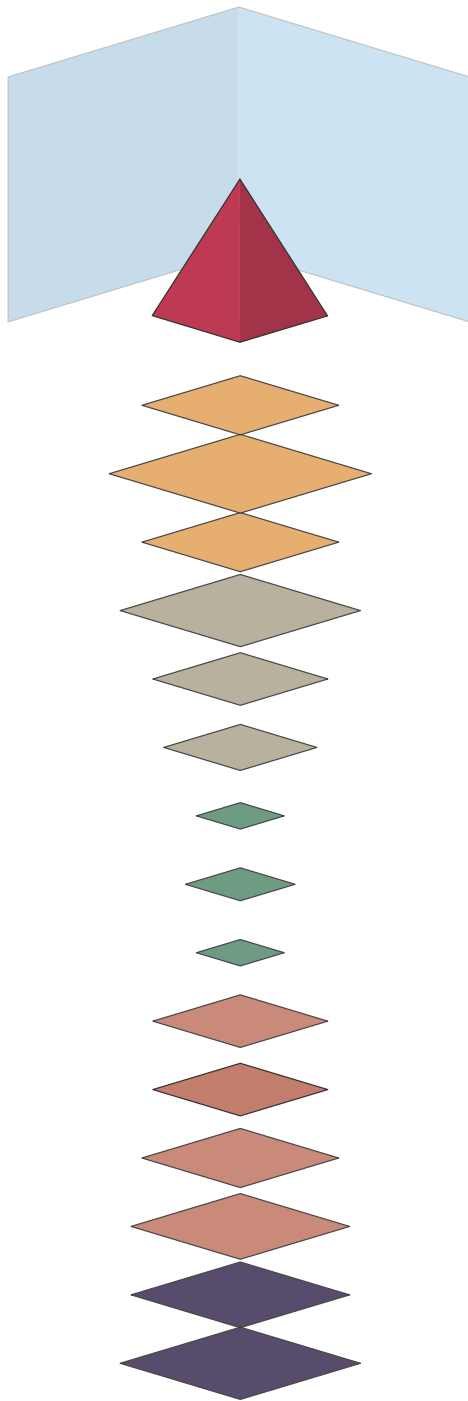




# AUSTRIA



4.13

## CRIMINALITY SCORE

147<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries

33<sup>rd</sup> of 44 European countries

8<sup>th</sup> of 11 Western European countries



### CRIMINAL MARKETS

4.17

HUMAN TRAFFICKING 4.50

HUMAN SMUGGLING 6.00

EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING 4.50

ARMS TRAFFICKING 5.50

TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS 4.00

ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS 3.50

FLORA CRIMES 2.00

FAUNA CRIMES 2.50

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES 2.00

HEROIN TRADE 4.00

COCAINE TRADE 4.00

CANNABIS TRADE 4.50

SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE 5.00

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES 5.00

FINANCIAL CRIMES 5.50



### CRIMINAL ACTORS

4.10

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS 1.00

CRIMINAL NETWORKS 4.00

STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS 4.00

FOREIGN ACTORS 6.50

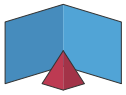
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS 5.00



