



2024/3006

3.12.2024

COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2024/3006

of 2 December 2024

in support of SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in South-East Europe reducing the threat of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on European Union, and in particular Articles 28(1) and 31(1) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,

Whereas:

- (1) On 19 November 2018, the Council adopted the EU Strategy against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition entitled 'Securing Arms, Protecting Citizens' (the 'EU SALW Strategy').
- (2) The EU SALW Strategy recalls that while significant progress has been made in recent years, especially in South East Europe, the scale of accumulation of SALW and ammunition, inadequate storage conditions, widespread illicit possession and gaps in implementation continue to limit the effectiveness of efforts to control the firearms and SALW in parts of the Western Balkans, impacting security in the region as well as in the Union.
- (3) On 10 July 2018, the Western Balkans Summit in London adopted the 'Regional Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW/firearms and their ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024' (the 'Roadmap').
- (4) The EU SALW Strategy notes that the Union will continue its support to the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) for SALW control activities and take into account regional initiatives, such as the Roadmap.
- (5) On 29 October 2024, the EU-Western Balkans Justice and Home Affairs ministerial meeting in Montenegro noted that the Roadmap would continue to 2030.
- (6) The actions provided for under this Decision will directly contribute to the implementation of the EU SALW Strategy, the EU Action Plan on Firearms Trafficking, the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime (EMPACT Firearms), the Roadmap, the Arms Trade Treaty, the United Nations (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, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and peace and security, the UN Disarmament Agenda, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda on peaceful and just societies, as well as contributing to the implementation of the Pact for the Future adopted by the UN General Assembly on 22 September 2024.
- (7) Consecutive United Nations Review Conferences reviewing the implementation of the UN Programme of Action against illicit SALW reaffirmed States' willingness to pursue international cooperation and to reinforce regional cooperation.
- (8) Under the Pact for the Future, UN Member States have committed to 'address the risks associated with illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, their parts and ammunition, or associated ammunition, including through national prevention strategies and approaches' (Action 18), and to 'strengthen our national and international efforts to combat, prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects' (Action 26).

- (9) The project supported by this Decision will deepen and complement the Union's assistance to SALW control, hitherto provided by the Union through Council Decisions in support of SEESAC's work in the region, including Council Decisions 2010/179/CFSP ⁽¹⁾, 2013/730/CFSP ⁽²⁾, (CFSP) 2016/2356 ⁽³⁾, and (CFSP) 2019/2111 ⁽⁴⁾. It will also contribute to the achievement of the Regional Implementation Plan and Roadmap goals supported by Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/2321 ⁽⁵⁾,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

1. With a view to the implementation of the EU SALW Strategy, the Union shall finance a project, the overall objective of which is to further contribute to improved security in the South-East Europe region and in the Union by combatting the threat posed by illicit small arms and light weapons and their ammunition in and from South-East Europe and Ukraine.
2. Specifically, the project will support:
 - further development of a legislative and regulatory framework on SALW, firearms, and explosives, and its harmonisation with the Union framework and standardisation in South-East Europe,
 - capacity building of customs authorities, border police and criminal police services of the Western Balkans to counter illicit trafficking and possession of firearms,
 - continuation of evidence-based policy-making on SALW control, addressing the needs of both men and women,
 - strengthening of regional cooperation, knowledge exchange and information-sharing on SALW control,
 - enhancement of capacities for Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM).

Article 2

1. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (the 'High Representative') shall be responsible for implementing this Decision.
2. The technical implementation of the project referred to in Article 1 shall be carried out by the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), where necessary in coordination with the Driver of the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) Firearms.
3. SEESAC shall perform its tasks under the responsibility of the High Representative. For that purpose, the High Representative shall enter into the necessary arrangements with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which shall act on behalf of SEESAC.

Article 3

1. The financial reference amount for the implementation of the project financed by the Union referred to in Article 1 shall be EUR 3 999 920,60.
2. The expenditure financed by the reference amount set out in paragraph 1 shall be managed in accordance with the procedures and rules applicable to the Union budget.

