



**UNIVERSITY "UNION-NIKOLA TESLA", BELGRADE**  
**Faculty of Law, Security and Management "Constantine the Great", Nis**

# **SECURITY CHALLENGES OF MODERN SOCIETY**

**Dilemmas and implications**

**Editor**  
**Dejan Dašić**

UNIVERSITY „UNION-NIKOLA TESLA“, BELGRADE  
Faculty of Law, Security and Management "Constantine the Great", Nis

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Thematic International Monograph

Monograph editor  
Prof. dr Dejan Dašić

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## WEAPONS TRADE AS A SECURITY CHALLENGE OF MODERN SOCIETY

Ratomir Antonović<sup>1</sup>, Georgi Manolov<sup>2</sup>

**Key Words:** weapons, trade, crime, security.

**Abstract:** Security problems nowadays are mainly referred to security challenges related to certain social, political and criminological phenomena. Security has been disrupted globally by many events such as migrant processes, political crises, pandemics of infectious diseases, but disrupted security is constantly badly affected by the large number of illegal weapons that are uncontrolled in free circulation on black illegal markets. Weapons circulating in illegal flows commit the largest number of crimes in the world, commit terrorist acts and such weapons pose the greatest threat to the security, both of individuals and global level. Arms control, proper and up-to-date arms registration and monitoring of citizens' weapons must be imperative for every national state in the world. Each copy of the weapon must be registered with the competent authority, as well as information on the owners of the weapon. Thanks to these up-to-date databases, it is easier to find potential perpetrators of crimes, although most committed criminal acts worldwide are carried out with weapons from illegal sources.

### Introduction

According to the provisions of the Law on Weapons and Ammunition<sup>3</sup>, a weapon is defined as a hand-held device made or adapted so that under the pressure of air, gunpowder or other gases or other propellants it can eject grain, shot or other projectiles, or disperse gas or liquid and other devices intended for self-defense, attack, hunting and sports. The legislator does not consider weapons for the humane killing of animals, tools and imitations of weapons that do not use ammunition. According to the provisions of the Law,

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<sup>3</sup> "Official Gazette of RS" No. 20/2015, 10/2019 and 20/2020.

firearms are weapons that, under the pressure of gunpowder gases, eject a projectile from a barrel. Firearms include machine gun, submachine gun, automatic rifle, submachine gun, pistol, revolver, shotgun rifle (single-shot, repeating and semi-automatic), smoothbore rifle (single-shot, double-shot, repeating and semi-automatic), and combined rifle uncoated barrels), pistols, rifles and revolvers with edge firing (small arms).

The legislator determines the existence of weapons with a short barrel, which does not exceed 30 cm, and the total length does not exceed 60 cm. The long pipe exceeds 30 cm, and the total length exceeds 60 cm. According to the legal definition, an automatic firearm is a weapon that is automatically loaded after a bullet is fired, and one press of the trigger fires at least two projectiles one after the other without reloading manually. A semi-automatic weapon is a weapon that automatically reloads after each bullet fired, and only one projectile is fired by pressing the trigger. A rehearsing firearm is a weapon in which, after firing a projectile by hand, a bullet from the magazine must be inserted into the barrel by rehearsing. Single-shot and double-barreled weapons have no ammunition depots or frames.

Air weapons are characterized by the firing of projectiles by compression under air pressure. Tendon weapons include crossbows, bows, slingshots, underwater rifles and similar weapons. The firing of the projectile is due to the pressure of the tendon or spring. Convertible weapons are weapons that only look like firearms and which, according to their construction and the material from which they are made, can be used with a modification for firing live ammunition.

The legislator also includes electric shockers and stun guns, which he defines as hand-held devices that temporarily disable with the help of high voltage. Gas sprays also have the character of weapons that disperse irritating chemical compounds in acceptable units according to international standards.

