

Illegal weapons, gangs and violent extremism in Denmark

LINA GRIP

Denmark is a relatively small country with an exceptionally high standard of living, although the trends in Denmark's Human Development Index show that its national development has flattened out in the past decade.¹ The Global Peace Index ranked Denmark the second most peaceful country in the world in 2016, ranking very low in, for example, violent crimes and access to weapons.² Denmark has limited experience of terrorist attacks carried out with firearms, with only six incidents occurring in the past 36 years. Yet on 14-15 February 2015 Copenhagen was the site of two terrorist attacks carried out with firearms. In two shootings in different locations an armed man killed and injured several people in the course of less than 12 hours.

This study seeks to investigate the illegal gun market dynamics in Denmark and how terrorists could have access to that market. Previous studies on these issues in Denmark have been rather limited. The present study's analysis is therefore mainly based on police data on seized firearms and a few expert interviews. Where relevant, the analysis was enriched with complementary information from various sources (see Box 1). The first section lays out the key Danish actors in the fight against illicit firearms and national policies to deal with these firearms, including terrorists' access to them. The following sections analyse the characteristics of the illicit firearms markets in Denmark and terrorists' and violent extremists' potential access to firearms on these markets. The last section provides conclusions.

1. National actors and policies for fighting illicit firearms

The Danish approach to controlling illegal firearms and preventing terrorist access to weapons has been targeted primarily at fighting criminal gangs and enforcing the country's strict gun legislation among civilian, non-violent firearms owners and

traders. The aim has been to weaken criminal gangs, to deter criminals from using firearms in their activities, and to reduce the availability and use of illegal firearms.

1.1 Legal framework

The key legislative acts dealing with legal firearms possession, distribution and trade are:

- the Danish Weapons and Explosives Act (Act 1005 of 22 October 2012, with subsequent amendments);
- the Danish Weapons and Ammunition Order (Order 1248 of 30 October 2013, with subsequent amendments);
- the Danish Weapons and Ammunition Circular (Circular 9597 of 30 October 2013); and
- the Danish War Material Act (Act 1004 of 22 October 2012).³

Box 1: Research design

The study started with a literature review of the existing academic and policy literature on illegal firearms in Denmark. The existing literature was very limited in scope: not a single publication devoted exclusively to the topic was found during the study. Although the academic and policy literature on illegal weapons in Denmark is very limited, the Danish authorities regularly collect data on firearms, and seized firearms are typically sent to the Nationalt Kriminalteknisk Center (National Forensics Centre) for analysis. This means that the authorities have information on, for example, weapon types and the countries where illegal weapons that are seized by Danish authorities were produced. The National Police also keep records of whether firearms were seized in connection with criminal gangs, although establishing this is not always straightforward. The centralisation of firearms statistics in Denmark was of great assistance. This case study of illegal gun markets primarily used statistics collected by the Nationalt Kriminalteknisk Center and the Nationalt Efterforskningscenter (National Investigation Centre), both of which form part of the Danish National Police.

Besides this quantitative data collection and analysis, two expert interviews were conducted. The first was with experts from the National Investigation Centre. The second interview was with a Danish academic who specialised in extremism in Denmark. These interviews and the data shared by law

enforcement agencies were absolutely crucial for the study. Unfortunately, a number of other stakeholders (including city authorities in Copenhagen and officials in the Ministry of Justice), three academics and other sections of the police declined to be interviewed on the subject. The response by these stakeholders was that they did not feel that they had sufficient insight into or expertise on the topic of terrorist access to illicit firearms in Denmark (or illicit firearms markets in Denmark more broadly).

In addition, a number of other sources were used to provide complementary information that was relevant to this study. The section on gang violence and shootings, for example, relied heavily on the annual reports on gang violence in the period 2010–2016 produced by the police's National Investigation Centre, as well as to a more limited extent on Danish criminal statistical reports and national reports to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPOA). The author used the Global Terrorism Database to identify terrorist incidents in Denmark in the past 36 years. The section on violent extremism and the crossover between gang criminality and extremism relied primarily on academic publications, as well as on the above-mentioned expert interview. News media were also used to a limited extent primarily to collect additional information on specific events, including smuggling and terrorism-related cases.

Denmark has one of the strictest – possibly the strictest – gun ownership laws in Europe. The only type of weapon that civilians may own without a licence are air rifles of a calibre of 4.5 mm or less. All other firearms, including gas pistols, alarm weapons and deactivated weapons, require a licence. In Denmark, self-defence is not a legitimate reason for acquiring a weapon, and civilians are never granted a firearm licence for self-defence reasons. The only two reasons for being granted a firearms licence are for sports shooting and hunting purposes. To gain an individual licence, sports shooters are required to have been active members of a sports shooting club for at least two years. Members without a firearms licence may practise their shooting at the firing range of the club to which they belong using the club's own licensed weapons, but they may not take any of these weapons home. Sport shooting clubs in Denmark currently have approximately 75,000 members; of these, about 20,000 members hold firearms licences. Dynamic sports shooting with semiautomatic rifles, as defined by the International Practical Shooting Confederation, is not allowed in Denmark. To have the right to hold a licence for hunting, individuals must pass an advanced hunting exam, which includes skills

on how to handle weapons properly. Although Danish law accepts that hunters use semi-automatic rifles with a magazine capacity of more than two cartridges, hunters may never carry more than two cartridges in their semi-automatic rifles at one time. There are currently approximately 250,000 hunting licences in Denmark, of which about 170,000 are active (the rest are suspended due to unpaid licence fees). A background check is conducted for all firearms licences and all licences are issued for a specific period.

Acquiring antique firearms (those produced before 1890) also require registration with and notification to the authorities. Collectors of antique weapons may not keep ammunition for their old guns and pistols. Collectors of firearms must keep an updated list containing information about the weapons in the collection that must be renewed once a year, as well as a list of any changes to the weapons in the collection, which needs to be sent to the police's administrative centre. The purpose of this is for the police to have an updated record of available weapons in order to avoid unregistered weapons disappearing in thefts or robberies, and thus possibly supplying the illicit firearms market.⁴

All firearms must be stored in an authorised weapons cabinet, which must be bolted to the floor or wall if it weighs less than 1,000 kg. Storage of up to 25 conventional weapons or ten particularly dangerous firearms should be in a security cabinet conforming to at least EN1143-1 grade 0 or a security level corresponding to this. A collection of more than 25 regular weapons or ten particularly dangerous firearms (pistols, semi- and fully automatic weapons, smoothbore shotguns with a barrel length of less than 55 cm, and semi-automatic shotguns) should be stored in a room with a security level equivalent to at least EN1143-1 grade 1, or in a security cabinet conforming to at least EN1143-1 grade 1, or a security level corresponding to this. In addition, an automatic burglar alarm system linked to a control centre approved by the National Police must be installed.⁵

The minister of justice or a person authorised by the minister has the right to carry out checks at any time and without a court order of the weapons collections of individual collectors; the stockpile and weapons records of dealers; the records of those who transport weapons; and the ammunition storage facilities of persons and associations, including those who are authorised to recharge ammunition.⁶ In one such check of 152 collectors in 2010, the East Jutland Police confiscated 250 antique weapons from 29 civilian collectors over the course of two days, due to their failure to report the new antique weapons that they had added to their collections. Another charge was that the owners had not stored their weapons in approved firearms storage facilities.⁷

1.2 Legislative criminal gang packages 1, 2 and 3

As will be illustrated later in this study, much of the illicit possession and use of firearms in Denmark is mainly connected to the activities of criminal biker gangs and street gangs. In an effort to curb gang violence (which often involves firearms), law enforcement in Denmark has worked through so-called legal 'gang packages', with one legislative package launched in 2009 and a second in 2013. A third initiative, 'Gang Package 3', is currently under way.

The first legislative package aimed at addressing situations where several shootings, or similar serious violent incidents, had taken place and the individual acts of violence were assumed to be connected to a conflict between criminal groups (i.e. inter-gang violence). It introduced a provision for the imposition of up to double penalties for specific illegal actions carried out as part of inter-gang violence, as well as a minimum sentence of one year in prison for the illegal possession of firearms (up from six months' imprisonment prior to the reform). The legislative package also included the introduction of zone bans, under which the police may issue a ban on entering and residing in an area with a radius of 500 metres; any violation of a zone ban leads to a prison sentence.⁸

In the first quarter of 2013 Copenhagen witnessed some of the worst motorcycle club and gang violence for several years. The police recorded more shooting incidents in the first quarter of 2013 than in the whole of 2012. Several of these incidents occurred in densely populated areas and involved the use of, for example, machine guns, at times when many innocent people were in the area. A key component of the 2013 package was to tighten the penalty for the illegal possession of firearms in specific circumstances, that is, when the firearm is carried in a public space, with an additional sentence if ammunition for the firearm was simultaneously carried. The penalty was increased from one year in prison to one year and three months for the first offence in the case of illegal possession of firearms in public places without ammunition; and imprisonment for one year and six months for the first offence in the case of the illegal possession of firearms in public places with ammunition. For a second offence, Danish law has a 'gang clause', that is, a provision that allows the imposition of a double sentence for certain serious crimes.⁹

The Danish justice system imprisoned 302 gang members between 2012 and 2016. In June 2016 315 gang members were in Danish prisons.¹⁰ Entries in the criminal register for 2015 and 2016 show that motorcycle club and other gang members in particular had been charged with various public crimes involving weapons and drugs, including violations of the drug laws, theft, burglary and crimes against the

public authorities.¹¹ In 2016 the upsurge in shootings in public places in Denmark again initiated a legal reform package to curb gang violence.

