



Citizens on Watch: Local-tailored approach to containment of arms proliferation in Serbia

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SUMMARY

This policy brief is piloting an idea of local-tailored approach to firearms seizure campaigns and using available but not yet fully utilized ways to reduce firearms misuses in Serbia. This idea is grounded in the fieldwork conducted in three local communities – in Zemun, Mladenovac and Nis – where citizens and representatives of different institutions and civil society organizations were interviewed. The policy brief includes related experiences of Finland and Switzerland, two countries with a larger amount of small arms and light weapons (SALW) per capita than Serbia, and Romania that has stricter firearms regulations, as examples of good practices for a joint and coordinated action by representatives of the security sector, NGOs, sport and hunting associations, and the media at the national and local level. These insights offer a roadmap for their contributions to informing and encouraging citizens to legalize or handover illegal weapons to the authorities as well as to preventing firearms misuses.

This new local-tailored approach to the campaigns as well as ways of enhancing security was also discussed with a wide range of interlocutors from international and national organizations that deal with the SALW issues from the perspective of European and regional disarmament policies. The approach is particularly characterized by acknowledging and incorporating security needs of different groups and motivation of citizens to possess and handover their weapons, by addressing observed causal links between domestic, gender based and peer-to-peer violence and firearms. We hope that the recommendations formulated in this policy brief will be beneficial to authors of the new Strategy for SALW control in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2017-2020 which is right now in the process of drafting.

1 The legalization of weapons and/or ammunition is a process of registering or handing unregistered weapons and/or ammunition that was held by a person without the approval of the competent authority. During this process, a person is not obliged to prove the origin of weapons and ammunition, and the owners who register or hand over weapons and/or ammunition during this period cannot be misdemeanor, nor prosecuted for illegally procuring, holding and carrying weapons and/or ammunition.

2 Please note that the terms such as small arms and light weapons, weapons, firearms are used interchangeably as synonyms in the brief.

3 Such as SDGs 16 (in particular 16.4) and 5 (5.2).

4 Official Gazette of the RS, No. 36/2010.

5 Official Gazette of the RS, No.20/2015.

6 Official Gazette of the RS, No. 94/2016.

7 Official Gazette of the RS, Nos. 85/2005, 88/2005., 107/2005, 72/2009, 111/2009, 121/2012, 104/2013, 108/2014 i 94/2016).

8 Official Gazette of the RS, No. 22/2015.

9 Official Gazette of the RS, No. 70/2015,

10 UN Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects, International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit SALW, OSCE Document on SALW, EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports.

11 The EU Global Strategy, available at: <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/global-strategy-foreign-and-security-policy-european-union> (accessed on: 11. 11. 2017).

12 Trieste Western Balkans Summit 2017, dostupno na: <https://europa.rs/trieste-western-balkans-summit-2017-declaration-by-the-italian-chair/?lang=en> (accessed on: 19. 11. 2017).

This policy brief is a final result of the project “Citizens on Watch: Public Participation and Localization of the Security Sector Reform”, which the Public Policy Research Center implemented with the support of the Democratization Department of the OSCE Mission to Serbia. The project was conducted in three local communities – Mladenovac, Zemun and Nis, with the aim of exploring viable ways to localize firearms seizure campaigns in Serbia. The PPRC also intended to inquire possibilities for local communities to participate in these campaigns and therefore improve local security. The project relies on the long-standing PPRC’s work in the field of small arms and light weapons and its impact on human security, such as “Gender-Based Violence and Firearms Misuse” (2017), “Firearms Possession and Human Security: Do we see firearms as provider of personal security or a security risk” (2016), “Targeting Weapons” (2014).

