



9 May 2016

Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments, 22-24 May 2016

Background note

Session IV: Ensuring the Security of Citizens while Respecting Fundamental Freedoms

The EU and its Member States are confronted with significant security challenges. The **recent terrorist attacks** in Europe testify to the increasing menace of violent extremism and the influence that global conflicts have on our countries.

Member States remain primarily responsible for ensuring internal security. However, the threats to Europe's citizens are becoming more varied and increasingly cross-border in nature, triggering the need for a common EU approach. Member States have the frontline responsibility for security, but can no longer succeed fully on their own. Terrorism, organised crime and cybercrime increasingly threaten societies in every corner of Europe, and these threats have changed in nature and magnitude. These **threats** are **transnational** and require cooperation and action at EU level. Europe moreover faces the spillover effects of political instability in its immediate neighbourhood, which puts into danger the EU's security interests.

In **February 2015**, the members of the European Council adopted a statement in which they committed to **further reinforce action against terrorist threats**, in full compliance with human rights and the rule of law. They agreed various measures to ensure the security of citizens, preventing radicalisation and safeguarding values and to cooperate with the EU's international partners.

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. In June 2015, the European Parliament and the Council endorsed this Agenda as the renewed Internal Security Strategy.

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. In addition, the Commission presented a **plan to strengthen the fight against terrorist financing**.



9 May 2016

The resolution passed by the United Nations Security Council on 17 December 2015, more specifically targeting funding to Da'esh and extending the former "Al Qaeda" sanction regime, showed a **deep global consensus to act against terrorism financing**.

The terrorist attacks in Paris in January 2015 and November 2015, as well as those in Brussels in 2016, have put security issues back at the top of the political agenda, including the EU Directive regulating the use of **Passenger Name Record (PNR)**¹ data for the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences and serious crime.

In addition, by 1 July 2016, a platform to facilitate and accelerate **the exchange of information and intelligence focusing on foreign terrorist fighters** should be implemented.

At the plenary session in May, MEPs will discuss an improved capacity of the agency **Europol**, the European Police office. In November 2015, the Parliament and the Council have reached an informal deal to enhance Europol's mandate and to ensure that it is actually able to fight against the increase in cross-border crime and terrorist threats.

Several other files are in the pipeline for the coming months, including reports on the **European criminal records information system** and on the **Schengen borders code**.

Some points for discussion:

- How to strengthen the cooperation among Member States regarding the fight against terrorism?
- How to effectively use the tools provided by the European Commission?
- How could national Parliaments contribute to achieve a balance between security measures and the protection of fundamental rights?
- How could national Parliaments contribute to exchange best practices regarding the prevention of radicalisation?
- Beyond short term measures, what should be the priorities regarding development cooperation and measures to restore peace in the regions shaken by war and terror?

¹ The text has been adopted by the European Parliament on 14 April 2016 and by the Council on 21 April 2016.