

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001789/25
to the Commission
Giuseppe Antoci (The Left)
(2 May 2025)**

Subject: Victims and escalation of urban violence due to the misuse and spread of illegal weapons in European cities

The recent shootings in European cities, such as those in Sicily ⁽¹⁾, Brussels ⁽²⁾ and elsewhere in the continent, have caused civilian casualties and confirm an upsurge in urban violence linked to the spread of illegal firearms. There are, it is estimated, over 35 million unregistered weapons in circulation in Europe ⁽³⁾ many held by young people and criminal groups.

The new 'Protect EU' strategy cites firearms as a key factor in the rise of violence and commits to proposing common criminal law standards on illicit gun running ⁽⁴⁾. The EU Council has also adopted new rules to improve traceability, enhance customs cooperation and make the weapons trade safer³.

Law enforcement go hand-in-hand with a strategy to promote a cultural shift towards civilian disarmament and combat the subculture of armed violence.

As part of the Internal Security Fund, the Commission has launched a specific call for projects to combat illicit weapons trafficking ⁽⁵⁾.

Can the Commission therefore say:

1. Whether it can provide updated data on the illegal circulation of firearms in Europe?
2. Whether it plans to allocate new resources to improve preventive measures and law enforcement, particularly in the most vulnerable urban areas ⁽⁶⁾, by supporting local authorities and law enforcement agencies in disarmament and youth prevention programmes?

Submitted: 2.5.2025

**Answer given by Mr Brunner on behalf of the European Commission
(17 July 2025)**

The misuse and trafficking of firearms is a priority identified in the ProtectEU: a European Internal Security Strategy ⁽¹⁾, the Commission's EU action plan on firearms trafficking ⁽²⁾ and is operationalised by a dedicated four-year plan within the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) ⁽³⁾.

The latest figure on illegal firearms is from the 2017 study mentioned by the Honourable Member, based on data aggregated from different sources ⁽⁴⁾.

Due to the lack of more reliable harmonised data, the Commission is not able to provide more precise and up to date figures on the number of illegal firearms in circulation.

The Commission has announced in its 2025 Work Programme the intention to adopt a proposal on harmonising firearms-related criminal offences.

The aim of such initiative would be to reduce the number of illegal firearms in circulation, and ultimately, to reduce firearms-related violence.

Under the Internal Security Fund ⁽⁵⁾ the Commission launched a call for projects on the protection of public spaces, including the topic of firearms.

¹ https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cronaca/2025/04/27/sparatoria-a-monreale-tre-morti-fermato-un-19enne_315f73cd-3cab-4fdb-b123-bb84ccc5b403.html.

² https://www.ansa.it/europa/notizie/rubriche/altrenews/2025/04/17/nuova-sparatoria-a-bruxelles-in-area-segnata-da-guerra-tra-gang_62a9f373-4fbf-4984-be53-ff74a0ae2317.html.

³ These figures are for 2017.

⁴ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/organised-crime-and-human-trafficking/trafficking-firearms_en.

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/isf/wp-call/2023-2025/call-fiche_isf-2024-tf2-ag-protect_en.pdf.

⁶ Siap, the Italian police union, recently stated that there are actual lawless urban 'no-go zones' where the availability of weapons is both a symptom and a cause of a deep-rooted social crisis.

⁽¹⁾ COM(2025) 148 final.

⁽²⁾ COM(2020) 608 final.

⁽³⁾ EMPACT cycle, a platform led by Member States: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/law-enforcement-cooperation/empact-fighting-crime-together_en.

⁽⁴⁾ Aaron Karp, Estimating Global Civilian-Held Firearms Numbers, Briefing Paper, Small Arms Survey, June 2018, available at <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-BP-Civilian-Firearms-Numbers.pdf>.

⁽⁵⁾ ISF-2024-TF2-AG-PROTECT. See awarded projects: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/cc4034e6-bc2a-4d71-9238-9f61d465c91b_en?filename=Projects%20funded%20under%20ISF_booklet.pdf&prefLang=ar.

In March 2025, the Commission selected four projects for a total of EUR 8 million. The projects aim to improve preventive actions and reinforce the capabilities of law enforcement agencies ⁽⁶⁾.

⁽⁶⁾ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-provides-eur-30-million-strengthen-protection-public-spaces-2025-03-12_en.