

ANNEX 1 - DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

Support for enhancing the fight against the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in the Western Balkans.

Implementing Agency:	United Nations Development Programme, Istanbul Regional Hub for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States through the South East and East Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC)
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Country / Region:	Western Balkans
Beneficiaries	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo ¹
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Brief Description

The fight against illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) remains a major challenge globally, regionally and in jurisdictions across the Western Balkans. These weapons continue to pose a serious security threat to the Western Balkans and to the European Union at large. They are frequently used in crimes, killings or threats against men and women, boys and girls. In the EU, the use of violence by criminals involved in serious and organised crime has grown both in frequency and severity, with many groups employing weapons or explosives in public spaces and accepting harm to innocent by-standers.

According to the latest EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (EU-SOCTA 2025) by Europol, the trafficking of illegal firearms and explosives remains one of the foremost cross-border threat areas confronting law-enforcement across Europe. Criminal networks are becoming more embedded and dangerous, exploiting legal business structures, digital platforms, encrypted communication and young perpetrators to amplify violence and weapon flows. The report notes a “double destabilising effect” of organised crime: through the creation of parallel illicit economies and through the deployment of criminal networks as proxies in hybrid threat scenarios. Firearms trafficking and violent crime are increasingly intertwined with broader criminal activities – including drugs, human trafficking and environmental crime – and are further fuelled by geopolitical tensions and the availability of diverted weapons. In particular, port cities, major urban drug markets and transit regions (including the Western Balkans) have seen intensified violence linked to firearms.

For the Western Balkans, this means that SALW trafficking remains a critical entry and transit vector, and that violence with weapons feeds into organised crime groups which now operate in well-connected, transnational networks, increasingly empowered by digital and hybrid means. Strengthened cooperation, improved tracing of firearms, closing of diversion routes and disruption of violent criminal business models must therefore remain central to regional and EU responses.²

¹ For the European Union, this designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. For UNDP, references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of the Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

² Europol, *EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (2025)*, published 18 March 2025, available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-events/main-reports/socta-report>

Recognizing that the proliferation and illicit trafficking of firearms, components and their ammunition is a persistent threat for the internal and external security, and to give a new impetus to more than a decade of efforts in this area, the Western Balkan authorities jointly developed and adopted the [Roadmap for a sustainable solution, to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition \(the Western Balkans SALW Roadmap\)](#)³, through a process fully led by the region's authorities. Coming to the end of the first phase of implementation, the text of the Roadmap was revised through consultative meetings with Small Arms and Light Weapons Commissions throughout the region during 2023 and 2024, ensuring regional ownership and sustainability of results. In an effort to keep the comprehensive approach and inclusiveness of the process, consultations also engaged donors, regional and international partners, as well as civil society representatives. The revised text of the [Roadmap](#) outlining the goals, overall targets and timelines during 2025-2030 was endorsed by the Western Balkans Ministers of Interior during the [EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs](#) held in October 2024.

The endorsement of the second phase of implementation followed also one of the key recommendations of the Roadmap's [Mid-Term Review](#), and the agreement and commitment expressed by the authorities of the region to continue the implementation of the Roadmap beyond 2024 at the [EU's High-Level Meeting on Countering Firearms Trafficking in South East Europe](#) held in Brussels in May 2023.

Since its adoption, the Western Balkans Roadmap has inspired the initiation of several other regional initiatives, which led to the adoption of similar regional roadmaps including in the Caribbean and in Central America while other regions are also in process of developing such regional instruments. The impact of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap on regional cooperation and on the fight against trafficking, organized crime and other types of crime has also been acknowledged in various forums including at the most recent [Berlin Process Summit](#) held in Berlin on 14 October 2024 and the [EU Western Balkans Summit](#) on 18 December 2024 in Brussels.

Additionally the Roadmap approach has been recognized in various reports of the *UN Secretary General (SG) on SALW Control* and has been recognized as a good practice in *UN SG's New Agenda for Peace*, outlining the need for developing SALW control roadmaps, setting national and regional targets, measuring progress toward the implementation of regulatory frameworks and pursuing whole-of-government approaches that integrate small arms and light weapons control into development.

The Roadmap is integrated in *2020-2025 EU action plan on firearms trafficking*⁴ ('EU Action Plan') and addresses challenges identified in the EU SALW strategy 2018 against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition "Securing arms, protecting citizens". The implementation of both Western Balkans Roadmap and the EU Action Plan have contributed to a significant increase of operational cooperation between the EU and the Western Balkans partners on the fight against illicit trafficking of firearms, reinforcing thus the efforts of the Western Balkans in meeting some of the key security requirements as part of the EU accession negotiations.

The implementation of the first phase of the project significantly contributed to the progress in the WB Roadmap implementation. The continuation of the project specifically aims to reinforce the gains over its first phase, including in strengthening strategic and operational capacity of the Western Balkans authorities to conduct firearms investigations as well as exchange information within the region and with the EU on illegal possession, misuse, and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition. In addition, it will follow up with concrete responsive measures following the findings of the extensive and multidimensional research conducted during the first phase, related to the

³ Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in the Western Balkans by 2024, <https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/publications-salw-control-roadmap/Regional-Roadmap-for-a-sustainable-solution-to-the.pdf>

⁴ COM(2020) 608 final - Annexes to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European economic and social committee and the Committee of the regions - 2020-2025 EU action plan on firearms trafficking, see: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/organized-crime-and-human-trafficking/trafficking-in-firearms_en

factors fuelling demand and misuse of firearms and in mapping some of the good practices worldwide related to arms violence prevention. Lastly, it will follow up on the pioneering work in translating commitment towards integration of gender perspective into practical tools in the hands of the law enforcement officials as well as in strengthening cooperation and capacities of civil society organizations to ensure a whole of society approach. It will also do so, by further building on the extensive support already provided by the EU and more particularly through the respective EU Council decisions ([2016/2356](#), [2018/1788](#) and [2019/2111](#), 2022/2321, 2024/3006) in support of SEESAC, in enhancing the South East Europe capacities in the fight against illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition.

I. DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE

The widespread availability of illicit small arms and light weapons and their ammunition is a key enabler of conflict and endemic crime worldwide. Such weapons may originate from various sources. Shipments of small arms to conflict zones and to areas experiencing pervasive crime can be sizeable but are most often small-scale consignments. The cumulative destabilizing force of such trade — for example, as equipment of foreign terrorist fighters, pirates, armed groups or organized crime syndicates — is not to be underestimated. Domestically, small arms and ammunition enter illicit circulation through theft, resale or corruption. Diversion of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition is a major problem in many parts of the world. It may occur as a result of a transfer without proper controls, unauthorized retransfer, thefts from poorly secured stockpiles, handouts to armed groups or civilian populations, or barter involving natural resources. In certain instances, government depots become sources of illicit weapons. Illicit arms trafficking has further been defined as a crime priority in European Multidisciplinary platform against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) by Europol based on their Serious and Organised Crime (SOCTA) methodology. Arms trafficking is now also happening on the darknet according to the Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment (IOCTA) report of the same organization.⁵

In the Western Balkans, the conflicts during the 1990s, resulted in a high number of unregistered weapons (military and civilian) in the hands of civilians making these weapons a security threat to the entire Western Balkans region and the EU. From urban centers to rural enclaves, the legacy of armed conflicts, prevalence of organized crime, persistence of domestic violence, and uneven control over firearms have contributed to persistently high rates of gun ownership and misuse throughout the region. Across all six jurisdictions the social, political, and economic impacts of gun violence are still tangible.

Data from the Armed Violence Monitoring Platform indicate that between 2019 and 2024, a total of 17,792 firearm incidents were recorded in the Western Balkans, with annual figures gradually increasing from 1,930 in 2019 to a peak of 3,429 in 2023. **Firearm seizures** were the most frequently reported type of incident, accounting for 46% of all cases in this period. Incidents in the criminal context ranked second (2,883 cases) but have been on decline since 2021. In this context, 1,535 armed robberies have been reported, with cases dropping sharply from 369 in 2019 to 148 in 2024, showing a 60% decrease. In contrast, incidents linked to organized crime rose steadily from 47 to a peak of 170 in 2023. Firearm incidents in the domestic violence context were in steady increase, nearly doubling from 68 in 2019 to 123 in 2024. Incidents with handguns prevailed while incidents with explosive devices (mainly seizures) showed a considerable rise over the years.

Based on the comprehensive study conducted in the first phase of the project, civilian demand for firearms in the Western Balkans is driven by a complex interplay of personal insecurity, cultural inheritance, institutional distrust, and the enduring legacy of past conflicts, The research findings

⁵ EU Serious and organized crime threat assessment (2017), <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-serious-and-organised-crime-threat-assessment-2017> , page 23; and Internet Organized Crime Threat Assessment (2019), <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/internet-organised-crime-threat-assessment-iocta-2019> , page 7.

underscore that firearm demand cannot be reduced to a single factor; rather, it results from a complex system where personal, social, economic, and cultural forces intersect. Social and cultural norms and traditional practices shape preferences for firearm acquisition and ownership. Factors such as hunting, recreation, and celebratory rituals all influence firearm demand, particularly among men. Men are consistently more supportive of firearm ownership and usage than women. Over 50 percent of male respondents claimed to have handled firearms compared to just over 10 percent of women. Although insecurity was found to fuel interest in gun ownership, with approximately one-third of respondents across the Western Balkans citing personal safety as the primary reason for owning firearms, it does not necessarily translate into a belief in their effectiveness for protection, as only one in five of them thinks firearms would genuinely improve household safety. Another important finding from the survey highlights that over 80 percent of respondents worry about young people's exposure to violent media, and 65 percent oppose children playing with toy guns while of specific concern among the findings is the perceived normalization of firearms among young men, which poses particular challenges to firearm control efforts.

Traditional and digital media are also perceived to amplify positive attitudes toward firearms. Focus group participants identified traditional and digital media as powerful drivers in shaping positive attitudes toward firearms, especially among youth. Sensationalized reporting on crime and violence, along with portrayals of firearms as symbols of heroism and power in popular culture, amplify the demand. Social media platforms further normalize firearm ownership among young men, complicating efforts at firearm control and suggesting the need for targeted awareness initiatives as well as a systematic policy approach in preventing armed violence, particularly targeting young men.

The Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap

To address this challenge and reiterate an explicit political commitment of all actors in the region towards reinforced small arms control, Western Balkans authorities developed, adopted and are implementing *the Roadmap for a sustainable solution, to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW, their ammunition and explosives (WB SALW Roadmap)*. Renewed at the end of 2024, the Roadmap 2025-2030 has five goals which address all functional areas of arms control, and these goals are incorporated into the relevant Small Arms Light Weapons Control strategies and action plans in each jurisdiction of the Western Balkans:

GOAL 1. By 2030, ensure that arms control legislation is in place, harmonized with the EU regulatory framework and other related international obligations and standardized across the region.

GOAL 2. By 2030, ensure that arms control policies and practices in the Western Balkans are in place, evidence-based and intelligence-led.

GOAL 3. By 2030, significantly reduce misuse, illicit manufacturing, illicit possession, and illicit flows of weapons, ammunition and explosives (WAE).

GOAL 4. By 2030, significantly reduce the supply, demand, illicit possession and misuse of arms, ammunition and explosives through the means of prevention.

GOAL 5. By 2030, substantially decrease the risk of proliferation and diversion through improved safety and security of the stockpiles and disposal of weapons, ammunition and explosives.

The Roadmap was initially endorsed by the Western Balkans authorities during the Ninth Regional Meeting of the SALW Commissions⁶ (Tirana, Albania, 28-29 May 2018) and was adopted during the **Interiors and Security Ministers' Meeting of the Western Balkans Summit** organized in London, on 10 July 2018⁷.

The development of such a comprehensive regional document through an inclusive and complex consultative process in the period of four months, was possible due to the pre-existing strong regional cooperation on SALW control of the Western Balkans, where, the jurisdictions, backed by

⁶ The SALW Commissions are inter-ministerial bodies coordinating all SALW-related policies.

⁷ A plan for a safer future, https://www.seesac.org/News_1/A-plan-for-a-safer-future/

EU, have been actively working on strengthening SALW control and combatting illicit trafficking of firearms through a regional approach since 2002. Strong level of expertise of the authorities and commitment of Small Arms and Light Weapons Commissions, was an important element of success, coupled by the technical assistance provided by SEESAC, as well as political and financial support from Germany, France, the EU and the RCC.

To translate the Roadmap into action, the Western Balkans authorities, with SEESAC's assistance, developed or amended existing action plans⁸ on SALW control to align them with the Roadmap goals and key performance indicators (KPIs). **High-Level Meetings**⁹ within the roadmap implementation were organized annually in Paris, Berlin and Brussels to take stock of the priorities set out in the SALW strategies and action plans.

With support provided through EU CD 2018/1788 and in close cooperation with the relevant authorities in the Western Balkans, a comprehensive and unique **coordination¹⁰ and monitoring¹¹ platform** has been established by SEESAC since beginning of 2019, to ensure an effective coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Roadmap and the accompanying six action plans.

In close cooperation with EU, Germany and France, SEESAC is **coordinating** the implementation of the Roadmap, involving the Western Balkans governments, key implementors such as UNDP, OSCE, NATO, UNODC, and key donors. At the request of donors, to further strengthen donor coordination, planning and communication, a **Western Balkans Small Arms and Light Weapons Control Roadmap Multi-Partner Trust Fund**¹² (MPTF) was established by UNDP, UNODC and the UN's MPTF Office. SEESAC performs the functions of the **Secretariat** responsible for the programmatic coordination and monitoring of the Trust Fund, providing technical and management support to the Steering Committee. While the EU is not contributing financially through the Trust Fund, it is seating in its Steering Committee (both EEAS and EU Commission).

The strategic importance and progress achieved in the Western Balkans in the implementation of the SALW Control Roadmap was welcomed at the **Poznan Summit of the Berlin Process** in July 2019 by Heads of Governments. In addition to this, progress was reviewed and commended at the **High-Level Meetings of the Franco-German initiative**, hosted by Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Germany and France, in Paris in December 2019 and Berlin in January 2020. Additionally, the **EU Commission** integrated the *Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap* in the *EU Action Plan on Combatting Illicit Trafficking of SALW* instead of developing a separate EU Action Plan for the Western Balkans. Recognising the quality of the comprehensive monitoring system developed under the Roadmap, the EU Commission also introduced the Roadmap Key Performance Indicators to the EU Action Plan to initiate detailed data collection and monitoring of progress on SALW control within the EU.

At the completion of the first phase of the Roadmap implementation and despite several major challenges faced by the region including the COVID 19 pandemic, war in Ukraine, major earthquakes, cyberattacks, the roadmap progress reports and the [Roadmap Mid-Term Review](#), confirm the progress in several areas of the Roadmap implementation. Specifically, based on the Roadmap Progress reports, including the latest ones presented during the [13th Regional Roadmap meeting in Sarajevo on 9-10 July 2025](#), several key trends and developments were highlighted across the region, including:

⁸ Action Plans for the implementation of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap, https://www.seesac.org/Strategic-Documents_1/.

⁹ Governments and the EU pledge support to fight armed violence in the Western Balkans, https://www.seesac.org/News_1/Governments-and-the-European-Union-pledge-support-to-fight-armed-violence-in-the-Western-Balkans/

¹⁰ On Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap coordination <https://www.seesac.org/Roadmap-Coordination/>

¹¹ On Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap monitoring, <https://www.seesac.org/Roadmap-Monitoring/>

¹² Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap MPTF, <https://mptf.undp.org/fund/slw00>

- **Legislative Alignment:** All jurisdictions have continued efforts to align their firearms, ammunition, and explosives related legislation with the EU Acquis. Draft laws on weapons and explosives are at varying stages of development. Three jurisdictions report full compliance of their Criminal Codes with the UN Firearms Protocol, while others indicated ongoing harmonization processes.
- **Strategic Frameworks:** Valid SALW control strategies were under implementation in 2024 in Tirana, Belgrade, Podgorica, Pristina, Skopje, and Sarajevo, with strategies in Belgrade, Tirana, and Skopje expiring at the end of 2024. These jurisdictions reported that new strategies are either being developed or planned for 2025.
- **Firearms Focal Points (FFPs):** FFPs are established in five jurisdictions (Belgrade, Podgorica, Pristina, Skopje, and Tirana) and are operational in four. Efforts to establish an FFP in Bosnia and Herzegovina remain ongoing. All jurisdictions reported enhanced investigative capacities and participation in joint operations, including Joint Action Days and other regional cooperation initiatives.
- **Ballistic and forensic capacities:** Most jurisdictions reported intensified efforts to accredit their ballistic laboratories, with some completing the accreditation process for specific forensic methods. All jurisdictions received training and specialized equipment to strengthen forensic and ballistic capabilities.
- **Firearms Reduction Measures:** Several jurisdictions implemented voluntary surrender, legalization, and deactivation campaigns to reduce firearms in illegal possession. In 2024, a total of **32,066 firearms were voluntarily surrendered**. Destruction of confiscated and surplus firearms and ammunition continued, with 20,155 firearms and over 15 million rounds of ammunition destroyed between 2018 and 2024.
- **Awareness-Raising:** All jurisdictions reported conducting awareness-raising campaigns, although outreach to legal entities remains limited in some cases. Notably, reports of celebratory shootings increased in 2024, particularly during the summer — a trend attributed to increased public awareness and improved reporting by both citizens and police.
- **Seizures inland and at the borders:** Since 2018, jurisdictions in the Western Balkans have seized over **35,000 firearms inland** and nearly **1,200 at border crossings**. In addition, more than **1.1 million rounds of ammunition have been seized inland, alongside over 80,000 rounds at the borders**.

