



# Final Review of the Western Balkans Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Control Roadmap (Phase I)

**CONSOLIDATED FINDINGS REPORT**

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

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For further information contact:

**Head of SEESAC**

Bulevar Zorana Đinđića 64, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

Tel: +381 11 415 5300 | Fax: +381 11 415 5499

[www.seesac.org](http://www.seesac.org)



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## ACRONYMS

<b>BIH</b>	Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>BMZ</b>	German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>CD</b>	Council Decision
<b>COM-B</b>	Capacity, Opportunity, Motivation and Behavioural Change Model
<b>COVID-19</b>	Covid-19 Pandemic
<b>EMPACT</b>	European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUR</b>	Euro
<b>EUROPOL</b>	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
<b>FAE</b>	Firearms, Ammunition and Explosives
<b>FFPs</b>	Firearms Focal Points
<b>FRONTEX</b>	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
<b>FRR</b>	Final Review Report
<b>GIZ</b>	German Agency for International Cooperation
<b>ICJ</b>	International Court of Justice
<b>INTERPOL</b>	International Criminal Police Organisation
<b>ITF</b>	International Trust Fund
<b>KIIS</b>	Key Informant Interviews
<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicators
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring & Evaluation
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MPTF</b>	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
<b>MTR</b>	Mid-Term Review
<b>NABIS</b>	National Ballistics Intelligence Service, UK
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OECD-DAC</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
<b>OSCE</b>	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<b>RACVIAC</b>	Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre
<b>RAG</b>	Red, Amber, Green
<b>RCC</b>	Regional Cooperation Council
<b>SALW</b>	Small Arms and Light Weapons
<b>SEEFEN</b>	South East Europe Firearms Expert Network
<b>SEESAC</b>	South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedures
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNMIK</b>	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo <sup>1</sup>
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>WB</b>	Western Balkans

<sup>1</sup> For the United Nations Development Programme, references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). 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.

# 1. Final Roadmap Review (Phase 1) Information Details

## Final Review of Roadmap Implementation

Review Timeline	27 June 2025 – 10 December 2025
Period reviewed	1 January 2019 – 31 December 2024
Review Team	First Call Partners Ltd (Andy McLean, Hope Kilmurry and Astrit Istrefi)

## Support to Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap (2018 – 2024)<sup>2</sup>

Jurisdictions	Belgrade, Podgorica, Pristina, Sarajevo, Skopje and Tirana
Overall number of projects	74
Projects under implementation (as of December 2024)	36
Completed projects	38
Implementing Partners	20
Donors	18 <sup>3</sup>
Total Financial Contribution in direct support of the Roadmap	93.40 m EUR

## Roadmap Financial Support 2018-2024<sup>4</sup>

European Union	43.30 m EUR
Germany	23.70 m EUR
United States	7.40 m EUR
France	6.20 m EUR
United Kingdom	4.00 m EUR
Sweden	3.707 m EUR
Netherlands	3.00 m EUR
Norway	2.00 m EUR

## Multi-Partner Trust Fund Contributions 2018 - 2024

Germany	13.28 m EUR
Netherlands	3.60 m EUR
Sweden	3.11 m EUR
France	2.85 m EUR
United Kingdom	2.50 m EUR
Norway	1.98 m EUR

## Regional and International Organisations Per Roadmap Goal

<b>Goal 1</b>	SEESAC, UNODC, OSCE, BMZ
<b>Goal 2</b>	NABIS, EMPACT, EUROPOL, INTERPOL, UNDP, UNDOC, OSCE, SEESAC, Norwegian People's Aid, Republique Francaise, Small Arms Survey
<b>Goal 3</b>	EUROPOL, INTERPOL, EMPACT, SEESAC, UNDP, UNODC, OSCE, FRONTEX, GIZ, PCC SEE, Directorate for Security and Defense Cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France)
<b>Goal 4</b>	OSCE, SEESAC, BMZ, UNDP, Small Arms Survey
<b>Goal 5</b>	OSCE, UNDP, SEESAC, UNODC, GIZ
<b>Goal 6</b>	UNDP, NATO, SEESAC, OSCE, ITF
<b>Goal 7</b>	UNDP, SEESAC, NATO, HALO Trust, RACVIAC, Norwegian People's Aid

<sup>2</sup> Table based on information from SEESAC's presentation at the 13th Regional Roadmap Coordination meeting. All data subject to change and changed through the implementation of the first phase.

<sup>3</sup> 7 donors are the key donors including the EU, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, France, Norway, and UK.

<sup>4</sup> 'Contributions by Regional and International Organizations', SEESAC (report presented to the 13th regional coordination meeting). To note, the funding amounts for Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, France, UK, and Norway include also the funding amounts reported separately below and provided within the MPTF.

## 2. Introduction

This Final Review was commissioned in July 2025 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC). The Final Review assesses progress made by the Western Balkans (WB) authorities in achieving the goals of the 'Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and their Ammunition in the Western Balkans' (hereafter referred to as the Roadmap) during its first phase of delivery. The Final Review Report (FRR) is intended to provide valuable information needed for political, financial and technical support, as well as further contributing to an effective and efficient coordination and monitoring mechanism. It also aimed to identify any pathways to strengthen existing regional cooperation.

This report provides an overview of the consolidated findings, lessons learned and recommendations arising from the Final Review. Section three outlines the Final Review scope and objectives, Section three summarises the FRR methodology; Section four provides an overview of the main findings and recommendations; Section six outlines the key challenges and risks; and the final section outlines the lessons learned.

## 3. Final Review Scope and Objectives

The FRR was conducted in line with the objectives of the European Council Decision 2022/2321, and aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the progress made by the Western Balkans (WB) Authorities in achieving the goals of the Roadmap in its first phase of implementation (2019-2024) including in establishing sustainable capacities to address the illegal possession, misuse, and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition. The findings and recommendations from the review will be used by the WB authorities to have a better understanding of their progress during this first phase of implementation and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the Roadmap.

The geographical scope of the FRR includes, in alphabetical order, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The duration covered by the FRR is 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2024. This has included drawing on the Mid Term Review (MTR) of the SALW Control Roadmap, which covered the period of 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

## 4. FRR Methodology

The methodology provided an assessment of performance in implementation. It also aimed to go further to focus on learning and analyse how have results been achieved, including why specific strategies and approaches have been successful or not. The Final Review examined the implementation of the Roadmap against five key criteria, following the OECD-DAC criteria such as: **relevance, impact, effectiveness, sustainability, gender** and **efficiency**. This was conducted in three phases including:

### Phase 1: Desk review

The team completed a comprehensive desk-based review to examine the status of Roadmap implementation across the six jurisdictions against the 14 KPIs, 38 targets and 7 Goals. The Review Team assessed 89 documents provided, including narrative and KPI reports, key highlights reports, international organisation (IO) contributions, as well as other relevant documentation and additional sources identified.