The legislator include boxers, daggers, sabers, daggers, bayonets and other means whose purpose is to serve during an attack. Weapons of personal security include pistols, revolvers, gas sprays and stun guns. Sports weapons include firearms, air weapons, cold steel weapons, stringed weapons and are used for shooting and martial arts. An incapacitated weapon is a weapon that has been permanently modified so that a projectile cannot be fired from it.



## Illegal arms trade

The arms trade, which does not take place according to the mentioned principles of legality, is considered illegal trade. Weapons are mostly procured from illegal sources if some illegal action is to be performed on them, because weapons from illegal sources do not have a registration number, so it is difficult to trace them. When weapons are procured outside legal procedures, a criminal offense is committed under Article 348 of the Criminal Code of Serbia “Official Gazette of the RS” No. 85/2005, 88/2005, 107/2005, 72/2009, 111/2009, 121/2009, 121/2012, 104/2013, 108/2014, 94/2016 and 35/2019), for which a prison sentence of six months to five years is threatened for the basic form of a criminal offense. The act is created during the unauthorized production, modification, sale, acquisition, exchange of firearms, convertible and disabled weapons, their parts and explosive devices.

A more serious form of this criminal offense occurs during the manufacture, processing, sale, purchase and exchange of weapons from the "A" category of firearms. For this form of crime, imprisonment ranging from one to eight years is threatened, alternatively with a fine. The more serious form referred to in paragraph three of this Article of the Criminal Code arises if the subject of the criminal offense is a larger quantity of weapons and a prison sentence ranging from two to twelve years is envisaged for it. The same punishment will be imposed on a person who carries a weapon without authorization (Manolov, 2019). Weapons or parts of weapons will be confiscated from the person with whom they are found without authorization.

The illicit trade in weapons and explosives is widespread in the Balkans. The reason for this fact should be sought in the frequent acts of war, which were present in this region, as well as the high crime rate and the activities of organized criminal groups. On the other hand, the love of the Balkan people for weapons is a special cult, which is associated with the turbulent past of the people in the area and the need for weapons. When we talk about gray arms markets, we do not mean only firearms, but also parts of firearms, explosives and these means that were illegally procured, made, sold or held. Also, ammunition is traded in these markets, which is also procured, held and sold without authorization (Spalević, 2013, p. 147).

In the consistent fight against organized crime and terrorism, there is a need for effective and coordinated measures and activities to combat illegal production, procurement, possession, trade and smuggling of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, as well as all other abuses and negative phenomena. It is a very complex process that requires continuous cooperation of all ministries and other state administration bodies and civil society in order to achieve maximum performance, as well as cooperation at the international level. In order to minimize the illegal trade in weapons, it is necessary to identify, prevent, prosecute and punish illicit possession, misuse and trafficking of weapons, as well as ammunition and explosive devices (Mazinjanin, 2016, pp. 22-24).

Gathering accurate, up-to-date and comprehensive information on all aspects of arms control is already a priority for all developed countries fighting the illegal trade in firearms. The regional survey on small arms and light weapons conducted in 2018 found that the practice of data collection in institutions is inconsistent and standardized, and that it is often not possible to obtain the required level of detail, especially when it comes to classifying data by age gender and semi-firearm holders. In many cases, coordination of institutions has not been established, which prevents the development of a sectoral review and adequate evidence-based policies. Achieving the sub-goals within this goal will enable the development of fact-based policies that provide a valid basis for an effective and efficient response to the danger of small arms and light weapons, ie firearms.

In addition, better data collection, sharing and analysis will allow relevant assessment analyzes to be overflowed into knowledge (Antonović, Marčetić, 2022). It will also provide risk management in combating the illicit trade and misuse of firearms, which will contribute to intelligence-based policing. In order to create gender-responsive policies, special attention will be paid to collecting data disaggregated by gender and age.

The exchange of operational and strategic criminal intelligence data will contribute to the systematic prevention and mitigation of threats posed by firearms at the national, regional and international levels. Systematic data collection and analysis to identify potential threats, risks, new issues and opportunities will lead to new preparation and integration of measures to mitigate and use relevant data and information in the policy-making process.



