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UN: Ethnic Albanian heroin trafficking “single most prominent organized crime problem in Europe today”

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Ethnic Albanian heroin trafficking is the “single most prominent organized crime problem in Europe today”, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime said in the report “Crime and Its Impact in the Balkans”, published on Thursday.

“Heroin represents the highest value contraband flow and, since the mid-1990s, ethnic Albanian traffickers have been said to control the trafficking of this commodity west into Europe ... Past estimates suggested that ethnic Albanian traffickers controlled 70 percent or more for the heroin entering a number of key destination markets, and they have been described as a ‘threat to the EU’ by the Council of Europe”, it says.

Nevertheless, the report said that “the single most notorious Balkan organized crime phenomenon – the role played by ethnic Albanian traffickers in West European heroin markets – appears to be in decline”.

It added that “Kosovo is extremely vulnerable to organized crime and thus to money laundering”.

The report also said that “only in Kosovo does the economy remain stagnant. Kosovo has the highest unemployment rate in South East Europe. The average salary is just 200 euros per month. There is 50 % unemployment, higher among youth, women and rural people. According to the Ministry of Finance and Economy, households in Kosovo receive more money from remittances than from work. More than half of the people live in poverty, and 30 percent live just above poverty line”, the report said.