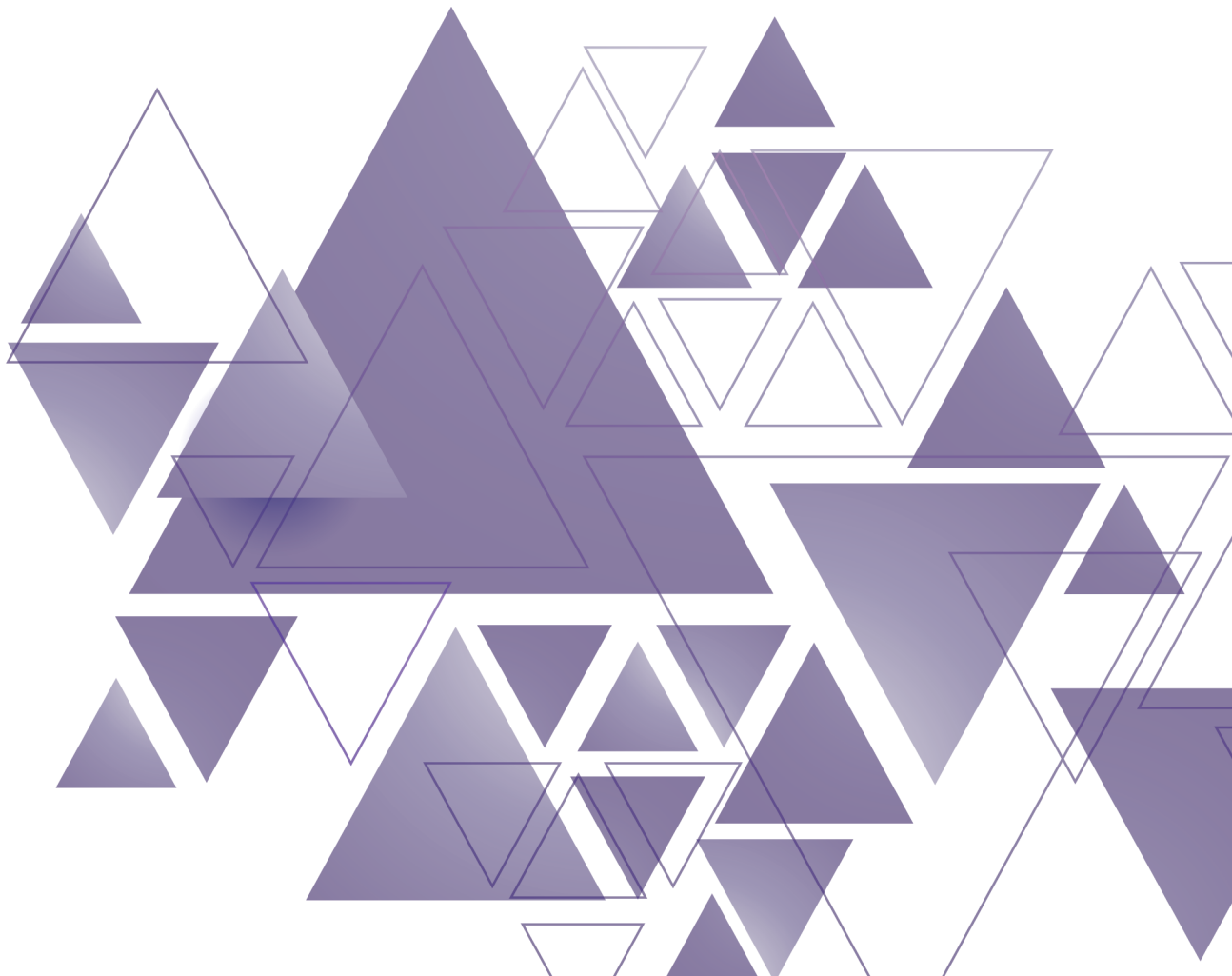


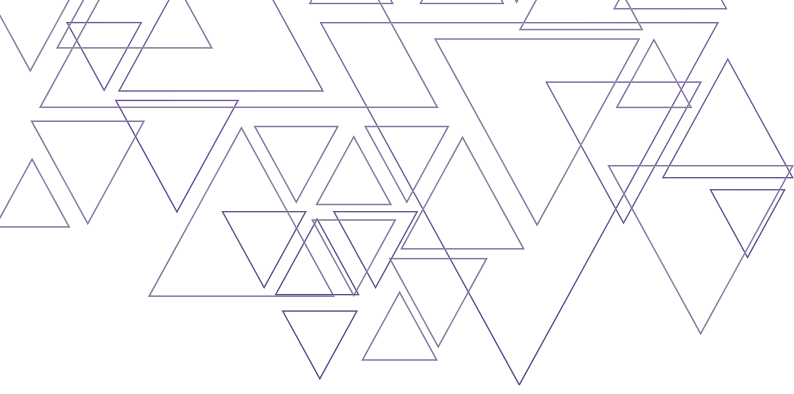


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WOMEN IN SALW CONTROL IN THE WESTERN BALKANS





The South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) aimed at strengthening national and regional capacities to control and reduce the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, thus contributing to enhanced stability, security, and development in South Eastern and Eastern Europe.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CD	Council Decision
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CPS	Conference of States Parties
EU	European Union
FFP	Firearms Focal Point
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MSBiH	Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina
AP	Action Plan
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PoA	Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RevCon4	The Fourth Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade of Small and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEE	South East Europe
SEEFEN	South East Europe Firearms Expert Network
SEESAC	South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WB	Western Balkans
WPON	Women Police Officers Network
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security Agenda

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The importance of women's full and effective participation in the security sector, including in small arms and light weapons (SALW) control, is being increasingly recognised within the broader efforts to promote sustained peace, security, and gender equality. This recognition is reflected in the growing body of international, regional, and jurisdictional normative frameworks that aim to enhance the gender-responsiveness of SALW control. Governments are also progressively called upon to promote women's full, equal, meaningful, and effective participation in SALW control and address the persistent barriers to such participation and representation in this field. The Western Balkans (WB) SALW Control Roadmap and SALW control strategies and action plans adopted across the region also prioritise their full participation.

To assist the WB jurisdictions in meeting their obligations arising from international, regional, and jurisdictional legal and policy frameworks, SEESAC conducted a regional analysis of women's professional engagement in SALW control. It aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of current trends, key challenges and evidence-based recommendations to promote a balanced representation and women's effective participation in SALW control.

The research approach taken in this analysis includes a thorough desk research and extensive empirical research. The former involved a review of international, regional, and jurisdictional legal and policy documents, as well as SEESAC's previous gender analysis on the role of women in the security sector, while the latter consisted of quantitative data collected from relevant institutions through questionnaires and qualitative data from in-depth interviews with women and men involved in SALW control across the WB. The questionnaires aimed to capture detailed information on women's and men's representation in SALW control's key functional areas, relevant policies and internal gender equality and complaint mechanisms, while the interviews provided nuanced insights into their professional experiences, challenges that women face, including societal gender norms, and recommendations for enhancing their participation in SALW control.

The analysis documented significant progress at the policy level in the region in enhancing gender-responsive approaches to SALW control. The WB has seen extensive development of legal and policy frameworks related to gender equality and anti-discrimination, establishing solid preconditions for SALW control gender mainstreaming. At the same time, SALW control frameworks increasingly incorporate gender perspectives and prioritise women's participation.

Despite these normative efforts and the existence of internal gender equality mechanisms, policies to combat gender-based discrimination and various good practices, women continue to be underrepresented in SALW control, with men prevailing across all functional areas. Furthermore, there are evident gendered patterns of women's and men's representation and participation.

In that regard, women's representation in policy-related areas has notably improved, including in SALW Commissions, legislative reforms and coordination roles linked to implementing the WB SALW Control Roadmap.

In 2022, the highest percentage of women in SALW Commissions was observed in Albania (42%), followed by BiH (41.1%), Montenegro (40%), North Macedonia (36.7%), Serbia (25%), and Kosovo¹ (11.5%). This marks a notable rise compared to 2016, when women comprised 14 to 29% of the SALW Commission members, with all five commissions in SEE chaired by men. Since their establishment in the region, only once has a woman been the head of the SALW Commission (in Albania).

Women's contribution to SALW control is particularly reflected in the activities related to its legislative aspects, where a more balanced representation of women and men has been documented. For instance, in the regional workshops on harmonising legislation in the field of SALW Control with relevant parts of the EU Acquis, the share of women from 2019 to 2024 was 54.9% compared to 45.1% of men.

1] For the United Nations Development Programme, references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). For the European Union, 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.

Similar patterns are also evident regarding coordinating the implementation of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap. On average, women accounted for 31% of participants in the regional meetings, and their participation ranged from 17.3% in 2019 to 42.3% in 2022.

Conversely, women's involvement in technical and operational roles remains low, with men's dominance persisting. Women are notably and insistently underrepresented in key areas like border and criminal police services and technical roles such as stockpile management.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, women make up 9.6% of the border police workforce, while men account for 90.4%. Women hold 7.4% of leadership positions, compared to men at 92.6%. In Serbia, women make up 8.5% of officers, compared to 91.5% men. As for management positions, women hold 6%, compared to 94% of men. In Montenegro, women comprise 9% of operational staff, compared to 91% of men. In North Macedonia, women hold 14% of managerial positions in the border police, with men occupying 86%. Among police officers, women constitute 17%, while men make up 83%. In Kosovo, women account for 22.8% of managerial positions but only 3.3% among operational staff. In Albania, data was provided generally for the police rather than specifically for the border police services. Among the 9,681 employees with a rank in the Albanian Police, 10% are women. Women make up 9% of inspectors, 16% of sub-commissioners, 9.8% of commissioners, 9% of chief commissioners, 11.6% of directors, and 2.5% of first directors.

The women's representation in the criminal police across six jurisdictions follows a similar pattern. The highest share of women among the criminal police officers was recorded in Montenegro, with 29.5%, relative to 70.5% men. In North Macedonia, women account for 20% of criminal police officers and hold 13% of management positions, compared to 80% and 87% of men, respectively. In Serbia, women account for 13.4% of operational and 6.8% of managerial staff. In Albania, 124 of the 313 female employees hold the rank of inspector, with the rest in leadership roles, from sub-commissioner to director. For Kosovo, such data was not available.

According to the data provided by the ministries of the interior in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the women's representation follows the trends identified in other jurisdictions. The share of women among police officers is 11% in Republika Srpska, 8.3% in the Sarajevo Canton, 27.3% in the Bosnian Podrinje Canton, 12.7% in the Tuzla Canton, 15.2% in Canton 10. In the Brčko District, women account for 8.3% of all police officers. A somehow similar pattern is observed regarding women in management positions. In Republika Srpska, women hold 17.3% of managerial positions, 8.3% in Canton 10, 9% in the Tuzla Canton, while there were no women in managerial positions in the Bosnian Podrinje Canton.

Regarding Firearm Focal Points (FFPs), in Albania, two out of three persons appointed FFP members are women (66.7%), while in Serbia, the percentage of women is 37.5%. In Kosovo, no women have been appointed FFP members. No data have been provided for North Macedonia and Montenegro, while the FFP has not yet been established in BiH.

The share of women is significantly higher when it comes to the professionals working with firearms licence approval for civilians, which might reflect the administrative character of such positions in which women tend to be more represented. In Serbia, women make up 68% of professionals dealing with firearms licence approval. In Albania the share of women is 35.7%, while in Kosovo women account for 20% of those professionals.

The analysis documented a systemic division wherein women are directed toward administrative roles, while men prevail in operational tasks and technical positions that have historically been dominated by them. This division reinforces traditional gender roles and limits the opportunity of a balanced contribution and perspective of both women and men. There is a common perception of a "natural division" of roles in which women excel in administrative and analytical tasks while men handle physically demanding fieldwork. This entrenched view affects women's opportunities in operational roles and reinforces traditional gender norms. Even with legal frameworks supporting gender equality, societal perceptions can undermine their

implementation and effectiveness, with women facing resistance or doubt from colleagues and supervisors. The gendered view of small arms control as a male domain limits women's balanced engagement at operational levels despite legal improvements.

The analysis indicated that women often opt out of undertaking operational roles due to societal expectations. Women who pioneer in these fields frequently face additional scrutiny in male-dominated environments. They often encounter doubts of their male colleagues regarding their abilities, requiring them to exert extra effort to overcome stereotypes. Women also experience substantial professional challenges balancing work-life responsibilities, especially in operational roles with irregular hours or fieldwork. This dual burden often leads them to seek other professional roles or leave the profession entirely, perpetuating their underrepresentation in critical operational tasks. Despite the women's low statistical participation in operational roles, many respondents believe their involvement to be adequate, indicating limited awareness of the systemic barriers women face.

The dominance of men continues to shape the SALW control landscape, and women's underrepresentation not only perpetuates traditional gender norms, beliefs and perceptions, but also limits the potential for holistic, inclusive, and innovative approaches to security challenges.

Barriers to women's participation persist, stemming from a complex interplay of institutional and societal gender norms and attitudes. Societal expectations and traditional, deeply entrenched gender roles significantly influence women's career choices, often steering them away from fields perceived as male-dominated, such as the security sector. As noted, SALW control is frequently seen as a male domain, discouraging women from entering these professions and inhibiting a more enabling environment.

Educational structure challenges are also significant, as in some jurisdictions the qualifications required for these roles traditionally have fewer female graduates.

Women rarely hold leadership or decision-making positions in SALW commissions, criminal and border police, or other field-based roles. The absence of women leaders means fewer role models and mentors for younger women in the field. It could also hinder the development of policies and practices that sufficiently address women's perspectives.

The analysis findings also show that, despite gender equality laws and anti-discrimination mechanisms, gender-based discrimination and harassment cases are rarely reported in the region. This might be due to insufficient trust in institutional mechanisms, fear of retaliation and the perception that the resolution process is often ineffective and exhausting. To overcome this, it is necessary to foster an environment in which women feel comfortable reporting harassment. Additionally, internal complaint mechanisms, as well as gender equality mechanisms, need strengthening and promotion to be recognised and effectively utilised by employees.

Interviews with women and men across the six WB jurisdictions highlight a complex landscape of simultaneous progress and persistent challenges to gender equality. Some interviewees, particularly women who have worked in the security sector for decades, have expressed optimism about the increasing visibility of women in decision-making roles. Others, however, pointed to the slow pace of change in operational areas in which women's representation remains low. While women are now more likely to be involved in policy-making processes related to SALW, there remains a distinct gap in their representation in technical positions or on the front lines of arms control efforts. These disparities are compounded by limited support for quotas and/or other mechanisms designed to increase women's participation, with many interviewees suggesting that such measures could lead to tokenism rather than addressing the root causes of underrepresentation.

To address the diverse challenges and obstacles to enhancing women's representation and participation in SALW control and contribute to creating a gender-equal work environment, a comprehensive set of measures has been proposed for institutions in charge of SALW control.

The measures are particularly aimed at:

- Fostering enabling and gender-inclusive environments and providing equal opportunities, including education and qualifications in addition to the inclusive environment and policies,
- Improving record keeping and application of gender analysis by the human resources departments,
- Implementing targeted recruitment strategies,
- Capacity building and technical training for women,
- Awareness raising campaigns,
- Strengthening leadership and decision-making opportunities,
- Promoting flexible work arrangements and family-friendly policies,
- Increasing gender equality mechanisms, and mechanisms against harassment and discrimination,
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation,
- Use of gender budgeting to enhance the sustainability of such measures.

THE REPORT'S STRUCTURE

The report is structured around five chapters:

Chapter one briefly introduces the specific Western Balkans context in which the analysis was conducted.

Chapter two outlines the main methodological approach taken in the analysis, its scope and purpose.

Chapter three provides an overview of legal and policy frameworks relevant to women's equal representation and participation in SALW control at international, regional, and jurisdiction levels. In this segment, the analysis closely builds on the findings of extensive gender analysis of relevant legislation and policies conducted by SEESAC² for WB jurisdictions, which is presented in Annex 1.

Chapter four brings an overview and analysis of data on women's representation and participation across different SALW control portfolios at the operational and policy levels. It also outlines key challenges and hindrances to ensuring balanced representation and women's meaningful participation in SALW control.

Finally, **chapter five** summarises the main conclusions and proposes practical measures for ensuring balanced representation and women's meaningful participation in SALW control.

2] The analysis is available in the [SEESAC Knowledge Base](#). In Serbia, a similar analysis was conducted by UNDP Serbia. For more information see: Stevanović Govedarica, Gordana. 2021. *Small Arms And Light Weapons, Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence: Analysis of Regulatory Framework and Practice*. Belgrade: United Nations Development Programme.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



The research conducted in South East Europe (SEE)³ has extensively documented how prevailing gender norms and roles and unequal power relations between women and men can fuel demand for small arms and shape their misuse patterns. Gender conditions specific risks that women and men face with respect to small arms misuse, including forms and extent of their exposure to armed violence. The widespread availability and misuse of small arms exacerbate the existing gender inequalities, which is most evident in the context of violence against women.

Gender also shapes the policy-making process and implementation of SALW control measures, which often take place in male-dominated institutional settings in which women have been traditionally underrepresented. SEESAC's previous research documented women's insufficient representation in SALW control. Such underrepresentation and women's insufficient participation in SALW control has had an impact on the policy outcomes, thus hindering the opportunity for more gender-responsive solutions.

Following the research and building on an extensive evidence base, SEESAC, in cooperation with SALW commissions in the region, undertook a comprehensive set of activities to reverse these trends and address identified challenges by bringing the gender perspective to the core of policymaking. The holistic approach taken is based on four interconnected pillars: a) continued capacity building of institutions in charge of arms control to mainstream gender in their work; b) data collection and analysis; c) increasing women's participation in arms control policymaking and implementation; and d) raising awareness about links between gender and small arms.⁴

In 2021, SEESAC also conducted a large-scale gender analysis of small arms control legislation and policies in the WB⁵ to assess and enhance their gender-responsiveness. It documented noticeable efforts across the region to ensure that the gender perspective is adequately mainstreamed in SALW control policies. This is evident in the strengthened consensus on the gender perspective's importance for SALW control, increased institutional capacities, gender mainstreaming, and enhanced gender-responsiveness of SALW legal and policy frameworks, particularly in strategies and action plans adopted in the WB, which also envisaged measures to increase women's participation.

In this regard, the specific focus of the efforts taken was on capacity-building initiatives, increasing women's expertise in a field traditionally dominated by men, as well as fostering an enabling institutional environment. This aligns fully with SEESAC's long-standing commitment to promoting women's involvement in the security sector, both within law enforcement agencies and ministries of defence and armed forces.

Since 2009, SEESAC has been working on implementing the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda in the SEE through facilitating regional cooperation among relevant security institutions. This has contributed to strengthened gender equality mechanisms, establishment of the women police officers network, combating gender-based discrimination, implementation of evidence-based policies, and enhanced gender-responsive leadership. These initiatives have also facilitated women's inclusion in the security sector and enhanced the security institutions' capacities to recognise and respond to the distinct security threats that women and girls face, particularly their capacity to address and prevent gender-based violence. In this context, enhancing women's representation and participation has been central to SEESAC's approach to SALW control.

The inclusion of women in SALW decision-making processes ensures addressing their specific needs and perspectives, which can improve community safety and resilience. Moreover, diverse representation in SALW control can challenge gender stereotypes and promote gender equality by positioning women as active stakeholders and leaders in peace and security matters, facilitating more equitable and effective solutions and achieving sustainable peace and security outcomes for all. Thus, the involvement of women in SALW control could enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives and contribute to broader societal changes toward gender inclusivity and equity.

3] Božanić, Dragan. 2016. *Gender and SALW in South East Europe, Main concerns and policy response*. Belgrade: SEESAC.

4] Božanić, Dragan. 2022. *Small Arms Control – The Case for Gender Mainstreaming*. Belgrade: United Nations Development Programme.

5] SEESAC Gender and SALW knowledge base <https://www.seesac.org/Gender-and-SALW/>

Despite recent advancements in the region, women continue to be insufficiently represented in SALW control. Similar patterns have also been observed globally, documenting persistent barriers to women's participation, as well as the continuous impact of gender inequality.⁶ To address these challenges, a growing body of international and regional standards puts measures in place to ensure women's full and effective participation in SALW control. There is a general consensus that promoting such participation in the security sector must fundamentally be based on gender equality and recognising women's human right to have equal access to all roles and responsibilities in this field.⁷

To further support authorities in the WB to fulfil commitments stemming from international, regional, and jurisdictional legal and policy frameworks, SEESAC initiated a regional analysis of women's participation in SALW control. It aims to provide an in-depth understanding of current prevailing trends and key challenges and evidence-based measures to contribute to a more balanced representation and women's effective participation in SALW control. The key findings from the 2021 gender analysis of legislation conducted by SEESAC served as a building block for this analysis.

6] Hessmann Dalaqua, Egeland and Graff Hugo. 2019. *Still behind the curve. Gender Balance in Arms Control, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Diplomacy*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNIDIR.

7] UNODA. 2022. *Training Manual On Gender-Mainstreaming Small Arms Control*. New York, NY: UNODA.

CHAPTER 2:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



ANALYSIS PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This analysis aims to contribute to increased representation and women's full and effective participation in SALW control in the WB.

The main research questions are as follows:

- What are the current state and key trends of women's and men's representation and participation in SALW control in the WB, at the policy and operational levels?
- Are there legal and policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms in place to ensure balanced representation and participation in SALW control? Are there any legislative obstacles or gaps that hinder women's participation in SALW control?
- What are the main challenges and hindrances to women's balanced participation in SALW control, including aspects such as recruitment, promotion and retention?
- Do societal or institutional norms and attitudes hinder women's participation in SALW control? If so, how do they manifest and impact women's roles?
- What is the way to achieve a more balanced and effective representation of women and men in SALW control in the WB?

The analysis specifically seeks to:

- increase awareness about the prevailing patterns and trends related to the participation of women and men across different functional areas of SALW control at the operational and policy levels,
- determine key challenges and hindrances in gender-balanced SALW control,
- provide evidence-based measures that will be the basis for stakeholders to foster dialogue and take steps to ensure a balanced representation of men and women in SALW control across the WB region.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The research methods applied in this analysis encompass:

1. **Desk research:** Firstly, this included an overview of international, regional, and jurisdictional legal and policy documents relevant to the women's participation in all spheres of public life and, particularly, to their participation in SALW control. Secondly, the desk research builds upon SEESAC's gender analysis of SALW control legislation and policies and SEESAC's research on the position of women in the security sector, including in law enforcement agencies and armed forces.
2. **Empirical research,** which included quantitative (data collection through bespoke questionnaires for relevant institutions) and qualitative (in-depth interviews with men and women involved in SALW control) research methods.

