

## CEASEFIRE's Synergies with Other European Initiatives

Blog post

16.06.2023.

CEASEFIRE is a Research and Innovation (R&I) Horizon Europe project that aims at providing law enforcement agencies with concrete support in the prevention of and the fight against firearms trafficking. In order to develop useful tools and knowledge, the research team has promoted from the beginning a cross-fertilization process between CEASEFIRE and already existing operational initiatives on firearms trafficking, mainly *EMPACT Firearms*. EMPACT is the “European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats”. Firearms trafficking has been identified as one of the EMPACT priorities since the first EU fully-fledged policy cycle of 2014 – 2017. In this regard, EMPACT Firearms, composed of representatives of Member States, EU agencies and other stakeholders, aims at targeting criminal networks and individual criminals involved in the illicit trafficking, distribution and use of firearms.



Thanks to the interactive process between CEASEFIRE and EMPACT Firearms, from one side R&I projects like CEASEFIRE can contribute to strengthening and enhancing LEAs operational capabilities and activities by providing LEAs with useful tools, knowledge, recommendations, best practices, etc. From the other side, EMPACT Firearms can contribute to the success of R&I projects by sharing information, inputs, feedback and expertise. This link allows the project to start from the actual operational needs and to develop *ad hoc* solutions that LEAs can benefit from.

The continuous exchange between CEASEFIRE and EMPACT Firearms is guaranteed by a dedicated task included in the project, i.e. “Continuous alignment with EMPACT Firearms objectives and activities” led by the *French Ministry of the Interior*. The task aims at aligning CEASEFIRE with the EMPACT Firearms Operational Actions and the related objectives and activities by setting up a direct two-way communication channel that facilitates a permanent dialogue between CEASEFIRE and the EMPACT Firearms community. This channel will remain active until the end of the Project to ensure constant coordination.

Many activities have been performed in the last months to coordinate CEASEFIRE activities with EMPACT Firearms. Thanks to the support of the French Ministry of the Interior, a first contact with EMPACT was established in January 2023. One month later, a first online meeting was organized to discuss more in detail the synergies between CEASEFIRE and the EMPACT Operational Actions. In particular, the discussion highlighted many analogies between CEASEFIRE and EMPACT Firearms objectives, which are the ground for the cooperation. Some of these concern the development of a better intelligence picture, the establishment of fully functional National Firearms Focal Points (NFFPs), the use of 3D printing, online and financial investigations, and the use of fast parcel and postal services to illegally traffic firearms, parts and components. From this meeting CEASEFIRE team started developing a roadmap for the cooperation, which points out expectations and next steps.



In March 2023, CEASEFIRE was invited by the European Commission in its capacity of Driver of an EMPACT Operational Action to attend a meeting in Brussels on the state of play and way forward on the establishment of NFFPs and the standardization of data collection on firearms at EU level. This was the occasion to present the Project to the EMPACT Firearms community and to gather useful feedback on the activities as well as contacts of LEAs interested in the project.

The cooperation is successfully proceeding. Some bilateral meetings with the Drivers of specific EMPACT Operational Actions more linked with CEASEFIRE took place and others will be organized soon. At the same time, a CEASEFIRE research team has been invited to attend other EMPACT Firearms meetings as expression of the interest the community has in what CEASEFIRE is developing and of the willingness to cooperate.

The exchange of needs, ideas, inputs and concrete solutions has proven to be an effective way to work together. The collaboration will also ensure the avoidance of duplications in the activities by creating common strategies to tackle common issues and by promoting more advanced and targeted solutions able to address the real operational needs.