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SEESAC Announces a New Project and Continues its Decades-long Work

SEESAC is proud to announce its new project *Support for Enhancing the Fight Against the Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in the Western Balkans*.

Funded by the European Union, represented by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations, through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), this €5 million project aims to strengthen strategic and operational capacities of the Western Balkans authorities to conduct firearms investigations, as well as to share information within the region and with the EU on illegal possession, misuse, and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition. In addition, it will support the authorities of the region to better understand and increase the response to the factors fueling demand and misuse of firearms in the Western Balkans, as well to better integrate gender into SALW control processes.

This 3 year-long project directly complements the current and builds on the work previously done by SEESAC, with the support of the EU through the EU Council Decisions 2016/2356, 2018/1788 and 2019/2111.

Activities envisioned by the project contribute to the implementation of selected aspects of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap. They do so by tackling four specific goals.



- 1. Establishing a network of functioning Firearms Focal Points (FFPs) in the Western Balkans.** While the operationalization of FFPs in the region has been previously initiated and supported through the EUCDs 2016/2356 and 2018/1788, this project will sustain and build on that effort. A network of FFPs will be supported through comprehensive technical assistance to increase the analytical capacities of these units, as well as through provision of specific tools, and organization of workshops and meetings in order to share best practices. The action will retain a degree of flexibility to respond to the needs identified by the network and to facilitate information sharing and promote regional cooperation including with the EU Member States. The FFPs main aim and role is the improve the intelligence picture of firearms trafficking.
- 2. Strengthening capacities of authorities in the Western Balkans to conduct crime scene investigations in accordance with relevant EU good practices and guidelines.** The primary beneficiary of these activities will be crime scene investigation units that will be provided with a number of tools including: Train the Trainers activities focusing on crime scene investigation and photography, as well as the establishment of a custody chain; Support in aligning existing SOPs with that of the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes; Support in preparation for the ISO 1702 accreditation; Provision of basic and advanced CSI equipment/kits; and Guidance on electronic evidence.
- 3. Increasing response to factors fueling demand and misuse of firearms in the Western Balkans.** This goal will be tackled on two fronts. First, the project will enhance knowledge of factors fueling demand and misuse of firearms in the WB through much needed in-depth research of both perpetrators and victims of firearms incidents, as well as through an examination of firearms in popular culture. Secondly, the project will help raise awareness and operational capacity among key beneficiaries by: Establishing a regional task force to contribute to standardization of design, management, monitoring and evaluation of awareness campaigns as well as sharing of best practices; Organizing bi-annual thematic meetings where proposals and best practices addressing most relevant and current problems will be discussed; Developing guidelines for policymakers on awareness raising dealing with various phases of campaigns and aspects of awareness raising; Providing technical advisory support to jurisdictions in designing, monitoring and implementing awareness campaigns as well as financial support for the implementation of these campaigns.
- 4. Strengthened capacities for mainstreaming gender into SALW control by institutions in Western Balkans.** The project will narrow in on the remaining challenges with regards to the institutional response to the use of firearms in domestic violence, insufficient capacities of relevant institutions to mainstream gender in their work, addressing gender factors fueling demand for firearms, participation of women in arms control, and gender sensitive data collection. Building on the work done through the implementation of the EU Council Decisions 2016/2356, 2018/1788 and 2019/2111, the project will address the above issues through capacity development, risk assessment methodologies, gender sensitive licensing tools, as well as inter-institutional cooperation.

[← Back](#)

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