1. INTRODUCTION

A number of strategic documents and laws in Serbia recognized the importance of legalization¹ and reduction of the stock of illegal weapons² and improving the culture of firearms possession in order to strengthen security of citizens, especially vulnerable groups. The significance of these processes is additionally admitted by the United Nations Global Sustainable Development Goals.³ The national documents include the Strategy for small arms and light weapons (SALW) control (2010-2015);⁴ the Law on Arms and Ammunition⁵ which was, inter alia, urged by several mass murders committed by both legal and illegal firearms, and which imposed stricter provisions for issuing weapons permits and tightened fines against persons who possessed illegal weapons; the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence;⁶ and the amended Criminal Code⁷ which also introduced more severe penalties for the possession of illegal weapons. Furthermore, the proliferation of firearms as a threat to human security has been recognized in other documents, such as the National Youth Strategy for the period 2015-2025⁸ and accompanying Action Plan for the period 2015-2017⁹ which highlighted the importance of prevention and consequently allocated funds for these activities at the national and local level.

Simultaneously, as a party of numerous international agreements¹⁰ and as a candidate for the European Union membership, Serbia got obliged to reduce the firearms proliferation. The fight against terrorism, extremism, radicalization and organized crime are substantial areas of the global European foreign policy¹¹ and security strategy and EU policy towards the Western Balkans.¹² For instance, declaration issued by the Western Balkan and EU representatives issued after the 2017 Trieste Western Balkans Summit supported the SALW control through better physical protection of firearms stockpiles and encouragement of voluntary weapons handover.

The policy brief is structured in six sections. The introductory part offers an overview of legal framework in Serbia underlining the importance of reducing number of illegal firearms. The second part presents data concerning firearms distribution in Serbia, in general, and in local communities of Zemun, Nis and Mladenovac, in particular. It also provides findings of the fieldwork research regarding motives of citizens to acquire and own firearms and reasons for the SALW proliferation in Serbia. In the third part the methodology is briefly discussed. The fourth section considers ways to localize firearms seizure campaigns. In the end, recommendations are formulated as to improve cooperation as well as existing models of cooperation at the national and local level. Likewise, the recommendations are concerned with effective and efficient ways to raise awareness of firearms risks, educate minors as well as to create sustainable local-tailored campaigns.

2. RESEARCH CONTEXT

The policy brief is focused on the upcoming Strategy for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2017-2022. In particular, this brief considers the possibility of involving citizens and a wide range of local institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs) in organizing actions to legalize illegal weapons and to improve the culture of firearms management; in others words it considers a possibility to locally adjust national activities targeting SALW issues envisaged by the strategy.

During the implementation of the first national Strategy for the SALW control for the period 2010-2015, only one Action Plan (AP)¹³ was adopted. Financial means for the AP activities were not identified; instead limited resources of responsible authorities were used for this purpose. The overall goal of the Strategy was the establishment of a “unique national system for effective control of small arms and light weapons in Serbia, which will reduce the quantity of weapons in illegal possession and the number of firearms misuses in legal possession and increase the overall security of citizens and society as a whole.”¹⁴ During the implementation period, the legislative framework in line with EU regulations got set up, a SALW Council was established and a SALW National Coordinator was appointed.¹⁵ However, the specific objectives defined by the Strategy, such as informing the public about the negative consequences of SALW misuses, educating citizens and legal entities about the firearms risks, effectively planning and implementing long-term and regular SALW control actions for the purpose of its collection (legalization) or seizure and destruction, and involvement of civil society as a support to the implementation of the strategy were fulfilled partially or were omitted.

During the previous strategy implementation period, only one firearms seizure campaign was carried out, which, with the exception of the so-called “Sablje” campaign from 2003, yielded the best results.¹⁶ Also, during this period, three national campaigns were conducted to promote the legalization of weapons and raise the culture of firearms management.¹⁷ Informing citizens about these

13 Official Gazette of the RS, No. 73/2013.

14 Official Gazette of the RS, No. 36/2010.

15 Dragan Kotarlič & Slobodan Joksimović, „Usklađivanje zakonske regulative Republike Srbije sa Strategijom EU za borbu protiv nedozvoljenog sakupljanja i prometa lakog i streljačkog naoružanja i municije – stepen usklađenosti i neophodne mere“, *Vojno delo* 3 (2015): 265.