⁽¹⁾ Council Decision 2010/179/CFSP of 11 March 2010 in support of SEESAC arms control activities in the Western Balkans, in the framework of the EU Strategy to combat the illicit accumulation and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition (OJ L 80, 26.3.2010, p. 48).

⁽²⁾ Council Decision 2013/730/CFSP of 9 December 2013 in support of SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in South East Europe in the framework of the EU Strategy to Combat the Illicit Accumulation and Trafficking of SALW and their Ammunition (OJ L 332, 11.12.2013, p. 19).

⁽³⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/2356 of 19 December 2016 in support of SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in South-East Europe in the framework of the EU Strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition (OJ L 348, 21.12.2016, p. 60).

⁽⁴⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/2111 of 9 December 2019 in support of SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in South-East Europe reducing the threat of illicit small arms and light weapons and their ammunition (OJ L 318, 10.12.2019, p. 147).

⁽⁵⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/2321 of 25 November 2022 in support of the South-Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) for the implementation of the Regional Roadmap on combating illicit arms trafficking in the Western Balkans and in support of disarmament and arms control activities in South-East and East Europe (OJ L 307, 28.11.2022, p. 149).

3. The Commission shall supervise the proper management of the expenditure referred to in paragraph 2.
4. For that purpose, the Commission shall conclude the necessary agreement with UNDP, which shall act on behalf of SEESAC. The agreement shall stipulate that SEESAC has to ensure the visibility of the Union's contribution, appropriate to its size.
5. The Commission shall endeavour to conclude the agreement referred to in paragraph 3 as soon as possible after the entry into force of this Decision. It shall inform the Council of any difficulties in that process and of the date of conclusion of the agreement.
6. A detailed description of the project is set out in the Annex to this Decision.

Article 4

1. The High Representative shall report to the Council on the implementation of this Decision on the basis of regular quarterly reports prepared by SEESAC.
2. The Commission shall report on the financial aspects of the project referred to in Article 1.

Article 5

1. This Decision shall enter into force on the date of its adoption.
2. This Decision shall expire 36 months after the date of conclusion of the agreement referred to in Article 3(4). However, it shall expire six months after the date of its entry into force if no agreement has been concluded within that period.

Done at Brussels, 2 December 2024.

For the Council

The President

NAGY M.

ANNEX

PROJECT DOCUMENT

Description of the Action

Project in support of reducing the threat of illicit small arms and light weapons and their ammunition in South-East Europe**1. Introduction and objectives**

Significant progress has been made in recent years in South-East Europe (SEE) in respect of enhancing arms control and countering illicit arms trafficking, not least because of sustained Union support. The SEE region, however, remains an area of concern and has been identified as a priority area in the EU Strategy of 19 November 2018 against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition entitled 'Securing arms, protecting citizens' (the 'EU SALW Strategy'). Illicit firearms have a clear impact on internal and external security, by fueling organised crime and terrorist acts in the SEE region and the EU. Therefore, further strengthening the control mechanisms relating to small arms and light weapons control constitutes a significant contribution to regional, European and global peace and security.

Building on the South East Europe Regional Implementation Plan Combatting the Proliferation and Impact of SALW (revised in 2014), the authorities of the Western Balkans reinforced their commitment to addressing the remaining SALW control challenges and addressing the illicit possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW by adopting the *Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse, and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024* (the 'Roadmap') in 2018. The implementation of the Roadmap, as confirmed by the findings of a Mid-Term Review, conducted end of 2022, has been successful. The Mid-Term Review confirmed, among other, the effectiveness and the relevance of the Roadmap to all aspects of SALW control. Furthermore, it confirmed that the Roadmap conveys a strong signal of cooperation among the Western Balkans jurisdictions and with external partners, and that the coordination and cooperation has increased, showing already early signs of impact. In addition, the mid-term review also confirmed that progress towards each goal of the Roadmap is mostly on track.

