

MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE WESTERN BALKANS SALW CONTROL ROADMAP — CONSOLIDATED FINDINGS



The South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) aimed at strengthening national and regional capacities to control and reduce the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, thus contributing to enhanced stability, security and development in South Eastern and Eastern Europe.

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1 LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACRONYM	DESCRIPTION
ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
3D	3 Dimensional
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CIAT	Countering Illicit Arms Trafficking
COVID-19	Coronavirus 19 Pandemic
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
ECIS	Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
EEAS	European External Action Service
EMPACT	European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats
EU	European Union
EUROJUST	European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation
EUROPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
FAE	Firearms, Ammunition and Explosives
FCP	First Call Partners
FRONTEX	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
iARMS	Illicit Arms Records, Tracing Management System
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organisation
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
IT	Information Technology
ITF	ITF Enhancing Human Security
KII	Key Informant Interviews
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoI	Ministry of Interior

ACRONYM	DESCRIPTION
MoIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NABIS	National Ballistics Intelligence Service, UK
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RAG	Red, Amber, Green
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RF	Results Framework
RS	Republika Srpska
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEESAC	South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFP	United Nations Firearms Protocol
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
US	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar

2 INTRODUCTION

The Mid Term Review (MTR) of the 'Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and their Ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024' was commissioned by UNDP for the South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) in October 2022. The review covers the first period of Roadmap implementation, from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021. It was undertaken by First Call Partners Ltd between October and December 2022.

The Roadmap was developed by six Western Balkans jurisdictions (in alphabetical order: Belgrade, Podgorica, Pristina, Sarajevo, Skopje and Tirana) with

support from Germany, France, the EU and SEESAC. It aims to make the Western Balkans "...a safer region and an exporter of security..." and is organised around seven goals and a range of targets and key performance indicators. Together they are intended to support the establishment of comprehensive and harmonised policy and legislation relating to control of SALW and ammunition; reduce trafficking within and beyond the Western Balkans; reduce the supply and demand for SALW through awareness raising, education, outreach and advocacy; reduce the number of firearms in illicit possession in the region; destroy surplus and seized SALW and ammunition and reduce the risk of proliferation and diversion.

The objective of the MTR is to:

"...provide a thorough understanding of the progress made by the Western Balkans authorities in achieving the goals of the roadmap and in establishing sustainable capacities for the illegal possession, misuse, and trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition. The findings and recommendations generated by the review will be used by the Roadmap's WB authorities to have a better understanding of the progress and gaps."¹

The MTR approach and methodology includes a comprehensive document review and visits to each jurisdiction to conduct interviews and group discussions. The document review combined qualitative and quantitative data; Primary research at the jurisdiction level focussed substantively on qualitative data, which aimed to deepen and elaborate analysis and conclusions arising from the document review. The document review consisted of policy, strategy and monitoring documents at both the regional and jurisdiction levels, produced by local authorities and international and regional supporting organisations. Interviews and group discussions (involving over 175 people) were undertaken face-to-face (and in limited cases, remotely) by a team of five researchers deployed by First Call Partners using a research protocol and questions agreed in advance with SEESAC. Each major component of the Roadmap was reviewed using a slightly adapted version of the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: Relevance, Impact, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence, Sustainability², Gender.

¹ Terms of Reference: Mid term Review of Roadmap Implementation. P.3

² Defined by the OECD as follows: **Relevance**: The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change. **Coherence**: The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution. **Effectiveness**: The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups. **Efficiency**: The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way. **Impact**: The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. **Sustainability**: The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.

3 MID-TERM REVIEW SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of the MTR report is to enable Western Balkans governments, the EU, the RCC, MPTF secretariat, the governments of France and Germany and other key supporters, including other Member States of the EU, and third parties with a demonstrated support record of Western Balkans Roadmap assistance to have a better understanding, at a strategic level, of:

- 1 progress in the implementation of the Roadmap Goals, against the overall targets and the set timelines
- 2 progress in building sustainable capacities for effective SALW control
- 3 the challenges and gaps identified in the implementation of the Roadmap
- 4 mapping of assistance, in the form of gap analysis informing future-looking recommendations, provided by donors and implementing partners in the implementation of the Roadmap; and
- 5 lessons learned with the view to provide actionable recommendations on each of the above aspects.

In addition, it assesses the degree to which Roadmap implementation has supported or promoted gender equality in SALW control. The findings will allow local SALW Commissions to look back and forwards, understand challenges and be aware of gaps, so that they can better set priorities and adjust as needed; and for implementing partners to understand the support required to contribute towards successful implementation of the Roadmap.