16 “Saber” was organized immediately after the assassination of Zoran Djindjic, the Serbian PM, in 2003. The aim of the campaign was to arrest suspects for the murder of the prime minister. The action was conducted in an emergency situation and lasted about a month. This was one of the most extensive police actions in history. At that time, over 10,000 persons were arrested. Source: “Dometi akcije Sablje”, *Vreme*, available at: <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=342537> (accessed on: 18. 11. 2017).

17 In 2011, the campaign “Do not let your weapon participate in the celebration”, in 2015, “Celebrate with the heart, not with weapons” and in 2016, “It’s not too late”.

topics was mostly reduced to statements of representatives of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) in the media with national coverage and as such were insufficient.

According to the Negotiating Position in the Process of Negotiations on the Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union,¹⁸ the initial deadline to adopt new Strategy for the SALW Control for the period 2017-2022 was the end of 2016. The working group for drafting this strategy was formed in October 2017 and it included the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, which as a state institution acts as an intermediary between the state and the civil sector. Given that the deadline for adoption of the strategy has been broken, there is a concern that as a consequence this important strategic document will be no publicly debated and that interested parties such as experts and representatives of civil society will be excluded from the consultations once more; hence they will not have any opportunity to provide potential suggestions and changes of the text.

In this brief opportunities that will secure involvement of local governments, local security councils, youth offices and civil society organizations, including hunting and shooting associations, women's organizations that provide assistance to victims of domestic violence, other CSOs, and the local media are considered in the context of effectively informing citizens on the possibilities for the legalization of illegal firearms and in promoting responsible culture of firearms management. Such local actions should be conducted in coordination with the MoI and in accordance with goals of the new Strategy for the SALW control.

3. METHODOLOGY

The results presented in this policy brief are based on the qualitative research (focus groups, consultations and interviews conducted between September and November 2017) and on the basis of secondary data analysis. A total of three focus groups were organized with the citizens of Zemun (seven participants), Mladenovac (eight participants) and Nis (six participants). Consultations in Zemun were held with members of the Local Security Council, and in Niš with representatives of the local community Djuka Dinic, Local Security Council, Palilula Municipality, Council for Human and Minority Rights, National Council of Roma, Center for Civil Resources Development, and shooting club "Safari". In Mladenovac, consultations were held with the Mayor, the Gender Equality Committee, the Varovice Hunting Association, shooting club "Filip Kljajić", the Center for the Human and Minority Rights Promotion (OKO) and the Center for Daycare of Children and Youth with Disabilities. A total of 41 respondents (20 women and 21 men) took part in the focus groups and consultations.

18 Available at: <http://eukonvent.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/PG24-Pregovaracka-pozicija.pdf> (accessed on: 18. 11. 2017).

19 We selected these three countries as examples of good practices in regulating the possession of firearms. The Romanian umbrella law regulating the issue of firearms prescribes very strict criteria for its acquisition, while Finland and Switzerland are at the top of the list of countries that have a large number of weapons per capita.

Interviews were organized with representatives of the embassies and/or ministries of interior of Finland, Romania and Switzerland.¹⁹ The available literature regarding SALW issues was used and the secondary data of the Serbian MoI, relevant international, national and local documents were analyzed. The draft recommendations of this policy brief were discussed at panel discussions in three local communities and at the national level in the form of a round table with representatives of national and international organizations, such as the Serbian National Association for Weapons (NAOS), South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse

for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), the Autonomous Women’s Center (AZC), the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence (BFPE), the youth umbrella organization (KOMS), the Office for the cooperation with civil society etc.