Following one of the key recommendations of the Mid-Term Review, the authorities of the region expressed their agreement and commitment 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. Furthermore, at the Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs held in Skopje, on 26-27 October 2023, the EU and the Western Balkans 'reconfirmed their determination to eradicate the trafficking and proliferation of small arms and light weapons and recalled the agreement reached in May 2023, to prolong the implementation of the Roadmap for comprehensive small arms and light weapons control in the Western Balkans beyond 2024'. Additionally, according to the EU-Western Balkans Summit Declaration of 13 December 2023, 'the Roadmap, which was prolonged beyond 2024, is an internationally recognized example of good practice of regional cooperation to strengthen small arms control'.

The revised text of the Roadmap, with the implementation period extended by 2030 was consolidated in the Regional Roadmap Meeting on 10 July 2024. The Roadmap with five goals covering all functional areas of arms control envisions a Western Balkans, which is a safer region and an exporter of security, where comprehensive and sustainable mechanisms, fully harmonised with EU standards and other international standards, are in place to identify, prevent, prosecute and control the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of firearms, ammunition and explosives. The Union adopted in 2022 a Council Decision in support of the implementation of the Roadmap (Decision (CFSP) 2022/2321).

The South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), as the executive arm of the Regional Implementation Plan on Combating the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (the 'Regional Implementation Plan'), supported the development of the Roadmap. Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/1788⁽¹⁾ mandated SEESAC with the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Roadmap. Coordination among institutions, international organisations and donors under the Roadmap framework is mainly ensured through formal regional Roadmap coordination meetings focusing on taking stock of progress and information exchange, and through provision of expert and technical support to local Roadmap coordination meetings. Monitoring of implementation of the

⁽¹⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/1788 of 19 November 2018 in support of the South-Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) for the implementation of the Regional Roadmap on combating illicit arms trafficking in the Western Balkans (OJ L 293, 20.11.2018, p. 11).

Roadmap is ensured through the development of biannual monitoring and evaluation reports documenting progress, challenges and needs in that implementation based on the commonly-agreed Key Performance Indicators. In addition, SEESAC holds the secretariat role of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) set up to support the implementation of the Roadmap. SEESAC is working closely with the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Commission (DG HOME, DG NEAR), Europol, the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), the EU Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), Interpol, NATO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and other relevant donors and international organisations that support disarmament and arms control activities in SEE.

The overall objective of this action is to further contribute to improved security in the SEE region and in the EU by combatting the threat posed by illicit SALW and their ammunition in and from SEE, and Ukraine. Its implementation will deepen and complement the Union assistance on SALW control provided through recent Council Decisions 2010/179/CFSP, 2013/730/CFSP⁽²⁾, (CFSP) 2016/2356, (CFSP) 2018/1788, (CFSP) 2019/2111 and (CFSP) 2024/381⁽³⁾ amending Decision (CFSP) 2019/2111 (which expires on 31 December 2024). It will also contribute to the achievement of the Regional Implementation Plan and Roadmap goals supported by Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/2321.

The action will contribute to strengthened regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and information-sharing on SALW control; further support the development of a legislative and regulatory framework on SALW, firearms, and explosives, and its harmonisation with the Union framework and standardisation in SEE; continue support to evidence-based policymaking on SALW control addressing the needs of both men and women; build the capacity of customs authorities, border police and criminal police services of the Western Balkans to counter illicit trafficking and possession of firearms and improve capacity for physical security and stockpile management (PSSM) through infrastructure security upgrades, surplus reduction, and training.

The project will more broadly contribute to European and global peace and security and, at the same time, it will enhance regional stability by working within the framework of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and in partnership with other relevant international partners and initiatives.

The action will directly contribute to the implementation of 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 (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, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and peace and security, and the UN Disarmament Agenda, and will specifically enhance regional cooperation in combating the threat posed by the spread of SALW and their ammunition. The project results will also directly contribute to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda on peaceful and just societies, in particular targets 16.1 (significantly reduce all forms of violence and death rate everywhere) and 16.4 (significantly reduce illicit arms flows), and Goal 5 on gender equality.

Specifically, the project will:

- contribute to strengthened regional cooperation, knowledge exchange and information-sharing on SALW control,
- support the capacity building of customs authorities, border police and criminal police services of the Western Balkans for countering illicit trafficking and possession of firearms,
- support further enhancement of capacities for PSSM.