The arms trade is especially represented over the Internet. According to the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Srpska, during 2021, 5,696 pieces of illegal weapons were seized: 306 long barrels, 293 short barrels, 728 mines and explosives and 11,114 pieces of ammunition 179. Recently, the so-called street sales of weapons are increasingly being replaced by internet sales, sales through advertisements, where weapons of dubious origin are openly offered for relatively small sums of money.

Observed from the aspect of the connection between the phenomenon of illegal trade in firearms, parts of firearms, ammunition and explosive devices with the crime of money laundering, their connection should be sought in illegal property gain, which occurs only in trade in firearms, ammunition and explosive devices. According to the available information, the illegal income from this form of illicit trade is extremely high, and the persons who organize it or participate in it in any way, collect a large income. Given the nature of the income generated in this way, it has the character of illegal property gain, because it was acquired through incriminated actions. What poses a special risk in this form of the gray economy is the blatant connection between the arms trade and money laundering with terrorism and the financing of terrorist activities (Antonović, 2021, pp. 116-119).

### **Proceedings with illegal weapons**

In the Republic of Serbia, the Strategy for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2010-2015 was adopted in 2010. year ("Official Gazette of RS" No. 36/2010). According to the provisions of this Strategy, small arms and light weapons are considered to be any hand-held deadly weapon that ejects, launches, is designed to eject or launch, or can be modified to eject or launch missiles, under the pressure of explosives, except old weapons. In a broader sense, small arms are intended for personal use and include, but are not limited to, pistols, revolvers, rifles, submachine guns, and light machine guns. Light weapons are those, as a rule, used by teams of 2-3 people, and include, among other things, heavy machine guns, hand-held rocket launchers, anti-aircraft systems and mortars up to 100 mm caliber.

The mentioned Strategy states the indisputable fact that illegal production, possession, traffic and trade in weapons actually accelerate related phenomena, such as organized crime, violent behavior and terrorism, which all have the ultimate consequence of creating insecurity for citizens, disrupting sustainable economic development, creating a breeding ground for abuse, developing crime, illicit use of weapons and endangering the lives and bodies of others.

Weapons are supplied from illegal sources to forces that provoke internal conflicts and the collapse of states. They restrict access to natural resources to certain groups and control the most important black market - the narcotics market. Conflicts arising on these grounds are on the thin line between conflicts between armed groups without military discipline and criminal activities (Kotarlić et al. 2015, p. 252). That is, they are more reminiscent of the conflicts of informal bearers of power of underground illegal channels of trafficking in illicit drugs, for personal dominance in illicit black markets.

In the Republic of Serbia, there was a sudden accumulation of weapons during the period of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the war on the territory of today's Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Given that there has been a reduction in the amount of military equipment and weapons, they have found their way into the citizenry, through legal and illegal offers on the market.

According to the Strategy from 2010, and according to the performed analyzes, in 2008 there were 1,172,468 weapons in the possession of citizens in the Republic of Serbia. In the period from 2005 to 2009, 6,191 criminal offenses were committed with the use of firearms. In the same period, 6,284 pieces of illegal weapons were confiscated from citizens, and 50,541 pieces of state-owned weapons were destroyed.

When it comes to combating the illegal trade in weapons, it is necessary to refer to international acts, which have served as a legal substratum for our country. The European Union has adopted a number of instruments and strategies, such as the Joint EU Contribution to Combating the Illicit Collection and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and Ammunition, adopted in 1998; 2004 EU Common Position on Arms Mediation; The 2005 EU Strategy to Combat the Illicit Collection and Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and Ammunition and the European Commission's 2005





## Plan to Support the Control of the Collection and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and Ammunition in the Western Balkans.

The implementation of the EU Code has proven to be an advanced and effective regime for the control of the collection and trade of small arms and light weapons. The European Union proclaimed the EU Code and demanded from the members, but also from the countries that join the European Union, to apply it in practice. This is especially important for the countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, where there were conflicts in the previous period, and they have significant quantities of small arms and light weapons, so control of arms collection and trafficking is very important from a security point of view (Kotarlić et al. 2015, p. 252).