4. SALW PROLIFERATION AND POSSESSION IN SERBIA

According to the MoI data from December 2016, 973.790 pieces of firearms were registered in Serbia. According to its estimates and estimates of other organizations in Serbia, there are about 220.000 pieces of illegal firearms.²⁰ Although the amount of both legal and illegal weapons in the possession of citizens has been reduced in the previous period, it continues to be a security issue and often appears as a means of committing criminal acts, violence and murders, often in the circle of the closest relatives and friends and in cases of peer-to-peer violence.²¹

The 2017 Strategic Assessment of the Public Security document states that large quantities of firearms, ammunition, explosives and explosive devices can be found in the possession of citizens, which has been followed by numerous seizures.²² Thus, for example, in the period 2012 to 2017 against 7.838 persons were filed criminal charges for illicit production, possession, carrying and trafficking of weapons²³ According to the Ministry of Interior, 3.096 young people, aged 18-30, were in possession of 4.093 pieces of firearms. The same year criminal charges were filed against young people for committing 500 criminal offenses of “illegal production, possession, carrying and trafficking of weapons and explosive materials” and 1.240 misdemeanor reports based on the enforcement of the article 35 of the old Law on weapons and ammunition. Nevertheless, the fight against the proliferation and smuggling of illegal weapons is not included in the eight priority goals of the MoI in the next five years.²⁴ This comes as a surprise because previous research has established a clear link between the possession of illegal and legal firearms and deaths in cases of domestic violence, while other reports show that the presence of firearms among young people at schools is increasing²⁵

20 Available at: <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/hronika/aktuelno.291.html:534440-MUP-U-Srbiji-izmedju-200000-i-900000-nelegalnog-oruzja> (accessed on: 12. 11. 2017).

21 Targeting Weapons: Misuse of weapons in Serbia, Public Policy Research Center for the purposes of UNDP-SEE-SAC, Belgrade,;2015, available at: http://publicpolicy.rs/projekti/16_Targeting-weapons---misuse-of-weapons-in-Serbia#.WjEOs9_ibIU

22 In the past 10 months alone (January-November 2017), the MoI seized 1,035 pieces of firearms (the highest number of 395 pistols and 327 guns) and about 20,000 pieces of ammunition and discovered an illegal firearms workshop in Zajecar. Also, during 2017, the MoI destroyed 18,000 pieces of firearms from police seizures and legalization process. Although the fight against illegal weapons is exempt from the MoIs priorities for the upcoming period, the current activities clearly indicate that the MoI stays dedicated to the suppression of narcotics trafficking and weapons.

23 According to MoI data submitted at the request of the PPRC in accordance with the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance (Official Gazette of the RS, Nos. 120/2004, 54/2007, 104/2009 and 36/2010) .

24 Priorities in the police work in the next five years are: fighting organized crime, combating drug production and smuggling, combating corruption, combating terrorism, combating the misuse of ICT, improving public order and peace, improving traffic safety and irregular migration, as well as human trafficking.

25 Marina Tadić, „Posedovanje vatrenog oružja i ljudska bezbednost: da li nas oružje štiti ili plaši?“, PPRC, Belgrade: November 2016, 4; Jelena Šapić & Filip Stojanović, „Između nezaposlenosti i ekstremizma: šta su stvarni bezbednosni izazovi mladih u Novom Pazaru“, PPRC, Belgrade: April 2017, 3.

No. of registered SALW pieces	Estimations of illegally owned SALW	No. of persons who possess SALW	No. of persons who possess 2 or more pieces of SALW	No. of persons who possess hunting weapons	No. of persons who have license/ permit to carry out firearms
973.790	220.000	appr. 550.000	168.811	317.947	691

Table 1. – SALW possession in Serbia – Source: MoI, 2017

	No. of persons who possess two or more pieces of SALW	No. of persons who possess hunting weapons	No. of persons who have license/permit to carry out firearms	No. of criminal charges for illicit production, possession, carrying and trafficking of weapons
Zemun	3411	3893	41	136
Nis	4464	8847	6	375
Mladenovac	1229	2127	1	66

