Firearms Trafficking: Policy Implications and Responses in Europe

Illicit Trafficking in Firearms, their parts, Components and Ammunition to, from and across the European Union
- Methodology
- Seizure data
- Demand and supply
- Arms flows
- Modus operandi
- Policy implications
- Combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods
- Data sources:
  - Illicit Arms Flows Database
  - Data from previous research projects
    - Especially Project SAFTE and Project DIVERT
  - Cross-regional expert meeting (UNODC, Vienna, 7-8 Oct 2019)
  - Expert interviews
  - Literature review
  - Online search for trafficking cases (to illustrate modus operandi)
- 16 EU MS reported to IAFQ on firearms seizures in 2016-2017
  - Varying levels of details and completeness
  - Most seizures within national territory

- Total numbers:
  - 50,000 seized firearms & 800,000 rounds of ammo in 2016
  - 40,000 seized firearms & 350,000 rounds of ammo in 2017
**FIGURE 1**: Distribution of seized firearms by type in 16 European Union Member States, 2016 - 17

Source: IAFQ
FIGURE 2: Distribution of seized firearms by type of marking in 10 European Union Member States, 2016 - 17

- 79% No marking
- 11% Altered marking
- 8% Unknown
- 2% Uniquely marked

Source: IAFQ
**INFOGRAPHIC 1: Main actors with demand for illicit firearms within the European Union**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Intent for criminal use</th>
<th>No immediate intent for criminal use</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Armed robbers</td>
<td>• Collectors and other individuals with emotional reasons</td>
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<td>• Drug criminals</td>
<td>• Individuals with perceived need for self-protection</td>
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<td>• Groups specialized in logistical preparation of assassinations</td>
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<td>• Mafia Organizations</td>
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<td>• Outlaw motorcycle gangs</td>
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<td>• Terrorists</td>
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</table>
- Price differences between and within Member States
- Differences in criminal access
  - Eroding of closed character of illicit gun markets in some MS
- High demand of EU firearms across the globe
  - Criminals, non-state armed groups, ...
  - Mainly diversion in third countries after legal export from EU
- No general trend of increase or decrease in illicit arms flows

- Mainly intra-regional flows
  - Western Balkans: source and transit
  - Between EU Member States

- Potential future sources:
  - Ukraine
  - Middle East & Northern Africa
- **Ant trade**
  - Mainly by vehicles, but also by boat
  - Consolidated smuggling routes (together with other goods)

- **Exploiting legal differences**
  - Blank firing weapons, deactivated & AEW, Flobert, components
  - Postal & fast parcel services
    - online or straw purchasers
  - Legal acquisition followed by ant trade
    - professional & non-professional perpetrators
- **Illicit manufacturing & conversion**
  - Relatively high numbers of seized parts & components
    - 4,800 item in 2016 & 1,700 items in 2017
  - 3D printing: vigilance required
- **Fraudulently obtained export licenses**
- **Internet**
  - Open web vs. darkweb
  - Postal & fast parcel services
  - Impact of Covid-19?
Policy implications

- Close loopholes and harmonize legislative and regulatory frameworks
- Improve export risk assessments to prevent diversion
- Strengthen law enforcement and border control capacities
- Promote effective criminal justice approach
- Reinforce international cooperation and information exchange
- Improve knowledge on illicit arms flows by better data collection & analysis and by prioritizing investigations into origin of firearms
Thank you for your attention.

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