

Non-Regularised Firearms in the European Union: Findings from Project DIVERT

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PROJECT DIVERT: REPORT

Forgotten weapons?
**Non-regularised
firearms**
in the European Union



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Structure of Presentation

- 1. Defining firearms non-regularisation**
- 2. Types of firearms non-regularisation**
- 3. The scope of firearms non-regularisation**
- 4. National initiatives to collect non-regularized firearms in Europe**
- 5. Best practices for organising collection measures**



What is non-regularisation?

Non-regularisation is a process in which firearms, ammunition or firearm components should have undergone a legal regularisation (i.e., legalization) process but have not.

What causes firearms non-regularisation?

- Legacy of armed conflict or significant political transitions
- Changes in the legislation
- Inheritance of firearms

Type 1: Conflict legacy firearms in the EU

- **Firearms from recent armed conflicts**

- ❑ Western Balkans
- ❑ (Northern Ireland)

- **Firearms from World War II (and I)**

- **Firearms from other armed conflicts**

- ❑ Spain
- ❑ Cyprus



Source: Latvian Criminal Police

Type 1: Conflict legacy firearms in the EU

➤ Political Transition

- ❑ Post-soviet legacy firearms in Eastern Europe
- ❑ Portugal

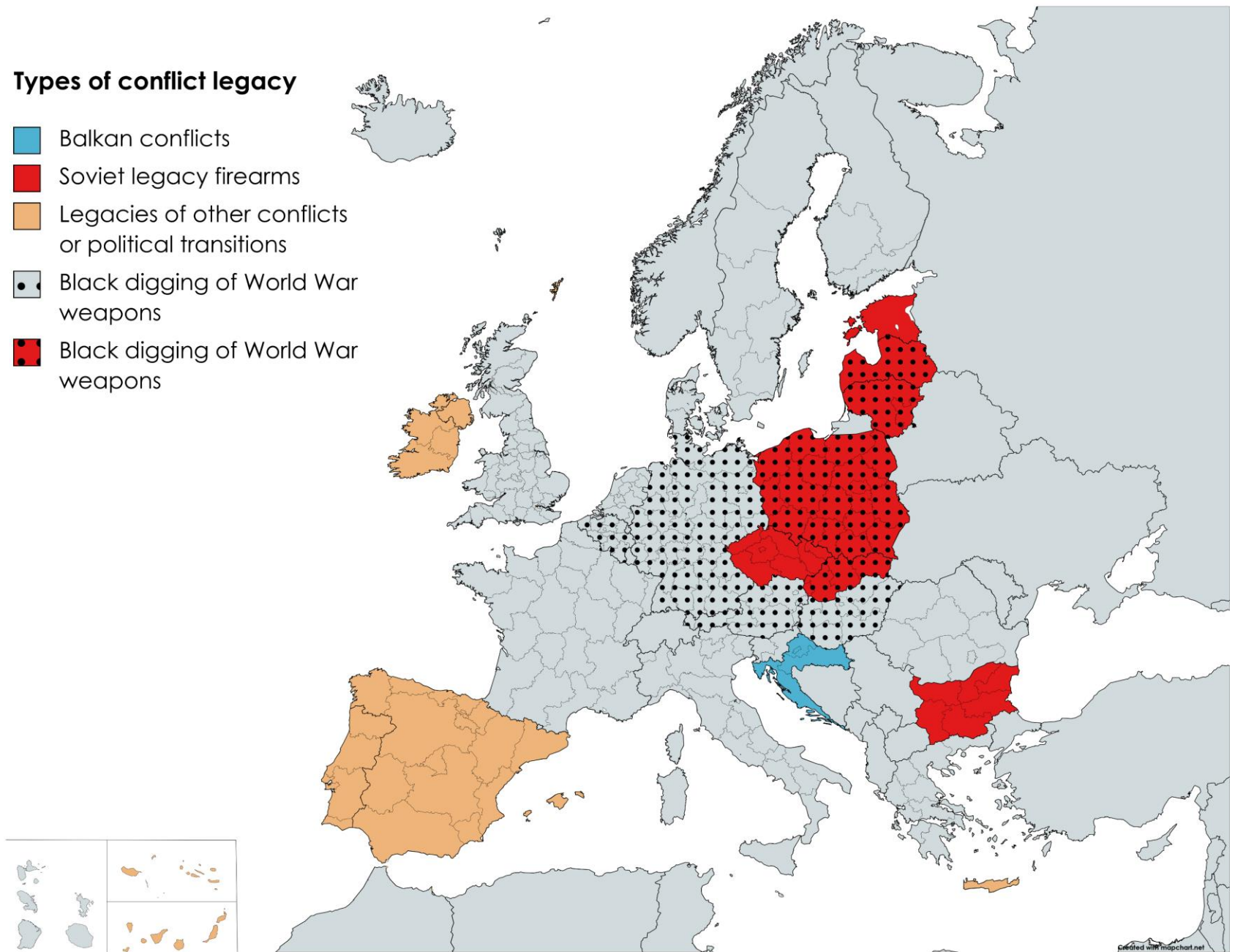
➤ Future conflict legacies?