SCOPE

The geographic scope of the MTR includes, in alphabetical order, Belgrade, Podgorica, Pristina, Sarajevo, Skopje and Tirana. The duration covered by the MTR is from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

4 APPROACH AND METHODS

APPROACH AND KEY PRIORITIES

The MTR provides an assessment of the progress made **in achieving the goals of the Roadmap and in establishing sustainable capacities** for the illegal possession, misuse, and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition. FCP's approach is centred on learning. This means as well as assessing results

(*what has been achieved*), the review team examined what has worked (and what has not worked) to achieve these results. The review assessed the strategies employed to achieve programme outcomes, as well as the organisational systems and processes which underpinned delivery.

The Review Team completed the following tasks as part of the MTR:

Desk Review

The team completed a desk-based review to assess the status of Roadmap implementation across the 6 jurisdictions against the 14 KPIs, the 38 targets, and the 7 goals. The team reviewed the 42 documents provided to them, as well as 10 additional sources identified during this process. Information gathered during this phase formed the basis of an initial assessment, which was elaborated and deepened during the data collection mission.

Data Collection Mission

The data collection mission was conducted in conjunction with the Final evaluation of the UNDP regional project 'Support to the implementation of the Roadmap for a Sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and their ammunition in the Western Balkans' and the Mid-term evaluation of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap Multi-Partner Trust Fund. Qualitative data collection was conducted through an 18-day field mission with five review team members between 24 November and 10 December 2022, supplemented by remote key informant interviews (KII) and group discussions conducted before and after travel (during week commencing 21 November and 12 December).

During the field mission, the team spent up to three days in each jurisdiction. To maximise the time available, the team split into two sub-teams to allow two sets of meetings to occur at the same time where required, ensuring at all times that interviewees were aware of the different tasks and their objectives, and suitable recording of data gathered to ensure separation between the different tasks during the analysis phase.

The sequence and timeline was as follows: Tirana 24 – 25 November; Podgorica 28 – 29 November; Pristina 30 November – 1 December; Skopje 2 – 5 December; Belgrade 6 – 7 December; and Sarajevo (with travel to Banja Luka) 8 – 9 December.

A full overview of all of the stakeholders interviewed as part of this process can be found in [Annex 2 - List of Stakeholders Interviewed](#). As outlined in [Annex 1 – MTR Questions](#), according to the stakeholder being interviewed, the team adapted the questions to ensure that they were relevant for the KII or group discussion. To ensure that the tasks were separated, all interviews covering more than one of the projects were conducted by at least two team members, with each member being responsible for one of the projects. The team demarcated which questions were associated with the particular project being evaluat-

ed or reviewed, and offered interviewees with a break in between the questions to ensure sufficient separation. Introductions to each interview confirmed which assessments were in scope, in line with the text of interview invitation emails, which also made the distinctions clear. Data gathered during the interviews were recorded and analysed separately.

The team gathered data on the progress of implementation of the Western Balkans Roadmap as per its goals and overall targets; whether the results achieved so far were sustainable and in line with the vision of the Roadmap, including the level of acquisition of the relevant competencies; what the key challenges were for implementation; and what key lessons, risks and opportunities were identified during implementation. Furthermore, the team assessed gaps and recommended additional actions; established whether overall targets were still relevant; and whether support provided by implementing organisations, key supporters and donors was timely, relevant, and responded to Roadmap priorities; and the extent to which there was coherence between Roadmap implementation and funding support.

Other key issues included the extent to which gender equality and the empowerment of women had been addressed in the design and implementation of activities; if there were any good practices identified; whether the mechanisms had ensured efficient and effective coordination of efforts and resources in line with EU CD 2018/1788 and whether there had been any challenges related to reporting based on KPI and roadmap goals.

Review and Report Writing

The final phase consisted of drafting the MTR report based on the findings generated through the desk review and interviews.

Finally, the team will provide a consolidated findings report which will include the consolidated findings, challenges, lessons learnt, gaps in current implementation and forward-looking recommendations of the MTR.

Limitations and Weaknesses to the Methodology

The principal challenge in conducting the MTR was the time frame within which it was completed. This meant focussing the field visit component on capital-based interviews and group discussions. Additional time would have enabled site visits – which whilst outside of the scope of the ToR would have allowed the team to build a stronger understanding of the impact on the ground of the Roadmap implementation and related projects, and to engage with a broader range of interviewees. This challenge has

been addressed to some degree by ensuring that interviewees included those who had both been involved in project implementation and wider engagement in relation to the Roadmap. The proximity to Albanian independence celebrations, planned local and regional SALW Roadmap consultations and the Christmas holiday period was also a major factor in the timings of visits. Doubling the Review team's planned presence mitigated this risk, however it limited the field work component to 18 days. A further challenge related to the scale of reporting and project-related documentation in particular, which was considerable, and the implications of this for the numbers of questions and criteria that had to be covered in the document review.

In addition, the parallel taskings of the MTR of the Roadmap implementation, combined with the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), and the Final Evaluation of the UNDP Regional Project represented both a challenge and opportunity. It led to the consolidation of the three field missions into one trip, meaning that interviews sometimes covered at least two or three tasks simultaneously. To avoid any confusion with regards

to which project was being assessed, the team explained what was being discussed in interviews and ensured that there was appropriate separation between the different tasks. It also allowed the team to obtain a comprehensive perspective from a wide range of stakeholders on overall Roadmap progress.

