Background

The widespread proliferation and misuse of firearms continue to pose a grave threat around the globe. To echo the concern about the negative impact of firearms on security, human rights, as well as social and economic development, UNDP SEESAC initiated data collection in 2014 to track the firearm-related incidents in SEE and established a Regional Armed Violence Monitoring Platform (AVMP).

The AVMP covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. The data is collected daily using local media clippings, online search engines, and relevant firearm-related reports of public institutions, where available.

The present regional report builds on monthly Armed Violence Monitor Reports, and it has been prepared to provide a collection of data, show the trends, highlights, as well as threats regarding firearm incidents in South East Europe from October-December 2020**.

Quarterly AVMP regional reports aim to serve as an information tool to research organizations and all interested parties engaged in the area of small arms and light weapons with the primary goal of providing a better understanding of the firearms’ negative impact on civilians.

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

**Data retrieved on 20 January 2021. Given that news articles may be published after the incidents occurred or that recorded incidents can be updated with new pieces of information, the given statistics may slightly differ in the future.
A 9.6% increase in the number of reported firearm incidents was observed in the SEE, in comparison to the July-September 2020 period.

A 57% increase in the number of incidents related to disputes with police, involving firearms, was reported during this quarter, compared to the previous one.

A 78% increase in the number of firearm-related domestic violence incidents was recorded during the reporting period in comparison to the previous quarter.

An 11.9% increase in the number of weapon seizure cases was noted from October to December 2020.
All firearm-related domestic violence incidents reported during this quarter were committed by men.

An increase of 33.3% (or from 66 to 88) in the use of rifles/shotguns was observed during this quarter in comparison to the previous one.

Compared to the July-September 2020 period, a decrease of 62.5% of celebratory shooting incidents was noted.

*Other/Unknown refer to suicides, shootings under undetermined circumstances, non-hunting related shooting of animals, explosions, weapons used for defence, weapon surrender, and all other incidents that cannot be classified under any of the categories above.
Number of incidents

An increase** of 75.6% of the reported firearm-related incidents was observed during the reporting period in comparison to the same period last year. Kosovo (161), BiH (118) and Serbia (93) recorded the highest number of firearm incidents, excluding weapon seizures.

From November to December 2020 the number of firearm-related incidents increased by 19.4% in the SEE region, most notably in the categories of criminal context, dispute with police and weapon seizures. A decrease in incidents related to undetermined shooting was noted.

**Please note it may also indicate improved coverage of firearm incidents by the media and competent authorities, as well as a more rigorous quality assurance conducted by SEESAC.
**Main trends - Weapon seizures**

- **Weapon seizures** continued to be the most reported firearm-related incident, with an increase of 18% (or from 319 to 377) during this quarter compared to the previous quarter and of 61.1% (or from 234 to 377) in comparison to the same period last year.

- The highest number of weapon seizures continues to be reported in Kosovo, which accounted for 48% of all reported seizures in the period of October-December 2020.

- With the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which recorded a decrease in weapon seizures by 39.5% compared to the previous quarter, in other jurisdictions, an increase of such cases was observed, namely 23.5% in Albania, 13.8% in Kosovo, 9.5% in Moldova, 41% in Montenegro, 125.9% in North Macedonia and 17% in Serbia.

- **Handguns** were the most seized type of weapon, accounting for 28.9% (or 109 out of 377) of all reported weapon seizures in the October-December 2020 period. An increase of 6.8% (or from 102 to 109) in cases of handgun seizures was noted in comparison to the previous quarter. Kosovo recorded the highest number of seized handguns (62.3%).

- **Explosive devices** were the second most seized type of weapon during the reporting period, accounting for 27.3% of all reported seizures. 78.6% of all seized explosive devices were seized in Kosovo and North Macedonia.

- In comparison to the previous quarter, an increase of 49.2% in the number of recorded seizures of explosive devices was observed (or from 69 to 103).
The number of firearm-related incidents in criminal context accounted for 19.6% of all reported firearm incidents during the reporting period, thus being the second most frequent type of incident across the SEE.

An increase of 52.1% of these incidents was observed from October to December 2020 (or from 46 to 70). Furthermore, there was an increase of 22.7% (or 139 to 172) in comparison to the previous quarter.

Two jurisdictions, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina (61 incidents) and Kosovo (47 incidents) accounted for 62.7% of all reported incidents in the criminal context during this quarter.

Robberies fall within the firearm incidents in the criminal context. During the reporting period, this type of incident accounted for 73.8% of all incidents under this category (or 127 out of 172).

Compared to the previous quarter, an increase of 23.7% was observed (or from 139 to 172) across the SEE. With the exception of Montenegro and North Macedonia, which experienced a decrease in robberies, all other jurisdictions observed an increase since the previous quarter.