- ❑ Ukraine
- ❑ MENA region



Types of conflict legacy

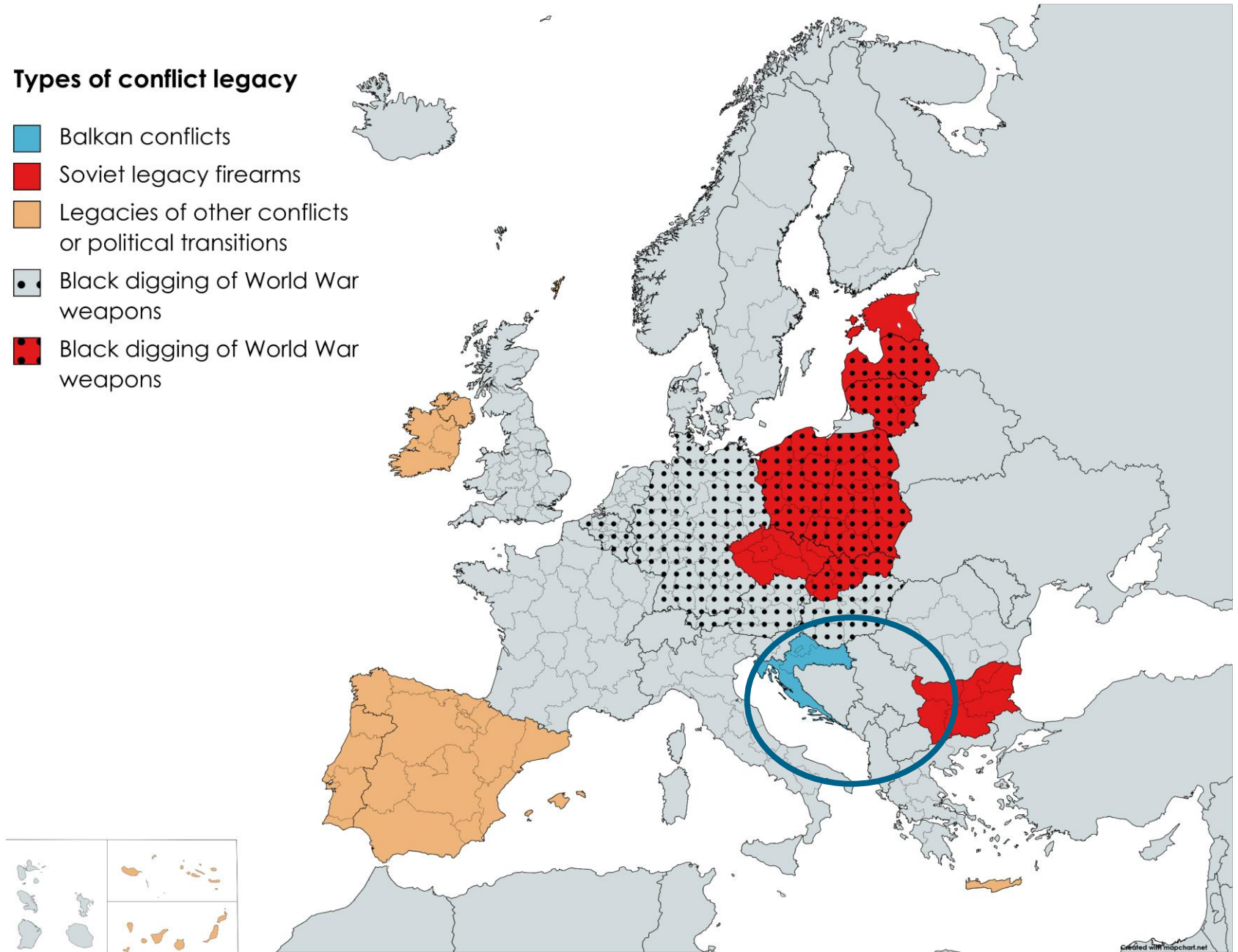
-  Balkan conflicts
-  Soviet legacy firearms
-  Legacies of other conflicts or political transitions
-  Black digging of World War weapons
-  Black digging of World War weapons