In continuation of Gang Package 2, Gang Package 3 is currently being processed and is expected to be adopted soon. The legislative package includes 28 provisions divided into three focus areas: (1) ensuring the safety and security of all Danish citizens; (2) keeping gang criminality off the streets; and (3) applying legal pressure on criminal gangs. The initiatives include banning motorcycle club members from returning to the areas where they have committed crimes, special efforts against extortion in gang environments, easier steps to close motorcycle clubhouses, etc. Of particular interests to the weapons-related area are the following:

- The minimum penalty for the possession of firearms in public places will double, for example, from approximately one year in prison to approximately two years for the possession of firearms without ammunition.
- An additional penalty is introduced for all crimes where weapons have been used in public areas, in terms of which any penalty may be increased by 'up to half'. For example, a crime that on its own results in a sentence of up to ten years (such as robbery) will increase to 15 years if a firearm was used in the execution of the crime. Previously, this only applied to inter-gang violence, but in Package 3 it always applies to other serious crimes.
- Due to intelligence data indicating that criminals are learning shooting and weapons-handling skills in shooting clubs, and that shooting clubs have accepted members with prior criminal and problematic mental health records, Gang Package 3 includes new provisions for increasing control of Danish shooting clubs. Approval of membership of shooting associations will be subject to approval by the police. All members who do not have their own firearms licences but use shooting club weapons will be checked (this includes some 50,000 people), as well as all new members.
- The police will have the right to make home visits to hunters and sports shooters who keep licensed firearms at home to check that these firearms are properly stored. Previously, this only applied to weapons collectors.
- Any violation of weapons legislation that has resulted in conditional or unconditional imprisonment must now be included in a person's criminal record (this was previously not the case for minor offences).¹²

1.3 Reducing illicit firearms possession and gun violence through weapons amnesties and temporary stop-and-search zones

1.3.1 Temporary weapons amnesties

Given the risk of the theft of unregistered weapons held by civilians in Denmark, temporary gun amnesties are considered good ways of reducing risks associated with such weapons. At regular intervals so-called gun amnesties are announced in terms of which illicit weapons can be handed over to the police without the person being charged with a violation of the Weapons and Explosives Act.

Table 1: Weapons voluntarily handed in during the 2013 amnesty

Type of weapon	Airguns	Firearms	Blank-firing weapons	Ammunition (rounds)	Explosives	Other
Region						
Nordjylland	351	682	90	Large amount	129	8
Østjylland	352	606	276	Large amount	46	45
Midt- & Vestjylland	464	812	501	Large amount	178	60
Sydøstjylland	397	720	446	54,287	122	78
Syd & Sønderjylland	702	1,137	490	Large amount	54	18
Fyn	432	1,088	562	113,940	467	107
Sydsjælland & Lolland-Falster	474	924	354	ca. 50,000	65	120
Midt- & Vestsjælland	256	756	311	7,240	11	9
Nordsjælland	330	745	236	Large amount	136	63
Københavns Vestegn	243	387	286	55,640	20	64
København	758	564	399	Large amount	37	7
Bornholm	85	216	84	ca. 3,500	70	3
Total	4,844	8,637	4,035	Large amount	1,335	575

Source: National Investigation Centre, Danish National Police

The latest gun amnesty for the handing in of civilian-held illegal small arms and explosive was announced in 2013. The nationwide initiative was very successful and resulted in the handing in of close to 20,000 weapons and significant quantities of explosives, while a large amount of ammunition was also collected. Interestingly, the number of voluntarily handed in firearms is about the same as the combined number of airguns and blank-firing weapons (see Table 1).¹³

The result was more than double that of the previous gun amnesty in Denmark in May-June 2009, when a total of 8,085 firearms were handed over to the police.¹⁴ It also surpassed that of the most recent gun amnesty in Sweden in 2013, when 15,000 weapons were handed over in a country with twice the population of Denmark and considered to have a greater gun problem.¹⁵

1.3.2 Temporary stop-and-search zones

In situations when the police assess that there is an increased risk of violent confrontations between criminal gangs, the police have the right to stop any person within a limited geographical area during a limited time period in order to search, for example, for illegal weapons. They may also search vehicles within the defined zone.

The police established 19 such zones in 2016 and a total of 982 searches were made.¹⁶ Many of the zones were located in the Copenhagen region, and were in part motivated by attempted murders and death threats involving the Loyal to Familia and Black Jackets gangs, as well as illegal weapons seized in Kokkedal and Hillerød.¹⁷ In September 2016 the police declared a stop-and-search zone in Odense, in responses to the continuing conflict between the Hells Angels and Black Army, leading to at least 478 searches within the zone.¹⁸

According to the police, stop-and-search zones and other targeted actions against inter-gang violence and illegal weapons have had a significant positive impact.¹⁹ In particular, temporary stop-and-search zones help to de-escalate an ongoing conflict between criminal groups, and have helped, for example, to calm down an area where shootings had occurred. This gives law enforcement and other actors the time to carry out their investigative and preventive activities. A temporary halt in shootings may disrupt what are known as 'near-repeat' shootings (see section 2.4, below) and help to reduce gun violence in public spaces.

1.4 International cooperation with regard to illicit firearms trafficking

1.4.1 EU harmonisation and cooperation

Denmark has stricter firearms legislation compared to the European Union (EU) Common Framework and most other EU member states. One such area is deactivation, which in Denmark is carried out by cutting the whole firearm in two parts along the length of the weapon. The common EU technical minimum criteria introduced for the proper deactivation of weapons were welcomed by the Danish authorities, but came too late. There is evidence that dealers are trying and sell off as many of their deactivated weapons as possible before the enforcement of the criteria becomes compulsory, according to Europol's Operation Portu and one Danish police representant.²⁰ Danish legislation is also stricter than most other EU member states in terms of convertible weapons: *"The problem is that you cannot force people in the rest of European countries to stick to the rules actually, that's the problem. Here [in Denmark] you're not allowed to have gas alarm weapons, even though it's only a gas alarm weapon. You can buy them in Germany but you can't take them to Denmark."*²¹

Since the early 1990s Denmark has had a special opt-out clause exempting the country from all participation in justice and home affairs (JHA) issues that apply at the supranational EU level. This became a growing problem after the treaties of Amsterdam and Lisbon, when much of the cooperation on JHA issues was changed from a qualified majority voting policy to a supranational policy. In May 2017 Europol became supranational as well, in large part due to the terrorist attacks in Brussels and Paris. Denmark is excluded from Europol unless the country agrees to withdraw its right to opt out.²² On 3 December 2015 Denmark decided in a referendum to leave Europol. Just two days before the new Europol regulation entered into force on 1 May 2017, Europol and Denmark signed a cooperation agreement. This is a tailor-made agreement that seeks to minimise the negative impact of Denmark's withdrawal from Europol by allowing for a sufficient level of cooperation, including the exchange of operational data and the deployment of liaison officers, without full membership.²³ Denmark's special status has been taken into account, given its membership of the EU and the Schengen Agreement, and it was requested that Denmark should contribute financially to Europol. In turn, Denmark will have a national focal point at Europol headquarters and be able to receive or retrieve data on a 24/7 basis, as well as take part in meetings of the heads of the Europol national units and the Europol Management Board.²⁴ Denmark believes that making the fight against illicit firearms a key priority of the nine EMPACT priorities (i.e. Europol's priority crime areas) under the 2013-2017 EU Policy Cycle has been very valuable and successful. Danish police welcome the continued focus on illicit

firearms in the next policy cycle, which is due to start in 2018. Danish police have participated in Europol Policy Cycle EMPACT activities and are ready to continue their engagement, including in EMPACT operations targeting illicit firearms trafficking. The current policy cycle's goal under the 'illicit firearms trafficking' policy is to reduce the risk firearms pose to citizens, including combating the illicit trafficking in firearms.²⁵

1.4.2 Nordic cooperation

The Nordic countries cooperate to fight illicit weapons in a number of ways. The Nordic Police and Customs Cooperation was established in 1984 to combat drug-related crime. However, since 1996 this agreement has covered practically all types of crime. The Swedish 'arms mission' (*vapenuppdraget*) was communicated at an early stage to the Nordic Police and Customs Cooperation and its liaison officers around the world. The Swedish focus on firearms smuggling has been reflected in increased information about firearms in liaison officers' reports, as well as a focus on the annual threat report of the Nordic Police and Customs Cooperation, in which firearms smuggling constituted an area of deepening concern in 2014. During the year discussions have been conducted among Danish, Finnish and Norwegian colleagues, and Nordic cooperation is working very well. Norway has also had a liaison officer at the customs office in Malmö since 2012, which further facilitates cooperation in ongoing cases. Consequently, liaison officers are used continuously in cases involving illegal firearms.²⁶ Cooperation among the Nordic countries regularly includes staff visits. An analyst from Swedish customs regularly works at the Danish police's National Investigation Centre, for example.²⁷

1.5 Prevention of radicalisation

The Danish approach to preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalisation is based on systematised multi-agency collaboration among various social-services providers, the educational system, the health-care system, the police, and the intelligence and security services that has evolved over a decade. The sharing of information necessary for such collaboration is regulated by the Danish Administration of Justice Act, which delineates the use of shared information. The Danish approach draws on decades of experience with similar collaboration from other areas and benefits from already existing structures and initiatives developed for other purposes than specifically preventing extremism and radicalisation, such as preventing criminality.²⁸ The Danish approach rests on "the understanding of terrorism as a crime comparable to other types of crime, and of extremism and

radicalization as risks especially to vulnerable young people, rather than as an existential threat to the state and the existing order or a political challenge.”²⁹

In 1997 a new law allowed knowledge sharing in collaborations among schools, social services and police. This is primarily a form of collaboration between municipal offices and the local police. The cooperation is anchored in so-called ‘info houses’ that store specialised knowledge of extremism and radicalisation, and which have been established in Denmark’s 12 police districts.³⁰ Denmark also has a system of collaboration among psychiatrists, social authorities and police; and among the Correctional Service, social authorities and police (KSP).³¹ The KSP system was launched primarily to prevent individuals released from prison or other institutions from re-engaging in crime. The Copenhagen terrorist attacks indicated the importance of the KSP system.³² In recent years there has been a significant strengthening of the authorities’ efforts with the introduction of a series of anti-terrorism packages, for example, a multi-year agreement between the police and prosecuting authority in the period 2016-2019.