Data collection through questionnaires for relevant institutions aimed to provide information on the current state of affairs regarding women's and men's representation and participation in SALW control. The questionnaires were distributed to the Mols in each jurisdiction, and 2022 data requested, inter alia, on the women's representation in all critical functional areas of SALW control, both policy and operational. Due to their leading role in SALW control, data was

collected on SALW commissions, criminal police, border police, physical security and stockpile management units, as well as firearms focal points. Furthermore, the questionnaire aimed to capture information on gender equality mechanisms, gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, policies on protection against them, internal complaint mechanisms, recruitment policies, career development, and measures to ensure the work-life balance.

Furthermore, to complement the analysis, SEESAC's data on women's and men's participation in training, similar capacity-building activities, and other relevant events in the field of SALW control have also been included.

In addition, 42 in-depth interviews were conducted in all WB jurisdictions, involving 34 women and 8 men. In-depth interviews provided an insight into the existing patterns of women's participation in SALW control in the WB. In-depth interviews are a qualitative research method that aims to explore an interviewee's point of view, experiences, feelings, and perspectives and provide a contextual understanding of an issue rather than statistically generalisable data.⁸ Ipsos Strategic Marketing, in cooperation with the SEESAC team, conducted in-depth interviews with selected individuals, women and men, who are actively involved in SALW control in the WB jurisdictions. The in-depth interviews were arranged primarily in person (preferred method) or through virtual platforms if that option was more convenient for the participant. They lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were conducted in the interviewee's native language, from October to December 2022.

Most interviewees are employed in the Mols and police directorates, while a few work in other ministries/agencies involved in SALW control through SALW commissions/boards. Their work experience in the security sector or sectors related to SALW control ranges from 4 to 37 years, with the majority having between 10 and 30 years of experience.

The in-depth interviews were semi-structured and covered the following topics:

- Interviewees' professional background, current duties and experience within their institution,
- Perception of women's participation and representation in SALW control at the policy and operational levels,
- Perception of societal or institutional norms and attitudes regarding women's participation in SALW control and of men's and women's attitudes toward SALW control,
- Perception of main challenges and barriers to increasing women's participation in SALW control,
- Awareness of legislative obstacles or gaps hindering women's participation in SALW control,
- Perception of the presence of gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment in their institution and personal experiences in that regard,
- Perception of the gender equality mechanisms' effectiveness and their contribution to increased women's participation and a more gender-equal working environment,
- Recommendations and suggestions on how to increase the number of women in SALW control.

GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

The analysis covers the six WB jurisdictions implementing *the Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse, and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and their Ammunition (hereinafter referred to as the Roadmap)*: Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Kosovo.

8] Pokela, Julianne. Steblea, Ingrid. Steblea, Jeffrey. Shea, Linda and Denny, Elizabeth. 2007. *Getting started with market research for out-of-school time planning: A Resource Guide for Communities. Workbook E: Conducting In-depth Interviews*. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation.

CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW OF LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS RELATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND SALW CONTROL



3.1 United Nations normative frameworks

At the **Fourth Review Conference (RevCon4)** of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade of Small and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which took place from 18-28 June 2024 in New York, the governments are called to ***promote the full, equal, meaningful, and effective participation of women in mechanisms relating to the implementation of the Programme of Action and to address the persistent barriers to the women’s full, equal, meaningful and effective participation and representation, including in leadership roles in all decision-making, planning, and implementation processes related to the Programme of Action, such as small arms commissions, programmes relating to community safety, violence reduction, collection and destruction of small arms and light weapons, stockpile management, conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding.***⁹

Longstanding efforts to enhance women’s participation across all spheres of life, including the security sector, thus also in SALW control, can be traced to establishing international normative frameworks on women’s rights and gender equality and are also being increasingly integrated into small arms control frameworks. In that regard, multiple international standards, both legally and politically binding, aim to enhance women’s representation and participation in the security sector, including small arms control. In addition, the last two decades have seen a gradual convergence of global agendas on sustainable development, gender equality, the sustaining peace agenda and SALW control, indicating that implementation efforts should be concerted and holistic.¹⁰

Below is a short overview of the relevant, legally and politically binding international standards.¹¹

LEGALLY BINDING

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979),¹² adopted by the UN General Assembly, is often regarded as an international bill of rights for women. Comprising a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for action to end such discrimination. The Convention affirms women’s equal right to participate in political and public life, and many of its provisions are directly relevant to enhancing the women’s participation in SALW control.

As per the Convention, discrimination against women is “...any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field”. Parties to the Convention are required to take all appropriate measures, including legislative and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Convention specifically calls on parties to ensure that women, on equal terms with men, have the right to participate in the formulation of government policy and their implementation and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.

9] [Final Report of RevCon4](#) (Outcome Document in Annex)

10] UNODA. 2022. [Training Manual On Gender-Mainstreaming Small Arms Control](#). New York, NY: UNODA.

11] This section extensively builds on the [UNODA Training Manual on Gender-Mainstreaming Small Arms Control](#).

12] UNGA Resolution [A/RES/34/180](#) of 18 December 1979.

The CEDAW Committee, the body of independent experts that monitors the implementation of the Convention, formulates the **general recommendations**, some of which are crucial for the role of women in arms control and disarmament. For example, General Recommendation No. 12 (1989) commends legislation to protect women against the incidence of all kinds of violence in everyday life, while Recommendation No. 19 (1992) includes the obligation to prevent, investigate, and punish violence against women. Recommendation No. 30 (2013)¹³ specifies the need to protect women through the elimination of discrimination and violence against women in conflict prevention, conflict, and post-conflict situations and emphasises the need to include robust and effective regulation of the arms trade apart from the appropriate control over the circulation of the existing and often illicit conventional weapons, such as small arms, to prevent their use for committing or facilitating serious acts of gender-based violence. Furthermore, Recommendation No. 35 (2017)¹⁴ provides additional guidance aimed at accelerating the elimination of gender-based violence against women¹⁵ and specifically recommends addressing factors that heighten the risk for women of exposure to serious forms of gender-based violence, *such as the ready accessibility and availability of firearms, including their export, a high crime rate and pervasive impunity, which may increase in situations of armed conflict or heightened insecurity*. Recommendation No. 38 (2020)¹⁶ recommends addressing the gendered impact of international transfers of arms, especially small and illicit arms, including through the ratification and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

In its most recent **General Recommendation No. 40 on equal and inclusive women's representation in decision-making systems** (2024),¹⁷ the Committee reiterates *women's right to equal and inclusive representation in all decision-making systems on equal terms with men*. It provides comprehensive guidance to parties on achieving equal and inclusive women's representation in all decision-making systems across all sectors, aiming for a systemic change, outlining legislative, policy, and programmatic measures to ensure the implementation of this obligation and overcome global challenges. The Committee identifies seven pillars of equal and inclusive representation in decision-making systems: (1) 50:50 parity between women and men as a starting point and universal norm; (2) Effective youth leadership conditioned by parity; (3) Intersectionality and inclusion of women in all their diversity in decision-making systems; (4) A comprehensive approach to decision-making systems across spheres; (5) Women's equal power and influence in decision-making systems; (6) Structural transformation for equal and inclusive decision-making; (7) Civil society representation in decision-making systems.

In that regard, several recommendations are directly relevant to women's representation and participation in the security sector, including in SALW control.

For instance, the Committee specifically recommends ensuring **parity and the strict application of the WPS in the regulation and implementation of arms control, including the proliferation of weapons and disarmament**,¹⁸ including the urgent disarmament of all nuclear weapons, as well as in the urgent conclusion of a legally binding instrument to prohibit lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS) that function without human control or oversight, and which cannot be used in compliance with international humanitarian law, and to regulate all other types of autonomous weapons systems.

Furthermore, the Committee calls parties to:

- Adapt and extend the WPS agenda to the changing nature of conflicts and new threats to peace and security, and apply the agenda holistically and as a women's human rights agenda in all decision and policy-making situations;

13] [CEDAW /C/GC/30](#) of 1 November 2013.

14] [CEDAW/C/GC/35](#) of 26 July 2017.

15] Updating General Recommendation 19. Paragraph 31c.

16] [CEDAW /C/GC/38](#) of 20 November 2020.

17] [CEDAW/C/GC/40](#) of 25 October 2024.

18] In the progress toward full equality, the CEDAW Committee envisions the "*General and complete disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control*" as enshrined in the Preamble to the CEDAW and Paragraph 28 of the Beijing Declaration.

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- Recognise women’s crucial role as a driving force of sustainable peace in conflict prevention, management and resolution, and ensure parity in all aspects, stages, and levels of decision-making on peace and security;
 - Ensure parity in leadership, development, implementation, and assessment of policies and programmes on overcoming root causes of crises and conflicts, including anticipated and unanticipated threats, preventive diplomacy, security and defence and strategic sectors of conflict prevention;
 - Ensure gender parity in leadership across all disciplinary boundaries in crisis prevention in health, environment, economy, space, cyber security finance, technology, including all new frontiers of technology;
 - Ensure parity in peace maintenance, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping, including in formal and informal peace negotiations, mediation, transitional justice and rebuilding, inter-community dialogues, and transitional decision-making bodies, including truth and reconciliation processes, national, international, regional, and hybrid commissions, councils, monitoring bodies, verification mechanisms, and monitoring groups, election preparation and political processes, demobilization and reintegration programmes, security sector and judicial reforms, and wider post-conflict reconstruction processes;
 - Remove all obstacles to parity, including by ensuring flexibility in location, childcare, and provision of security, and provide active support, such as through ensuring funding for women’s NGO representation;
 - Expand early warning mechanisms for crisis and conflict from a gender perspective, including signs such as the decrease of women in leadership, the decrease of women in public spaces, spikes in hate speech and sexual violence;
 - Ensure that the implementation of women’s rights and parity is under no circumstances treated as subsidiary to other priorities;
 - Prioritise the design and implementation of women’s rights and parity-based reparation programmes with transformative impact and DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) processes;
 - Reframe NAPs on WPS with parity as a fundamental principle, a feminist domestic and foreign policy, including a feminist approach to security, conflict prevention and peace, and newly emerging threats, including those going beyond the prevention of armed conflict and peace building in the narrow sense. Base NAPs on targeted indicators centred around the pillars of the extended WPS agenda, as well as parity at all levels of the government and parliament, security and defence systems, innovative sectors and life sciences;
 - Design WPS policies with an age-responsive approach that account for the important role of young women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding and their specific needs, as recognised in UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security.

Finally, the Committee particularly highlights the importance of the full inclusion of women in marginalised situations, including women in poverty, refugee, asylum-seeking, displaced women and women with disabilities.

Box 1: Freedom from gender-based violence against women and harassment

The elimination of gender-based violence is crucial for fostering women's increased participation in various sectors, including in the SALW control. Gender-based violence undermines women's safety, dignity and rights, creating barriers to their full and equal participation in decision-making processes and leadership roles. In the context of SALW control, addressing gender-based violence ensures that women can contribute effectively to peacebuilding and security initiatives. Pervasiveness of gender-based violence and its disproportionate impact on women's safety and well-being was extensively documented by the OSCE-led survey¹⁹ which documented that more than one in two women in the WB have experienced some form of violence since the age of 15, while almost one in three experienced it in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The misuse of firearms in domestic violence disproportionately impacts women. According to SEESAC's Armed Violence Monitoring Platform (AVMP) period, out of all women killed by firearms in the 2019-2021, 66% were killed in the context of domestic violence. In addition, the number of firearm-related incidents in the context of domestic violence recorded on the AVMP on the nearly doubled since 2018.

CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 provides thorough guidance on how to effectively and comprehensively combat gender-based violence.

The **United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325**¹⁹ (2000) reaffirms the important role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, and post-conflict reconstruction. It stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security and urges all actors to increase the women's participation and incorporate gender perspectives in peace and security efforts.²⁰ It is often described in terms of four pillars: participation and representation, prevention, protection and relief and recovery.

With the adoption of UNSCR 1325 (2000), the Security Council addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women for the first time. Nine other ensuing resolutions on WPS were adopted: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019). These ten resolutions form the foundation of the **WPS agenda** which directs the efforts to advance gender equality and ensure women's active participation in decision-making processes, policymaking, and implementation. It also addresses the critical issues of ensuring the security and protection of women against all forms of gender-based violence in armed conflicts and in post-conflict periods. Furthermore, the UNSCR 2122 (2013)²¹ urges for **women's full and meaningful participation in efforts to combat and eradicate the illicit transfer and misuse of small arms and light weapons**, while UNSCR 2242 (2015)²² includes explicit references to the impact of arms, armed conflict and sexual violence on women and development, and the key role of women's participation in small arms control.

UNSCR 2117 (2013) and UNSCR 2220 (2015) encourage women's full and meaningful participation in all policymaking, planning and implementation processes to combat and eradicate the illicit transfer,

19] [S/RES/1325](#) of 31 October 2000.

20] <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

21] [S/RES/2122](#) of 18 October 2013.

22] [S/RES/2242](#) of 13 October 2015.

destabilising accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and, more broadly, in initiatives which maintain and promote peace and security.

Arms Trade Treaty (ATT, 2013) regulates international trade in conventional arms by establishing the highest international standards to prevent and eradicate illicit trade and diversion of conventional arms. It is the first legally binding treaty that recognises the link between the arms trade and gender-based violence.²³ While the Treaty did not address issues directly related to women's participation, efforts to tackle this issue are increasingly becoming part of discussions around ATT implementation. For instance, the Tenth Conference of State Parties (CPS),²⁴ recognised the need to promote women's full, equal, meaningful, and effective participation and underlined the importance of their involvement in all decision making and implementation processes relating to the ATT. It also called on the *ATT Secretariat to collect gender-disaggregated attendance data during ATT working group and preparatory meetings, in addition to the data collected at CSPs, to foster gender balance in delegations. Gender-balanced panels should also be encouraged in plenary sessions, side events, and other forums.*

POLITICALLY BINDING

Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA, 2001)²⁵ adopted by the General Assembly as a politically binding instrument, established a normative framework for SALW control. While there is a very limited gender consideration in the PoA text, there have been increasing efforts recently to encourage governments to take a gender-responsive approach in the PoA implementation.²⁶ As previously mentioned, in the Outcome Document adopted at the RevCon4 (2024), governments are called to mainstream the gender perspective in the design and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programming on small arms and light weapons control. Apart from calling for women's full and effective participation in small arms control, this also includes the collection of disaggregated data and the application of gender analysis to inform evidence-based gender-responsive policymaking and programming. In addition, the Outcome Document underlines the necessity of addressing the gender roles, norms, and expectations for women and men to acquire illicit arms and combat gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence. Finally, governments are called to enhance the coordination between the authorities responsible for the implementation of the Programme of Action and the relevant gender equality agencies and civil society groups and encourage the engagement and participation of men and boys in mainstreaming a gender perspective into policies and programmes on small arms and light weapons.

The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**²⁷ also facilitates the incorporation of a gender-responsive approach in the SALW control, including women's participation. Specifically, Goal 5 focuses on gender equality (particularly targets 5.2 – End all violence against women and girls and 5.5 – Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life), while Goal 16 (particularly targets 16.1 – Significantly reduce all forms of violence and death rate everywhere and 16.4 – Significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows) promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. As noted, empowering women and ensuring their equal and meaningful participation in disarmament and arms control decision-making processes can lead to more inclusive, effective, and sustainable policy outcomes.²⁸

23] UNODA. 2022. *Training Manual On Gender-Mainstreaming Small Arms Control*. New York, NY: UNODA.

24] The *Final Report of the Tenth Conference* of Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty.

25] *A/CONF.192/15* of July 2001.

26] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

27] For more information, see: https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16#progress_and_info

28] UN Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament – *Securing Our Common Future* (2018).

A number of **United Nations General Assembly resolutions** from 2010 onwards address women's participation in SALW control. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution adopted in 2023 on the illicit trade of SALW in all its aspects²⁹ recognises the need for the strengthened women's participation in decision-making and implementation processes, including gender mainstreaming, relating to the PoA and the International Tracing Instrument.

UNGA **Resolution 65/69 (2010)**³⁰ and subsequent resolutions on **women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control** emphasise the importance of increasing women's involvement in disarmament efforts and promoting equal opportunities in decision-making processes.

The United Nations Human Rights Council (the Council) focuses on the impact of arms on the enjoyment of human rights and promotes efforts to protect those rights more effectively through various international instruments. For example, in the UN Human Rights Council **Resolution on Impacts of Arms Transfers on Human Rights**,³¹ concerns were expressed that the diversion of arms and unregulated, or illicit arms transfers continue to undermine the human rights of individuals, especially women, children, youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities and persons in vulnerable and conflict situations. Therefore, the Council³² underlined that member states must protect women and children who are particularly affected by the harmful impact of both lawful and illicit firearms possession.³³ In parallel, the Council adopted a series of resolutions with the purpose of accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women.³⁴

Furthermore, **the UN Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament – Securing Our Common Future** (2018),³⁵ reiterates that the **equal, full, and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes** related to disarmament is essential for the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security. It further underlines that more education and training opportunities should be established to empower young people to be a force for change and disarmament.

Our Common Agenda (2021),³⁶ the UN Secretary-General's report includes a recommendation to put women and girls at the centre of the security policy. Also, the UN Secretary-General's **New Agenda for Peace** (2023)³⁷ calls for **transformation of gendered power dynamics in peace and security** (Action 5), which could be achieved through the introduction of measures to ensure women's full and equal participation in peace and security decision-making, including gender parity in government and local institutions, backed by quotas and accountability frameworks. In addition, the New Agenda for Peace calls state parties to commit to eradicating gender-based violence, enacting legislation, and allocating 15% of official development assistance to gender equality, with at least 1% directly supporting women's organisations.³⁸

Finally, the **UN Pact for the Future**,³⁹ adopted in September 2024, under Action 8 on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, highlights the need for urgent removal of all legal, social, and economic barriers to achieve gender equality and ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

29] [A/RES/78/46](#) of 6 December 2023.

30] [A/RES/65/69](#) of 8 December 2010.

31] [A/HRC/RES/47/17](#) of 13 July 2021

32] Report [A/HRC/32/21](#) of 15 April 2016.

33] Council also adopted [A/HRC/RES/26/16](#) of 16 July 2014; [A/HRC/RES/29/10](#) of 2 July 2015; [A/HRC/RES/38/10](#) of 5 July 2018; [A/HRC/RES/45/13](#) of 6 October 2020.

34] [A/HRC/RES/11/2](#) of 17 June 2009; [A/HRC/RES/14/12](#) of 18 June 2010; [A/HRC/RES/17/11](#) of 17 June 2011; [A/HRC/RES/20/12](#) of 5 July 2012; [A/HRC/RES/23/25](#) of 14 June 2013; [A/HRC/RES/26/15](#) of 26 June 2014; [A/HRC/RES/29/14](#) of 2 July 2015; [A/HRC/RES/47/15](#) of 13 July 2021.

35] UN Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament – [Securing Our Common Future](#) (2018).

36] [A/75/982](#) of 5 August 2021.

37] [Our Common Agenda, Policy Brief 9, A New Agenda for Peace 2023](#).

38] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

39] United Nations. 2024. Summit of the Future Outcome Documents, [Pact for the Future](#), *Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations*. New York, NY: United Nations.

Box 2: Small arms control and gender equality – An overview of international normative frameworks⁴⁰

Legally binding	Politically Binding
Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)	The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Goals)
The Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms; their Parts and Components and Ammunition (Firearms Protocol)	Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA)
	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW)
United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR)	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PfA)
	United Nations General Assembly Resolutions
	<i>The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects</i> 56/24 (2001); 57/72 (2002); 58/241 (2003); 59/86 (2004); 60/81 (2005); 61/66 (2006); 62/47 (2007); 63/72 (2008); 64/50 (2009); 65/64 (2010); 66/47 (2011); 67/58 (2012); 68/48 (2013); 69/51 (2014); 70/49 (2015); 71/48 (2016); 72/57 (2017); 73/69 (2018); 74/60 (2019); 75/241 (2020); 75/56 (2020); 76/32 (2021); 76/232 (2021); 77/71 (2022); 77/80 (2022); 78/46 (2023); 78/54 (2023).
	<i>Women; disarmament; non-proliferation and arms control</i> 65/69 (2010); 67/48 (2012); 68/33 (2013); 69/61 (2014); 71/56 (2016); 73/46 (2018); 75/48 (2020); 77/55 (2022).
<i>Youth; Peace and Security</i> 2117 (2013); 2220 (2015); 2370 (2017).	<i>Youth; disarmament and non-proliferation</i> 74/64 (2019); 76/45 (2021); 78/31 (2023).
<i>Women; Peace and Security</i> 1325 (2000); 1820 (2008); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2009); 1960 (2010); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015); 2467 (2019); 2493 (2019); 2538 (2020).	Human Right Council Resolutions
<i>Youth; Peace and Security</i> 2250 (2015); 2419 (2018); 2535 (2020).	<i>Impacts of arms transfers on human rights</i> 24/35 (2013); 32/12 (2016); 41/20 (2019); 47/17 (2021); 53/15 (2023);

40] This overview is sourced from the UNODA [Training Manual On Gender-Mainstreaming Small Arms Control](#) and has been consequently adapted to include relevant documents adopted after 2022.

	<p><i>Human rights and the regulation of civilian acquisition; possession and use of firearms</i> 26/16 (2014); 29/10 (2015); 38/10 (2018); 45/13 (2020); 50/12 (2022); 56/9 (2024).</p> <p><i>Accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (series with thematic changes)</i> 11/2 (2009); 14/12 (2010); 17/11 (2011); 20/12 (2012); 23/25 (2013); 26/15 (2014); 29/14 (2015); 41/17 (2019); 47/15 (2021); 53/27 (2023).</p>
Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace agenda	
United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2282 (2016) and 2413 (2018).	United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 70/262 (2016) and 79/1 (2024).

3.2 Regional legal and policy frameworks

3.2.1 Council of Europe

The Council of Europe (CoE) has established a rich body of legal instruments and policy guidance aimed at achieving the advancement and empowerment of women and the effective implementation of gender equality in its members and beyond.⁴¹

The CoE's main instruments include:

- **The European Convention on Human Rights**⁴² is Europe's core human rights treaty. Article 1 specifies that the rights and freedoms the Convention includes are guaranteed to everyone within the jurisdiction of the parties. Article 14 guarantees the non-discrimination principle which is further reinforced by Protocol 12 to the Convention, as interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights.
- **European Social Charter**⁴³ establishes the enjoyment of economic and social rights without discrimination.
- **The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)**⁴⁴ sets, for the first time in Europe, legally binding standards to prevent violence against women and domestic violence, protect its victims, prosecute the perpetrators, and implement co-ordinated policies. It characterises violence against women as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination.

⁴¹] This section is based on: Council of Europe. 2024. *Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029*. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe.

⁴²] European Court of Human Rights, Council of Europe.1953. *The European Convention on Human Rights*. Strasbourg, France: European Court of Human Rights, Council of Europe.

⁴³] Council of Europe. 1961. *European Social Charter*. European Treaty Series - No. 35. Turin: Council of Europe.

