

# CITIZENS ON WATCH: Public Participation and Localization of the Security Sector Reform

**Public Policy Research  
Center**

## **Citizens on Watch: Public Participation and Localization of Security Sector Reform**

The project aims are to investigate a possibility of localization of campaigns for the SALW legalization / seizure of illegal firearms in Serbia and ways to improve local security.



**FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT - December 2017 | Belgrade |**

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## Summary

The project "Citizens on Watch: Public Participation and Localization of the Security Sector Reform" was implemented from June 1, 2017 until November 30, 2017 by the Public Policy Research Centre (CENTER) from Belgrade, Serbia. The aim of the project was to investigate a possibility of localization of campaigns for the SALW legalization and seizure of firearms in Serbia. CENTER explored viable possibilities of local communities to participate in legalization campaigns and improve security in local communities. The project was carried out in three communities - Zemun, Mladenovac and Niš - where fieldwork was organized. In cooperation with representatives of local self-governments, hunting associations, local councils for security, gender equality bodies, non-governmental sector and other actors, CENTER explored opportunities for local communities to engage in campaigns to legalize weapons and to enhance security in local communities. Key findings of the research and recommendations were presented in the form of three policy briefs for each location and final policy brief that includes findings from all the three locations discussed within the broader framework of the implementation of the Law on Arms and Ammunition, the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the new National Action Plan for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 - Women, Peace, Security - in Serbia (2017-2020) as well as other national documents and strategies relevant for the topic. Furthermore, the results were discussed within the general framework of the international agreements and obligations Serbia undertook in line with the fight against terrorism, extremism, radicalization and organized crime recognized by the global European foreign policy and security strategy and EU policy towards the Western Balkans and the United Nations Global Sustainable Development Goals. All of them recognize importance of better physical protection of firearms stockpiles and encouragement and/or voluntary weapons handover and violence against women (VAW).

Having in mind that the Strategy for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2017-2022 is in preparation, the final policy brief's recommendations are focused on the Strategy. In particular, this brief considers the possibility of involving citizens and a wide range of local institutions and civil society organizations (NGOs) 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.

The project relies on the long-standing Center's work in the field of impact of small arms and light weapons 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).

The CENTER team successfully implemented large majority of activities– it conducted 6 focus groups (hereafter: FG) and consultative meetings (41 participants in total),<sup>1</sup> 3 panel discussions at local level (25 participants), 2 in depth e mail interviews with interlocutors in Niš (the Shooting club "Safari" Niš, Local security Council Niš), 2 interviews with the representatives of the NGO sector in Zemun (Local youth office and Association of citizen from Kraina), 5 expert interviews ( representatives of SEESAC, National Shooting Association of Serbia, representatives of the embassies or Mol in Switzerland, Romania and Finland) one round table at the national level in Belgrade (10 participants), and one final conference in Belgrade gathering MPs, national and local actors, members of the diplomatic core and representatives of relevant NGOs based in Belgrade and experts (14 participants in total out of which 2 MPs). The specific added value of the project is inclusion of 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

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that FGs and consultations refer to the same qualitative method that allows data collection in the form of group conversation.

sector, NGOs, sport and hunting associations, and the media at the national and local level. In total 99 citizens/representatives of the local and national institutions/international and national and local NGOs were engaged in the research and advocacy activities.

Only one activity was not carried out. Panel discussion in Zemun was not organized due to the lack of time of the important participants such as the Local security council and the representatives of the municipality of Zemun.<sup>2</sup>

The key findings obtained through focus groups and consultative meetings with local actors and panel discussions are the following: Citizens in Nis, Zemun and Mladenovac are 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). Citizens and representatives of local institutions and organizations see 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. The forthcoming national Strategy for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2017-2022 and the Action Plan should envisage localization of the legalization campaigns of the illegal weapons as well as promotional activities against misuse of the weapons into their framework. The country's efforts to fulfill its obligations related to encouragement and/or voluntary weapons handover and suppression of violence against women (VAW) would be further improved by taking of the above-mentioned policies.

#### GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

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. 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 Mol 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 Mol entitled Strategic Assessments of Severe and Organized Crime (2015), which strongly underlined the cooperation.