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Type 2: Changes to the firearms regulation

➤ Motivation to non-regularise?

- ❑ Intentionally
- ❑ Unintentionally

➤ Type of law changes prone to non-regularisation

- ❑ Re-classification of live-firing firearms (e.g., Germany, Belgium)
- ❑ New rules for blank-firing guns (e.g., gas pistols and alarms pistols in Lithuania and Spain)
- ❑ New rules for firearms deactivation (e.g., in Spain)

➤ Future Challenge

- ❑ Acoustic expansion weapons, decorative firearms, blank firing guns

Type 3: Inheritance

➤ Types

- Inheritance of legal firearms
- Inheritance of illegal firearms

➤ Motivation

- Intentionally
- Unintentionally



Source: Gendarmerie des Hautes-Pyrénées

Scope of Non-Regularization

- **Information often based on expert estimates, not quantitative data**
- **Non-regularisation is an important source of illicit firearms possession in many EU Member States**
 - ❑ E.g., Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Latvia, Poland, Spain
- **Non-regularisation is an important source of illicit firearms possession in Western Balkans**
 - ❑ Illicit firearms trafficking into EU

National initiatives (1)

➤ Analysis of 55 cases of collection initiatives undertaken between 1991-2019 in Europe

- ❑ Immediate post-conflict context:
 - ❑ By command (phase I) vs. voluntarily (phase II)
 - ❑ Western Balkans and Northern Ireland
- ❑ Peacetime context
 - ❑ Collection programmes vs. collection policies
 - ❑ Voluntary participation by civilian gun owners in exchange for incentive
 - ❑ Different contexts

→ Focus on peacetime collection programmes and policies which contain an amnesty provision

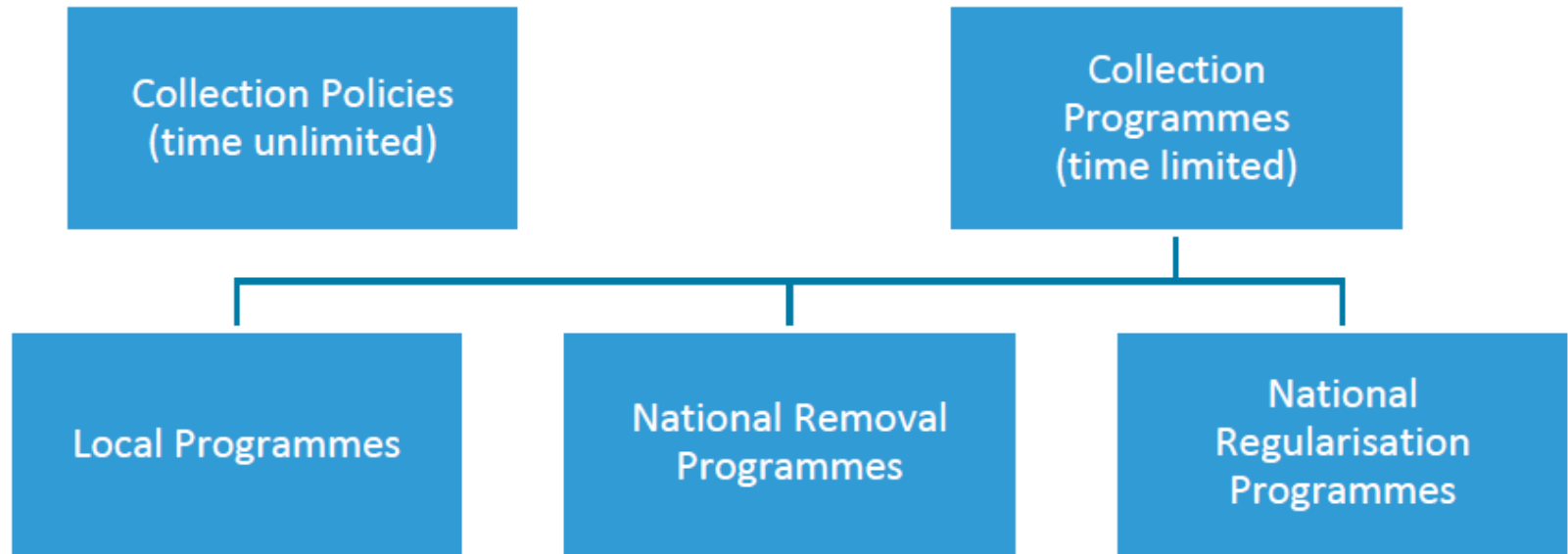
- ❑ Mainly official government data and reports to international organisations
- ❑ Problem of registration of collected firearms