⁴⁴] Council of Europe. 2011. *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*. Council of Europe Treaty Series - No. 210. Istanbul: Council of Europe.

In addition, the CoE's Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings⁴⁵ is aimed at preventing and combating trafficking in women, men and children for the purpose of sexual, labour or other types of exploitation.

The recommendations and guidelines from the Committee of Ministers, along with the resolutions from the Parliamentary Assembly concerning gender equality, address a broad range of issues. These include combating gender-based discrimination, preventing and eliminating sexism, protecting women from violence, achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, integrating gender perspectives in various sectors, and establishing and implementing gender equality standards and mechanisms. They also focus on safeguarding and promoting the rights of migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking women and girls, involving men and boys in gender equality initiatives, addressing digital violence, and examining the impact of new technologies and artificial intelligence on gender equality. Furthermore, these instruments deal with combating discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. They provide members with standards, benchmarks, and guidance to develop legislation and implement policies in accordance with internationally agreed gender equality standards.

3.2.2 European Union

Equality between women and men is recognised by the EU as a fundamental principle, a core value, and a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU objectives of growth, employment, and social cohesion. As such, gender equality is enshrined in overarching EU legal and policy documents, including:

- Treaty on European Union (TEU),⁴⁶ Articles 2 and 3,
- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,⁴⁷ Articles 21 and 23,
- Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),⁴⁸ Article 8,
- The Treaty of Lisbon⁴⁹ which includes a commitment to gender equality through Declaration 19,⁵⁰ annexed to the Final Act of the Intergovernmental Conference that adopted the treaty.

In addition, the EU has adopted six directives⁵¹ related to gender equality and non-discrimination:

1. **Directive 79/7/EEC** on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security,
2. **Directive 92/85/EEC** on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health in the workplace of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding,
3. **Directive 2006/54/EC** on equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (the so-called Recast directive),
4. **Directive 2010/41/EU** on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity,
5. **Directive 2019/1158** on work-life balance for parents and carers,
6. **Directive 2004/113/EC** on equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services.

45] Council of Europe. 2005. *Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings*. Council of Europe Treaty Series - No. 197. Warsaw: Council of Europe.

46] European Union. 2012. *Treaty on European Union*. Official Journal of the European Union. C325/5. Brussels: European Union.

47] European Union. 2010. *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*. Official Journal of the European Union C83. Vol. 53. Brussels: European Union.

48] European Union. 2012. *The Treaty on the Functioning of the of the European Union*. Official Journal of the European Union. C 326/47. Brussels: European Union.

49] Council of Europe. 2007. *Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community*. Official Journal of the European Union. C 306/1. Brussels: European Union.

50] *Declarations* annexed to the Final Act of the Intergovernmental Conference which adopted the Treaty of Lisbon, signed on 13 December 2007.

51] A list of all six directives related to gender equality and non-discrimination is available [here](#).

Furthermore, **the EU 2020–2025 gender equality strategy**⁵² sets policy objectives and actions to make significant progress by 2025 **towards a gender-equal Europe**. The goal is a Union in which women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are **free** to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to **thrive**, and can equally participate in and **lead** our European society.

The key objectives include ending gender-based violence, challenging gender stereotypes, closing gender gaps in the labour market, achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy, addressing the gender pay and pension gap, closing the gender care gap, and achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics.

The Strategy pursues a dual approach of gender mainstreaming combined with targeted actions, and intersectionality is a horizontal principle for its implementation. While focusing on actions within the EU, it is coherent with the EU's external policy on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Strategy is guided by the following principles: unity – taking a joined-up and coordinated approach across external policies, between Member States and the EU, and between internal and external policies; promoting cooperation and partnership at all levels; taking responsibility in relation to priority regions, especially those likely to pose a threat to the EU's security and most likely to benefit from EU action; promoting a global rules-based cooperative order with multilateralism as its key principle and the UN at its core, based on respect for International Law, including Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, with a view to creating a peaceful and sustainable world; and **incorporating gender and diversity aspects in SALW-control projects and actions**.

The EU Strategy against Illicit Firearms, Small Arms and Light Weapons and their Ammunition⁵³ aims to guide an integrated, collective and coordinated European action to prevent and curb the illicit acquisition of SALW and their ammunition by terrorists, criminals and other unauthorised actors, and to promote accountability and responsibility with regard to the legal arms trade. This new EU Strategy guides the actions by EU Institutions and EU Member States. It is guided by the following principles: unity – taking a joined-up and coordinated approach across external policies, between Member States and the EU, and between internal and external policies; promoting cooperation and partnership at all levels; taking responsibility in relation to priority regions, especially those likely to pose a threat to the EU's security and most likely to benefit from EU action; promoting a global rules-based cooperative order with multilateralism as its key principle and the UN at its core, based on respecting the International Law, including the Human Rights Law and the International Humanitarian Law, with a view to creating a peaceful and sustainable world; and incorporating gender and diversity aspects in SALW-control projects and actions. In that regard, the EU will systematically mainstream gender considerations in the design of new projects relating to the fight against gun violence and SALW control in general, including sharing good practices.

The EU action plan on firearms trafficking 2020-2025⁵⁴ has four overarching priorities: safeguarding the licit market and limiting diversion, building a better intelligence picture, increasing pressure on criminal markets and stepping up international cooperation.

52] European Commission. 2020. *EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*. Brussels: European Commission.

53] Council of Europe. 2020. *EU Strategy against Illicit Firearms, Small Arms and Light Weapons and their Ammunition*. Brussels: Council of Europe.

54] European Commission. 2020. *EU action plan on firearms trafficking 2020-2025*. Brussels: European Commission.

3.2.3 Western Balkans SALW control Roadmap

The **Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and their ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024** was adopted in 2018.⁵⁵ Ever since then, it has been serving as a guiding and consensual document developed and owned by the regional authorities in achieving a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW/firearms and their ammunition in the WB, clearly integrating the gender perspective.⁵⁶ In 2023 and 2024, through extensive regional processes, the Roadmap was revised for phase II of implementation for the 2025-2030 period.

The Roadmap aims to establish the WB as a safer region and an exporter of security, in which comprehensive and sustainable mechanisms, harmonised with the European Union and other international standards, are in place to prevent, identify, investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of arms, ammunition and explosives.

It places specific importance on advancing gender equality, builds on a gender analysis of SALW/firearms control in the region and reinforces its key recommendations. The integration of gender perspective and its implementation through action plans is monitored and evaluated as a key element to achieve a better, more sustainable, and efficient output.

The revised Roadmap has five goals:

- Goal 1.** By 2030, ensure that arms control legislation is in place, harmonised with the EU regulatory framework and other related international obligations and standardised across the region,
- Goal 2.** By 2030, ensure that arms control policies and practices in the Western Balkans are in place, evidence-based and intelligence-led,
- Goal 3.** By 2030, significantly reduce misuse, illicit manufacturing, illicit possession, and illicit flows of weapons, ammunition and explosives (WAE),
- Goal 4.** By 2030, significantly reduce the supply, demand, illicit possession and misuse of arms, ammunition and explosives through the means of prevention,
- Goal 5.** By 2030, substantially decrease the risk of proliferation and diversion through improved safety and security of the stockpiles and disposal of weapons, ammunition and explosives.

Under Goal 2, on evidence-based and intelligence-led arms control policies, there is a specific gender-related target - **Fully integrate gender and age concerns in arms control policies and prioritise women's participation in policymaking**. Such a target was also defined in the initial Roadmap document covering the period until 2024. In the context of this analysis, Goal 1, which calls for the harmonisation with the EU regulatory framework and other related international obligations, is of particular relevance.

The progress in the Roadmap implementation is measured through key performance indicators and the narrative progress reports, which provide an overview of activities undertaken by each Western Balkan jurisdiction during the reporting period.⁵⁷

⁵⁵] The Roadmap was developed as a follow up to the High-Level Meeting on SALW control in South East Europe held on 1 February 2018 in Podgorica, Montenegro. The official adoption of this document took place at the EU-Western Balkans Summit in London on 10 July 2018.

⁵⁶] For more information, see: <https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/publications-salw-control-roadmap/Regional-Roadmap-for-a-sustainable-solution-to-the.pdf>

⁵⁷] For more information, see: https://www.seesac.org/10th-regional-progress-report_1/

3.3 Jurisdictional legal and policy frameworks

In 2021, SEESAC, in close cooperation with the SALW commissions in the WB, conducted an all-encompassing gender analysis of the current legislation and policies relevant to arms control. It aimed to assess the gender-responsiveness of legislative and policy frameworks pertaining to small arms control, map the achievements and the remaining gaps, and provide recommendations for authorities on strengthening legislative and policy responses to gendered factors fuelling the demand for and misuse of firearms.

The legislation's gender-responsiveness was assessed according to several key gender concerns related to small arms: links between firearms and domestic violence and violence against women; gendered aspects of firearms demand, use, and misuse, including links between specific forms of masculinity and firearms; preconditions for the integration of the gender perspective into small arms control policies and legislation; **women's participation and representation in arms control**; record keeping practices; and gendered aspects of the arms trade.

The WB jurisdictions' legal frameworks are aligned with all major international human rights treaties, including the CEDAW⁵⁸ and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).⁵⁹

In all WB jurisdictions, **extensive legislation on gender equality and non-discrimination has been adopted in the last two decades**. Such legislation, particularly laws on gender equality and anti-discrimination laws, as well as strategies for advancing gender equality or preventing discrimination and accompanying action plans, provides a **robust basis for mainstreaming gender in small arms control and ensuring women's full and effective participation**. In addition, **action plans on UNSCR 1325** have been put in place in the region, and a comprehensive set of measures is envisaged to foster women's participation across the security sector.

Parallel to those processes, the analysis documented significant progress achieved by the relevant institutions in the WB in integrating the gender perspective into small-arms control policies. This has particularly been the case regarding the recently adopted SALW Control strategies and actions for the Roadmap implementation, which foresee multiple measures to:

- address linkages between firearms and domestic violence;
- respond to gendered aspects of firearm demand, use, and misuse – including linkages between masculine norms and firearms;
- **increase the participation and women's representation in arms control; and**
- further build institutional capacities for gender mainstreaming and improve gender-sensitive data collection and record-keeping practices.

The full-fledged analysis is available in the SEESAC knowledge base, while a brief overview is provided in Annex 1 to this report.

58] UNGA Resolution [A/RES/34/180](#) of 18 December 1979.

59] Council of Europe [Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) (CETS No. 210).

Box 3: Business case for gender equality

In addition to legal and political commitments, the growing body of research⁶⁰ has documented that **advancing gender equality provides numerous benefits to institutions** and organisations and enhances their performance and overall effectiveness.

For instance, gender-diverse teams bring on board a variety of perspective and experiences, which, on the other hand, can **enhance decision making** through improve problem-solving and creative thinking, thus facilitating **holistic and innovative solutions**. Gender-diverse leadership teams are often more effective and usually demonstrate better governance.

Gender-inclusive practices **enable access to a wider range of talent**, ensuring that organisations can draw from the best candidates, both women and men. In addition, leveraging the full potential of the workforce by providing equal opportunities for all employees enhances productivity and maximises talent utilisation. This is particularly relevant in the context of the shrinking labour force that the WB societies are facing.

Respecting and promoting gender equality in an institution promotes a more inclusive and respectful workplace culture, increasing **employee satisfaction and engagement, contributing to increased retention**. This can further enhance institution's reputation and public image. Gender equality fosters a **healthier organisational environment**, reducing instances of discrimination and risks of legal repercussions, and creating a supportive atmosphere for all employees.

60] For more information, see: Sundiatu Dixon-Fyle et al. 2020. *Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters*. NY: McKinsey and Company; Steiner, Achim, and Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. *Making the Business Case for Gender Equality*. Web log. UNDP (blog). UNDP; *The Business Case for Gender Equality* (2018); Tetra Tech ES, Inc. *Engendering Industries: Developing a Business Case for Gender Equality*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Agency For International Development; *The Business Case for Gender Equality, Engendering Industries*; Niethammer, Carmen. 2022. *Think Outside the Gender Box*. Web log, European Investment Bank (blog); Kriplani, Sanaya. 2023. *The Business Case for Gender Diversity: Why Gender Balance Is Key to a Successful Business Strategy*. LinkedIn; Asuako, Jennifer. 2020. *Women's Participation in Decision Making: Why It Matters*. NY: UNDP.

CHAPTER 4: WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SALW CONTROL IN THE WESTERN BALKANS – RESEARCH FINDINGS



This chapter analyses data on women's representation and participation in various functional areas of SALW control, as obtained from the relevant institutions. Societal and institutional norms and attitudes towards women's participation in SALW control are explored using data from in-depth interviews with employees working in SALW control. It subsequently presents the analysis based on information on institutional gender equality mechanisms and women's associations within the Mols and the Police. The chapter concludes by addressing issues related to gender-based discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment and discussing current practices regarding recruitment, career development, and retention of women in this field.

4.1 Women's representation

Within the scope of this analysis, data on the representation of women and men in different functional areas of SALW control were collected, including in:

- SALW Commissions,
- Criminal police,
- Border police,
- Firearms focal points (FFPs),
- Departments for firearms licence approval for civilians,
- Physical security and stockpile management.

In addition, SEESAC data on the participation of women and men in different regional fora and training was included in the analysis.

Although limitations in data submitted by institutions hinder the full understanding of women's representation, available data document gendered patterns of women's and men's involvement in SALW control. While men dominate across all functional areas of SALW control, women's participation in policy-related areas is significant. It has seen notable improvement in recent years, reflecting their important contributions to advancing SALW control, particularly in legislative reforms and policy-making. On the other hand, at the more technical level, women's involvement remains low, and men's preponderance is persistent.

POLICY AND LEGISLATION

SALW Commissions⁶¹

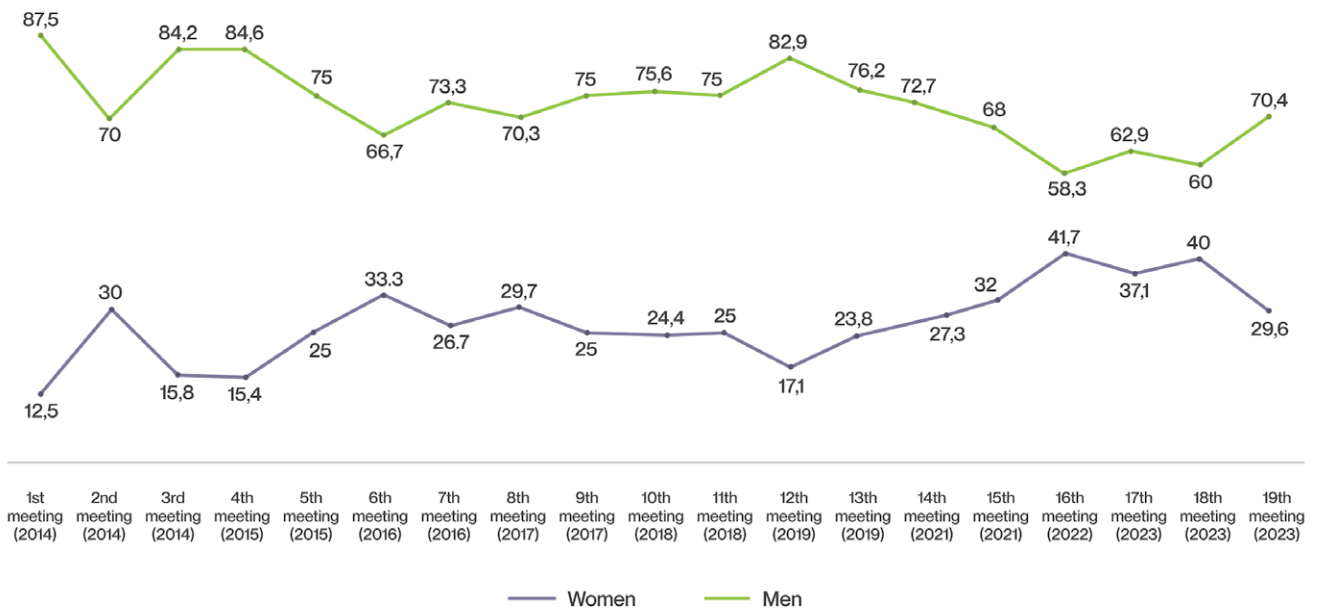
In 2022, the highest percentage of women in SALW Commissions was observed in Albania (42%), closely followed by BiH (41.1%), Montenegro (40%), North Macedonia (36.7%), Serbia (25%), and Kosovo (11.5%). This marks a notable rise compared to 2016, when women comprised 14 to 29 percent of the SALW Commission members, with all five commissions in SEE chaired by men. Since their establishment in the region, only once has a woman been the head of the SALW Commission (in Albania).

Additionally, data from regional SALW Commission meetings, held biannually since 2014,⁶² documents a general increase in women's participation. Despite occasional fluctuations, the trend towards more gender-balanced representation has been evident from the initial meeting in 2014 to the end of the reviewed period.

61] SALW commission (or SALW coordination board) is an inter-agency body responsible for policy development, coordination, implementation, and monitoring of efforts to address all SALW-related issues within a specific jurisdiction. For more information, see: UNDP, 2008a. *How to Guide, The Establishment and Functioning of Small Arms and Light Weapons Commissions*. Geneva: Bureau for Crisis Prevention & Recovery, Geneva, Switzerland: Bureau for Crisis Prevention & Recovery, UNDP.

62] The regional SALW commission meetings were organised by SEESAC and supported under the EU CDs [2013/730/CFSP](#), [2016/2356/CFSP](#) and [2019/2111/CFSP](#).

Share of women and men among participants of regional SALW Commission meetings, 2014-2023 (in %)

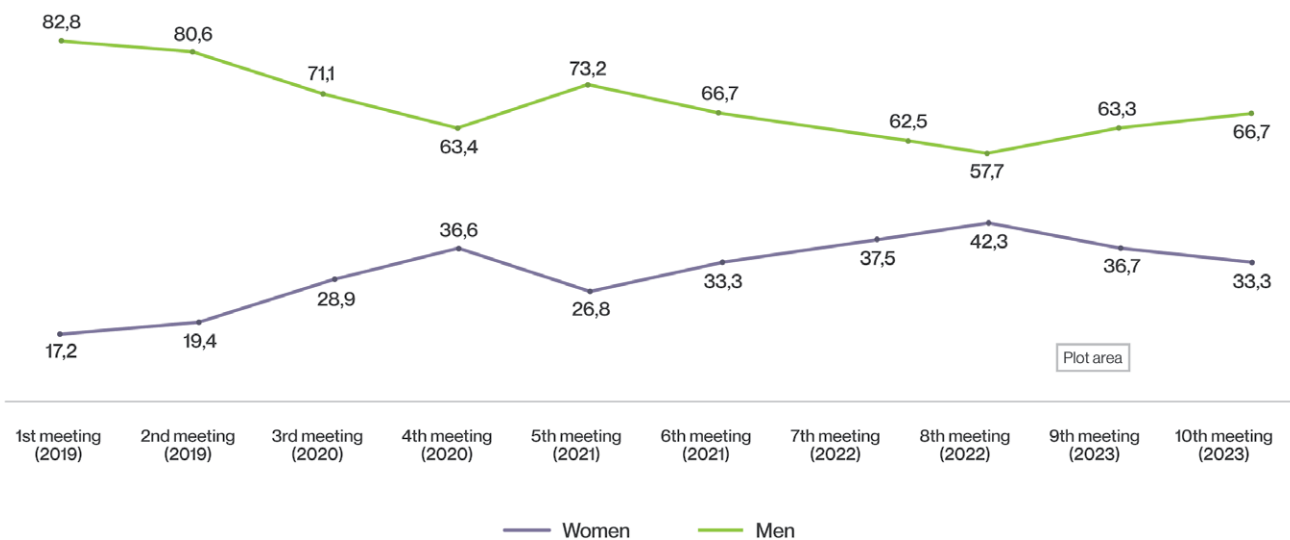


On average, women constituted 27.9% of these meetings’ participants, as compared to 72.1% of men. Women’s lowest participation at the regional SALW Commission meetings was at the first meeting held in February 2014 (12.5%), while the highest was documented in 2022, reaching 41.7%.

Women’s contribution to SALW control is particularly reflected in the activities related to the legislative aspects of SALW control, where more balanced representation of women and men has been documented. For instance, in the regional workshops on harmonising legislation in the field of SALW control with relevant parts of the EU Acquis,⁶³ the share of women from 2019 to 2024 was 54.9% compared to 45.1% of men.

Similar patterns are also evident regarding coordinating the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap implementation. On average, women accounted for 31% of participants in the regional meetings, and their participation ranged from 17.2% in 2019 to 42.3% in 2022.

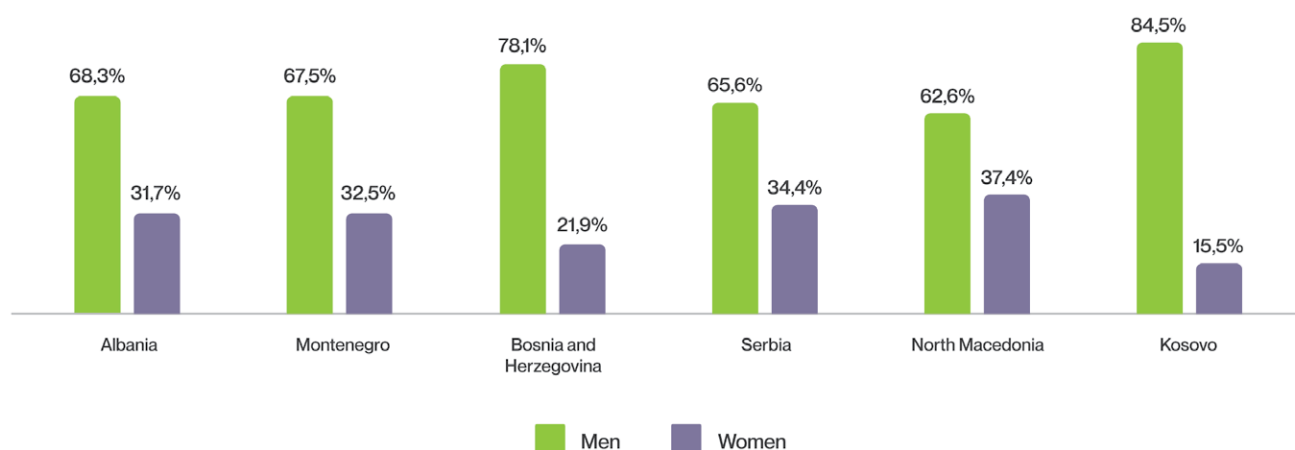
Share of women and men participants of Regional Roadmap coordination meetings, 2019-2023 (in %)



63] The regional workshops on harmonising legislation in the field of SALW control with relevant parts of the EU Acquis were organised by SEESAC and supported under the EU CDs [2018/1788](#) and [2019/2111](#).