While below are some of the key findings confirmed by the Mid-Term Review of the Roadmap:

- The effectiveness and the relevance of the Roadmap to all aspects of SALW control were confirmed.
- The Roadmap conveys a strong signal of cooperation among WB jurisdictions and with external partners.
- The coordination and cooperation have increased, showing already early signs of impact.
- Progress towards each goal of the Roadmap is mostly on track.
- Additional emphasis on learning and whole-of-government approaches is required, along with a greater focus on awareness, data management, and analysis capabilities.
- Funding and technical support from external partners have been relevant to Roadmap goals and to local-level priorities.

In addition, the Mid Term Review provided some **key recommendations**, including to:

- Ensure ongoing relevance to the context through regular threat assessments and conflict and political economy analysis.
- Prioritize sustainability and translating capacity and capability into operational activity.
- Move beyond commitment to the principle of gender equality during the next phase of implementation.
- Consider additional funding for areas of the Roadmap that may have been unprioritized.
- Achieve greater coherence in partner support, aligned closely with local priorities.
- Strongly encourage making an early decision on what follows after 2024.

Gaps nevertheless still exist including further improvement of investigation capacities, additional support in improving analytical skills and connectivity of Firearms Focal Points, and criminal justice

response needs to be enhanced by strengthened capacities for crime scene investigations and good quality of evidence. Furthermore, while remarkable progress has been achieved in incorporating the gender perspective in small arms control strategies, gaps in institutional response still remain. Lastly, activities aimed at increasing awareness, public information, education, outreach and advocacy to reduce the supply, demand and misuse of firearms, need a more concerted effort and their implementation is currently lagging behind.

1. Strategic and operational capacities of WB authorities to conduct firearms investigations and exchange information within the region and with the EU on illegal possession, misuse, and trafficking of SALW

1.1 Network of Firearms Focal Points in the Western Balkans

The **Firearms Focal Point (FFP)** serves as a central mechanism for collecting, analysing, and sharing intelligence on the illicit possession, criminal use, and trafficking of firearms, their essential components, and ammunition—both domestically and internationally. Operating at both strategic and tactical levels, the FFP enhances the intelligence picture, supports investigations, and enables prevention efforts through timely and coordinated information exchange. By integrating legal control measures, intelligence gathering, ballistic data, and analysis, the FFP delivers fast-time intelligence to investigators, identifies new investigative leads, and disseminates knowledge that strengthens firearms-related investigations. Utilization of data at the jurisdictional level also enables timely international cooperation, such as making and completing tracing requests with partner law enforcement agencies. The FFP model is adaptable to different jurisdictions, varying security contexts, ranging from a dedicated unit to a single point of contact coordinating multiple disciplines across different departments.

As part of wider efforts to strengthen law enforcement capacities in combating the illegal possession, misuse, and trafficking of small arms and light weapons support has been provided to all Western Balkan jurisdictions to establish FFPs as key analytical units in firearms investigations. Despite notable progress, gaps remain in operational and seizure data collection, analysis, and information sharing—an area of growing importance also in the context of emergence of new technologies.

Building on initial limited support provided through EU Council Decisions 2016/2356, 2018/1788, and 2019/2111, and with funding from the first phase of this project, UNDP SEESAC has provided comprehensive technical assistance, training, and regional cooperation to strengthen FFPs. Today, five out of six Western Balkan jurisdictions have established FFPs, in line with the European Firearms Experts (EFE) guidance and the European Commission's recommendation to EU Member States. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the only jurisdiction without an operational FFP, SEESAC has been supporting the Council of Ministers Working Group in defining the structure, functions, and tools needed to establish one.

To support FFPs' capacity to collect, analyse, and act on firearms-related intelligence, SEESAC implemented a comprehensive set of activities in phase I of this project which have contributed to the transformation of the FFPs from ad hoc analytical units into institutionalized mechanisms that systematically support criminal investigations and strategic decision-making. This support has included:

- Targeted training on analytical skills, critical thinking, foresight, and digital investigation, including open-source and social media intelligence and cyber patrolling. These trainings significantly enhanced the ability of law enforcement officers to identify and analyse firearms-related intelligence from multiple sources, including online platforms and digital environments. As a result, FFP analysts have become more proficient in transforming raw data into actionable intelligence, directly supporting investigations and operational planning.
- Development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the establishment and functioning of FFPs in five jurisdictions, ensuring institutional clarity and sustainability. The SOPs formalized internal workflows, defined reporting lines, and improved coordination with

other law enforcement units, leading to more consistent and structured analytical outputs across the region

- Regional cooperation initiatives, including study visits, workshops, and exchanges with EU counterparts, which facilitated the transfer of good practices from EU Member States. These initiatives not only strengthened professional networks among analysts and investigators but also contributed to harmonizing analytical methodologies and data collection standards in line with EU and EFE guidance.
- Integration into EMPACT activities, particularly through participation in Joint Action Days (JADs) and cross-border operations. Through these activities, FFPs improved their capacity to provide intelligence support before, during, and after operational phases, thereby enhancing the quality and impact of regional EMPACT actions targeting firearms trafficking.
- Enhanced inter-institutional cooperation between FFPs, ballistic experts, and prosecutors, strengthening the intelligence-to-evidence chain and promoting the use of analytical products in criminal proceedings. This cooperation has resulted in more coherent national responses and improved linkages between analytical, operational, and prosecutorial levels.
- Production of knowledge products addressing emerging threats, including 3D-printed firearms, which improved the understanding of new trends and proposed adequate operational responses.

Further to this, since 2018, SEESAC has been organizing Annual FFP Meetings funded through the EU Council Decision CFSP 2016/2356 and the Phase I of this project, that bring together representatives of all Western Balkan jurisdictions, EU Member States, and key international partners. These meetings have evolved into the key regional coordination mechanism for firearms intelligence and analysis, fostering structured dialogue and the exchange of intelligence-led policing practices. The Annual FFP Meetings have had a tangible impact on regional cooperation and institutional development. They have facilitated the harmonization of FFP methodologies with EU standards, improved data collection and analytical processes, and strengthened the operational links between national FFPs and EU counterparts. Through these annual exchanges, jurisdictions have identified common operational challenges and jointly developed follow-up measures, including targeted training modules, standard operating procedures, and cross-border initiatives under EMPACT. As a result, the Annual FFP Meetings have contributed to measurable progress in the analytical and intelligence capacities of Western Balkan law enforcement agencies. They have also ensured sustained institutional commitment to the FFP concept, paving the way for its full integration into national and regional frameworks for combating firearms trafficking.

All these efforts led to the improvement of the quality and frequency of analytical products produced by the FFPs, enabling law enforcement authorities to better detect trafficking patterns, identify key actors and routes, and anticipate emerging risks. Regional cooperation among FFPs has increased, resulting in more frequent information exchange, and closer alignment with EU standards. Collectively, these achievements have elevated the analytical component of firearms investigations in the Western Balkans to a new level, ensuring that operational and policy responses are increasingly intelligence-led, evidence-based, and interoperable with EU mechanisms.

Identified challenges and the way ahead

Despite significant progress achieved in establishing and strengthening Firearms Focal Points across the Western Balkans, several key challenges continue to hinder their full operationalization. In some jurisdictions, **the absence of a clear legal mandate for FFPs** remains a major constraint, resulting in unclear division of responsibilities between analytical units, investigative services, and higher-level coordination bodies. This lack of formal grounding often limits the authority of FFPs to access critical data and to systematically contribute to operational decision-making.

Another persistent challenge concerns **inconsistent data sharing**, both domestically among law enforcement institutions and internationally with relevant EU and regional partners. Variations in data formats, collection methodologies, and levels of confidentiality lead to gaps in the regional intelligence picture and hinder timely cross-border cooperation in firearms-related criminal cases.

Strengthening standardized data exchange mechanisms and promoting interconnectivity with Europol and INTERPOL remain a priority in this regard.

Operational links between FFPs and prosecutors, border police, customs administrations, forensic services, and international partners also require further improvement. While progress has been made through joint trainings and EMPACT activities, the linkages between analytical outputs and operational responses are still developing. Enhancing these connections is essential to ensure that intelligence generated by FFPs effectively informs investigations, prosecutions, and preventive measures.

Finally, **capacity gaps** persist in terms of human resources and technology. Several FFPs continue to face shortages of specialized and permanently assigned personnel, limited access to modern analytical tools, and insufficient IT infrastructure to support data management and secure communication. Addressing these gaps through targeted capacity development, investment in digital tools, and institutional integration will be critical to ensuring that FFPs function as fully operational, sustainable, and interoperable analytical hubs within the broader law enforcement system.

These gaps will be addressed through a set of targeted interventions designed to further institutionalize and strengthen Firearms Focal Points across the Western Balkans:

- **Upgrading data systems for interoperability and real-time intelligence sharing.** Building on previous assessments, SEESAC will continue to support the modernization of FFP data management systems, by procuring the necessary hardware equipment and related software in order to enable automated data exchange and compatibility with Europol, including SIENA and other relevant EU platforms. Improved interoperability will enhance situational awareness and facilitate the timely sharing of intelligence within and between jurisdictions.
- **Delivering advanced, gender-sensitive, and role-specific training.** SEESAC will organize tailored training focusing on advanced analytical methods, online investigations, and strategic intelligence, while integrating gender perspectives into firearms analysis and reporting. These efforts will further build the capacities of FFP staff.
- **Procuring and implementing advanced analytical and tracing tools.** To bridge existing technological gaps, SEESAC will facilitate the procurement and delivery of specialized software and hardware necessary for ballistic and intelligence analysis, ensuring that FFPs have access to modern tools that are compatible with EU standards and global best practices. The equipment would include iBase analyst notebook, SQL server, and web services to connect the iARMS system with national weapons registries or Firearms Focal Points (FFPs), as well as to establish a link with the EUROPOL Intelligence Hub once operational, and to support the networking of the ballistic related data between some jurisdictions
- **Continuing to facilitate regional dialogue and participation in international platforms.** SEESAC will maintain its role as the regional facilitator, ensuring that FFP representatives regularly exchange information, align methodologies, and engage with European and global firearms control initiatives. This ongoing cooperation will sustain progress toward harmonized, intelligence-led policing in the region.

A coordinated, long-term approach—anchored in national ownership and supported by SEESAC's technical expertise—will be essential to transforming FFPs into fully functional analytical hubs at the forefront of efforts to combat firearms-related crime and enhance regional security.

This work will contribute to the implementation of Goal 3 of the *Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap*, which calls for strengthened institutional capacities for intelligence-led policing. As analytical hubs for collecting, processing, and sharing firearms-related intelligence, FFPs are essential to building an evidence-based response to illicit firearms trafficking. In addition to this, the

emphasized the need to further institutionalize and resource FFPs to ensure *Mid-term Review of the Roadmap (2022)* systematic data collection and regional information exchange, fully aligning national practices with EU standards and the European Firearms Experts (EFE) framework.

Overview of the current situation by jurisdictions

Serbia – The Firearms Focal Point was established in a virtual format through a ministerial decision. Key technical infrastructure is in place, including database integration, and an Instruction for Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) was adopted in 2024, stipulating that all firearms checks are routed through the FFP. The FFP team's analysts have completed necessary training in system operation and data exchange, and the required hardware is operational. The FFP maintains international cooperation via Interpol, Europol, and SELEC. While progress is notable, the structure remains virtual; legal and staffing measures are needed to formalize it and transform it into a robust, intelligence-led structure aligned with EU practices, including full integration with forensic units, prosecutors, and customs.

Montenegro – The FFP operates through close cooperation between the Criminal Intelligence Department, the Department for International Operational Cooperation, the Ballistics Laboratory of the Forensic Centre, and the Group for Combating Firearms Smuggling. It is staffed, with a well-structured and interconnected intelligence framework linking national databases, the national forensic system, and international platforms to support firearms-related investigations. The FFP has adopted SOPs, begun producing intelligence products, and serves as the national tracing focal point. Further support is needed for equipment, training of newly appointed staff, and strengthening inter-institutional and international networking.

Kosovo – The FFP, based in the Department for International Law Enforcement Cooperation, is fully operational and staffed. It connects all relevant databases, including the police information system, weapons registration software, and the Integrated Ballistics Information System (IBIS). The unit produces intelligence-led policing products supporting investigators and prosecutors and acts as a key firearms intelligence contact point. Although staffed by only three officers, the unit participates regularly in regional trainings and workshops. Continued capacity building and staff reinforcement remain important to sustain and expand its functionality.

Bosnia and Herzegovina – The FFP has not yet been established; however, in 2024 the Council of Ministers created a working group to lead its development. SEESAC has provided advisory support to clarify the FFP's roles, functions, and required tools. Following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between relevant authorities, further assistance will be needed to establish the FFP structure, including procurement of hardware and software and training for appointed staff.

North Macedonia – The FFP was established in a virtual format by decision of the Minister of Interior and is staffed by eight analysts within the Criminal Analysis Unit. It integrates several key databases, including the weapons registry and IBIS, both linked to iBase and Analyst's Notebook. Efforts are ongoing to connect the FFP to the Forensic Case Management System (CEMS). Additional support is needed to advance database integration, adopt and implement SOPs, and provide sustained training, ensuring alignment with EU best practices and strengthening its role in combating firearms-related crime.

Albania – The FFP, established by order of the General Director of the State Police, comprises six members plus the Head of Unit and operates in a virtual format. It manages the collection, analysis, exchange, and use of criminal and ballistic information on legal and illegal firearms. Key databases, including the weapons registry, police information system, and forensic databases, are linked to ANB and iBase. The unit serves as the focal point for tracing and produces analytical products shared within police structures and other law enforcement agencies. However, cooperation and data-sharing protocols between agencies need strengthening. International cooperation is conducted through the relevant office for Interpol and Europol. Additional support is required for specialized training and upgrading IT infrastructure to enhance interoperability.

1.2 Capacities of authorities in the Western Balkans to conduct crime scene investigations in accordance with relevant EU good practices and guidelines

Firearms- and explosives- related crime requires tailored criminal justice responses — prevention, investigation, and prosecution — supported by strong forensic capabilities. Forensic science plays a critical role in these cases, often providing the only or decisive evidence for solving crimes. This includes ballistic analysis, firearm tracing, explosives identification, and biometric methods such as fingerprints and DNA profiling, often in combination with forensic databases.

Most forensic evidence originates from crime scene investigations (CSI), making CSI capacity (trained personnel, proper equipment, standardized procedures, and evidence-handling protocols) essential to ensuring credibility, admissibility, and international cooperation. Evidence from firearms- or explosives-related scenes may include bullets, cartridge cases, gunshot residue, explosive traces, firearm components, as well as standard evidence like fingerprints, DNA, and trace materials

Since forensic evidence carries high probative value and is subject to intense scrutiny in court, its credibility depends on strict adherence to standardized processes throughout the forensic chain (from collection and transport to storage and analysis) ensuring integrity, continuity, and reproducibility of results. Accreditation and robust Quality Management Systems (QMS), in line with international standards, are key to guaranteeing that forensic services meet recognized quality requirements.

Effective CSI is critical to firearms-related crime investigations, as the speed and accuracy with which police officers secure crime scenes, collect evidence, and conduct analysis directly impacts the criminal justice response and the successful prosecution of cases.

Support to Western Balkan jurisdictions in the standardization of procedures and practices in arms control and firearms, ammunition, and explosives (FAE) investigations has been provided through EU Council Decision 2018/1788 and the first phase of this project. However, further assistance is required to fully harmonize the regulatory framework and its implementation—particularly in crime scene investigation.

To establish a baseline for targeted support, **SEESAC conducted a comprehensive needs assessment** of CSI units investigating FAE crimes. The resulting reports, endorsed by national authorities, identified significant gaps in procedures, equipment, and quality management systems. Based on these findings, SEESAC implemented a set of targeted interventions aimed at strengthening the consistency and reliability of crime scene investigations related to firearms, ammunition, and explosives.

SEESAC supported the standardization of procedures for safeguarding recovered evidence, ensuring that national practices align with international best standards, including those of the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI) and ISO/IEC 17020 requirements. These standards define how inspection bodies, such as CSI units, should operate to ensure the impartiality, integrity, and reproducibility of their work. Standardization of procedures has enabled CSI units across the Western Balkans to adopt a more uniform approach to documenting, collecting, and handling evidence, which in turn increases the credibility and admissibility of forensic findings in judicial proceedings and facilitates cross-border cooperation.