The basic postulates in the legislation of the Republic of Serbia in the field of dealing with and trade in illegal weapons are promoted by the 2010 Strategy. They are defined as goals of a specific nature. There are a total of eight: 1) Creating conditions for effective implementation of national legislation related to production, trade, marking and stamping, control of exports and imports, fulfillment of conditions for possession and registration procedures of weapons; 2) Informing the public about the negative consequences of abuse and educating citizens and legal entities on the risks of weapons, as well as the legal regulations on the possession and domestic and foreign trade of weapons; 3) Creating conditions for safe storage of small arms and light weapons; 4) Planning and implementation of long-term and regular actions of control of small arms and light weapons for the purpose of their collection (legalization and handover) or deprivation and destruction; 5) Identification of surplus stocks of small arms and light weapons in the possession of the state and creation of material and financial conditions for its safe disposal; 6) Strengthening cooperation at the national and international level, in accordance with existing international documents; 7) Engaging civil society in support of the Strategy for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons; and 8) Ensuring compliance with and application of accepted or confirmed international documents related to small arms and light weapons and harmonization of domestic regulations with international and UN, OSCE and EU documents.

In 2020, the European Union adopted the EU Action Plan for Combating Illicit Trafficking in Firearms for the period 2020-2025. The adoption of this act was preceded by an extensive action by Europol and the French and Dutch police in the summer of 2020, which cut off the work of a

Dutch criminal group that traded in illegal weapons. Also, the riots that took place in the summer of 2020 in France, pointed out to the police a large number of weapons of non-origin that were in the hands of the protesters. At the same time, in a police operation in Spain, a large network of firearms dealers was disbanded, and on that occasion, 730 weapons were seized throughout Spain and 21 people were arrested. These are all examples of the real danger posed by illegal firearms. Extreme activists are increasingly in the spotlight due to the accumulation of weapons. This shows how firearms can increase the risk of serious and organized crime, including terrorism. It is estimated that in the EU in 2017, 35 million illegal firearms (56% of the estimated total number of firearms) were owned by civilians. According to these estimates, the number of illegal firearms exceeds the amount of legally owned firearms in twelve EU member states.

The EU Action Plan is based on Europol's 2017 Threat Assessment of Serious Organized Crime, which cites the availability of firearms in many EU member states as one of the serious security risks. "Changes in the way, routes and geographical areas affected by some criminal activities may indicate some longer-term events and changes that affect crime." The illicit trafficking, distribution and use of firearms "remains a major threat". In particular, "the sale of disabled, re-trained and refurbished firearms has increased," according to Europol estimates. Also, the already mentioned problem of selling weapons over the Internet is pointed out, as well as individualization in that criminal activity, in the sense that the arms trade is no longer a specialty of organized criminal groups, but also individuals.

According to Europol data, in the period 2009-2018, 23 incidents were identified in which there was a mass shooting in a public space in Europe, where 341 people were killed. During 2015, Europol recorded 57 terrorist incidents involving the use of firearms. During 2017, firearms were used in 41% of all terrorist attacks, which was a slight increase compared to 2016 (38%). Recent Eurojust cases confirm that illegal firearms have been used on several occasions in terrorist attacks and that networks of traffickers have interacted with individual terrorists or terrorist organizations. Coordination of cross-border investigations by Eurojust in several cases led to the seizure of illegal firearms.

The Western Balkans have been identified as the area with the largest number of illegal weapons in the EU, and it is therefore necessary to raise the flow of information and intelligence between the EU and the Western



Balkans to a higher level. Weapons originating from the Western Balkans are most often used in terrorist acts committed in Europe. Mostly small arms and assault rifles arrive on the European market through the Western Balkans, and their prices are drastically lower than the price of weapons coming from other illegal sources.