Practices of Finland, Switzerland and Romania, as well as SEESAC experience in the region should be taken into consideration when drafting the Action plan for the forthcoming SALW Strategy. Both the CENTER research and before mentioned practices suggest that is important to include the NGOs in the process of consultations in drafting the Strategy and the Action plan and the implementation of the activities.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING LOCAL-TAILORED APPROACH TO THE FIREARMS SEIZURE CAMPAIGNS:

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<sup>2</sup> The challenges related to organising activities in Zemun will be discussed in the separate part of the report

- 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.

## Project background

The aim of the project Citizens on Watch: Public Participation and the Localization of Security Sector Reform were to bring to life the human security concept in local municipalities through tailor made and contextualized approach to firearms possession. This was done through: (1) Research of the specific local backgrounds and motives, which are affecting citizens' attitudes toward firearms possession. (2) Outlining tailor-made mechanisms focused on strengthened co-operation between citizens, local actors (municipal authorities/local security councils, professional hunting associations, professional shooting clubs, councils for gender equality and NGOs) related to the issue. 3) Promotion of open discussions at the local level on factors that contribute to building the culture of responsible possession and use of weapons. 4) Providing knowledge on bottom-up approach to public participation in the security sector reform, related to the issue. 5) Offering evidence-based policy advice to relevant actors at the local and national level working on drafting, implementing and overseeing current legislation and new strategies and action plans thus strengthening horizontal and vertical cooperation within endeavors to enhance security governance and democratic control of security sector related to the issue.

- 1) The project was conducted on three locations: Mladenovac, Zemun and Niš<sup>3</sup> which have different backgrounds related to misuse/concentration of legal/illegal weapons. **Mladenovac:** Mladenovac was mainly selected because of a spree shooting that occurred in the village of Velika Ivanča in April 2013, located on the territory of this municipality. Fourteen people (including a gunman) died and one, the gunman's wife, was injured. The police identified the gunman as a relative to many of the victims. The

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<sup>3</sup> In the original proposal we tentatively suggested Kragujevac as a city with the large weapons production, but later on changed the location in agreement with OSCE.

gunman had a weapon in legal possession.<sup>4</sup> The research and other project activities covered the entire municipality of Mladenovac.

- 2) **Niš:** This city has one of the most advanced Local Security Councils which was at the time of the project implementation in the process of adopting the Strategy and the Action Plan related to human security. The city is also spotted by Mol reports as one of those with higher level of insecurity when it comes to youth violence and weapons.
- 3) **Zemun (Altina, Plavi Horizonti, Grmovac, Busije):** Zemun has a considerable percentage of population which came to Serbia after the civil war in the former Yugoslavia and had traumatic experiences/were involved in the combat activities during the civil war. This community has been chosen as one which might have specific attitudes toward weapons.

**The overall objective of the project** was to contribute to the promotion of public participation in the security sector reform specifically related to the implementation of the Law on Weapons and Ammunition, Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the forthcoming Strategy on Small Arms and Light Weapons 2017- 2022.

The project was undertaken with the aim to inform public policy creators working on the preparation of new National Small Arms and Light Weapons Control and Collection Strategy for the period 2017-2022. The project aimed to draw attention on specific circumstances in local communities which are affecting the implementation of above-mentioned legislation, to outline possibilities for the tailor-made approach to campaigns for the legalisation of weapons and responsible use of weapons in possession of citizens and be instrumental in discussion on public participation in the security sector reform at the local and national level.

Specific objectives were:

- To provide analysis of the motives of the citizens in different local communities in Serbia to legalise/ submit illegal weapons, provide the employees of the Ministry of Interior with a set of recommendations how to better evaluate whether their fellow citizens are fit to possess weapons and take part in the process of rising culture of firearms possession.
- To bring MPs attention to importance of localisation of the security issues and in such way to improve parliamentary oversight over the security sector;
- To raise public awareness of importance of democratic civilian control of the security sector among local and national stakeholders – municipal authorities, local media and MPs from selected Committees and the Mol.