To guide jurisdictions toward recognized international quality benchmarks, SEESAC **developed an Action Plan for achieving ISO/IEC 17020:2012 accreditation**. The Action Plan provides a clear roadmap for CSI units to progressively introduce and institutionalize quality assurance mechanisms, improve documentation, and implement internal audits. By following these steps, CSI units are better equipped to demonstrate technical competence, enhance the reliability of their results, and build trust among national and international counterparts.

Complementing these efforts, SEESAC **produced Guidelines for drafting Quality Manuals for CSI inspection bodies**, aligned with ISO/IEC 17020:2012. These Guidelines offer practical, step-

by-step instructions for developing internal procedures, defining roles and responsibilities, and maintaining traceability throughout the forensic chain. They serve as a foundational tool for institutionalizing Quality Management Systems and ensuring that forensic operations meet internationally accepted levels of quality, transparency, and accountability.

Collectively, these measures have laid the ground for systematic, standardized, and high-quality crime scene investigation processes in the Western Balkans. By promoting accreditation and the implementation of QMS, SEESAC is helping ensure that forensic evidence produced in the region is both credible and comparable with EU standards, which is an essential prerequisite for effective prosecution of firearms- and explosives- related crimes and for regional and international cooperation in criminal justice.

Although no jurisdiction has yet achieved ISO 17020 accreditation, efforts are advancing in **Serbia, Albania, and Montenegro**. Strengthening CSI capacity and achieving accreditation remain priorities, as they ensure the admissibility of evidence across jurisdictions, particularly in joint investigations.

In parallel, SEESAC continued to **strengthen the forensic capacities of law enforcement authorities** in the Western Balkans by equipping ballistic laboratories with essential tools and technologies needed for the effective examination and comparison of firearms, ammunition, and ballistic evidence. This support improved the reliability and efficiency of ballistic analyses, enabling laboratories to provide higher-quality forensic evidence for criminal investigations and prosecutions.

To further enhance regional expertise, SEESAC organized **three specialized regional workshops** on crime scene investigation, each focusing on a distinct aspect of forensic practice: photography and custody chain management, regional cooperation in CSI, and electronic evidence recovery. These workshops strengthened practical skills, improved understanding of the forensic chain of custody, and promoted harmonized investigative standards in line with EU good practices. The training on photography and custody chain management, for example, contributed to ensuring that evidence collected at crime scenes remains credible and admissible in court, while the module on electronic evidence recovery expanded the scope of investigations to include digital traces increasingly relevant in firearms-related cases.

Collectively, these interventions have advanced the region's ability to conduct credible, standardized, and intelligence-led forensic investigations that meet EU and international quality standards. By strengthening forensic capacities, SEESAC has contributed to building trust in the criminal justice process and improving the overall effectiveness of firearms- and explosives-related crime investigations in the Western Balkans.

Identified challenges and the way ahead

Despite tangible progress in strengthening forensic and crime scene investigation capacities, CSI units in the Western Balkans continue to face several systemic challenges that hinder full alignment with EU standards and good practices. Procedures and protocols for crime scene management remain **inconsistent**, varying not only between jurisdictions but also across units within the same jurisdiction. This lack of harmonization leads to uneven quality in evidence collection and documentation, which may affect the credibility and admissibility of forensic evidence in judicial proceedings and limits regional interoperability.

Additionally, **understaffing and limited specialized training** continue to hinder the operational efficiency of CSI units. Many teams operate with small teams and insufficient opportunities for professional development, particularly in advanced forensic methods and the use of new technologies. This directly impacts the timeliness, quality, and scope of investigations, particularly in complex or cross-border firearms and explosives cases. A further obstacle lies in **outdated equipment and inadequate infrastructure for secure evidence storage**, which can compromise the integrity of the chain of custody and hinder adherence to international forensic standards.

To systematically address these challenges, SEESAC conducted, in addition to above mentioned assessment, also a comprehensive **Gap Analysis** comparing national Standard Operating Procedures with ENFSI best practices across all six Western Balkan jurisdictions. The findings and recommendations—endorsed by national authorities—provided a clear roadmap for harmonizing procedures, building capacities, and improving infrastructure.

Building on these results and in order to overcome these gaps, SEESAC will, in the next phase, implement a targeted set of interventions designed to **strengthen regional cooperation, enhance technical and operational capacities, and address equipment gaps.**

In order to strengthen **regional cooperation and knowledge exchange**, SEESAC will organize two regional meetings gathering CSI experts from all jurisdictions to exchange experiences, harmonize investigative protocols, and jointly address operational challenges. Dedicated modules will focus on cross-border cooperation, particularly in managing crime scenes that involve multiple jurisdictions, thus reinforcing regional interoperability and mutual trust.

In parallel, SEESAC will deliver **advanced capacity-building activities** through one regional and several national-level trainings tailored to jurisdiction-specific needs. Training topics will include the application of new technologies and methods in CSI, advanced techniques for searching and recovering evidence, maintaining the chain of custody, securing crime scenes, and conducting CSI in cases involving sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). These trainings will ensure that investigators apply standardized, gender-sensitive, and evidence-based approaches across the region.

The equipment procured under Phase I of this project has substantially strengthened the investigative, analytical, and operational capacities of law enforcement institutions across the Western Balkans. Crime Scene Investigation units can now collect and process evidence more effectively through advanced cameras, forensic tools, and mobile laboratories, while Firearms Focal Points have improved their ability to manage, analyze, and exchange firearms-related data through upgraded servers, computers, and software solutions. The provision of surveillance and detection equipment, such as night-vision devices, GPS trackers, and metal detectors, enhanced field operations, while the integration of networking and data-management tools laid the groundwork for future interoperability with regional and EU information systems. Overall, these investments directly improved the effectiveness of firearms investigations, intelligence exchange, and cross-border cooperation.

Complementing these activities, and in line with the remaining gaps, as per the needs assessments conducted, SEESAC will provide additional **technical support and targeted equipment** to address the most pressing operational needs identified through earlier assessments. This will include portable crime scene kits, digital forensics tools for field data extraction, secure packaging materials, and advanced scene documentation equipment. The provision of such tools will be accompanied by practical training to ensure their proper use and maintenance.

By combining regional cooperation, advanced training, and targeted equipment provision, SEESAC will ensure that CSI units in the Western Balkans are **better equipped, better trained, and better connected**. These interventions will lead to higher quality and reliability of forensic evidence, increased capacity to process complex or cross-border cases, and stronger alignment with EU and international forensic standards.

This work will contribute to the implementation of *Goal 3 of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap*, which calls for strengthening law enforcement and criminal justice capabilities to ensure effective detection, investigation, and prosecution of firearms-related crimes. CSI serves as the foundation of the forensic chain, ensuring that evidence is collected, preserved, and analysed in accordance with international standards. The need for additional investment and harmonization of CSI capacities across the region to ensure consistency, reliability, and interoperability of forensic evidence has been highlighted in the *Mid-term Review of the Roadmap (2022)*. Strengthening CSI units is therefore central to achieving credible, intelligence-led, and evidence-based responses to

firearms- and explosives-related crimes, and to aligning the region's investigative practices with EU and international standards.

Overview of the current situation by jurisdictions

Serbia

Serbia's CSI system operates under the centralized structure of the General Police Directorate, with around 600 officers, mostly men and predominantly with secondary education. Despite having a formal legal and organizational framework, the CSI function remains **fragmented, under-resourced, and inconsistently supervised**. There is **no systematic quality management system** in place, and **ISO/IEC 17020 accreditation** — essential for ensuring credibility and interoperability of forensic evidence — has not been achieved. Existing **Standard Operating Procedures** are **partially developed and outdated**, lacking detailed work instructions and mechanisms to guarantee consistent implementation. **Training is insufficient**, equipment and facilities are limited, and **institutional coordination between the National Forensic Center (NFC) and regional units is weak**. While Serbia's strategic and legislative frameworks (Law on Police, Criminal Procedure Code, Chapter 24 Action Plan) recognize the importance of forensic credibility, the **CSI function still requires standardization, modernization, and stronger oversight** to meet **EU and ENFSI best practice standards** and to ensure the integrity and admissibility of forensic evidence in national and cross-border investigations

Montenegro

Montenegro's CSI system is **fragmented, under-resourced, and insufficiently structured** to meet international standards. There is **no dedicated central CSI unit** with adequate authority, staffing, or control functions—only 56 CSI officers are deployed nationwide, nearly all with **secondary education**, and the system faces **severe understaffing, aging personnel, and low motivation**. Standard Operating Procedures exist but are **not mandatory**, leading to inconsistent implementation and **limited adherence to ENFSI and ISO/IEC 17020 requirements**. **Equipment, vehicles, and infrastructure are outdated or missing**, severely constraining operational effectiveness and evidence preservation. **Training is infrequent**, and recruitment is unstructured, while **quality management and accreditation processes are absent**. Institutional independence during CSI is often compromised by overlapping mandates with investigative authorities. To align with EU and ENFSI best practices, Montenegro must **establish a formal CSI inspection body**, ensure **mandatory SOP implementation, strengthen training and recruitment, and develop Quality Management Systems** as a step toward **ISO/IEC 17020 accreditation**, ensuring reliable, impartial, and credible forensic evidence in both national and cross-border cases.

Kosovo

Kosovo has established a **hybrid CSI structure** under the **Directorate of Forensics (DOF)** within combining centralized coordination with decentralized regional implementation across **seven Regional Police Directorates**. While the **legal and institutional framework** for CSI exists—anchored in the Law on Police, the Criminal Procedure Code, and detailed **Standard Operating Procedures**—the system remains **partially aligned with ISO/IEC 17020 and ENFSI standards**. The SOPs are comprehensive and mandatory but require further harmonization with **ILAC-G19** and ENFSI best practices to ensure consistent implementation and independence during crime scene processing. The staffing levels remain **insufficient** relative to operational needs and workload. Training is organized by the Kosovo Academy for Public Safety and includes both basic and specialized courses; however, **training duration, mentoring, and facilities are inadequate** compared to international standards. Equipment, facilities, and logistics are also **outdated or incomplete**, limiting the ability to conduct advanced CSI methods. **A formal Quality Management System** is not yet established. Accreditation to **ISO/IEC 17020** is still pending, and key preconditions—such as ensuring **independence, impartiality, and a centralized supervisory function**—must be strengthened. Overall, Kosovo's CSI system shows **solid institutional foundations** but requires **comprehensive investment in QMS, infrastructure, staffing, and training** to reach ENFSI-aligned, internationally recognized standards and to support credible forensic evidence in domestic and cross-border criminal investigations.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina maintains a **highly decentralized CSI system**, reflecting its complex political and administrative structure composed of multiple police agencies at the state, entity, cantonal, and district levels. Each police body operates its own CSI units with **limited coordination and no central supervisory authority**, which poses major challenges for standardization and quality control. Although the legal framework for CSI exists across jurisdictions, it remains **fragmented**, with gaps between national laws, sub-legislative acts, and practical implementation. Standard Operating Procedures are either missing or only partially developed, leading to **inconsistent methodologies and variable quality** of crime scene work. Human resource capacity is uneven: while some cantonal and entity-level units (e.g., Sarajevo Canton and Republic of Srpska) have experienced staff and basic infrastructure, others suffer from **staff shortages, limited specialized training, and lack of clear career development pathways**. Equipment and facilities are outdated and differ widely among jurisdictions, resulting in unequal operational capability. No CSI unit in Bosnia and Herzegovina is currently **accredited under ISO/IEC 17020**, and there is **no unified Quality Management System** to ensure compliance with ENFSI or ILAC-G19 standards.

North Macedonia

North Macedonia maintains a **centralized crime scene investigation structure** with units operating across **eight regional Interior Affairs Sectors (IAS)** and twenty local police stations. While the **legal and procedural framework** for CSI is largely in place, including a set of twelve SOPs and a strategic development plan, the system remains **only partially aligned with ISO/IEC 17020 and ENFSI standards**. There is **no central supervisory or quality assurance mechanism**, and **no comprehensive CSI training programme**—training currently relies on ad hoc initiatives and mentoring. Although **260 CSI officers** are in place (55% with university degrees), motivation is low due to limited status, outdated equipment, and insufficient logistical support. The **Forensic Department** provides only partial oversight, lacking control over recruitment, monitoring, or method implementation. Existing SOPs and manuals provide a solid foundation but are **not yet linked to an operational Quality Management System** or subject to systematic enforcement. Overall, CSI in North Macedonia has the **institutional basis for development but requires substantial investment** in QMS implementation, structured training, standardization, and accreditation processes to meet EU and ENFSI standards and strengthen its contribution to firearms-related criminal investigations.

Albania

Albania has established a **centralized and hierarchical CSI system** under the Forensic Directorate of the Albanian State Police, supported by **12 regional units**. While the **legal and institutional frameworks are formally in place**, operational effectiveness is constrained by **uneven implementation of Standard Operating Procedures** and the **absence of a comprehensive Quality Management System**. CSI activities are guided by internal instructions rather than fully standardized ENFSI-aligned procedures, resulting in **inconsistencies in evidence collection and documentation**. The country lacks **ISO/IEC 17020 accreditation**, and while there is awareness of international requirements, progress toward compliance has been slow. CSI units face **limited staffing, insufficient specialized training, and outdated equipment**, including vehicles and technical tools for scene processing and evidence storage. Coordination with the Forensic Directorate is functional but could be further strengthened to ensure systematic supervision and harmonization across regional units. Overall, Albania's CSI capacities remain **partially aligned with EU and ENFSI standards**, requiring targeted investment in **training, QMS implementation, and infrastructure** to ensure reliable, standardized, and internationally recognized forensic practices.

1.3 Capacities of customs authorities in the Western Balkans to counter illicit trafficking of firearms

Global trade has significantly increased, straining Customs Administrations' capabilities in terms of resources, equipment, security, and expertise. Customs controls are vital for preventing illicit trade in prohibited goods, including weapons and explosives, and contribute to international peace and stability efforts. Customs officers inspect cargo, vehicles, persons, and baggage using documentary checks and physical inspections based on risk analysis. Challenges include detecting hidden

weapons, IED components, and explosive precursors, especially when items are disassembled or disguised. While non-intrusive inspection tools like x-ray scanners are crucial, they are costly, and overreliance on them can ignore other valuable information within the supply chain. Costs, overlapping responsibilities, and limited funding constrain their use.

Effective border controls require coordination among various agencies, including immigration, security, and health services. The concept of Integrated Border Management (IBM) or coordinated border management promotes cooperation to improve efficiency, reduce delays, and enhance the detection of illegal activities, creating secure and user-friendly borders.

Strengthened cross-border control is one of the central requirements for a comprehensive approach towards combating illicit trade and flows of firearms, essential components, ammunition, and explosives in the Western Balkans. Effective border controls serve as a deterrent to crime in all its facets and as a confidence-building measure. Strict and effective border control is a foundation to any long-term programme of national and regional security. The strengthening of overall capacities for border control is necessary to effectively suppress the trafficking of weapons, ammunition and explosives across borders. An **assessment of the capacities of customs services of the jurisdictions to counter illicit trafficking** of firearms was finalized by SEESAC under EU Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/2321, and the focus was primarily on the legal framework in place and the administrative and technical capacities of the customs authorities to counter illicit trafficking of firearms. The findings of the assessment showed, in particular, the **lack of targeted training on the detection of firearms at borders, the lack of Standard Operating Procedures in place focusing on SALW control, and the lack of specialized equipment.**

The assistance for the development of **Standard Operating Procedures and thematic trainings** at the level of jurisdictions for customs authorities is already planned by SEESAC in the framework of the EU Council Decision 2024/3006. Workshops for the development of SOPs have taken place in almost all jurisdictions, and draft documents are being prepared at the moment. Training sessions will be organized during 2025 and the beginning of 2026. These trainings will focus on supporting the practical application of the SOPs, fostering harmonisation of procedures across jurisdictions, and strengthening the technical and operational capacity of customs authorities in the region.

Procurement of technical equipment does not fall within the scope of any projects currently implemented by SEESAC. While existing initiatives comprehensively address **procedural development** and **capacity-building activities**—including the drafting of Standard Operating Procedures and delivery of thematic trainings—the provision of technical equipment remains a critical gap. Ensuring access to the necessary tools and resources will **complement and complete the overall support framework for customs authorities**, enabling them to effectively implement newly established procedures and fully leverage the skills acquired through training.

Identified challenges and the way ahead

The Needs Assessments show that many customs equipment pieces are outdated, require maintenance or upgrades, or are incompatible with other systems. Customs authorities have limited equipment for identifying firearms, suspicious substances like explosives or precursors, such as smear/trace detection machines and test kits. Also, there is a clear need for additional operational equipment and training to enable non-intrusive inspections and detailed examinations of shipments and substances. Priority equipment for firearms detection includes handheld metal detectors, substance testing kits, fixed and mobile X-ray scanners, fiberscopes, portable image scanners, vehicle search tools, and personal protective equipment. Compatibility with existing tools and stakeholder needs must be considered, with ongoing training and lifecycle management.