Table 2. – SALW possession in Zemun, Nis, and Mladenovac – Source: MoI, 2017

Citizens and representatives of institutions in Zemun, Nis and Mladenovac believe that **the motives for widespread possession of firearms in Serbia** are tradition and war history. Tradition or the so-called. gun culture is a set of cultural elements that favor the presence, possession and / or use of weapons among individuals or groups in society.²⁶ The beginnings of such a culture are related to the appearance of a hajduk.²⁷ In the representations of hajduk, possession of firearms was a symbol of power and proof of masculinity. According to the participants of the research, due to the outbreak of wars in the 1990s, there was an uncontrolled proliferation of firearms. “Do you know how many wars have passed? People have weapons from different battlefields” (Mladenovac). “There are also veterans who joined the army and who kept the weapons after the wars were completed in order to defend themselves from potential enemies. Now the question is whether this enemy is real or not” (Nis). The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) had the fourth largest army in Europe²⁸ and was one of the largest producers and exporters of firearms in Southeast Europe.²⁹ During the conflict, large quantities were lost because of unsecured warehouses, a significant number was brought to the house after the end of the conflict, and a small number of firearms ended up in the hands of criminals. Recall of the war situation, and the current often warlike messages exchanged by politicians from the former Yugoslav republics, contribute to the citizens’ decision to keep some of these weapons in their possession (Zemun).

Another widespread motive for firearms possession, which was pointed out by citizens in Nis, Mladenovac and Zemun, is the lack of trust in the institutions and their ability to provide citizens with proper and timely protection.³⁰ According to this year’s research, citizens’ motives for possessing weapons are individual efforts to ensure personal security and property due to mistrust in institutions to protect them. “I do not feel safe, I do not feel that the state will protect me, for example, in the case of burglary, I do not feel that the state will help me, will react quickly, and that the case will be examined properly” (Zemun). Most of the participants said that they see the possession of firearms in the house as a source of threat to their security and security of their family members. “I was against the presence of gun in our house, I do not feel safe knowing it is there. Little children run around, and you simply never know what may happen” (Zemun).

26 Vladimir Cvetković, „Serbian Society and Gun Culture“, Sociologija Vol. XLVIII, N° 1 (2006): 41.

27 Armed Violence, “Handgun Ownership and Armed Violence in the Western Balkans”, Small Arms Survey, Issue Brief No. 4, September 2014: 2.

28 Ibid.

29 Ian Davis, Small Arms and Light Weapons in Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – the Nature of Problem, London: Saferworld Report, 2002: 46.

30 Marina Tadić, „Posedovanje vatrenog oružja i ljudska bezbednost: da li nas oružje štiti ili plaši?“, PPRC, Belgrade: November 2016, 4; Danijela Spasić & Marina Tadić, Zloupotreba oružja i rodno zasnovano nasilje, PPRC, Belgrade, 2017; Živeti sa nasleđem – Istraživanje o SALW, Republika Srbija, SACISCG, Belgrade, 2005.

Members of hunting and shooting associations see hunting and sport (shooting) as a way to promote responsible use of weapons and enhance security culture. Most citizens think that the media plays a negative role in promoting citizens' security, as they often promote the culture of violence in their contents. The research participants identified the youth and women as the most vulnerable groups in terms of the risks of using firearms. These findings are confirmed by the aforementioned MoI analyzes and previous research on the causal link between firearms and gender-based violence.³¹

Asked what would be **the motives for citizens to hand over weapons to the relevant institutions or to legalize it**, the participants emphasized financial aspects of firearms possession - high taxes and expensive medical examinations - and concerns for the security of family. "I am not going to hunt anymore, the firearm was stored at my house in a wardrobe. Then I started to think why I should provoke situation in which someone will come to my sons and take it. So I decided to hand it over" (Zemun). On the other hand, in previous PPRC researches, data indicated that high taxes do not contribute to the greater effects of legalization.³² Existing sanctions/penalties for illegal possession are high, which demotivates holders of illegal weapons to legalize it or renounce it for the benefit of the Republic of Serbia.