### **Target Groups**

The project targeted four main groups:

- Citizens in Mladenovac (Velika Ivanča), Niš and Zemun
- Local security providers in three selected municipalities such as members of councils/board for local security, professional hunting associations, professional shooting clubs, councils for gender equality, local activists/NGOs who are interested in security issues and/or democratic control in the above mentioned communities;
- Members of the Parliamentary Committees responsible for security sector control and human rights; representatives of the Mol, members of the working group dealing with the forthcoming National Small Arms and Light Weapons Control and Collection Strategy for the period 2017-2022, etc;

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<sup>4</sup> RTS. (2013). *Stravičan zločin u Velikoj Ivanči*. Available at: <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/135/Hronika/1301276/Stravi%C4%8Dan+zlo%C4%8Din+u+Velikoj+Ivan%C4%8Di.html>. [Accessed 5 March 2017].










- Local media in the selected municipalities, as well as national media

Key activities were:

1. **Desk research** which included analysis of all relevant documents and new data gathered from Mol
2. **Focus groups discussions with citizens and consultations** with representatives of municipal authorities, professional hunting associations, professional shooting clubs, councils for gender equality and NGOs about security perceptions, perceptions on weapons possession and the challenges in building the culture of responsible possession and use of weapons.
3. **In depth interviews with representatives of Mol** (Switzerland and Finland) and **members of diplomatic core** (Romania), and **SEESAC**.
4. **Establishment of the new micro website** devoted to the news related to this project.
5. **Production of three local policy briefs** addressing the specific challenges in building the culture of responsible use of weapons in each location
6. **Production of one final policy brief**
7. **Panel discussions in three selected municipalities about the policy briefs**. The panel discussions gathered municipal authorities, participants at FGDs/consultations, District Police/focal points for community policing, citizens and local media. Draft policy briefs were presented during the discussions.
8. **Round table with national interlocutors**. The purpose of this event was to present the draft version of the final policy brief and discuss the findings and policy recommendations.
9. **Organisation of the conference** in Belgrade in co-operation with the OSCE Mission to Serbia. The event included selected interlocutors from the local and national level (municipal authorities, participants at consultations, MPs from the Parliamentary Committees responsible for security sector control and human rights, the Ministry of Interior (Mol),
10. **Dissemination of the final policy brief** to all interlocutors and presented in selected national media and through CENTRE's digital platforms (general website, micro website, social networks, issuu, newsletter, etc),
11. **Advocacy**. In line with previous practice, the CENTRE will continue to conduct advocacy and lobbying activities, even beyond the project implementation, so as to ensure that recommendations gained are communicated with decision makers and the general public.

**Final products:** three local policy briefs (electronic version) and one final policy brief (in electronic and print version).

Table 1. – Overview of the key activities and the implementation period

Activity	Month 1 - July	Month 2 – Aug	Month 3 - Sep	Month 4 - Oct	Month 5 - Nov
Desktop research and FG guide					
Media outreach					
FGs, CMs and Interviews					
Preparation of tailor-made briefs					
Panel discussions					
Preparation and launching of microsite					
Preparation of the final brief					
Final conference in Belgrade					
Evaluation and reporting					

## **Activities**

### **Preparatory Phase**

Preparation of a guide for FGD and consultations, final decision and selection of local NGOs as focal points and initial communication with them were conducted during June, July and August 2017. A desk research was conducted in order to acquire information about data and most recent developments on the ground, related to weapons possession, illegal weapons proliferation, challenges to local security related to weapons possession, status and documents on Local security councils, additional data from the Mol, practices in Finland, Switzerland and Romania and review of foreign and domestic literature related to SALW and communication campaigns aimed at responsible use of weapons. This phase also included drafting letters intended to local actors (please see Annex 1), Mol (for Mol correspondence please see Annex 2), representatives of practices embassies in Finland, Switzerland and Romania (please see Annex 3), preparation of handouts, and decision on visual identity of the project (the logo creation – (Annex 4) and microsite design.

The guide for FGs consisted of three parts – local security context, possession and proliferation of weapons and localization approaches (please refer to the Annex 5).

In this phase the new webpage for the project topic related news was created at the CENTERs website (Annex 6). Intent was to present the project activities in a transparent manner and made them available to a broader audience by providing them bilingually. Furthermore, the preparation for the design of the micro website devoted to the project was kicked off.