Customs capacities are directly linked to the objectives set under This work will contribute to the implementation of *Goal 3 of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap*, which emphasizes the importance of strengthening law enforcement and border control mechanisms to prevent and detect illicit firearms trafficking. Effective customs controls at border crossing points are a critical first line

of defence against the smuggling of firearms, their parts, and ammunition. With regards to this, the *Mid-term Review of the Roadmap (2022)* highlighted that additional support to customs administrations is needed to improve detection capabilities, enhance inter-agency and cross-border cooperation, and ensure systematic integration of customs in regional and EU firearms control efforts. Strengthening customs capacities is therefore essential for establishing a coordinated, intelligence-led response to illicit firearms trafficking and for ensuring full alignment with EU Integrated Border Management and customs security standards.

2. Response to factors fuelling demand and misuse of firearms in the Western Balkans

2.1 Whole of a government and society response to the factors fuelling demand and misuse of firearms in WB.

The cutting-edge **research on factors fuelling demand for firearms**, conducted in Phase I, significantly contributed to the increased knowledge on factors fuelling demand and misuse of firearms, their impact on citizens of the region and available support to victims of armed violence, as well as good practices in armed violence prevention.

It established comprehensive and up-to-date insight into the WB residents' perception of firearms and identified both risk factors that trigger firearms acquisition in the region, and protective factors that could reduce small arms proliferation. The research documented that a firearm demand in the Western Balkans cannot be reduced to a single factor; rather, it is the complex interplay of feelings of personal insecurity, cultural inheritance, institutional distrust, gender norms and roles, and the enduring legacy of past conflicts that drives the civilian demand for firearms in the Western Balkans. The perception survey revealed that safety and protection are the leading reasons for acquiring firearms cited by a third of the population. Recreational use and prestige follow, each cited by a quarter of the population, while tradition is noted slightly more than one in ten times, illustrating the multifaceted role of firearms in society.

Identified gaps and the way ahead

Over half of the Western Balkans' residents find self-defence a justifiable reason for firearm use, while a substantially smaller number justify its use during celebrations. The motives and approval rates for firearms vary across jurisdictions: in Montenegro, tradition stands out; in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, safety is emphasized; in Albania, recreation is highlighted. In Montenegro, approval rates for firearm use exceed the regional average, whereas in North Macedonia, they are lower than the regional average. A notable number of residents in the Western Balkans believe that firearm possession, whether legal or illegal, is widespread. Across the region gender stands out as the most significant and consistent determinant of attitudes towards firearm possession and use. Men, in particular young men, consistently demonstrate more favourable attitudes towards firearms possession.

Relying on empirical data, this research offered a robust conceptual foundation for designing context-sensitive interventions. The report provided some strategic recommendations to reduce illicit firearm demand and misuse, including to: (1) implement sustained public awareness and education campaigns, particularly targeting young men and their families; (2) enhance public security and rebuild trust in policing and justice institutions; (3) upgrade firearm licensing systems with risk-based assessments and post-license monitoring; (4) incentivize responsible firearm ownership, safe storage, and voluntary disarmament; (5) strengthen regional and institutional coordination to curb illicit flows; (6) leverage digital platforms and influencers to challenge pro-gun narratives and promote constructive alternatives. (7) strengthen institutional capacities and data availability to systematically monitor and analyse firearms demand and misuse across the Western Balkans.

While looking at the impact of firearms and the institutional response in alleviating the detrimental effects of the firearms on citizens, another research implemented during Phase I of the project, reviewed the relevant legal and policy frameworks at international, regional and jurisdiction level as well as support services available for victims of armed violence in six Western Balkans jurisdictions. The research identified the gaps in legal protection specific to victims of armed

violence. The research also assessed the scope and availability of support services provided by public institutions and civil society organisations and several key areas for improvement have been identified, including: the necessity to update legal frameworks to better align them with international standards; ensuring that the support services are accessible, confidential, and free of charge for both direct and indirect victims of armed violence; and enhancing capacities of relevant stakeholders, including of the CSOs for advocacy and contribution to human security oriented SALW control policy making.

Lastly, to contribute to a better understanding of armed violence prevention approaches, SEESAC conducted in Phase I **mapping of good practices in armed violence prevention**, which outlined key elements of a holistic armed violence prevention strategy and provided an inventory of good practices that could inform policy developments and operations in the region. Such practices include hybrid, collaborative interventions for arms violence prevention (e.g. focused deterrence, situational crime prevention) and community-based armed violence interventions (public health-based interventions, risk education, public information and advocacy, street and community outreach work).

The insights gained through the above knowledge base and through the key recommendations of the *Mid-Term Review of the Roadmap*, which emphasize the need for a strengthened role and better inclusion of civil society organizations in the SALW control policy making, will serve as foundations to support authorities and other stakeholders in advancing evidence-based and a whole-of-society SALW control policymaking. This action will provide support for monitoring of firearms demand through tailor-made knowledge products, follow up perceptions survey and capacity development of SALW Commissions for data recording and analysis. Additionally, workshops for CSOs on SALW control will be organized. In the Phase I, SEESAC fostered cooperation with women's organizations in the region. Through region-wide consultations, 17 organizations contributed to creating guidelines aimed at preventing the misuse of firearms in cases of domestic violence. Additionally, representatives of 18 organizations participated in a regional workshop on SALW control, where the primary aim was to strengthen their capacity to actively engage in SALW control efforts.

This will contribute to fostering sustainable partnerships for strengthened advocacy and narrowing the remaining challenges, while aiming at addressing the root causes of firearm misuse and proliferation in the Western Balkans. As such, to support these processes, it is essential to continue the support to authorities in enhancing the monitoring of firearms demand and expand the availability of relevant data.

2.2. Awareness and operational capacity

Awareness and advocacy are recognised as essential functional areas in the control of small arms and light weapons. Campaigns in this field may target multiple objectives, including: **demand reduction**, by influencing attitudes towards firearm ownership and use, **safe storage promotion**, encouraging citizens to keep firearms in secure locations inaccessible to unlicensed family members, **support to legalization and voluntary surrender campaigns**, aimed at removing weapons from the illegal market, **risk mitigation**, addressing the misuse of firearms in contexts such as celebratory shooting, domestic violence, and gender-based violence (GBV). These efforts may be implemented independently or in conjunction with operational policing measures targeting specific threats, timeframes, and audiences. They also play a critical role in the implementation of new legislation, ensuring that citizens and legal entities are informed of changes through public information campaigns and internal compliance programmes.

Awareness-raising is explicitly embedded in Goal 4 of the *Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap*. This goal commits to reducing the supply, demand, and misuse of firearms through **awareness, education, outreach, and advocacy**. The *Mid-term Review of the Roadmap (2022)* concluded that additional emphasis on awareness-raising was required, given its centrality to achieving behavioural change and fostering compliance with SALW legislation.

Over the past several years, jurisdictions in the Western Balkans have intensified awareness-raising activities. While earlier campaigns were typically linked to legalization or collection drives and often implemented as isolated initiatives, recent efforts have shown a shift toward more strategic and integrated approaches. An expanded view was adopted regarding what could be the focus of campaigns, which recently have dealt with the issues such as the role of firearms in gender-based violence and the importance of safe storage of SALW, they have called for reporting of celebratory gunfire and focused on youth as their target audience. Some jurisdictions have demonstrated ability for longer-term planning and have used awareness-raising efforts to enhance operational policing and intelligence led actions. All jurisdictions have recognized the need for capacity building if more effective campaign planning, implementation and monitoring is to be achieved, and members of their SALW Commissions have undergone such trainings.

The Ministries of Interior and police services from all six jurisdictions actively participate in SEESAC's **Regional Awareness-Raising Task Force**, that was supported during the first phase of this action. This forum ensures regular coordination of campaign planning and implementation on a regional level and in so doing also helps prevent negative cross-border impacts of awareness efforts. The Task Force meetings continuously stress the need for alignment of awareness efforts with legislative promotion, intelligence-led operations, and targeted advocacy in order to achieve meaningful results. These advances are ensured through regular and candid exchanges of experiences and practical lessons-learned which take place among jurisdictions, as well as through capacity building portions of the meetings which are tailor designed to respond to the expressed needs of participants and current developments in the region, and which promote best practices.

Between 2022 and 2024, five out of six **Regional Awareness-Raising Task Force meetings** included dedicated learning days, with topics chosen by beneficiaries. Trainings covered: designing, planning, and implementing campaigns; monitoring and evaluation methodologies; crisis communication strategies; designing campaigns focused on GBV involving firearms and on the use of social and traditional media. These learning aspects ensured that the participants have a command of the basic knowledge of how a campaign should be realized and built upon over a longer time period. Other trainings provide more specific knowledge or skill sets that are particularly relevant to the participants now. From 2025, SEESAC extended these trainings to **jurisdictional level**, enabling broader participation of key personnel and integration of local priorities into practical exercises.

In addition, in 2023 and 2024 eleven trainings were organised for **representatives of the media, Ministries of Interior (MOI's), and prosecutors' offices**. These addressed the dynamics of gender-based violence involving firearms, the role of media reporting in shaping public discourse, and strategies for improving inter-institutional cooperation in reporting. At the trainings, the representatives of these key institutions engaged in candid exchange for the first time, learned about the rules and constraints under which each is operating, and identified added value each institution can offer. The transformation of participants in understanding each other was evident and very concrete ways to improve communication were identified at each of the trainings.

Training efforts have been complemented by the **development of specialised knowledge products** to shape further planning of project activities as well as contribute to further strengthening of capacities of journalists, MOI/police personnel and prosecutors:

- [*Analysis of Media Reporting on Firearms Misuse in Male GBV against Women in the Western Balkans*](#). Since media have a crucial impact on shaping public perceptions, the Analysis was conducted to determine the baseline on how media currently report on the phenomenon, it identified areas where improvement is needed and provided specific recommendations on how to best achieve those improvements. Its results served as a key tool in discussions between the representatives of the media, MOI and prosecutors; offices at the local-level trainings.
- [*Guidelines for Officials of the Ministries of Interior and Police Services in Communication with the Media in Cases of Firearm Misuse in GBV*](#). The Analysis of media reporting showed how much MOI's and police services shape the public discourse on GBV with firearms. The Guidelines provide very concrete and practical steps that MOI and police service PR services can take to ensure their contribution to the discourse is positive and victim centered.

- *Guidelines for Crisis Communication Linked to SALW Control* (to be published). In the course of the project, a number of shootings took place that disturbed the public across the region – among them mass shootings in Belgrade and near Mladenovac, two mass shootings in Cetinje, and a publicly aired femicide in Gradačac. The authorities responded to these incidents with various success, but they all recognized their need for more robust capacity to respond to similar incidents in the future. The Guidelines are a direct response to these requests.
- *Guidelines for Best Utilisation of social media in Awareness-Raising Linked to SALW Control* (to be published). Social media is a component of communication tool whose potential is continuously growing, yet it is used to a limited extent in awareness raising efforts. The jurisdictions realized they need assistance to make their social media outreach more impactful, and the development of Guidelines are a direct response to this request.

SEESAC has implemented several regional social media campaigns addressing specific risks. Regional campaigns serve to share a standardized messaging throughout the region and thus educating and informing the public. They also serve as positive examples of effective utilization of social media usage, intelligence-based campaign design, and importance of monitoring and evaluation of such efforts. The following campaigns were organised:

- **Be the Star of the Party, Don't Be Like Joe, and Celebrate with Your Heart, Not Your Gun** – advocating against celebratory shooting. These campaigns alone reached approximately 8.3million people online.
- **Hear Out the Voice of the Victims** – highlighting the lethal impact of firearms.
- **Arm Yourself with Love, Action, Facts, and Knowledge** – addressing firearm misuse in domestic violence, suicides, and celebratory shootings.

Identified challenges and the way ahead

Although the desire of MOIs/police services to adapt, to expand the scope of their awareness raising efforts and to grow their tool sets is evident, further support in this process is needed. **Continued exchange of information, experiences and lessons learned among colleagues, on a regional level is crucial.** Given that they are functioning in similar institutional, legislative and cultural frameworks, they can collectively learn faster than they ever could through trial and error individually. Together they can also more quickly identify and respond to new trends and threats, and benefit from possible bilateral or multilateral cooperation in activities.

Jurisdictions need to continue their work on adopting **evidence-based, long-term messaging and campaign planning**, that will aim to directly support other arms control activities, as a standard. Resources such as SEESAC's [Armed Violence Monitoring Platform](#) and most the recent *Study of Factors Influencing Demand and Misuse of Firearms (to be published)* are very useful resources to be used in awareness planning, design and implementation. **Strengthening of responsible reporting practices**, especially when it comes to gender-based violence with firearms, which was initiated in the first phase of the project, should be continued. Specific attention should be paid to effectively addressing the **uptick in the interest for SALW among youth** as well as their changing attitude towards it. Building on positive new practices in the region, jurisdictions should adopt a more comprehensive approach to addressing celebratory gunfire. Although internal capacities of authorities are growing, **technical and financial assistance** in designing, implementing and monitoring awareness campaigns continues to be needed.

Deeper **integration of the civil society sector** in awareness activities should be prioritized, and support for building their capacities to contribute should also be envisioned. Targeted capacity building for **media** would also help ensure that the public discourse about firearms – key to changing behaviour, achieves higher quality. These gaps can be addressed through a myriad approaches ranging from providing financial and technical expertise, organization of regional and jurisdiction-level meetings and trainings, development of knowledge products, etc.

SEESAC will continue to provide targeted capacity-building, campaign design support, and knowledge products to ensure that awareness and advocacy activities are sustainable, evidence-based, and strategically aligned with Roadmap objectives.

Overview of the current situation by jurisdictions

Serbia

The most significant recent advocacy initiative followed two mass shootings in May 2023. The Ministry of Interior's **Surrender Weapons** campaign, supported by SEESAC, led to the voluntary surrender of **82,398 firearms, 26,485 explosive devices**, and over **4.2 million rounds of ammunition** in just two months. Subsequent campaigns addressed safe storage (**Firearms Under a Key**, OSCE-funded), pyrotechnics misuse, and domestic violence. UNDP Serbia has also run GBV- and suicide-prevention campaigns in partnership with **Journalists Against Violence Against Women** and the **Association of Women Police Officers**.

Montenegro

Since 2015, the ongoing **Respect Life, Return Weapons** campaign by the MOI of Montenegro has promoted voluntary surrender. In early 2025, following a mass shooting in Cetinje, the campaign intensified, resulting in the collection of **3,660 firearms, 418 hand grenades**, and over **122,000 rounds of ammunition** in just six months—a fifteenfold increase compared to 2024. Earlier efforts included a 2023 perception survey and the development of key communication documents, as well as targeted campaigns against celebratory shooting.

Kosovo

For three consecutive years, Kosovo's Ministry of Internal Affairs, with UNDP Kosovo and SEESAC support, has run **Celebrate with Your Heart, Not Your Gun** campaigns against celebratory shooting. Reporting of misuse increased by **40% (2023–2024)** and **17% (2022–2023)**.

In 2024, targeted campaigns against GBV involving firearms and pyrotechnics misuse were also implemented. Previous cross-border campaigns with North Macedonia addressed celebratory shooting in border communities, while a 2019 legalization drive removed over **2,000 weapons** from the illegal market.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Recent campaigns supported by UNDP in BiH have targeted high school-aged males, raised awareness of femicide with firearms, addressed celebratory shooting, and promoted responsible firearm ownership. A notable development was the adoption of a **unified visual identity** for a campaign implemented across all jurisdictions—an unprecedented move in BiH. Partnerships with the **Association of Women Police Officers** and various CSOs expanded outreach to previously hard-to-reach audiences. Earlier, the **Be on the Right Side – Choose Life without Weapons** campaign (2014), supported by SEESAC, involved police agencies across cantons in anti-firearm misuse initiatives.

North Macedonia

Awareness efforts have included prevention campaigns targeting businessmen, security agencies, hunting associations, sports fans, and school students, alongside television and radio programming. Partnerships with the Red Cross and medical specialists have brought the risks of pyrotechnic injuries into sharper focus for youth. In 2024, a **communication strategy** on SALW awareness was adopted, prioritising men and youth (12–18) as target groups.

Joint cross-border campaigns with Kosovo have addressed celebratory shooting since 2022.

Albania

In 2023, Albania adopted its first **Awareness-Raising and Communications Strategy on SALW Misuse** with an accompanying action plan. Campaigns under this framework have used a multi-phased approach, addressing youth awareness, domestic violence prevention, and general firearm safety. UNDP Albania's **Fire Ideas, Not Guns** campaign, funded through the MPTF, targeted youth and was implemented with local police, school security officers, and public safety councils. Additional campaigns by the Ministry of Interior (with OSCE support) expanded partnerships to

include CSOs, media, musicians, and security institutions. The **Don't Shoot but Love** campaign, supported by SEESAC, (EU CD 2013/2356) reached over **257,000 people** via social media, prompted a voluntary surrender initiative, and resulted in the collection of nearly **2,000 weapons**.