By contrast, as an incentive to increase the amount of weapons in illegal possession, citizens state the possibility to earn money on an illegal arms market. Namely, prices of weapons in the illegal market in the Western Europe are up to ten times higher than in the local markets (either in the RS or in the countries in the region).³³ According to the MoI estimates, a certain number of legal weapons owners have weapons in the legal possession that sell out at an illegal market; and then falsely report the theft or loss of such weapons in order to free themselves from tax evasion by nullifying their gun ownership from official records.³⁴

5. LOCAL-TAILORED APPROACH TO FIREARMS SEIZURE CAMPAIGNS IN SERBIA

Article 46 of the Law on Arms and Ammunition provides the Minister of Interior with the possibility to issue periodic legalization of weapons and ammunition, when reasons of preserving citizens' security, public order and peace require. This process provides a chance to owners of illegally possessed weapons to surrender unregistered firearms and ammunition without proving their origin and without criminal and misdemeanor prosecution, because Article 348 of the RS Criminal Code does not apply during the legalization.³⁵ While the operational part of such processes should stay within the jurisdiction of the MoI, informing citizens through media and promotional activities leaves the possibility of involving a wider circle of actors.

31 The Women's Violence Network report shows that in the period from 2012-2016. One third of the murders of women in a family-partnership relationship is committed by firearms. Reports on femicide for 2016, 2015, 2014, and 2013, Women Against Violence Network, available at: <http://www.zenepro-tivnasilja.net/femicid-usrbiji> (accessed 13.11.2017).

32 Danijela Spasić & Marina Tadić, Ibid; „Srbija puna oružja: legalizovan tek svaki pištolj“, 021, available at: <http://www.021.rs/story/Info/Srbija/116523/Srbija-puna-oruzja-Legalizovan-tek-svaki-stoti-pistolj.html> (accessed on: 15. 10. 2017).

33 Procena pretnje od teškog i organizovanog kriminala, MoI, Belgrade, 2015: 78.

34 Ibid.

35 Official Gazette of the RS, No. 85/2005, 88/2005, 107/2005, 72/2009, 111/2009, 121/2012, 104/2013, 108/2014 i 94/2016.

Year	No of firearms pieces	No of ammunition pieces
2003	82.769	2.226.765
2007	8.455	11.566
2015	7.545	160.434
2016	1.410	61.755
2017	1.104	57.000
Total	101.283	2.517.520

Table 3 – Results of previous legalization processes in Serbia – Source: MoI, 2017

Year	Zemun	Nis	Mladenovac
2003	814	N/A	146
2007	115	N/A	29
2015	120	130	18
2016	20	18	1
2017	8	11	1
Total	1.077	159	204

Table 4 – Results of previous legalization processes in Zemun, Nis, Mladenovac – Source: MoI, 2017

Citizens in Nis, Zemun and Mladenovac said they were not sufficiently informed about the process of legalization and firearms seizure campaigns (e.g. when it started, what the conditions and character of campaigns were). Participants in the research claimed that the prerequisite for successful processes of legalization of firearms is trust in the institutions, particularly in the police. They pointed out that the rule of law and Rechtsstaat are necessary for the citizens to feel safe and to decide to hand over the weapons they possess. Also, they stated that for motivating citizens, it is important to take into account motives of local communities to support such actions. For example, in Mladenovac there is an extremely strong institutional memory of the mass murder in Velika Ivanca, committed with a legal weapon.

Respondents believe that these campaigns would be more successful if they were accompanied by an organized and planned media campaign, but said that the information would be more effective if almost all local media were not shut down. “We always have to assume that someone does not have any knowledge about the topic and that they do not have to be notified; therefore you must disseminate it among different groups. For this purpose, the media campaign should be a national campaign that will not be of short-term, but a process that has to last for a long time so it spurs a wider debate” (Zemun). They added that the reduction in the amount of illegal weapons and the number of misuses of legal firearms are of national interest; because of it national televisions should provide free space for broadcasting promotional video spots concerned with these topics.

