



'It is estimated that 35 million illicit firearms were owned by civilians in the EU in 2017 (56% of the estimated total of firearms). According to those estimates, illicit firearms would outnumber legally-held firearms in twelve EU Member States.'

Communication by the European Commission on the 2020-2025 EU action plan on firearms trafficking (24 July 2020)

Online Module: Executive Summary

After legal production, firearms travel throughout the world and are traded several times during their lifecycle. However, a significant proportion of them will at some point be diverted into the illegal market.

Organised crime groups and other criminals involved in firearms are highly experienced professionals who use all their creativity to be able to traffic firearms. They are masters in identifying and exploiting the weaknesses of the system for their own benefit.

Crimes involving firearms vary from murders to terrorist attacks and everything in between. But they have one thing in common: they have a huge impact on the safety and wellbeing of EU citizens.

This online module aims at providing the users with a general understanding of different aspects of the illicit use of firearms for criminal purposes and the different measures to counter firearms-related criminal activities. It is targeted at law enforcement officers, judicial authorities and forensic experts who are dealing with the illicit use of firearms for criminal purposes, and at those who need to know and apply the different measures to counter illegal firearms-related crimes.

The module consists of an introduction, 10 topic chapters and a glossary of firearms-related terms and abbreviations. Users can also check their levels of understanding for each of the topics by considering a selection of quiz questions.

The chapters are:

1. **Introduction**
2. **Legislation and Regulation:** The legislation and legal instruments relating to the regulation of firearms in the EU and internationally.
3. **Types of Firearms:** The various types of firearms available, categorised in terms of their intended purpose and function.
4. **International Cooperation:** The tools and systems, organisations and networks, which support and facilitate cooperation between the Member States to combat firearms-related crime.
5. **National Firearms Focal Points (NFFPs):** The network of NFFPs that is being developed, including their role, functions and staff.
6. **Intelligence:** The features of firearms-related crime, and how intelligence is acquired and employed to counter it, including the interviewing of suspects.
7. **Trafficking and Smuggling:** The various aspects of trafficking of firearms, including its extent, the source countries and trafficking routes, and the modi operandi used.
8. **Tracing and Marking:** The process of tracing the legal ownership of a firearm and the markings that facilitate the identification and tracing of the firearm.
9. **Ballistics and Forensics:** The various ballistic and forensic examinations made on firearms to support investigations.
10. **Building Cases:** Examining how an understanding of the modi operandi of firearms trafficking can support investigators and prosecutors, focusing on the modi operandi of illicit firearms trafficking from Slovakia to the Netherlands.
11. **Case Study:** Operation Flobert - A description of a Portuguese investigation.