2.3 Mainstreaming gender in SALW control in the Western Balkans

SALW Control and armed violence are highly gendered, and prevailing gender norms and dynamics significantly influence patterns of firearm demand, use, and misuse, with significant implications for the safety and well-being of both women and men. These firmly entrenched trends remain consistent and have been extensively documented in the Western Balkans. Gender emerges as the most prominent and consistent factor influencing attitudes toward firearm possession and use. Men, especially those aged 18-30, consistently exhibit more favourable views, greater familiarity with firearms, and a higher likelihood of owning or expressing interest in owning firearms compared to women. In the region, men account for over 97% of firearm ownership and more than 98% of perpetrators in firearm-related criminal offences. They also constitute the majority of firearm-related victims (80%), with young men being particularly exposed to armed violence. Women, conversely, own only a small fraction of firearms and rarely misuse them; however, they are disproportionately represented among victims of firearms misuse (20%), primarily in the context of domestic violence. The misuse of firearms in domestic violence remains a pressing threat in the region.

The *Regional Analysis of the Misuse of Firearms in Domestic Violence in the Western Balkans* (to be published), conducted in Phase I, extensively **documented main trends and key concerns** in this context. Between 2019 and 2023, **more individuals lost their lives to firearm-related incidents in domestic violence than in any other type of incident**, including *in* criminal cases and public disputes, *particularly affecting* women. More than two-thirds of women killed with firearms in the region were killed *in domestic violence context*—a figure nearly eight times higher than those killed in criminal activities (68.4% and 8.8% respectively) and six times higher than men. Women were most at risk of firearm use by their current or former intimate partners. *Every second woman (50.7%) in the Western Balkans killed with firearms was killed by their intimate partner, while the same holds for 0.4% of men.*

Despite recent progress achieved in the region in advancing legislative and policy responses in preventing the misuse of firearms in domestic violence, the analysis also documented challenges in their implementation. Such challenges include inconsistent application of risk assessment procedures hindering effective prevention, difficulties in timely detection of illegal weapons, firearms licensing procedures not fully considering the specifics of domestic violence, inadequate capacities of law enforcement to apply gender-responsive approach in their operations, and insufficient cooperation between police and women's organizations providing services to victims of domestic violence.

In addition, the [Regional Analysis of Women's Participation in SALW control in the Western Balkans](#) provided a thorough insight into the current state of women's representation and involvement in this field. The analysis documented increased women's participation in policy-related areas, such as legislative reforms and decision-making processes, but also their significant underrepresentation in technical, operational, and leadership roles. Gendered patterns of participation persist, steering women toward administrative tasks and away from traditionally male-dominated fields of operational SALW control. Systemic barriers, including entrenched societal norms, limited educational pathways, inadequate support mechanisms, and underreporting of discrimination, contribute to these disparities. To address these challenges and foster an inclusive environment, the analysis provided comprehensive recommendations focusing on targeted recruitment, capacity building, awareness campaigns, gender-inclusive leadership, and strengthening mechanisms to combat harassment and discrimination, supported by gender budgeting and continuous evaluation.

To support authorities in adequately responding to these gender aspects of firearms, including their misuse and demand, SEESAC implemented a **comprehensive set of activities in Phase I of the project**, which significantly contributed to a **better understanding of the challenges at hand** and **informed SALW control policymaking and operations**. A holistic technical support was provided

to authorities by combining action-oriented research, the development of practical tools, and capacity-building activities. These initiatives focused specifically on enhancing the gender responsiveness of operational SALW control to more effectively tackle pressing security challenges in the region, such as the misuse of firearms in the context of gender-based and domestic violence. Bespoke [Guidelines for Assessing and Addressing Risks Related to Firearms Misuse in Domestic Violence](#) and [Guidelines for Gender Responsive Firearms License Approval](#) were developed through the extensive regional consultative process that involved more than 100 police officers and 17 women's organizations. The above-mentioned analysis fed into the development of the guidelines and provided a thorough understanding of the main challenges in this field. The inclusive regional process itself significantly contributed to the raised awareness among professionals about the role of firearms in domestic violence. These guidelines provide practical tools, including checklists, to support professionals in integrating gender perspectives and addressing risks of firearm misuse in the context of domestic violence and violence against women. They offer step-by-step guidance for assessing and responding to risks, such as evaluating high-risk indicators, conducting background checks, and ensuring compliance with legal requirements for firearms ownership. The guidelines emphasize the importance of gender-responsive proceeding actions throughout processes like police interventions in domestic violence and firearm license approvals.

To facilitate application of the guidelines and inform daily operations as well as ensure that expertise is embedded in institutions, SEESAC organized **two comprehensive regional training of trainers** from five jurisdictions and established **a regional pool of 29 trainers** who trained their colleagues how to use the guidelines. In 2025, ten jurisdiction-level trainings were implemented and were very positively evaluated by participants. The development of the guidelines and the implementation of the training have contributed to enhanced institutional capacities to integrate a gender-responsive approach into their operations. To further strengthen this institutional response to address the high prevalence and persistent trends of domestic violence, it is essential to continue implementing these trainings. Additionally, trainers' skills need ongoing development, and due to the high turnover of staff in law enforcement agencies and need for additional training capacities, it is crucial to expand and onboard new trainers regularly.

In parallel with the support provided to mainstream gender at the operational level through the various streams, support also continued to the members of SALW commissions in charge of policy development, evaluation, and implementation in enhancing their knowledge to mainstream gender in SALW Control policy frameworks through the delivery of advanced regional gender and SALW training. Additionally, to strengthen gender responsive leadership, a bespoke gender coach programme was delivered to the recently appointed Head of the SALW commission of Montenegro. Finally, a milestone was achieved in Phase I in facilitating the involvement of women's civil society organizations in planning and development of SALW control policies led by the relevant institutions, through a dedicated Regional Workshop on Gender and SALW control attended by 18 women's organizations from across 6 jurisdictions. The workshop familiarized them with key concepts and SALW control frameworks, enhancing their active participation in relevant policy processes.

Identified challenges and the way ahead

While substantial progress has been made in addressing the gendered dimensions of firearm misuse, the connections between men, masculinities, and the demand and misuse of firearms have not been sufficiently addressed either in policy or in practice. Prevailing norms of masculinity, particularly those linking firearms to power and control, continue to shape patterns of firearm possession and use, especially among young men aged 18–30. To effectively reduce firearm misuse and tackle its root causes, these dynamics must be systematically integrated into practical SALW control policies, operations, and capacity-building efforts in the region, particularly in preventive measures as envisaged by the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap.

In the forthcoming phase, **further support will be provided to the institutions to consolidate progress achieved and tackle remaining challenges as identified in the Mid-Term Review of the Roadmap. The Mid-Term Review recommended that moving beyond commitment to the principle of gender equality should be the priority for the next phase of implementation,**

requiring further practical steps to be taken to tackle what are often societal norms and behaviours. This will also facilitate implementation of the existing legal and strategic frameworks, facilitate implementation of key recommendations from the conducted research, and contribute to an **enhanced armed violence prevention, including in domestic violence with the use of firearms.**

Overview of the current situation by jurisdictions

Serbia

The SALW Control Strategy foresees activities to raise awareness and reduce use of firearms in the context of domestic violence. In that regard, the Ministry of the Interior is cooperating with UNDP Serbia in the implementation of the project “Reduce risk - Increase safety – Towards ending SALW misuse in domestic violence context”, funded by Germany through the Funding Windows. SEESAC will actively seek the possibilities to regionally upscale good practices developed within this project.

Montenegro

The SALW Control Strategy is based on a thorough gender analysis and envisages a comprehensive set of activities to fully integrate the gender and age concerns in SALW control policies. In the previous period, there have been significant efforts to implement such provisions, particularly through Phase I of the project and to maintain the current level of commitment, it is necessary to provide further support to the authorities. In Phase I, 6 police officers completed two regional Training of Trainers sessions on assessing firearm-related risks in domestic violence and gender-responsive firearm licensing. They, in turn, trained 27 first-line responders and officers handling firearm license applications.

Kosovo

The SALW Control Strategy and Action and Action Plan adopted in 2024 marked significant progress in strategically addressing gender aspects of SALW. The Strategy contains specific objectives related to improving institutional and policy response to the misuse of SALW, particularly with regard the prevention of firearms misuse in domestic violence and improving women’s participation. The foundation for such work were laid in Phase I which equipped professionals with bespoke guidelines and provided training. Six police officers completed the Regional Training of Trainers (ToT) trained total of **30** of their peers who handle domestic violence cases and firearm licence applications. In the forthcoming period, it is necessary to provide further support to authorities to ensure continuous capacity building and narrow in on remaining challenges.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The recently adopted SALW Control Strategy 2025–2030 and its accompanying Action Plan 2025–2027 explicitly emphasize the need to further advance the integration of a gender perspective into SALW control at both strategic and operational levels. The Action Plan acknowledges the progress made through the activities implemented during Phase I and highlights the importance of permanent capacity-building efforts. These efforts are crucial to ensuring the fulfilment of existing commitments, particularly in addressing the use of firearms in domestic violence, promoting women's active participation in SALW control initiatives, and improving the availability of gender statistics. During the Phase I, **6** police officers from BiH completed Regional ToTs and trained total of **30** colleagues who deal with the domestic violence cases and firearm licence applications in their respective police departments. Given the prevalence of domestic violence and decentralized institutional structure, it is necessary to continue with the implementation of training.

North Macedonia

North Macedonia’s SALW Control Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan place a strong emphasis on integrating gender perspectives into SALW control efforts. The strategic framework outlines key objectives, including addressing the misuse of firearms in domestic violence, promoting women’s participation in SALW control decision-making processes, and ensuring the systematic collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data.

During Phase I, notable progress was made in building institutional capacities through the development of tailored tools and targeted training programs for professionals working on SALW-related issues. **6** police officers in total attended and completed two Regional Trainings of Trainers

on the application of *Guidelines for Assessing and Addressing Risk related to the Firearms misuse in Domestic Violence* and *Guidelines for Gender Responsive Firearms licence approval* and trained total of **20** colleagues who work with domestic violence and firearms permits in their police departments across North Macedonia. To build on these achievements, it is crucial to provide further technical and operational support to authorities. This will help address remaining challenges, ensure consistent capacity building, and enable North Macedonia to meet its commitments for gender-responsive SALW control effectively.

Albania

The SALW Control Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan, currently under development, emphasize the need to fully integrate gender and age considerations into SALW control efforts. They outline specific measures to strengthen institutional capacities, address the misuse of firearms in domestic violence, promote the participation of women in SALW control, enhance collaboration with women's organizations, and improve gender-sensitive data collection. During Phase I, significant progress was made in strengthening institutional capacities, particularly through the development of tools and the training of professionals to combat firearm misuse in domestic violence. In Albania, **5** police officers completed two Regional Trainings of Trainers *on the application of Guidelines for Assessing and Addressing Risk related to the Firearms misuse in Domestic Violence and Guidelines for Gender Responsive Firearms licence approval* and trained a total of **28** police officers from different police departments in Albania who deal with the domestic violence cases and firearm licence applications. Building on these achievements, it is essential to provide continued technical assistance to ensure the effective implementation of these strategic commitments and sustain the momentum toward gender-responsive SALW control.

The key expected result of this project is the enhanced ability of the Western Balkan authorities to fight illicit possession, misuse and trafficking in SALW and their ammunition, in line with the EU SALW Strategy, the EU Action Plan on Firearms Trafficking and the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap. It will support the further inclusion of the Western Balkans into EU tools and alignment with EU standards.

II. STRATEGY AND DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

The **overall objective** of this project is to enhance the ability of the Western Balkans to fight against illicit possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW, their ammunition and explosives, in line with the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap. This will be achieved through two specific objectives and six outputs:

Specific Objective 1: Strategic and operational capacity of WB authorities to conduct firearms investigations and exchange information within the region and with the EU on illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition strengthened through:

- Output 1: Fully functional Firearms Focal Points in the Western Balkans exchanging information in line with EU standards;
- Output 2: Strengthened capacities of authorities in Western Balkans to conduct crime scene investigation in accordance with relevant EU good practices and guidelines;
- Output 3: Further enhanced capacities of customs authorities in the Western Balkans to counter illicit trafficking of firearms.

Specific Objective 2: Response to factors fuelling demand of firearms in the Western Balkans strengthened through:

- Output 4: Enhanced response to factors fuelling demand of firearms in the Western Balkans through a whole of government and society approach;
- Output 5: Raised awareness and operational capacity among key beneficiaries;
- Output 6: Further strengthened capacities for mainstreaming gender into SALW control by institutions in the Western Balkans.

It is anticipated that the successful implementation of the project will depend on several key assumptions, such as a) the political commitment remains high; b) sufficient human resources are assigned to implement the activities by the jurisdictions; and c) political and security stability in the region and beyond.

SO1: Strategic and operational capacity of WB authorities to conduct firearms investigations and exchange information within the region and with the EU on illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW strengthened

Output 1: Fully functional Firearms Focal Points in the Western Balkans exchanging information in line with EU standards

The project will build on the ongoing work initiated under **EU Council Decisions 2016/2356, 2018/1788, and 2019/2111**, as well as the first phase of this project, which focused on the operationalisation of Firearms Focal Points in the Western Balkans. Building on these foundations, the current phase will further facilitate **regional cooperation** and **capacity development** of FFPs, ensuring they operate as fully functional hubs for intelligence-led policing in the field of firearms control. A **regional network of FFPs** will be further strengthened and supported through:

- **Technical assistance** to increase analytical capacities;
- **Provision of specialised tools** and support for digital data management and secure IT systems enabling real-time information exchange to enhance data collection, analysis, and operational output;
- **Organisation of workshops, technical meetings, and peer exchanges** to facilitate sharing of best practices;
- A **flexible mechanism** to respond to emerging needs identified by the network, enabling timely information sharing and cooperation, including with EU Member States.

Furthermore, to facilitate regional cooperation, knowledge sharing and joint planning of activities annual **two-day regional workshops** for Firearms Focal Points will be organised, they will involve **three representatives from each of the six jurisdictions**, along with international experts, including EU Member States' FFP representatives. These meetings will serve as a platform for: sharing best practices, intelligence on new *modus operandi*, emerging threats (incl. 3D printed firearms), and firearms trafficking trends, as well as to contribute to standardization of approaches to risk assessment, intelligence analysis, and operational cooperation.

Thematic priorities addressed in these meetings will include:

- Challenges in information exchange and handling protocols;
- Risk and threat assessment methodologies;
- Foresight and trend analysis;
- Specific risks such as trafficking of converted weapons, imitation/fake firearms, hand grenades, 3D-printed firearms and suspicious transfers of explosive precursors;
- Secure digital tools for data collection, storage, and exchange;
- Improving the “intelligence-to-evidence” chain — how FFP analytical products feed directly into investigations and case-building;
- Thematic presentations on AI tools, digital forensics, and social media analysis for firearm investigations.

To enhance analytical expertise of the FFPs, the project will deliver:

- **Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) Training** – 2-day regional training for **two participants per FFP** including practical tabletop exercises, covering:
 - Problem and subject profiling.
 - Criminal market analysis.
 - Operational and strategic assessments.
- **Advanced Analytical Training** for FFP analysts;
- **Criminal Business Analysis and High Priority Persons Training** – 2-day regional training for **two participants from each jurisdiction** to strengthen complex case analysis capabilities.

To ensure FFPs are **fully embedded within the investigative and intelligence-led policing cycle**, and to address the weak operational links between FFPs and prosecutors, border police, customs administrations, forensic and ballistic services and other relevant stakeholders, the project will:

- Organise **up to 15 outreach workshops** bringing together FFP staff, ballistic laboratory experts, prosecutors, and other relevant stakeholders in each jurisdiction;
- Support **integration of ballistic intelligence** into operational casework.

The aim is to increase the number of investigations, indictments and **final convictions** for trafficking of weapons (via track record), and increase the number of tracing of firearms and investigations on origin of seized weapons (via track record).

The project will also further develop FFPs' **ability to collect, analyse, and report on firearms, ammunition, and explosives data** by organising:

- **Up to 12 local-level workshops** and **specialist trainings on demand** targeting operational personnel;
- **On-site advisory missions** tailored to jurisdiction-specific needs.

The project will facilitate active participation of Western Balkan authorities in **EMPACT firearms Operational Actions (OA)** by:

- Support participation in **up to 10 EMPACT firearms meetings** for representatives from all six jurisdictions (one person per jurisdiction);
- Hosting **up to 6 jointly organised workshops** with EMPACT firearms (including JAD), in cooperation with WB PACT II project, implemented by CEPOL and Europol, which hosts an EMPACT Support Network

Ongoing **advisory and technical support** will be provided to all jurisdictions to:

- Maintain and strengthen FFP operational structures;
- Ensure staff are well-trained, equipped, and working in line with harmonised Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs);
- Enable systematic collection and analysis of operational and strategic data from all relevant sources.