⁽²⁾ Council Decision 2013/730/CFSP of 9 December 2013 in support of SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in South East Europe in the framework of the EU Strategy to Combat the Illicit Accumulation and Trafficking of SALW and their Ammunition (OJ L 332, 11.12.2013, p. 19).

⁽³⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/381 of 22 January 2024 amending Decision (CFSP) 2019/2111 in support of SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in South-East Europe reducing the threat of illicit small arms and light weapons and their ammunition (OJ L, 2024/381, 23.1.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2024/381/oj>).

2. Selection of implementing agency and coordination with other relevant funding initiatives

SEESAC is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the RCC, and as such is the focal point for SALW-related activities in SEE. As the executive arm of the Regional Implementation Plan, it has been working since 2002 with stakeholders in SEE on implementing a holistic approach to SALW control through the execution of a wide spectrum of activities including: the facilitation of strategic and operational regional cooperation; supporting policy development and capacity enhancement for institutions; awareness-raising and SALW collection campaigns; stockpile management, surplus reduction, improved marking and tracing capabilities; and improved arms export control. Consequently, 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 SEE region, ensuring national and regional ownership and the long-term sustainability of its actions and establishing itself as the primary regional authority in the field of SALW control.

SEESAC maintains bilateral and multilateral channels of communication with all relevant actors and organisations. In that regard, it continues to serve as the Secretariat of the Regional Steering Group for SALW (RSG). In addition, SEESAC has also been appointed as the Secretariat of the MPTF. SEESAC is also part of the SALW/MA Coordination Meetings, an informal coordination mechanism on SALW control activities that operates between NATO, the Union, OSCE, United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and SEESAC. SEESAC regularly contributes to relevant regional forums such as the EU-Western Balkans meetings of ministers of Justice and Home Affairs, the NATO structural information exchange process on SALW, and the South-Eastern Europe defense ministerial ('SEDM') process. In addition, SEESAC continues to maintain a wide network of formal and informal partnerships with organisations such as RACVIAC (Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre) – Centre for Security Cooperation and the OSCE's Forum for Security Cooperation. Regular coordination meetings as well as information exchange take place with other UN agencies, such as UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) and UNODA, through the UN Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA) as well as other formats. SEESAC therefore serves as a regional hub and focal point for a wide spectrum of issues related to security sector reform, with a particular focus on SALW control and stockpile management. SEESAC maintains close contact with and provides support to relevant Union actors, primarily DG NEAR, DG HOME, Europol, Interpol and Frontex, as well as EU-led initiatives such as EMPACT Firearms, and the European Firearm Experts (EFE) Group. This enables a more effective outreach to the SEE counterparts.

Based in Belgrade, SEESAC currently operates throughout SEE, with activities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo (*), the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia as well as limited support to Ukraine. In the past, it also operated in Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania. Regional ownership is ensured through the RCC as well as through the RSG, where representatives of all countries in SEE provide strategic guidance, initiatives and requests for support.

SEESAC has pioneered an approach based on tackling shared problems through regional initiatives, which has yielded impressive results in SEE, 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.

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. Its SALW expertise and in-depth knowledge of regional affairs and relevant stakeholders make SEESAC the most suitable implementing partner for this particular action.

3. Project description

The new phase of the project will build upon the basis of the achievements under Council Decisions 2004/791/CFSP (*), 2010/179/CFSP, 2013/730/CFSP, (CFSP) 2016/2356, (CFSP) 2018/1788, (CFSP) 2019/2111 and (CFSP) 2024/381 of 22 January 2024 amending Decision (CFSP) 2019/2111 and in complementarity with the ongoing Council Decision (CFSP)

(*) 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.

(*) Council Decision 2004/791/CFSP of 22 November 2004 extending and amending Decision 2002/842/CFSP implementing Joint Action 2002/589/CFSP with a view to a European Union's contribution to combating the destabilising accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons in South East Europe (OJ L 348, 24.11.2004, p. 46).

