



European Agenda on Security: Commission takes action to combat terrorism and illegal trafficking of firearms and explosives

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The European Commission adopted today a package of measures to step up the fight against terrorism and the illegal trafficking of firearms and explosives. The package includes two main elements: a proposal for a [Directive on Terrorism](#), which will strengthen the EU's arsenal in preventing terrorist attacks by criminalising preparatory acts such as training and travel abroad for terrorist purposes as well as aiding or abetting, inciting and attempting terrorist acts; an [Action Plan](#) to step up the fight against criminals and terrorists accessing and using weapons and explosives through a reinforced control of illicit possession and import to the EU. The atrocious terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November showed once more that Europe needs to scale up its common response to terrorism and take concrete actions in the fight against terrorism and the illegal trafficking of firearms and explosives.

European Commission First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"The Commission is determined to do everything it can to help Member States address and defeat the terrorist threat. The increase in the number of EU citizens travelling abroad to become 'foreign fighters' means that an update of the EU framework on terrorist offences is needed to ensure a common criminal justice response. Cooperation at EU level and with third countries is also necessary to crack down on the black market for firearms and explosives. Our proposals will facilitate the efforts of national authorities to disrupt terrorist networks."*

European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"Today we deliver on our promise to be firm on terrorism. Our proposal targets not only those who commit terrorist atrocities, but also those who help with travelling, financing or supporting terrorism. This is how we reinforce our criminal response to tackle the serious threats posed by foreign terrorist fighters. We also bring to the table an EU Action Plan on firearms and explosives in order to cut the access of terrorists to the traffickers within the EU and on our periphery. Europe needs to act together, decisively and swiftly, to crack down on terrorism and improve our security."*

The proposals presented today are part of the [European Security Agenda](#) adopted in April 2015. In the light of the recent events, their implementation has been significantly accelerated.

A proposal for a new Directive on combating terrorism

The proposal for a new Directive on terrorism closes criminal enforcement gaps in the EU legal framework. The Directive also provides for common definitions of terrorist offences ensuring a common response to the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, so enhancing the deterrent effect across the EU and ensuring that perpetrators are effectively sanctioned.

The new Directive overhauls the EU's existing legal framework on the criminalisation of offences linked to terrorist activities. It implements into EU law international obligations, such as the provisions of the [UN Security Council Resolution 2178\(2014\)](#) on Foreign Terrorist Fighters, the recently adopted [Additional Protocol](#) to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of terrorism and the [Financial Action Task Force Recommendations](#) on terrorist financing.

The proposed Directive criminalises:

- **Travelling for terrorist purposes**, both within and outside the EU, to counter the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters;
- **The funding, organisation and facilitation of such travels**, including through logistical and material support, including the provision of firearms and explosives, shelter, means of transportation, services, assets and goods;
- **Receiving training for terrorist purposes**. Law enforcement will be provided with the possibility to investigate and prosecute training activities having the potential to lead to the committing of

terrorist offences;

- **Providing funds used to commit terrorist offences** and offences related to terrorist groups or terrorist activities;

The proposal also strengthens provisions criminalising recruitment, training for terrorist purposes and the spread of terrorist propaganda, including on the internet.

The Commission proposal also lays out new rules, complementing the Directive on rights for victims from 2012, to ensure that victims of terrorism receive immediate access to professional support services providing for physical and psycho-social treatments as well as immediate information on their rights, independently of where they live in the European Union.

An Action Plan against firearms illicit trafficking and the use of explosives

The European Commission today also adopted an Action Plan to target the illicit trafficking of firearms and explosives in the EU. The aim of the Action Plan is to better detect, investigate and seize firearms, explosives and explosives precursors to be used for criminal and terrorist purposes.

This Action Plan complements the [measures adopted](#) on 18 November 2015 aimed at tightening controls on the legal acquisition and possession of firearms and implementing common minimum standards for the deactivation of firearms.

The Action Plan seeks to improve operational cooperation at EU level and with third countries to render the fight against the black market of weapons and explosives more effective. Its key elements are:

- **Restricting access to illegal firearms and explosives:** The Action Plan invites all Member States to set up inter-connected **national focal points** on firearms to develop expertise and improve analysis and strategic reporting on illicit trafficking in firearms, notably through the combined use of both ballistic and criminal intelligence. It also foresees a **stronger role for Europol** regarding online trafficking and the diversion of legal trade through its recently established Internet Referral Unit. The Action Plan urges Member States to **fully implement EU rules on Explosives precursors**.
- **Enhance operational cooperation:** The Action Plan urges the Member States to set up or expand the existing **cyber-patrol teams** to firearms, explosives and explosives precursors. **Controls at the external borders**, as well as police and customs cooperation should be strengthened by risk-based controls on goods whether arriving in commercial traffic (e.g. containers), in passenger transport (e.g. cars) or in passengers' luggage. The Action Plan also proposes to establish a **Customs Priority Control Action** with member States on the illicit trafficking of firearms at the EU's external borders.
- **Improve gathering and sharing of operational information:** The Action Plan calls on Member States to **make full use of existing tools to facilitate information exchange** and systematically insert information on sought firearms into the Schengen Information System and Interpol's iARMS where available. **Exchange on ballistic information** should be strengthened through a dedicated platform.
- **Stronger cooperation with third countries:** In order to reduce the illegal import of firearms and the access to explosives into the European Union, the Action Plan proposes to step up **cooperation with third countries** through the systematic inclusion of firearms trafficking and use of explosives into security dialogues with key partner countries and organisations. In addition to reinforcing the cooperation with the key countries of the **Western Balkans**, the European Commission proposes to enhance cooperation with countries in the **Middle East** and **North Africa** as well as with **Turkey** and **Ukraine**. Particular consideration is given to the establishment of a dialogue with countries in the Sahel region, with the Arab League and with international organisations. In certain cases, EU financial assistance could be envisaged as regards the confiscation and the decommissioning of firearms.

Background

The responsibility for ensuring internal security is first and foremost with the Member States, but cross-border challenges defy the capacity of individual countries to act alone and require EU support to build trust and facilitate cooperation, exchange of information and joint action.

President **Juncker's** [Political Guidelines](#) identified the security agenda as a priority for this Commission, and the 2015 Commission Work Programme committed to the delivery of the European Agenda on Security.

On 28 April 2015, the European Commission set out a [European Agenda on Security](#) for the period 2015-2020 to support Member States' cooperation in tackling security threats and step up our common efforts in the fight against terrorism, organised crime and cybercrime. The Agenda sets out the concrete tools and measures which will be used in this joint work to ensure security and tackle these

three most pressing threats more effectively. Since then, [significant progress has been made](#) in implementing the elements of the agenda.

In the Agenda and in the [Work Programme for 2016](#), the Commission promised to review the existing legislation on firearms in 2016 to improve the sharing of information, to reinforce traceability, to standardise marking, and to establish common standards for neutralising firearms. In the light of recent events the Commission has significantly accelerated this work.

For more information

[Fact Sheet: Implementing the European Agenda on Security – New measures to combat terrorism and illicit trafficking of firearms and use of explosives](#)

[Proposal for a Directive on Terrorism](#)

[EU Action Plan against illicit trafficking in and use of firearms and explosives](#)

[Annex to the Communication on Firearms and Explosives](#)

[European Agenda on Security](#)

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