

Skopje – 15th Roadmap Local Coordination Meeting on SALW

29 June 2026

Opening remarks

The fifteenth Local Coordination Meeting on the implementation of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap was convened by the Small Arms and Light Weapons Commission of North Macedonia, which welcomed participants and set out the priorities for the period ahead.

Legal framework and strategic implementation

The most significant development reported was the adoption of the new Law on Weapons by Parliament on 26 June 2026, three days before the meeting. The text had been finalized in draft in November 2025 with the technical support of a SEESAC expert, subjected to consultation with civil society and other stakeholders, and submitted for the opinion of the European Commission, which was ultimately positive following the incorporation of comments. The new Law provides for a period of voluntary surrender of one year and for legalization over six months from its entry into force. In parallel, the Law amending the Law on Testing and Stamping, that is the marking of firearms and ammunition, was adopted by the Government and was to be forwarded to Parliament under an accelerated procedure, while amendments to the Law on the Development, Production and Trade of Military Goods, adopted in March 2026, transferred competence for external trade to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. The Law on Explosive Materials for Civilian Use remained in the final stage of drafting, with consultation and governmental adoption still to follow. On national SALW strategy, the Commission confirmed that no valid SALW Control Strategy had been in force during the reporting period, the previous strategy having expired. Following an evaluation workshop held in Skopje in September 2025 with SEESAC support, a new Strategy and Action Plan for 2026 to 2030, aligned with the Roadmap indicators, had been drafted and submitted to the Government, where it remained under revision to ensure coherence with other national strategies. Officials underlined that harmonizing the many items of secondary legislation required under the new laws, within a six-month statutory deadline, would require the immediate establishment of working groups and continued external support.

Firearms Focal Point, data collection and digitalization

The Firearms Focal Point was reported to be functional, operating through the competent organizational units of the Public Security Bureau. During the reporting period it received IT equipment donated through SEESAC to improve data management and the exchange of forensic and operational information, in particular with the Crime Scene Investigation unit. The Border and Migration Affairs Sector had been designated to handle foreign requests and firearms tracing. The National Bureau for Cooperation with Interpol reported a pilot project to upgrade the national firearms search system by linking iARMS with the database, which, once completed, would allow police stations across the country to verify seized weapons directly. Wider digitalization continued through the upgrade of the Weapons Registry, aligned with the new weapons classification and expected by early October 2026, together with nine new electronic services for citizens.

Firearms trafficking and operational cooperation

Operational cooperation against trafficking was reported across border, postal and joint-operational channels. Within the framework of EMPACT Operation CONVERSUS, targeting converted firearms and coordinated for North Macedonia by the Department for Criminal Police. To strengthen border control, Customs officials were trained in the application of standard operating procedures for SALW, developed with SEESAC and aligned with those of the Border Police, and five officials took part in the 22nd SEEFEN meeting in Skopje in October 2025. Particular attention was given to trafficking through postal and parcel channels: an inter-institutional working group of the Customs Administration and the Post of North Macedonia,

supported by UNODC, adopted standardized reporting templates, twelve customs and postal staff were trained in the analysis of X-ray images, and the Customs Administration received an X-ray scanner from UNODC in December 2025. The authorities confirmed continued recourse to the supporting tools offered by EMPACT and Europol and reported no cases of diversion of arms exports during the period.

Investigation, forensics and criminal justice response

Several concrete results were recorded in forensic and criminal justice capacity. The indoor shooting range within the Department for Forensic Examinations was officially opened on 23 December 2025, and two technical documents prepared by international, SEESAC and Ministry ballistic experts will form the basis of the Ministry's standard operating procedures for its use. In March 2026 five ballistic experts undertook a study visit to Niš, Serbia, to discuss accreditation procedures with regional counterparts. Work on the Crime Scene Investigation training and simulation facility at the Idrizovo training centre advanced to the completion of its design and technical documentation, with reconstruction expected in late summer 2026 and the first training event before year end. With UNODC support, the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors delivered training on the legal framework, and in December 2025 judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officers reviewed, with counterparts from Pristina and Tirana in Vienna, a UNODC methodology for the analysis of firearms-related judgments intended to promote greater consistency in sentencing.

Gender-responsive firearms control and domestic violence

Gender considerations were integrated into both data systems and forensic practice. The Incident Recording, Documents and Activities Module, the principal police information management system, was upgraded with UNDP support to strengthen the recording of domestic violence and gender-based violence cases involving firearms, to improve the collection of gender-disaggregated data and to introduce an alert triggered when a known perpetrator of such violence applies for a weapons permit. The Crime Scene Investigation service endorsed and distributed to all specialists the Guidelines for Forensic Techniques on applying a victim-centred approach in cases of gender-based violence, developed with UNDP and drawing on a preceding training event and the contribution of women's civil society experts. The Commission noted that women were well represented in its own composition and in the units responsible for issuing permits and conducting firearm-related investigations, and that women's organizations had taken part in a regional workshop on gender and SALW. The authorities also received a SEESAC regional analysis on the misuse of firearms in domestic violence.