In order to combat the phenomenon of illegal arms trade, it is necessary to raise the level of communication between EU member states. The different national concepts of the countries dealing with the illegal arms trade must not be an obstacle to dealing with this problem, but on the contrary, we should work on their synchronization and harmonization and mutual convergent. On July 24, 2019, the European Commission sent twenty reasoned opinions to the member states that did not provide reports on the full transposition of the Directive on the control of the acquisition of weapons into national legislation. In addition, in December 2017, the Commission published an evaluation of the implementation of Regulation (EU) no. 258/2012 on the import, export and transit of firearms for civilian use, which identified gaps due to uneven application. In April 2018, a recommendation was adopted calling for the strengthening of EU rules in order to increase the traceability and security of procedures for controlling the export and import of firearms and cooperation between the authorities in the fight against illicit trafficking in firearms.

Unfortunately, despite all efforts at the international and national levels, the intelligence image remains uneven due to the lack of comprehensive and comparable data on firearms seizures from across the continent (Mladenović et al. 2022). The exchange of information for intelligence and profiling purposes is hampered by restrictions imposed by national law on the exchange of information outside of specific investigations. The problem is also fueled by the lack of communication and coordination between different institutions, within countries and internationally.

Twenty EU member states and four partners from the Western Balkans have a kind of hotspot for firearms. However, hotspots are often not given adequate responsibilities (for administrative control, data collection from law enforcement, database access, monitoring, international cooperation and forensics), as well as staff recommending best practice guidelines developed by national experts. firearm experts. Also, as relevant, there is the problem of unequal incrimination of acts related to illegal weapons. This fact almost always leads to non-enforcement of laws and sanctions. This also limits the confiscation of property acquired through the crime of

illicit trafficking in firearms. Different national approaches make joint cross-border actions, such as controlled deliveries, impossible.

The countries of Southeast Europe still have a pronounced problem of synchronizing acts with the highest standards and ensuring effective control of firearms. Synchronization involves the creation of national databases, ballistic capabilities to provide conditions for stockpiles and campaigns for the voluntary surrender of weapons. For these reasons, as well as for the prevalence of many different and conflicting opinions, which shifts from the domain of law to the domain of politics, cooperation between the EU and the countries of Southeast Europe is not at an enviable level (Životić et al. 2020, p. 131).

However, the problem is not only with the countries of Southeast Europe, which have a problem with legal synchronization and the existence of political will to solve the problem of illegal weapons. This problem is also faced by EU member states, as well as countries from the immediate vicinity of the union. In these countries, the illegal modification of maneuvering and gas weapons, the conversion of intimidating weapons into firearms, is becoming more common, and new and more efficient patterns of concealing such weapons are being developed. Thanks to the application of modern technologies, much easier production of firearms has been made possible in these countries, and at the same time new and simpler mechanisms for transporting firearms and weapon parts via modern "express mail" and courier services are being developed. Which above all led to the transition from the export of traditional weapons of conflict from the Western Balkans to the import of new weapons from Western Europe to the Balkans or unmarked basic parts from the United States. Armed conflicts in the EU's eastern neighborhood could also become new sources of illicit arms exports to the EU.

### **Annual results of work in the fight against illegal weapons**

In order to obtain the exact number of illegal weapons in civilians clothes, it is necessary to consult the data related to the number of incidents with weapons that occurred in the review year. These incidents should include armed robberies and murders, and the number of weapons seized from criminal organizations should be taken as an important parameter.



The data related to the seizure of weapons are not so accessible to the public, but the Ministry of Internal Affairs announces them only after a certain period of time has passed. After the assassination of the Prime Minister, Zoran Djindjic, in March 2003, the police undertook a comprehensive action to find illegal weapons in the citizens. Voluntary surrender of weapons was started first, without any sanctions for possession of illegal weapons.

In this procedure, handing over weapons from the citizens to the police gave different results by regions in Serbia, while we were left shy about the data concerning western Serbia and Kosovo and Metohija. The effectiveness of this action was conditioned by the political moment, the degree of trust of citizens in state institutions and the police, national homogeneity or heterogeneity of the environment, the approach of the police during this action, as well as the structure of the population who fled the war-torn area in the 1990s. Therefore, it should not be surprising that there was such a large number of illegal weapons in Vojvodina, because the area of Vojvodina was mostly inhabited by immigrants from the areas where the war whirlwind raged.