1.5.1 Key actors

The terrorist threat from radicalised individuals and groups in Denmark is handled primarily by the Police Intelligence Service (PET), which, as Denmark’s national intelligence and security force, has the task of identifying, preventing, investigating and countering threats to freedom, democracy and security in the Danish community. PET has had a violent extremism prevention centre since 2007, which is responsible for launching and implementing initiatives and projects in cooperation with other relevant actors, with the aim of intervening as early as possible. The efforts are intelligence based and threat based, and involve the intelligence services’ knowledge and experience of previous terrorist cases, investigations, etc. PET’s early prevention work has three main tracks: outreach to and dialogue with civil society, developing the capacity and knowledge of professional subject groups, and exit programmes targeted at people who are already part of an extremist environment.³³ However, the efforts also involve other authorities, including the Defence Intelligence Service, the police, prosecutors’ offices and the Correctional Service. Denmark has also developed a series of policies aimed at preventing violent extremism.³⁴ The National Police Prevention Centre (NFC) establishes policy for, supports and coordinates the police’s crime prevention efforts, including inter-agency collaboration. The centre’s tasks are to promote cooperation with external actors, and to develop new methods and approaches to police crime prevention work. The NFC collects research-based knowledge and best practice, and is also responsible for civilian police duties, including activities in particularly vulnerable

residential areas. The national EXIT programmes contact point is also based in the NFC.³⁵

A large number of authorities are involved in efforts to prevent extremism and radicalisation in Denmark. The Board of International Recruitment and Integration, PET, the NFC, and the Board of Education and Quality support efforts in the country's municipalities and police forces, as well as in day-care centres, elementary schools and the area of youth education. Much of the preventive work is aimed more generally at all crime prevention rather than violent extremism or illegal fire-arms trafficking specifically.³⁶

1.5.2 EXIT programmes

Although the bulk of the work is directed at preventive measures, Denmark has also introduced a series of direct intervention responses targeting already radicalised individuals. A national emergency response team has been established, for example, to respond at short notice if a municipality or police district requests counselling in relation to emergency situations, for example, if individuals are planning to travel to conflict zones, and in emergency situations following (terrorist) arrests, arson attacks, demonstrations, etc. The response team can launch targeted emergency interventions in municipalities that experience acute challenges.³⁷

Since 2011 the Danish government has implemented a national exit plan for gang members called 'A Way Out'. The national EXIT programme targets individuals linked to motorcycle club or gang groupings who need help to start afresh. The programme is available throughout Denmark at the municipal level and is rooted in local EXIT units consisting of coordinators from the municipality, the police and the Probation Service.³⁸ A new proposal in Gang Package 3 is that individuals actively taking part in EXIT programmes may hand in their weapons to the police without criminal charges being laid against them.³⁹ PET's exit initiatives are targeted at individuals who are radicalised and involved in violent militant Islamist groups and extremist political groups. National authorities provide counselling to local authorities on how to strengthen exit initiatives dealing with extremism, with a special focus on how to tackle young people's recruitment for and participation in armed conflicts abroad.⁴⁰

Studies have shown significant differences between EXIT programmes offered by various Danish municipalities in different parts of the country. Some municipalities have gradually established teams of experienced professionals who possess various skills, including experienced street workers and staff with educational or

academic backgrounds. In other municipalities an exit candidate's only option is to obtain an exit coordinator or a mentor who is a policeman. In one case the exit coordinator was the same police officer who had been in charge of the investigation of the crime that the candidate had been accused of committing.⁴¹

2. Characteristics of the illicit firearms market in Denmark

The size of the illicit firearms market in Denmark is estimated to be rather modest, both in scale and organisation. There is no single illicit firearms market in Denmark that a range of stakeholders access; rather, there appears to be a web of interactions involving illegal weapons (see section 2.3, below). Yet, the PET Centre for Terror Analysis (CTA) considers firearms to be 'readily available' to extremists wanting to carry out an attack in Denmark and believes that 'simple attacks' could be carried out after little or no planning.⁴² An interviewee with the Danish police's National Investigation Centre agrees that illegal weapons are available to those who wish to carry out such attacks, but accessing illegal weapons in Denmark involves high risks and is costly. The price for a used standard pistol starts at 15,000-20,000 Danish kroner (about €2,000-2,700), and increases if the buyer has specific requests or needs.⁴³

The majority of illegal weapons are thought to be sourced through domestic theft inside Denmark, followed by criminal supplies of weapons mixed with other illegal goods, and imported weapons. No illicit manufacturing of firearms is reported in Denmark⁴⁴ beyond small-scale craft conversion of items such as gas pistols and blank-firing weapons, which is known to take place in many European countries.⁴⁵ Yet there are ongoing investigations and prosecution of groups or individuals engaged in transferring small arms and light weapons illegally, as well as of individuals engaged in unlawful brokering activities.⁴⁶ The following section lays out the main characteristics of the illegal firearms market in Denmark.

2.1 The size of the Danish illicit firearms market

A reliable estimate of the size of the illicit gun market in Denmark is currently not available. Data on seized firearms and reported cases of violations of the Weapons Act, however, suggest that this market is rather limited and that the general availability of firearms is decreasing, but criminal gangs have nonetheless managed to access illegal firearms through illegal imports or illegal domestic gun markets.

2.1.1 Weapons seizures

One type of evidence of the scale and types of firearms found on illegal markets in Denmark is provided by weapons seized by the police. The Danish authorities are relatively successful in seizing weapons and have seized a total of 3,001 firearms in the past four years (2013-2016), with a relatively stable range from one year to another (see Table 2). Weapon seizures in this case, refers to guns submitted to the National Forensic Centre for analysis and include all firearms that are suspected to original from criminal environments (including criminal possession). Many of the seized weapons are thought to be connected to criminal gangs, but proving a connection to criminal gangs is often very difficult.

Table 2: Number of firearms seized in Denmark, 2013-2016

Year	Number of firearms
2016	663
2015	777
2014	763
2013	798
Total	3,001

Source: Danish National Police; Denmark's national report to UNPOA 2014, p. 15

According to Project FIRE's findings, Northern Europe is the macro-region with the third highest number of cases of firearms seizures (20.88% of cases and 11.15% of firearms of the EU total). Within Northern Europe, the highest number of cases occurred in Sweden (33.62% of cases; 20.79% of firearms). In terms of firearms seized, however, Denmark accounted for the highest number (11.12% of cases; 33% of firearms), followed by the UK and Sweden.⁴⁷

Many of the firearms seized in Denmark could not be owned in the country even with a licence, which means that they must have been obtained illegally (including converted weapons and automatic weapons). Pistols are the most commonly seized type of weapon, and are also the weapon of choice for criminals in Denmark (see below). Given the prevalence of pistols in shootings in Denmark and the fact the many seizures are thought to be associated with gang environments, it is not

surprising that pistols make up 43% of the seized weapons. Not surprisingly, military-grade firearms make up only a small percentage of the firearms seized in Denmark, while machine pistols account for 5% of the firearms seized in 2016. It suggests that some seized weapons that were not recorded as being seized in a gang environment may nonetheless be linked to criminals. Furthermore, other weapons types may have different effects on safety and security in terms of, for example, crime or suicides.

Table 3: Firearms seized in 2016

Type of firearm	Number of firearms	% of total number of firearms
Pistols	332	47.5%
Shotguns	117	16.7%
Rifles	84	12.0%
Sawn-off shotguns	58	8.3%
Machine pistols	33	4.7%
Saloon rifles	35	5.0%
Converted gas and alarm weapons	22	3.1%
Automatic weapons	13	1.9%
Machine guns	5	0.7%
Total	699	100%

Source: Database of the Danish National Forensics Centre

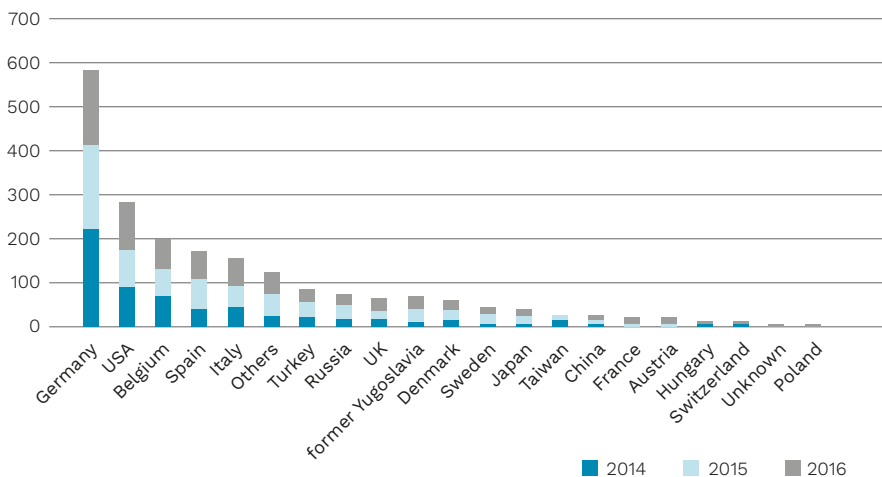
In 2014 less than one-fifth of the alarm and gas pistols that were seized in Denmark had been converted, but in the first months of 2017 more than one in three of them had been (see Table 4). In 2014 converted weapons were a relatively significant problem; however, in the past few years Denmark reported a decrease in converted alarm and gas pistols, and Danish authorities estimate that the problem is smaller in Denmark than in, for example, Sweden, and in some other EU countries, where converted weapons are a significant problem. The conversions that the Danish police come across are all simply done and did not require any special skills or equipment. The increase in converted gas weapons is thought to be motivated by the same reasons as in other EU countries: their availability, low price and relatively low risk of acquisition.⁴⁸

Table 4: Gas/alarm weapons seized in Denmark, 2014-2017

Year	2017	2016	2015	2014
Total	21	61	53	86
Converted	8	22	17	16

Source: National Investigation Centre, Danish National Police

The most common country of production of weapons seized in Denmark is Germany. Figure 1 shows the country of production of all the firearms seized in Denmark in the period 2013-2016. The statistics show very little variation from one year to another in the four years covered: Germany is, for example, always the most common country of production, while the United States is always the second most common, and Belgium, Italy and Spain alternate among third, fourth and fifth places.