A further challenge was the fact that many of the questions assigned to the team within the ToR did not align easily with OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, with many of the questions focused specifically on the criteria of 'effectiveness' and not all specifically related to the targets of the Roadmap.

Finally, due to time pressures, it is likely that insufficient attention was given to interviews with justice sector stakeholders (including judges and stakeholders from ministries of justice); other key ministries such as education, health; and wider stakeholders such as civil society organisations (CSOs). Engagement with these actors was limited due to the short-time frame in which the field missions were planned and conducted and represents a potential weakness in primary data collection.

5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the Roadmap is a highly relevant and effective initiative. It is relevant to multiple objectives, both specific to SALW control and to much broader political priorities, including regional cooperation and EU enlargement. The roots of the Roadmap in the Berlin Process provide high-level political direction and the role of France, Germany and the EU should not be underestimated. The greatest successes during the first period of implementation however sit with the six Western Balkans jurisdictions. This is despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects this had on delivery of the priorities of governments and the delivery of projects, the effects of political uncertainty, and events including an earthquake in Albania and cyber-attacks by hostile actors in several jurisdictions. Over a three-year period, strategies and plans were developed, Firearms Focal Points further developed, SALW Commissions further developed and enhanced, and important ongoing work on legislative review and harmoni-

sation undertaken, all of which built on SALW control efforts which have been undertaken across the Western Balkans for many years. Significant capacity building support provided by bilateral and multilateral partners, not least SEESAC, UNDP Offices, OSCE and UNODC, was undertaken. Together, jurisdiction-level commitment and external political and funding support has generated considerable momentum regionally and locally, with ever stronger networks of government officials, law enforcement agencies and others sharing information and experience. In the next phase of Roadmap implementation, this energy, commitment and capacity should be translated into increased systematic operational activity and increased regional cooperation. This first phase of Roadmap implementation has been a success; the challenge now is to build on the solid foundations and ensure that capacity to tackle SALW proliferation and misuse is sustainable into the future.

The following sections are structured by OECD-DAC criteria, with findings and conclusions followed by a summary of recommendations. Signposting is included with each recommendation, identifying whether they are high level and relevant at the Roadmap level whether they are relevant to specific goals.

RELEVANCE

The Roadmap is very relevant both to tackling SALW possession, misuse and trafficking, and to wider security challenges, both within the Western Balkans region and the EU. Important progress has been made which strengthens this relevance, including the ongoing process of harmonisation of legislation and greater opportunities and mechanisms for investigations and information exchange.

At the regional and local levels, the Roadmap plays an important role in demonstrating awareness of the dangers of illicit SALW. The ownership of the Roadmap demonstrates commitment to a common approach to tackling aspects of illicit SALW proliferation. The incorporation of the Roadmap into the 2020-2025 EU Action Plan on Firearms Trafficking and the adoption of harmonised legislation suggests it is having an impact on policy (particularly EU policy) and inter-regional cooperation.

Roadmap Goals set out a clear and integrated menu of the actions required, which are relevant to a wide range of different SALW control priorities. The prioritisation of legislative harmonisation is a critical step in establishing a regionally harmonised normative approach to tackling illicit SALW proliferation and misuse. The Roadmap presents a framework which is broad enough to be inclusive of different priorities, whilst also setting out the core competencies and the administrative arrangements

required to tackle them on a regional and cross-border level.

The Roadmap remains relevant to all aspects of SALW control. There is enough flexibility in the Roadmap to cover the key priorities across, within, and between, the EU and the Western Balkans. It is embedded within ongoing and longstanding political cooperation as well as established mechanisms for security and law enforcement cooperation. The role of SEESAC as a coordinator, provider of expertise and as a connector linking local, regional and international actors together was identified as particularly important.

Funding and technical support from external partners has been relevant to Roadmap goals as well as local jurisdiction-level priorities. Funding has been broadly spread across Roadmap goals through the UNDP Regional Project and Multi Partner Trust Fund in particular, and reasonably well cohered with support from OSCE and bilateral contributions (France, Germany and the UK amongst others). There have been some clusters of support which are arguably out of proportion to other priorities – the provision of ‘K9’ dog units are an example. There are also areas in which additional funding focus would be welcome in the future, including broader citizen engagement on issues requiring changes in social and gender norms relating to weapons ownership and misuse.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Ensure ongoing relevance to the context through regularly updated threat assessments and periodic conflict and political economy analysis to provide a wider understanding of the context in which SALW control is undertaken. **(High level; Goals 2, 3, 5)**
- 2 Maintain the linkages between jurisdiction- and regional- level strategies and continue to contribute both to illicit SALW control and to EU alignment priorities, including through MPTF funded projects. **(High level)**
- 3 Establish the relevance and replicability of the Roadmap (and MPTF support) model for other issues and other contexts. A first step would be to commission a lessons learned exercise seeking the views of jurisdictions as well as SEESAC and other international partners. **(High level)**
- 4 Consider additional funding for areas of the Roadmap which might not have been prioritised, but which are relevant to the implementation of the Roadmap in its next phase, including civilian engagement and civil society partnerships. A ‘civil society challenge fund’ is one approach that should be considered.