The police then conducted a survey among citizens with the question "How widespread are weapons in your area?" And the results of the survey were as follows.

Seventy percent of the respondents answered that everyone they know has at least one weapon. These results were registered in eastern Serbia, and Table two clearly shows that the region surrendered the least number of weapons (only 428), which indicates that the data on the number of surrendered weapons does not show a realistic picture, and that the most armed areas are least accepted to take part in this police action.

Another question from the police survey was "Do you or a member of your family own a weapon?" Respondents from eastern Serbia again prevailed on this question, where thirty percent of them gave an affirmative answer. Also, the inhabitants of eastern Serbia expressed the lowest level of trust in the police and the action of removing illegal weapons from the possession of citizens without imposing any criminal sanctions (so-called amnesty).

Regarding the estimates related to the number of illegal weapons in the citizens of Serbia, a significant and close source should be mentioned about suicides committed with the use of firearms. Also important are the data concerning the committed crimes that included the use of weapons. All indicators clearly state that there is a positive correlation between the number of suicides and serious crimes with the number of illegal weapons in the citizenry (Kilias et. al. 2001, pp. 439-440). In climates where there is a high suicide rate with the use of firearms, there is at least one piece of firearm in almost every family.

The Republic of Serbia has a high rate of legal weapons and we are among the most armed countries in the world. In percentage terms, Serbia has registered weapons in 42 percent of households, which puts us at the very top of Europe. The high rate of armaments is more characteristic of the United States, where there is a very liberal regime for the purchase and registration of weapons. The strictest regime for the acquisition and registration of weapons is in Great Britain, so it is not surprising that only five percent of Britons legally dispose of weapons.

### **Solving the problem of illegal weapons in the EU**

Only in 2020, the European Union adopted the Action Plan to Combat Illicit Trafficking in Firearms for the period 2020-2025, which contained indicators for assessing and monitoring the effectiveness of the action plan to combat illicit trafficking in firearms, with systematic collection of data on crime and criminal law data from all law enforcement services, such as police, customs, prosecutors and courts. These indicators confirm compliance with legal solutions at the EU level and indicate the total number of seizures, crimes committed, the number of initiated criminal proceedings, convictions, the number of hotspots related to firearms, the number of seized weapons, the total number of legalized weapons, the number of disabled and destroyed weapons.

The main priority of the EU is the consistent integration of the Firearms Directive into the legislation of the member states, as well as the corresponding delegated and implemented acts. The aim is to integrate the Directive into the legislation of the EU partner countries in Southeast Europe. The EU's priority is to positively influence some new security threats, which arise from the illegal trade, possession and use of weapons, as well as illegal production. Also, strict control of the import and export of wea-



apons intended for civilian use must be introduced. This is done by checking whether the import or export violates the provisions on bans on the import or export of weapons from or to certain countries, then whether the import and export procedure is carried out in accordance with EU re-regulations, then control of gas and weapons imports for intimidation, which can easily be turned into a firearm and the like. As one of the most important measures to combat the illegal arms trade, the EU is working intensively to introduce whistleblowers in dedicated industries, which would duly report any attempted abuse or illegal actions related to weapons.

Second EU priority is to enter information into the Schengen Information System about lost, stolen weapons, as well as sold weapons that are believed to fall into the category of refurbished weapons. Also, every copy of the seized weapon must be recorded in the Schengen Information System. The EU supports initiatives that allow national authorities to search or enter data into both the Schengen Information System and Interpol's iARMS, and calls on member states to respond to Interpol's call for volunteers to test new features. The main goal is that all security-relevant information is automatically merged into a single database that will be available to those authorities to whom that information is important.