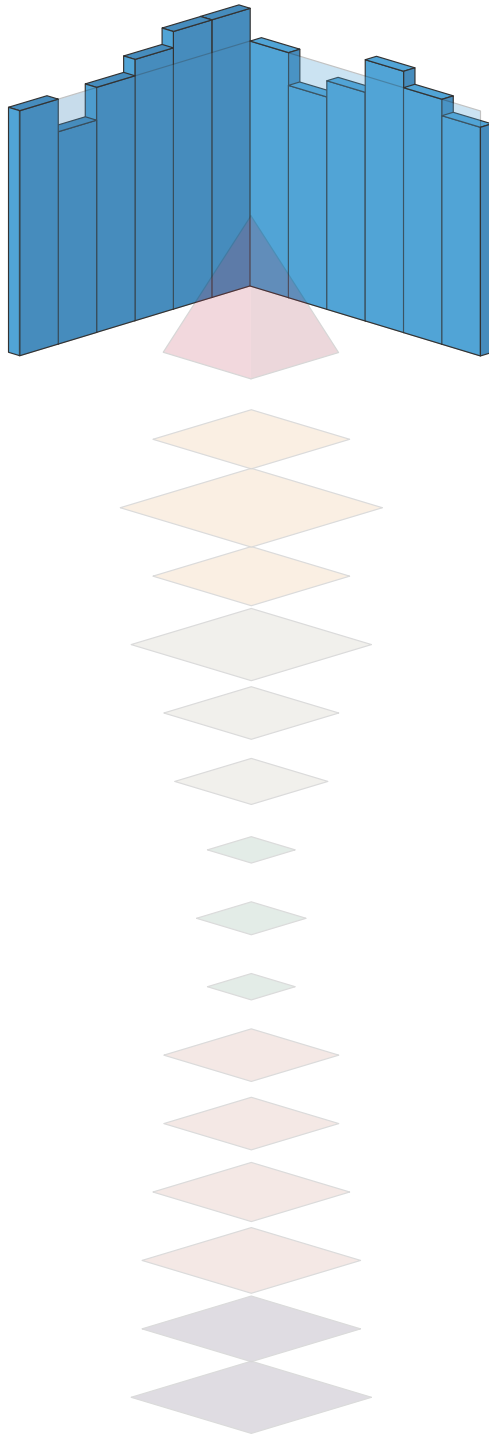
7.50

## RESILIENCE SCORE





# AUSTRIA



7.50

## RESILIENCE SCORE

13<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries

10<sup>th</sup> of 44 European countries

4<sup>th</sup> of 11 Western European countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	7.50
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	6.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	7.50
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	8.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	8.50
LAW ENFORCEMENT	8.50
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	7.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	6.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	7.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	8.00
PREVENTION	7.50
NON-STATE ACTORS	7.00



4.13

## CRIMINALITY SCORE



CRIMINAL MARKETS 4.17



CRIMINAL ACTORS 4.10



# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Austria remains a destination and transit country for human trafficking. The majority of victims identified are women from foreign countries who have been targeted for sexual trafficking, with most originating from EU member states. Eastern European and Nigerian mafias are predominantly involved in this criminal market. Labour exploitation also occurs in agriculture, construction, and the catering sectors, as well as in domestic and care work, although it is rarely detected by law enforcement. Child trafficking affects Austria in both its roles as a transit and a destination country. Additionally, the long processing times for asylum applications and the inability of asylum seekers to work in Austria make them vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking. Traffickers are increasingly using the internet and technology to facilitate their crimes.

Austria is also a significant transit and destination country for human smuggling, with both foreign and local actors involved in this criminal market. Human smuggling activities have been increasing in Austria, which is indicated by the growing numbers of detected cases in recent years. Reports indicate that transnational criminal organizations are increasingly recruiting Austrian nationals to carry out their illegal activities inside the country. The criminal market involves the illegal transfer of people, mainly of Asian origin, to Austria and other countries in northern Europe.

Protection racketeering is becoming more prevalent, particularly among foreign criminal networks. This practice involves extortion and targets not only other criminal actors but also legitimate businesses and individuals. The same criminal networks involved in protection racketeering are also engaged in other criminal activities, such as drug trafficking and human trafficking. Extortion related to money laundering also takes place.

### TRADE

Austria has a significant firearms and ammunition manufacturing industry, which is, however, well-regulated. Rates of gun-related crimes are low compared to European standards, but there are occasional reports of privately held firearms being acquired unlawfully. The arms trafficking market in the country appears to be not particularly widespread, as tight controls are in place to prevent such activity. Nevertheless, instances of firearms and ammunition being traded through Austria are not uncommon, with organized criminal groups involved in this activity. Although limited in scope, illicit arms trafficking in Austria is heavily

linked to other illicit activities, such as the drug and sex work markets.

Austria has experienced a significant increase in the smuggling of counterfeit goods, including a steep rise in the smuggling of counterfeit pharmaceutical products. Customs officials have also identified Asian networks as being responsible for shipping thousands of counterfeit products, including apparel, shoes, bags, wallets, and face masks. Although counterfeit luxury goods are regularly detected by police and customs officials, this issue appears to be smaller than in many other European countries.