Figure 1: Countries where weapons seized by Danish authorities were produced, 2014-2016

Source: National Investigation Centre, Danish National Police

2.1.2 Violations of the Weapons Act

Firearms-related violations constitute about 10% of the annual reported violations of the Weapons Act. Like the number of seized firearms, the annual numbers of reported cases of firearms violations of the Weapons Act are quite stable. The largest

drop was a significant decrease in the number of illegal firearms from 2009 to 2010, while the increase since has remained relatively stable. The drop from 2009 to 2010 is considered to be a result of the successful implementation of a new criminal code making firearms crimes costlier (see above). Fluctuations in other years are typically caused by police districts' special efforts in this area. Targeted operations carried out by, for example, the Jutland police and Fyn police, resulted in an increase in seizures because of, for instance, seizures resulting from the failure to renew firearms licences. A recent national victims survey did not indicate that there has been an increase in the use of knives and firearms associated with episodes of violence in recent years.⁴⁹ The result may indicate a stable level of such violence, as well as being indicative of the relative isolation of gun and knife violence in criminal gang environments that generally do not affect the average citizen.

Table 5: Reported cases of Weapons Act violations, 2009-2015

Year	Number of firearms-related violations	Total number of violations
2009	1,095	7,306
2010	699	5,998
2011	725	6,619
2012	731	6,517
2013	596	7,297
2014	671	7,111
2015	745	7,513

Source: Danish National Police, Strategic Analysis 2016, p. 25

While the number of firearms violations has remained quite stable, the total number of reported violations of the Weapons Act has increased by over 20% in the past decade (Table 5).

The number of offences perpetrated with unlawful knives increased by 11% between 2009 and 2014, while the number of cases of illegal firearms in the same period fell by almost 39%. Hence, the number of firearms-related cases that the police have investigated has also been falling. In the period 2010-2014 this number more than halved from 1,371 to 619.⁵⁰ A possible cause was the stricter legislation on the unlawful possession of firearms that entered into force in 2009, allegedly causing criminal gangs (including motorcycle club gangs) to partly shift from using firearms to using weapons such as knives.⁵¹ This would suggest that stricter gun legislation specifically targeting gangs may have a deterrent effect. Since 1 July 2014 the penalty

for the possession of firearms has been made more stringent and it has become easier to apply the so-called gang clause that can impose double sentences for serious biker- and gang-related crime. In addition, imprisoned members are excluded from parole when their group has engaged in a violent conflict with another group.⁵² However, the implementation of the 'gang clause' placed specific pressure on investigators to prove the individual perpetrator had a gang connection, which is very difficult in practice. If gang members involved in firearms offences and violence are not convicted under the gang clause, the deterrent effect of the stricter legislation is likely to be undermined, which may explain the return of gun violence a few years after the entry into force of the stricter legislation.

2.2 Sources of firearms on the illicit market

Firearms have mainly ended up on the illicit gun market because of domestic diversion from legal gun owners and shooting clubs and illegal imports of firearms. In addition, some firearms also reach the illicit gun market through the illegal sale of unregistered firearms by individual gun enthusiasts without criminal intentions or through internet sales.

2.2.1 Domestic diversion

The theft of firearms from private citizens often involves licensed firearms. These thefts are then reported to the police. Between 2012 and 2016 more than 1,000 firearms were reported stolen from private homes in Denmark.⁵³ On other occasions the weapons are old and not in use, and are stored somewhere on the property such as in the loft or attic (i.e. not in proper locked weapons-storage facilities). Thefts from such sources are often not reported to the police, but the police estimate that the number of unrecorded cases is large, and that these weapons constitute a considerable pool of illegal weapons in Denmark. One indicator is that the unlicensed and unregistered weapons stored in people's homes are often very old, typically from the Second World War or earlier. Unregistered old pistols of this type show up rather frequently in shooting incidents or in other criminal investigations, but without being previously reported to the police.

One specific aspect of firearms acquisition through robbery and theft is theft from sports shooting clubs. Two-thirds of the current 75,000 members of Danish sports shooting clubs are not allowed to take firearms home. However, the 'freedom of association' in Danish law allows associations to include any member in their activities, without prior background checks. This means that criminals, mentally ill and

underage people can join sports shooting clubs in Denmark, where they learn, for example, weapons-handling and shooting skills, and gain information about the club's security arrangements (e.g. the location of storage rooms and surveillance cameras) that could subsequently be used to steal the club's weapons. Recently, a Danish police officer was shot and killed by a mentally disturbed attacker with a criminal record who used a weapon that he had stolen from the sports shooting club to which he belonged. The incident, along with other known criminal involvement in some shooting clubs, has resulted in a change in legislation (see above).⁵⁴

2.2.2 The illegal importation of firearms

Although the scale of weapons smuggling is difficult for authorities to estimate, firearms trafficking into Denmark from other European countries is believed to be more limited compared to some other countries, such as neighbouring Sweden. The illegal imports are of two kinds: firstly, weapons are legally bought without a licence in another EU country and then brought illegally into Denmark. This is possible because many weapons that require a licence in Denmark can be bought licence-free in other EU countries, including, for example, alarm weapons, gas pistols and deactivated weapons. Secondly, weapons are bought illegally and smuggled into Denmark, sometimes via a series of other European countries. A 2014 study found that the main method of trafficking illicit firearms into Denmark was in heavy goods vehicles originating primarily from the western Balkans.⁵⁵ Some weapons smuggled into Denmark are destined for the Swedish criminal market (see below).

Profit-motivated criminals who also engage in, for instance, the smuggling of cigarettes, drugs or people are thought to be responsible for firearms smuggling. The police believe that criminals typically smuggle firearms to sell rather than for their own use. Contrary to the findings in the 2014 study, what the authorities can confirm is that weapons of a specific origin, such as those once produced in the western Balkans, are relatively seldom used in shootings or seized in investigations in Denmark compared to in some other EU countries. This is most notable in comparison to Sweden, where most weapons used in shootings in public spaces are from the western Balkans. One of the explanations may be the use in firearms acquisitions of closer personal connections in Sweden with the western Balkans, due to the much larger diaspora in Sweden compared to Denmark.⁵⁶ This does not mean that there are no cases in Denmark of firearms smuggling from the former Yugoslavia. In 2013, for example, a man was convicted of smuggling four AK-47s and two Zastava pistols into Denmark from Croatia.⁵⁷ The 2015 strategic analysis report of the Danish National Police stated that terrorist access to firearms in Denmark may increase in the future through the smuggling of weapons and other military materiel from, for example, Russia.⁵⁸

2.2.3 Illegal internet sales

Danish and other national police forces actively monitor the internet in an attempt to follow developments and illegal trade deals. The Danish police's investigations have shown that the trade in illegal firearms on the dark web is primarily conducted by gun enthusiasts who have no criminal intent. The assumption is that, although the prices of weapons on the dark web tend to be lower than on the street, criminals are risk averse and avoid using the dark web to access firearms.⁵⁹ Less experienced criminals may be less risk averse and may use social media to access guns. In 2015 a report about Danish youth trading weapons on a Facebook group (one that had 1,000 members) caused a stir, although it is difficult to assess whether any firearms were actually traded in this way.⁶⁰

2.2.4 Illegal sales by gun enthusiasts

Individual gun enthusiasts, such as collectors, have been known to organise informal garage sales of unregistered weapons and to sell weapons to other weapon enthusiasts without criminal intent.⁶¹ In December 2012 Danish police confiscated a total of 158 illegal firearms, hand grenades, mortar shells and fuses, as well as large amounts of cartridges in several searches of homes, leading to the arrest of eight men aged between 19 and 71. In the first search the police found ten illegal firearms, including two machine guns and three pistols. The investigation found evidence that some weapons collectors held many unregistered and illegal weapons, and that these collectors to some extent traded illegal weapons among themselves and with other interested parties.⁶² Although the traders typically have no violent or criminal intention, it is a completely illegal arrangement that may also attract individuals who intend to use the unregistered weapons for criminal or even terrorist purposes.

