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#### OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

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To:	Delegations

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Subject:	Council conclusions on combating trafficking of weapons and fighting threats stemming from firearms and pyrotechnic articles - Council conclusions (12 June 2025)
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Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on combating trafficking of weapons and fighting threats stemming from firearms and pyrotechnic articles, approved by the Council (Justice and Home Affairs) at its 4102nd meeting held on 12 June 2025.

**Council conclusions**  
**on combating trafficking of weapons and fighting threats stemming from firearms and**  
**pyrotechnic articles**

**General considerations**

The trafficking of weapons and ammunition, privately made firearms (including illicit 3D-printed firearms), the illicit conversion of alarm and signal weapons, improperly deactivated firearms, and the misuse of pyrotechnic articles pose varying but significant threats to the internal security of the European Union (EU) and to public safety. Additionally, separately loaded black powder weapons and their reproductions represent a potential and evolving threat in some Member States which would require further assessment.

**Privately made firearms (including 3D-printed firearms)**

1. The use of technologies, including 3D-printing, to illicitly produce privately made firearms and their essential components is becoming a source of new threats to the internal security of the EU.
2. In some cases, privately made firearms that are illicitly produced, including by unauthorised professionals or by infringing a trade mark in a Member State, are made to resemble genuine firearms as identified in the PHANTOM Operational Action in the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT).
3. The number of crimes involving privately made firearms (including 3D-printed firearms) which are illicitly produced by criminal networks and individuals is increasing.
4. The traceability and verification of privately made firearms (including 3D-printed firearms) are a challenge for law enforcement since these firearms lack serial numbers and identification elements. In particular, digital blueprints for producing 3D-printed firearms and computerised numerical control (CNC) machined firearms are freely available online. These blueprints can be downloaded, distributed and used to illicitly produce firearms, which may lead to potential security threats.

5. The approach to the illicit production and possession of privately made firearms, including 3D-printed firearms and their essential components, is not explicitly harmonised at EU level which could require a coordinated approach.

#### Converted alarm and signal weapons and reactivated firearms

6. The threat derived from the illicit conversion of alarm and signal weapons into fully functional firearms which are then used in criminal activities continues to grow.
7. Effective action against this threat may require cooperation at EU level, the harmonisation of legislation and the development of common analytical and law enforcement capabilities and administrative measures, as differences in the implementation of EU legislation are exploited by criminals to get hold of alarm and signal weapons that can be converted.
8. Convertible weapons are distributed in the EU through various channels, including:
  - a) the legal sale of convertible alarm and signal weapons and deactivated firearms that are then reactivated;
  - b) illicit trafficking from countries with less restrictive regulations;
  - c) trading on the darknet and on online platforms that may appear to be legitimate or on openly accessible platforms that facilitate illicit trade;
  - d) trafficking across land and sea borders as well as in postal and parcel shipments;
  - e) illegal workshops engaged in the production or conversion of weapons or their components (including those using 3D-printing);
  - f) distribution by criminal groups and terrorist organisations.
9. The fight against the trafficking of weapons has been enhanced by EU cooperation through the EMPACT, through the National Firearms Focal Points, and through collaboration with Europol and other EU agencies such as Frontex and Eurojust, as well as by improved information-sharing mechanisms between Member States and third parties.

10. Union-wide criteria for clearly distinguishing between non-convertible and convertible weapons, as well as international cooperation and the involvement of technical experts in identifying threats could potentially mitigate the illicit conversion of weapons.

#### Separately loaded black powder weapons

11. Reproductions of antique weapons that can be constructed using modern techniques are included within the scope of Directive 2021/555<sup>1</sup>. However, further exchange of information between Member States, in accordance with the applicable Union and national laws, on incidents involving separately loaded black powder weapons and their reproductions may reduce inconsistencies in the policy concerning their control, sale, registration, storage and permits.
12. Better monitoring of the illicit use of separately loaded black powder weapons and their reproductions could improve the effectiveness of cross-border information exchange, prevent potential risks and maintain the relatively small scale of crimes associated with such weapons and their reproductions.

#### Pyrotechnic articles

13. The illicit use of pyrotechnic articles poses a growing threat to public safety and security, human and animal health and public order. Risks are associated with the proliferation and illicit use of pyrotechnic articles by hooligans, terrorists and criminal groups and with acts of violence against security staff, law enforcement, rescue services, emergency medical services and the general public. Furthermore, pyrotechnic articles can cause serious injury to their users and bystanders as well as damage to public and private property. The illicit use of pyrotechnic articles can pose a significant threat to critical infrastructures and cause disruption in cities and communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Recital 37 of Directive 2021/555 of 24 March 2021 on control of the acquisition and possession of weapons (the ‘Firearms Directive’).

