



2024/3097

6.12.2024

COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2024/3097

of 5 December 2024

in support of the comprehensive programme on supporting efforts to prevent and combat illicit trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and Conventional Ammunition in South-Eastern Europe

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

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

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

Whereas:

- (1) For several decades, states in South-Eastern Europe have been facing significant risks and challenges related to destabilising accumulation and uncontrolled spread of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) and conventional ammunition (CA). Those risks have wider negative implications for Europe as a whole, and beyond.
- (2) On 19 November 2018, the Council adopted the EU Strategy against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, entitled 'Securing Arms, Protecting Citizens' (the 'EU SALW Strategy').
- (3) At regional level, the EU SALW Strategy commits the Union and its Member States to providing assistance in strengthening law enforcement capabilities in order to identify, disrupt and prohibit trafficking networks and to prevent firearms from reaching terrorists and criminals via the illicit market.
- (4) As outlined in the outcome document of the fourth UN Conference to Review Progress made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in June 2024, Member States of the UN have undertaken to strengthen, as appropriate, partnerships and cooperation at all levels in preventing and combating the illicit trade in SALW.
- (5) In 2000, the States participating in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) committed to combating illicit trafficking of SALW in all its aspects. In 2020 the OSCE updated its Best Practice Guide on Deactivation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, recognising the importance of ensuring irreversible SALW deactivation or destruction, based on the outcome of the third UN Conference to Review Progress.
- (6) The project supported by this Decision will take other regional initiatives into account, in particular the Western Balkans Roadmap, the work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/the South-Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) and relevant European Commission activities in South-Eastern Europe related to arms control and illicit arms trafficking.
- (7) The Union previously supported OSCE activities on SALW by means of Council Decisions 2012/662/CFSP⁽¹⁾, (CFSP) 2017/1424⁽²⁾ and (CFSP) 2019/2009⁽³⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Council Decision 2012/662/CFSP of 25 October 2012 in support of activities to reduce the risk of illicit trade in, and excessive accumulation of, Small Arms and Light Weapons in the region covered by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (OJ L 297, 26.10.2012, p. 29).

⁽²⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/1424 of 4 August 2017 in support of OSCE activities to reduce the risk of illicit trafficking and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition in the Republic of North Macedonia and in Georgia (OJ L 204, 5.8.2017, p. 82).

⁽³⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/2009 of 2 December 2019 in support of Ukraine's efforts to combat illicit trafficking in weapons, ammunition and explosives, in cooperation with the OSCE (OJ L 312, 3.12.2019, p. 42).

- (8) Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/2133 ⁽⁴⁾ supported phase I of a project in support of the comprehensive programme on supporting efforts to prevent and combat illicit trafficking of SALW and CA in South-Eastern Europe. It is now appropriate to support phase II of that project,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

1. With a view to implementing the EU Strategy against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition (the 'EU SALW Strategy'), the objective of this Decision is to reduce risks of illicit trafficking and uncontrolled spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in, to or from South-Eastern Europe that undermine safety and security by impeding sustainable peacebuilding and socioeconomic development as well as by contributing to a breakdown in order, fuelling terrorism and criminal violence or leading to a resumption of conflict.
2. In order to achieve the objective referred to in paragraph 1, the Union shall support actions in, inter alia, the following priority areas:
 - (a) assisting the national authorities of the Republic of Albania to decrease the risk of proliferation and misuse of SALW;
 - (b) addressing security and safety risks of illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
 - (c) supporting the strengthening of the K-9 capacity of the Kosovo (*) police to detect and confiscate SALW, ammunition and explosives;
 - (d) assisting the national authorities of the Republic of North Macedonia to decrease the risk of proliferation and misuse of SALW;
 - (e) strengthening the capacities of the Ministry of Interior of Montenegro to more effectively reduce, prevent, and counter illicit trafficking and misuse of SALW, ammunition and explosives;
 - (f) addressing safety and security risks related to illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition in Serbia;
 - (g) strengthening OSCE action against the illicit proliferation of and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition – Phase 3.
3. The beneficiaries of the project set out in the Annex (the 'project') shall be the authorities in South-Eastern Europe mandated and responsible for preventing and combating illicit trafficking of SALW and CA.
4. A detailed description of the project is set out in the Annex to this Decision.

Article 2

1. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy ('HR') shall be responsible for implementing this Decision.
2. The technical implementation of the project shall be carried out by the OSCE Secretariat.
3. The OSCE Secretariat shall perform its tasks under the responsibility of the HR. For that purpose, the HR shall enter into the necessary arrangements with the OSCE Secretariat.

⁽⁴⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/2133 of 2 December 2021 in support of the comprehensive programme on supporting efforts to prevent and combat illicit trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Conventional Ammunition (CA) in South-Eastern Europe (OJ L 432, 3.12.2021, p. 36).

(*) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Article 3

1. The financial reference amount for the implementation of the project financed by the Union shall be EUR 3 763 170.
2. The expenditure financed by the reference amount set out in paragraph 1 shall be managed in accordance with the procedures and rules applicable to the general budget of the Union.
3. The Commission shall supervise the proper management of the expenditure referred to in paragraph 1. For that purpose, it shall conclude the necessary financing agreement with the OSCE Secretariat. The financing agreement shall stipulate that the OSCE Secretariat has to ensure the visibility of the Union's contribution, appropriate to its size.
4. The Commission shall endeavour to conclude the financing agreement referred to in paragraph 3 as soon as possible after the entry into force of this Decision. It shall inform the Council of any difficulties in that process and of the date of conclusion of the financing agreement.

Article 4

1. The HR shall report to the Council on the implementation of this Decision on the basis of regular narrative reports prepared by the OSCE Secretariat. Those reports shall form the basis of the evaluation to be carried out by the Council.
2. The Commission shall report on the financial aspects of the project.

Article 5

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

Done at Brussels, 5 December 2024.

For the Council

The President

CSEPREGHY N.