

Tuesday, 10 May 2022

[@](#) [f](#) [in](#) [t](#)

## SEESAC Celebrates 20 Years of Working in South-East Europe for a #SAFERREGION

On 8 May 2022, SEESAC celebrated **20 years of unwavering commitment** to strengthening the capacities of stakeholders in South-East Europe to control and reduce the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, and to advance gender equality.

Through its engagement, SEESAC has been **facilitating regional cooperation** and supporting governments to create a more **effective, accountable, and inclusive security sector** that serves as a bedrock of the rule of law.

Today, SEESAC is the leading regional initiative in the field of security in South-East Europe.

The progress made is a direct result of our close partnership with the Governments in the Western Balkans, Republic of Moldova, Belarus, and Ukraine, ably facilitated by years-long support provided by the European Union, Germany, France, the United States of America, Norway, Slovakia, the United Kingdom, Sweden and the Netherlands.

SEESAC is a joint initiative of UNDP, Regional Cooperation Council and governments in South-East Europe.

From its onset in 2002, SEESAC's role has been that of an executive arm of the Regional Implementation Plan to Combat the Proliferation and Impact of Small Arms and Light Weapons and that of a **focal point for SALW-related activities in South East Europe**. By 2009, the scope of our work grew to include the advancement of gender equality in the security sector reform, thus also contributing to the Women, Peace and Security agenda. More recently, our geographic area of responsibility expanded to include Belarus and Ukraine as well.



In the course of our work, SEESAC supported governments in developing a number of signature solutions rooted in strong partnerships, local ownership, and regional coordination, thus **contributing to the standardization of approaches and positioning the region among the global leaders in SALW control**. Several of these solutions are now being replicated by other regions of the world, such as the Caribbean and the EU. Some of the key areas of tangible progress achieved include:

- The Armed Violence Monitoring Platform provides an up to date, detailed insight into firearms incidents in the region and their trends, contributing to evidence-based policymaking;
- 7 governmental SALW control coordination mechanisms in South East Europe have been established by the authorities, with SEESAC's support, and now serve as a strategic framework for synchronized implementation of SALW control efforts and represent the backbone of regional cooperation;
- The Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap has been developed and is considered a blueprint for voluntary national and regional target-setting on SALW control globally;
- A shared regional system for monitoring SALW control efforts has been created through the development of Key Performance Indicators tracking the Western Balkans Roadmap implementation, and through a common SALW surveys methodology;
- Operational cooperation between law enforcement and criminal justice structures has been increased within the SEE and with the EU, through the South East Europe Firearms Experts Network;
- Capacities of the border and criminal police services have been strengthened as a result of comprehensive assessments, new equipment, training, and development of procedures for enhanced detection and investigation of misuse and trafficking of SALW;
- 5 Firearms Focal Points have been established and enhance firearms investigations, following a comprehensive technical and advisory support provided by SEESAC, leading to a standardisation of approaches throughout the region; their lessons learned are collected in the Guidelines;
- Over 342,000 pieces of SALW destroyed, coupled with 24 weapons and ammunition storage sites and 21 evidence rooms with significantly enhanced security, diminish the risk of proliferation of SALW;
- SALW control-related legislation and policies harmonised with the EU Acquis, leading to a regional standardisation of procedures and practices;
- Regular publication of regional and national Reports on Arms Exports, and shared control mechanism, reflect one of the highest levels of regional synchronisation and transparency of arms exports globally; these are direct results of the Regional Information Exchange Process;
- Increased gender equality in the military in the Western Balkans through enhanced gender awareness of over 5,000 personnel members;
- Increased number of women in Armed forces in the Western Balkans in the last 7 years from 3% to 6% in 2012, to between 6% and 9% in 2019;
- A number of knowledge tools and practical solutions for the integration of gender perspective in SALW control contribute to enhanced security for women and inspire action across the globe;

- Dozens of developed knowledge products and tailor-made solutions directly bolster various SALW control mechanisms;
- 14 regional and national SALW awareness-raising campaigns organised and supported, informing at least 10 million people about the dangers of SALW through social media alone.

All of these results are cumulatively responsible for:

- **22 million citizens in South East and East Europe living in a safer region.**

[← Back](#)

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