Citizens and representatives of local institutions and organizations saw a range of options for localizing national campaigns to legalize and hand over weapons, and raising the security culture of keeping a legal weapon. They see many advantages in the local-tailored approach. They believe that such campaigns would reach a

much larger number of people and that the campaigns should include problems of local communities.

Citizens identified local communities, local councils for security and community policing as key institutional mechanisms for conducting such actions. As examples of already established good practices, joint actions of the MoI, local institutions and organizations in raising the level of safety in traffic, which can be applied in the cases of these actions, are singled out. These campaigns are conducted continuously, they are contently adapted to different target groups, and budget funds are envisaged for their implementation.

Citizens, local institutions and organizations recognized a number of local actors who could engage in such actions: they suggested that local security councils could introduce also gender equality committee representatives, involving women's organizations specialized in providing assistance in cases of domestic violence, hunting and shooting associations, schools, and other actors.

The participants believe that such campaigns do not have to be costly: they could be organized via social networks, posting posters to local health stations, schools and other local institutions, organizing workshops/panel discussion at the local community level, highlighting also mass sports events as ways to promote legalization. They also pointed out that such campaigns could be financed by companies through their programs of CSR. On the other hand, the respondents who oppose the localization of campaigns emphasize the negative profiling of certain communities and / or groups of people.

Among the participants in the research there are those who consider all national and local campaigns as counterproductive as they see the seizures as a way of disarming, threatening the tradition and weakening national defense capacities. In their view, firearms seizure campaigns have a repressive character and provoke resistance among those fond of SALW. Therefore, these interlocutors primarily seek to promote the safe storage and handling of firearms.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: JOINT ACTIVITIES OF ACTORS AT LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL

International and national goals for the suppression of terrorism, extremism, radicalization and organized crime, and the strengthening citizens' security, impose on the state authorities numerous tasks related to reducing the proliferation of illegal weapons, and the promoting responsible culture of firearms management. Defining the new SALW Control Strategy (2017-2022) and the accompanying AP provide the opportunity to consider new approaches to these processes. Also, work on the new strategy and the AP provides a chance for a more efficient use of budget means and better planning and allocation of domestic resources to finance preventive action.

The experience of European countries whose citizens possess greater quantities of legal weapons than Serbia (Switzerland and Finland) and / or have experience in applying the latest European directives (all countries covered), prescribe rigorous licensing procedures for the possession of weapons (in particular Romania), have

developed e-registers (Finland and Switzerland) and have both developed multilateral and bilateral cross-border cooperation practices (all encompassed countries) and experiences in involving citizens and the civil sector in these policies (all countries covered) that can be useful in conceiving a new Strategy and its AP.

Regarding practices of informing citizens and the promotion of responsible possession of weapons, we particularly refer to the experience of Romania because a website of their MoI put all relevant information on incidents, even those including illegal possession of weapons and / or possible misuse of illegal and legal weapons making them visible and transparent. Also community policing has crucial role in improving the level of security.

When it comes to prevention and encouraging citizens to surrender illegal weapons, we highlight the experience of Finland where there are no occasional actions for legalization but it is rather a continuing activity. In this country, campaigns for responsible use of weapons are organized through the solid cooperation of the MoI, hunting and shooting organizations. Citizens are involved in these actions through the work of NGOs that work closely with the MoI and the National Police Board in the preparation of legalization. The MoI has excellent cooperation with the media, which, in the course of their editorial policies, report on the SALW issues and legislation changes.

The Swiss Federal Police emphasized prevention as a particularly useful practice for maintaining a low rate of criminal acts committed by firearms. This is primarily achieved through rigorous implementation and oversight of law enforcement, continuous changes in legislation in line with new challenges, and the development of an electronic weapons register at the cantonal level. This e-register contributed to the exchange of information and facilitated the verification of information on the origin of the weapon and the owner, especially in cases of criminal acts or in cases of issuing new permits. Citizens' participation in decision-making on key issues, including this one, is ensured through a referendum participation.