The EU will also take steps to initiate systematic and harmonized data collection on firearms seizures and publish annual statistics, as it does in drug seizure analysis. This would provide law enforcement agencies with useful information, which will, above all, help them identify new trends in illicit trafficking and form clearer risk profiles. Firearms can also be traded on dark internet markets. The Commission will, at the suggestion of the European Parliament, carry out a preparatory action for the continuous monitoring of the dark internet.

The third priority is to increase the pressure on criminal markets, which would practically complete the already identified hotspots for firearms with complete and trained personnel. The focal points should be linked to the UN Small Arms and Light Weapons Program and international monitoring instruments. For better coordination, the EU Commission will publish a reference list of focal points with clearly identified data and competencies.

In order to effectively implement this priority, it is necessary for all EU member states to ratify the UN Firearms Protocol, in order to facilitate their mutual cooperation and to prevent and suppress the illicit trade in

and traffic in firearms. All member states must work to establish criminal law standards on the illicit trafficking of firearms, as well as their illicit production. The Commission calls on Member States and Southeast European partners to improve co-operation between law enforcement (customs, police and border control officers), but also co-operation with prosecutors and forensic experts, in order to tackle the main sources and routes of illegal firearms.

Within this priority is the control of the so-called. the dark internet and offers to sell and buy weapons. In the process of monitoring illicit strata of the Internet, the EU asked Europol for support, as well as all countries, not only members, but also the countries of Southeast Europe to "patrol" the Internet and combat illicit phenomena.

The fourth priority of the EU is to strengthen relations with countries that are not members of the EU, but also those that are not territorial on the continent of Europe. This especially refers to the countries of North Africa and the Middle East, namely Tunisia, Lebanon and Jordan, with which we need to upgrade relations in the field of arms tracking and arms control. Special attention should be paid to Turkey, because it is one of the most important countries engaged in the production of gas weapons and intimidation weapons that can be easily converted into firearms.

Given the high risk of illicit firearms trafficking in Southeast Europe (considered an area involving non-EU partners from the Western Balkans, Ukraine and Moldova), the specifics of the region's geopolitical circumstances a large number and the types of national and international actors involved, and the current instability in Eastern Europe, the 2015-2019 Action Plan Evaluation Report highlighted the need for a new action plan. This was recommended by the delegates of all partners who attended the third meeting of the Joint Committee of Firearms Experts of the European Union and Southeast Europe, held in Brussels on September 24, 2018. The evaluation report also stressed the need to include Ukraine and Moldova in a broader harmonized framework of cooperation against common threats posed by illicit trafficking in firearms throughout the region. This is also a response to the Council's call for Ukraine to be involved in the relevant operational action plans of the EU's cycle of organized and serious international crime. As regards Ukraine, the Action Plan will take into account EU support for Ukraine's efforts to combat arms trafficking, ammunition and explosives, in co-operation with the OSCE and SEESAC. The EU-funded Commission supports activities in the frame-work of integrated border management and the fight against trafficking, which also goes





through the European Border Mission to help Moldova and Ukraine. Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2283 supports the ongoing work of Conflict Armament Research in Ukraine (Ristić et al. 2020, p. 59).

Regarding the Western Balkans, France and Germany supported the work on the 2018 Regional Map, which was the result of the participatory approach of the EU's Balkan partners. On that basis, the EU proposed a number of concrete measures from the mentioned roadmap, which especially concern the part of their financing. These actions, which specifically refer to Southeast Europe, were defined by the authorities of the Western Balkans through the development and adoption of a regional roadmap attached to Council Decision (CFSP) 1788/2018. Leading towards the main goal of the Action Plan - combating illicit trafficking in firearms and ammunition, it keeps three main directions in focus and provides greater clarity and better structure than the Action Plan for the period 2015-2019, especially in resolving remaining legal gaps and inconsistencies in the control of firearms that hinder police and judicial cooperation: 1) Harmonization and modernization of the administrative structure; 2) Reducing inventories and increasing the rate of its security; 3) Raising the efficiency of the bodies responsible for law enforcement while enabling maximum operational cooperation and exchange of information.