The illicit trade of excise goods in Austria is primarily focused on the smuggling of cigarettes. Although tobacco products are relatively cheap, and the demand for illegal ones is limited, large quantities of illicit tobacco products are frequently detected upon entry into the country. There have been cases involving individuals attempting to bring large quantities of cigarettes in their suitcases.

### ENVIRONMENT

Austria has strict laws in place to protect its flora and fauna, and although there is little evidence of illegal logging within the country, it is a destination for illegal timber from neighbouring countries and Indonesia. Some Austrian companies have been caught engaging in illegal logging and corruption in Romania, but there is little indication of organized criminal groups involved in flora crimes within Austria. The country's involvement in the trafficking of animals and their products is limited. However, while the illegal reptile and amphibian market in Austria is small, the hunting of protected raptors remains an issue. During the COVID-19 pandemic, an increasing number of attacks on protected birds of prey was recorded in Austria. An illegal market in caviar and coral also exists, and there is evidence of illegal persecution of lynxes, bears, and wolves to protect livestock. The number of convictions for wildlife crime in Austria is low compared to the number of cases, but authorities do regularly uncover instances of animal and animal product smuggling at the country's borders.

Austria has a good environmental performance and its minerals industry does not play a significant role in the economy. Although there have been some incidents of gold smuggling and crude oil imports from Nigeria, where there is a substantial illegal market, there is no evidence of Austria's organized crime involvement in the market for non-renewable resources. As such, this market is unlikely to have a significant impact on society or accrue substantial value.

## DRUGS

Austria has a small but steady heroin market with a regular number of people addicted to the substance. The Balkan Route is a major entry point for heroin and opiate products being smuggled from Afghanistan through Austria to Southern Europe. Foreign mafia-style groups based in the Balkans, in collaboration with locals, largely control the heroin trade. Despite heroin being among the top five substances seized in Austria, there has been a decline in heroin seizures over the past decade.

Austria is primarily a transit country for cocaine primarily imported through various points in Europe. Vienna International Airport is a common point of entry for cocaine smugglers who use body packing or hidden compartments in luggage to transport the drug. Criminal groups operating in Austria are diverse, including those from the Western Balkan states, West Africa, Central and South America. These foreign groups are also known to collaborate with local actors in the transshipment and trade of this illicit substance. Cocaine distribution within Austria is primarily done through rail and bus infrastructure. The yearly seizures carried out by Austrian law enforcement have increased; the availability and consumption of cocaine in Austria have also increased, as indicated by the higher levels of cocaine metabolites in wastewater. The factors contributing to this increase include higher purity levels, stable prices, and the popularity of online drug purchases via the dark web.

Austria is a destination and transit country for the cannabis trade, with a growing virtual drug market and increasing popularity among young adults and students. Foreign and local actors are involved in the market, with small-scale domestic production mainly found indoors and on minor cultivation sites. The Western Balkans and Morocco are important sources of herbal cannabis and cannabis resin, respectively. Austria is also a significant transit country for smuggling cannabis products into Europe. Possession and consumption of small quantities of cannabis are generally tolerated by Austrian law enforcement.

Austria is primarily a transit and destination point for synthetic drugs, with nationals from production countries more likely than locals to smuggle drugs into the country. Amphetamines and MDMA (Ecstasy) mainly originate in the Netherlands and Poland, while methamphetamines are predominantly produced in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Illicit synthetic drug use is relatively widespread among young adults and these drugs are increasingly sold online. The COVID-19 pandemic caused smuggling to plummet, but it has increased after the lifting of restrictions. Nationals from Slovakia, Turkey, the Philippines, and to a small extent from Austria and the Czech Republic account for the smuggling of methamphetamine from the greater Bratislava area, in most cases to Vienna.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Austria has experienced a surge in cyber-dependent crimes over the past few years, with thousands of cases reported to the Federal Police. Cybercriminals have not only targeted individuals and businesses but also governmental institutions through the use of ransomware and hacking techniques, which have resulted in system failures and made some parts of the administration non-operational. In some cases, criminals have downloaded hundreds of gigabytes of sensitive information and demanded ransom payments in cryptocurrencies.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