### Phase 2: Data collection mission

The FRR review team started the data collection process by attending the 13th Regional Roadmap meeting in Sarajevo from 8-9 July. Following this, qualitative data collection was conducted through a combination of remote interviews and an in-person field mission, as agreed with SEESAC. The interviews were conducted by two team members. Remote interviews were held from 4 August – 8 September (covering international donors, MPTF Secretariat members, partners based outside of the region and relevant stakeholders from Tirana and Podgorica). The field mission covered Pristina, Belgrade, and Sarajevo (including a trip to Banja Luka), from 10 – 19 September. Remote interviews were then conducted with Skopje and with remaining international and regional organisations following this. Overall, **65 KIIs were conducted with 89 stakeholders**.

The Review team gathered data on the progress of implementation of the Western Balkans Roadmap as per its goals and overall targets; whether the results achieved so far are sustainable and in line with the vision of the Roadmap; what the key challenges were for implementation; and what key lessons, risks and opportunities were identified during implementation. Furthermore, the team assessed whether there were any gaps in the Roadmap; its relevance; whether the support provided by implementing organisations, key supports and donors has been timely, relevant, and responding to the expressed priorities in the implementation of the Roadmap; and the extent to which there have been synergies and interlinkages among the interventions of the funding mechanisms and initiatives contributing to the Roadmap implementation.

Other key issues assessed include the extent to which gender equality and the empowerment of women have been addressed in the design and implementation of activities; identifying any good practices identified; whether the mechanisms have ensured efficient and effective coordination of efforts and resources in line with EU Council Decision (CD) 2018/1788 and EU CD 2022/2321 and whether there were any challenges related to reporting based on Key Performance Indicators and roadmap goals. On return from the field missions, the Team Leader convened the project team for an internal workshop to discuss emerging findings, agree a shared analysis and develop recommendations for the FRR. This was concluded with a debrief to UNDP SEESAC with preliminary findings of the data collection for the FRR.

### Phase 3: Review and report writing

Following analysis of the desk review and the field missions, the Review team drafted the FRR report. This was revised following comments, questions, suggestions and requests for clarification from SEESAC and Western Balkan stakeholders. These were addressed in the revised final version of the FRR report, accompanied by this Consolidated Findings report.

## Limitations

No.	Limitation	Mitigation
1	The timing of the review over the summer period impacted the Review Team's ability to conduct interviews during the summer months.	The team mitigated this as much as possible by conducting the interviews slightly later (end of August/early September) and moving the Skopje remote mission to after the field mission. This enabled the team to access a high number of stakeholders.
2	One notable gap was a lack of access to prosecutors, or the wider criminal justice sector to interview as part of the FRR. Overall, the team only interviewed one prosecutor (in Sarajevo), which represented a significant gap in the findings. This was due to a lack of response from prosecutors, as well as the limited time-frame in which the data collection was conducted.	The team tried to mitigate this by asking other stakeholders about criminal justice chain linkages but it remains a limitation. This gap seems representative of the need for further engagement with justice institutions in Roadmap implementation (see findings section below). This is provided as a key recommendation for the Roadmap during phase 2.
3	The differentiation between remote interviews and in-person meetings was recognised by the team as impacting the ability to gather as strong data.	Whilst the team ensured that the remote meetings were as in depth as possible, a recommendation for the next review would be to conduct the whole field mission in person.
4	All interviews were conducted in capitals, preventing site visits, as well as engaging with a broader range of interviewees. This could have enabled the team to assess the wider impact of the work that has been done during the first phase.	The Review Team aimed to ensure that almost all interviewees recommended were interviewed, including engaging with wider local stakeholders to get a broader sense of the local context.

## 5. Summary of Findings and Recommendations

This section is divided according to the key criteria assessed against the Roadmap including: relevance, impact, effectiveness, sustainability, gender and efficiency. This includes a summary of the key findings and associated recommendations.

### RELEVANCE

The Roadmap is found to still be **highly relevant to the regional context and the challenges it faces**. Almost all interviewees noted that the Roadmap is relevant both for the Western Balkans jurisdictions and the specific challenges that they face, as well as for the EU and donor governments. This was found across all seven goals, with many respondents noting that the Roadmap sufficiently enabled the region to holistically respond to all challenges related to SALW from a regulatory, operational, and societal perspective. Whilst challenges have been faced in terms of achieving some of the results related to the goals (such as Goal 1: Legislation – see effectiveness section below), it is widely accepted that the Roadmap is critical to ensuring that the challenge of SALW can be effectively addressed, to increase the safety and security of the region and its neighbours. As one interviewee stated “without the Roadmap and the increased control efforts in the region, a lot more illegal weapons would find their way into the EU”.

From a security perspective, **SALW remains a common security problem for all jurisdictions and the EU**. The post-conflict nature of the region, combined with the complex security challenges faced by each jurisdiction both drives perceptions of a need for firearms, whilst simultaneously placing the region at risk of instability. For example, a recent study on the factors influencing firearms demand and misuse conducted for SEESAC found that ‘approximately one-third of respondents across the Western Balkans cite personal safety as the primary reason that they think people own firearms.’<sup>5</sup> This is compounded by the war in Ukraine, which represents a potential upcoming threat to the region's stability. Recent events such as the 2023 femicide in Sarajevo,<sup>6</sup> the mass shooting at a school in Belgrade in 2023,<sup>7</sup> and several mass shootings in Montenegro,<sup>8</sup> demonstrate that SALW misuse is a critical security problem across all jurisdictions. Interviews with donor governments and international policing organisations confirmed that the Western Balkans is still a key route for SALW reaching the EU, with the trade in deactivated and converted blank-firing weapons (which can then be reactivated) currently of particular concern.

**The Roadmap has strong political relevance for the region.** It is found that the Roadmap's connection to the EU Growth Plan and wider Enlargement process makes it a very relevant process for Western Balkans jurisdictions. The plan acts as an incentive, using financial aid and enhanced economic integration to encourage the Western Balkan countries to accelerate reforms necessary for EU accession. More broadly, as found in the MTR, it provides a space for all jurisdictions to meet regularly, develop relationships, understand challenges, as well as learn lessons from one another.

<sup>5</sup> p. 7, 'Research Findings on Factors Fuelling Demand and Misuse of Firearms and Shaping Risk-Taking Behaviours in the Western Balkans', SEESAC, 2025

<sup>6</sup> Fear Endures in Women Exposed to Bosnia Livestreamed Femicide | Balkan Insight

<sup>7</sup> Serbian court jails parents of teenager who killed 10 in school attack | Serbia | The Guardian

<sup>8</sup> Four Months After Second Mass Shooting in Montenegro, Public Demands Answers | Balkan Insight

As one respondent noted “previously, I could not have imagined all of the regional stakeholders coming together to discuss security issues”, whilst another stated that the Roadmap was “indispensable” for their jurisdiction. This is very important for the stability of the region, with a high level of engagement across all jurisdictions.

**More broadly, both the 2019-2024 and 2025-2030 Roadmaps were found to give space to respond to new challenges related to SALW across the region.** For example, interviewees noted that the Roadmap in the first phase responded well to emerging threats and trends such as the use of 3D weapons, blank-fire weapons, as well as new approaches to trafficking, including through the postal service. This flexibility is recognised as key to the second phase of the Roadmap, with one interviewee stating that “it allows for new ideas, does not restrict activities, and recognises the changing nature of threats.”