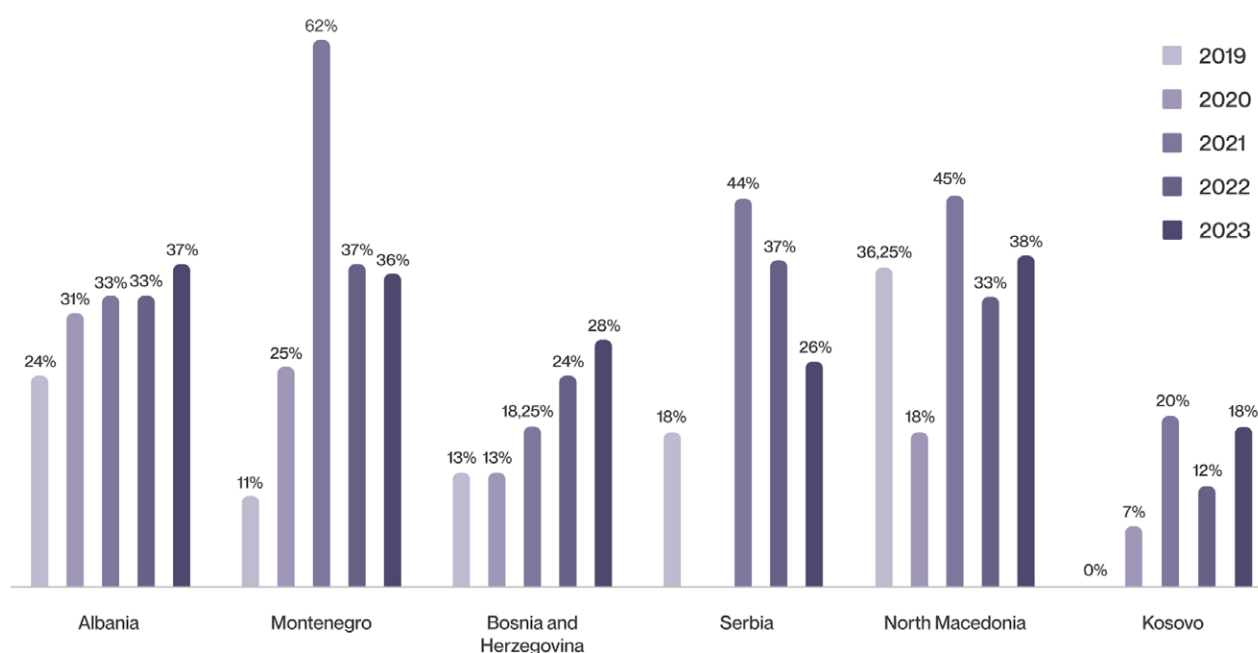
As for the local Roadmap coordination meetings⁶⁴ which take place biannually in each WB jurisdiction, significant variations have been documented across the region. In North Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and Albania, the representation of women exceeded 30%. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the share of women was 21.9%, while it was lowest in Kosovo, at 15.5%.

Share of women and men participants of local coordination meetings, by jurisdiction, 2019-2023



Despite significant variations recorded during this period, the women's representation in the local coordination meetings in 2023, in all jurisdictions, was higher than in 2019 when the first such meeting took place.

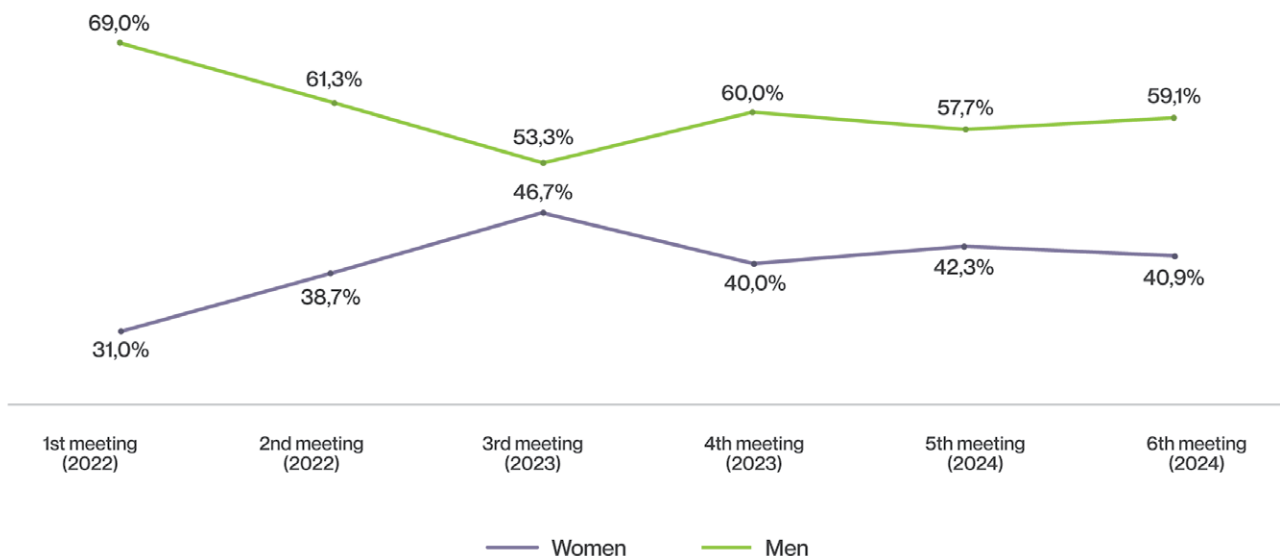
Average % of women at the local coordination meetings, by year and jurisdiction



64] The local Roadmap coordination meetings were organised by SEESAC and supported under the EU CDs [2018/1788](#), [2021/2161](#), [2022/1654](#) and [2022/2321](#).

Average representation of women among participants of the Regional Awareness-Raising Task Force⁶⁵ meetings was 39.9%, compared to 60.1% of men. The highest share of women was recorded in the third meeting when they accounted for 46.7% of participants.

Share of women and men participants of the Regional Awareness-Raising Task Force meetings



OPERATIONAL SALW CONTROL

Contrary to the trends documented at the policy-making level, the analysis of available data documents a women’s significant underrepresentation across operational SALW control, particularly related to technical roles.

Border Police

Women’s representation in the Border Police remains low across the region, both in leadership positions and as operational staff.

In BiH, women represent 9.6% of the Border Police workforce, while men account for 90.4%. Women hold 7.4% of leadership positions, compared to men at 92.6%.

In Serbia, women constitute 8.5% of officers, compared to 91.5% men. As for management positions, women hold 6% of such posts, compared to 94% of men.

In Montenegro, women comprise 9% of the operational staff, compared to 91% of men. No data on the share of women and men in leadership position was available.

In North Macedonia, women hold 14% of managerial positions in the Border Police, with men occupying 86%. Among police officers, women constitute 17%, while men comprise 83%.

⁶⁵] The Regional Awareness Raising Task Force aims to diversify approaches to awareness-raising and strengthen institutional capacities for effective implementation across the six participating jurisdictions. It also seeks to promote region-wide standardisation of awareness-raising practices through networking, information exchange, sharing of best practices and lessons learned, and coordination and collaboration on related activities. The meeting was organised in the scope of SEESAC’s more extensive work of increasing response to factors fuelling demand and misuse of firearms in the Western Balkans as part of the [Support for Enhancing the Fight Against the Illegal Possession, Misuse, and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons \(SALW\)](#) in the Western Balkans project, funded by the European Union.

In Kosovo, women account for 22.8% of managerial positions but only 3.3% among operational staff.

In Albania, data was provided for the police in general instead of specifically for the Border Police service. Among the 9,681 employees with a rank in the Albanian Police, 10% are women. Women comprise 9% of inspectors, 16% of sub-commissioners, 9.8% of commissioners, 9% of chief commissioners, 11.6% of directors, and 2.5% of first directors. Out of the 313 female employees, 124 hold the rank of inspector, while the others occupy leadership roles ranging from sub-commissioner to director.

Criminal Police

The women's representation in the Criminal Police across six jurisdictions follows a similar pattern. Their highest share was recorded in Montenegro, with 29.5%, relative to 70.5% men. In North Macedonia, women account for 20% of officers in criminal police and hold 13% of management positions, compared to 80% and 87% of men respectively. In Serbia, women account for 13.4% of operational staff, and 6.8% of managerial. In Albania, 124 of the 313 female employees hold the rank of inspector, with the rest in leadership roles from sub-commissioner to director.

According to the data provided by the Mols in BiH, women's representation follows the trends identified in other jurisdictions. The share of women among police officers is 11% in the Republika Srpska, 8.3% in the Sarajevo Canton, 27.3% in the Bosnian Podrinje Canton, 12.7% in the Tuzla Canton, 15.2% in Canton 10 and 8.3% in the Brčko District. A somehow similar pattern is observed regarding women in management positions. In the Republika Srpska women hold 17.3% of managerial positions, 8.3% in Canton 10, 9% in the Tuzla Canton, while in the Bosnian Podrinje Canton there were no women in managerial positions. For Kosovo, such data was not available.

Physical security and stockpile management (professionals responsible for SALW/ evidence preservation)

The data from three jurisdictions was not available, while the other three provided data on professionals responsible for SALW/evidence preservation, i.e. data on physical security and stockpile management. In Albania, women account for almost one quarter (24.3%) of both operational staff and managerial positions (24.2%) involved in physical security and stockpile management. In Serbia, women comprise only 5% of the operational staff, and there are none in leadership positions. In BiH, only a limited number of entities submitted data which also documented that, for instance, in Canton 10 and the Tuzla Canton, all PSSM positions, operational and managerial, are held by men. In the Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies of BiH there were two such positions, one held by a man, the other by a woman.

Firearms focal points (FFPs)

In Albania, two out of three persons appointed FFP members are women (66.7%), while in Serbia, the percentage of women is 37.5%. In Kosovo there are no women appointed FFP members. No data was provided by North Macedonia and Montenegro, while in BiH the FFP has not yet been established.

Professionals dealing with firearms licence approval for civilians

The share of women professionals working with firearms licence approval for civilians is significantly higher, which might reflect the administrative character of such positions where women tend to be more represented. In Serbia, women make up 68% of professionals dealing with firearms licence approval. In Albania the share of women was 35.7%, while in Kosovo, women accounted for 20% of those professionals.

In BiH, the representation of women and men varies among different entities. In Republika Srpska, the share of women is 77.3%; in Canton 10, it is 50%; the Posavina Canton, 33.3%; the Tuzla Canton, 11.1%, while in the Brčko District, there is only one such position, and it is held by a woman.

Bodies/commissions entrusted with approving the applications for firearms licences

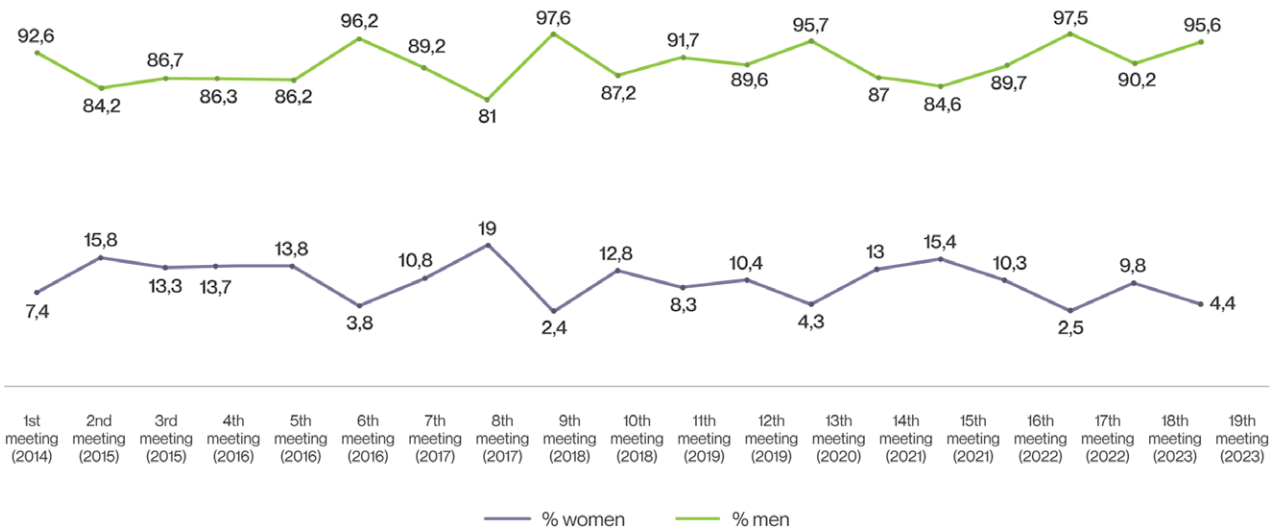
Some jurisdictions have bodies/commissions for firearms licence approval. In Albania, the share of women members of these commissions was 18%, 16.7% in Kosovo and 36.4% in North Macedonia.

In BiH, the highest percentage of women in those bodies is in the Brčko District (40%), and the Tuzla Canton (7.9%). Serbia does not have bodies entrusted with approving the applications for firearms licences, while data for Montenegro was not available.



Women’s underrepresentation in more technical aspects of SALW control is also evident in the South East Europe Firearms Expert Network (SEEFEN) meetings.⁶⁶ In the 2014-2023 period, women’s overall representation was 9.9%, with the lowest at the meeting in May 2018 (2.4%), and the highest 15.8% and 15.4% at the meetings in May 2015 and October 2021, respectively.

SEEFEN meeting participants, 2014-2023



⁶⁶] The meetings of the South East Europe Firearms Expert Network (SEEFEN) were organised by SEESAC supported under the EU CDs [2013/730/CFSP](#), [2016/2356/CFSP](#) and [2019/2111/CFSP](#).

WOMEN AND MEN IN THE WESTERN BALKANS IN SALW CONTROL – AN INSIGHT INTO THEIR CAREER PATHS

To complement the quantitative data discussed in the previous section and contribute to a better understanding of identified trends, this section provides a brief overview of the findings from the in-depth interviews with women and men involved in different aspects of SALW control in the WB, particularly focusing on their professional experiences and career trajectories.

The in-depth interviews' participants have diverse professional trajectories predominantly within **the governmental security sector, with a significant majority employed in the Mols** under their jurisdictions. They have diverse working experience, ranging from a few years to several decades in the security, law enforcement, and defence sectors. Nevertheless, the predominant experience falls within the 10 to 30-year range.

In most instances, **employees progressed through the hierarchy in a sequential manner, with rapid transitions to higher positions not commonly observed**. Individuals in management positions typically begin their careers at entry-level positions.

While a considerable number of interviewees, particularly women, are currently in charge of **legal and regulatory responsibilities**, actively contributing to **policy development and coordinating strategies related to SALW control**, two prevailing career trajectories for women and men emerge. **One path involves individuals previously engaged in frontline operational work**, including tasks such as inspections, weapons verifications, and field investigations. **The alternative path pertains to legal professionals commencing with administrative duties and progressing, over time, to strategic roles**. These differences in professional paths also exhibit significant gender differences, with women more likely to take up administrative roles.

The educational backgrounds of the interviewees, women and men, demonstrate diversity, encompassing fields such as law and police/security academies, but also mechanical engineering, natural sciences, business administration, and social sciences (law, political science, economics, sociology, psychology, etc.). Gendered patterns in education were observed, with women being significantly more likely than men to have academic backgrounds in social sciences. The obstacle to increasing women's involvement in SALW control may often be seen in relation to an insufficient number of women with specific educational backgrounds and necessary training completed, which further hinders the improvement of the gender ratio. Some interviewees highlighted that career choices are made long before entering the workforce, as shaped by societal factors and traditional gender roles, including educational ones, which could later impact their professional paths.

Often, **their initial professional pursuits did not necessarily align with SALW control but guided them toward this domain through various turns in their career paths**. Notably, for many interviewees, their involvement in the field of SALW control was more a matter of circumstance than a deliberate career choice or a personal ambition to work in this specific area.

- Some professionals had a **general aspiration to serve in the public sector or law enforcement**, and their career path led them to specialise in SALW control.
- Interviewees were typically drawn to the **public sector** due to its **perceived stability**. **It is often viewed as providing stable employment with associated benefits and a structured career progression**. **The majority have been affiliated with the public sector since the outset of their professional journeys**. Some interviewees highlight that, at the time they entered the labour market, there was a limited availability of jobs in the private sector suitable for their professional profiles, so they opted for public sector jobs.

- Some interviewees transitioned into their current roles due to organisational restructuring or the abolition of specific units within their departments, which necessitated a change in their career direction. In some cases, interviewees assumed roles in SALW control because the positions became available, and they were appointed or requested to fill them, rather than actively seeking them.
- Some interviewees mention that, **due to their education**, typically involving training for police officers and inspectors, it was a natural progression for them to continue their career in this direction. Many of them, men and women, who started their careers as police officers or inspectors, affirm that they deliberately selected their profession. Specific experiences, like working with weapons, subsequently equipped them for roles in this field. Furthermore, some affirm the importance of holding positions that grant them authorisation to carry weapons.
- While some interviewees did not start their careers with the intention of working in SALW control, they **adapted to their roles and grew to find meaning and interest in their work, often developing a passion for the field as they gained experience.**
- Many express that their motivation to remain in this job stems from the aspiration to **effect positive societal change**. They perceive their work as integral and impactful on the progress of society.
- Furthermore, some interviewees, particularly from operational backgrounds, highlight that they **find their job highly engaging and stimulating**, motivating them to pursue a career in this field.
- These points suggest that, **while not all professionals in SALW control initially set out to pursue this path, many**, both women and men, **have embraced their roles and the opportunity to contribute to an important aspect of security and governance.**
- Interviewees, depending on their current positions and years of work experience, expressed **diverse aspirations for their future work**. These ranged from a desire to continue their current career paths to aiming for higher positions that would allow them the opportunity to influence strategic levels and bring about meaningful change.

The interviewed women and men highlighted that to address the women's underrepresentation in SALW control and the wider security sector in general, educational institutions (such as police high schools, academies, and similar) should implement measures to **increase the enrolment of female students**. Such an approach can contribute to a long-term change.

Training programmes designed for women in SALW control are frequently regarded as crucial for increasing their participation in the field. These initiatives aim to address women's underrepresentation by equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge. Targeted training plays a pivotal role in bridging the gender gap, offering women the opportunity to gain specialised expertise in SALW control, empowering them to overcome barriers related to educational backgrounds and societal perceptions. By providing tailored education, these programmes contribute to breaking down stereotypes and encouraging more women to pursue careers in SALW control.

4.2 Perception of women's participation and representation in SALW control and the impact of societal and institutional norms and attitudes

Given the multisectoral nature of SALW control, which spans various departments, most interviewees typically provided insights from the perspective of their specific sector or department, which does not reflect the comprehensive overview of women's involvement in this field. This was particularly true for interviewees in administrative and legal positions, who often quoted examples from their professional settings, which are, in certain cases, dominated by women. The smaller proportion of women in technical roles somewhat limited the diversity of perspectives articulated. Due to that, in contrast to the identified trends, most interviewees believe that **women's participation in SALW control and within their institutions and departments is generally satisfactory**. Some suggested that the involvement of women in SALW control could be increased. Still, there is a consensus that hiring and promotion should prioritise candidates' expertise and competencies.

The interviewees acknowledged that gender representation varies depending on the field of work and department, particularly reflecting the administrative/legal and operational positions divide. In most jurisdictions, women constitute the majority in legal departments and roles involving administrative tasks in Mol and police directorates. However, at the operational level, the women's participation is significantly lower. These differences in gender representation are often attributed to variations in interests, educational backgrounds, and professional affinities.

On the other hand, interviewees pointed out that **prejudices against women's involvement in SALW control persist**, noting that both men and women harbour gender biases. This is particularly pronounced in more operational and technical roles. It was sometimes noted that despite women occupying positions at the strategic level, their representation at the operational level, which directly impacts end-users, remains limited. Some interviewees believe that the strategic-level appointments of women to committees and working groups may create an illusion of their participation, masking the absence of substantive involvement in operational roles.

There are somewhat ambivalent attitudes regarding the opportunities for women and men to advance in their careers. Most of the interviewees state that **men and women formally have equal opportunities to rise to leadership positions within the institutions**. In that regard, they refer to the current legislation that guarantees equal opportunities for all. However, according to them, career progress in institutions depends more on decision-makers' preferences, personal connections, and political affiliation and not so much on gender.

On the other hand, across all jurisdictions, **women are widely recognised to be underrepresented in high-level managerial and strategic positions**. Given that women have only entered certain security sector areas in the last 5-10 years, and **considering the strict hierarchy in the civil service where promotion is a long-term process**, this was in some cases raised as a reason for inadequate representation in high-level positions. It was also noted that women's low representation in police structures poses challenges for them to progress to leadership positions. Some interviewees claim that women may be less inclined to apply for higher positions due to family responsibilities, while this is not recognised as an obstacle for men. Moreover, another reason mentioned is that women, more often than men, sometimes doubt their ability to meet such positions' expectations as readily as men, making it challenging for them to embrace these roles unless they are fully confident in their ability to fulfil the requirements.

While in some jurisdictions, **the gender balance in SALW commissions has improved, women still constitute minority, and, as indicated above, only in one case did woman hold position of the head of SALW commission.** The main reason for that, mentioned in most jurisdictions, is that the members' appointment is determined by the hierarchy and positions held within their respective institutions, including in the commissions. As noted by several interviewees, besides a small number of women in senior positions, women often work in more specialised roles and not at the highest strategic level, etc. Consequently, **women are less directly involved in the SALW control decision-making process.** However, some interviewees believe that they are sufficiently involved, bearing in mind that women very often constitute the majority of delegation members participating in international meetings related to SALW control.

While observing progress compared to previous periods, some interviewees expressed concern that newly elected commissions in some jurisdictions may have fewer women. The inclusiveness of commissions appears to be somewhat influenced by the personal perspectives of decision-makers, particularly those in high-ranking positions, with changes occurring predominantly after each electoral cycle.

Notably, there are varying perspectives on the introduction of quotas. The prevailing opinion is that such measures are not effective as they might artificially inflate the number of women in the field rather than address the underlying issues that prevent women from entering and succeeding in these roles.