### **Focus Groups and Consultations**

Six focus groups and consultations/in depth interviews took place in three locations in Serbia –Niš, Mladenovac and Zemun. In Niš FG/consultations were held 8.9.2017, in Mladenovac FG/consultations were held on 6.9.2017. in Zemun FG was held on 19.10.2017 and consultations on Zemun 6.11.2017).<sup>5</sup> In Niš we spoke 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 addition in depth interviews were conducted via e mail with the Shooting club "Safari", Local Security Council Niš (Questions for in depth interviews are in Annex 7). 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.

Zemun proved to be the biggest challenge in terms of organizing the research phase of the project. Two different local focal points were not able to organize FGs which led to delays in realization of that part of the activity. Therefore the CENTER organized 1 FG in its own premises, and conducted in depth interviews with the Zemun policy makers and NGOs in their own premises, instead of organizing consultations. Two interviews were organized with the representatives of the Local Security Council and 2 interviews with the Youth office Zemun and the Krajina association (List of questions for in depth interviews is in Annex 8)

A total of 41 respondents (20 women and 21 men) took part in the focus groups and consultations. Attendance lists for the FGs/consultations.(Annex 9)

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<sup>5</sup> Photos of all project events are available in the Annex 21.

Chart 1. – Number of all participants per city

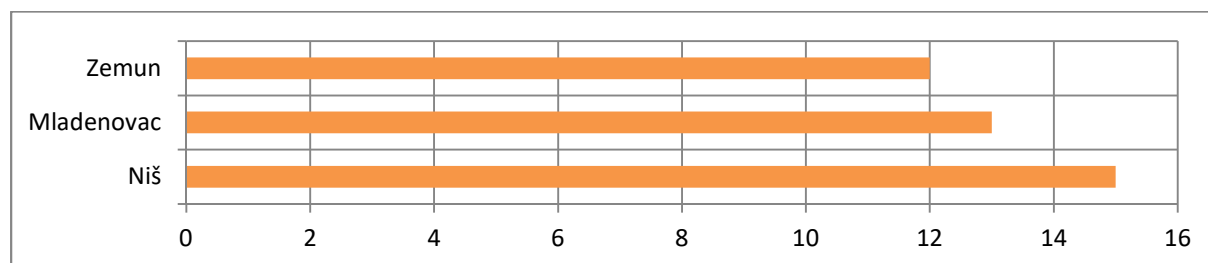
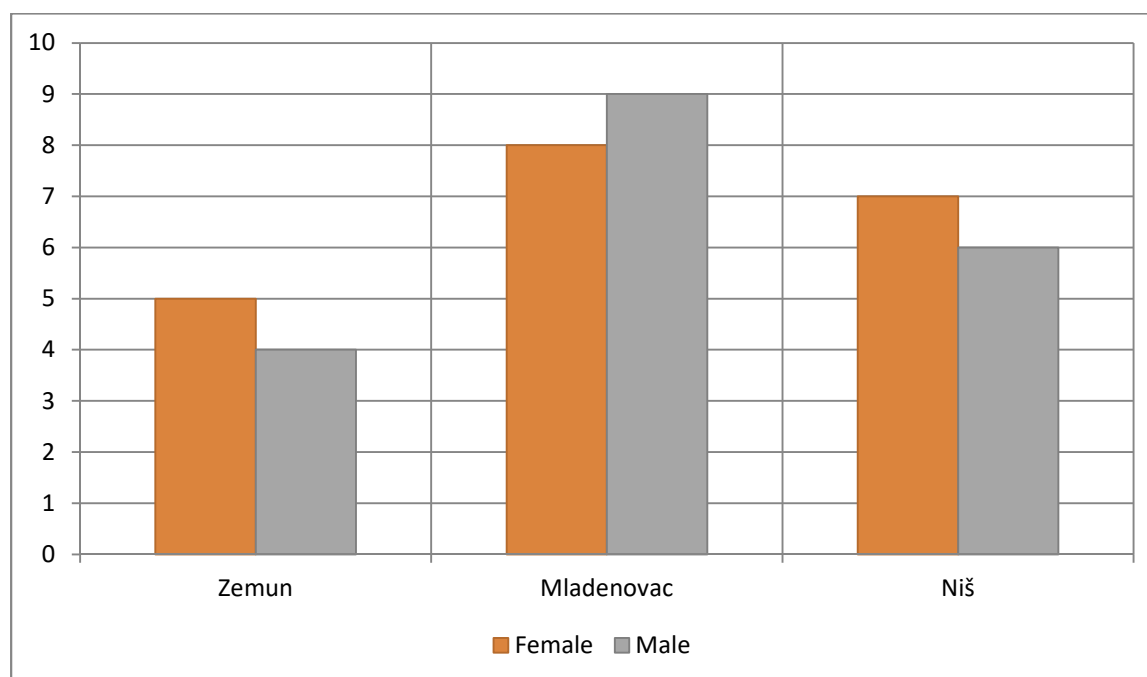