When assessing whether any additional areas need to be covered by the Roadmap, **the Review Team did not identify any significant gaps.** Some interviewees raised concerns and highlighted the need for a stronger focus on organised crime and corruption as part of the Roadmap. Whilst it is clear that both issues are highly complex and directly linked to effectively responding to SALW misuse across the region, it was found that there is clear value in keeping the Roadmap focused. There are other avenues to address those wider issues and the benefit of the current approach is that it specifically focuses on operational areas of SALW, which creates an enabling environment for cooperation. There is a risk that addressing wider issues could politicise and destabilise the process.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 The implementation of Phase 2 of the Roadmap should **maintain the agility shown during Phase 1 to take on new challenges**, adapt to changing contexts, and be responsive to emerging technologies or new international frameworks as they relate to SALW control.
- 2 Efforts should be made by SEESAC, jurisdictions and related donors to **ensure continued engagement with relevant representatives of Ukrainian institutions in coordinating relevant measures** to contain any SALW flows into the region and towards Ukraine. This should be a key priority during Phase 2.
- 3 **Jurisdictions, SEESAC and international organisations should continue to capitalise on opportunities in the region to maximise the impact and relevance of small arms control.** Very strong examples were identified through quick responses to very tragic events, changing circumstances, or new political positions – this should be continued.

## IMPACT

The FRR concludes that **Roadmap implementation has had a very positive impact on regional trust and cooperation on small arms control.** The ongoing exchange and cooperation facilitated by the Roadmap has increased common understanding of firearms and explosives challenges, helped to develop joint approaches and legislative and procedural responses, shared experience of lessons learned, and established relationships which aid day-to-day contact between SALW Commission members and their peers in other jurisdictions.

**The Roadmap has maintained high-level political commitment.** The endorsement of Phase 2 by the Western Balkans Ministers of Interior during the EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs in October 2024 is evidence of this.

However, this political commitment needs to be demonstrated at the jurisdictional level in the next phase by prioritising the passing of updated firearms legislation and new legislation related to firearms, ammunition and explosives, including explosives precursors.

**The Roadmap has significantly increased inter-institutional cooperation.** There is clear evidence in each jurisdiction of enhanced cooperation and coordination between different departments and agencies on small arms control.

**The Roadmap does not yet, according to the available data, appear to have significantly impacted the misuse of weapons in the region.** There are positive examples of behaviour change, such as the large numbers of weapons surrendered in Belgrade following the tragic shootings, and the increase in reporting of celebratory shootings in Pristina. But the number of firearms-related incidents remains stubbornly high. This is an issue to examine in more detail in phase two as assessing societal impact in this area is challenging.

**It is hard to judge if the Roadmap has influenced public attitudes.** It is encouraging in this regard that only 10% of respondents in the 2024 RCC Securimeter survey said they would consider owning a gun compared to 15% in the RCC’s 2020 survey. However, fluctuations in this figure year on year indicate that perceptions may be more influenced by events in the region than by the delivery of the Roadmap. Public opinion is supportive of small arms control measures with this being the top measure identified by respondents in a recent regional SEESAC survey to improve safety across the region. For example, when asked what the most efficient way of improving safety is, 30% of people surveyed said stricter firearms control regulations. This was the top priority selected by respondents from a range of options. 27% stated that they believe there should be more police or security authorities, and 25% stated there should be more efforts to raise public awareness about the risks and dangers of firearms. Furthermore, only 5% of respondents stated that more people own firearms for self-protection.

**The Roadmap has become a model for other violence-affected regions, enabling the Western Balkans to become an exporter of security.** Similar small arms control roadmaps have been adopted in the Caribbean and Central America, and lessons and productive exchanges have been shared with Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Moldova. The Western Balkans has provided good examples of the effective establishment of Firearms Focal Points. The region has been exemplary in implementing the Guidance from the European Firearms Experts network and exchanging information with EU Member States (such as with Croatia, Sweden and during DG Home organised meetings, and sharing information such as the linking of databases, and record keeping of seizure data).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4 **Identify more captivating ways to demonstrate impact, including developing ‘change stories’.** These should identify the specific changes achieved, the importance of the change, and the contribution of activities towards it. This will help the Roadmap to showcase its results beyond the technical level. These could be focused by goal or by jurisdiction.

## EFFECTIVENESS

**The Roadmap has achieved commendable results in its first five years of implementation.** It has proved its worth as a regional coordination framework. The FRR concludes that good progress has been made on Roadmap implementation since the MTR, especially on Goals 2 and 3, with improvements on Goal 4. Progress has continued on Goals 6 and 7. Challenges particularly remain on Goals 1 and 5. Excellent work has been done across the region at the technical level, but the political context has often impeded impact. A red, amber, green (RAG) rating has been applied to assess this, with the team adding and additional Amber/Green rating in some cases.

RAG	Summary
<span style="color: green;">■</span>	This represents strong progress against targets
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> <span style="color: green;">■</span>	Strong progress: most expectations met with some gaps identified.
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> <span style="color: orange;">■</span>	Partial progress against targets with some gaps identified
<span style="color: red;">■</span> <span style="color: orange;">■</span>	Limited progress against targets with significant gaps

Goal	Rating	Mitigation
<p><b>GOAL 1:</b></p> <p>By 2023, ensure that arms control legislation is in place, fully harmonised with the EU regulatory framework and other related international obligations and standardised across the region</p>	<span style="color: orange;">■</span>	<p><b>There has been good progress towards this goal at the technical level in drafting new legislation, but clear challenges at the political level.</b> This is the goal that requires the most support during Phase 2, including assessing whether there is anything that can be done to try and unblock some of the political barriers in all jurisdictions which appear to be slowing progress in passing the legislation. However, it must be noted that there is clear evidence that a lot of good technical work has been done. Significant work has been conducted under <b>target 1</b> to help establish complete legal frameworks on firearms, ammunition and explosives but there is only evidence of strong progress on Tirana. Progress is more systematic against <b>target 2</b> with five jurisdictions having signed and ratified the Arms Trade Treaty, while Pristina included it in its 2015 Law on Weapons; further work is being conducted on amendments to Criminal Codes where necessary. Gaps remain around <b>target 3</b> with most laws only partially harmonised and delays with <b>target 4</b>. Relatively good progress on <b>target 5</b> in terms of the development of operational guidelines and arms control and FAE investigations. Strong progress identified on ballistics methods. Finally, there is good progress on <b>target 6</b>, with evidence of increased engagement between different stakeholders, particularly through SEEFEN.</p>
<p><b>GOAL 2:</b></p> <p>By 2023, ensure that arms control policies and practices in the Western Balkans are evidence-based and intelligence-led.</p>	<span style="color: green;">■</span>	<p><b>Very good progress has been made across Goal 2.</b> This is seen clearly in relation to the development of SALW control strategies, improvements in data collection, and the establishment of Firearms Focal Points (FFPs) (in place in five jurisdictions, and operational in four). Data collection has been standardised in most places but not institutionalised. Furthermore, there is evidence of increased data exchange both across the region, as well as with international stakeholders. Strong progress against <b>targets 1 and 2</b>. Significant improvement in data collection, which is now standardised across most jurisdictions (but not yet institutionalised). There is also evidence of good progress against <b>targets 3, 5, 6 and 7</b>. Data is regularly exchanged through both iARMS and SIENA across all jurisdictions (including across most authorities in Sarajevo), including on lost and stolen firearms. Investigation capacities are increased as a result of capacity building approaches under the Roadmap. Less progress is made against <b>target 4</b>. Whilst some improvements have been made since the MTR (such as increased information exchange between police-prosecution) in some jurisdictions: more work needs to be conducted to consolidate this. Much work has been done against <b>target 8</b>, some SALW control strategies were found to include provisions related to gender and age. However, it is unclear whether this has led to the meaningful participation of women in SALW control.</p>

### GOAL 3:

By 2024, significantly reduce illicit flows of firearms, ammunition and explosives (FAE) into, within and beyond the Western Balkans.