The interviewees indicated that **societal norms and gender roles, which could be embedded in the organisational culture, significantly impact women's participation in SALW control.** The interplay between cultural norms, institutional practices and personal perceptions shapes the environment in which men and women operate within this field. Two trends were identified:

1. Most interviewees noted **improvement toward a more balanced gender representation in SALW control institutions** in different jurisdictions. However, such perspectives might differ depending on the jurisdiction. The progress is attributed to **supportive legislation** on public officials and **various institutional employment policies**, often ensuring measures for increasing women's participation and **changing mind-sets**, leading to greater acceptance of women in roles traditionally dominated by men. The shift from previous generations is notable and campaigns aimed at women's empowerment and raising awareness about gender equality have also played a significant role. While the shift in perception is evident and expected to continue evolving, there remains a need for further support measures to empower women and recognise their potential to drive social change.
2. On the other hand, due to **persistent stereotypes in society that associate weapons with men**, women's involvement in SALW control is often perceived as unconventional or incongruent. Weapons and arms control are often associated with masculinity, creating a perception that SALW is predominantly a man's domain. Many interviewed women also believe that certain organisational units, such as, for instance, special police and anti-terrorist forces, are not conducive to women's higher representation due to the perception that these roles naturally suit men. This belief extends to hazardous occupations and roles involving significant decision-making responsibilities, reinforcing the view of men as primary decision-makers. Such a stereotype poses challenges to women's increased participation in these areas and is often mirrored in institutional mind-sets that may hinder women's involvement in the field. Historically, resistance to women entering SALW control positions was more pronounced, and despite some progress, many still believe that women lack knowledge about weapons.

A significant divide is perceived between the attitudes of men and women towards SALW control. Men are generally more lenient and advocate for fewer barriers to firearm possession, whereas women exhibit more caution and advocate for stricter measures. This suggests that a more gender-balanced approach to SALW control could positively impact policy outcomes.

There **is a common perception among interviewees that women in roles traditionally occupied by men face extra scrutiny and pressure to prove themselves.** They often have to **work harder to earn the same credibility and trust that men receive** more easily in this field, with any missteps being judged more harshly. However, the appointment of women to high political and public sector positions has started challenging these entrenched gender roles in traditionally male-dominated sectors. Despite this progress, they still navigate workplaces in which inappropriate comments and gender-specific stereotypes can undermine their perceived abilities.

Finally, many interviewees recognise gender prejudices as a barrier to the advancement of women in this field. Women leaders can positively influence institutional culture. Increasing the number of mixed-gender teams and providing training can help reduce biases.

4.3 Institutional mechanisms for advancing gender equality

A wide range of **internal institutional gender equality mechanisms** have been established in the Mols and police directorates. Their different structure and scope of work reflect diverse approaches to advanced gender equality within those institutions.

For instance, the Mol in Serbia adopted a plan for achieving and improving gender equality, and, in line with the obligations arising from the Law on Gender Equality, the person responsible for gender equality and contact persons for the implementation of the provisions of this Law are appointed. In addition, several sets of internal tools have been developed to facilitate the advancement of gender equality, including the Guidelines for the Implementation of Measures to Achieve Gender Equality in the Mol through the human resources management system; Manual for the Prevention and Protection Against Gender-Based Discrimination and Discrimination Based on Other Personal Characteristics; Instructions with Guidelines for the Prevention and Protection against Gender-Based Discrimination and Discrimination Based on Other Personal Characteristics in the Mol; as well as the 2023 Risk Management Plan for Violations of the Gender Equality Principles. Furthermore, gender equality contact persons have been appointed according to the Law on Gender Equality.

In Albania, the *diversity specialist* position has been established within the Police, whose scope of work comprises promoting the values of diversity and equal opportunities in service provision and employment policy through inclusiveness, taking account of the needs of all discriminated groups to achieve their full representation within the Police.

In Montenegro, the *gender equality coordinator* position has been established, which is a person in charge of coordinating all gender equality activities and annual reporting. In addition, persons of trust are appointed in all security sector units as antidiscrimination and gender equality mechanisms.

In Kosovo, the MIA appointed a *human rights officer* who covers antidiscrimination issues.

In the BiH Ministry of Security (MSBiH), the *Gender Equality Coordination Board* was set up in 2022, primarily focusing on integrating the gender equality principles into all the MSBiH development policies and strategies. It specifically aims to increase the number of women in leadership positions in the MSBiH, incorporate gender equality policies into sectoral documents, eliminate gender stereotypes and prejudices, raise awareness among employees on the gender equality issues, monitor statistical data and promote the use of gender-sensitive language.

In North Macedonia, collecting disaggregated statistical data on the number of the Mol representatives attending training is a mechanism to guarantee equal opportunities for women and men in professional development.

Despite efforts to establish institutional gender equality mechanisms, research findings indicate their insufficient visibility, as most interviewees are not fully aware of the specific gender equality mechanisms or measures within their institution to ensure more balanced representation of women. However, one of the most recognisable measures is the education and training of employees to raise awareness of gender equality. Additionally, a few interviewees noted that, in most jurisdictions, there are affirmative measures in place for employment or appointments within the institutions. These measures include gender quotas for recruiting police officers and inspectors, giving preference to the qualified candidates from underrepresented genders, or at least guidelines for increasing women's participation in the police force. However, there is a lack of information on how effectively and consistently these measures are applied in practice.

Regarding the effectiveness of the existing mechanisms and measures, interviewees suggest that they could certainly be more effective. Still, most emphasise that measures should not necessarily have to involve differential treatment for women and men. Instead, they advocate for equal recognition of their work and achievements. Additionally, there is mention of **gender mainstreaming in strategies and policies**, the **use of gender-sensitive language**⁶⁷ and the **continuous striving for inclusive and innovative approaches to security challenges**. Promotional campaigns are also highlighted as important for shaping the general population's perception of various professions, encouraging high school girls to pursue education in these professions.

Across the region, one of the mechanisms recognised as successful are the **women's associations within ministries and/or the Women Police Officers Network**.

The Women Police Officers Network (WPON) was established with the support of SEESAC in November 2010 under the umbrella of the Southeast Europe Police Chiefs Association by high-ranking women representatives of nine police services in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia. The WPON's mission was to place gender at the top of the police reform agenda in the region. It served as a platform for knowledge and experience exchange across police services in the region on the status, needs, and priorities of policewomen in South East Europe, an advocacy mechanism for promoting gender equality in policing, and an advisory mechanism on the gender-efficient implementation of international agreements.

Women's organisations are also established in each jurisdiction. In Albania, women working in the Police are part of the *Women Police Officers Network*, and they have contributed to the drafting of the Manual on Gender-Sensitive Policing, containing guidance on recruitment, selection, and professional development of women in the police structures. In BiH, two associations have been established: *The Policewomen's Network Association* and *the Network of Women of the Republika Srpska Mol*. The *Women Police Officers' Association* was established in Montenegro (2017) and in Serbia (2018) *Network of Women in the Police*. In North Macedonia, there is the *Women's Section* in the Macedonian Police Union. In Kosovo, the *Association of Women in the Kosovo Police* has been established.

Since their establishment, women's associations have been promoting gender equality within their institutions and working on improving the status and increasing the number of women in the police in general, including in managerial positions (decision-making positions). To that end, diverse activities have been implemented, including: raising awareness on the importance of gender equality; advocacy for gender sensitive working environment; including providing advice to police services on important issues related to the position of women in the police; professional development of members by information exchange and organisation of seminars, meetings, round tables and conferences; training on combating gender-based violence; publication of knowledge products; exchange of information and good practices in advancing gender equality; as well as cooperation with relevant institutions, bodies, non-government and international organisations.

⁶⁷] Montenegro is the only jurisdiction in which the use of gender-sensitive language is mandatory. In North Macedonia there is a provision in the Mol's Collective Agreement stipulating that masculine nouns shall be considered as neutral, i.e. as referring to both men and women. Other jurisdictions stated either that they are in the process of preparation for the use of gender-sensitive language, or that in official communication both men and women are treated with respect. In the Kosovo Police it is regulated through the Administrative Instruction.

Box 4: Establishing the Southeast Europe Women Police Officers Network: research findings⁶⁸

In 2008, the Southeast Europe Police Chiefs Association (SEPCA), with SEESAC support, proposed the establishment of the Southeast Europe Women Police Officers Network, with the aim of promoting and applying the principles of gender equality and democracy in police work.

In the run-up to organising the first regional Network meeting, an expert meeting was held in Belgrade in March 2009, with the participation of the SEPCA Secretariat, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Mission to Serbia, an expert from the Police Academy in Montenegro and the interior ministries of Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. It was agreed that all police services interested in joining the Network would conduct research to obtain the up-to-date information regarding the status and role of women police officers in the region. Conducted in 2010, it was expected to contribute to mutual understanding of the key trends and challenges and facilitate the planning of joint activities. The expert group designated the areas to be studied, designed the research instruments (surveys) and established procedures for carrying out each individual phase of the study. This was followed by field research, data entry and processing, and the drafting of the report. The study made use of four types of survey, each targeting different participants: administrative services in charge of human resources, education and training (police academies, training centres, etc.), women police officers, men police officers and management.

A total of 3,897 respondents, women and men from 8 ministries, participated in the research which documented women's significant underrepresentation among employees in the law enforcement agencies, among both uniformed and commissioned personnel. Such underrepresentation is particularly evident in management positions, which are rarely held by women.

The [research](#) particularly focused on the recruitment and hiring of women law enforcement officers, selection issues, education and training, career development, gender-related issues pertaining to work and discrimination in the workplace. It also explored establishing associations as an opportunity to enhance the police work's quality and efficiency, as well as gender equality.

Based on the research findings, a wide range of evidence-based recommendations were developed which were particularly instrumental in the development of the Guidelines for Gender Sensitive Policing (see box 6).

68] Novović, Snežana. Vla, Snežana. Rakić, Nada. 2010. *Establishing the Southeast Europe Women Police Officers Network: Research findings*. Sofia: South East Europe Police Chiefs Association (SEPCA) Executive Secretariat.

Box 5: Situation analysis in the field of gender equality in the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina (MSBiH), in cooperation with the INFOHOUSE Foundation non-governmental organisation, conducted a comprehensive situation analysis on gender equality within the Ministry. This initiative serves as a basis for future project activities, ensuring compliance with the Law on Gender Equality and the adoption of a programme to achieve gender parity.

The analysis objectives were to:

- Strengthen mechanisms for effective prevention and protection against gender-based and sexual harassment in the workplace;
- Develop a plan to address and eliminate observed gender inequalities in specific security areas.

The analysis methodology included a **desk analysis** of the relevant legal frameworks, reports on the implementation of strategies, policies and annual work reports; as well as an **online questionnaire** for employees to obtain insights into attitudes, experiences and needs, as well as their knowledge of discrimination, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment and gender equality mechanisms.

The analysis provides data on the representation of women and men in different positions in the hierarchy of the MSBiH and various institutions within the Ministry, such as the State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA), the BiH Border Police, the Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies of the BiH, the Foreigner Relations Service, Personnel Training and Professional Development Agency, the Forensic Investigations and Expert Examination Agency, Police Support Agency and the UN peacekeeping missions in South Sudan and Cyprus.

Key recommendations for improving the participation and position of women in MSBiH:

- Strengthen the capacity of employees of the Ministry by conducting regular training on UNSCR 1325, particularly for new staff;
- Enhance professional capacities to ensure women police officers' continued representation in the UN peacekeeping missions;
- Adopt and conduct an annual survey on the status of women in managerial roles and among police officers, and create a plan to improve their positions based on the survey results;
- Continue promotional activities, including public awareness campaigns, to highlight the importance of gender equality in defence and security.

4.4 Protection from gender-based discrimination and harassment

Each jurisdiction has adopted different antidiscrimination and/or gender equality laws and strategies, which are also applicable in the security sector. Generally, there are no specific **policies against gender-based discrimination** in the ministries of the interior and police. In some jurisdictions, prohibition of discrimination, including the prohibition of gender-based discrimination, is also part of the laws on police, and provisions on the prohibition of discrimination have been included in the Police Ethics Code. These provisions are mostly aimed at prohibiting discrimination, including gender-based discrimination, related to the interaction between police officers and members of the community. According to the interviewees, gender-based discrimination in their institutions, although present, is perceived to be at a low level, especially compared to the earlier period. Both men and women claim that they have not personally experienced gender-based **discrimination in the workplace**, and they are not aware of other employees facing it. Instances of discrimination are thus perceived as sporadic. Its most commonly perceived form is the undervaluation of women's abilities to perform certain activities. Additionally, there is a belief that a woman's potential need to take an extended leave due to pregnancy or childbirth is, to some extent, factored into the recruitment process.

Moreover, interviewees feel that opportunities for advancement and training within the institution are generally **not discriminatory against women**. Nonetheless, some of them expressed their concerns that career progression in the public sector can be challenging overall due to factors such as politically influenced practices and nepotism, irrespective of gender.

As for the **policies on the protection against sexual harassment**, the situation is slightly different. Harassment and sexual harassment are prohibited by several, mainly labour laws, and, in some jurisdictions, also by the specific laws dealing with the prohibition of harassment at the workplace (mobbing), such as in Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia. Some jurisdictions have developed their own policies related to sexual harassment. In Albania, the Police has the Standard Procedure for the Protection from Sexual Harassment at the Workplace, which includes opportunities for informing, training and assisting employees in cases of sexual harassment, as well as the possibility to report sexual harassment through anonymous online form directly to the Professional Standards Directorate of the General Police Directorate. The Police Authorities Coordination Directorate of BiH adopted the Decision on the Zero Tolerance Policy towards Acts of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. In the Republika Srpska, the Rulebook on Harassment at Work has been adopted as an internal act, while in the Tuzla Canton, the Protocol on Handling Cases of Sexual Harassment in Public Sector Institutions of Tuzla Canton is in place for all public sector institutions, including Mol and the Police.

There are different **internal complaint-handling mechanisms** in place in the Western Balkans. In Albania, mechanisms against violence, harassment and sexual harassment exist on two levels – central and local, each having a confidential counsellor. At the central level, complaints could be submitted to *the Directorate for Professional Standards, the General Police Directorate Appeals Commission, the Human Resources Directorate and the Police Union*. At the local level, a complaint could be submitted to the immediate superior or the unit/sector head. In BiH, several different types of mechanisms have been established, reflecting its complex structure. For example, *the Police Authorities Coordination Directorate of BiH* has an *advisor for the prevention of harassment and sexual harassment at the workplace*, while in the Republika Srpska, *the Service for the Protection of Integrity and Legality at Work* has been established; many cantons have the possibility of submitting complaints to *the Professional Standards Unit or Internal Control Department*. In the Tuzla canton there is a *consultant for internal handling of cases of harassment and sexual harassment*. In Serbia, three types of mechanisms exist – *persons for protection from harassment at work (mobbing), mediators, and persons for support, prevention and recognition of harassment and abuse*. Montenegro has appointed *persons of trust and contact persons for protection from harassment at work*, while in North Macedonia, complaints are handled by the immediate supervisor or *the Internal Control, Criminal*

Investigations and Professional Standards Department. In Kosovo, the *Complaints Commission* has been established to examine such complaints.

Despite the presence of protection mechanisms in every jurisdiction, reported cases of gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment and other forms of harassment remain very rare. 2002 data indicates that in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, there were no reported cases of gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, or other forms of harassment. In Kosovo, one sexual harassment case was reported, with the victim being a woman. In BiH, the Border Police reported four cases of sexual harassment involving women. In comparison, the Zenica-Doboj Canton recorded two cases of sexual harassment involving men and four cases of other forms of harassment involving women. By contrast, other entities did not report any cases or did not provide information.

The majority of interviewees' perspectives correspond to the low number of reported cases of harassment and sexual harassment within institutions. Although some recounted experiences or incidents of harassment or mobbing by superiors, they emphasised that such occurrences were not always gender-based. Regarding sexual harassment, many interviewees asserted its scarcity within institutional environments and reported no personal encounters. Nonetheless, some acknowledged awareness of such incidents, frequently noting that victims often refrain from reporting. When cases are reported, they are typically met with disapproval within the institution and suspicion towards those who report them. Additionally, employees exhibit reluctance to engage in the reporting process due to mistrust in the system and the burdensome nature of the process. Some interviewees have recounted female colleagues facing sexist remarks in the workplace, commonly interpreted as improper behaviour rather than overt sexism. Although these reports remain uncorroborated, often categorised as anecdotal, there is an awareness among interviewees of instances in which supervisors suggested that female colleagues be more socially engaged, implicitly proposing such interactions as career advancement opportunities.

The interviewees are aware of the existence of mechanisms to prevent and combat gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, though some perceive them as inefficient. This perception largely stems from the belief that individuals who have previously reported such cases often faced protracted and exhaustive procedures, or experienced inadequate resolution methods. This has consequently led to a perception that it may sometimes be preferable to refrain from reporting to avoid further complications and the low number of reported cases may be related to this perception.

On the other hand, a few interviewees expressed familiarity with the formal procedures for reporting sexual harassment and discrimination within their institutions. The majority indicated that, should the need arise, they would seek relevant information and report incidents to their superior, internal control, or designated contact persons for these issues. There was a consensus among interviewees on the necessity of employee education to increase awareness of the available mechanisms and to improve the recognition and reporting of discrimination and harassment in the workplace.

4.5 Recruitment, career development and retention

As previously outlined, all jurisdictions have adopted gender equality laws and strategies that comprise provisions for promoting gender equality in public services. However, analysis indicates that, aside from the general provisions within these legislative and policy frameworks, there are limited specific measures targeted at increasing the recruitment of women in the ministries of the interior, or police departments.

Overall, there are no established quotas for the recruitment of women in the police forces across the jurisdictions studied. Albania is an exception, with specific targets, such as achieving 30% women's representation in the Police, being set and reviewed annually. In other jurisdictions, the recruitment of women is managed in accordance with the general obligations outlined in gender equality laws, without the implementation of quotas.

In Albania, the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2030 has been instrumental in advancing the recruitment of women in the Police as well as in promoting women to leadership and operational roles. Additionally, within the framework of the UNSCR 1325, the Police adopted the Diversity Plan, which aims to promote gender equality and diversity principles. The interviewees have highlighted that the Police has made significant progress in integrating the gender perspective over the years, which is supported by a dedicated position within the institution responsible for ensuring the incorporation of a gender perspective across departments. Furthermore, the mandatory quota of 150 women for the Police Academy is viewed as beneficial, as it ensures a higher intake of women into the Police in the future.

In BiH, only a limited number of institutions provided information on recruitment practices. The Federal Police Directorate noted that, while specific measures aimed at increasing the number of women in the Police were not adopted, the implementation of gender equality legal provisions and the ombudsman's recommendation on the balanced participation of men and women in employment within public institutions contributed to an increased number of women in the Police.

In addition, the MSBiH Coordination Committee for the Gender Equality Law has been established relatively recently, and the current situation analysis has been conducted. Furthermore, the MSBiH has a gender equality coordinator, and some police organisations have gender focal points and advisors for preventing sexual harassment. Nevertheless, it is emphasised that these advisors are relatively new, and this mechanism has not yet fully matured.

In Serbia, Mol adopted the Plan for Achieving and Improving Gender Equality in the Mol (2018). Furthermore, the Mol, in accordance with the obligations prescribed by the Law on Gender Equality, adopted the 2023 Risk Management Plan for gender equality principle violation.

In Montenegro, campaigns for the enrolment of girls in the Police Academy are continuously conducted. In the period from 2020, there was an ongoing campaign entitled *We Are the Power of the Team – For More Women in Policing*.⁶⁹ A new campaign was launched in 2023 – *I Choose the Police*.⁷⁰ It encouraged girls to join the police which was made inclusive and capable to respond to the needs of diverse communities and groups it serves in the best possible ways. Furthermore, the Montenegrin Mol adopted two plans to increase the number of female police officers in the Police Directorate for 2018-2019 and 2023-2024.

In Kosovo, the MIA applies the principles of equal opportunities, non-discrimination and fair and proportional gender representation in recruitment procedures. The Human Resource Department produces regular statistical reports to assess the gender balance. As noted by interviewees, although in the Mol there are no provisions for improved gender balance in managerial positions, a considerable number of managerial positions are held by women.

In North Macedonia, the Law on Police stipulates that civilians from all communities should be adequately and fairly represented within the police force and that gender equality should be upheld in employment practices. Additionally, different criteria are applied to men and women in physical fitness assessments, including those for positions in the Rapid Deployment Unit, the Special Police Operations Department, and the Military Academy. In the Border Police, policies have been developed to ensure women's representation at borders and in customs for control checks, specifically mandating the appointment of at least one woman per shift.

With regard to requirements for the gender-balanced composition of the recruitment boards/committees and their capacities to integrate the gender perspective in their work, the situation varies across the region. In Albania, North Macedonia, and certain BiH entities, all members of the recruiting committees attended gender-related training, while this is not the case in others. In Albania, North Macedonia, as well as certain entities in BiH, it is not mandatory for the selection committees to include men and women. In Serbia, at

69] For more information, see: <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-montenegro/474935>

70] For more information, see: <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-montenegro/545176>

least one selection committee member must be from the less represented sex. In Montenegro it is required by law for the recruitment boards to have both women and men represented. In Kosovo, equal gender representation is ensured in the MIA recruitment commission.

The majority of interviewees across all jurisdictions believe that there are no specific legislative provisions or internal procedures limiting the involvement of men or women in SALW control. Furthermore, the legal framework guarantees and promotes active participation and equal opportunities for women and men in various domains, including SALW control. Some interviewees highlight that progress in this field has been made in recent years thanks to organisations such as the UNDP (through SEESAC) and OSCE, which have provided support for improving the regulatory framework.

Commonly suggested improvements include developing specific employment and recruitment guidelines, such as introducing quotas for certain work areas and applying different criteria for men and women entering the police force. However, a few interviewees acknowledge that challenges persist in their practical implementation despite legislative progress and the adoption of treaties and conventions to advance women's rights. This indicates a gap between policy and practice that needs to be addressed to achieve meaningful progress in gender equality within the police force.

Many interviewees underlined that the first step in increasing the number of women in the police is their entry in the profession. Following this, it is equally important to ensure that both men and women have **equal access to professional development and career advancement**. When asked about internal mechanisms ensuring equal access to career development for women and men, all jurisdictions stated that conditions and criteria for professional advancement and promotion are the same for men and women, without discrimination on any grounds.

All jurisdictions have established certain measures to monitor personnel's professional development and career advancement, usually within the human resources department or professional training and career development units. For example, in Serbia, the Career Development Department within the Human Resources Directorate, the Logistics Sector, carries out the tasks of planning, implementing and monitoring the police officers' career development in cooperation with the relevant organisational units of the MoI. This department is in charge of checking the fulfilment of the requirements for advancement, i.e. acquiring the next rank/title, as well as checking the fulfilment of the requirements for attending trainings for leadership levels. In North Macedonia, pursuant to the Rulebook on the Manner of Selection upon Deployment and Promotion and Implementing the Career System for Employees in the MoI, authorised officers are assigned regardless of gender. Any authorised official who meets the promotion conditions according to their professional qualities and qualifications, professional abilities, completed training courses during employment and performance when exercising their duties may be promoted, regardless of gender. Affirmative measures are applied when checking the physical fitness of persons applying to a call to join the service in the Rapid Deployment Unit and the Special Anti-Terrorism Unit. In Kosovo, the personnel's professional development and career advancement are monitored through the Human Resources Management Unit, which handles the data of all civil servants via electronic systems: the Human Resources Management Information System (HRMIS) and the Information Resource Management System (IRMS).