Special attention will be given to the **establishment and operationalisation of the FFP in Bosnia and Herzegovina**, including through a:

- Needs assessment;
- Provision of essential equipment;
- Tailored training and mentoring for newly appointed staff.

By combining technical assistance, targeted capacity building, and strengthened regional cooperation, the project will ensure that FFPs operate as fully functional hubs for intelligence-driven firearms control, contributing to greater security in the Western Balkans and alignment with EU standards.

Output 2: Capacities of authorities in Western Balkans to conduct crime scene investigation in accordance with relevant EU good practices and guidelines strengthened

Crime Scene Investigation units play a pivotal role in the criminal justice chain by securing crime scenes, collecting and preserving both physical and electronic evidence, and ensuring its proper transfer through the chain of custody. The ultimate goal is to guarantee that evidence is **traceable, undamaged, and free from contamination**, allowing it to be used effectively in court proceedings without legal or procedural challenges. Strengthening these units directly improves investigative quality, case integrity, and prosecution outcomes.

The activities under this output will build upon **existing and planned interventions** by relevant actors in the region and support already provided by SEESAC during the first phase of this project and under EU Council Decision 2016/2356.

They will also be **guided by the findings of comprehensive needs assessments finalized in the first phase of the project** to ensure activities respond to real operational gaps and jurisdiction-specific priorities.

Regional Cooperation and Knowledge Exchange will be facilitated by the organisation of **two regional meetings for three representatives from each jurisdiction's central CSI Unit** with sessions enabling the sharing of experiences and focusing on harmonising investigative protocols and addressing operational challenges common to the region. Dedicated modules will address cross-border cooperation, including handling crime scenes that may involve multiple jurisdictions.

Capacity Building through Training will be ensured through **one regional training** for two representatives from each jurisdiction on new technologies and methods in CSI. Furthermore, up to **three national-level trainings** tailored to jurisdiction-specific needs, building on the outcomes of the initial needs assessment will be organised. The training topics may include: advanced techniques for searching, location, and recovery of different sorts of traces; proper handling of recovered evidence throughout its lifetime while in the custody of CSI, including the custody chain issues; and securing crime scene (for CSI and uniformed police officers); as well as CSI in SGBV cases.

Technical and Advisory Support and Equipment will also be provided, in coordination with EU delegations in the Western Balkans to ensure overall synchronicity of efforts and avoid double funding, :

- Follow-up technical assistance to support CSI units in **advancing toward ISO/IEC 17020 accreditation and implementing Quality Management Systems** in line with ENFSI recommendations;
- Following the initial equipment and consumables assessment, the project will provide **advisory and technical support** alongside **targeted equipment procurement** to address identified gaps. This may include:
 - Portable crime scene kits (evidence collection tools, swabs, gloves, protective suits);
 - Digital forensics tools for field data extraction;
 - Secure evidence packaging materials to maintain chain-of-custody integrity;
 - Scene documentation tools such as high-resolution cameras, lighting equipment, and measurement devices.
- The provision of such equipment will be accompanied by **practical training** to ensure effective use and maintenance.

By combining regional cooperation, advanced training, and targeted equipment provision, the project will ensure CSI units in the Western Balkans are better equipped, better trained, and better connected, resulting in:

- Higher quality and reliability of forensic evidence;
- Increased capacity to process complex or cross-border cases;
- Greater alignment with EU and international forensic standards.

Collectively, these activities comprehensively address the challenges identified in the previous phase. By harmonizing procedures, building specialized skills, and equipping CSI units with modern tools, SEESAC will enable a more consistent, reliable, and professional approach to crime scene management. Continued emphasis on accreditation, quality management, and institutional integration will ensure that these improvements are sustainable, leading to higher-quality forensic evidence and enhanced cooperation across jurisdictions in the Western Balkans.

Output 3 – Capacities of customs authorities in the Western Balkans to counter illicit trafficking of firearms enhanced

Targeted **equipment provision** will strengthen the ability of customs authorities in the Western Balkans to detect and intercept illicit firearms, ammunition, and explosives. Specialised detection

toolkits will be delivered to high-risk border crossings, including **fibre-optic scopes, endoscopes, density scanners, handheld detection devices and similar**. These tools will enable customs officers to identify concealed firearms in vehicles, cargo, postal shipments, and passenger baggage.

Equipment allocation will be based on a **needs assessment**, finalised through the EU Council Decision CFSP 2022/2321 and endorsed by all WB authorities ensuring that resources are deployed to the locations with the highest impact potential, in coordination with EU delegations in the Western Balkans to ensure overall synchronicity of efforts and avoid double funding.

By closing the current operational gap in technical capabilities, this investment will **complement ongoing procedural and capacity-building efforts**, (development of SOPs and delivery of trainings supported by SEESAC through the EU Council Decision 2024/ 3006) enabling customs services to effectively implement harmonised SOPs and respond to emerging trafficking threats.

Specific Objective 2: Whole of a government and society response to the factors fuelling demand and misuse of firearms in the Western Balkans

Output 4: Response to factors fuelling demand of firearms in the Western Balkans through a whole of government and society approach enhanced

Building on the extensive knowledge base acquired in Phase I as well as findings of the Roadmap Mid-Term Review, the following activities will be organised:

Activities aimed at **strengthening monitoring of firearms demand** will include:

- Development of tailor-made **knowledge products** providing in-depth insights onto the specific cultural and societal context, risk and protective factors for each jurisdiction of the Western Balkans, relying on the data collected through the regional perception survey, which was conducted in Phase I of the project as part of the methodological approach used for the study on the factors shaping the demand for firearms in the Western Balkans;
- **Technical support** to SALW commissions to enhance record-keeping and analysis on firearms distribution;
- Implementation of a **follow-up regional perceptions survey** on firearms demand and based on the methodology of a similar survey conducted in Phase I, in order to provide up-to-date insights and complement the longitudinal monitoring of the main trends and inform policy development and operations.

Activities aimed at **increasing capacities and strengthening regional cooperation of civil society organizations in the area of SALW control**, will be the following:

- Workshops at the regional level for CSOs from the Western Balkans. In order to facilitate inclusion and active participation of CSOs in SALW control policy making, the workshops will familiarize participants with key concepts, instruments, and trends in small arms and light weapons control, as well as ongoing policy developments and institutional mechanisms in the region;
- Jurisdiction-level events to support dialogue between institutions involved in SALW control and CSOs, to enhance the impact of SALW Control Roadmap implementation.

Output 5: Awareness and operational capacity among key beneficiaries raised

Awareness raising is a critical element in preventing the misuse and proliferation of firearms, strengthening public understanding of small arms and light weapons risks, and promoting behavioural change. This component builds on the results of Phase I of the project and relevant EU Council Decisions, as well as findings of the Midterm review. All activities will be grounded in evidence-based approaches, drawing on analytical tools such as the SEESACs Armed Violence Monitoring Platform and prior research on firearms demand in the Western Balkans.

To support regional coordination and knowledge-sharing, **annual meetings of the Regional Awareness Raising Task Force** will be organised.

The Task Force will serve as a regional platform, enabling jurisdictions to:

- Discuss emerging trends and evolving threats;
- Exchange best practices and lessons learned from national awareness initiatives;
- Identify opportunities for domestic or multilateral cooperation.

Annual thematic meetings will bring together five representatives from each of the six jurisdictions. These meetings will enable:

- Presentations and discussions of recent and planned activities from each jurisdiction;
- Examination of trends identified via the Armed Violence Monitoring Platform, results of the Study of Factors Fuelling Demand and Misuse of Firearms and other relevant data sources;
- Addressing specific thematic priorities raised by members, which may include:
 - Youth-focused campaigns and youth engagement in firearms awareness-raising;
 - Celebratory gunfire;
 - Domestic violence at gunpoint;
 - Broader armed violence prevention strategies.

Capacity-building modules will be integrated into these meetings, responding to needs and requests voiced by participants.

Furthermore, **technical and financial assistance will be provided to design, implement, and monitor effective awareness campaigns.**

Technical advisory support will be provided to relevant authorities and civil society stakeholders in campaign planning and execution. In addition, cooperation on or co-design of campaigns with government bodies, media outlets, NGOs, and thematic organisations (e.g., youth groups, women's organisations, hunting associations) is envisaged. Lessons learned from past campaigns and findings from the Phase 1 firearms demand research will be incorporated in these campaigns.

Campaign themes may include:

- Public information on newly adopted firearms legislation;
- Voluntary surrender and legalisation of firearms;
- Youth-focused messaging in awareness campaigns — particularly young men, given their higher interest in firearm possession, misuse, and victimisation statistics;
- Advocacy against celebratory shooting and other high-risk behaviours.

Campaigns will combine public education with behavioural change strategies, using multimedia formats and community-based outreach to maximise reach and impact.

To ensure sustainability and institutionalisation of good practices, **targeted capacity building** will be provided to:

- Representatives of authorities, those responsible for SALW control;
- Representatives of the media;
- Non-governmental organisations and community actors.

Training topics may include:

- Evidence-based campaign planning, implementation, and evaluation;
- Effective public speaking and media engagement skills;
- Strategic use of social media for public outreach;
- Understanding gender-based violence involving firearms;
- SALW-related procedures for media reporting;
- Addressing SALW-related risks for youth audiences.

Furthermore, relevant **knowledge products** will be developed to complement the trainings, ensuring lasting access to practical guidance. These may cover:

- Step-by-step campaign planning guides;
- SALW-informed media reporting manuals;
- Guidance on effective SALW and youth awareness-raising.

Facilitating the destruction of SALW could also be part of the awareness campaigns.

Ongoing **advisory and technical support** will also be provided to stakeholders, ensuring that awareness-raising actors remain informed, interconnected, and aligned in their messaging for effective arms control advocacy.

By strengthening regional coordination, improving the quality and reach of awareness campaigns, and equipping key stakeholders with sustainable skills and resources, this component will: foster a unified regional approach to public awareness on SALW risks; reduce demand for illicit firearms; support compliance with firearms legislation and contribute to long-term armed violence prevention efforts across the Western Balkans.

Output 6: Capacities for mainstreaming gender into SALW control by institutions in WB strengthened.

Activities under this output will aim to provide further support to institutions to consolidate and build on progress achieved in Phase I. These will also facilitate implementation of gender related provisions in the existing legal and strategic frameworks in line with international, regional, and national commitments.

To further **strengthen institutional capacities to combat firearms misuse in gender based and domestic violence**, a comprehensive set of activities will be implemented, upscaling good practices developed in phase I and addressing identified challenges. This will include:

- Implementation of **jurisdiction level trainings/capacity building** of police officers on the prevention of firearms misuse in gender based and domestic violence, including on the application of the *Guidelines for Gender Responsive Firearms License Approval* and *Guidelines for Assessing Risks of Firearms Misuse in Domestic Violence*;
- Support to **capacity development of trainers** will be provided through the implementation of advanced training, networking support, recruiting new trainers, and exchange of best practices;
- **On-demand support** will be provided to jurisdictions to enhance the prevention of firearms misuse in gender based and domestic violence, which could include the localization and revision of the guidelines, the refinement of legal and policy frameworks, or the development of new tools. Women's organisations will be included in these processes.

To advance policy and operational efforts to **enhance prevention of armed violence** specifically targeting groups most at risk of firearms misuse, such as young men, **regional guidelines for armed violence prevention will be developed**, focusing particularly on young men due to their disproportionate exposure to armed violence. The Guidelines will build on the main takeaways from the research on factors fuelling demand and misuse of firearms, and a knowledge product on mapping of armed violence prevention programmes, both conducted in Phase I-

Support will also be provided for capacity development of SALW commissions and other relevant stakeholders to mainstream gender in policy making and operations, and increase women's participation in SALW control:

- **Advanced regional gender and SALW training** will be organised for the representatives of SALW commissions and gender equality agencies;
- **Regional training for the HR departments of the MOI's and police directorates** will be organised to support the implementation of the recommendations of the analysis of women's participation in SLW control;
- **Relevant gender-related knowledge products** will be developed;
- **On-demand consultative support to authorities** to mainstream gender perspective in SALW control will be provided.

III. SELECTION OF IMPLEMENTING PARTNER

The project will be implemented by United Nations Development Programme Istanbul Regional Hub through SEESAC. SEESAC is a joint initiative of UNDP and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), established in 2002 as the executive arm of the Regional Implementation Plan on Combating the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in South East Europe (SEE). With on-ground-activities across South Eastern and Eastern Europe, SEESAC is a regionally owned platform which uses a holistic approach to small arms and light weapons and facilitates strategic and operational cooperation on arms control and contributes to confidence building in the region. SEESAC provides a comprehensive support to authorities in the Western Balkans, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, works closely with the European Union (EU), which is SEESAC's key donor, and other donors providing support for implementation of SALW control efforts in the region, and convenes all other stakeholders working on arms control.

Since 2002, SEESAC is responsible for the collection and dissemination of information, monitoring and reporting on progress in the implementation of SALW control efforts in the region, as well as for assisting in policy formulation, provision of technical assistance in development and implementation of SALW control programmes and facilitation of coordination on SALW control efforts among governments, donors and other stakeholders. Furthermore, SEESAC is also providing project development, technical advisory, project monitoring and evaluation support to the EU, UNDP, OSCE and other stakeholders within South and Eastern Europe on request.

SEESAC facilitates strategic and operational regional cooperation on small arms and light weapons control, supports evidence-based policy development and capacity enhancement for institutions, awareness-raising and SALW collection campaigns, stockpile management, surplus reduction, and improved marking and tracing capabilities, as well as improved arms-exports control. In this way, SEESAC has acquired a unique capacity and experience implementing multi-stakeholder regional interventions against the shared political and economic background of the partners in the region, ensuring national and regional ownership and the long-term sustainability of its actions and establishing itself as the primary regional authority in the SALW control field.

SEESAC was instrumental in development of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap and is coordinating its implementation in close cooperation with the EU, Germany and France, as well as ensuring the monitoring of Roadmap implementation. SEESAC also facilitates interregional cooperation and knowledge sharing on arms control and has supported the replication of the Roadmap in Caribbean, and Central America and Dominican Republic, as well as supported the knowledge transfer to the Kyrgyz Republic, Honduras and Cambodia.

SEESAC maintains bilateral and multilateral channels of communication with all relevant actors and organisations. In that regard, SEESAC serves as the Secretariat of the Regional Steering Group for SALW (RSG). In addition, SEESAC has been tasked with coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap and has been appointed as the Secretariat of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap Multi-partner Trust Fund (MPTF).

SEESAC regularly contributes to relevant regional fora. SEESAC regularly contributes to EU-Western Balkans Justice and Home Ministerial Meetings, meetings organised within the Berlin Process, the South East Europe Defence Ministerial process. SEESAC continues to maintain a wide network of formal and informal partnerships with organizations and initiatives, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE), North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and relevant UN agencies, in particular the UNODA, UNODC, UNIDIR and UNWOMEN and regional organisations such as the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC). SEESAC regularly contributes to UN Coordination Action on Small Arms (CASA) bringing together all the UN agencies working on disarmament and arms control; the SALW and mine action ('MA') coordination meetings, an informal coordination mechanism on SALW control activities involving NATO, the Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and SEESAC.

Other stakeholders with activities in Southeast and East Europe, primarily Europol, Frontex, Interpol, EMPACT Firearms and the European Firearms Experts (EFE) group regularly liaise with SEESAC in order to secure complementarities of action, the relevance and timeliness of intervention. In addition, SEESAC has established extensive cooperation with civil society across the Western Balkans, particularly women's organizations working on the prevention of gender-based violence.

Based in Belgrade, SEESAC operates throughout South East Europe, with activities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia and Ukraine. Regional ownership is ensured through the RCC as well as through the RSG, where representatives of all jurisdictions in the region provide the strategic guidance. SEESAC has pioneered an approach based on tackling shared problems through regional initiatives, which has yielded impressive results in Southeast and East Europe not only because of the crucial information-sharing and promotion of healthy regional competition which it sparks, but also because it helps achieve consistent and easily measurable results at national and regional level through a holistic implementation modality.

The European Union is SEESAC's principal donor. Projects implementing EU Council Decisions have been ongoing since 2002. SEESAC is currently implementing two EU Council Decisions: The regional project implementing CFSP/2024/33/SEESAC, amounting to USD 4,216,716.30, aiming to improve security in the SEE region and the EU by combating the threat posed by illicit SALW and their ammunition, including from Ukraine. The project strengthens regional cooperation and knowledge-sharing, supports harmonization of SALW legislation with the EU framework, and builds the capacities of law enforcement, border authorities, and stockpile management institutions through training, infrastructure upgrades, and evidence-based policymaking. The project will be implemented from January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2027.

The project implementing CFSP/2022/37/SEESAC Roadmap II, with a total budget of USD4,153,610.15, supports the implementation and monitoring of the Regional Roadmap, enhances interregional cooperation, and strengthens the capacities of law enforcement services in the Western Balkans, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine to counter illicit arms trafficking. It further promotes knowledge exchange and coordination with regional and international partners, thereby contributing to European and global peace and security. The project commenced on January 18, 2023, and will end on January 17, 2026.