**Significant improvements have been made on cross-border cooperation to tackle illicit flows since the MTR.** However, this is not systematic nor institutionalised. There is evidence of more effective and efficient investigations. Joint Action Days have promoted cooperation but require more preparation and wider follow up. SEEFEN has been a highly effective technical network. There are several areas for improvement, including the institutionalising and consolidating of regional cooperation during Phase 2. Some good progress has been made on **target 1** with improvements found across all jurisdictions. However, a key gap is the lack of overall progress on legislation, particularly on the Law on Weapons, Criminal Codes and legislation on explosives precursors and civil use of explosives. Most progress is found against **target 2** with strong evidence of strengthened capacities of relevant law enforcement units such as border police, criminal police, customs administrations and others. Under **target 3**, no cases of diversion of arms exported have been reported by any jurisdictions throughout the entire first phase of the Roadmap. This is a positive result. However, it does call into question the level of monitoring of diversion throughout the duration of implementation. Weapons exporters and end users/recipient countries have a joint responsibility for monitoring diversion. Finally, very good progress is identified in relation to **target 4**: strong evidence of strengthened bilateral, regional and international engagement and mechanisms. This includes between jurisdictions, as well as regular engagement with actors such as FRONTEX, EUROPOL and/or INTERPOL.

### GOAL 4:

By 2024, significantly reduce the supply, demand and misuse of firearms through increased awareness, education, outreach and advocacy.

**There has been significant improvement since the MTR and some very strong examples of successful awareness raising campaigns across the region with concrete results.** However, firearm-related incidents have increased and the level of firearm-related crime remains high. In the next phase, more needs to be done to scale up awareness-raising approaches. Campaigns are found to be most effective when they are targeted and take a holistic approach. There is evidence of successful examples in Belgrade, Podgorica and Pristina. Most progress is found against **targets 1, 3, 5, and 7** since the MTR with evidence of an increased number of campaigns that are more focused, relevant and timely. Key examples include Pristina's annual 'Celebrate with your heart, not your gun' campaign which resulted in a 40% increase in reporting of celebratory shootings in September 2024, and a 28% increase in police cases being opened. The most striking results were identified following the voluntary surrender campaign (supported by both SEESAC and OSCE) in Belgrade following the very tragic mass shootings in May 2023: resulting in over 80,000 weapons being surrendered, 4 million pieces of ammunition and over 26,000 explosive devices being handed in. Progress has been made in relation to engagement with media (particularly since MTR), as well as the engagement of CSOs in campaigns. Some progress was found against **target 2** with five jurisdictions holding regular seminars for legal entities licensed for export and import of arms and military equipment. The Review Team were unable to sufficiently measure **target 8**. Gaps were found related to **targets 4 and 6**, specifically related to gender.

## GOAL 5:

By 2024, substantially decrease the estimated number of firearms in illicit possession in the Western Balkans.

**Mixed results were found against Goal 5.** Whilst there has been some very strong progress on voluntary surrender (as seen particularly clearly in Belgrade), not all jurisdictions currently have legislation enabling the voluntary surrender of weapons or ammunition. Furthermore, deactivation is also a key challenge across several jurisdictions with numbers very low (such as in Skopje and Pristina). For **target 1** there is clear evidence of improved capacities to detect and seize firearms, ammunition and explosives through the range of trainings, capacity building, provision of equipment and K9 capacities provided across each jurisdiction. Mixed progress on **target 2**, with several jurisdictions still facing challenges related to the voluntary surrender of weapons, ammunition and explosives; as well as on **target 3**: work needs to be done to ensure that sufficient legislation is in place across the region to enable both voluntary surrender and legalisation. Challenges were also faced around **target 4** with very limited examples of re-registration identified across any jurisdiction (apart from Belgrade more recently and Tirana in 2023). Whilst there is some evidence of work to improve capacities such as in Sarajevo to develop a new application for the registration of legal firearms in the Federation of BiH, as well as requests from Pristina and Skopje, significant issues remain.

## GOAL 6:

Systematically decrease the surplus and destroy seized small arms and light weapons and ammunition.

**Generally strong progress was found against Goal 6.** Most jurisdictions report that they do not have a surplus of weapons. However, some jurisdictions still report needs in relation to this. Against **target 1**, 46,491 firearms were destroyed during Phase 1, with annual numbers generally low but with two notable spikes observed in 2019 and 2021; almost 16 million rounds of ammunition have been destroyed between 2018-2024. Overall numbers destroyed in both SALW and ammunition have broadly trended downwards during Phase 1. There is evidence of surplus weapons generally being destroyed where necessary and so the explanation of this trend, reinforced by interviews, is judged to be that most surplus state stocks in the region have now been destroyed. The priority focus now is on life cycle management. Against **target 2**, 21,148 confiscated firearms were destroyed between 2018-2024, with the numbers remaining relatively stable throughout the duration of the Roadmap.

## GOAL 7:

Significantly decrease the risk of proliferation and diversion of firearms, ammunition and explosives.