2.3 Dynamics of the illicit gun market

2.3.1 Instrumental market with a wide variety of available firearms driven by criminal demand

The illegal gun market in Denmark is facilitated and largely driven by the demand of criminal gangs. Criminals in Denmark sell and resell firearms within and between gangs. The illegal gun market in criminal environments appears to be pragmatic rather than ideological. Individuals from an motorcycle club gang known to have right-wing and xenophobic tendencies have, for example, been known to trade with

an ethnic street gang.⁶³ Thanks to police firearms forensics units, investigations have shown that the same weapons are used in multiple shootings and various crimes. On one occasion the same weapon was used in five different shootings. The police therefore infer that the size of the criminal gang market in firearms is limited in Denmark.⁶⁴ This dynamic is different from the situation in Sweden, for example, where a weapon is rarely used in more than one shooting.⁶⁵ Criminal gangs in Denmark are typically so-called 'multi-criminals' and do not specialise in firearms only. Most commonly, firearms are used as protection or for the control of, for example, drug markets. Theft, robbery and involvement in the illegal sales of gun enthusiasts are ways in which criminals gain access to firearms in Denmark, as well as through the conversion and importation of weapons.⁶⁶ The police warn that the improved organisation and increased internationalisation of criminal groups may increase criminals' and terrorists' access to weapons in Denmark.⁶⁷

Box 2: Weapons and accessories seized in January 2012

- German semi-automatic saloon rifle, .22 calibre, GSG 5
- US revolver, .44 Magnum calibre, Colt Anaconda
- US revolver, .357 Magnum calibre, Smith & Wesson 28-2 Highway Patrolman
- Sharp-loaded US self-loading pistol, .45 ACP calibre, Colt MK IV Government
- Turkish converted gas and signal pistol, 6.35 mm calibre
- Italian semi-automatic shotgun, 12/70 mm calibre, FABARM
- US 'slide-action' (pump-action) shotgun, 20/76 mm calibre, Mossberg 500C
- Sharp-loaded Turkish converted gas and signal pistol, 6.35 mm calibre
- Turkish converted gas and signal pistol, 6.35 mm calibre
- US 'slide-action' (pump-action) shotgun, 12/70 mm calibre, Winchester 1200
- US rifle, 30-30 calibre, Winchester 94
- German/US semi-automatic saloon rifle, .22LR calibre, Colt M4 Carbine
- Sharp-loaded US revolver, .44 Magnum calibre, Smith & Wesson 25-5
- Sharp-loaded US revolver, .357 Magnum calibre, Smith & Wesson 627-5
- Sharp-loaded Brazilian even-let pistol, 9 Parabellum calibre, Taurus PT92AF
- Sharp-loaded German self-loading pistol, .22LR calibre, Walther P22, with attached silencer
- German self-loading pistol, 9 mm Parabellum calibre, Walther P99, number FAG5050 with associated magazine containing 15 cartridges
- German self-loading pistol, 9 mm Parabellum calibre, SIG Sauer P226 S

- US self-loading pistol, .45 ACP calibre, Colt COMBAT Commander
- British sub-machine gun, 9 mm Parabellum calibre, Sten MK II
- US self-loading pistol, 9 mm Parabellum calibre, Springfield 1911A1
- German self-loading pistol, 7.65 calibre, Mauser HSC with magazine containing eight cartridges
- US revolver, .357 Magnum calibre, Smith & Wesson 19-3
- Israeli self-loading machine pistol, 9 mm Parabellum calibre, Uzi
- Italian percussion revolver, .44 calibre, NAVY 1851
- Belgian self-loading pistol, 9 mm Parabellum, Browning 1935 Hi Power with magazine containing two cartridges
- US self-loading pistol, .22LR calibre, Ciener Platinum Cup
- While-charging pistol, .45 ACP calibre, unknown brand, model 1911A1
- US self-loading pistol, .45 ACP calibre, Enterprise Arms, with three magazines each containing 11 cartridges
- Philippine self-loading gun, .45 ACP calibre, ARMSCOR
- Chinese self-loading gun .45 ACP calibre, Norinco 1911A1, with magazine containing one cartridge
- US bolt, barrel and magazine, .22LR calibre, Ciener 1911A1
- Philippine self-loading pistol, .40 calibre Smith & Wesson, with associated magazine containing two cartridges
- Gun, 7.65 mm calibre, unknown make and producer, with six cartridges
- US revolver, .22 calibre Hornet, Smith & Wesson 686-3 with 12 cartridges
- US revolver, .357 Magnum calibre, Ruger GP100 with six cartridges
- US self-loading pistol, .22LR calibre, Ruger MK II with magazine containing eight cartridges and attached silencer
- Danish military pistol, 9 mm Parabellum calibre, SIG, P-210 Neuhausen
- German converted gas and signal pistol, .22 Hornet calibre, Rohm Noris Twinny
- US self-loading pistol, .45 ACP calibre, Kimber Gold Match II
- .410 calibre gun, unknown tag and trademark
- German semi-automatic saloon rifle, .22LR calibre, GSG 5
- German self-loading pistol, 7.65 mm calibre, Walther PPK
- Electronic laser sight, Walther; one silencer; and a Hawke laser

Source: SKAT, High Court, Doc. No. SKM2013.667.ØLR, 24 January 2013

One court case from 2012 is an illustrative example of the dynamics of the illegal firearms market and the different types of firearms that are available on the illicit gun market in Denmark. In January 2012 two men were convicted of smuggling 1.1 tons of cannabis, as well as for robbery, receiving stolen goods, providing

fraudulent information and tax fraud. According to PET, at least one of the men had close contacts with the biker community, including leading members of the G5 and G4 motorcycle club gangs. Large parts of the sentences that the smugglers received¹ were due to the possession of an illegal weapons cache consisting of a wide variety of 44 firearms (see Box 2) and large amounts of ammunition of various calibres. Five of the seized firearms were registered in the police firearms register as having been stolen in Denmark. The serial numbers had been removed on 14 of the other weapons. The remaining firearms were not registered in the firearms register and could not have been legally acquired, owned or transferred in Denmark.⁶⁸

2.3.2 Weapons transiting through Denmark

Malmö and the Öresund bridge (between Copenhagen and Malmö) are thought to be the most common route for illicit weapons that reach Sweden by land. The illegal import of firearms to Malmö is extensive. As one example, three-quarters of firearms seized in Sweden in the first half of 2012 were seized at the Öresund bridge and the docks in Malmö.⁶⁹ Because of Malmö's location and local demand, the city is thought to be used as a depot for illegal firearms. Most of the illegal weapons circulating in Malmö's criminal environments were produced in the Czech Republic or the former Yugoslavia.⁷⁰ The importance of Öresund bridge and Malmö for the illicit gun market in Sweden suggests that many of the guns trafficked to Sweden have transited through Denmark; these guns include military-grade assault rifles. In February 2017, for example, a man previously convicted of murder was stopped in his car at the Öresund bridge and found to be carrying two AK-47 assault rifles with him.⁷¹

The Öresund bridge is not only used for firearms trafficking to Sweden, but also for bringing firearms from Sweden to Denmark.⁷² In February 2017, for example, Swedish customs and police arrested a couple for importing and converting a large number of gas pistols that authorities think were then sold to criminals in Sweden and Denmark, one of which was used in a murder in Gothenburg, Sweden. The couple had received more than 90 gas weapons that the man had converted to fire live ammunition. The weapons had been imported by making use of the laxer gun

¹ One of the men was sentenced to 12 years in prison and a fine of 1.195 million Danish kroner (approximately €160,000), and some of his belongings were confiscated. The other man was sentenced to seven years in prison and was expelled from Denmark for life.

laws in the countries from where they originated.¹ The authorities also found several thousands of cartridges of various calibres, silencers, magazines and several weapons barrels.^{73 74}

2.4 Criminal gangs and firearms violence in Denmark

The Danish intelligence picture of gun violence is very closely linked to criminal gangs, although these vary in terms of their organisation. It is assumed that gun violence in public places that is not linked to criminal groups is a rare occurrence in Denmark. Historically, the criminal gang scene in Denmark was almost exclusively made up by two rival motorcycle club gangs, Hells Angels and Bandidos. The Hells Angels motorcycle club has seven divisions in Denmark, as well as a support group called AK81.¹¹⁷⁵ In the past decade Hells Angels have represented themselves as the protectors of Denmark against young men from ethnic minorities, and have engaged in a conscious process of demonising their rivals.⁷⁶ About two-thirds of individuals affiliated with gangs in Denmark are linked to motorcycle club gangs, primarily Hells Angels and Bandidos. Only about 100 people are connected to other motorcycle club gangs.⁷⁷

Contrary to the motorcycle club gangs, criminal gangs are smaller and more numerous. In recent years the gang scene has diversified and become more complex, including by the establishment of international groups in Copenhagen from, for example, the Netherlands and Germany. The police have detected conflicts among the various gangs related to crime markets, territory, and personal conflicts and cases of revenge.⁷⁸ The groups are very dynamic, with old ones disappearing and new ones forming. In 2016 the largest gangs were Loyal to Familia, Black Army, Brothas Souljaz, Black Cobra, UTF and Bloodz.⁷⁹

In addition to the organised criminal groups, a number of street gangs have further diversified the gang environment in Denmark. In 1998, as a result of collaboration among police, schools and social services, 15 to 20 youth street gangs were identified in Copenhagen alone, each with five to 20 members between the ages of 15 and

I In both Sweden and Denmark alarm weapons require a licence. While associations and clubs that are affiliated with the Swedish Sports Confederation or the Swedish Kennel Club do not need a licence for alarm weapons, a private individual requires a licence to own such a weapon, which is applied for under so-called odd purposes. The prerequisites for obtaining a licence for an alarm weapon is that you need the weapon for dog training, sports competitions, agriculture or to scare pests. Authorisation is very restrictive (Swedish police, Weapon Laws and Regulations, <<https://polisen.se/Lagar-och-regler/Vapen/Paintballskytte/>>).

II The letters A and K stand for *Altid Klar* (Always Ready), and the numbers 8 and 1 refer to the letters H and A's position in the alphabet.