Awareness raising and community engagement

Awareness-raising during the period concentrated on the risks of celebratory shooting and the misuse of pyrotechnics. Under the campaigns "Celebrate with your Heart, not with your Gun" and "Say No to Pyrotechnic Devices", the police held meetings with citizens, hunting associations and hospitality owners and organized school lectures with the Clinic for Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery and the Red Cross, including a simulation exercise for secondary-school students in Skopje. An OSCE and MoI campaign on the misuse of firearms among young people, launched on 24 March 2026, reached more than one thousand students across twelve schools, six primary and six secondary, and two faculties. The discussion identified a need for greater flexibility and closer coordination between organizers and participating schools in delivering such campaigns, and the Skopje Sector for Internal Affairs offered to support their extension to other regions.

Voluntary surrender, collection and destruction

The new Law on Weapons provides the legal basis for a forthcoming voluntary surrender and legalization campaign, and the authorities indicated that an operational plan, with public

information activities designed alongside international partners, would be prepared promptly following its entry into force. No surrender campaign had taken place during the reporting period. The relevant standard operating procedures for destruction were finalized during the period, and members of the Destruction Commission indicated that further sessions had been conducted in 2026 to clear a historically overfilled stockpile. Deactivation was advancing but was not yet operational. The standard operating procedure on the marking and registration of deactivated firearms was finalized with OSCE support and specialists were trained in North Macedonia and France, but the national marking and certification procedure had not commenced.

Storage security and specialized capacities

The security of storage facilities was addressed both as an immediate operational concern and as a capacity-building priority. Initial activities under the OSCE project were launched at the Orman warehouse site to assess its suitability for upgrading as secure storage for seized weapons, and the discussion underscored the urgency of securing adequate capacity in the Skopje region, where the highest volume of legalization is anticipated, preferably by adapting an existing building rather than undertaking new construction. A decision on the location and financing of such a facility remained outstanding. In the area of ammunition life-cycle management, representatives of the Army, the Ministry of Interior and the Protection and Rescue Directorate took part in training on the chemical stability of propellants, conducted with Austria, and on international standards for safety distances and the storage of ammunition, with further workshops with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia and Austria planned for the autumn.

Plans and activities of international organizations

UNDP presented an overview of its support, implemented with the Forensic and Crime Scene Investigation Department and the SALW Commission across forensic infrastructure and the digitalization of police records. It confirmed that the upgraded Incident Recording module, sustained by a field network of trainers, is intended to become the single police recording system from the beginning of 2027, that the upgrade of the Weapons Registry would be delivered in early October 2026, and that a Multi-Partner Trust Fund campaign on pyrotechnics was under way with a possible extension for capacity-building and equipment.

The **OSCE** Mission to Skopje reported that it had secured significant additional funding, leaving a remaining gap of 1.8 million, and outlined continued work on canine detection capacities, including a new outpost expected to open around September 2026, on real-time information exchange through the SIENA system, and on the deactivation and safe-storage workshop under construction at Gjorche Petrov, where thirty-five firearms had been deactivated to European standards pending national certification. It further announced a forthcoming assessment visit by the German armed forces, to be followed by tailored training on the identification, registration and safe storage of small arms.

UNDP SEESAC presented an overview of its current activities and plans for further work in North Macedonia. The presentation covered support to the harmonization of the firearms, ammunition and explosives (FAE) legislative framework, evidence-based SALW control policies, Gender and SALW, as well as support provided to the criminal police, border police and customs authorities. Furthermore, support to the FFP and the CSI Unit was highlighted, together with plans for further support in these areas. Finally, support to physical security and stockpile management (PSSM) and awareness-raising activities was also highlighted.

Europol presented an assessment of the threat posed by counterfeit firearms. It observed that such weapons are particularly difficult to trace and identify, that the profit margins involved are exceptionally high, with items reportedly acquired for as little as 20 to 30 euros and resold for six to seven thousand euros in destination markets such as Sweden, and that their long serviceable life, cited as up to a century, means they remain in circulation over

extended periods, frequently reaching lower-level street gangs and sustaining a "crime as a service" model. Europol identified a trafficking route running through Türkiye, Bulgaria and Greece, with weapons moved in ordinary vehicles and, in some instances, openly displayed on social media and video-sharing platforms.

Donor interventions

An overview was provided of the **Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF)** supporting the implementation of the SALW Control Roadmap in the Western Balkans. It was noted that the Trust Fund received new contributions from the Netherlands and France in 2025, bringing total contributions since its establishment to USD 30.4 million. The recent decision of the MPTF Steering Committee to allocate an additional USD 1 million for immediate priorities across the region in 2026 was also highlighted. Looking ahead, the Trust Fund is awaiting proposals for new activities from implementing organizations, to be developed in close coordination with and endorsed by the relevant SALW Commissions. In this context, in-kind and direct financial contributions from national authorities were encouraged as an important element in informing and guiding future support and priorities.