



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA

HORIZON EUROPE
PROJECTS FUNDED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PADUA

EU-GUNS - A Continent Disarmed? Gun Culture, Gun Control and the Making of Western Europe (ca. 1870-1970)

When we think of a man with a gun on his belt, we immediately think of the United States. But the situation was not so different in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. Until the First World War, pistols and rifles were advertised in children's magazines, high society ladies went out with a pistol in their handbag, and their husbands never left the house without a revolver in their jacket pocket. With the exception of a few countries (including Italy), no licenses or permits were required to buy weapons, and pistols and rifles could easily be bought from hardware stores or by mail order. The outbreak of the First World War changed everything, and a series of measures were introduced that severely restricted the possibility of buying and carrying weapons. This research project will study this silent but epochal revolution that gradually transformed Europe into a continent where armed citizens were the exception rather than the norm. This process deeply affected European society, reshaping social and political rights and decisively influencing state prerogatives and European identity itself. By comparatively examining six Western European countries (Italy, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Sweden) over the course of more than a century (from 1870 to 1970), the project aims to investigate the root causes of this transformation. It will do so by adopting a new perspective: whereas previous studies have focused on illegal and brutal forms of political violence, terrorism and mass death, this project will study the everyday, lawful use of weapons. By studying a widespread phenomenon that has been underestimated in historical research, the project aims not only to fill a gap, but also to analyse the relationship between individual rights, the control of violence and the expansion of state power thus rethinking the foundations of European identity.

ERC Grantee: Matteo Millan

Department: Historical and Geographic Sciences and the Ancient World

Coordinator: Università degli Studi di Padova

Total EU Contribution: Euro 1.999.913,00

Call ID: ERC-2023-CoG

Project Duration in months: 60

Find out more: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101124518>