20.⁸⁰ These youth gangs are geographically based (from areas such as Tingbjerg, Blågårds Plads, Kokkedal, Værebros, Mjølnerparken, etc.). Some of them have formed an official grouping and display their gang identity by wearing black hoodies marked with local geographical names.⁸¹

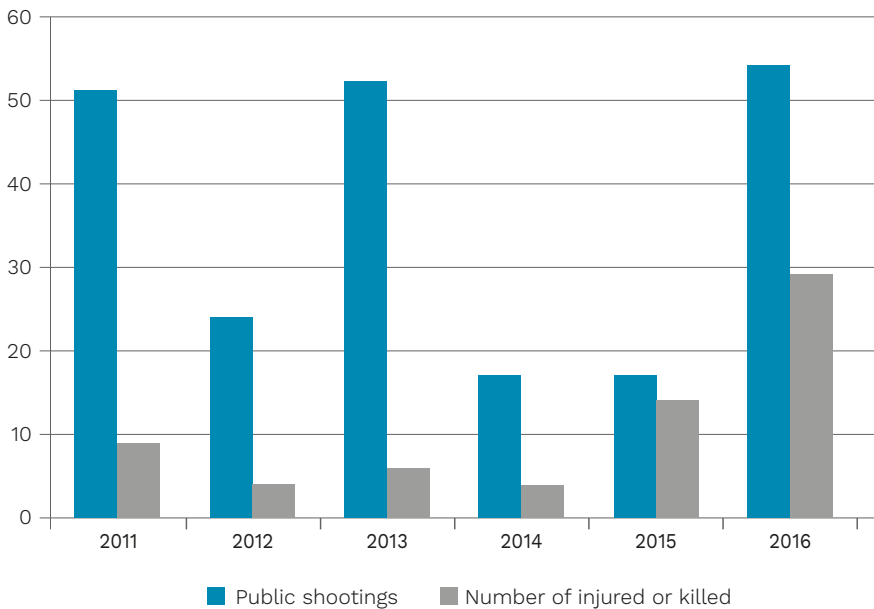
In 2016 approximately 1,400 people were affiliated to criminal or motorcycle club gangs in Denmark, which is the lowest figure recorded since 2010.⁸² A recent study showed that 3,332 individuals had been affiliated to gangs and motorcycle club clubs between 2009 and 2016, but only 324 individuals had been associated with the gang environment for the entire period. Hence, criminal and motorcycle club gang membership is very fluid in Denmark, and it is not uncommon that members leave or even shift from one gang affiliation to another. Interestingly, to some extent there has been some integration, or at least individual overlaps, since 2008 between street gangs and more organised criminal motorcycle club gangs. One example given in the literature was a drive-by shooting of a male member of a rival street gang, after which the young shooter was offered a position linked to Hells Angels: 'For HA, a prospect who had committed such as brutal drive by killing was attractive, because it symbolized power and [a] dangerous reputation in relation to other street communities.'⁸³

According to official estimates, eight violent conflicts between gangs were ongoing in January 2017.⁸⁴ Criminal gangs are responsible for the overwhelming majority of public shootings in Denmark. In 2016 all 54 recorded public shootings were connected to biker and gang conflicts. Almost all shootings are carried out with pistols, which are more easily available, and are easy to carry and conceal.⁸⁵ The trends in shootings in criminal environments in Denmark show clear evidence of so-called near-repeat shootings. This involves crimes that are clustered in space and time, with a crime event often shortly followed by another one nearby. Between mid-September and mid-October 2016 alone Denmark experienced 24 shootings, 20 of which took place in Copenhagen, Næstved and Odense. Many of the exceptionally numerous shootings during 2016 included young men who were believed to be linked to the motorcycle club gang community. However, because several of the shootings occurred in public spaces, there were also non-gang-related casualties (i.e. people who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time).⁸⁶

Although the number of shootings in public spaces fluctuates from year to year, a significant increase in the number of 'successful' shootings can be observed: while in 2011 someone was hit in only six of the 50 shootings (an 11.5% accuracy rate), the same number of shootings resulted in injuries in 29 shootings in 2016 (a 54% accuracy rate). Police intelligence has also noted an improvement in individual gang members' handling of firearms and that gang members tend to assume a 'correct'

position before shooting. The police therefore conclude that criminals have become more skilful shooters in the past few years. The police have further concluded that some criminals, including members of motorcycle club gangs, have learnt how to shoot and handle firearms in Danish shooting clubs.⁸⁷

Figure 2: Public shootings and number of injured or killed, 2011-2016



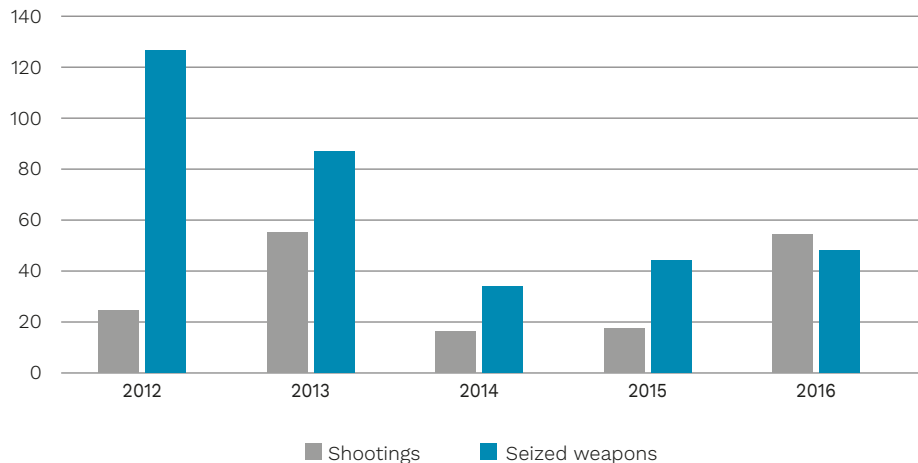
Source: National Investigation Centre, Danish National Police

Although almost all shootings can be linked to criminal groups and many firearms seizures are thought to be linked to gangs, only about 6% of the seized weapons can actually be definitely linked to gangs. In 2014, 584 firearms were submitted for investigation by the police, of which 33 weapons were confirmed to be linked to motorcycle club and gang environments (5.6%).⁸⁸ In 2015, 691 guns were submitted for investigation by the police, 43 of which were confirmed to be linked to motorcycle club and gang environments (6.2%).⁸⁹

However, the number of firearms seized in gang environments has not followed the same pattern in recent years. In 2016 police found 48 firearms that the National Police can confirm are related to biker and gang environments. If one compares the

number of shooting incidents with the number of weapons seized, police find significantly fewer firearms per shooting incident than before. In 2016 police therefore identified 0.88 firearms per public shooting incident. In 2010, when Denmark experienced 40 shootings in public places and the police confiscated 224 firearms linked to the biker and gang environments, the ratio was 5.6 firearms per firearms shooting incident.⁹⁰ While the decline in firearms after 2009 was thought to at least partly have been the result of a changing preference for knives, the police believe that the gangs have recently become more skilful in hiding their firearms: for example, the weapons are often not kept in private residences, but are stored in other locations and 'pooled' for use from there.⁹¹

Figure 3: Shootings and seized firearms linked to criminal gangs, 2012-2016



Source: Danish National Police, annual reports on gangs and motorcycle clubs, 2012-2015, <<https://www.politi.dk/>>

3. Terrorist access to firearms on the illicit market in Denmark

The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) lists 40 terrorist attacks in Denmark between 1978 and 2015. Only a small number of these attacks resulted in injuries (13 attacks) or fatalities (four attacks). Firearms were rarely used in attacks in this period, and homemade explosive devices such as Molotov cocktails were used much more frequently. Yet the six attacks in which firearms were used resulted in injury or death

Table 6: Terrorist attacks using firearms in Denmark

GTD ID	Date	Country	City	Perpetrator group	Fatalities	Injured	Target type
Bat mitzvah in synagogue	14/02/2015	Denmark	Copenhagen	Unaffiliated individual(s)	1	2	Religious figures/ institutions, police
Free speech debate at cultural centre	14/02/2015	Denmark	Copenhagen	Unaffiliated individual(s)	1	3	Private citizens & property
Attempted murder of Lars Hedegaard	05/02/2013	Denmark	Copenhagen	Unknown	0	0	Private citizens & property
Anti-Israeli attack ⁹²	31/12/2008	Denmark	Odense	Unknown	0	2	Private citizens & property
Ferry hijacking	11/05/1995	Denmark	Anholt	Unaffiliated individual	0	0	Maritime
Attempted murder of Cavit Demir	03/04/1981	Denmark	Copenhagen	Justice Commandos for the Armenian Genocide; Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia	0	1	Government (diplomatic)

Source: Global Terrorism Database, 'Firearms incidents in Denmark';⁹³ Lysholt and Nørgaard (2015)⁹⁴

on four occasions, in total killing two people and injuring five others (see Table 6). This finding suggests that when firearms are used in acts of terrorism, these attacks have deadlier outcomes.