IMPACT

Roadmap implementation is having an important impact on regional coordination and cooperation, building on previous efforts over many years prior to the Roadmap being agreed. There is increased contact between jurisdictions at policy and operational levels, increased cooperation through regional platforms on legislative harmonisation and Firearms Focal Points amongst others, and strong support from across the region for the opportunities for professional development and training that implementation has brought. The most important indicator of impact to-date is the ongoing political commitment at senior levels within and between the Western Balkans jurisdictions and the EU.

Progress on harmonisation. Good progress has been made with the harmonisation of legislation. This is critical to EU accession, but also to ensure that legislation keeps pace with the changing nature of SALW trafficking. There is still work to do, including ensuring Criminal Codes and operative legislation keep pace with developments, and on specific areas, such as post-shipment verification of SALW and ammunition transfers.

Progress on coordination. Regional coordination has increased significantly. The result of ongoing exchange and cooperation includes increasing understandings of firearms and explosives, components and trafficking techniques, helping to establish common understandings on legislative and procedural responses, shared experience of regional project implementation, and establishing relationships which aid day-to-day contact between SALW Commission members and others.

Increasing systematic operational activity. Intelligence-led, data driven, operational activity has not increased substantially as a consequence of Roadmap implementation, although the work of the Firearms Focal Points should be acknowledged. The lack of a clear causality between the Roadmap and operational improvements does not necessarily mean that operations do not take place, or that they lack an information and intelligence base. However, to-date there is a lack of strong evidence to suggest that this is systematic, or that it is driven specifically by Roadmap implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5 Prioritise translating capacity and capability into operational activity during the next phase of implementation and ensure that reporting operational success is prioritised. (Goals 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)
- 6 Ensure that the political impacts of the Roadmap, specifically regional harmonisation and cooperation are captured in reporting, and in planning for any future phases, particularly additional multi-annual cycles. (High level; Goal 2)
- 7 Adopt a policy of realism for measuring impact to align what is possible within the remaining implementation period. This could be done through a review of existing monitoring and reporting commitments. (Goals 2, 3, 5)

EFFECTIVENESS

Implementation of the Roadmap has been effective in making progress towards achieving its goals. Significant effort has been made at the jurisdiction levels particularly in establishing the administrative and policy arrangements necessary for implementation. At the regional level, regular reporting, Regional Coordination Meetings and the day-to-day role of SEESAC have all been important in ensuring that momentum is maintained.

Capacity building through training and equipment. Significant capacity building investments have mostly been received positively and have achieved tangible improvements in capability and capacity. Opportunities for regional experience sharing and networking are highly prized by jurisdictions,

as is the provision of technical equipment, particularly for forensic examination and for border surveillance and detection.

Data-driven and intelligence-led activity. There has been significant investment in improving data management and analysis capability, primarily through establishing and operationalising Firearms Focal Points (FFPs), and through the adoption or establishment of improved IT systems. In most cases, this is a work in progress, but there are indications that once IT systems projects have been completed in several jurisdictions, it will make a significant difference to the transfer and exploitation of information, including through the FFPs.

Important coordination and liaison. The Roadmap has been effective in establishing the mechanisms and rhythm of regional coordination. It has also been effective in providing opportunities and frameworks for liaison between policy and operational actors across the region.

More emphasis on learning and whole of government approaches is required. There is relatively little evidence of feedback loops linking initial threat analysis through to operational activity, case preparation, prosecution and adjudication. This lack of a full picture of the criminal justice chain makes learn-

ing and continuous improvement difficult. Similarly, a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation as programme management disciplines would help with embedding learning during implementation.

Additional emphasis on awareness raising is required. In several jurisdictions, periodic awareness-raising campaigns are undertaken. However, more could be done; for instance, a more concerted effort to describe links between illicit SALW and issues considered a threat to public and personal safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8

Finalise initial legislative harmonisation, including completing changes to Criminal Codes and Criminal Procedure Codes, as they relate to obligations under the UN Firearms Protocol and put in place mechanisms to ensure timely updates and adaptations as required. Harmonisation of legislation on weapons, explosives and explosive precursors with the EU Acquis should also be completed. **(Goal 1)**

9

Focus donor coordination to complete systems development and interoperability. A specific audit of the current state of plans and implementation across the region should be considered given the complexity of the issue and the fact that a full picture of progress was not possible within the time available for the MTR. **(Goals 2, 3, 5, 6, 7)**

10

Broaden ownership of SALW strategies and plans at the jurisdiction level beyond law enforcement actors and where necessary, consider bespoke engagement with the judiciary, civil society and local political leadership. SEESAC and other partners could consider a specific 'challenge fund' (see recommendation 4 above) to support innovative approaches to public outreach, communications and public awareness raising to help encourage engagement. **(Goals 2, 4)**

EFFICIENCY

Overall, relatively little attention has been paid to the issue of efficiency during the first phase of Roadmap implementation, due in part to a lack of indicators and agreed metrics for measuring efficiency. There are opportunities during the next phase to increase efficiency of reporting and balance ambition and affordability more explicitly.