**Good progress made** with evidence of improved stockpile management across the jurisdictions with regular inspections, evidence of training and improved facilities. But the scale of the challenge is daunting, a considerable number of military, law enforcement and civilian storage facilities across the region are still not up to international standards. Good progress has been made against **target 1** with demonstrable evidence of increased capability to conduct inspections. Progress has also been made against **target 2** which has received considerable funding to improve storage facilities. However, this target is judged to be amber when progress is set against the considerable scale of the challenge and that most work was conducted prior to the first phase of implementation. From 2019-2024 only, 10 storage facilities throughout the region were upgraded by SEE-SAC, of which two were MoD facilities and eight were MoI facilities. Most storage units are not up to international standards and much work needs to be done towards this target in Phase 2. There is some evidence of progress against **target 3** with outreach done in some jurisdictions to build the capacities of relevant legal entities for inspections, but this does not appear to be systematic across all jurisdictions. There has been some good progress against **target 4** in building the capacities of state institutions to inspect legal entities with regular inspections of these reported in Belgrade, Skopje, Sarajevo and Tirana.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5** **Prioritise the adoption of new legislation.** Legislation is a key enabler for implementation across the Roadmap and is also important for EU accession. This requires renewed political engagement with leaders and parliamentarians in each jurisdiction, including from international donors, SALW Commissions and implementing partners through consultations, advocacy, and regular engagement.
- 6** **Systematise operational cooperation.** Cross-border cooperation to combat illicit trafficking has considerably increased since the MTR but needs to be further developed. Regional projects and cross-border projects where simultaneous activities are delivered on both sides of a border and project activities support collaboration, information exchange and joint operations have proved to be a good model and should be scaled up.
- 7** **Increase support for awareness raising campaigns and improve M&E of this.** There are good initiatives to build upon under Goal 4 and this is a key area for development and scale up in phase 2, including continuing to share examples and results amongst all jurisdictions. To help assess the effectiveness of campaigns it is important that monitoring and evaluation approaches are strengthened with baseline and endline assessments. The COM-B behaviour change model<sup>9</sup> could provide a useful tool for designing and evaluating interventions in this area.
- 8** **Focus efforts on criminal justice chain.** The need to enhance linkages between police and prosecution services in each jurisdiction was highlighted in the MTR and is one area where not many results have subsequently been seen. Whilst there are some areas of success such as the amending of some Criminal Codes and the regional exchanges of good practices among law enforcement, prosecution and judicial officials, a clearer judicial input into 'whole of government' efforts could generate more timely and effective communication with other parts of the criminal justice chain and help improve the success of operations.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is a challenging concept for an area as dynamic as SALW control in the context of ongoing external threat. However, it is critical to SALW control in the mid-long term, especially in light of the general trend of reducing ODA budgets. The Review found that there have been **some very strong examples of sustainability during the first phase, but this has not been integrated across all goals or institutions.** Overall, it is found that work needs to be done within the second phase to consolidate the results achieved and ensure that they are sufficiently institutionalised. This should be a key focus to ensure that any effect is not lost, including ensuring that the jurisdictions allocate sufficient budgets to SALW control, continue cooperation, and maintain capability (both in terms of institutional memory, skills and equipment) that has been built throughout implementation. This section is divided into two parts: part one provides an overview of strong examples of sustainability, and part two highlights some areas requiring improvement.

<sup>9</sup> The COM-B behaviour change model assesses the capability, opportunity and motivation of target actors which can lead to behaviour change, including the barriers. Further information on this can be found on p. 39.

## RESULTS IN SUSTAINABILITY

**There has been a strong focus on sustainability by many implementing partners in their projects, helping to ensure that the changes are longer lasting.** This was found across all implementing partners both within the document review and the interviews. For example, SEESAC's approach to designing projects is built on a needs assessment, targeting actions to those most needed, and working in cooperation with SALW Commissions to ensure that they are most appropriate. Implementing partners have prioritised the development of guidelines<sup>10</sup> and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)<sup>11</sup> to encourage the maintenance of equipment and the institutionalisation of practices. Training of trainers has been used as an approach to try to ensure that technical skills are passed on within partner institutions. This is all key to ensuring longer-lasting effect. For example, there is evidence of OSCE providing equipment (including vehicles and equipment related to K9s) alongside an agreement from the jurisdictions that they will pay for the maintenance; and both UNDP and UNODC have utilised opportunities to embed trainings into wider curriculums within jurisdictions.

**There is a strong sense of local ownership across all jurisdictions at the technical level which contributes to the Roadmap's wider sustainability.** Interviews with key stakeholders across all jurisdictions revealed a strong sense of ownership, particularly amongst the SALW Commissions. For example, many projects are either designed or co-designed by the SALW Commissions, who are able to identify key priorities for their jurisdiction. When interviewing one member from the police they noted "one of the best things about the Roadmap was that we were able to provide our list of needs". This sense of ownership is found very strongly at the technical level and is strengthened through the regional meetings and regular engagement, as well as the way in which the Multi-Partner Trust Fund is run. A related aspect contributing to local ownership is the link with the EU Accession Process and Growth Plan, with the EU's role as a donor and monitor of the Roadmap, contributing to a sense of ownership by the jurisdictions and focus on the Roadmap as a priority. However, it must be noted that there is a need for ongoing buy-in and ownership at the higher political levels in phase 2 to help address issues where progress has been slower in phase 1, for example on the passage of small arms legislation.

**Good progress has made across the region on institutional development to tackle SALW through the establishment SALW Commissions and Firearms Focal Points.** The establishment of new units has helped to embed cooperation to tackle the proliferation and misuse of SALW as standard practice in governments across the region. As these units develop further, they will put down roots and be a key element of a sustainable approach to addressing the SALW challenge.

**There is evidence of jurisdictions allocating budget for some SALW related work** including the FFPs, taking on physical unit costs, or embedding training or curricula into jurisdictions' programming/activities. There are examples of jurisdictions allocating budgets to these new institutions for SALW-related work. This includes staff members with job descriptions and responsibilities for delivering against the Roadmap, integrated into the administration. In addition, some jurisdictions such as Belgrade and Tirana have also taken on physical unit costs, which are now embedded into the jurisdictions' budgets; and the ballistics laboratories require funding for both accreditation and continuation of activities. For example, on stockpile management, Tirana has invested in personnel, the refurbishment of some stockpile warehouses, as well as the management of them; while Belgrade allocates trainings and funds the accreditation process for their ballistics laboratory annually through their budget. Finally, some jurisdictions have also embedded training or curricula into the jurisdictions' programming and activities which ensures that institutional memory is retained.

**There are strong examples of sustainable approaches through jurisdictions supporting each other with securing accreditation of practices of their ballistics laboratories.** The accreditation of ballistics laboratories is very expensive and sometimes challenging for jurisdictions to obtain, despite having several of the practices and procedures in place. However, a very strong example of sustainability was found with Skopje and Sarajevo, where their ballistics laboratories have been working together and supporting each other with accreditation. This has been done through their experts conducting proficiency tests for accreditation for each other. This approach prevented each of them from spending significant funds on accreditation but enabled inter-laboratory cooperation to ensure that they could be accredited. It is identified as a clear example of both regional cooperation and sustainability and is one that should be adopted more broadly.

**Legislative changes are likely to be sustainable.** Furthermore, the legislative changes that have and will be made through the Roadmap are also inherently sustainable in nature. Whilst several challenges have been identified in terms of passing legislation, once they are on the statute books they will represent a legislative framework for jurisdictions to work to. This also influences the policy agenda and creates an enabling environment for jurisdictions.

## HOWEVER, CHALLENGES WITH SUSTAINABILITY REMAIN

**More work is needed to ensure the allocation of budgets for SALW-related activities.** Despite some good examples of the commitment of resources by the jurisdictions (see above), SALW Commissions have often struggled to influence budgets and there is still a heavy reliance on international funding for the majority of activities. This was raised by all jurisdictions and many international partners, with many interviewees noting that there is a need to allocate more local budget or resources for this in the future. Whilst challenges were recognised such as the lack of flexibility and very tight jurisdictional budgets, there is a strong need to ensure that further commitment is made going forwards to ensure the sustainability of progress made. During the next phase, there is a need to secure further commitment from jurisdictions to allocate budgets for SALW-related activities. This could include an increased focus on co-funding, with jurisdictions asked to make a financial or in-kind contribution to projects.