There has been a significant rise in financial crimes, including cyber-enabled financial fraud, misappropriation and embezzlement, as well as corruption. Notably, high-ranking state and federal politicians have been accused of financial favoritism and misuse of state funds. In addition, various criminal actors, ranging from opportunistic individuals to large-scale criminal networks, are involved in financial crimes in Austria. Internet fraud has affected a majority of businesses in Austria, with returned products/refund frauds, falsification of personal or shipping details, and denial of receipt of the shipment being the most commonly reported types. Authorities have identified several other types of fraud schemes, including investment fraud, phishing, e-commerce fraud, payment-in-advance fraud, and impersonation of police officers, as being particularly prevalent.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

Foreign criminal groups with connections to Austria and its multicultural communities play a significant role in the country's criminal markets, operating transnationally. Balkan criminal groups engage in human and arms trafficking and use legal businesses to launder their proceeds, often using violence and intimidation. West African and Asian mafias are involved in trafficking for sexual exploitation, the drug trade, and counterfeit goods, while the Chechen mafia deals with arms trafficking. Italian mafias engage in various criminal activities such as drug trafficking, illegal gambling, and money laundering through legal businesses. Recently, foreign cybercriminal groups have also targeted Austria. While there is no evidence of domestic mafia-style groups, small local criminal networks seeking foreign collaboration operate in the country's drug market, particularly in the cannabis trade. These groups are also involved in human trafficking, human smuggling, and firearm smuggling. Their loose structures and ties to networks, groups, and individuals abroad make them difficult to identify.

Private corporate actors are associated with various criminal activities, especially financial crime and corruption. Corporate entities are not usually linked to organized criminal groups, but small businesses and shell companies, which have increased in recent years, may be used as fronts for

other criminal activities or to conceal or launder proceeds of crime. Money-laundering, illicit public procurement, and corruption within the state apparatus in Austria suggest that some state-embedded actors are facilitating illicit financial flows. Recent cases have revealed connections between

leading parties and illicit businesses in Russia involved in corruption. Despite this, there is little evidence suggesting wide collaboration between officials and organized criminal groups in Austria. Corruption is more commonly linked to political parties and the private sector.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Despite past scandals involving its leaders, Austria is known for its strong political stability and governance. While the government has relatively robust policies and laws concerning organized crime, other policy fields lack strategy and direction, and political leadership by senior officials can be lacking at times. The coalition government's differing positions on immigration and asylum rights may lead to political spillover and an ambiguous stance on European solidarity in human rights matters. Despite these challenges, Austria has a strong institutional framework, with constitutional rules proving instrumental in resolving past political crises.

Public-sector corruption remains an issue in Austria, with the country criticized for weak party finance legislation and inadequate regulation of lobbying and corruption among parliamentarians. While public procurement contracts and official documents are publicly available, access to information in Austria is limited. The country has also been criticized for inadequate transparency, with official secrecy still enshrined in the Constitution.

Austria is committed to international cooperation in combating various forms of crime, including transnational organized crime, corruption, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and trade in wildlife. The country is party to various international conventions and treaties and has extradition agreements with different countries. Recently, Austria has intensified its efforts to combat organized crime, particularly human smuggling and trafficking, by setting up joint criminal investigation units and expanding information sharing with neighbouring countries such as Hungary. Austria's national laws generally conform to international standards and criminalize most of the criminal markets and the establishment and participation in a criminal association aimed at the commission of planned and repeated grave offences, including human trafficking, smuggling, and drug trafficking. However, there are some regulatory gaps, particularly in the areas of anti-corruption and anti-trafficking measures. There are also further deficiencies within the Austrian legal framework, such as the inadequate implementation of the European Timber Trade Regulation and a delay in implementing the EU's Whistleblower Directive. The law-making process in

Austria is slow, and many initiatives and bills are hampered by divisions in the governing coalition.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The judicial system in Austria is widely perceived as independent by both individuals and private sector actors. The judiciary operates professionally and without political influence. Special anti-corruption court departments, presided over by judges with expertise in corruption and organized crime, further ensure the system's integrity. Austria's penitentiary system is also well-equipped, with prisons providing appropriate infrastructure for medical and psychological support, leisure-time activities, and employment. There is no evidence of corrupt prison personnel, and staff members are involved in a range of tasks beyond enforcement, such as caring for and supporting prisoners, monitoring them during work, and guiding them during leisure-time activities.