Internal mechanisms to ensure women and men have equal access to career development have been established in Albania⁷¹, Kosovo and North Macedonia.

On the other hand, no specific internal mechanisms are in place in any jurisdiction to **monitor personnel fluctuation, i.e. retention of women and men**.

Measures that enable women and men to reconcile professional and family life are of utmost importance for balanced gender representation within the sector. These measures typically include protection for pregnant police officers, flexible working hours, and paid leave for childcare. In Montenegro, for instance,

⁷¹ In Albania, equal access to career development for women and men is guaranteed by the Law On Police, the Law on Protection from Discrimination and the Law No. 9970, "on Gender Equality", as amended, and the 2021-2030 10-Year Strategy.

flexible working hours are provided when specific operations allow such opportunities. Additionally, if both parents are police officers, they may be assigned different shifts as required to balance their private and professional lives better. In some jurisdictions, in addition to maternity leave, women are entitled to a breastfeeding leave, and, in jurisdictions in which a child is younger than three years, mothers are exempt from night shifts or working beyond full-time hours. Additionally, certain jurisdictions have introduced paid leave or reduced working hours for parents of children with disabilities. In Albania, the time spent on maternity leave is also counted in the time required for progressing a higher rank. In Serbia, in the Mol Guidelines for the Implementation of Gender Equality Measures, there is an entire section addressing *flexible working practices*. Several long-term goals aimed at better reconciliation of professional and private life have been set, such as: the introduction of measures to encourage fathers to use parental leave when the police employs both parents, increasing the predictability and regularity of shift work so that women and men can more easily balance parental responsibilities; introduction of flexible working practices in the Mol (flexible working hours, working from home, etc.), in the organisational units in which it is possible to organise such a work regime, and depending on types of work performed and the employees' needs.

When it comes to the **opportunities for women and men to advance in their careers**, interviewees expressed somewhat ambivalent attitudes. Most of them state that men and women have equal opportunities to rise to leadership positions within the institutions, usually referring to legislation in force that guarantees equal opportunities for all. However, according to interviewees, career progress in institutions depends more on the decision makers' preferences, personal connections and political affiliation, and not so much on gender. On the other hand, across all jurisdictions, **women are widely recognised to be underrepresented in high-level managerial and strategic positions**. Given that women have only entered some areas of work in the last 5-10 years, and considering the strict hierarchy in the civil service where promotion is a long-term process, it is sometimes seen as logical that women are not represented in the highest positions to the same extent as men, since accessing opportunities for career advancement often requires individuals to wait for the retirements of senior staff. However, most interviewees believe this situation will change in favour of women over time.

Furthermore, some interviewees claim that women may be less inclined to apply for higher positions due to family responsibilities and the burden of work-life balance. Another reason mentioned is that women frequently have lower self-confidence compared to men, making it challenging for them to embrace such positions unless they are certain they can fully meet the expectations.

Box 6: The Guidelines for Gender-Sensitive Policing

The Women Police Officers Network in South East Europe (WPON) was founded in November 2010 in Sarajevo, BiH, under the auspices of the Southeast Europe Police Chiefs Association. The participants of the founding meeting appointed women police officers representing police services in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina–Federation, Bosnia and Herzegovina – Republika Srpska, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Croatia, North Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia. The WPON was established with the support of the Southeast Europe Police Chiefs Association and SEESAC.

The WPON's mission was to place gender at the top of the agenda of police reform in the region. It served as a platform for knowledge and experience exchange across police services in the region on the status, needs and priorities of policewomen in SEE, an advocacy mechanism for promoting gender equality in policing and an advisory mechanism on the gender-efficient implementation of international agreements.

The WPON developed **the Guidelines for Gender Sensitive Policing**, with an Emphasis on the Recruitment, Selection and Professional Development of Women in Police Services. The Guidelines are based on the recommendations from the regional research on the position of women in police services - **Establishing the Southeast Europe Women Police Officers Network**, as well as on discussions during the public presentations of this study held across the region during 2010 and 2011.

The Guidelines aimed to:

- Identify the challenges in recruitment, selection and professional development of women in the SEE police services;
- Develop a greater understanding of the problems that women face in the police services;
- Foster the exchange of information and good practice in this area; and
- Define measures that can improve the existing practice.

Specifically, the Guidelines provide practical recommendations that will help to 1) Recruit more qualified and motivated women candidates and ensure their admission in the police education system and police services; 2) Make the selection process more gender-sensitive; 3) Support the professional development of women in the police services; 4) Ensure that formal and informal obstacles do not limit career advancement for women.

4.6 Challenges and hindrances

The interviewees highlighted that the challenges faced by women with regard to their participation in SALW control stem from a complex interplay of gender-related, societal, cultural and professional factors. These challenges and hindrances could be divided into several groups:

Societal and cultural influences, including a gendered perception of small arms control

Societal expectations and traditional gender roles play a significant role in shaping women's career choices, often steering them away from fields which are traditionally perceived as men's domain. Women often opt out of operational roles in SALW control due to deeply ingrained societal expectations and personal preferences influenced by cultural norms.

This is closely related to the gendered perceptions in which arms control-related fields are primarily considered men's fields of expertise, which could discourage women from entering these professions. These stereotypes are reinforced by the lack of visible female role models and societal biases that undermine women's abilities to perform in these areas. Related to that, interviewees stated that women often show less interest in and familiarity with weapons, which contributes to their underrepresentation in roles that involve handling firearms. The handling of firearms is viewed as more challenging for women. They are often less familiar with weapons, a smaller percentage of them possess and desire to own a weapon and may not show significant interest in such tasks. As already stated, this lack of interest is influenced by societal norms and a lower exposure to weapons. Furthermore, the historical context of mandatory military service for men has provided them with greater exposure to weapons, giving them an advantage in SALW control roles. This disparity in experience and differences in familiarity with arms control tasks further contribute to the gender imbalance in the field.

Together, these factors create a professional environment that is less welcoming to women, necessitating targeted interventions and supportive policies to bridge the gender gap in this critical field.

Women face additional scrutiny when working in male-dominated environments, which can impact their willingness to pursue or remain in these roles. Women pioneering in the fields traditionally dominated by men frequently encounter the distrust of their male colleagues regarding their abilities to perform their jobs as successfully as men. Consequently, they must exert additional effort at work to tackle such stereotypes. This often becomes a barrier, leading women to reconsider and sometimes withdraw from pursuing or sustaining these positions. In addition, societal and familial pressures can lead to self-doubt and the internalisation of gender norms that can lead to self-limiting attitudes that further impact career opportunities.

Work-life balance and career advancement

In addition to societal and cultural barriers reflected in the prevailing gender norms and roles, women in SALW control face substantial professional challenges, particularly in balancing work-life responsibilities.

Women frequently face the dual burden of professional and family responsibilities, which hinders their career progression. The difficulty of balancing these demands leads many of them to seek other professional roles or leave the profession altogether. Most interviewees highlight that meeting the demands of their profession was difficult during the period in which they start their families and have young children. Some successfully navigated these challenges because they had support from their families, but others opted for reassignment to less demanding positions, typically in administration. Although challenges related to the work-life balance are not exclusive to sectors and tasks within the SALW control field but are rather pervasive across the institution, they more often associate such challenges with operational and lower positions.

Namely, the interviewees recognise the demanding nature of fieldwork, requiring availability at any time of day. The demanding nature of operational roles, which often require extensive fieldwork, shift work, and adaptability to unpredictable conditions, is perceived as an obstacle for women, especially those with family obligations. Consequently, this creates a significant barrier to their sustained participation and advancement in these roles. Due to those multiple factors, such roles are seen as less appealing due to the demanding nature of the work and societal pressures to fulfil family responsibilities. It is commonly noted that women often opt for reassignment from these roles (transition from the police officer to a civil servant status), or a shift towards office tasks once they start families. Therefore, implementing supportive policies and practices is crucial for women to succeed in operational roles. This includes flexible work arrangements, mentorship programmes, and initiatives that challenge societal norms and promote gender equality in the workplace.

Educational and training barriers

Some interviewees highlighted that career choices are made long before entering the workforce, and societal factors and traditional gender roles play a role in shaping these choices. Educational barriers could also be important, as the specific qualifications required for these roles, traditionally have fewer female graduates in some jurisdictions. Many interviewees believe that this educational gap limits the pool of qualified women for these positions. Also, it is often necessary to have some additional training completed.

Training programmes designed for women in SALW control are frequently regarded as essential measures to increase their participation since targeted training programmes would offer women the opportunity to acquire the specific expertise required for SALW control, empowering them to overcome barriers related to educational backgrounds and societal perceptions. By providing tailored education, these programmes contribute to breaking down stereotypes and encouraging more women to pursue careers in SALW control.

Job responsibilities, turnover and retention

Gendered patterns of women's and men's representation in different areas of SALW control are often perceived as the "natural division" of roles in SALW control, with women excelling in administrative and analytical tasks while men handle physically demanding fieldwork. While this division can create a functional synergy, it also reinforces traditional gender roles and limits women's opportunities in operational roles.

Furthermore, as stated by the interviewees, the physical demands and potential hazards associated with fieldwork in SALW control deter many women from pursuing these positions. Operational roles in SALW control are typically associated with physical demands, irregular working hours, and potential exposure to dangerous situations, which are often seen as incompatible with societal expectations for women. This cultural bias not only discourages women from pursuing careers in SALW control but also undermines their confidence and interest in roles that involve handling weapons.

Regarding staff turnover in institutions, particularly in the field of SALW control, perceptions among the interviewees differ based on jurisdiction. In Serbia and Montenegro, turnover within the institutions/departments is seen as infrequent and sporadic. Regular retirements and occasional transitions to the private sector or abroad are rare. In BiH, opinions are divided, some observe low turnover, while others perceive it as high. The reasons for it differ; some argue that men tend to leave the public sector roles more frequently due to limited advancement opportunities, while others point out that women may request transfers to other positions/departments within the institution, especially after starting families. Conversely, turnover in North Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania is seen as somewhat more pronounced. In these jurisdictions, women are perceived to have longer tenures in the workplace, finding it advantageous due to long-term job security and considerations related to maternity leave. On the contrary, men are noted to change workplaces more frequently, pursuing higher-ranking positions and better salaries in the private sector. Nonetheless, it is essential to highlight that many men and women choose to stay in the public sector until retirement, indicating that there is no notable gender disparity in turnover.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND IDENTIFIED MEASURES TO SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS IN ADVANCING WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN SALW CONTROL



5.1 Conclusions

- The analysis of data on women's and men's representation in SALW control and review of international, regional and jurisdictional legal and policy frameworks documented that, while important steps have been made to increase the awareness of gender dynamics in SALW control and improve women's participation in the field, numerous challenges and gaps remain.
- International normative frameworks, both legally and politically binding, call for concerted efforts to enhance women's participation across the security sector, thus also in SALW control. In doing so, they prioritise women's equal, meaningful, and effective participation in SALW control and call on governments to address the persistent barriers, including in leadership roles in all decision-making, planning, and implementation processes.
- Such calls are also reflected in the relevant frameworks for the WB. The SALW Control Roadmap calls for the full integration of gender concerns in arms control policies and prioritises women's participation. In all WB jurisdictions, extensive legislation on gender equality and non-discrimination has been adopted in the last two decades. Such frameworks, as well as strategies for advancing gender equality, WPS action plans and SALW control strategies provide a robust basis for mainstreaming gender in SALW control and ensuring women's full and effective participation.
- Regarding women's participation in the security sector in general, and thus SALW control, institutions in the WB have, to a varying degree, developed internal policies, established gender equality mechanisms, and implemented targeted activities to boost women's participation.
- Women police officers networks have played a vital role in advocating for the improvement of the status of women in law enforcement agencies and continue to be the agents of change.
- Such efforts have also generated good practices and it should be explored how they can be upscaled and regularly and sustainably implemented.
- Despite this progress, implementation gaps persist, with many policies lacking the necessary enforcement and monitoring mechanisms to ensure genuine gender inclusivity. Efforts to increase women's inclusion in the security sector have also been uneven and, in some aspects, slow.
- Unequal representation of women and men across sectors throughout the region is evident, and patterns of their involvement in SALW control are highly gendered. While men dominate across all functional areas of SALW control, women's participation in policy-related areas is significant. It has seen notable improvement in recent years, reflecting their important contributions to advancing SALW control, particularly in legislative reforms and policy-making. This progress is particularly evident in women's increased participation in SALW commissions and coordination efforts related to the implementation of the WB SALW Control Roadmap.
- On the other hand, at the more technical level, women's involvement remains low and men's preponderance is persistent. More specifically, they are generally underrepresented in key operational areas such as border and criminal police services, and technical roles like stockpile management. In some jurisdictions, their participation in these roles is almost negligible. The lack of female representation in crucial operational roles not only perpetuates traditional gender norms but also restricts the potential for innovative approaches to security challenges.
- Identified gendered patterns also indicate a systemic division in which women are directed toward "soft" roles and administrative positions. At the same time, men dominate operational tasks, which reduces the potential for women to contribute more broadly to SALW control. Bridging this gap requires targeted efforts to integrate gender perspective into the SALW control policy and practice.

- Such patterns of women's and men's representation in different areas of SALW control are often perceived as the "natural division" of roles in SALW control. While this division can create a functional synergy, it also reinforces traditional gender roles and limits women's opportunities in operational roles.
- Barriers to women's participation are persistent and result from a complex interplay of several factors.
- Institutional and societal gender norms and attitudes continue to reinforce gender stereotypes. Societal expectations and traditional gender roles play a significant role in shaping women's career choices, often steering them away from fields that are traditionally perceived as male-dominated, including the security sector in general.
- This particularly relates to SALW control, frequently seen as men's field of expertise, which could discourage women from entering related professions and hinder the establishment of a more enabling environment. These stereotypes are reinforced by the lack of visible female role models and societal biases that undermine women's capabilities in these areas.
- This indicates a more profound cultural challenge, both institutional and social, that views women as less suited for physically demanding or dangerous tasks, such as those found in SALW control. These entrenched attitudes not only create barriers for women seeking to enter or advance in SALW control roles, but they also perpetuate their exclusion cycle. Even when legal frameworks are in place to support gender equality, societal perceptions can undermine their effectiveness, as women may still face resistance or doubt from colleagues and supervisors. The gendered perception of firearms as a male domain remains strong and limits women's engagement at operational levels despite improvements in legal frameworks.
- Women often opt out of operational roles in SALW control due to deeply ingrained societal expectations and personal preferences influenced by cultural norms.
- Moreover, women face additional scrutiny when working in male-dominated environments, which can impact their willingness to pursue or remain in these roles. Women pioneering in fields traditionally dominated by men often encounter the distrust of their male colleagues regarding their abilities to perform their jobs as successfully as men. Consequently, they must exert additional effort at work to tackle such stereotypes.
- In addition to societal and cultural barriers reflected in prevailing gender norms and roles, women in SALW control face substantial professional challenges, particularly in balancing work-life responsibilities, which are particularly relevant to operational roles that require irregular hours, fieldwork, or shift work. This has led many women to opt for less demanding roles, or leave these professions entirely, further perpetuating their underrepresentation in critical operational tasks.
- Educational barriers are relevant, as the specific qualifications required for these roles, such as physics, mechanical engineering and chemistry traditionally have fewer female graduates in some jurisdictions.
- Perception gap and lack of awareness. A notable gap exists between the statistical data obtained from the jurisdictions and the perceptions of many interviewees. Despite evidence showing women's low participation in operational roles, many respondents believe that women's involvement is adequate. This reflects a lack of understanding of the systemic barriers women face and suggests that even within security institutions, awareness of gender disparities is limited.
- Women rarely hold leadership or decision-making positions in SALW commissions, criminal and border police services, or other field-based roles. The hierarchical nature of the security structures, along with specialised roles, often leaves them out of key decision-making processes, since this power is often concentrated among those with extensive operational experience. The lack of female leadership further hinders the development of policies and practices that do not consider women's perspectives. Moreover, their absence from influential roles means there are fewer role models and mentors to support the development of younger women in this field.

- Despite the existence of gender equality laws and anti-discrimination mechanisms, women in SALW control still face discrimination and harassment, though it is underreported, as data obtained from the jurisdictions confirmed. Many interviewees mentioned a lack of trust in internal complaint mechanisms, leading to fears of backlash and prolonged, exhausting resolution processes. The culture within the security institutions, while improving, often fails to create an environment in which women feel comfortable reporting harassment or other forms of discrimination. In addition, institutional gender equality mechanisms established in different forms across the region are not sufficiently recognised by the employees, indicating the need for their further strengthening and promotion.

5.2 Identified measures to support institutions in advancing women's representation and participation in SALW control

To address the challenges documented in this analysis, in terms of enhancing a gender-balanced competency-based representation and participation of women and men in SALW control and creating a gender-inclusive work environment, several measures are proposed to relevant institutions engaged in SALW control aiming at inclusive, equitable and ultimately more effective approaches to security challenges:

Fostering enabling environments

- Promote **gender-responsive leadership** for high-level decision makers (women and men) to foster the establishment of a gender-inclusive environment and to provide leaders with the essential skills to initiate and steer the activities towards those goals. To that end, innovative initiatives such as gender coach programmes should be utilised;
- Support networking among leaders to facilitate learning and exchanging experiences and good practices;
- All personnel, both uniformed and non-uniformed, should be systematically trained on gender equality, protection against gender-based discrimination, and enabling a violence, including gender-based violence-free work environment;
- Further examine and understand women's lower representation in managerial positions and, based on such analysis, develop measures to address it. To that end, provide leadership training to women to support their career development towards managerial posts.

Record keeping, gender analysis and targeted human resources strategies

- Ensure that all data on employees are sex- and age-disaggregated and that gender analysis is consistently applied in human resource analysis, in particular with regard to recruitment, professional development, promotion, retention and training attendance;
- Provide gender training, including on gender analysis, gender-sensitive data collection and gender mainstreaming, for human resource departments as well as analytical departments;
- Regularly conduct and disseminate to decision-makers the analysis on the status of women and men within the institution with recommendations on how to improve gender-balanced representation and foster gender-inclusive environment;

- Introduce monitoring of the average time women and men spend in one position/rank, i.e., the average time spent in the previous rank, disaggregated by position/rank, and the average time spent in the current rank, disaggregated by rank;
- Introduce monitoring of fluctuations and the reasons of personnel leaving the service, including exit interviews, to enable the development and implementation of measures for improving staff retention and reducing turnover;
- To address women's underrepresentation in SALW control and the security sector in general, the educational institutions (such as police high schools, academies, etc.) should implement measures to increase enrolment of women where discrepancies in enrolment still exist;
- Implement targeted recruitment strategies to attract women to operational roles within areas related to SALW control, along with other measures.

Training, Capacity Building and Networking

- **Ensure that women and men have equal access and equally benefit from SALW control-related capacity-building activities such as training, workshops, seminars, mentoring, coaching etc.;**
- Based on a training needs assessment, develop and implement training programmes to provide women with skills and knowledge necessary to excel in SALW control. They should focus on arms inspection, crime investigations, border security operations and other fields in which women's underrepresentation was documented. Tailored training can help bridge the educational gap in technical fields;
- Implement tailor-made mentorship programmes that can provide women with guidance and support from senior professionals in the sector;
- Further strengthen **the women police officers network by providing adequate resources for their work and boosting their expertise on SALW control.**

Awareness Raising Campaigns

- Regularly implement awareness-raising activities to combat gender stereotypes, discrimination and sexism, which have adverse effects on the status of women in the security sector, including SALW control. Such initiatives can help change gender stereotypes and perceptions of "traditional" gender roles in the workforce, which often create barriers to the balanced participation of women and men. This should also address the perception that certain roles are more appropriate for men and encourage both men and women to participate more actively in SALW control;
- Through information dissemination highlight the benefits of gender diverse workforce in the security sector, such as improved decision-making and community relations;
- Showcase successful women in operational roles to serve as role models. These efforts can help create a shift in perception and encourage women to consider careers in fields traditionally dominated by men.

Strengthening Leadership and Decision-Making Opportunities

- Provide leadership training for women in mid-level roles to equip them with the tools they need to rise to higher positions;
- Ensure a balanced representation of women and men in policy making and strive for gender parity in SALW commissions, relevant working groups, committees etc.

Flexible Work Arrangements and Family-Friendly Policies:

- To improve the retention of women and men in SALW control, **flexible working arrangements** should be introduced whenever the context allows. For example, offering more predictable shift patterns, opportunities for part-time work, and flexible parental leave can help women and men balance their professional and family responsibilities;
- Recognising important parenting role of fathers, programmes encouraging men to take parental leave could also alleviate some of the burden on women, contributing to a more gender-equal workplace.

Strengthened Gender Equality Anti-Discrimination Mechanisms

- Institutions should reassess their gender equality and anti-discrimination mechanisms which address the issues of gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse to further strengthen their functioning. This includes conducting regular gender audits, providing gender-sensitivity training for staff at all levels and enhancing transparency in handling complaints;
- Ensure that all staff are informed about measures to prevent gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse and consistently implement these measures;
- Further strengthen the internal complaint mechanism for discrimination and harassment cases.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Continuously monitor women's representation in security institutions based on regular collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data on recruitment, retention and career advancement, which should be used to inform future strategies;
- Develop and use gender-sensitive monitoring mechanisms, such as performance evaluations and feedback loops, to track the success of gender equality initiatives and identify areas in which further interventions are needed.

Gender responsive budgeting

- Ensure that adequate budgetary allocations are made to facilitate the implementation of these measures in a sustainable manner.

By implementing these measures, institutions can create a more inclusive and effective SALW control framework, ensuring that women and men shape the future of security across the region equally. This will enhance gender equality while strengthening the overall effectiveness of law enforcement and policy-making in the SALW control sector.

ANNEX I: LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: A BRIEF OVERVIEW



ALBANIA

Albania has established an extensive legal framework for advancing gender equality and non-discrimination.

The Law on Gender Equality in the Society⁷² regulates the fundamental issues of gender equality in public life, equal protection and treatment of women and men, equal opportunities for the exercise of rights, as well as their participation and assistance in development. The law provides special interim measures that guarantee at least 30% participation of the underrepresented sex in political and public decision-making posts, as well as mandatory collection of gender statistics by all government bodies.⁷³

The Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination⁷⁴ aims to ensure the right of every person to equality before the law and equal protection by the law; equality of opportunities and possibilities to exercise rights, enjoy freedoms and participate in public life; and effective protection from discrimination and from every form of conduct that encourages discrimination.