Balancing ambition with affordability (and sustainability). The scale of ambition set out in the Roadmap – which draws heavily on previous work to establish the functional areas required for SALW control – is considerable. Commitments made at the jurisdiction level in strategies and plans are equally ambitious. It is unclear to what extent these can be funded, or the degree to which financial support will be forthcoming to maintain capacity in the future. Affordability is key in establishing the efficiency of interventions and may require that other options are considered if up-front investments are to generate continued benefits over their lifetime.

Considering what needs to be monitored, and what needs to be reported. The reporting requirements of the Roadmap are considerable. Some KPIs

could be questioned regarding the extent to which they are helpful in demonstrating progress in Roadmap implementation (for instance whereas some KPI relate directly to specific implementation activities (KPI 1 and 2 for instance), in others (KPI 4, 10, 11 and 14) it is much harder to attribute causality to Roadmap implementation, with potentially many external variables affecting performance in each case. A review of what monitoring and reporting is most important, with a consequent reduction in the scope and scale could make the process more efficient, and free up resources that could be focussed on other aspects of implementation.

Stockpile safety, security and management and other high-cost activity. Despite investments in this area over many years, there remain significant military and policing stockpiles requiring attention to maintain safety and security and dispose of surplus. With regards to military holdings in particular, given their size, these are expensive and often large-scale processes and given the total budgets allocated by partners to Roadmap implementation, could divert a large percentage of available funds without fully resolving the problem. Funding for military

stockpile management in particular is probably not an efficient use of Roadmap implementation funds given the benefits that could be achieved elsewhere with smaller quantities of funding, although there

remains a case for supporting management of evidence rooms and magazines in which SALW are held pending the outcome of court cases and for ensuring the safety of police holdings in particular.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11 Consider reducing reporting requirements during the second phase of Roadmap implementation to free up time which could otherwise focus on delivery outcomes at the local level. **(All Goals)**
- 12 Prioritise support for activities which promote efficient use of resources such as local maintenance units, low-cost IT alternatives, and working with what exists locally rather than expensive imports, whilst keeping in mind the importance of interoperability with EU systems over time. **(Goals 2, 3, 5, 6, 7)**

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is a challenging concept for an area as dynamic as SALW control in the context of ongoing external threat and towards greater EU integration. However it is critical to SALW control in the mid-long term. Early decisions on what follows the current Roadmap will affect how sustainability is tackled in the next phase of implementation of the existing Roadmap due to end in 2024.

Timelines and ‘what comes next’. The Roadmap implementation period is not long enough for the scale of change envisaged to be achieved and the benefits sustained. A critical issue during the remaining period is for the Western Balkans jurisdictions, alongside bilateral and multilateral partners to establish what will follow the current Roadmap. Without clarity on this question, it is hard to define which aspects of implementation need to be sustainable within the current timeframe, and which could be further enhanced as part of a follow-

on engagement.

Understanding cultural and social change. Several of the changes envisaged in the Roadmap require changes in organisational culture or in social norms and values – such as gender equality or attitudes towards civilian firearms ownership. These ‘cultural changes’ cannot be achieved during the lifetime of the Roadmap and are generational issues in which progress may be seen in a decade rather than a year.

Absorption capacity: SALW Commissions and law enforcement agencies have in many cases been very flexible and mostly successful in their ability to engage with the demands of Roadmap implementation. There is a risk that in some areas absorption capacity could become an issue, particularly as regards identifying and deploying officials for training and workshops, particularly where participants have skills which are not widely held.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13 Prioritise sustainability during the final phase of Roadmap implementation. A ‘sustainability audit’ should be completed for each Jurisdiction-level Action Plan. Consider a specific ‘sustainability lessons learned’ exchange between jurisdictions. **(High level; all goals)**
- 14 Western Balkans jurisdictions to decide what will follow the current Roadmap, and with supporting partners to immediately begin considering options for future support beyond the current Roadmap period. **(High level)**

COHERENCE

The Roadmap presents a coordinated approach to tackling SALW challenges across the Western Balkans and between the region and the EU. It is comprehensive, incorporating the well-established functional areas of SALW control and it is consistent

with EU and international agreements, obligations and best practice. Partner/donor engagement is consistent and, in many areas, coordinated, although not necessarily fully cohered or integrated.