14. In some Member States, pyrotechnic articles are increasingly used for criminal purposes, including attacks on ATMs, and in the manufacture of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which are then used to injure, blackmail, intimidate, silence, threaten or kill people.
15. The illicit trade in and the illicit production and uncontrolled transfer of pyrotechnic articles, particularly via the internet, social networks and illegal online shops, poses a growing threat.
16. Unauthorised access to professional pyrotechnic articles, their frequent lack of compliance with safety regulations (including as regards transport and storage), the presence of low-quality products and products which are under-classified by manufacturers, and the excessive power of some pyrotechnic articles pose significant safety and security risks to users, bystanders and the general public, including minors.
17. Existing regulations at EU level, in particular Directive 2013/29/EU concerning pyrotechnic articles, focus mainly on the safety of pyrotechnic articles and their free movement within the single market.
18. There is an urgent need to consider strengthening the enforcement of rules on (online) access to pyrotechnics articles, notably professional ones, the control of e-commerce, the traceability of products, a form of administrative harmonised control, and the application of uniform definitions of categories of pyrotechnic articles.
19. Coordinated action, including considering and taking, in proportionality to the risk, effective and decisive measures on specific pyrotechnic articles, is needed at EU level to enhance safety and security as well as to reduce the risks associated with the illicit use of pyrotechnics articles such as the category F4.

## Firearms data

20. The Schengen Information System (SIS) is a key tool in supporting law enforcement cooperation and border management in the EU, including in the search for and tracing of firearms. Firearms alerts can be entered in the SIS for two main purposes: firstly, conducting discreet checks, inquiry checks or specific checks; and secondly, seizing firearms or using them as evidence<sup>2</sup>.
21. Firearms have a long lifecycle and can still pose a threat after many decades. Each firearms alert must be reviewed within 10 years<sup>3</sup>. A periodic review of alerts is necessary for both legal and operational reasons, allowing for regular verification of data and the removal of outdated or inaccurate entries in accordance with the principle of necessity.
22. The quality and completeness of the data entered into the SIS remains a major challenge. Many Member States point to inconsistencies (e.g. a lack of unique serial numbers, inconsistent naming of weapons manufacturers, incorrect data formatting). As the source of the information entered into the SIS, national databases play a key role in ensuring the quality and consistency of the data. Uniform standards for entering data in national databases would enhance quality when creating alerts in the SIS.
23. To ensure the effective use of the SIS, it is crucial to examine the feasibility of automating certain aspects of the review of alerts as well as the systematic notifications of impending expiry to avoid the potentially premature or delayed removals of alerts, which can hamper law enforcement efforts. Further to the analysis conducted by the European Firearms Experts (EFE) and the subsequent exchange of views at the Council Working Party on JHA Information Exchange (IXIM) on 5 December 2024, the Council will consider discussing a possible update of the review mechanism and the need to improve data quality in the SIS.

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<sup>2</sup> Articles 36 and 38 respectively of Regulation (EU) 2018/1862 on the establishment, operation and use of the SIS in the field of police cooperation and judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

<sup>3</sup> Article 54 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1862.

24. Moreover, Member States' law enforcement agencies could act more effectively if the information on weapons were improved and more effective use were made of existing systems, such as Interpol's Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System (iARMS) and any other relevant information exchange system.

#### Trafficking of weapons and ammunition from non-EU countries and partners

25. The illicit trafficking of weapons and ammunition from non-EU countries and regions such as Türkiye, Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans poses a serious threat to the EU's internal security and to stability in neighbouring countries. It is also closely linked to the activities of organised crime groups and terrorism and requires a coordinated response at national, EU and international level.
26. Therefore, international operational cooperation, intelligence sharing and joint cross-border operations are crucial, mainly within the framework of EMPACT and in cooperation with the relevant EU agencies.
27. The activities of criminal networks and their attempts to smuggle weapons into the EU will require further monitoring once Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and other armed conflicts in the EU's neighbouring regions have ceased.

#### **The Council invites the Commission and the Member States to:**

##### Privately made firearms (including 3D-printed firearms)

28. Provide, including with the support of EMPACT, an effective response to the threat posed by illicit privately made firearms, including 3D-printed firearms and their essential components, through a comprehensive and long-term coordinated approach, including the assessment of legislative and operational measures at national and EU level, as well as in the context of international cooperation.
29. Consider monitoring the online space effectively to prevent the dissemination of blueprints of 3D-printed firearms and CNC machined firearms and consider introducing mechanisms to control and block access to such content, when legally feasible.