2022/2321 and Regional IPA project in Support of 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 Commission. It will focus on three main areas, maintaining the holistic approach to tackling the threat of SALW in the SEE region.

The three areas address the strategic and policy level as well as the operational aspects, thus directly assisting all levels of SALW control with a focus on strengthening regional cooperation, knowledge exchange and information-sharing; capacity building of customs authorities, border police, and criminal police services of the Western Balkans in countering illicit trafficking and possession of firearms; and improvement of capacities for PSSM through infrastructure security upgrades, surplus reduction and training.

In particular, the project will result in:

- strengthened regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and information-sharing on arms control,
- enhanced capacities of customs authorities, border police, and criminal police services of the Western Balkans in countering illicit trafficking and possession of firearms,
- improved capacities for PSSM through infrastructure security upgrades, surplus reduction, and training.

The project's strategy is grounded in SEESAC's unique approach of fostering confidence and cooperation in the SEE region as a prerequisite for achieving concrete and measurable transformational change. In particular, at the regional level, different cooperation processes facilitated by SEESAC, involving both policymakers and operational-level practitioners, have proven essential in ensuring an enabling and competitive environment for knowledge transfer, expertise exchange, and information-sharing. This has served not only to increase the capacities in the SEE region but, more importantly, to build confidence and establish direct cooperation among institutions and individual experts, which, amongst other factors, enabled the development of the Roadmap. In addition, the regional cooperation approach has made the SEE region more transparent and efficient in its efforts to control the arms trade, resulting in the SEE countries being among the most transparent globally in their reporting on arms transfers. Therefore, the project will continue to foster regional cooperation as the essential enabling element for measurable results.

The project's geographic scope is SEE, with direct project beneficiaries being the relevant authorities in Albania, BiH, Montenegro, Serbia, Moldova, North Macedonia and Kosovo. In addition, the project will seek to continue supporting Ukraine, through its engagement in transferring knowledge and experience gained and best practices developed in the Western Balkans.

3.1. Facilitation of regional cooperation and support for evidence-based policymaking on SALW control, thus further contributing to the reduction of the threat of illicit proliferation of SALW

Objective

The first component aims to further contribute to strengthening capacities to design and implement evidence-based SALW control policies and standardisation of approaches through regional cooperation at the strategic and operational levels of SALW Commissions and the South-East Europe Firearms Experts Network (SEEFEN) which represent the backbone of the regional approach to SALW control in South-East Europe. Furthermore, information exchange and knowledge sharing, further capacity development for data collection and analysis, harmonisation and standardisation of SALW legislative and regulatory frameworks, and the integration of gender perspective into SALW control policies will be supported. This, in turn, will contribute to achieving Roadmap Goals 1, 2 and 3.

Description

Building upon the successful approach of facilitating networking at regional level, this component will continue to facilitate regional cooperation between SALW Commissions through regular regional meetings, information exchange and work on collecting data and increasing capacity for evidence-based policymaking. Transparency of arms transfers will also be increased through the partial integration of the regional information exchange process on arms transfers into the SALW Commission cooperation process, as well as support for continuing transparency of arms transfers in SEE. Finally, this

component will provide technical support through targeted and on-demand policy-relevant research and briefs for policymakers.

Additionally, considering the risk of illicit trafficking of firearms towards the Union, as well as the use of firearms in organised crime and terrorist incidents, the development of robust information-gathering and exchange systems and mechanisms is an essential element in efforts to combat this threat. Through its longstanding work in the SEE region, and especially through the successful implementation of Council Decisions 2013/730/CFSP, (CFSP) 2016/2356, (CFSP) 2018/1788, (CFSP) 2019/2111 and (CFSP) 2024/381 of 22 January 2024 amending Decision (CFSP) 2019/2111, including the establishment and facilitation of SEEFEN, SEESAC has been at the forefront of such efforts, acting as a convener of cooperation processes while working to increase the capacity of law enforcement agencies for marking, tracing and record-keeping, including through technical assistance and support for the establishment and enhancement of record-keeping systems. As such, this component will build upon the basis established in the previous period by further strengthening SEEFEN, while at the same time using it as a platform for increased cooperation among law enforcement agencies in SEE and beyond to combat illicit trafficking of SALW and their ammunition. All activities of SEEFEN will be closely coordinated with and contribute to the efforts of Europol, EMPACT, EFE, DG Migration and Home Affairs, Interpol, Eurojust and Frontex, and other relevant actors.