In the last decade four terrorist attacks in which firearms were used can be identified. On 3 April 1981 an Armenian gunman shot a Turkish Embassy labour attaché, Cavit Demir, in his apartment building in Copenhagen. Demir was seriously wounded, but survived after a series of operations. The Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia and Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide claimed responsibility for the attack.⁹⁵ On 11 May 1995 former staff member Henry Stærke Hansen hijacked the ferry that he was fired from a year previously. He used a Winchester rifle to take the captain hostage while demanding to have his case dealt with by the municipality, which he believed had treated him unfairly in connection with the layoff. Stærke Hansen surrendered himself to the police and was later convicted under the Terrorist Act.⁹⁶ On 31 December 2008 a perpetrator of Danish-Palestinian descent opened fire with a 9 mm pistol at three Israelis in a shopping mall in Odense and injured two of them. The perpetrator was convicted of attempted murder and sentenced to ten years in prison. No information is publicly available about how the shooter acquired his pistol.⁹⁷

On 5 February 2013 an unknown gunman posing as a postman attempted to shoot Danish historian and journalist Lars Hedegaard in his home in Copenhagen. Hedegaard was the chairman of the Danish Free Press Society and the recipient of the 2012 ICLA Defender of Freedom Award. Hedegaard had been critical of Islam in the past, including by alleging that it limits free speech. The attack failed and the perpetrator was able to escape. No group claimed responsibility for the incident, but it was considered an act of terrorism.⁹⁸ According to the US State Department, Basil Hassan was accused of the attempted murder of Hedegaard and arrested in Turkey in 2014, but released as part of an alleged exchange for 49 hostages held by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).⁹⁹

The most deadly terror attack in recent history in Denmark took place in February 2015 when a so-called 'lone wolf' killed two people and injured five others in a double attack on a cultural centre and a synagogue in Copenhagen. The paper will discuss the firearms the perpetrator used in this double attack in greater detail in the following section.

Besides these (attempted) terror attacks, the Danish security forces have foiled a number of other terrorist plots, and firearms have been seized in house searches connected to some of these foiled plots. In 2010 security services in Denmark and Sweden uncovered a terrorist plot against the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*,

which published the controversial cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in 2005. In several raids the police detained five men whom they described as militant Islamists. Automatic firearms, ammunition and silencers were seized.¹⁰⁰ In April 2016 the Danish police arrested four men in Copenhagen suspected of having joined ISIS with the intention of committing acts of terror. The police searched four properties, and at one address claimed they had found weapons and ammunition. The address had links to one of Copenhagen's criminal gangs.¹⁰¹

According to data submitted to Eurojust, Denmark concluded court cases against 22 individuals for terrorist offences in the period 2013-2015.¹⁰² In the past few years several Danes have been convicted of openly supporting ISIS, and of travelling to fight for the group in Iraq and Syria.¹⁰³ The PET Centre for Terror Analysis (CTA) estimates that at least 135 people have left Denmark to go to Syria or Iraq since the summer of 2012. Barely a quarter are still in the conflict zone and a corresponding proportion have possibly been killed.¹⁰⁴ The CTA estimated further that half of those who had left the country had been involved in crime before their departure.¹⁰⁵ The number of Danish citizens travelling to join ISIS and the number of returnees has dropped in the past year. Despite the law banning travel for terrorist purposes and the strengthening of Criminal Code provisions restricting connections to enemy armed forces, it is likely that people will still travel abroad to and return home from conflict zones in the coming years.¹⁰⁶ As of April 2016, approximately 62 such individuals had returned to Denmark.¹⁰⁷ Although PET assesses that a small-scale terrorist attack in Denmark is more likely to be carried out by someone other than returned foreign fighters, the latter are considered more likely to be involved in a planned attack. According to PET, members of this group therefore constitute the most dangerous terrorist threat to Denmark, while it acknowledges broad variation within the group. Risk assessments are carried out at the individual level to determine what kinds of responses are needed.¹⁰⁸

3.1 The terrorist attacks in Copenhagen on 14-15 February 2015

On 14 February 2015 at about 3.30 p.m. a man opened fire on a cultural centre in central Copenhagen called the Krudttønden Café during a debate being held there on 'Art, Blasphemy and Freedom of Expression'. The debate featured the controversial Swedish artist and activist Lars Vilks, who had depicted the Prophet Muhammad as a dog in 2007, and who had been the target of death threats ever since. Finn Nørgaard, a film director attending the event, was shot dead at close range after going outside at the time the attacker struck. Three police officers were wounded in the shooting, in which the café was sprayed with 55 bullets.¹⁰⁹ Early

next morning, at about 1 a.m., shots were fired at the synagogue in Krystalgade in central Copenhagen during a bat mitzvah celebration, killing a security guard standing outside. Two police officers were also shot, but their injuries were not life threatening.¹¹⁰ A couple of hours later the police shot dead a suspect who had arrived at an address they had under surveillance. Officers said that the police challenged him near a railway station in the neighbourhood of Nørrebro, upon which he opened fire and was then shot.¹¹¹ The dead suspect carried with him the same weapons that were used in the attacks. The attacker, later identified as Omar Abdel Hamid el-Hussein, was thought to have carried out both terrorist attacks in Copenhagen. The attacks are considered 'lone wolf' incidents and no group claimed responsibility for them.¹¹²

The perpetrator of the double attack was a 22-year old Danish-born Palestinian with a criminal history who was well known to the Danish intelligence services. As a teenager, he became a member of the Brothas gang in Mjølnerparken and was sentenced twice for violence, possession of an illegal weapon, and an indiscriminate knife attack on a man on a suburban train in Copenhagen. He was arrested in January 2014 and sentenced to two years in prison. El-Hussein was believed to have been radicalised in prison. The prison authorities reacted to changes in his behaviour and found that el-Hussein had expressed sympathy for ISIS, which had led prison staff to warn the Prisons and Probation Service and the latter to in turn warn the Danish Security and Intelligence Service.¹¹³ El-Hussein was released from prison on 30 January 2015, just two weeks before the attack.¹¹⁴

El-Hussein used a 5.56 mm M95 rifle in the attack on the Krudttønden Café. The M95 is a magazine-fed, air-cooled, automatic weapon that can fire 700-900 shoots per minute, and is primarily used at ranges of up to 500 metres. Importantly, the M95 is the Danish defence forces' standard weapon.¹¹⁵ According to the Danish police, el-Hussein used the semi-automatic function of the weapon, which is easier to use and more precise. Despite the wide variety of firearms that can be acquired on the illegal gun market in Denmark, an M95 is rarely found there. The police investigation found that el-Hussein had stolen the weapon in an armed robbery of a house belonging to a member of the Danish Home Guard, a volunteer military organisation that supports the military and police. Its members take a series of obligatory courses, including target shooting and weapons training.¹¹⁶ In October 2014 the Danish Home Guard had 46,651 members,¹¹⁷ 4,328 of whom each had a weapon stored at home. The investigation found that the robbery had been planned and the house was targeted specifically to steal the weapon stored there.¹¹⁸ After the terrorist attack these Home Guard weapons were temporary recalled to a central storage facility. After a multi-million euro procurement, the Home Guard reintroduced the system of members' taking their weapons home – with the significant

difference that each home-stored weapon now requires a chamber lock. The chamber can only be unlocked with a key or code, and attempts to remove the lock without the key will render the weapon inoperable. The chamber lock system is used by the Home Guard in both Norway and Sweden.¹¹⁹

At the Krystalgade Synagogue el-Hussein fired nine shots from two pistols. Both weapons were old, probably stolen, pistols. The pistols were found on el-Hussein when the police shot him. One was a Polish-made pistol produced sometime before the Second World War. The second was a German-made Walther 7.65 mm pistol that had also been produced in the first half of the 20th century. Given the dynamics of the illegal gun market in Denmark, together with the confirmed theft of the M95, it is very likely that the two pistols were unregistered weapons that were stolen from a private home or storage system and were never reported as stolen to the police.¹²⁰

3.2 Firearms possession in left-wing and right-wing extremist networks

Denmark has a history of violent left-wing extremism, but the movement has largely become non-violent. The extreme left enjoys a relatively large membership, especially in Copenhagen. Left-wing squatters in Copenhagen engaged in 155 acts of vandalism and sabotage between 1981 and 1994. These actions included the systematic demolition of branches of multinational companies and the offices of perceived imperialist regimes like the United States, Israel and apartheid South Africa, as well as a number of arson attacks and only occasionally the use of primitive bombs and firearms. Left-wing terrorist attacks after 1994 have not been confirmed.¹²¹

Between 1990 and 2005 there were 19 confirmed cases of right-wing extremist violence against people in Denmark, injuring nine people and killing one person. The attacks were carried out by, for example, Frit Danmark (Free Denmark), Blood & Honour Denmark, White Pride and Dansk Front (Danish Front). The attackers used knives, beating/kicking, firebombs, letter bombs, Molotov cocktails, glass, axes, brass knuckle-dusters, other melee weapons, maglights, crowbars and tear gas. Only one attack involved a firearm – a saloon rifle. In this attack three members of Blood & Honour Denmark harassed, threatened and attacked three Bosnian refugees in the town of Rudkøping, using one rifle and 13 knives.¹²² Another study showed that Danish radical right-wing groups engaged in 188 acts of violence between 1982 and 1999. Refugees and immigrants were the principal targets of the extreme right's violence, and were targets in 129 of the cases. There is no data on

how many of the offences included firearms, but the study concluded that the use or involvement of firearms was limited.¹²³

Danish extreme right-wing organisations officially distance themselves from violence and other unlawful activities. Yet individuals with varying degrees of involvement with these groups have been known to engage in criminal activities, including the possession of illegal weapons.¹²⁴ Individual members of the National Front of Denmark, for example, have been convicted of the illegal possession of weapons and/or violent assaults, including violent hate crimes.¹²⁵ A public report states that some members of the National Front of Denmark have received weapons training in Russia.¹²⁶

In January 2014 Danish Defence League member Jimmie Hørskov Juhler, the treasurer and deputy chairman of the Danish Defence League Support Association, updated his profile picture on Facebook to one of the Norwegian terrorist and mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik. The image was the notorious self-portrait of the Norwegian terrorist in uniform posing with a gun, but Breivik's face was replaced with that of Jimmie Hørskov Juhler.¹²⁷ As of April 2017 the Danish Defence League's Facebook page had obtained 12,000 likes.¹²⁸ The profile picture is an anecdotal case of the potential symbolic value firearms hold in right-wing extremist environments.

