

Firearms trafficking is at the forefront of organized crime in Europe. It is a highly complex, multifaceted and transnational phenomenon. CEASEFIRE is a Horizon Innovation Action that responds to this phenomenon by developing an innovative, holistic, multi-disciplinary, high-tech and versatile technologies and protocols that will significantly increase and broaden the operational capabilities of EU Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) in detecting, analysing and tracking cross-border illicit firearms trafficking-related activities.

In particular, the efforts in CEASEFIRE will concentrate on the following two fields:

a) **The development of advanced Artificial Intelligence technologies.** This includes a wide set of AI-enabled tools, such as solutions for cyber patrolling, web data gathering, on-the-spot detection of firearms, advanced Big Data analytics, cryptocurrency analysis, large-scale information fusion, visual analytics and firearms-related intelligence collection.

b) **The establishment of fully-operational National Focal Points (NFPs).** These will alleviate organizational, operational, cooperation, legal, cross-jurisdictional, trans-border and information exchange challenges. This involves defining models, protocols and procedures for making NFPs fully functional, complemented by activities for mapping the various legal frameworks within different countries, and procedures within different agencies, for harmonizing investigations, cooperation, lawful evidence collection and forensic analysis. The development of efficient information sharing mechanisms among LEAs, judicial and forensics authorities will further reinforce the systems' capabilities.

## 1. The importance of ethics in the CEASEFIRE project

Our ethics partner, Trilateral Research, leads in two specific research areas relating to ethical and legal considerations in CEASEFIRE. The first of these involves ensuring that the research activities conducted during the CEASEFIRE project are compliant with the standards of research ethics required by the European Commission. The second considers the issues which CEASEFIRE-produced technologies could raise in terms of ethics, societal values, fundamental rights, and other applicable laws if used by LEAs. This also concerns the broader theme of intelligence-led policing. The methodologies for doing so draw upon privacy-by-design, ethics-by-design and human rights-by-design. The result is that the research project is conducted, and the produced technologies are developed, in a manner that respects privacy, ethical, and legal standards from the outset.

To ensure privacy, ethics, and human rights-by-design in conducting research activities undertaken during the project, Trilateral has identified potential legal, ethical, personal data, fundamental rights and privacy considerations on a task-by-task basis. Trilateral held mitigation meetings with work package leaders to discuss these potential issues or concerns,

and where needed, consortium members formulated a project response. If common themes were identified cross-project, a set of requirements and recommendations to mitigate these potential issues were developed which are contained in CEASEFIRE's forthcoming law and ethics manual. This includes requirements and recommendations concerning principles relating to data protection, ethical, legal and fundamental rights that will be used throughout the project lifetime. This approach allows the project partners to anticipate potential issues and work in a manner that then circumvents them, thereby working ethically and responsibly by design.

Secondly, to ensure that the outputs and technologies of the CEASEFIRE project are ethical, Trilateral will conduct a societal impact assessment study. The overall assessment methodology will be based on both ex-ante and ex-post evaluation, emphasizing aspects related to the perception of security, the side effects of technological solutions, and societal resilience. As the technologies will be used by LEAs, institutional and societal trust in the produced technologies are of utmost importance. Therefore, particular attention will be placed on examining the potential impact on human rights, including but not limited to, issues of non-discrimination, due process, and dignity. Furthermore, related aspects such as fairness, power, trust, integrity, social sorting, justice and democratic dissent will also be taken into consideration. In doing so, Trilateral will employ a trio of methodologies to conduct the societal dimension analysis and monitoring. Currently, Trilateral is conducting a desk-based approach to the societal impact of the project's outputs with preliminary results being available in May 2023. Following this, Trilateral will engage with societal representatives such as experts, academics, and civil society organisations, with the preliminary results being available in March 2024. Lastly, Trilateral will connect directly with the general public to research potential societal impacts and the findings of which will be available in October 2024.

If you have any questions on the ethical approach of CEASEFIRE, please reach out to our ethics partner in Trilateral. Emma can be reached at [emma.finlay@trilateralresearch.com](mailto:emma.finlay@trilateralresearch.com) and would be more than happy to discuss any of her findings.