Austria has a well-trained and well-resourced law enforcement system that can counter organized crime without any political or external influence. The Austrian crime intelligence federal agency has established bureaus targeting corruption, organized crime, and human trafficking. International cooperation among EU member states and other countries as well as internal security measures are supported by the internal security fund and the EU.

Austria is located along major trafficking routes in Europe for drugs, arms, and humans. Although the country is part of the Schengen agreement, it still maintains border controls and random checks at some borders with other Schengen states. The country has also introduced border checks with neighbouring Hungary and Slovenia to control irregular migration flows. Controls have been strengthened at all Austrian airports, which serve as a major hub for criminal markets. However, a recent cyber-attack has revealed structural weaknesses in Austria's cyber robustness, resilience, and digitalization. Provincial governments do not have insurance against cyber-attacks.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Austria is considered a low-risk country for money laundering and terrorism financing. However, the country is often used as a gateway for financial crimes between Eastern and Western Europe. Business people from the East frequently hold bank accounts, company investments, and real estate in Austria. While Austria largely adheres to international anti-money laundering standards, there are still instances of money laundering within the banking system and non-bank financial institutions and businesses.

The regulatory environment for businesses in Austria is hindered by a large public sector and extensive bureaucracy, making it difficult for companies to operate efficiently. Although the government has introduced some labour market and tax reforms, the taxation system does not incentivize work and investment initiatives. Despite this, businesses have confidence in the government's ability to protect property rights, and Austria's openness to global trade and investment strengthens competitiveness. The country's fiscal position is relatively stable, but there are external risks, such as weak global economic growth, bank exposure to Central and Eastern Europe, and political and economic uncertainties, including the European sovereign debt crisis and the current refugee crisis, which could threaten the economy. Recently, the reduction of COVID-19-related state subsidies for businesses has revealed a significant number of over-indebted businesses, as the legal obligation to file for insolvency was reinstated.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Austrian government and non-state actors have made victim and witness support a priority, with a specific focus on victims of human trafficking and modern slavery. Several victim-support organizations assist victims in finding accommodation, employment, medical care, psychological counselling, and language courses, and there is a mechanism for a special protection residence permit for victims. However, there are still gaps in the referral process for potential trafficking victims, particularly among smuggled individuals and asylum-seekers. While Austrian law provides for the protection of victims' rights during criminal proceedings,

NGOs report inconsistencies in the reflection period and note that victims are not always informed of their rights. NGOs are permitted to accompany victims to hearings and interviews, and the government has increased its funding to specialized anti-trafficking NGOs providing services to victims, including those with disabilities.

Austria has implemented various crime prevention strategies to combat trafficking, smuggling, and violence, but their effectiveness has not always been noticeable. The government has established a national anti-trafficking task force, and efforts have been made to reduce demand for commercial sex and sex tourism. The government also focuses on cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries to combat organized crime and corruption. Community and consumer awareness programmes are in place to reduce risks related to drug use and addiction, money-laundering, terrorism, and corruption. Austria also targets crime prevention programmes at children and young people. However, the government faces challenges in cybercrime prevention and resilience.

Austria has a tradition of private associations dealing with organized crime-related issues. While media is generally considered to be free, nearly half of Austria's journalists feel that media freedom has reached a precarious state in recent years. Journalists face harassment and threats both online and offline, and there are restrictions on journalistic access to information related to the government's work. Ownership of the media is concentrated in the hands of a few owners, limiting the diversity of reporting. Additionally, law enforcement has been accused of obstructing media reporting on protests and harassing journalists. Quality media is in financial peril, which has led to urgent calls from media representatives asking for a change in the law. Currently, public funds are being allocated to newspapers with the highest circulation, while other smaller media have been left aside.

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