## **Conclusion**

The paper deals with the very current issue of trafficking in illegal weapons, and the topic itself is viewed both from the aspect of law and from the aspect of security. The moment of drawing material funds from the arms trade and redirecting those funds for financing crime and terrorism is highlighted. Thus, the starting point in the paper is the handling of weapons, their treatment and use, while creating a clear distinction between legal and illegal weapons. Also, as an important moment in the paper is to point out the degree of social danger and harmfulness of the existence of large quantities of illegal weapons in the citizenry and gives an overview of the correlation between high arms and crime rates in a given climate.

The paper presents the legislative regulation of the issue of weapons, issues of how the law treats the procedure of legalization of weapons, which weapons can and cannot be subject to legalization and which weapons can and which citizens cannot and have. A much more important aspect of the

work is illegal weapons, which are an aggregate for illegal funds, which are then further merged into illegal criminal funds intended for crime and terrorism. In that part, the author uses the application method, which shows the concrete results of normative acts through their implementation and gives concrete results of the work of the police in the process of reducing the number of illegal weapons in the Republic of Serbia.

In addition to the applied method, a comparative method was used in the paper where a comparative overview of the regulation of illegal weapons is given, and countries such as the USA, the Republic of Serbia, countries in the region, Great Britain and other countries with significantly different approaches for solving this problem are used as comparative parameters. It starts from the most liberal regime in the United States, and goes to the most restrictive regime in Great Britain, which serves as an example of strict traffic control and arms registration.

At the level of the European Union, a great effort has been made to put the issue of illegal weapons within the legally and legitimate acceptable framework. The paper presents the legal acts of the EU that should serve as a substrate in the legislation of member states, as well as countries that aspire to become an integral part of the EU. EU acts not only deal with the issue of weapons, but also deal with all related concepts, which in cohesion form a complex intertwining of organized criminal networks in the world. Therefore, convergent and harmonization of legal mechanisms enables a quality and consistent response to the challenges posed by the illegal arms trade, and the end result should be a lower crime rate at the global level.

In this regard, the EU has adopted an Action Plan to combat illicit trafficking in firearms for the period 2020-2025, which promoted an action plan for the next five years, with very concrete measures to combat this harmful phenomenon. The paper itself gives an overview of these measures, with statements on how these measures could be applied in order to achieve the best effect. Also, with this document, the EU has promoted the basic principles and priorities with the obligation to apply them as consistently as possible in practice.

The Republic of Serbia is actively fighting the problem of illegal weapons. What gave the author some difficulties in summarizing the results of the work of the Serbian police in this area are the scarce and outdated information on the number of confiscated weapons and the closure of these bodies to provide newer and more up-to-date information. Thus, the available data from 2003 were used, when a large-scale action of finding



and confiscating illegal weapons from citizens was initiated without bearing any legal consequences. The condition was voluntary surrender of weapons and voluntary renunciation of them. The action was called an amnesty for those who possessed weapons without legal cover. The paper gives a tabular presentation of how many weapons were seized on that occasion by regions in Serbia. Although these are high numbers, it is believed that not even the tenth percent of the total illegal weapons found in Serbian civilians were given on that occasion, and it was evident that in some parts of Serbia this action was openly boycotted. The most cooperative were the inhabitants of Vojvodina, where most weapons were handed over, followed by Belgrade and central Serbia. Data on Kosovo and Metohija and western Serbia were not available, which indicates that this action was not carried out in those areas.

The conclusion of the paper is that the evasion of the provisions on the legalization and registration of weapons occurs in cases when the weapon was procured from illegal sources and when it is planned to commit a crime. So, there are clear reasons why someone does not want to report a weapon, and these acts are mostly done intentionally. Also, the conclusion is that there must be a way to the diffusion of illegal weapons at the global level, which means that measures against illegal weapons must be adopted at the global level by international institutions. Only the authority of these institutions can guarantee the implementation of measures and can contribute to solving the problem of illegal weapons.

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