Chart 2. – FGs and CMs participants per gender



## **In Depth Interviews**

Apart from abovementioned in depth interviews with local organizations and institutions, five expert in depth interviews were held with SEESAC (3.11.2017), National Shooting Association (3.10.2017), Ministry of Interior of Finland and Switzerland (via e mail) and the embassy representative from Romania (16.10.2017). Interviews with Mol representatives from Finland and Switzerland were organized with the assistance of the respective embassies. List of questions for the interlocutors are in the Annex 10.

## **Local Briefs**

Three local briefs were prepared in the period October - November 2017. They included the facts on the project, the key statistical points on the proliferation of SALW and seizure of SALW in Serbia and respective communities. The main part of the briefs consisted of the analysis drawn on FGDs and consultations findings; it was divided into five parts which discussed the observed human security threats, possession and proliferation of weapons, modalities for localization of legalization campaigns and dissemination of information related to secure use of legal weapons.

The briefs were sent to the prospective RTs participants electronically and were distributed as a hard-copy during the panel discussion. The briefs design, text wrapping and printing all were the CENTER contributions in kind (see Annex 11).

## **Panel Discussions**

Panel discussions with local stakeholders were organized during October – November 2017. In Mladenovac the discussion was held on 3.11.2017, and in Niš on 9.11.2017. Panel in Zemun was not organized.<sup>6</sup> Invitation letters are enclosed in Annex 12.

In Niš 10 participants (representatives of the Niš city municipalities Niška Banja and Palilula, OSCE, NGOs Fons Foundation, Chris Mreza, Protecta, media: Narodne novine, Vecernje Novosti, JugPress). In Mladenovac 14 participants: (2 participants Center for Social Welfare Mladenovac, 4 participants GO Mladenovac, Gender Equality Office, 3 participants JKP Mladenovac, Mladenovac Polytechnic, 1 citizen, 2 participants from NGO Nenis association, 1 participant from the NGO Living room for children with disabilities). For more details on panel discussion participants, please refer to Annex 13.

The press release was prepared for each panel discussion and sent out to local and national media (see Annex 14). Also, as a follow-up, the project's team sent the Power Point presentation with recommendations to all participants of panel discussions (Annex 15).

## **Round Table**

Draft version of the final policy brief was discussed at the round table with prominent national stakeholders which was held in the CENTERS premises on 15.11.2017. There were two members of the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence (BFPE), two members of SEESAC, two from the National Association for Weapons Serbia, and one per the following organisations: Serbian Youth Umbrella Organization (KOMS) Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCBP), Office for Cooperation with Civil Society and Autonomous Women's Center (AŽC). Invitations and the list of participants are enclosed in Annex 16.

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<sup>6</sup> Despite CENTERS efforts, participants were unable to participate due to work obligation constraints

## **Final Policy Brief**

The final policy brief was produced in November 2017. It is structured to give an overview of the key SALW related international obligations Serbia undertook, important strategies and laws connected to the topic and the importance of the issue in a view of the new Strategy for SALW control for 2017-2022. The overview was then followed by the analysis of the data collected through fieldwork (e.g focus groups, consultations, panel discussions, in depth interviews, round table and literature review). The data covered proliferation of the legal and illegal weapons in Serbia, data about legalization actions and promotional campaigns in the previous period, critical overview of the achievements of the previous Strategy. Strong emphasis was given to lectures learned in Finland, Romania and Switzerland and the experience of SEESAC. The most prominent place was given to the recommendations to the national policy makers (in charge of drafting new SALW Strategy), local policy makers (Local security councils) and NGOs. (please see Annex 17).