In the October-December 2020 period, the highest number of robberies was recorded in BiH (52), Kosovo (46) and Serbia (20).
The total number of perpetrators* in the reporting period was 1084, out of which sex was reported for 67.1% of them.

In incidents for which the number and sex of perpetrators were reported, 713 were men and 15 were women. This also indicates that men accounted for 97.9% of all reported perpetrators, whose sex was identified.

Women accounted for the minority of perpetrators (1.3%) and were mostly involved in incidents in the criminal context (37.5%) and related to weapon seizures (31.5%).

The total number of victims* in the reporting period was 416. Out of this number, sex was reported for 392 (94.2%) victims.

Women were mostly victims of incidents in the criminal context (63.7%) and domestic violence (18.6%), out of all incidents in which women were identified as victims.

Men were mostly reported as victims of incidents related to public disputes (28.5%) and criminal context (23.5%), out of all incidents in which men were identified as victims.

For the incidents in which the perpetrators and victims' age was reported, both fall under the age group of 19-35.

*Perpetrator refers to any individual who has used a firearm/ammunition/explosive to commit any of the types of incidents covered by the AVMP.

* Victim refers to any individual who has been threatened, injured or died as a result of the use of a firearm/ammunition/explosives.

** Refers only to incidents for which the number and sex of the perpetrators and victims were reported.
- **Injury** refers to all incidents in which an individual sustained an injury due to weapon use.
- **Death** was recorded as an outcome for **46 victims** - in most cases the context of the incidents was unknown.
- **Handgun** was the most often used type of weapon in **suicides** (39%), followed by rifles (13%) and explosive devices (13%).

**OUTCOME FOR VICTIMS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>July-September 2020</th>
<th>October-December 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injury*</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No injury**</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable***</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Nuclear/Extended family members** committed **24 firearm incidents** in domestic violence context. More concretely, **15 of those** were committed by **intimate partners**.
- **Friends/acquaintances and neighbors** committed **12 firearm incidents** related to public disputes, followed by **6 accidental shooting incidents**.
- **Strangers** committed **33 incidents** in the criminal context, and all of them were related to **robberies**.

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS**

- **Nuclear/Extended family**
  - Accidental, Hunting, Celebratory shooting: 1
  - Criminal context: 2
  - Domestic violence: 12
- **Friends/acquaintances and neighbors**
  - Accidental, Hunting, Celebratory shooting: 6
  - Criminal context: 1
  - Domestic violence: 12
- **Strangers**
  - Accidental, Hunting, Celebratory shooting: 1
  - Criminal context: 0
  - Domestic violence: 8

*Please note that the graph represents only the most common types of incidents for these three types of victim-perpetrator relationship.*

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*Injury refers to all incidents in which an individual sustained an injury due to weapon use.*

**No injury** refers to all incidents in which a weapon was discharged, but the victim did not sustain a gunshot injury.

***Not applicable** refers to all incidents in which a weapon is present but not used or discharged (for example, theft of a weapon).
**Type of weapons**

Please note that the graphs below represent the number of incidents in which these types of weapons were used. During the reporting period in 17.3% of reported cases, the type of firearm was either unknown or not reported.

In 364 (41.7%) firearm incidents, the weapons used were in **illegal possession**, while in 470 (53.7%) of them, the type of possession was **not reported**. In 40 (4.5%) cases, the weapons were in **legal possession**.

The number of incidents involving handguns increased by 42.5% from October to December 2020. Furthermore, handguns were the most reported type of weapon in firearm-related incidents during the reporting period. More precisely, handguns were featured in 304 incidents, out of which in 109 of them this type of weapon was seized, while in 89 cases it was used in the criminal context.

Fake/toy weapons were used in 28 incidents throughout 2020, with the highest number (10) being recorded during this quarter. Out of these 10 cases, half were used to commit robberies. The same applies for the whole year, where out of 28 incidents, in 14 it was used in the criminal context.

Automatic/military grade weapons were used in 52 firearm incidents in the October-December 2020 period. They were also the second most used type of firearm to commit domestic violence (24%), following handguns (48%).

Explosive devices were reported in 147 firearm incidents during this quarter, out of which in 103 cases it was related to seizures. In 31 cases, they were used and/or activated under undetermined circumstances, most notably in BiH (14), Serbia (9) and Montenegro (5).
Firearm-related incidents recorded in urban areas accounted for 70.4% of all reported incidents.

There was an increase of 44.9% of firearm incidents recorded in rural areas. Compared to the number of recorded incidents in urban areas, more incidents in rural areas were observed in the category of Accident, hunting and celebratory shooting.

The majority of firearm incidents took place at home (194), followed by street (165) and public buildings such as shops (40) and gas stations (18).
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