The current project proposal is either building on the results achieved or complementing the previous or ongoing assistance, including assistance provided through the project "Support for enhancing the fight against the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in the Western Balkans", IPA/2021/ 425-067, which works to reinforce the strategic and operational capacities of Western Balkans authorities to conduct firearms investigations, exchange information within the region and with the EU, and respond to the factors fuelling demand and misuse of firearms. It also contributes to awareness-raising, crime scene investigation standards, and the integration of gender perspectives in SALW control, including addressing domestic violence risks linked to firearms. The project commenced on September 1, 2021, and is scheduled to conclude on December 31, 2025.

According to the EU, SEESAC implemented its previous Union-funded projects with a very high delivery rate of the envisaged activities, delivering sustainable project results by developing and fostering national ownership of its projects and activities, and promoting regional coordination, experience and the sharing of best practices, as well as regional research. Furthermore, in terms of accountability of implementation of EU funded projects, SEESAC has successfully undergone an EU verification mission in 2017, which resulted in no negative findings. In addition, during Phase I of the proposed project (IPA/2021/425-067), a Results-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) mission was conducted, confirming the project's strong performance across all evaluated criteria. The ROM report highlighted SEESAC's high relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency, as well as its strategic contribution to regional security and stability in the Western Balkans. It commended SEESAC's ability to adapt to evolving

circumstances, maintain strong coordination with beneficiaries and regional partners, and ensure visibility of EU support. The findings reaffirmed SEESAC's reputation as a reliable, results-oriented, and technically proficient implementing partner capable of delivering complex regional initiatives in line with EU standards, confirming that SEESAC's SALW expertise and in-depth knowledge of regional affairs and relevant stakeholders make SEESAC the most suitable implementing partner for this particular action.

The project will liaise with other IPA-funded project regional and national projects, in particular the WB PACT II, EU4FAST, WB CRIM JUST and IISG projects to identify potential synergies, *in SEESAC's capacity of coordinator of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap implementation.*

IV. MULTI-YEAR WORK PLAN¹³

Multiyear Work Plan ¹⁴				
Support for enhancing the fight against the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in the Western Balkans				
Nr. Activity	Description	Planned Activities through years		
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3-4 (6 months)
Specific Objective 1 - Strengthening the strategic and operational capacity of Western Balkan authorities to conduct firearms investigations and exchange of information within the region and with the EU on the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition				
Output 1 - Network of functioning Firearms Focal Points in the Western Balkans exchanging information in line with EU standards				
Activity 1.1	Annual Regional Workshop for FFPs of the Western Balkans			
Activity 1.2.1	Regional training on Open source intelligence			
Activity 1.2.2	Advanced Analytical Training for FFP analysts			
Activity 1.2.3	Criminal Business Analysis and High Priority Persons			
Activity 1.3.1	Outreach workshops of the FFPs and ballistic laboratories toward prosecutors			
Activity 1.3.2	Support integration of ballistic intelligence			
Activity 1.4.1	Workshops and specialist trainings on demand			
Activity 1.4.2	On-site advisory missions			
Activity 1.5.1	Support to the implementation of EMPACT operational actions – participation in EMPACT meetings			
Activity 1.5.2	Workshops organized with EMPACT			
Activity 1.6.1	Provision of advisory and technical support including equipment			
Activity 1.6.2	Support for the establishment and operationalisation of the FFP in Bosnia and Herzegovina,			

¹³ Cost definitions and classifications for programme and development effectiveness costs to be charged to the project are defined in the Executive Board decision DP/2010/32

¹⁴ Changes to a project budget affecting the scope (outputs), completion date, or total estimated project costs require a formal budget revision that must be signed by the project board. In other cases, the UNDP programme manager alone may sign the revision provided the other signatories have no objection. This procedure may be applied for example when the purpose of the revision is only to re-phase activities among years.

Total Output 1				
Output 2 - Capacities of authorities in Western Balkans to conduct crime scene investigations in accordance with relevant EU good practices and guidelines strengthened				
Activity 2.1	Regional Annual meetings of CSI Units			
Activity 2.2.1	Regional trainings			
Activity 2.2.2	National-level trainings			
Activity 3.1	Technical support, including equipment provided			
Total Output 2				
Output 3- Capacities of customs authorities in the Western Balkans to counter illicit trafficking of firearms enhanced				
Activity 3.1	Provision of equipment and trainings on the use of equipment for Customs authorities			
Specific Objective 2 - Response to the factors fuelling demand and misuse of firearms in the Western Balkans				
Output 4 - Enhanced response to factors fuelling demand of firearms in the Western Balkans through a whole of government and society approach				
Activity 4.1	Monitoring of firearms demand through tailor-made knowledge products, follow up perceptions survey and capacity development of SALW Commissions for data recording and analysis			
Activity 4.2	Workshops of CSOs and jurisdiction-level events from the Western Balkans on SALW control			
Total Output 4				
Output 5 - Awareness and operational capacity raised among key beneficiaries				
Activity 5.1	Annual regional task force meetings			
Activity 5.2	Technical, financial and advisory support provided for the development, implementation, M&E of awareness raising campaigns			
Activity 5.3	Capacity development of authorities responsible for SALW control, youth, media professionals, non-governmental organisations and community actors through organization of meetings, trainings, development of knowledge products			
Total Output 5				
Output 6 - Strengthened capacities of institutions to mainstream gender in SALW control				
Activity 6.1	Support for strengthening of institutional response to firearms misuse in gender based and domestic violence			
Activity 6.2	Activities on the prevention of armed violence			
Activity 6.3	Capacity development of SALW commissions and other relevant stakeholders			

V. RESULTS FRAMEWORK

EXPECTED OBJECTIVES AND OUTPUTS	OUTPUT INDICATORS ¹⁸	DATA SOURCE	BASELINE		TARGETS (by frequency of data collection)			DATA COLLECTION METHODS & RISKS
			Value	Year	Year 1 2026	Year 2 2027	Year 3 and 4 2028 and January-June 2029	
Objective 1	Objective 1 level indicator			2025				
Strengthened strategic and operational capacity of Western Balkan authorities to conduct firearms investigations and exchange of information among themselves and with the EU on the illegal possession, misuse, and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition	Level of strategic information sharing and cooperation within the region	SEESAC	Ad hoc information sharing		Information sharing and regional cooperation increased	Information sharing and regional cooperation further increased	Information sharing and regional cooperation further increased	EU enlargement reports International organization reports
Output 1: Fully functional Firearms Focal Points in the Western Balkans, exchanging information established in line with EU standards	Number of FFPs established		5		5	5	6	

Information exchange and knowledge sharing through the organization of annual workshops for FFPs of the Western Balkans	The extent to which information is exchanged among the FFPs	SEESAC	Information sharing at annual workshops for FFPs		Information sharing during the annual workshops for FFPs increased	Information sharing during the annual workshops for FFPs further increased	Regular, Information sharing	SEESAC assessment/ reports Meeting minutes
The capacities of FFPs in the Western Balkans has been enhanced	The level of authorities' capacities to conduct firearms investigations	SEESAC	Capacities limited		Capacities increased	Capacities further increased	Capacities developed and utilised	
FFPs outreach supported	The extent to which the work of the FFP is known by senior management and investigators	SEESAC	The work of the FFP is known to a limited extent to senior management and investigators		Outreach increased	Outreach further increased	The work of the FFPs well known and used by senior management in the police, investigators, as well as the prosecutors	
The FFP's ability to collect, analyse, and report on firearms, ammunition, and explosives data was increased	The level of the FFP's ability to collect, analyse, and report on firearms, ammunition, and explosives	SEESAC	The FFP's ability to collect, analyse, and report on firearms, ammunition, and explosives data is limited		The FFP's ability to collect, analyse, and report on firearms, ammunition, and explosives data is increased	The FFP's ability to collect, analyse, and report on firearms, ammunition, and explosives data is further increased	The FFPs are able to collect, analyse, and report on firearms, ammunition, and explosives data	
EMPACT operational actions (OA) supported	The extent of the support provided to the EMPACT operation actions	SEESAC	Limited support provided		Support provided	Support provided	Support provided	

Provision of advisory and technical support	The extent to which FFPs demonstrate strengthened capacities	SEESAC	The capacities of FFPs are limited		The capacities of FFPs are increased	The capacities of FFPs are further increased	The capacities of FFPs are strengthened and sustainable	EU enlargement reports International organization reports SEESAC assessment/ reports Meeting minutes
Output 2. The capacities of authorities in the Western Balkans to conduct crime scene investigations in accordance with relevant EU good practices and guidelines have been strengthened	The extent to which the capacities of the CSI units are standardised with the ENFSI best practices	SEESAC	Standardization of capacities with ENFSI best practices is limited		Standardization of capacities with ENFSI best practices increased	Standardization of capacities with ENFSI best practices further increased	Capacity of CSI Units standardized with 3 ENFSI best practices (Crime scene investigations, Recovery of explosive traces; and GSR)	
Regional cooperation and knowledge exchange of selected authorities in the Western Balkans in the area of Crime scene investigation was enhanced through the organization of a regional annual workshop on CSI	The extent to which the capacity of the CSI units cooperate in the Western Balkans region and exchange knowledge	SEESAC	The extent of cooperation is limited		The extent of cooperation is increased	The extent of cooperation is further increased	Cooperation is regular	
The capacities of selected authorities in the Western Balkans in the area of Crime scene investigation through training were built	The level of capabilities of the CSI units to conduct crime scene investigation in relation to usage of firearms	SEESAC	Level of capabilities is limited		Level of capabilities increased	Level of capabilities further increased	Level of capabilities strengthened and applied	
Equipment and technical support to CSI Units was provided	The level of the operational capabilities	SEESAC	The level of operational capabilities limited		The level of operational capabilities improved	The level of operational capabilities further improved	The level of operational capabilities strengthened and used	
Output 3: Capacities of customs authorities in the Western Balkans to counter	The level of capacities of customs authorities in the Western Balkans	SEESAC	The level of capacities of customs		The level of capacities of customs	The level of capacities of customs	The level of capacities of customs authorities is	

illicit trafficking of firearms enhanced			authorities is limited		authorities is improved	authorities is further improved	further improved and applied	
Provision of equipment for Customs authorities	The level of operational capabilities of customs authorities	SEESAC	Operational capabilities of customs authorities limited		Operational capabilities of customs authorities improved	Operational capabilities of customs authorities further improved	Operational capabilities of customs authorities further strengthened and used	The needs assessment report
Objective 2	Objective 2 level indicator							
Response to the factors fuelling demand and misuse of firearms in the Western Balkans	Level of response to factors fuelling demand and misuse of firearms	SEESAC	Inadequate response		Improved response	Further improved response	Strong response to factors fuelling demand and misuse of firearms	Findings and recommendations of the research report on factors fuelling the demand Armed Violence Monitoring reports
Output 4: Enhanced response to factors fuelling demand for firearms in the Western Balkans through a whole-of-government and society approach.	Level of capacity to address factors fuelling demand and misuse of firearms	SEESAC	Knowledge and monitoring of factors fuelling firearms demand and misuse in place		Improved capacity	Further improved capacity	Strong capacity in place for a whole of government and society response	Findings and recommendations of the research report on factors fuelling the demand SALW action plans
Strengthened monitoring of firearms demand and misuse of firearms.	Level of monitoring of firearms demand and misuse	SEESAC	Baseline study in place, inadequate and inconsistent monitoring of firearms demand		Further improved knowledge of firearms demand at jurisdiction level	Improved record-keeping and analysis of data	Improved monitoring	Jurisdictions fact sheets on firearms demand Perception survey report Meetings reports

Increased capacities and strengthened regional cooperation of civil society organizations in the area of SALW control	Level of knowledge and participation of CSOs in SALW control	SEESAC	Limited participation and knowledge of civil society organizations of SALW control		Improved participation	Improved knowledge	Improved knowledge and engagement	Meetings' reports
Output 5: Awareness and operational capacity to fight illicit and/or misuse of firearms raised among key beneficiaries	Operational capacity among beneficiaries to implement effective and regular awareness raising activities	SEESAC	Limited capacity		Improved capacity	Further improved capacity	Capacities significantly strengthened and utilised	Campaigns' evaluations; Meetings/trainings evaluations; Level of participation at meetings and trainings; Knowledge products developed;
Knowledge enhancement, information exchange, and standardization of approaches at the Regional Task Force	The extent to which information is exchanged among jurisdictions, their knowledge enhanced, and regional standardization achieved.	SEESAC	Limited knowledge; Limited information exchange; Limited regional standardization;		Information sharing and regional standardization increased, knowledge enhanced	Information sharing and regional standardization increased, knowledge enhanced	Information sharing and regional standardization increased, knowledge further enhanced and follow up ensured	Meeting minutes from RAR TF meetings; Evaluations of RAR TF meetings; Level of participation by jurisdictions and international organizations at RAR TF;
Capacity development for key stakeholders	Level of capacities of key stakeholders to implement effective awareness-raising activities	SEESAC	Limited capacities		Increased capacities	Further increased capacities	Capacities strengthened and applied	Training evaluations Number of knowledge products developed

Support for Development and Implementation of Awareness Raising Activities	Level of effectiveness of awareness-raising activities to inform, educate and/or change behaviour of the public.	SEESAC	Awareness campaigns implemented ad hoc and continuously underutilized as a tool supporting other SALW control work.		Increased effectiveness	Further increased effectiveness	Strong effectiveness	Evaluation report of implemented campaigns
Output 6: Capacities for mainstreaming gender into SALW control by institutions in Western Balkans strengthened	The extent to which institutions consistently integrate the gender perspective (at the strategic and operational level)	SEESAC	Integration of gender perspective not consistent		Capacities of institutions to integrate the gender perspective consistently further improved	Capacities further strengthened	Capacities for integration of gender perspective consistently used	SALW control strategies and action plans Legislative framework Roadmap Progress Reports
Strengthened institutional response to firearms misuse in gender based and domestic violence	Level of the institutional response to the firearms misuse in gender-based violence	SEESAC	Tools for first line responders developed, pool of trainers established, limited number of first line responders trained		Improved capacities of first-line responders and other professionals	Improved capacities and their application by first-line responders and other professionals	Improved and regularly applied capacities of first-line responders and other professionals	Training reports
Enhanced prevention of armed violence	Level of capacity for the prevention of armed violence	SEESAC	Limited capacities for armed violence prevention, lack of comprehensive guidelines		Enhanced knowledge for armed violence prevention	Enhanced knowledge and capacity for armed violence prevention	Further enhanced capacity on armed violence prevention, and its consistent application	Knowledge product on armed violence prevention Training minutes

Capacity development of SALW commissions and other relevant stakeholders	Level of capacity development	SEESAC	Tools developed, a limited number of stakeholders trained		Strengthened knowledge	Strengthened capacities	Further strengthened capacities and their utilisation	Knowledge product on gender sensitive licencing methodology Training minutes
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VI. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

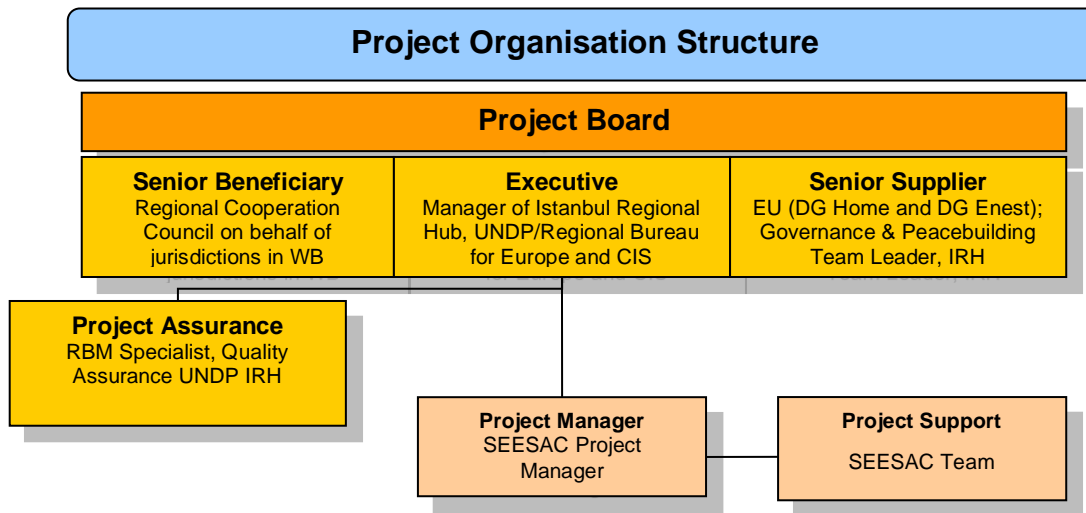
The project is directly implemented by UNDP's Istanbul Regional Hub for Europe and the CIS through the South East and East Europe Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), the regional initiative working under the mandate of UNDP and the Regional Cooperation Council, successor to the Stability Pact for South-East Europe. SEESAC is the executive arm of the Regional Implementation Plan on Combating the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons and, as such, acts as focal point for all SALW-related issues in the SEE region, including facilitating coordination of the implementation of the Western Balkans Roadmap. UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub is responsible for overall management, backstopping and monitoring of the project and has the overall accountability for project implementation. The project shall be implemented by the SEESAC project office located in Belgrade. The project duration is three years.