## **Final Conference**

The final policy brief was presented on the occasion of the final conference in Belgrade organized by Democratization Department of the OSCE Mission to Serbia. The conference took place at Hotel Zira in Belgrade, on November 22, 2017 (for the invitation letters and agenda please see Annex 18). The aim was to discuss key findings and recommendations with MPs, local actors, NGOs based in Belgrade and the academia. 2 MPs, representative of the Ministry of Interior, representatives of the OSCE mission to Serbia, Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade, the National Association for Weapons Serbia, Serbian Youth Umbrella Organization, Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, Autonomous Women's Center, NGO OKO Mladenovac, Embassy of Finland, Embassy of Switzerland and NGO Center for development of civil resources Niš, participated in the conference actively sharing their opinions and insights (see Annex 19). The conference was structured as it follows:

- Presentation of the key findings and recommendations by the CENTER team (Annex 20);
- Possibilities for MPs' contribution to reducing illegal firearms in Serbia (2MPs from the Defence and Internal Affairs Committee)
- Possibilities for experts' contribution to reducing illegal firearms in Serbia (Faculty of Security Studies, etc NAOS, AZC)
- Possibilities for local actors' contribution to reducing illegal firearms in Serbia (NGOs from Mladenovac and Niš)

For the purpose of the conference the final brief was translated into English. Photos from all events are enclosed in the Annex 21.

After the conference, the policy brief was electronically disseminated to all the participants of the project and third interested parties. Electronic copies were sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in charge of the SALW Strategy, Office for Cooperation with Civil Society (as a representative of NGOs in the working group for SALW) and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Serbia, SEESAC, Swiss Federal Police Department, Swiss Embassy in Serbia, Finnish Mol, Finnish Embassy in Serbia and Romanian Embassy in Serbia, United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs – UNODA, European Union Delegation to Serbia, Directorate-General (DG) Migration and Home Affairs, DG for Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Johannes Hahn's Cabinet member dealing with rule of law, home affairs and migration, and Serbia, SIPRI and Small Arms Survey.

## **Outreach and Communication**

The project's visibility was ensured during the whole time of its implementation. The CENTER team prepared four press releases during the implementation period (three after each discussion and one after the final conference – for the final conference (for press release, please see Annex 22). National and local media extensively covered the panel discussion in Niš and to some lesser extent in Mladenovac. Unfortunately national media reporting didn't report about the final conference. The reason may be too many political events. In total there were 11 reports in national and local media: TV N1, Novi magazin, Beta, B92, Kurir, TV Bellami Niš, Jugmedia, Jug Press, Narodne novine Niš, Mladenački dnevnik. (for the list of media and photos of the media inputs please refer to Annex 23)

Furthermore, the project page was visibly placed and kept on the CENTERs homepage, while the news was regularly posted in slider. In the period June-November, we published 10 posts related to the project.

In addition to the CENTERs main site, a new microsite exclusively dedicated to the project was designed and launched in November 2017. It can be accessed on the following link: [www.lokalnabezbednost.publicpolicy.rs](http://www.lokalnabezbednost.publicpolicy.rs). (Annex 24)

When it comes to the social networks, there were 15 related posts on Facebook in the period August November with an average reach of 499 persons. To promote panel discussions at local level, events for each location were created and shared on the CENTER accounts. On Twitter, there were 64 posts. Finally, 10 related posts were set on LinkedIn.

## **The Key Fieldwork Findings**

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. According to the participants of the research, due to the outbreak of wars in the 1990s, there was an uncontrolled proliferation of firearms. 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. 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.

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 Mol analyzes and previous research on the causal link between firearms and gender-based violence.

This and other CENTER 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 Mol 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 Mol entitled Strategic Assessments of Severe and Organized Crime (2015), which strongly underlined the cooperation.