Lastly, the component will address the urgent need for a tighter legislative and regulatory framework on SALW and firearms control in the Western Balkans to effectively regulate arms control and facilitate the response to relevant threats. This will consequently enable the compatibility of laws and procedures on arms control in the Western Balkans and the standardisation of SALW and firearms control procedures and practices. Such standardisation would allow for the removal of obstacles preventing law enforcement agencies and the judiciary from cooperating directly, exchanging information, and conducting joint or parallel investigations. It will do so, building upon the support provided through the implementation of Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/1788, by developing tailor-made national and regional thematic workshops, updating the regional arms-law compendium and providing advisory support on demand.

Specifically, the project envisages the facilitation of regional cooperation and support of evidence-based policymaking in SALW control through:

- regional meetings of SALW Commissions (twice per year) in SEE focusing on information exchange and knowledge-sharing on, and standardisation of, arms control policies,
- regional meetings of SEEFEN (once per year) focusing on operational information exchange and cross-border cooperation in fighting illicit trafficking of firearms,
- provision of on-demand technical advice and support to SALW Commissions and SEEFEN in order to enhance policy development, design, adoption and implementation,
- on-demand support for harmonisation of arms control legislation for relevant amendments regarding EU legislation on arms control and standardisation throughout the SEE region,
- support for SALW data collection and analysis,
- maintenance of the Armed Violence Monitoring Platform and regular dissemination of a SEE Armed Violence Monitor enabling capture of trends,
- further integration of gender perspective in SALW control policymaking,
- maintenance of the online information exchange platform and its enhancement through the development of policy-relevant on-demand knowledge products.

Project results/implementation indicators:

- organisation of up to six regional meetings of SALW Commissions,

- organisation of up to three regional meetings of SEEFEN (twice yearly) focusing on networking and information exchange between law enforcement firearms experts,
- enhancing capacities of SALW Commissions and SEEFEN members through the provision of technical and advisory support,
- enabling information exchange, knowledge transfer and standardisation of approaches,
- organisation of up to ten thematic workshops for the beneficiaries supporting harmonisation of legislation with the *acquis* and standardisation within the SEE region,
- provision of expertise, advisory and technical support for legislative and policy updates with the aim of harmonisation with the EU regulatory framework and standards,
- publication of monthly monitors on armed violence trends throughout the SEE region,
- ensuring data collection, analysis and dissemination from authorities,
- integration of gender perspective in SALW policymaking.

3.2. Further support to capacity building of law enforcement and border authorities in preventing and countering illicit arms and explosives trafficking

Objective

The second component aims to ensure the required support to counter illicit trafficking of SALW through improved processes, equipment, and training of targeted law enforcement institutions. This is in line with Goal 3 of the Roadmap, which calls for a significant reduction of illicit flows of firearms, ammunition, and explosives.

Description

This component will support the capacity building of the regional authorities to perform both preventive and repressive activities necessary to successfully identify, thwart, and counter-trafficking of firearms, ammunition, and explosives from and through their jurisdiction. The European Agenda on Security identified the fight against trafficking in firearms as one of its priority actions. It called for a review of the legal framework and reinforcement of the fight against firearms trafficking. Sources of illicit firearms and explosives trafficking are diverse, and controls at the external border and police and customs cooperation remain of paramount importance, as outlined in the EU SALW Strategy. At the SEE regional level, the Union and its Member States will assist in strengthening law enforcement capabilities to identify, disrupt, and prevent trafficking networks and prevent firearms from reaching terrorists and criminals via the illicit market, inter alia by blocking the illicit financing and transport of arms and enhancing the role of border and criminal police as well as customs authorities. Due to the cross-border nature of arms trafficking, it is particularly important to provide support to neighboring countries.