2021-2030 Gender Equality Strategy⁷⁵ has four main strategic goals: 1) exercise of economic and social rights of women, young women, girls, and men, young men and boys in the society and the empowerment of women, young women, and girls in all their diversity, aiming at an improvement and sustainability of the environmental (green) economy and their equal participation in the digitalisation process; 2) **ensuring equal participation, representation, and leadership rights of women and men, young women and men, girls and boys in all their diversity in political and public decision-making at the local level**; 3) reduction of all forms of harmful practices, gender-based violence and domestic violence, and 4) application of gender mainstreaming as the main tool for achieving gender equality and gender justice in the society.⁷⁶ Under the second strategic goal, there are two objectives related to women's participation – enabling conditions for equal participation and representation and strengthening social attitudes and behaviour that encourage equal participation, representation, and leadership.⁷⁷

Albania has also adopted strategic documents related to SALW control such as the **Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and Explosives Control Strategy (2019-2024)**.⁷⁸ This strategy ensures and monitors the fulfilment of Albania's obligations under different international conventions and documents in the area of firearms control as well as *the Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse, and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Their Ammunition in the Western Balkans*. The goals of the Strategy and Action Plan are aligned with the regional Roadmap. In this regard, the Strategy highlights that the possession and misuse of firearms are clearly gendered, expresses explicit commitment towards the advancement of gender equality within small arms control and aims to mainstream the gender perspective across different areas of SALW control. One of the Strategy's targets is to fully integrate gender and age concerns in SALW/firearms control policies and ensure women's meaningful participation in SALW/firearms control.

This overall target contains several specific objectives: • increase women's participation in SALW/firearms control; • increase the capacities of institutions in charge of SALW/firearms control to mainstream the gender perspective and develop gender-responsive SALW/firearms policies; • improve institutional and policy responses to the misuse of firearms in domestic and intimate partner violence; • enhance the prevention of SALW/firearms misuse.

72] Law No. 9970, dated 24/07/2008.

73] [The 2021-2030 Gender Equality Strategy](#)

74] Law "on the Prohibition of Discrimination" (no. 10 221/4 February 2010, amended 2020).

75] [The 2021-2030 Gender Equality Strategy](#)

76] Mandro, Arta. 2021. *Report on the Gender Analysis of Small Arms Control Legal and Policy Frameworks in Albania*. Belgrade: SEESAC.

77] Ibid.

78] [The Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and Explosives Control Strategy \(2019-2024\)](#)

Two accompanying Action Plans have been adopted for the implementation of the Strategy, covering the 2019-2021 and 2022-2024 periods.⁷⁹

Several other important strategic and internal documents are also in place, such as: the Guidelines for Preventing and Addressing Violence, Harassment and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace within Administration Institutions; the General Police Director Order No. 657, dated 28/07/2020 “on the approval of the procedure for handling cases of harassment and sexual harassment in the Police” (revised); Order of the Director of Police “on conducting a study related to the integration of female police officers in operational roles holding the ranks of director, chief commissioner and commissioner”.⁸⁰

In addition, the **Action Plan on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 “Women, Peace and Security”** establishes the specific objective of increasing women’s representation in the decision-making activities and processes related to security and peacekeeping.

SERBIA

The Law on Gender Equality⁸¹ was adopted in 2021, replacing the Law on Equality between Sexes. Article 7 of the Law defines the policy of equal opportunities which includes 1) equal participation of women and men in all stages of planning, preparation, making and implementing decisions that affect the position of women; 2) taking into account the different interests, needs and priorities of women and men when adopting public and other policies and deciding on rights, obligations and legally based interests; 3) taking measures that ensure an equal starting point for the achievement of the principle of equal opportunities for persons, that is, groups of persons who are in an unequal position based on sex, sexual characteristics, that is, gender, especially members of sensitive social groups. Article 39 on gender equality in defence and security also mandates the implementation of activities aimed at increasing the representation and involvement of women in decision-making positions in all processes related to the maintenance of peace and security.

The Law on Prohibition of Discrimination⁸² regulates the general prohibition of discrimination, the forms and cases of discrimination, and the methods of protection against discrimination.

The 2021 to 2030 Gender Equality Strategy⁸³ sets out the overall goal of overcoming the gender gap and achieving gender equality as a prerequisite for the development of society and the improvement of the daily life of women and men, girls and boys. In the context of women’s participation, Measure 2.4. of the Strategy refers to strengthening capacity, improving the institutional and normative framework for gender equality in political life, and ensuring equal participation of women and men, especially vulnerable groups, in decision-making on public affairs. One of the measures that specifically targets peace and security, Measure 2.2, foresees improved security of women in peace, conflict and post-conflict recovery of society, crisis and emergency situations, through the integral implementation of UNSCR 1325 - Women, Peace and Security in the Republic of Serbia. However, it should be noted that the **2017–2020 Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325**,⁸⁴ which envisaged, inter alia, the introduction of a gender perspective in all public policies in the field of defence and security, has expired, and that the third Action Plan preparation process is underway.

79] https://www.seesac.org/Strategic-Documents_1/

80] Information obtained from the questionnaire submitted by the Mol.

81] Official Gazette, No. 52/2021.

82] Official Gazette, No. 22/2009 and 52/2021.

83] Official Gazette, No. 103/2021.

84] Official Gazette, No. 53/2017.

Furthermore, **the 2019–2024 Small Arms and Light Weapons Control Strategy in the Republic of Serbia**,⁸⁵ aims to ensure the safety of people through efficient and effective control of small arms and light weapons by establishing comprehensive and sustainable mechanisms for identifying, preventing, prosecuting, and controlling the illegal possession, misuse, and trafficking of firearms, ammunition, and explosives.⁸⁶ The overall goal of reducing the threat of illegal possession and misuse of SALW, ammunition and explosives for civilians is planned to be achieved through five goals, with one of the measures intended to achieve integration of gender principles in the Action Plan implementation. This measure further provides a sub-measure related to ensuring women's effective and meaningful participation in SALW control.

Several other strategic and internal documents are also in place: Guidelines for the Implementation of Measures to Achieve Gender Equality in the Mol - through the human resources management system; Handbook for the Prevention and Protection against Gender-Based Discrimination and Discrimination Based on Other Grounds in the Mol; Instruction with the Guidelines for Prevention and Protection against Gender-Based Discrimination and Discrimination Based on Other Grounds in the Mol; Risk Management Plan for Violation of the Gender Equality Principle (2023); the Mol Plan for Achieving and Improving Gender Equality.⁸⁷

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

BiH has made significant efforts to harmonise its legislative framework with international standards and commitments and has adopted key legislation in this area – the **Law on Gender Equality**.⁸⁸ This Law addresses gender equality in all spheres of public and private life and provides a framework for the gender institutional mechanisms in charge of implementing and overseeing the implementation of the gender equality provisions.⁸⁹ It provides that government bodies at all organisation levels, local self-government bodies, including legislative, executive and judicial authorities, political parties, legal persons with public authorities, legal persons engaged in government institutions, or under government supervision, entities, cantons, towns, or municipalities the work of which is supervised by a public body, have to ensure and promote equal gender representation in the processes of managing, decision-making, and representation.⁹⁰

Furthermore, BiH adopted a new **2023-2027 Gender Action Plan**.⁹¹ It contains three strategic goals within which priority areas of action are defined: 1) Development, implementation, and monitoring of a programme of measures to improve gender equality in government institutions; 2) Building and strengthening systems, mechanisms, and instruments for achieving gender equality; and 3) Establishing and strengthening cooperation and partnership. Under the part related to gender and security, there are several references to the SALW Control documents. Improving the safety of civilians, including multiply marginalised groups in BiH, through women's equal participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and building and preserving sustainable peace is stated as the main goal under gender and security.

The 2021-2024 BiH Strategy for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons⁹² aims to enhance the effectiveness of arms control efforts and to advance the implementation of the *Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of SALW and Their Ammunition in the Western Balkans* by 2024.⁹³ It sets out four strategic goals for small arms control advancement: 1) Improvement/

85] Official Gazette, No. 44/2019.

86] Stevanović Govedarica, Gordana. 2021. *Small Arms and Light Weapons, Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence - Analysis of Regulatory Framework and Practice*. Belgrade: United Nations Development Programme.

87] Information obtained from the questionnaire submitted by the Mol.

88] Official Gazette, No. 16/03 and 102/09.

89] Miftari, Durkalić and Barreiro Mariño. 2021. *Gender Equality Profile of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: UN Women Office Bosnia and Herzegovina.

90] The Law on Gender Equality, Article 20

91] [2023-2027 Gender Action Plan](#)

92] [2021-2024 Strategy for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons in BiH](#)

93] <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-bosnia-and-herzegovina/479873>

harmonisation of the legal framework and the implementation of SALW control legislation; 2) Reduced misuse, illegal possession and trade in weapons and ammunition; 3) Enhanced management of SALW in the possession of the Armed Forces in BiH; and 4) Increased cooperation with international and regional organisations and civil society.⁹⁴ Under the first strategic goal, it is highlighted that the gender perspective plays an important role in understanding the distribution of and demand for firearms, as well as in explaining the specific risks that women and men face with respect to firearms misuse, including in domestic and intimate partner violence.

The **Action Plan for the implementation of the 2021-2024 Strategy for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons in BiH** further operationalises the strategic commitments and envisages the implementation of a wide range of activities to integrate the gender perspective into SALW control, such as increasing women's participation in SALW, increasing the capacity of institutions engaged in small arms and light weapons/firearms control to integrate the gender perspective into measures and develop gender-responsive policies on SALW; and improving institutional and strategic responses to the misuse of firearms in the context of domestic violence and intimate partner violence.⁹⁵ In addition, the Action Plan foresees the implementation of gender-related activities with respect to data collection, awareness raising, and cooperation with civil society organisations.

MONTENEGRO

Montenegro has **adopted the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on the Protector of Human Rights**⁹⁶ that define in more detail the promotion and protection of the whole corpus of human rights, create conditions for the empowerment of women and persons of different gender identities and set out priority areas and goals that should contribute to reducing gender inequality in all areas of social, economic, political and cultural life. With the adoption of **the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination**,⁹⁷ the legislative framework became further strengthened through the integration of international principles and standards for the protection against discrimination.⁹⁸

The Law on Gender Equality⁹⁹ defines gender equality as equal participation of women and men, as well as persons with different gender identities, in all spheres of the public and private sectors; equal position and equal opportunities to exercise all rights and freedoms and to use personal knowledge and skills for the development of the society, as well as to enjoy equal benefits of the work achievements. The law stipulates that all government authorities, such as administration and local self-government, public institutions, public enterprises and legal persons exercising public authority, as well as business companies, other legal persons, and entrepreneurs, are obliged, in order to achieve gender equality in all phases of planning, making, and implementing decisions, as well as in taking actions in their competence, to assess and evaluate the impact of those decisions and activities on the position of women and men.¹⁰⁰ The Parliament and the Government are obliged to promote and implement gender equality principles, in particular the principle of gender-balanced representation in the election and appointment to certain offices, the setting up of working bodies, and determining the composition of official delegations. These provisions established a basis for gender mainstreaming in small arms control.

94] Sumonja, Sanja. 2021. *Report on the Gender Analysis of Small Arms Control Legal and Policy Frameworks in the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Belgrade: SEESAC.

95] Ibid.

96] Official Gazette, No. 1/2007, 38/2015 and 21/17.

97] Official Gazette, No. 41/2010, 40/11, 18/14 and 42/17.

98] 2021 Gender Equality Strategy.

99] Official Gazette, No. 046/07, 73/10, 40/11 and 35/15.

100] Vuksanović, Tijana. 2021. *Report on the Gender Analysis of Small Arms Control Legal and Policy Frameworks in Montenegro*. Belgrade: SEESAC.

Montenegro has adopted the **2021-2025 for Gender Equality Strategy**.¹⁰¹ The Strategy aims to enhance the implementation of the existing normative framework regarding gender equality and protection against gender-based discrimination, as well as to improve education, culture, and media policies to reduce the level of stereotypes and prejudices towards women. The Strategy particularly aims to increase the participation of women and persons of different gender identities in areas that provide access to, use of, and benefit of social and natural resources.¹⁰²

The 2019-2025 Strategy for Combating Illicit Possession, Misuse and Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons and Ammunition calls for the full integration of gender and age dimensions into SALW/firearms control policies and ensuring women's meaningful participation in SALW/firearms control. Also, one of the goals is to increase awareness and reduce the misuse of firearms in violence against women, domestic violence, and other forms of gender-based violence. To that end, plans have been established to develop measures and institute procedures to ensure women's equal representation in the SALW Commission and other relevant bodies and implement training on the gendered aspects of SALW/firearms for members of the SALW Commission and all other institutions responsible for the implementation of control policies in this field.¹⁰³

In addition, the **2024-2027 Strategy for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 - Women, Peace and Security and accompanying resolutions, with the 2024-2025 Action Plan**¹⁰⁴ strategically aim to improve the position of women and girls in all processes that lead to the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The strategic goal will be achieved by enhancing institutional capacities for gender equality, increasing women's representation in the security sector, and raising awareness of the protection needs of women and girls in conflict zones. Additional objectives include integrating the gender perspective in education, preventing discrimination and abuse, supporting women in emergencies, and improving public awareness of the UNSCR 1325 through various communication channels. Finally, it is important to note that the Montenegro Mol has adopted the plan to increase the number of female police officers in the Police Directorate.¹⁰⁵

NORTH MACEDONIA

North Macedonia has established a solid legal framework to protect women's rights and gender equality, through the adoption of the **Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men**,¹⁰⁶ (adopted in 2006 and amended in 2012) and the **Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination**¹⁰⁷ (adopted in 2020). **The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men** regulates the establishment of equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men, the general and special measures, the rights and obligations of the responsible entities in ensuring equal opportunities for women and men, etc. Creating conditions for equal opportunities is recognised as a concern of the entire society. The law defines and envisages gender mainstreaming in each phase of creating, adopting, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating policies, while considering the promotion and improvement of equality of women and men.¹⁰⁸ The Government is obliged to anticipate equal participation of women and men in the composition of its working bodies and delegations, its consultative and coordinative bodies, and the appointment

101] [2021-2025 Gender Equality Strategy with 2021-2022 Action Plan](#)

102] UNDP. 2021. [Gender equality Profile of Montenegro](#). Podgorica: United Nations Development Programme.

103] Ibid.

104] Ministry of Defence of Montenegro, [UNSCR 1325 Implementation Strategy](#).

105] [The 2024-2024 Action Plan](#) for creating conditions for increasing the number of female police officers in the Police Directorate is a development document for the implementation of the gender equality policy in the Ministry of the Interior-Police Directorate. This plan contains the reasons for the introduction of the measures, the goals they achieve, the measures implementation method, deadlines for implementation and measures implementation supervision.

106] Official Gazette, No. 6/12, 166/14.

107] Official Gazette, No. 258/2020.

108] Frishchikj, Jasminka. 2021. [Report on the Gender Analysis of small Arms Control Legal and policy frameworks in North Macedonia](#). Belgrade: SEESAC.

of representatives on the governing boards of public enterprises and institutions.¹⁰⁹ Hence, this Law provides a robust basis for mainstreaming gender in small arms control.

More recently, the **Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination** (2020) has been adopted, guaranteeing protection from discrimination, including gender-based discrimination.

The 2022-2027 Gender Equality Strategy¹¹⁰ clearly states the connection between this strategy and other strategic documents, including the SALW Control Strategy and the 2020-2025 UNSCR 1325 – Women, Peace, Security, Strategy. The three main priority goals are: the establishment of an effective and efficient system for the improvement of gender equality at all levels; improvement of the position of women in all spheres of public and private life; suppression of gender stereotypes and building a non-violence and non-discrimination culture.

Furthermore, the **2022- 2024 Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Control Strategy and Action Plan**¹¹¹ aims to create a safer environment and have control of small arms and light weapons in the society in order to improve the conditions for enhancing general security. The strategic goals are aligned with the Regional Roadmap, and there are several specific gender related goals, such as: ensuring that the analysis on the implementation of relevant legislation and institutional practices to prevent firearms misuse in the context of domestic violence and violence by intimate partners; developing tools and conducting training for relevant professionals on gender-sensitive licence approval and risk assessment of firearm-related domestic violence through the activity related to the inclusion of gender-sensitive tools in the firearms legislation; strengthen the role and capacities of the SALW Control Commission in order to establish a mechanism for engagement of civil society organisations working on gender equality and gender-based violence in the development of policies on small arms and light weapons control; monitoring and analysis of crime related to firearms, ammunition and explosives are foreseen, with data segregated by gender and age; mainstreaming gender and age issues in SALW control policies and **ensuring women’s meaningful participation in SALW control**; establishing a mechanism for participation of relevant gender mechanisms in the development of small arms and light weapons control policies; and addressing gender and other factors that drive demand and misuse of firearms, particularly targeting young men.¹¹²

Finally, the **2020-2025 Second Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 – WPS** contains a specific goal related to women’s participation, which aims to enable a gender-transparent, inclusive, and equal working environment for women and to ensure women’s effective, accountable and sustainable participation in all aspects of society through adoption and implementation of supporting legislation and policies as well as training and education.

KOSOVO

The Law on Gender Equality¹¹³ guarantees equal opportunities and equal treatment in public and private areas of social life, including political and public life, employment, education, health, the economy, social benefits, sport, culture, and other areas. The Law explicitly includes the gender perspective in every stage of the process, including planning, approval, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of legislation, policies or programmes, and budgets in all political, economic and social areas. The Law also defines the institutional mechanisms for gender equality and the duties and responsibilities of the relevant officials. With respect to data collection, the Law stipulates that all data and statistical information collected by

109] Ibid, p. 33.

110] [The 2022-2027 Gender Equality Strategy](#).

111] [Small Arms and light Weapons \(SALW\) Control Strategy and 2022- 2024 Action Plan](#).

112] Ibid, p. 25.

113] Official Gazette, No. 2004/2.

institutions at all levels of legislative, executive, judicial power, as well as other public institutions should be disaggregated by sex, and submitted to the Statistics Agency.¹¹⁴

Furthermore, the **Law on Protection from Discrimination**¹¹⁵ aims to eliminate all, including direct or indirect, forms of discrimination against women, as well as any other grounds of discrimination.¹¹⁶

In addition, **the 2020-2024 Gender Equality Programme** provides a wide range of entry points for gender mainstreaming and increasing women's participation across the security sector, which are also relevant for enhancing the gender-responsiveness of SALW control. Two specific objectives of this programme aim to create a safe and non-discriminatory environment for women and men in the security sector and increase equal participation and representation in the decision-making process in line with the requirements of the Law on Gender Equality. In that regard, a wide range of activities are planned, including: research on forms of discrimination and a safe environment for men and women in the security sector; establishment of a women, peace and security advisory board within security institutions; training of members of security institutions on the requirements of the Law on Gender Equality, including gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming; undertaking affirmative measures to increase the number of women in the security sector as well as continuous research on the position of women in the security sector.¹¹⁷

Furthermore, the **2017-2021 Small Arms, Light Weapons, and Explosives Control Strategy and Action Plan**¹¹⁸ includes a comprehensive set of measures which aim to provide a safe environment in which SALW and explosives are under control and do not pose a serious threat to domestic and regional security. The Strategy had four strategic objectives: advancement of legislation and policy development; development of a comprehensive approach for reducing the risks of weapons and explosives posing threats to public order and security; further development of institutional and investigative capacities, and enhancing inter-institutional coordination and international cooperation.¹¹⁹ Although all four strategic objectives are directly relevant to advancing gender-responsiveness in SALW control, the Strategy and the accompanying 2017-2021 Action Plan provide only limited recognition of the gender perspective's important role in SALW control. Gender perspective integration is foreseen primarily in activities related to awareness rising.¹²⁰

114] Qosaj Mustafa, Ariana. 2021. *Report on the Gender Analysis of Small Arms Control Legal and Policy Frameworks in Kosovo*. Belgrade: SEESAC.

115] Official Gazette, No. 2004/3.

116] Qosaj Mustafa, Ariana. 2021. *Report on the Gender Analysis of Small Arms Control Legal and Policy Frameworks in Kosovo*. Belgrade: SEESAC.

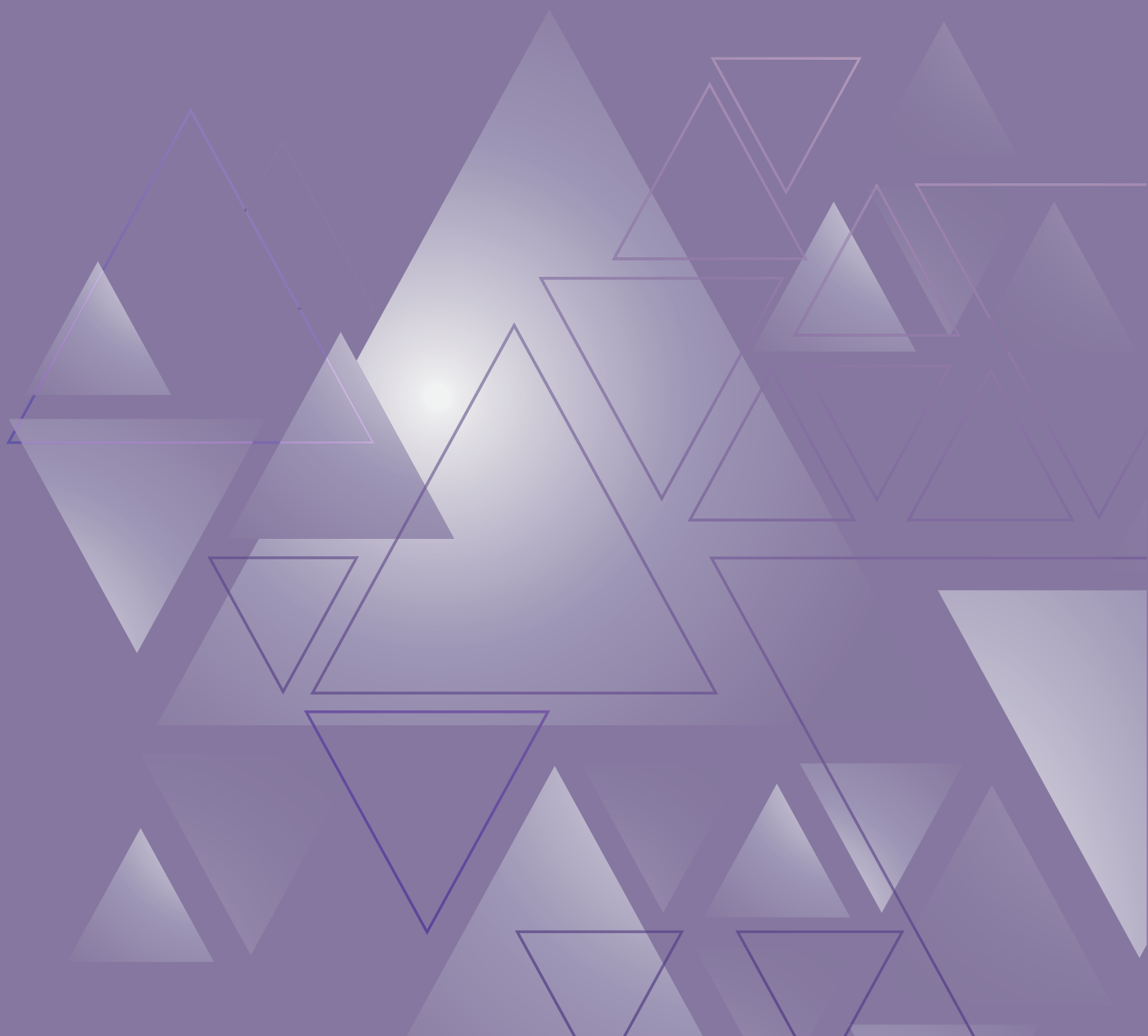
117] Ibid, p. 32.