**Any support with the provision of equipment or software needs to consider sustainability more carefully:** this includes maintenance and continuation of software licences. Whilst some efforts have been made to ensure the sustainability of the provision of equipment, several interviewees noted that there are certain issues regarding both the maintenance and updating of software licenses. Key issues were raised in relation to equipment or software that is sourced abroad and therefore require maintenance abroad, equipment that has a shorter shelf-life (such as drones for border patrols), as well as software that requires licenses following the conclusion of training. In addition, there is also a need to ensure that systems are compatible, such as using EVOFINDER more consistently, versus the IBIS system (an issue that was raised in Sarajevo as both systems are reportedly incompatible). Furthermore, there are also some concerns with regards to postal scanners, where UNODC have committed to cover the cost of maintenance for five years, and there is currently no commitment from the jurisdictions that this will be taken on subsequently.

**Staff rotation is a problem in all jurisdictions.** Training needs to focus on training of trainers to encourage institutional memory and prevent loss of knowledge. An issue raised in all jurisdictions is the fact that there are regular staff turnovers in key departments and agencies working on SALW-related issues. Several interviewees noted that there are often challenges of institutional memory being lost when beneficiaries of training are rotated into a new position. This appears to happen fairly regularly and significantly undermines the sustainability of the Roadmap. Efforts should be made to ensure that any training or capacity building is accompanied with a commitment that the trainee will stay in the position for a certain amount of time, or that there will be an investment in train the trainers or other methods to maintain institutional memory. Particular areas of concern include ensuring sufficient trained officers to manage K9 capability, as well as particular types of training that focuses on the use of specific equipment or methods. For ballistics laboratories, efforts also need to be made to ensure that there are sufficient staff members for the laboratories to maintain accreditation and sustainability.

<sup>10</sup> Such as SEESAC's Guidelines for Assessing and Addressing Risks Related to the Firearms Misuse in Domestic Violence.

<sup>11</sup> Such as a SOP on tracing the parts of firearms in Skopje.

## RECOMMENDATION

9

**Increase the focus on sustainability.** This is vital to help consolidate and institutionalise results and gradually reduce the reliance on donor funding in a context where ODA budgets are shrinking. It is unclear if there will be a third phase for the Roadmap so the transition to sustainability must be a primary focus of phase 2 to ensure that the gains made are not lost. Important ways of doing this include considering introducing cost-sharing as a criteria for MPTF funding, and integrating reciprocal commitments into all project MoUs with host governments (for example, to maintain staff in post who have received specialist technical training, to provide budget allocations for maintenance costs, and to implement a training of trainers approach with partner institutions cascading training internally to a wider range of staff).

## GENDER

### **Addressing gender issues is critical to tackling the misuse of small arms in the Western Balkans.**

On average, a woman is killed in the region every week, with the number of femicides rising in recent years to the hundreds. In Serbia, media investigations into femicide revealed that about 30 percent of such cases involved firearms, many of which were inherited or illicit. Firearms, even when not used, often serve as tools for psychological coercion, with perpetrators using the presence of a gun to intimidate partners.<sup>12</sup> Studies from Serbia highlight that firearms used in femicide often originate from weapons legally obtained for hunting, demonstrating how recreational ownership can intersect with intimate partner violence.<sup>13</sup>

### RESULTS ON GENDER

**There is clear evidence of an increased capacity to include gender mainstreaming on SALW misuse across the Western Balkans.** For example, specific guidance has been prepared on a range of important topics including: assessing the risk of firearms misuse in domestic violence by SEESAC to be integrated into licensing processes; guidance on gender in forensics; guidelines for officials of the Ministries of Interior and police services for communication with the media in cases of firearm misuse in gender-based violence; a gender and SALW resource pack; as well as a handbook on the standardisation of gender training in the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces of Montenegro and several gender mainstreaming tools. In addition, OSCE developed a gender mainstreaming strategy which was included in their K9 and deactivation projects. Furthermore, SEESAC has commissioned several research reports examining the relationship between gender and firearms misuse,<sup>14</sup> including assessing firearms in the context of domestic violence and male gender-based violence. This has significantly built the understanding of gender and how it relates to SALW misuse. Furthermore, there is also evidence of increased capability to conduct gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis across the region.

Secondly, there is also **evidence of mainstreaming gender in policy development and revision of action plans and strategies.** Several of the SALW Control strategies, policy documents and action plans included gender equality within them. Some jurisdictions also include specific legislation on gender-based violence and SALW misuse such as domestic violence. Furthermore, in several jurisdictions such as Sarajevo, there are plans to include mental health assessments prior to the licensing of weapons, which includes assessing whether the applicant and anyone in their household has a prior domestic violence conviction.

<sup>12</sup> P60, SEESAC 2025, op cit.

<sup>13</sup> P18, ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Gender and Security - SEESAC

### **The UNDP Serbia project demonstrates very promising results and evidence of best practice.**

UNDP Serbia with the support of SEESAC has piloted a new project specifically focused on gender issues. This has resulted in a number of achievements including, the development of an online training course on the Ministry of Interior's e-learning platform on the law on the prevention of domestic violence. It is now mandatory for all police and prosecution to pass this, and other courses related to gender. The project has worked with journalists to reduce the sensationalism of reporting around firearms misuse in domestic violence incidents – recognising the trigger effect that this can have in generating more violence. This has led to the creation of a network of 100 journalists committed to ethical media reporting on domestic violence. The project has also helped to improve coordination between the police and health workers when responding to incidents and the development of a new protocol on handling cases of domestic violence. And the project has facilitated discussions between practitioners on the challenges faced implementing the law on prevention of domestic violence to inform the amendment of the law.

The **development of women police officer networks has been an important initiative in some jurisdictions** which has helped to increase solidarity and the sharing of experiences between members. It has also helped women officers to develop a stronger common voice to help advocate for reforms within their forces.

### HOWEVER, SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES REMAIN

**Understanding of gender issues is found to be very varied across stakeholders,** with many interviewees only referring to the number of women in SALW Commissions when asked. SEESAC has done excellent work in phase one to promote a gender-sensitive approach to small arms control but the interviews conducted for the FRR show that much more is needed. Gender to many people is synonymous with the equal participation of women in project activities. This has been done well in phase 1 and women are generally fairly well represented in SALW commissions in the region (given the predominantly male nature of law enforcement agencies in the region). However, many interviewees did not understand the broader intersection between gender and SALW misuse.

**There is a gap between high-level commitments to gender mainstreaming and implementation in practice.** Some interviewees highlighted the high-level political focus on gender, for example an international conference by the women's police officers' network in Serbia which was opened by the Prime Minister and attended by many ministers. But this top-level show of support has not yet translated into practical action on the ground.

**Roles in police forces are often gendered.** Some interviewees highlighted that whilst women may be comparatively well represented in some roles within the police – such as forensics, where reportedly they can take up to 80% of roles – in other more frontline roles then they can often be under-represented. The need for more women officers to attend domestic violence scenes to help document injuries and support appropriate medical checks was highlighted for example.