The project will directly contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, *Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies*, and secondly to SDG 5, *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. Specifically, it is linked to SDG target 16.4 *By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime*. Additionally, the project contributes to the following targets: SDG target 16.1. Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere, and SDG target 5.2. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

The project is also directly contributing to the implementation of the UN Secretary General new Disarmament Agenda, the EU Security Strategy, the EU SALW Strategy, the EU action plan on firearms trafficking, the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime, including the European multidisciplinary platform against criminal threats (EMPACT) Firearms, the Arms Trade Treaty, the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects, the International Tracing Instrument, the UN Firearms Protocol and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). It will also contribute to the implementation of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap.

Aiming at supporting the regional efforts on arms control, the project directly contributes to Regional programme document for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (2026–2029), Outcome 3: "By 2029, institutions and people are better prepared to prevent, respond to and recover from crises while sustaining long-term development, Output 3.1: Institutions and conflict and violence-affected communities enabled to foster social cohesion, build safer communities and strengthen peace."¹⁵

¹⁵ <https://www.undp.org/eurasia/publications/undp-regional-programme-document-europe-and-cis-2022-2025>



The project will be directed by a **Project Board**, chaired by the Manager of UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub, who will serve as the Project Executive; together with the RCC and the European Commission (DG ENEST and DG HOME) who represent the Senior Beneficiary and the Senior Supplier accordingly. The Project Board is the group responsible for making by consensus management decisions for a project when guidance is required by the Project Manager, including approval of project plans and revisions. In order to ensure UNDP’s ultimate accountability, Project Board decisions should be made in accordance with corporate UNDP standards that shall ensure best value to money, fairness, integrity transparency and effective international competition. In case a consensus cannot be reached, final decision shall rest with the UNDP Manager of the Regional Hub.

The Project Board will:

- Provide overall leadership, guidance and direction in successful delivery of outputs and their contribution to outcomes under the programme;
- Be responsible for making strategic decisions by consensus, including the approval of project substantive revisions (i.e., changes in the project document);
- Approve annual work plans, annual reviews, and other reports as needed;
- Meet at least once a year (either in person or virtually) to review project implementation, management risks, and other relevant issues;
- Address any relevant project issues as raised by the Project Manager;
- Provide guidance on new project risks and agree on possible countermeasures and management actions to address specific risks.

The team will also receive political and strategic guidance and support from the Regional Steering Group for Small Arms and Light Weapons (RSG), composed of representatives of the governments of the states concerned, the RCC, UNDP and observers from international organizations engaged in SALW Control. The RSG will meet once a year to ensure the full buy-in and future guidance from the states in the region.

The project will be managed by a **Project Manager**, who has the authority to run the project on a day-to-day basis on behalf of the Implementing Partner within the constraints laid down by the Board. The Project Manager is responsible for day-to-day management and decision-making for the project. The Project Manager’s prime responsibility is to ensure that the project produces the results (outputs) specified in the project document to the required standard of quality and within the specified constraints of time and cost.

Project Assurance is the responsibility of each Project Board member; however, the role can be delegated. The Project Assurance role supports the Project Board by carrying out objective and independent project oversight and monitoring functions. This role ensures appropriate project management milestones are managed and completed. Project Assurance has to be independent of the Project Manager; therefore, the Project Board cannot delegate any of its assurance

responsibilities to the Project manager. The project assurance role for this project will be performed by **Results Based Management - RBM Specialist from UNDP IRH.**

The **Project Support** role provides project administration, management and technical support to the Project Manager as required by the needs of the individual project or Project Manager. It is necessary to keep Project Support and Project Assurance roles separate in order to maintain the independence of Project Assurance. Project support is provided through the SEESAC Team with the Regional Cooperation Specialist, SALW Coordinator, Operations Manager, Project Associates, Project Finance Associate, Project Assistants, Communication Officer and Driver.

The project team (project manager and project support) will be composed of:

- One Project Manager (level P4), 50%
- One Regional Cooperation Specialist (level P3), 50%
- One SALW Coordinator (level NOC), 50%
- One Operations Manager (level NOC), 50%
- Two Project Associates (level SB3) 100% each in a consultative role engaged directly on project activity level
- One Project Finance Associate (level SB3), 100%
- Two Project Assistants (level SB2) 100% each
- One Driver/Clerk (level SB1) 100%
- One Communication Officer (level SB4) 50% in a consultative role engaged directly on project activity level

The project team is part of UNDP's Istanbul Regional Hub, based in Belgrade.

Project Office Management

Types of costs - There are three types of costs related to the management and administration of the project that have been defined in the budget: 1. project management costs, 2. administration costs and 3. project evaluation costs.

1. Project Management costs

The project management costs will include staff managing the implementation of the project and in that sense carrying out tasks that are directly attributable to the implementation of the Action. The staff fees will be charged through project costs for the time spent directly attributable to the implementation of the Action.

The project office management staff will carry out the following duties:

- Ensure the effective administration of the project, coordinate with country offices and partners, ensure the timely delivery of outputs as well as effective financial and activity reporting to the donor;
- Ensure results oriented, effective, efficient and accountable implementation of activities and focusing on achievement of project results specified in the project document, to the required standard of quality and within the specified constraints of time and costs.

2. Administration costs

The project administration costs will include staff administering the implementation of the project and in that sense carrying out tasks that are directly attributable to the implementation of the Action and office operational costs. The staff fees will be charged through project costs for the time spent directly attributable to the implementation of the Action.

The **project office administration** will carry out the following tasks:

- Conduct procurement procedures, purchases and performing accounting actions in line with UNDP's rules and procedures;
- Manage invoices and requisitions requests and follow up with the purchase of goods and services;

- Manage administration and implementation of project activities and apply financial management strategies.
- Provide administrative support in preparation of meeting, workshops, seminars, conferences and other events including logistical preparations, travel, preparation of training materials and performing relevant administrative functions.
- Provide support to management of the programme, administration of budgets and functioning of the optimal cost-recovery system.
- Provide transportation services to project staff.

Office operational costs shall include several categories of costs that are directly attributable to the implementation of the Action and are necessary for the functioning of the Project Office including:

- Travel and subsistence costs for staff and other persons directly assigned to the operations of the project office;
- Depreciation costs, rental costs – of the project offices, equipment and assets composing the project office;
- Costs of maintenance and repair contracts specifically awarded for the operations of the project office;
- Costs of consumables and supplies specifically purchased for the operations of the project office;
- Costs of IT and telecommunication services specifically purchased for the operations of the project office;
- Costs of energy and water specifically supplied for the operations of the project office;
- Costs of facility management contracts including security fees and insurance costs specifically awarded for the operations of the project office.

3. Project evaluation costs

Project evaluation costs have been given as a lumpsum based on the previously incurred costs of the same type on similar projects. The incurred costs shall relate only to the project specific action.

These three types of costs are reported under an Output 7 in the budget.

VII. SUSTAINABILITY

SEESAC develops and implements projects at the request and in close cooperation with the beneficiaries – primarily Ministries of Interior and Defence in South East and East Europe, making sure that projects respond to the needs of the Governments, that they build on previous work and are complementary to other ongoing initiatives. Furthermore, Governments take an active part in different regional platforms facilitated by SEESAC, which enable, among other, knowledge sharing, identification of existing gaps and joint planning of the activities. This is essential for local ownership and consequently for the sustainability of actions.

The project is ensuring the local ownership and buy-in through regional platforms at the strategic and operational levels; namely the regional platform of SALW commissions in South East and East Europe, and the South East Europe Firearms Experts Network which were essential for identification of gaps that will be addressed through this project.

Sustainability is further ensured through prioritisation of policy and institutional frameworks, development of standard operating procedures, development of knowledge products, and capacity development through training.

VIII. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

UNDP through SEESAC will take appropriate measures to publicise the fact that the implementation of the Support for enhancing the fight against the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in the Western Balkans action is funded by the European Union (EU) through Decision on the financing of the multi-country multiannual action in favour of the Western Balkans and Türkiye for 2025-2027. The project is providing support for the implementation of selected aspects of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap. It specifically aims to strengthen strategic and operational capacity of the Western Balkans authorities to conduct firearms investigations as well as exchange information within the region and with the EU on illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition.

The project will liaise with the EU Delegations/EU Office in each jurisdiction and inform them as much as possible about the action, including the specific activities and events taking place in the jurisdictions covered by the Delegation.

IX. RISKS

There are seven main risks that can threaten the achievement of project results, primarily related to the political situation in the region, including the regional divisions and distrust because of global instability and the ongoing war in Ukraine, lack of internal political and institutional stability caused by frequent elections, the complexity of implementing regional cooperation activities. These risks as well as relevant mitigation measures are described below. The project team will ensure that these risks will not hinder the effective implementation of the project, counting on SEESAC's over 18 years of experience in implementing successful regional projects, and developing mechanisms to mitigate potential risks.

#	Description	Risk Category	Impact &	Risk Treatment / Management Measures	Risk Owner
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			Likelihood = Risk Level		
1	Lack of internal political and institutional stability in the six Western Balkan jurisdictions, including political and institutional instability caused by frequent elections.	Political	<p>The lack of internal political and institutional stability in the six Western Balkan jurisdictions may lead to delays and deadlocks in the implementation of the project.</p> <p>P =3 I = 4</p>	<p>UNDP SEESAC has strong knowledge and understanding of the situation on the ground, in all the targeted jurisdictions, accumulated during over 20 years of successfully implementing SALW control projects in the Western Balkans. UNDP SEESAC will continue to diligently monitor the situation counterparts and observe diligently the situation in order to plan and respond to changes in a timely manner.</p> <p>Furthermore, the region benefits from high-level political commitment made by the Western Balkans authorities to address the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, as witnessed by the Western Balkans SALW Roadmap. Also, awareness-raising and regional capacity-building activities are expected to contribute to strengthened networking and trust-building, creating favourable conditions at the technical/operational level to counterbalance possible negative developments at the political level.</p>	Project Manager
2	Regional divisions and distrust because of global instability and the ongoing war in Ukraine	Political	<p>Decreased interest for regional cooperation due to political divisions influenced by global instability</p> <p>P =3 I = 4</p>	<p>Strong advocacy towards the jurisdictions would be implemented to continue the regional cooperation on SALW control, which is considered a technical, not political issue, highlighting the downsides of interrupted cooperation. In case this outreach would not be successful, the project implementation would adjust and continue with jurisdictions that continue to contribute and benefit from the process.</p>	
3	Complicated political relations related to the Kosovo status.	Political	<p>This risk may affect the implementation of regional cooperation activities.</p> <p>P = 3 I = 4</p>	<p>As a regional initiative under the RCC framework, SEESAC is bringing together all governments in the region. In the event that issues related to the status of Kosovo become a detrimental factor for cooperation with a specific jurisdiction, SEESAC's operations will focus on sub-regional activities, leaving all options for cooperation open for the future.</p>	Project Manager

4	Limited interest, trust, and/or stakeholders' buy-in into the foreseen activities led by SEESAC.	Operational	<p>This risk may potentially affect the successful implementation of the project activities, if target beneficiaries and other stakeholders do not participate in the planned actions.</p> <p>P = 2 I = 4</p>	<p>UNDP SEESAC is a known partner in the region and has built a strong network of contacts who can support implementation of the action. Project activities have been developed in consultation with the jurisdictions, and their implementation will be closely coordinated with them in order to ensure ownership of the process. While specific activities of the project will be planned and consulted with the Western Balkans authorities, including at the technical and strategic level, specific work plans can be adjusted should there be limited interest for a specific activity. Also, lack of interest, trust and/or buy-in will be addressed through the demonstration of concrete project results.</p>	Project Manager
5	Complexity of implementing and coordinating regional activities.	Operational	<p>This risk may affect the implementation of the project activities involving simultaneous cooperation and coordination with more than one beneficiary jurisdiction.</p> <p>P = 2 I = 3</p>	<p>UNDP SEESAC has over 20 years of experience in implementing successful regional projects that bring together authorities from the six Western Balkans jurisdictions, as well as other regional and international stakeholders. This is coupled with internal capacities and strong relationships with national counterparts to overcome the challenges of such coordination.</p>	Project Manager
6	Insufficient operational capacity within national counterparts, including frequent staff changes.	Operations	<p>The risk may translate into low level of engagement of the project beneficiaries in the project activities, which can make medium-term capacity building challenging.</p> <p>P = 2 I = 3</p>	<p>The insufficient operational capacity of the national counterparts will be mitigated through careful and realistic planning processes. The long-term relationship with beneficiary institutions provides the basis for a realistic capacity assessment and therefore a good basis for planning.</p>	Project Manager
7	Return of the pandemic	Social and environmental	<p>Reappearance of the pandemic may affect project implementation, by delaying or temporarily cancelling activities that involve regional cooperation, particularly at the technical/operation level, as well as other activities related to provision of technical advice and support that require travel and</p>	<p>Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Western Balkans in March 2020, UNDP SEESAC has adjusted its activities to the new working environment that relied primarily on virtual meetings. SEESAC has successfully organized local and regional Roadmap coordination meetings with the participation of the Western Balkans authorities, and regional and international organizations, as well as online trainings. SEESAC will thus continue to use its knowledge and experience gained so far to effectively organize meetings and activities online, whenever</p>	Project manager

			<p>face-to-face meetings. Also, project beneficiaries may have difficulties in participating in the planned activities if they are required to channel their human resources and efforts towards addressing the impact of the pandemic.</p> <p>P=2 I=4</p>	<p>necessary. If not possible and if the pandemic persists in the region, the project will prioritize activities that do not require travel and face-to-face meetings. SEESAC will also closely monitor the situation on the ground in all the targeted jurisdiction, and quickly adjust its planned activities, in coordination with the donor and the project partners, in response to the potential new measures imposed by the Governments in the region.</p>	
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X. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In accordance with UNDP’s programming policies and procedures, the project will be monitored through the following monitoring and evaluation plans:

Monitoring Plan

Monitoring Activity	Purpose	Frequency	Expected Action
Track results progress	Progress data against the results indicators in the RRF will be collected and analysed to assess the progress of the project in achieving the agreed outputs.	Quarterly	Slower than expected progress will be addressed by project management.
Monitor and Manage Risk	Identify specific risks that may threaten achievement of intended results. Identify and monitor risk management actions using a risk log. This includes monitoring measures and plans that may have been required as per UNDP’s Social and Environmental Standards. Audits will be conducted in accordance with UNDP’s audit policy to manage financial risk.	Quarterly	Risks are identified by project management and actions are taken to manage risk. The risk log is actively maintained to keep track of identified risks and actions taken.
Learn	Knowledge, good practices and lessons will be captured regularly, as well as actively sourced from other projects and partners and integrated back into the project.	At least annually	Relevant lessons are captured by the project team and used to inform management decisions.
Annual Project Quality Assurance	The quality of the project will be assessed against UNDP’s quality standards to identify project strengths and weaknesses and to inform management decision making to improve the project.	Every two years	Areas of strength and weakness will be reviewed by project management and used to inform decisions to improve project performance.
Review and Make Course Corrections	Internal review of data and evidence from all monitoring actions to inform decision making.	At least annually	Performance data, risks, lessons and quality will be discussed by the project board and used to make course corrections.
Project Report	A progress report will be presented to the Project Board and key stakeholders, consisting of progress data showing the results achieved against pre-defined annual targets at the output level, the annual project quality rating summary, an updated risk log with mitigation measures, and any evaluation or review reports prepared over the period. Progress reports, assessing the progress of the project in achieving the agreed outputs, will be also prepared and submitted to the donor.	Annually, and at the end of the project (final report) Quarterly	

<p>Project Review (Project Board)</p>	<p>The project’s governance mechanism (i.e., project board) will hold regular project reviews to assess the performance of the project and review the Multi-Year Work Plan to ensure realistic budgeting over the life of the project. In the project’s final year, the Project Board shall hold an end-of project review to capture lessons learned and discuss opportunities for scaling up and to socialize project results and lessons learned with relevant audiences.</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>Any quality concerns or slower than expected progress will be discussed by the project board and management actions agreed to address the issues identified.</p>
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This action will also seek complementarities and synergies with other existing projects in the area and will liaise with the EU Delegations in each country/area and inform them as much as possible about the action, including the specific activities and events taking place in the jurisdictions covered by the Delegation.

Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Title	Planned Completion Date	Key Evaluation Stakeholders	Cost and Source of Funding (USD)
Mid-term Evaluation	September 2027	relevant authorities	29,855.70 EUR
Final Evaluation	September 2029	Western Balkans relevant authorities	29,855.70 EUR