118] *2017-2021 Small Arms, Light Weapons and Explosive Control Strategy and Action Plan*.

119] Qosaj Mustafa, Ariana. 2021. *Report on the Gender Analysis of Small Arms Control Legal and Policy Frameworks in Kosovo*. Belgrade: SEESAC.

120] Ibid.

ANNEX II: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS



1. QUESTIONNAIRE

SURVEY ON THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN SMALL ARMS CONTROL		
QUESTIONNAIRE ADDRESSED TO THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR/POLICE		
<p>This questionnaire is addressed to the Ministry of the Interior/Police. Completing this questionnaire should provide a more comprehensive and objective picture of the situation in the areas/sections included in the analysis. In case you have any questions or require any additional clarification, please contact</p>		
Please enter the contact details of the person tasked with completing the questionnaire:		
Name and surname:		
E-mail:		
Telephone number:		
THANK YOU!		
1.		
<p>Please list the laws and strategies (including by-laws, regulations, action plans, programmes and any local acts) in your jurisdiction that govern the field of gender equality and establish the basis for ensuring gender equality and balanced representation of women and men at the Ministry of the Interior/Police.</p>		
<p>Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:</p>		
2.		
a) Is there a gender equality mechanism in place at the Ministry of the Interior/Police?	YES	NO

If YES , please explain which gender equality mechanism is in place at the Ministry of the Interior/Police and what its mandate is.		
b) Is there any administrative act in place concerning the establishment of such a mechanism?	YES	NO
If YES , please specify. Is this act publicly available? If it is available online, please provide a direct link to the document.		
c) If there is a gender equality mechanism in place, have the members of the gender equality mechanism received specialised training on gender equality?	YES	NO
Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:		
3.		
Is the use of gender-sensitive language officially regulated at the Ministry of the Interior/Police?	YES	NO
If YES , please describe how gender-sensitive language is used in practice.		
Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:		

4.		
Are there any women's organisations or associations at the Ministry of the Interior/Police?	YES	NO
If YES , please briefly describe these organisations or associations.		
Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:		
5.		
Are there policies in place (such as laws, by-laws, regulations, strategies, action plans, programmes, local acts) on the protection against gender-based discrimination?	YES	NO
If YES , please list these policies, and if they are available online, please provide a direct link to the document.		
Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:		
6.		
Are there policies in place (such as laws, by-laws, regulations, strategies, action plans, programmes, local acts) on the protection against sexual harassment?	YES	NO
If YES , please list these policies, and if they are available online, provide the respective link.		

Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:		
7.		
a) Is there an internal complaint-handling mechanism in place (people's advocate, mediation service or other) at the Ministry of the Interior/Police with a view to monitor, prevent and control:	YES	NO
1. gender-based discrimination		
2. sexual harassment		
3. other forms of harassment		
If YES, please describe this mechanism.		
b) If there is no such mechanism in place, whom can the employees contact if they feel that they have been victims of gender-based discrimination/sexual harassment/other forms of harassment:		
Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:		
8.		
Have there been reported cases of sexual harassment/gender-based discrimination in 2022? Please indicate the number of reported cases by gender of the person who reported, if any, in the following table.		

	Gender-based discrimination		Sexual harassment		Other forms of harassment	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Number of cases reported in 2022						
Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:						
9.						
Are there any specific measures or approaches in recruiting women at the Ministry of the Interior/Police? Are there any measures aimed at increasing the number of women at the Ministry of the Interior/Police?				YES		NO
If YES, please describe them.						
Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:						
10.						
Are there established numerical quotas or percentages as regards the recruitment of women?				YES		NO
If YES, please specify the quota.						
Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:						

11.			
Are there annual targets set for the recruitment of a specific number of women and men?	YES		NO
If YES, please specify the designated number/percentage of women and men pursuant to these targets:			
Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:			
12.			
a) Is there an imposed timeframe within which a certain percentage of women should be recruited (and what is the percentage)?	YES		NO
b) Please specify the timeframe:			
c) Please specify the percentage of women, as set out in the target to be achieved within that timeframe:			
Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:			
13.			
Have the members of the recruitment committee (board) participated in any gender-themed training?	Yes, all of them	Some have participated and some have not	No, they have not attended such training

Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:

14.

Is it compulsory for both women and men to be a part of the selection committee/board?

YES

NO

If YES, which regulation provides for this?

Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:

15.

Is there an internal mechanism to ensure that women and men have equal access to career development?

YES

NO

If there is such a mechanism in place, please describe it briefly.

Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:

16.		
Is there a system in place to monitor personnel professional development and career advancement (career development)?	YES	NO
If there is such a system in place, please describe it briefly.		
Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:		
17.		
Is there an internal mechanism in place to monitor personnel fluctuations, i.e. men and women staff retention?	YES	NO
If there is such a mechanism in place, please describe it.		
Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:		
18.		
Are there any measures that enable women and men to better reconcile professional and family life at the Ministry of the Interior and the Police? Which are these measures, please describe them.		
Improvement of the employee remuneration system and their promotion, including the increase of salaries and transparency for other lawful remunerations and benefits.		

Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:

19.

Are there any measures to ensure that the working conditions fit both women's and men's needs?

YES

NO

If YES, please describe them.

Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:

PLEASE FILL IN THE DATA ABOUT THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND MEN ACCORDING TO THE FOLLOWING TABLES

If the legislation specifies that any information requested is confidential, please include a note referring to that specific legislation and provide only percentage

If the requested information is not available, please indicate so.

Information is requested for 2022

Ministry of the Interior/Police

1. Border Police

	Women		Men		Total		No data available
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Lead position							
Police officer							

Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:

--

2. Criminal Police

	Women		Men		Total		No data available
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Lead position							
Police officer							

Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:

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3. Physical security and stockpile management (professionals responsible for SALW evidence filing)

	Women		Men		Total		No data available
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Lead position							
Operational staff							

Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:

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4. Firearms Focal Point

	Women		Men		Total		No data available
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	

Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:

5. Professionals working with firearms licence approval for civilians

	Women		Men		Total		No data available
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	

Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:

6. Authorities (commissions) entrusted with approving the applications for firearms licences (if such authorities are in place)

	Women		Men		Total		No data available
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	

Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:

7. SALW Commission

	Women		Men		Total		No data available
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	

Note: If you have any comments regarding the required information, please note them below:

2. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS (SALW) CONTROL

Introduction

Date:	
Institution/department name:	
Interviewee's name:	
Interviewee's position in the institution/department:	
Working experience (total)	
Years of experience in SALW control:	

A. Warm Up: Professional Background and Experience – 5 minutes

Aim: To gather essential context about the interviewee's career - their professional journey, roles, key responsibilities, and experiences within the Ministry of the Interior, particularly in the area of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) control.

1. Could you please provide a **brief overview of your professional background**?
 - a) Could you briefly describe **your previous roles and responsibilities within the Ministry of the Interior/Security**?
 - b) How many **years of experience** do you have working in SALW-related roles? What **specific experiences** have you had in the field of SALW control?
2. Could you provide **more detail about your current position** and **your duties within your department**?
3. What motivated you to work in the field of SALW control? **Why did you choose this path?**
4. What are your **personal career aspirations**?
 - a) Have your aspirations changed over the years?

B. Perception of Women's Participation in SALW Control/Challenges and Hindrances - 10 minutes

Aim: Gaining insight into the interviewee's perception of women's current participation in SALW control, at both policy and operational levels. Analysing personal experiences or observations of challenges and barriers that women face in participating in SALW control more fully.

5. What are your **thoughts on women's current participation in your institution and in SALW control in general** (SALW commissions, border or criminal police, physical security and stockpile management and firearms focal points)?
6. How would you describe the **present state of women's representation** in yours and other departments that focus on SALW control? Do you think **women are sufficiently represented**?
 - a) *FOR SALW COMMISSION MEMBERS*: Have you observed any **notable differences in women's representation** across various positions and institutions in SALW control? If so, could you elaborate on these differences? (*Representation of women/men in leadership positions when it comes to SALW control (among top and middle management staff), at the policy level versus the operational level, etc.*)
 - b) *FOR OTHER INTERVIEWEES*: Have you observed any **notable differences in women's representation** across various positions in your institution? If so, could you elaborate on these differences? (*Representation of women/men in leadership positions - among top and middle management staff*)
 - c) Has your institution taken any **measures to address the imbalance in women's representation** (*disproportionate representation of men and women in the institution, its organisational units related to SALW control or in management positions*)?
 - i. *IF YES*: How have these **measures affected the departmental dynamics and women's role in SALW control**?
 - ii. Did you benefit from them in any way?
7. Regarding **staff turnover, how do you assess the situation within your institution or department**?
 - a) Specifically, have you **observed any discernible gender-based disparities in terms of retention** (*men/women exhibiting a tendency to remain employed for a longer duration/departs more rapidly*)?
8. *FOR SALW COMMISSION MEMBERS*: **How involved are women in the decision-making process within SALW control in your jurisdiction**?
9. How would you **assess the opportunities for women to rise to leadership positions within your institution**?
 - a) *ASK WOMEN*: **What challenges do women face in climbing the leadership ladder** in SALW control, according to your experiences?
10. Different research showed **women's low participation in SALW control across WB**, including **your jurisdiction**. In your opinion, **what are the main reasons behind that fact**?
11. What do you perceive as the **main challenges or hindrances** to increasing women's participation in SALW control (*on the operational and policy level*)?
 - a) *ASK WOMEN*: Are there any **challenges that you frequently face as a woman in the field of SALW control**?
 - i. How did you learn to cope with this challenge?
 - b) Can you discuss **how challenging it is to balance your personal life and the demanding nature of your career in SALW control**?
 - i. Are these challenges unique to SALW control or common across the organisation?
12. From your perspective, **what are the benefits of women's participation in the field of SALW control**?
 - a) Based on your experience, **how important it is for women to participate in SALW control bodies**?
 - b) **What unique value or perspective do women bring to SALW control**?
 - i. What would be the advantages of women's greater representation in SALW control bodies? And, do you see any potential downsides?

c) *FOR SALW COMMISSION MEMBERS*: What has been your **experience with the inclusion of women’s perspectives in SALW control policy formulation and implementation**?

i. Can you **identify certain policies that were particularly influenced by women’s insights or participation**?

13. Can you provide any **examples of women in leadership or influential positions** regarding SALW control?

a) Could you share an **example of a situation in which a woman in your department/organisation acted as a change agent** or initiated significant positive change in relation to SALW control?

14. How will the **role of women in SALW control be changing in the future** (*reality*)?

a) What is **your vision for the future of SALW control in terms of gender parity** (*expectations*)?

i. What changes do you hope to see to make this vision a reality?

C. Legislative Obstacles and Gaps – 5 minutes

Aim: To identify and understand any existing legislative hindrances that impact women’s participation or progression in SALW control.

15. Are you aware of any **legislative obstacles or gaps** that hinder women’s participation in SALW control?

a) Are there **specific legislative provisions** (laws, statutes, or regulations) or any internal procedures that you feel **limit the women’s entry or engagement in SALW control** or in any other way disproportionately affect women’s participation in SALW control?

b) *IF YES*: Could you please elaborate? Could you please provide examples of such obstacles?

16. Have these obstacles **lessened or intensified over the years**? Could you please provide examples?

a) Has there been any **legislative progress to eliminate these barriers**?

i. How effective have such measures been?

D. Effectiveness of Gender Equality Mechanisms – 5 minutes

Aim: Determining the current mechanisms (such as: policies, programmes or initiatives) in place which aim to promote gender equality or enhance women representation in SALW control. Assessing their functionality, impact, and efficiency.

17. Are there some **specific gender equality mechanisms** that have been implemented within your institution/department?

18. *IF YES*: How would you **evaluate the implementation of gender equality mechanisms** in your organisation? What do you think about how they work?

a) How have these mechanisms **contributed to improving the women’s status in your organisation, increasing women’s participation and fostering a more gender-equal working environment**?

b) How could their work be improved in your opinion?

i. Are these mechanisms **adequately promoted and enforced**?

E. Societal and Institutional Attitudes - 10 minutes

Aim: To identify and understand the prevalent societal and institutional attitudes towards women that shape their opportunities in SALW control.

19. From your observations, **how do men's and women's roles in SALW control differ**, if at all?
20. How would you **describe societal norms and attitudes regarding women's participation** in SALW control?
 - a) Could you please provide **examples of societal norms that either encourage or hinder women's engagement** in SALW control activities?
 - b) *ASK WOMEN*: Have you ever felt that **societal attitudes have affected your professional endeavours** or those of other women in your institution/SALW control?
 - c) Have you observed any **gender-specific attitudes or stereotypes** that influence perceptions of men's and women's capabilities in SALW control roles? (*perception of successes and failures*)
 - d) Have you observed any **changes in these attitudes** over time?
 - i. Can you identify any **key events or triggers** that have influenced changes in these societal attitudes?
 - e) What **strategies/initiatives do you think might positively influence these attitudes** and motivate more women to participate in SALW control?
21. In your opinion, how do **institutional norms within your organisation** impact women's participation in SALW control?
 - a) Can you provide **specific examples** of how these norms **have influenced women's roles and experiences** in your organisations?
 - b) Are there **any norms or expectations that impact women's decisions to pursue and remain in careers within the SALW control sectors**?
 - i. *ASK WOMEN*: Have you or any of your female colleagues **been deterred or motivated** by these attitudes **to join/persevere in the field of SALW control**?
 - c) Can you describe the **communication style and culture within your department/institution**?
 - i. Does it affect women in the field of SALW control? Does it foster or inhibit women's empowerment in SALW control?
 - d) How would you rate **your organisation leadership's open-mindedness** towards change and inclusiveness? Have you noticed a change in this attitude over the years?
 - e) Are there some **initiatives to modify these institutional norms and attitudes**?
 - i. Could you please give examples of **strategies/initiatives that have been successfully implemented**, either within your organisation or elsewhere, that have positively influenced institutional attitudes?
22. In your opinion, **are there any differences between men's and women's attitudes toward SALW control** (in your department/institution)?
 - a) IF YES: Could you please briefly explain?
 - b) To what extent is this perceived as a prestigious area to work in?
23. How would you describe your **male colleagues' perception of female involvement in SALW control**?
 - a) How are these **attitudes manifested in day-to-day operations** - affect collaboration and decision-making in your organisation?

- b) From your perspective, have **the attitudes of men towards female colleagues in the field changed** over your tenure? In what way?
- c) Does your institution/department **offer gender sensitisation programmes**?
- i. *IF YES*: Have they been effective? How do such programmes influence the **perception and acceptance of female colleagues in the field**?
 - ii. How **frequent and open are discussions regarding gender equality in your organisation**, especially in relation to SALW control?

F. Gender-Based Discrimination and Harassment – 10 minutes

Aim: To assess the prevalence of gender-based discrimination and harassment within the organisation.

24. How do you assess the **presence of gender-based discrimination** within your institution/department (*such as different treatment of women and men because of their gender*)?
- a) Have you observed any **gender-specific barriers or bias in the selection and promotion process** (*criteria and procedures*) for positions in your department/organisation/field (SALW control)?
 - i. *IF YES*: What **steps do you think could be taken to remove such barriers/biases** and achieve greater inclusion of the gender equality principle in the selection process?
 - b) Do you believe men and women in your department/organisation/field **receive equal opportunities for advancement and training**? Why do you think so?
 - c) Have you **personally experienced any gender-related challenges (discrimination)** within your professional context? If comfortable, please share your experiences.
 - i. Could you, please, share **how these challenges were managed or addressed**?
 - d) Do you **know anyone who has experienced gender-based discrimination** in your institution?
 - i. Have you **observed or witnessed some of your colleagues facing difficulties** at work due to their gender? In what way (*men or women; policy related or societal challenge*)?
 - ii. How do people usually react in such situations (when witnessing such an act)?
25. How would you rate the **level of safety for those working in the field of SALW control**?
- a) Are there **differences between women and men** in this regard?
 - b) Is there a **support system or network for women** in departments dealing with SALW control?
26. Have you ever **observed or heard about cases of sexual harassment** in your institution?
- a) Do you know anyone who has experienced sexual harassment?
27. Are there **mechanisms in place** (*code of conduct or a policy against discrimination and harassment in the workplace - act, regulation, rulebook*) within your institution to prevent/address gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment?
- IF YES*:
- a) Has that mechanism **established formal procedures** for addressing and reducing instances of these occurrences (*procedures for investigating complaints reporting systems, measures and sanctions etc.*)?
 - b) In your opinion, **to what extent are the existing mechanisms effective**? Are you aware of any problems in their application?
 - i. Do you know whom to contact in case of discrimination and harassment?

G. Recommendations and Suggestions – 10 minutes

Aim: To gain valuable insights and practical ideas from the interviewee on fostering greater gender equality in SALW control. This could involve adjustments to current practices or the introduction of new initiatives.

28. What would your **top recommendations be to boost women's participation and create a more gender-equal work environment** in your institution/department?
 - a) What recommendations and suggestions do you have for **increasing the number of women in SALW control**?
 - i. Based on your experiences, what **specific strategies do you suggest for recruiting and retaining more women in SALW control roles**?
 - ii. What could be done in order to **increase their retention**?
 - b) **How can gender equality be further promoted** within your institution/department?
29. Are there any **specific policy changes** that you believe would contribute to these goals?
 - a) Do you believe **there is a need for special policies or affirmative actions** to increase women's participation in SALW control?
 - i. *IF YES:* **What specific policies or actions would you recommend**?
30. What types of **programmes/initiatives** could help women and men to function more effectively within your organisation/department?
 - a) Are there specific programmes or policies that support work-life balance within your organisation?
 - b) How pivotal do you believe is **specialised education and training** in uplifting women's roles in SALW control?
 - i. Are there any **exclusive training programmes for women** in your organisation or the region?
 - ii. How can **education and training programmes** be tailored to address gender-specific challenges?
 - c) Are there any **gender parity programmes/initiatives** within your institution that can serve as models for others?
 - d) Are there any **leadership programmes or mentorship initiatives** you would recommend that are specifically geared towards women in the field?
31. Have you ever **submitted feedback or suggested improvements regarding women's participation/representation** in SALW control?
 - a) *IF YES:* What was the response or action taken by the higher authorities?
32. *ASK WOMEN:* Looking back at your journey, **what insight or lesson would you want to share with women** aspiring to enter SALW control in the future?

"We are now coming to the end of this interview. Is there anything you find relevant for the topics we have discussed, but you have not had a chance to mention it? Is there anything that I did not ask you, but you think should be noted?"

Thank you for your time and cooperation in this interview. Your insights are valuable to our ongoing research.

ANNEX III: REFERENCE LIST



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i] For more information, see the OSCE-led Survey on Violence Against Women - Main Report. This report presents the cross-regional, comparable findings of the OSCE survey on the well-being and security of women, which was conducted in 2018 in selected jurisdictions in Southeast and East Europe. The OSCE-led research included a quantitative and qualitative component and was conducted with the aim of providing comparable data on the different forms of violence women experience in childhood and throughout their lives. The research examined the violence experienced by women in conflict and non-conflict settings, as well as the impact of violence on women and girls, including its lasting consequences. Questions about norms and attitudes regarding violence against women were asked in order to better understand the underlying causes of violence.

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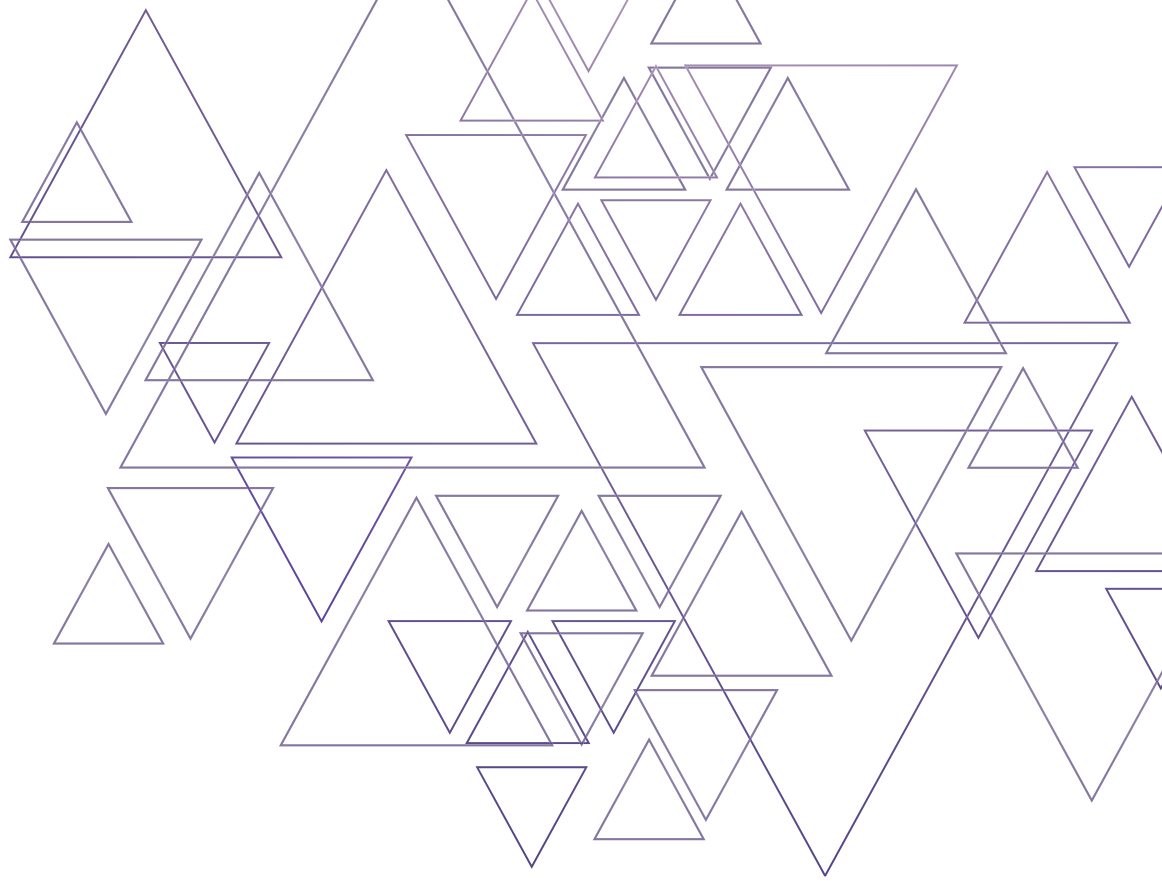
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