30. Support the development and assessment of tools to monitor the online dimension of weapons trafficking.

**The Council encourages the Member States to:**

Privately made firearms (including 3D-printed firearms)

31. Continue and strengthen cooperation on the exchange of information in accordance with applicable Union and national law, based on experience and best practices for combating crime related to 3D-printed firearms and their essential components.
32. Strengthen the efforts of law enforcement (police and customs) authorities to prevent and investigate illegal workshops that produce privately made firearms.

Converted alarm and signal weapons and reactivated firearms

33. Develop engagement in cooperation mechanisms, including EMPACT, together with Europol, Frontex, Eurojust, Interpol, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the European Networks of Forensics Science Institutes, to combat the trafficking and distribution of converted weapons.
34. Further strengthen international cooperation to monitor the flow of converted weapons and to combat transnational criminal groups.
35. Enhance efforts to detect and dismantle illegal workshops involved, amongst others, in the conversion of alarm and signal weapons.
36. Implement effective measures and proper checks at national level to prevent imports from non-EU countries, including Türkiye, of alarm and signal weapons that do not meet the EU's technical specifications<sup>4</sup> to counteract the introduction into the single market of models that can be converted.

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<sup>4</sup> Annex of Implementing Directive (EU) 2019/69 laying down technical specifications for alarm and signal weapons.



37. Strengthen national controls including through the participation of law enforcement (police and customs) authorities in EMPACT's operational action Conversus, through reinforced exchanges of information and cooperation to identify producers, importers and retailers supplying the EU market with models of alarm and signal weapons that can be converted into lethal weapons.

Separately loaded black powder weapons

38. Consider, where relevant, monitoring incidents involving the reproduction of separately loaded black powder weapons to better assess the risks and effectiveness of existing regulation at national and EU level.

Firearms data

39. Aim to develop the National Firearms Focal Points as a key tool for information exchange and analysis of firearms data.
40. Take measures to improve the quality and completeness of firearms data in the SIS by:
- a) ensuring better data quality and consistency of entries in national databases;
  - b) introducing clear standards and guidelines for data formatting;
  - c) eliminating errors resulting from the manual entry of information;
  - d) raising awareness of the SIS Handbook and distributing it to the relevant national authorities and other authorities responsible for entering alerts in the SIS, as well as to SIS end-users;
  - e) regularly updating tables of weapon manufacturer codes and developing tools for the dynamic addition of new manufacturers;
  - f) enhancing the training of personnel responsible for entering and updating firearms alerts.

### Pyrotechnic articles

41. Stress the importance of strengthening and unifying the application of Directive 2013/29/EU, with the support of the Commission, and calls for additional action to better address security concerns for controlling the trade and use of pyrotechnics.
42. Ensure that pyrotechnic articles are correctly categorized by enforcing measures, to counteract the practice of classifying articles in a category other than that based on their technical parameters and intended use.
43. Increase the oversight of online and distance trade in pyrotechnics articles and consider restrictions, including the possibility of blocking online or distance sales.
44. Intensify cross-border cooperation, with the support of Europol, as an information and knowledge hub, to identify and eliminate illicit distribution channels for pyrotechnic articles and to tighten control procedures for the import, transfer and transportation of these products.
45. Continue to increase cooperation on the enforcement of laws on the safety and control of pyrotechnic articles and on the incorporation of best practices into national regulations to ensure the protection of citizens and public order.

### Trafficking of weapons and ammunition from non-EU countries and partners

46. Increase cooperation with the EMPACT Operational Action Plan on Firearms and with EFE and develop specific actions to counter emerging threats.
47. Support the continued monitoring of the situation at the EU's borders with the support of Frontex, particularly in relation to the trafficking of weapons and ammunition stemming from, or following, routes from Ukraine, the Western Balkan countries and Türkiye.
48. Strengthen preventive measures to counteract the smuggling of and illicit trade in weapons and ammunition.

49. Consider developing technology and analytical tools, in accordance with fundamental rights and the applicable legal framework, to support the detection of attempted smuggling.
50. Intensify operational information exchange with key partners, including Ukraine, the Western Balkan countries, Türkiye and Latin America.
51. Expand training programmes for border, police and customs officers with the involvement of the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL).
52. Continue to participate in joint cross-border operations (e.g. EMPACT Joint Action Days).
53. Identify and track weapons through relevant systems and databases, which enables law enforcement agencies to quickly verify the legal status of weapons, as promoted in EMPACT.
54. Continue cooperation with Ukraine, including with the support of EMPACT, in the early detection of potential illicit transfers, thereby supporting the implementation of the EU list of actions to counter the trafficking of firearms and other small arms and light weapons, in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.
55. Continue to analyse the situation and remain committed to taking further measures to reduce the risks associated with illicit weapons trafficking and, if necessary, prevent new threats posed by developments in technology and changes in trafficking and smuggling methods.