In December 2014 the Norwegian police seized automatic weapons and narcotics from members of the Norwegian Resistance Movement. The movement's logo was found on some of the weapons. The Nordic Resistance Movement is the name of the umbrella organisation made up by the Swedish, Finish, Danish and Norwegian resistance movements. Several members of the Swedish chapter of the organisation have previously been convicted of illegal firearms possession.¹²⁹ Like the Nordic Resistance Movement, the National Socialist Society of Denmark and the organisation Stop the Islamisation of Denmark have stated that they would use violence in self-defence.¹³⁰ In June 2017 three members of the Swedish chapter of the Nordic Resistance Movement were charged with detonating two bombs and placing a third at a left-wing community centre and two refugee housing facilities in Gothenburg, Sweden, in January 2017, causing severe injuries to one victim.¹³¹

According to PET, some left-wing and right-wing extremist networks in Denmark are prepared to use violence to promote their agendas. Such violence can be directed against political opponents; minority groups, including refugees and migrants; and organisations and companies that are judged to have symbolic value. Yet the CTA believes that there is a limited terrorist threat from people or groups who move in or sympathise with these environments, but that increasing focus on refugees and migrants among people linked to these networks or with extremist sympathies may

increase the threat to asylum centres, refugees and migrants, and the responsible authorities. The CTA further assesses that threats can take the form of violence, arson or other attacks. Attacks and threats against refugees and migrants from right-wing extremists can in turn lead to counter-reactions from extreme Islamists or from members of left-wing extremist circles.¹³²

3.3 Crossover between criminal and political violent networks

Several studies have shown crossovers between known terrorists behind recent attacks in Europe and criminal environments, largely by mapping the past criminal records of known terrorists. One recent Danish study, for example, showed that an increasing proportion of the perpetrators who are directly involved in terrorist attacks linked to jihadism in Europe have known criminal pasts. Between 2001 and 2011 five of the 33 perpetrators of terrorist attacks had known criminal backgrounds, while between 2012 and July 2016, 30 out of 51 had such backgrounds.¹³³ A study by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence found that the crime-terrorism nexus did not mean the merging of criminals and terrorists as organisations, but of their social networks, environments or milieus. Criminal and terrorist groups, for example, often recruit from the same pool of people, creating (often unintended) synergies and overlaps that have consequences for how individuals radicalise and operate.¹³⁴

Already in 2014 the Danish government stated that a key concern for Danish authorities are criminals, including people associated with gangs, with close links to extremist circles.¹³⁵ The crossover between criminal and politically motivated violence became much more apparent since the shootings in Copenhagen 2015, which, as we have seen, were carried out by a former local gang member who had recently been released from prison. The police's evaluation report of the terrorist attacks in Copenhagen found the crossover between criminal and violent extremism in Denmark to be a growing concern:

In the gangster environments, there are signs of radicalization and it can be noted that there are people who perceive themselves in both environments and who exploit their connections to the criminal environment to gain access to weapons, etc. These people, who are simultaneously affected by militant Islamic propaganda, and who move in environments with high levels of violence, constitute an increasing concern.¹³⁶

A recent study of the crossover between crime and extremism in Denmark found that individuals do indeed move in and out of both environments, while there are also social and geographical crossovers. However, crossover can also contain groupings that operate in a greyer area in between or overlapping both ideologically motivated crimes and other crimes. Criminal and extremist groups may also complement each other. Extremist groups may serve as alternatives to criminal groups, on the assumption that they offer other forms of community and morality than criminal networks.¹³⁷

Access to weapons and explosives is a condition for terrorist incidents and violent conflicts in other criminal environments.¹³⁸ According to PET, contact with the criminal community can facilitate access to weapons and explosives for extremists intending to carry out an attack.¹³⁹ Or, as in the case of el-Hussein, the terrorist had past experience of illegal gun acquisition techniques and could himself obtain a highly lethal firearm through a planned home robbery. PET further believes that there are people who have both the intention and capacity to commit terrorist attacks in Denmark, partly due to the availability of illegal firearms, and that relatively simple attack by individuals or small groups continue to represent the most likely form of terrorist attacks in Denmark.¹⁴⁰

The CTA believes that violent extremist communities thrive in both criminal gang environments and prisons. The CTA further believes that stays in conflict zones and/or related prior involvement with the criminal community may be indicators of radicalised individuals' capacity to commit violent acts.¹⁴¹ Criminal gang environments are characterised by their members' readiness to use violence. Thus, people without experience in conflict zones may have developed the capacity for violent crime in criminal environments.¹⁴² The attacks on the Krudttønden Café and the synagogue in Copenhagen on 14 and 15 February 2015 are examples of this type of attack. Despite the warnings of the potential capacity to carry out terrorist attacks in Denmark of the over one hundred Danes who have travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight for ISIS, el-Hussein was trained in criminal gangs in Copenhagen, not on the battlefields in Syria.

Although most extremist organisations in Denmark are not associated with violence or unlawful activities, individuals and criminal groups use ideological elements of the extreme Islamist and right-wing political environments to legitimise violent and criminal acts.¹⁴³ Individuals associated with extremist groups have been known to act on their own when engaging in violent and other illegal acts. This is most visible in terms of motorcycle club-related individuals engaging in right-wing extremism, but also occurs among individuals who misinterpret the mandate they are given by these groups.¹⁴⁴ Some people with connection to the gang and

motorcycle club environments also find themselves ideologically linked to the radical right-wing environment. As part of this environment, the individuals attached to the motorcycle club environment often deem Islam to be a threat.¹⁴⁵ A recent report by Danish welfare authorities further highlighted that certain gangs or criminal groups had increasingly begun to embrace Islamist views in their rhetoric, as well on the internet and in social media. One example is *Loyal to Familia*, which is particularly active in the Copenhagen area. The group increasingly claim that they have felt excluded by society because of racism and discrimination, not least from the police, which motivates their unlawful actions.¹⁴⁶

Extreme Islamist environments may offer gang members an alternative community and establish an apparently legitimate framework for the pursuit of crime and violence. Individuals in gang environments may, for example, start using militant Islamist symbols and rhetoric as an identity marker, or actual radicalisation may result, in which a subject uses the gang capacity for violence, including access to weapons, and applies it to a militant Islamist agenda.¹⁴⁷

4. Conclusions

Denmark does not have a significant problem with organised domestic terrorism or violent extremism, and only a few cases have involved illegal firearms. The one recent terrorist attack – in Copenhagen on 14-15 February 2015 – was a so-called ‘lone-wolf’ attack without any affiliation to a terrorist organisation. Historical terrorist activities in Denmark, which were conducted primarily by left-wing extremists, but also occasionally by right-wing extremists, have rarely involved firearms. Left-wing extremist organisations have since largely become non-violent. According to the Danish police, the Security and Intelligence Service, and an academic expert on Danish extremism, Denmark does not have a major problem with violent extremism in terms of the traditional ideological spectrum. However, at the same time, the country has experienced several attempted and actual attacks in the past ten years and has a comparatively high number of citizens who have left to fight for ISIS (although this trend among foreign fighters is declining, like elsewhere in Europe). Denmark also has a problem with gang violence and illegal weapons, and there is some crossover between the criminal and domestic extremist environment. Both the extremist and gang environments in Denmark have diversified in the past one-to-two decades.

The illegal firearms market in Denmark is fragmented and supply driven. Many of the firearms that are seized by the police are unregistered old firearms, and the

majority of the illegal firearms available in Denmark are believed to have been sourced domestically, through theft. Although the biggest concern are the black markets run by criminals, Danish authorities also face a problem with individuals and gun enthusiasts without violent or criminal intentions who act outside the law. One example is informal garage sales of firearms; another is that many citizens keep old firearms on their property without proper registration or licences. Another source of supply is illegal imports of deactivated firearms, gas weapons and lethal firearms. Some gas weapons are converted before being smuggled into Denmark, while others are converted after entry. Illegal imports of firearms are often organised by criminals who also smuggle goods or people. Denmark is also a transit country for firearms being trafficked into Sweden: the Öresund bridge between Copenhagen and Malmö is the most common entry point for illicit firearms being trafficked overland into that country.

Some of the policy challenges Denmark faces are the difficulty of linking firearms crimes to gang environments, which would allow the use of the gang clause in the legislative framework, and the less restrictive legal frameworks on firearms in other EU and Schengen Area countries, which tend to undermine the strict Danish legal framework. A potential future policy challenge is Danish-Europol cooperation, given Denmark's withdrawal from Europol in 2017.

The Danish approach to preventing illegal firearms possession and terrorist access to weapons has been targeted primarily at fighting criminal gangs and enforcing the country's strict gun laws among civilian, non-violent firearms owners and traders. The aim has been to weaken criminal gangs, deter criminals from using firearms in their activities, and reduce the availability and use of illegal firearms. Although the police maintain that this approach has been highly successful, it only seems to keep violence levels down for a couple of years at a time.

The National Action Plan to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism contains numerous recommendations for action at different levels of society, including by both the social services and law enforcement agencies. The updated 2016 National Action Plan also states that there is a crossover between criminal gangs and violent extremism in terms of both operations and recruitment, and this requires more targeted and consistent efforts against common crimes committed in radicalised environments. Nonetheless, this strategic document does not include any reference to firearms or gun control efforts.

Although Denmark already has plans and policies to tackle illegal gun possession and limit criminal access to and use of firearms, more could be done to integrate firearm-specific initiatives in the established long-term programmes developed

through inter-agency collaboration to prevent violent extremism. This would include a specific focus on firearms- and gun-enabled crime in broader violence prevention measures, to shift the balance away from the predominantly repressive firearms measures under the so-called 'gang packages'. More awareness could also be raised among legal gun holders to prevent the illegal circulation of weapons that might end up in the hands of terrorists or other criminals.

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