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Firearms Focal Points - the 'one-stop shop' for all gun-related information

A partnership between SEESAC and governments across South East Europe aims at bringing Firearms Focal Points– investigation hubs for all firearms related information - to 7 different locations in the region.

Fighting gun violence is not solely a police job. A diverse range of expertise from the judiciary, law enforcement and forensics is required to solve the puzzle, from a bullet being used to commit a crime to putting the person responsible behind bars. Additionally, different criminals can use one firearm several times within a certain jurisdiction and in some instances, sell firearms used in crime across borders. Firearms Focal Points are designed to collect all the necessary information and put the puzzle pieces together, creating accurate investigative leads thereby helping both investigators and prosecutors to tackle the problem at source, in the interest of citizens across Europe and beyond.

One of the first Firearms Focal Points in the world was created in the United Kingdom (UK) with the establishment of the United Kingdom National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS). NABIS collects, processes and coordinates all firearms-related information for UK law enforcement. Given the fact that South East Europe is recognized both as a source and a transit route for arms and ammunition trafficking towards the EU and beyond, the UK authorities decided to bilaterally provide assistance to the region.

A team comprised of SEESAC members and expert consultants from Arquebus Solutions, together with NABIS and the UK College of Policing met with all organizational units that work on fighting firearms-related criminality, from police, forensics labs, weapons registry offices and IT experts, in 7 different locations from the Western Balkans to Moldova. The team analyzed the procedural gaps, technological requirements and training needs necessary for the establishment of the Firearms Focal Points in each of the jurisdictions. The information gathered will result in practical assistance to establish or support the existing Firearms Focal Points in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Firearms Focal Points will advance South East Europe's capability to prevent and suppress firearms-related criminality and arms trafficking.

What do Firearms Focal Points do?

Focal Points will gather, analyze, share and improve the information flow regarding the criminal use and illicit trafficking of firearms into, within or through a certain jurisdiction. This new function will provide information to the strategic and operational levels of decision making through the coordinated collection and sharing of information (criminal and ballistic) to enhance the ability of law enforcement and the judiciary to analyze and coordinate direct actions against the threats and risks of firearms misuse and trafficking. All this aims to pre-empt and suppress crime in South East Europe and the European Union.

*References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

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