The SEESAC experience in the region demonstrates that good cooperation between the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense, long-term legalization and firearms seizure campaigns, strengthening the role of community policing, cooperating with a wide range of actors in the society, working with the civil sector and diversifying promotional campaigns in accordance with different motives of the communities to possess / engage in promoting the legalization of illegal weapons and good practices in the handling and handling of weapons also contribute to the strengthening of citizens' security.

This and other PPRC researches showed that long-term education of citizens on the firearms risks and continuous awareness raising campaigns on the importance of these policies for citizens' security at the level of local communities are necessary. Also, they indicated that there is a great interest of citizens and the civil sector at the national and local level to engage in various activities regarding improving the security of their communities. Developing promotional campaigns that would be based on understanding of specific

citizens' motives to hand over weapons or raising a culture of responsible using firearms would contribute to more efficient transmission of messages.

Proactive attitude of the MoI on prevention and cooperation between the national and local levels of government in the coordination and joint implementation of such actions is essential for the success of such actions. A good example of the planning of such an action is the document of the MoI entitled Strategic Assessments of Severe and Organized Crime (2015), which strongly underlined the cooperation.

Recommendations regarding local-tailored approach to the firearms seizure campaigns

- Develop cooperation and coordination of MoI work with community policing and local institutions and organizations, especially local security councils,
- Encourage the creation of local security councils in communities where they are not formed yet,
- Include topics of disarmament, legalization of illegal weapons and raising a culture of safe use of firearms into strategic plans of local security councils,
- Incorporate these topics into the action of local communities as mechanisms that are recognized as good modalities for organizing citizens, especially in suburban and rural areas,
- Encourage the inclusion of a wide spectrum of civil society organizations in the work of local security councils and at the local community level,
- Involve a wide range of citizens from pre-school children to young people and elderly people and continuously work on raising awareness on topics such as importance of reducing the proliferation of weapons and risks stemmed from the misuse of firearms,
- Develop local campaigns to promote the legalization of illegal weapons through coordinated action at national and local level, and specifically develop messages of such campaigns from the perspective of local security issues (for example, domestic violence, peer-to-peer violence, etc.), and citizens' motives to engage in such action,
- Utilize affordable and effective means to conduct campaigns, for example, posters with information regarding firearms seizure campaigns and legalization put in local police stations, health centers and other public institutions in suburban and rural areas and organizing campaigns on social networks in urban areas,
- Pay special attention to informal awareness-raising activities on firearms misuses such as volunteer advocacy campaigns at major sports events and other gatherings. One of the good ideas could be branding local campaigns in line with well-known local motives, such as "merak" in Nis.



CENTAR
PUBLIC POLICY
RESEARCH

The Public Policy Research Center (CENTRE) is an independent think tank established in 2010. It analyzes the impact of public policies on citizens, particularly in the field of security and social-economic policies, with the goal to improve implementation of these policies or to propose necessary changes.

CENTRE's research focus is on security, inclusiveness, and representation of vulnerable groups. It applies a multidisciplinary approach and prioritizes qualitative fieldwork which provides an opportunity for in-depth impact assessment of cross-sectoral policies. To formulate sustainable public policies, it is necessary to take stock of both central and local level dynamics.

By the middle of 2017, we have conducted more than 20 projects, including those at regional level. Findings and recommendations stemming from the projects are available at CENTRE's website in the form of policy briefs, reviews, policy papers and research studies. Our activities include media analyses as well as education and capacitybuilding in the key areas of its work.

CENTRE's projects have been supported by international organisations and agencies (OSCE, UNDP, UNICEF, UNOPS, DCAF), governmental organisations and bodies, ministries, private donors – SDC and OSI, international academic institutions, and through programs such as MATRA of the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands. CENTRE has received a grant for organizational development by the Think Tank Fund of the Open Society Foundation.

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