**SOPs need to be implemented at jurisdictional level.** Excellent work has been done as highlighted above on the development of SOPs and guidelines in phase 1 but there is not much evidence of these being implemented in practice. A key focus in phase 2 should be working with jurisdictions to support the implementation of these and to review progress and challenges.

**There is only one specific jurisdiction level project focused on gender across the whole Roadmap.** The UNDP Serbia highlighted above is currently the only one of its type in the region. It has proved the concept and demonstrated the value of a concentrated focus on this issue and consideration should be given to how the lessons from this can be shared across the region and it can be scaled up in other jurisdictions.

**The capacity of CSOs to work on SALW issues needs to be developed.** SEESAC brought together women's organisations at a regional workshop in June 2025 to discuss small arms control. It was clear that this was a new issue for many of them and they had little knowledge in this area. Many did not participate because they felt they did not have the necessary expertise. CSOs could be a powerful implementing partner for public awareness campaigns and could also play a role in advocacy and monitoring implementation. Building their capacity to do so should be a focus of phase 2.

## RECOMMENDATION

10

**Continue to expand the gender focus of the Roadmap.** Promising initiatives in phase 1 – including the development of guidance/SOPs and the UNDP Serbia public campaign on domestic violence – provide a platform to be built upon in phase 2. More work is needed with government officials to demonstrate why a gender focus is important for effectively tackling SALW and what this means in practice (beyond the participation of women in project activities). Providing support to implement the newly developed guidance/SOPs and to scale up domestic violence campaigns across the region (with a particular focus on engaging young men) is vital. This includes raising awareness more widely to the public to support societal understanding.

## EFFICIENCY

Whilst the report has covered several areas of efficiency, this section summarises efficiency around four key areas: delivery, coordination, monitoring and funding, all of which impact the efficiency of implementation. These are outlined in detail below.

### DELIVERY

**The wider political context (such as changes in governments) has made it challenging to translate the significant investment in developing draft legislation into adoption** through new laws on the statute books. As demonstrated throughout the report, this is one of the key areas which needs to be focused on during phase 2.

However, it must be noted that **there is evidence of increased efficiency in the delivery of Goal 2.** This is found particularly strongly in the increased inter-institutional cooperation found across the jurisdictions, which has led to regular engagement, streamlining of processes and more efficient results.

**The increase of weapons seizures at borders in the region is suggestive of an increase in capacity.** This is understood to be a result of the provision of training and equipment and suggests an efficient translation of project activities into results.

**The weapons surrender campaign in Serbia following the tragic shootings was very efficient in leading to the surrender and deactivation of significant numbers of weapons.** This shows the potential of well-coordinated initiatives, especially when used strategically at key moments. In other jurisdictions, the lack of enabling legislation on weapons surrender and deactivation is an impediment to replicating this success.

### COORDINATION

**Regional initiatives are challenging in the Western Balkans and SEESAC has been sensitive to the contextual issues and carefully avoided potential pitfalls.** SEESAC has carefully balanced roles – providing leadership whilst supportively facilitating the jurisdictions to deliver results.

**SEESAC's role has many dimensions.** As a coordinator, it convenes biannual meetings of the SALW Commissions which provide an important opportunity for the jurisdictions to report on progress and exchange experiences. At the technical level it brings together law enforcement agencies biannually in the South East Europe Firearms Expert Network (SEEFEN) which was highlighted by stakeholders as very helpful for sharing good practices. The combination of this strategic and technical coordination has been an effective and efficient way of developing momentum to support Roadmap implementation. The meetings are well organised and facilitated and have provided important fora through which regional cooperation amongst Western Balkans jurisdictions to address SALW issues has improved.

**In its technical role, SEESAC provides expertise to the jurisdictions to support the development of SALW legislation and policies.** The technical knowledge of SEESAC staff is welcomed by the jurisdictions, many of whom highlighted this critical role in interviews. SEESAC also conducts research in key areas, for example its upcoming report on factors fuelling the demand for weapons, which help to provide an evidence base to inform programming. This knowledge development role is important in helping to drive progress.

**Some stakeholders interviewed commented that there is not enough space in the Regional Roadmap Coordination meetings for dialogue on key themes.** The primary focus of these six-monthly meetings is on the presentation of reports from the jurisdictions. This serves an important accountability function and creates some peer pressure to demonstrate progress. Whilst the Review Team are aware that there also exist Regional SALW Commission Meetings, but these only include representatives from SALW Commissions with no general representation from donors or implementing partners.

### MONITORING

**Regular reporting on progress has been important for accountability and to encourage implementation.** The Roadmap establishes a valuable framework against which to assess progress with its goals, targets and KPIs. The biannual reports are a key transparency tool. In recognition of the need not to over-burden jurisdictions with reporting, and in line with a MTR recommendation, the KPI reporting is now done annually rather than every six months which is sensible. To keep up the momentum for delivery, the overall narrative reports should be maintained on a biannual basis. The key highlights reports which SEESAC puts together are very useful for providing an overview for stakeholders.

**The involvement of international partners in the regional meetings creates an extra degree of monitoring and oversight.** This is welcome and has been helpful for the development of productive partnerships between donors, regional and international organisations and jurisdictions. Consideration could be given to how to engage civil society more.

**More work could be done on monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of activities.** This is an area for development in many areas. For example, considerable investment has been made in capacity building. The FRR has heard consistent testimony from stakeholders of the benefits of this, but there is an absence of rigorous data by which to assess the extent to which capacity has increased and the effect which this has had. For example, where K9 capacity has been increased what impact has that had on seizures in the locations where the dogs are deployed? Where drones and scanners have been provided, what effect has this had on seizures and interdictions at specific border posts? Where celebratory shooting campaigns have been implemented, what impact has this had on public perceptions before and after the intervention? Establishing a more rigorous monitoring system for different interventions would be valuable to help demonstrate the results of activities and answer the 'so what?' question.

### FUNDING

**The support provided by implementing organisations, key supporters (such as EU Member States) and donors has been very relevant.** SALW Commissions attested that support provided was generally in line with their priorities and the FRR finds a strong level of local ownership over internationally supported projects. A strength of the Roadmap is that it provides a structured framework to help direct international support which has helped ensure that assistance provided has been aligned with the expressed regional priorities.

**The MPTF has worked very effectively as a fund.** The governance structure including international partners and the jurisdictions has worked effectively and helped to ensure that projects selected for funding are in line with jurisdictions' needs.

**SEESAC has played a critical role overseeing the provision of donor support.** With so many partners and funding instruments there is always a risk of duplication and gaps. The FRR finds that SEESAC has done well to help minimise this risk. The largest areas where international funding has been provided is under Goals 2 and 3. Comparatively less has been provided under Goal 4 and 5 and this is an area for increased focus in phase 2.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**11 Consider adapting Regional Coordination meetings to include more discussion at the strategic level on thematic areas.** The six-monthly meetings of Regional Roadmap Coordination meetings have been central to Roadmap delivery but their format is focused primarily on reporting by the jurisdictions and limits the scope for more interactive discussion. The FRR proposes that more time is given on the agenda of each meeting to discussion on key thematic issues or to reduce the time for presenting to hold more interactive workshops. SEESAC could select these topics based on the areas where the reports from the jurisdictions highlight either good practice or common challenges at the strategic level. This could allow a deeper discussion on how to develop joint solutions to these common challenges and to share emerging good practice and lessons from one jurisdiction to another. The requirement for written reports every six months from the jurisdictions should remain.