## **Recommendations**

- Develop cooperation and coordination of Mol 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 is "merak" in Nis.

## **Evaluation**

As evaluation benchmarks were proposed:

- Demonstrated interest by the MPs and local stakeholders: interest to attend and take part in the discussions, demand to receive copy of policy briefs;

The research findings and recommendations were embraced by both MPs and local stakeholders underlying the importance of such a research for further actions and arrangements. During the discussions at the local level, interlocutors showed interest for their own engagement in localization of legalization policies and proposed many general and local tailored approaches to better communication and promotion of legalization of weapons. The project added to the OSCE efforts to help local security councils in Niš and Zemun to develop meaningful strategic plans for action.

- Further communication among targeted groups: any further publications, events or other activities addressing locally specific issues and cooperation between local and national interlocutors;

Local NGOs which took part in our project were empowered to take part in public discussion on the strategic plan of the Local security council in Niš. CENTER encouraged local authorities in Mladenovac to form local security council and include various actors beyond the one set by the legal framework and that is to include its body for gender equality, NGOs and local hunting and shooting institutions. CENTER chose as partners some of the local members of NGOs network for monitoring new National Action Plan for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 - Women, Peace, Security - in Serbia (2017-2020). Number of media which picked up the story in Niš showed that the topic resonates both in national and local media.

- External peer review;

CENTER engaged Filip Ejduš prominent professor at the Faculty of Political Science as an external peer reviewer. His insights contributed to the quality of the research and their presentation.

- Realization of any policy recommendations the research team would set at the end of the report.

During the final conference the MoI representative, an expert in weapons legalization said that the CENTERs approach is in line with the MoI own thinking of putting more effort in prevention i.e. giving more space to promotional campaigns which will inform citizen about the importance of legalization of weapons. CENTER sent the final policy brief to the members of the Working group dealing with the new SALW strategy. Unfortunately, the working group is not open to NGOs therefore the impact of the proposed approach cannot be assessed at the time of reporting..

## **Challenges during the project implementation**

The implementation period was marked by challenges induced by the timing of the project. Due to summer holidays FGs were scheduled for the late September and October. After several attempts to partner with local NGOs in organizing FGs/consultation with interlocutors in Zemun, the CENTER has decided to organize FG in its own premises and instead of consultations, organize in depth interviews with important interlocutors. Although the questions regarding arms proliferation statistics were sent to the Ministry of Interior at the very beginning of the project, the answers arrived with significant delay. However, all envisaged research activities were done. In addition, CENTER added 3 in-depth interviews with the interlocutors from Finland, Switzerland and Finland plus interview with SEESAC which were not envisaged in the original project. Those interviews added international and regional dimension to the project. Several MPs who expressed interest to participate in the final conference were omitted to come due to urgent tasks in and out of the parliament. SEESAC representatives were not able to come to the final conference as they've had team building meeting.

## **Conclusion**

The project's key value was an innovative approach to the legalization of illegal weapons; Policy briefs piloted an idea of local-tailored approach to firearms seizure campaigns and using available but not yet fully utilized ways to reduce firearms misuses. This idea was 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 supported the idea as an important method of approaching proliferation of weapons and addressing local security issues such as violence against women, youth peer to peer violence etc. CENTER's new local-tailored approach to the campaigns for legalization of weapons and addressing local security needs was supported by 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 local tailored approach was particularly acknowledged for its incorporation of 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. The 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, represent and added value as they may serve 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, which were missing in the previous national SALW Strategy (2010-2015) and may benefit the new Strategy. The findings were presented in a particularly good timing as the new Strategy for SALW control in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2017-2020 is in the process of drafting.

## **Budget and Financial Report**

The overall budget for the action was 1.199.100,00 RSD. The first tranche in the amount of 959.280 RSD was transferred to CENTER's account on 26.06. 2017. The remaining spent amount – 180.450,59 RSD is expected to be transferred to the CENTER account upon the approval of the CENTER's Final Narrative and Final Financial Report by the OSCE Mission in Serbia.

During the project implementation the CENTER ensured sound budget execution through regular budget monitoring. The Final Financial report is attached as a separate document.