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. A preliminary assessment of the capacities of customs services of the jurisdictions is being performed under Decision (CFSP) 2022/2321, and the focus is primarily on the legal framework in place and the administrative and technical capacities of the customs authorities to counter illicit trafficking of firearms. The preliminary findings of the assessment show in particular the lack of targeted training on detection of firearms at borders and SOPs in place focusing on SALW control. Additionally, further support is needed for the capacity development of border and criminal police services, building on the activities already implemented under the Decisions (CFSP) 2019/2111 and (CFSP) 2024/381 amending Decision (CFSP) 2019/2111 and based on Recommendations from Needs Assessment of these two services performed under Decision (CFSP) 2018/1788.

The assistance within this component will focus on the development of Standard Operating Procedures and thematic trainings at the level of jurisdictions for customs authorities and also thematic trainings and procurement of equipment for border and criminal police services. Additionally, regional workshops will continue to take place. The proposed activities will complement the work of SEEFEN and be closely coordinated with other ongoing Union-supported actions in SEE, primarily the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime and specifically the operational action plans of EMPACT Firearms, as well as the activities of Europol, Frontex and Interpol.

It will do so through:

- the development of SOPs and provision of training for border management in countering illicit arms trafficking in support of customs authorities in Albania, BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and the Republic of North Macedonia,
- the provision of equipment and training for border and criminal police in countering illicit arms trafficking in support of border and criminal police authorities in Albania, BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and the Republic of North Macedonia.

Project results/implementation indicators:

- development of up to six SOPs per customs service,
- organisation of up to six thematic trainings per customs service,
- organisation of up to two regional workshops for border and customs services,
- provision of equipment for border police, and training for usage of equipment,
- organisation of up to six thematic trainings for border service per jurisdiction,
- provision of equipment for criminal police, and training for usage of equipment,
- organisation of up to six thematic trainings for criminal police per jurisdiction,
- organisation of up to two regional workshops for criminal police.

3.3. *Improvement of capacities for physical security and stockpile management (PSSM) through infrastructure security upgrades, surplus reduction and training*

Objective

To reduce the risk of proliferation through the enhancement of weapons and ammunition stockpile security and reducing surplus stocks of SALW.

Description

The aim of the third component is to support authorities of the interior and police authorities to further improve security infrastructure and standard operating procedures for priority storage locations, which still pose a significant risk of theft and illegal proliferation of SALW and their ammunition. This component is building on Decision (CFSP) 2016/2356, (CFSP) 2019/2111 and (CFSP) 2024/381 amending Decision (CFSP) 2019/2111 and is in line with Goal 7 of the Roadmap aimed at a significant decrease of the risk of proliferation and diversion of firearms, ammunition and explosives, and Goal 6 aimed at a systematic decrease of surplus and destruction of seized SALW and ammunition. SEESAC has successfully been using a two-pronged approach of: (1) improving the security of storage locations; and (2) building the capacity of the personnel tasked with managing stockpiles, significantly increasing security provisions and reducing the risk of the unwanted proliferation of stockpiles of SALW and their ammunition. In line with a comprehensive approach to PSSM of SALW and their ammunition, SEESAC expanded this approach by merging it with the reduction of surpluses, further reducing proliferation risks.

The project will continue to improve the security of weapons and ammunition storage in SEE by providing further specific technical and infrastructural assistance in line with international best practices and standards. While security in military storage locations has been significantly increased under Council Decision 2013/730/CFSP, SEESAC has identified stockpiles

held by police and authorities of the interior as an area of concern due to the lack of capacity for safeguarding, inadequate record-keeping and stockpile management capabilities, and more complex systems which include formation weapons as well as confiscated firearms. Support will be provided for enhanced security of police/authority of the interior SALW evidence rooms through infrastructure upgrades. Evidence rooms located in local police stations are a priority, as a potential hazard for diversion exists but also in terms of public safety where several hazardous materials are kept together under poor storage conditions. Support will also be provided for reduction of surplus or confiscated SALW and ammunition thus further decreasing the risk of their illicit proliferation.