**12 Civil society could be engaged more as a monitor and partner.** Most delivery activities are implemented directly by governments with the support of international organisations. Civil society has had a relatively limited role to date but could have a critical role in priority areas in phase 2. This could include in advocating for implementation, public awareness-raising campaigns, monitoring progress in implementation.<sup>15</sup>

**13 Sustainability of results should be integrated as an important element of all internationally funded projects in phase 2.** Progress has been made on sustainability in phase 1 as highlighted in section 6.4 above. However, this could be integrated more systematically in phase 2. For example, a requirement of funding under the MPTF could be a degree of cost-sharing from the jurisdictions. As pressures on donor budgets increase, this could be a good way of helping to sustain international engagement and demonstrating a real partnership approach. This is particularly important for infrastructure investments where unless jurisdictions are able to prioritise the allocation of budgets for the upgrades needed to secure weapons stockpiles it is unlikely that the scale of coverage required under Goal 7 (see above) will be possible.

## 6. Key Challenges and Risks

### CHALLENGES

Several of the challenges outlined in the MTR remain pertinent. During the first part of implementation over the 2019-2024 period, key challenges included the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for government engagement and cooperation, the earthquake in Albania, cyber-attacks experienced by several jurisdictions. More recently, complex political developments have impacted implementation, particularly as new Ministers and government officials have been appointed, as well as the wider global context, which is impacting donor funding; changes in the US government position on aid; and competing global priorities. A key example of this is the war in Ukraine which has had a significant impact including in the direct implementation of some of the goals (such as voluntary surrender campaigns in a period of wider security fragility), influencing the illegal flow of weapons, and changing donor priorities to respond to the war. A final challenge is the changing pace and development of new technologies related to SALW including 3D printing, the conversion of blank firing weapons and artificial intelligence. These represent significant challenges for the Roadmap and will continue to be in the coming period.

### RISKS

As outlined by the MTR, there are clear delivery risks related to Roadmap implementation including the risk of doing harm through activities, programme and fiduciary risk, political risk, and some security risk (given the nature of some activities). These have generally been managed well. The Ukraine war represents a significant further risk both as a destabilising factor for the region, as well as a risk of weapons proliferation following any peace process or negotiation. Risks are also identified in relation to a reduction of donor funding in the forthcoming period, as well as changing priorities of jurisdictions in light of any changing contexts, which could impact commitment and capacity to implement the Roadmap.

<sup>15</sup> For example, there is an independent civil society monitoring of the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty: Home - ATT Monitor

## 7. Lessons learned

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- **Political buy-in was essential for the development of the Roadmap and remains essential to progress (both at jurisdiction and EU levels).** The initial high level political engagement of Germany and France and the role of the Berlin process, as well as the agreement of the Roadmap by the leaders of the six jurisdictions at the London Conference in 2018 were all essential in providing it with political support and momentum. Whilst it is possible that without this political framing, cooperation within and between jurisdictions would have occurred on specific issues, interviews for the FRR clearly identify the high-level support for the Roadmap as one of the most important reasons for why it has maintained its profile and resources have continued to be made available at the jurisdiction level. The EU accession links have been vital for keeping it on the agenda and continuing to encourage implementation. Significant political and diplomatic support is required to maintain and increase progress through the second phase of implementation. This is particularly important in each jurisdiction and in the EU for progress on Goal 1 – legislation.
- **Tackling SALW and its related challenges requires a regional approach and trust is essential for this.** Borders in the region remain porous despite the improvements in border management made under the Roadmap and so regional cooperation is the key to progress. Trust is a prerequisite for cooperation but it also develops as a result of cooperation. The willingness of jurisdictions from across the Western Balkans to cooperate and engage collectively on SALW control issues was regularly remarked upon by all groups of interviewees. Reasons for why this is the case usually focused on the issue of trust; a sense of common purpose has been developed over recent years on SALW control – aided but not driven by external encouragement, including the prospects of EU accession. The length of time in which SALW control has been a visible priority in the region, and the longevity of SEESAC in particular were identified as important factors in establishing trust over time, which enables Roadmap implementation to be sustained even if the prevailing regional political challenges remain significant. The Roadmap has been able to help build trust between many of the jurisdictions but this remains a work in progress in many areas.
- **An effective regional facilitator is vital for progress.** SEESAC's role has been central to the development of the Roadmap, the results under phase 1 and the development of phase 2. Its mandate from the six jurisdictions and its link to the Regional Cooperation Council has given it the legitimacy to play this role and its leadership and competent staff have given it the credibility to deliver it. The combination of political and technical support has proven to be effective and backing that up with access to timely funding to support aspects of implementation has been critical.
- **Good data collection and coordination structures are vital enablers.** The establishment of SALW Commissions have been vital in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Roadmap across the different ministries, departments and agencies at the jurisdiction level. The development of FFPs have helped to gather and share data on firearms issues more effectively and supported a more evidence-based approach to jurisdictions' policy development and operational implementation. If the Roadmap had not emphasised the importance of coordination and had instead assumed that this would happen automatically, it is unclear whether this would have been effective. Investment in administrative processes and structures has helped to establish systems and protocols through which coordination can take place and can be nurtured and further developed over time.
- **Format of the Roadmap provides clear direction for jurisdictions and donors alike.** The structure of the Roadmap with clear goals, targets and KPIs has helped to provide a common framework for implementation and the targeting of international assistance. It has struck the right balance between big picture themes and sufficient detail to focus implementation.
- **Local ownership is critical to success and the sustainability of the Roadmap's results.** The participatory way in which the Roadmap has been developed with the six jurisdictions helps to increase their ownership of it. SEESAC has a critical facilitating and supporting role but they cannot achieve progress at the local level without the support of the jurisdictions. Sustaining and enhancing this ownership is vital in the next phase.
- **The Roadmap needs to remain agile to be able to respond to new and emerging challenges.** The SALW agenda is constantly evolving and the Roadmap has proved to be sufficiently flexible and agile to help address new challenges such as 3D printing, postal trafficking and the activation of blank-firing and deactivated firearms. Maintaining this iterative and adaptive approach will be important for the new challenges which will emerge in coming years.
- **Co-funding by jurisdictions will become increasingly important as the donor landscape changes.** As donor budgets reduce then the international community will look to the jurisdictions to enhance their contribution to the costs of SALW control and Roadmap implementation.

**SEESAC**

Bulevar Zorana Đinđića 64,  
11000 Belgrade, Serbia

Tel: +381 11 415 5300 | Fax: +381 11 415 5499

[www.seesac.org](http://www.seesac.org)

 [undp\\_seesac](https://www.instagram.com/undp_seesac)

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