National initiatives (2)

Collection Policies
(time unlimited)

Collection
Programmes
(time limited)

National initiatives (2)



National initiatives (3)

➤ Collection policies

- ❑ Identified cases
 - ❑ Estonia and Belarus (Soviet legacy weapons)
 - ❑ Croatia and Montenegro (conflict legacy weapons)
 - ❑ Finland (history of high level of gun possession)

- ❑ Organised at national level with only 1 incentive (amnesty)
 - ❑ Cash rewards are exceptional
 - ❑ Mostly partial amnesty

National initiatives (4)

➤ Collection programmes

- ❑ More than 650,000 firearms collected
- ❑ Mainly at national level
- ❑ Wide variety in duration
 - ❑ Longer programmes do not necessarily lead to more collected firearms
- ❑ Context
 - ❑ Changes in legislation (33 cases)
 - ❑ Conflict legacy (10 cases)
 - ❑ Mass shooting (4 cases)
 - ❑ Other circumstances
- ❑ Incentive:
 - ❑ Cash rewards are exceptional
 - ❑ Mostly partial amnesty

National initiatives (5)

➤ Local collection programmes

- ❑ Average duration of two weeks
- ❑ Partial amnesty
- ❑ Removal in context of crime context, recent shooting or conflict legacy

➤ National removal programmes

- ❑ Generally countries with high numbers of non-regularised firearms
 - ❑ Armed conflict legacy
 - ❑ Legacy from historic changes in regulation
 - ❑ Crime prevention
- ❑ Mainly partial amnesty

➤ National regularisation programmes

- ❑ Complementary to new changes in legislation
- ❑ Mainly partial amnesty

National initiatives (6)

➤ Regional patterns?

- ❑ South Eastern Europe: armed conflict legacy
- ❑ Eastern European countries: Soviet legacy
- ❑ Western Europe:
 - ❑ Crime prevention
 - ❑ New legislation

Organising effective collection measures (1)

➤ Phase 1: Planning

- ❑ Goal?
 - ❑ Removal, regularization or both?
- ❑ Target group?
 - ❑ Criminals, regular citizens or both?
- ❑ Form of collection measure?
 - ❑ Local or national?
 - ❑ Length of programme?
 - ❑ Amnesty for which crimes?
- ❑ Communication?
 - ❑ Clear and targeted
- ❑ Resources required?
 - ❑ Various activities

Organising effective collection measures (2)

➤ Phase 2: Implementation

- ❑ Security measures for collecting firearms
- ❑ Security measures for destroying firearms
- ❑ Oversight mechanisms to prevent diversion

➤ Phase 3: Evaluation

- ❑ Data collection
 - ❑ Detailed data registration
 - ❑ Cross-checking registers
 - ❑ Publication of results to public
- ❑ Evaluate impact on crime and violence

More information?

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