Main activities envisaged:

- support for enhanced security of police/authority of interior SALW evidence rooms through infrastructure upgrades,
- support for the destruction of surplus and/or confiscated SALW,
- provision of support for stockpile management and inspection systems;

Project results/implementation indicators:

- security of up to 6 evidence rooms increased,
- a total of up to 5 000 pieces of conventional weapons destroyed,
- up to three thematic workshops provided.

4. Beneficiaries

The direct beneficiaries of the project will be the institutions responsible for SALW control in SEE. The authorities of the interior, police services, customs authorities, border guards, criminal investigators and prosecutors of the Republic of Albania, BiH, Kosovo, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia and the Republic of North Macedonia will benefit from information exchange and knowledge-sharing leading to standardisation through regional cooperation, capacity development, improved procedures and provision of targeted specialised equipment necessary for policy, operational and technical advancements in SALW control. Finally, SALW Commissions and other institutions responsible for the control of SALW in SEE will benefit from training and information-sharing as well as regional cooperation.

The proposed activities are fully in line with the national priorities on SALW control and the Roadmap and have been endorsed by the relevant national SALW control authorities, demonstrating their buy-in and commitment to the achievement of project results.

The general population of the countries in South-East and East Europe and the Union, at risk from the widespread proliferation of SALW, will benefit from this project as the risk decreases.

5. Union visibility

SEESAC shall take all appropriate measures to publicise the fact that the action has been funded by the Union. Such measures will be carried out in accordance with the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement between the European Union and the United Nations⁽⁵⁾.

SEESAC will thus ensure the visibility of the Union's contribution with appropriate branding and publicity, highlighting the role of the Union, ensuring the transparency of its actions and raising awareness of the reasons for the project as well as Union support for the project and the results of this support. Material produced by the project will prominently display the EU flag in accordance with Union guidelines for the accurate use and reproduction of the flag.

Given that planned activities vary greatly in scope and character, a range of promotional tools will be used, including: traditional media; websites; social media; and informational and promotional materials including infographics, leaflets, newsletters, press releases and others, as appropriate. Publications, public events, campaigns, equipment and construction works procured under the project will be branded accordingly. To further amplify the impact by raising awareness among

⁽⁵⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/procedures-beneficiary-countries-and-partners/fafa-united-nations_en.

various national governments and the public, the international community and local and international media, each of the project target groups will be addressed using the appropriate language. Particular focus will be placed on new media and online presence.

6. Duration

Based on the experience of implementing Decisions 2013/730/CFSP, (CFSP) 2016/2356 and (CFSP) 2018/1788, (CFSP) 2019/2111 and (CFSP) 2024/381 amending Decision (CFSP) 2019/2111 and taking into consideration the regional scope of the project, the number of beneficiaries, and the number and complexity of planned activities, the timeframe for implementation is 36 months.

7. General set-up

The technical implementation of this action has been entrusted to UNDP, acting on behalf of SEESAC, the regional initiative working under the mandate of UNDP and the RCC, successor to the Stability Pact for South-East Europe. SEESAC is the executive arm of the Regional Implementation Plan and, as such, acts as a focal point for all SALW-related issues in the SEE region, including facilitating coordination of the implementation of the Roadmap.

UNDP, acting on behalf of SEESAC, will have the overall responsibility for the implementation of project activities and accountability for project implementation. The project duration is three years (36 months).

The project shall be implemented by the SEESAC project office located in Belgrade.

There are three types of costs related to the management and administration of the project that have been defined in the budget:

- project management costs,
- administration costs, and
- project evaluation 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.

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 the terms and conditions of the Action.
- Manage vouchers 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.

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.

8. Partners

SEESAC will directly implement the action in close cooperation with SALW Commissions as well as with the authorities of the interior and police services of Albania, BiH, Kosovo, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia and the Republic of North Macedonia, and relevant institutions in Ukraine. Other institutions will be closely involved in line with the established multi-stakeholder holistic approach to SALW control.