Regional architecture and cooperation mechanisms. The framework of regional cooperation established by the Roadmap adds to its cohesion; Regional Coordination Meetings, reporting based on common indicators and targets, and the establishment of the MPTF to help prioritise and coordinate funding are all examples. Promoting regional harmonisation and dialogue was an explicit Roadmap aim, and this has been achieved effectively.

Policy and strategic cohesion. There is a debate about tackling SALW as a standalone thematic priority, rather than integrating it as a cross-cutting issue in other policies and strategies. In the Western Balkans, maintaining a thematic focus is a good way to proceed, given the well-established history of co-operation and the existence of SEESAC and local

programme teams with experience. However, SALW strategies should be cohered closely with other law enforcement, security and governance priorities.

IT and software requirements. There is important work outstanding to complete IT and software development and ensure interoperability between databases and analysis at and between jurisdictions. Achieving this is a key characteristic of improving planning, analysis and operational coherence and as such the effectiveness of Firearms Focal Points. Rather than being seen as an IT challenge, completing these processes satisfactorily and within the period of the Roadmap should be a central component of implementation with leadership and resources provided by SALW Commissions, individual departments and partners alike.

RECOMMENDATIONS

15

Achieve greater coherence in partner support, aligned closely with local priorities. This could be undertaken in the first instance through a mapping of intended support for the remainder of Roadmap implementation, which is then used as the basis for dialogue between supporting partners and jurisdictions, possibly facilitated by SEESAC. **(All goals)**

GENDER

Some important work has been undertaken to promote a more gendered approach to SALW control – predominantly with regards to ensuring SALW control strategies and action plans in the Western Balkans are gender responsive and include gender considerations. Significant support has been provided by SEESAC and others and numerous research

exercises and workshops have taken place. Moving beyond commitment to the principle of gender equality is the priority for the next phase of implementation, requiring further practical steps to be taken to tackle what are often societal norms and behaviours.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16

Maintain recent levels of engagement on gender and ensure that gender is mainstreamed into planning for any successor to the Roadmap. **(All goals)**

17

Prioritise use of sex-disaggregated data throughout the operational cycle so that commitments in KPIs on this issue are met by the end of the implementation period. **(Goals 2, 3, 4, 5)**

18

Identify practical areas for driving forwards progress on gender, including establishing gender leaders at senior positions in key ministries and using workforce planning to invest in greater representation of women in technical roles. Additional Gender Adviser contributions may be required from SEESAC or other partners to support jurisdictions directly. **(All Goals)**

6 LESSONS TO INFORM FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

This section sets out the main lessons that have been identified which are relevant to the remainder of the Roadmap implementation period and as part of considerations for a follow-on initiative. They are based on the experiences of those involved in Roadmap implementation at the jurisdiction level as well as from international and regional organisations. As such, they represent an important collective body of knowledge that should be incorporated into implementation activity as well as planning for any future phases. It is recommended that a specific discussion on these lessons takes place, perhaps as part of a future Regional Coordination Meeting.

1. THE ROADMAP CONCEPT WORKS AS A POLITICAL AND COOPERATIVE MECHANISM.

Will be beneficial in supporting operational activity in the future and should be maintained in some form. A key lesson is that funds and a disbursement mechanism should be ready by the time a new Roadmap is agreed to maintain momentum and avoid damaging periods of inaction or indecision.

2. POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IS REQUIRED TO ELEVATE COOPERATION BEYOND OPERATIONAL COORDINATION.

Political and diplomatic support of a similar level is required to maintain progress through the second phase of implementation and in any successor to the Roadmap.

3. IMPROVING COORDINATION REQUIRES TARGETED EFFORT.

Investment in administrative processes helps to establish systems and protocols through which coordination can continue to be improved and if beneficial, can be nurtured and further developed over time.

4. SALW CONTROL IS AN IMPORTANT 'TIP OF THE ICEBERG' ISSUE THAT CAN FACILITATE ENGAGEMENT ON OTHER MORE SENSITIVE TOPICS.

SALW has been an effective issue through which to engage on a range of priorities and is a useful entry point into related issues. As an issue which has resonance with different functions of government, SALW control can play a useful convening role.

5. AMBITIOUS GOAL AND TARGET SETTING HELPS TO MOTIVATE STAKEHOLDERS BUT DOES NOT REPRESENT REALISTIC TARGETS WITHIN THE TIME AVAILABLE.

Distinguishing between political commitment and ambition and a realistic timetable and plan for implementation is important for combining ambitious goals and a realistic timetable for delivery.

6. LINKING THE ROADMAP TO AMBITIONS FOR EU ACCESSION HELPS TO ENCOURAGE POLITICAL OWNERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP.

External stimulus is important for generating political momentum and creating the conditions for cooperation.

7. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION ACROSS THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SECTOR, INCLUDING FROM PROSECUTORS AND JUDGES

is important for learning lessons and supporting intelligence- and evidence- led planning and operations. Bespoke outreach is required so that efforts to include the judiciary in SALW control are more effective.

8. TRUST MAY BE INTANGIBLE BUT IS ESSENTIAL TO REGIONAL COOPERATION.

Getting to the point where trust is generated and can be protected can take a significant period of time and requires patience and clear rules of engagement.

9. CULTURAL CHANGE OR CHANGES IN SOCIAL NORMS TAKES TIME.

Ambitions for change should be realistic in terms of the expected levels of input and time. In the case of future Roadmap implementation, gender equality and other social changes should both be given an increased priority locally.

7 KEY GAPS, CHALLENGES, RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The section which follows provides an in-depth assessment of the status of implementation of each goal under the key criteria of the review. However, it is first useful to provide an overview of the key gaps, challenges, risks and opportunities identified as part of the review to provide the wider context in which the assessment has been made.

Gaps:

The Review Team assess that the support provided by implementing organisations, key supporters and donors was timely, relevant and responded to Roadmap priorities. Gaps identified are included in the sections which follow. However, key areas that could be expanded upon include the need to engage further with a wider group of the public, including actors such as civil society organisations, academia, and wider public organisations to improve engagement with SALW control and thus increase the impact of Roadmap implementation. Furthermore, additional work is required to engage a wider cohort of justice sector actors, specifically judges as this is an important gap. Other areas warranting further consideration to ensure that the breadth of the Roadmap priorities are being supported include a greater focus on making practical progress on gender equality, more focussed support on aspects of arms export control, specifically end user verification, and greater consideration of the relationship between SALW related problems and other challenging policy and operation areas in which SALW are often involved, including people trafficking and violent extremism.

Challenges:

The first phase of the implementation of the Roadmap occurred at a time in which there were significant contextual challenges. Issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on government priorities, the ability to implement projects, and the limited ability to bring people together was a significant challenge. Furthermore, other factors include the earthquake in Albania, cyber-attacks by hostile

actors in several jurisdictions, as well as a complex political context. The combination of these slowed delivery, impacted decision-making processes and in some cases, led to the postponement of activity.

Risks:

Whilst the issue of SALW itself is not as contentious as some other related areas (including aspects of organised and transborder crime, and high-level corruption), the context in which the Roadmap is being implemented brings with it obvious risks (the risk of doing harm through operations, programme and fiduciary risks and political risk). This has been exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which impacts the geopolitical dynamics of the region and further afield as well as representing a significant future risk with regards to SALW proliferation. Furthermore, the multiple actors working on SALW, the complexity of the Roadmap, as well as the varying levels of capacity within each jurisdiction are all risks relevant to implementation.

Opportunities:

Opportunities are outlined in full within the Recommendations section. **However, the Review Team concludes that the Roadmap is highly catalytic and has demonstrated its potential to be a key driving force for both regional and international cooperation in the Western Balkans.** The first phase of implementation has demonstrated the capability of the jurisdictions, implementing partners, donors and SEESAC to generate high levels of activity in relation to SALW. This has outlined several opportunities for the remaining phase to ensure the operationalisation of these activities. Furthermore, the success of the Roadmap also has the potential to be applied to other regions –representing a further opportunity to build global best practice. This should be capitalised further during the second phase, with additional work on international outreach and cross-sharing of information considered by the Roadmap's key architects.

ANNEX 1

MID-TERM REVIEW QUESTIONS



MID-TERM REVIEW QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION — GUIDANCE FOR THE INTERVIEW

The interviews and group discussions will intend to capture the following findings:

- 1 What are the key lessons learned, identified risks and opportunities in the Roadmap implementation?
- 2 Are there specific aspects of the Roadmap implementation that have been identified as good practices or lessons learned, used in other geographic or thematic areas?
- 3 Have organizations and donors effectively supported the implementation of the Western Balkans Roadmap? What have been the challenges? What should improve in the future?
- 4 Is the distribution of support reflecting the priorities of the Roadmap implementation? Are there areas/needs within the Roadmap where the support provided has been identified to be more limited or non-existent?
- 5 What evidence can respondents give that illustrates progress or lack of progress against the Western Balkans Roadmap?

RELEVANCE

- 1 Do you think the Roadmap itself is still relevant in the current context?
- 2 Are the current overall targets still relevant and are there any areas that are not suitably covered by the Roadmap?
 - a. Is there sufficient progress to the vision, 3 years in, now at the end of the 4th year, 2 years to go. Would you say that it is behind, on track, or ahead?
 - b. What evidence informs national action plans, evolving SALW/ammunition-related approaches to countering illicit trafficking and misuse of SALW/ammunition?
 - c. How evidence-based and/or intelligence-led is the programme?
 - d. Has the threat related to firearms within the EU and coming from the Western Balkans increased or decreased during the mid-term review period? Are there any new threats deriving from or towards the Western Balkans identified?

IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS

- 1 What is the progress in the implementation of the Western Balkans Roadmap as per its goals and overall targets? Is the overall implementation of the Roadmap on track in achieving its Goals?

EFFECTIVENESS

- 1 What steps have been undertaken by the authorities towards harmonisation of legislation on firearms, ammunition and explosives with the relevant EU regulatory framework and in line with international agreements/standards including the Arms Trade Treaty, UN Firearms Protocol?
- 2 What concrete steps have been undertaken in improving capacities for detection of illicit firearms, ammunition and explosives within the jurisdictions' territory and at the borders?
- 3 Has operational cooperation in preventing and countering illegal possession and trafficking of FAE through bilateral, regional, with EU agencies and including within EMPACT operations increased in the mid-term review period? Are there lessons learned or good practices identified, including recommendations for the next phase?
- 4 Have there been challenges in implementing Life Cycle Management of SALW and ammunition by the jurisdictions?
- 5 Have awareness activities among general population, targeting both women and men, on the danger of misuse and/or illicit possession been conducted during the mid-term review period?
- 6 Has there been an increase in the prosecution and adjudication of firearms related crimes during the reporting period?
- 7 Is the reporting mechanism established sufficient in ensuring efficient and effective monitoring of the progress implementation both at the jurisdiction and regional level?
- 8 Have there been challenges related to reporting based on the Key Performance Indicators, lessons learned, and the narrative reports, and are there any recommendations for improvement in ensuring better monitoring of progress?

EFFICIENCY

- 1 To what extent has the use of available resources been efficient across the jurisdiction/implementation of the Roadmap? Any lessons?
- 2 To what extent have activities been implemented within their planned timeframes?

SUSTAINABILITY

- 1 What are the key challenges identified including those related to COVID-19 pandemic constraints, the remaining gaps, and recommendations for the way ahead?
- 2 What are the areas that have been identified by the mid-term review that require priority funding support or identified as new needs, and for which funding has not yet been identified?
- 3 Are there any actionable recommendations looking beyond 2024, in maintaining the commitment towards a sustainable and joint action by the region, harmonized with EU in fighting the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons?

- 4 To what extent are the results achieved so far and progress identified sustainable, in line with the vision of the Roadmap? What are the challenges and opportunities/lessons learnt identified? Will the outputs lead to benefits beyond the lifespan of the Roadmap?
- 5 To what extent have the projects implemented by organisations strengthened and promoted local ownership and leadership? Are there any lessons learnt? To what extent have the capacities of relevant government institutions been strengthened to sustain the results of the projects?

CROSS-CUTTING QUESTIONS

Coherence

- 1 Has the support provided by implementing organizations, key supporters and donors been timely, relevant, and responding to the expressed priorities in the implementation of the Western Balkans Roadmap?
- 2 To what extent have there been synergies and interlinkages among the interventions of the Funding Mechanisms and initiatives contributing to the Roadmap implementation?
- 3 Are the mechanisms established sufficient in ensuring efficient and effective coordination of efforts and resources?

Gender

- 1 To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design and implementation of activities under specific goals of the roadmap?
- 2 Do the key legal and policy documents integrate gender and age concerns in SALW/firearms control including practical measures for its implementation? Have there been any gaps either in legal framework or in its implementation identified, in particular in effectively preventing and countering use of firearms in domestic and gender-based violence?

Funding

- 1 Have the funding mechanisms used by different implementing organisations been considered effective in supporting and promoting a coordinated approach of resources in the implementation of the Roadmap?
- 2 Have there been challenges related to, the availability of funding, degree of absorption of funds and implementation capacities of implementing partners, which have been identified to influence the progress of the Roadmap implementation?

ANNEX 2

LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED



LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

AS PART OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW, THE REVIEW TEAM INTERVIEWED THE FOLLOWING STAKEHOLDERS:

TOTAL NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED FOR MTR	107
TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED FOR MTR	175

BREAKDOWN OF INTERVIEWS PER JURISDICTION

BELGRADE	16
PODGORICA	10
PRISTINA	12
SARAJEVO AND RS	14
SKOPJE	14
TIRANA	19
REGIONAL	22

BREAKDOWN OF INTERVIEWS PER INSTITUTION

SECURITY SECTOR (INCLUDES POLICE/MOI/MOD/MOIA/CUSTOMS/EXPORT CONTROL/BALLISTICS/FORENSICS)	57
PROSECUTORS	4
MOJ/JUDGES/COURTS/JUDICIAL TRAINING CENTRES	5
MINISTRY OF ECONOMY/CIVIL AFFAIRS/MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS	3
IMPLEMENTERS (SEESAC, UNDP, UNODC, OSCE, ITF, NABIS, EUROPOL, INTERPOL, NATO, FRONTEX, EMPACT)	25
DONORS/WIDER DONOR COMMUNITY	11
CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	2



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