**The Council invites the Commission to:**

**Privately made firearms (including 3D-printed firearms)**

56. Consider including the threats stemming from privately made firearms, including 3D-printed firearms and their essential components, in future reports on the application of the Firearms Directive.

57. In the impact assessment concerning minimum criteria for criminalising firearms offences, include questions on the need to harmonise criminal offences related to firearms, on the effectiveness of current regulations on illicit manufacture of firearms and their essential components, and on the need to include the use of new technologies in the definition of firearms manufacturing. The impact assessment should also cover questions on the need to criminalise the production, possession and dissemination of digital blueprints to produce illicit firearms and their essential components and on whether it is necessary to prepare a legislative proposal to close possible loopholes in the production, possession and distribution of 3D-printed firearms.

#### Converted alarm and signal weapons and reactivated firearms

58. Assess the need to revise the EU legislation, including the relevant implementing acts, applicable to alarm and signal weapons to better counter the illicit conversion of such weapons.
59. Include a specific point about converted alarm and signal weapons in future reports on the implementation of the Firearms Directive, including an assessment of the threat they pose to public security in the Member States.
60. Recognise that the illicit process of converting alarm and signal weapons into firearms poses a growing threat to internal security and requires coordinated action at national and EU level.

#### Firearms data

61. Expedite work to establish a mandatory minimum dataset to be entered into Member States' national databases of seized firearms (e.g. type, make, model, calibre and serial number of weapons, circumstances of seizure, location, smuggling route data, photographs and unique firearms identification number). Explore synergies to align the dataset of firearms alerts in SIS with this minimum dataset.

62. Analyse the need to amend EU legislation to ensure the harmonised establishment of these minimum datasets at national level and the integration of the data with the Europol Firearms Hub, thereby creating a common European repository and avoiding the duplication of systems. This could contribute to the monitoring of illicit firearms, including identification of patterns, trends and *modi operandi*, and a better evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures and regulations in place across the EU.

#### Pyrotechnic articles

63. Support the Member States in their current and future efforts to strengthen and harmonise the application of Directive 2013/29/EU, especially to better address security concerns for controlling the trade and use of pyrotechnics.
64. Establish effective mechanisms for tracking high-risk pyrotechnic articles at each stage of distribution, taking into consideration the creation of accompanying documents for intra-EU movements.
65. Examine the possibility and necessity of including category F1 fireworks within the scope of Article 4(2) of Directive 2013/29/EU, which provides Member States with a basis for introducing bans or restrictions on the possession, use or sale to the public of pyrotechnic articles in categories F2 and F3 and P1 and T1, as some articles in these categories can cause severe harm and injury if used incorrectly.
66. Consider limiting the maximum content of net explosives in pyrotechnic articles with the highest risk level (F3 and F4) and consider ways of ensuring better enforcement of restrictions on the use and circulation of pyrotechnic articles.
67. Urgently, evaluate the measures taken at EU level and accordingly take further action to strengthen the regulatory framework and develop legislative proposals to prevent the illicit production of, trade (including online trade) in and use of dangerous pyrotechnics articles.

**The Council invites the Commission, Europol, Interpol and Frontex to:**

68. Within their respective mandates, work towards further harmonisation and improved cooperation in the fight against trafficking of weapons and pyrotechnic articles by:
- a) a coordinated approach to the analysis of this phenomenon by cooperating in international operations and information exchange, following the work carried out by EMPACT and in accordance with international, EU and national law;
  - b) developing a long-term strategy to combat weapons trafficking once Russia has ceased its war of aggression against Ukraine, improving border guard training and exploring the use of artificial intelligence to detect illicit weapons and ammunition.

**The Council invites Europol to:**

69. Establish a dedicated platform for the exchange of information on 3D-printed firearms and blueprints for CNC machines to better coordinate law enforcement activities at EU level in cooperation with Eurojust, Interpol and OLAF within their respective mandates.
70. Involve Member States in the design and development of the ballistic exchange module within the Firearms Hub being developed by Europol, including EMPACT stakeholders and the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes. This module should facilitate the sharing of ballistic data among Member States, and be accessible to all Automatic Ballistic Information Systems, ensuring full interoperability.
71. Strengthen the support for and facilitate cooperation between Member States to more efficiently prevent the use of pyrotechnic articles for criminal and violent purposes.
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