

Brussels, 6 November 2007

Fight Against Terrorism: stepping up Europe's capability to protect citizens against the threat of terrorism

Today, the Commission adopted a new package of proposals aimed at improving the EU's capabilities in the fight against terrorism. The package contains a series of proposals dealing with the criminalization of terrorist training, recruitment and public provocation to commit terrorist offences, the prevention of the use of explosives by terrorists and the use of airline passenger information in law enforcement investigations. It also contains a report on the implementation of one of the key legal instruments of the EU's counter terrorism arsenal.

Announcing the adoption of the new measures today, Vice-President Franco Frattini, said that, "terrorism remains a threat to the political foundations of the European Union as well as to the life and well-being of our citizens". The territory of the Union was violently attacked in Madrid (March 2004) and in London (July 2005). Many other plots were recently foiled, in Austria, in Denmark, in France, in Germany and in the UK. He added that "none of our fellow citizens is immune from this threat and terrorism may also strike at European citizens and interests abroad. Terrorists will strike whenever, wherever and with whatever means to make the most impact". He went on to say that "we cannot be complacent, we have to continue striking the right balance between being aware of the threat and taking adequate and proportionate measures, both at European and national level, to prevent it. Our goal remains preserving the right balance between the fundamental right to security of citizens, the right to life and the other fundamental rights of individuals, including privacy and procedural rights."

Dealing with those who support terrorism

The Commission proposes amending the Framework Decision on combating terrorism making public provocation to commit a terrorist offence, recruitment and training for terrorism punishable behaviour, also when committed through the Internet. The proposal aims to equip our legal systems across the EU with the adequate tools to bring to justice the criminals who spread violent propaganda providing terrorism tactics and instructions on how to manufacture and use bombs or explosives to provoke others to commit terrorist acts. The new legislation will make it easier for law enforcement authorities to get cooperation from internet service providers, to prevent crimes and identify criminals while, at the same time, ensuring that personal data remain well protected and fundamental rights safeguarded.

Practical action to enhance the security of explosives

Attacks such as the Madrid bombings were carried out using commercially available explosives. More can be done to prevent the use of such explosives, chemical precursors and detonators by terrorists. Under impulsion of the Commission, a group of experts – involving all the relevant civil society stakeholders – investigated the issue and recommended a list of 47 action points now endorsed by the Commission

in the form of an action plan tackling the different angles of the issue. The action plan aims to enhance the security of explosives, calling, among other, for the establishment of rapid alert systems on lost and stolen explosives and suspicious transactions, a network of European bomb-disposal experts, the development of an explosive forensic capability in Europol, research on security of explosives and detonators as well as schemes for the vetting of personnel involved in the industry.

Establishing an EU-wide system for the exchange of Passenger Name Records (PNR)

The Commission proposes that air carriers make available PNR data for flights coming to or leaving the EU (in and outbound EU flights) to specialized national units carrying out risk assessments and law enforcement and counter terrorism missions. The conception and planning of terrorist attacks involves traveling by air. Members of radical groups fly to meet and obtain both guidance and training abroad. Providing law enforcement agencies in the EU the possibility of obtaining advance passenger information and analyzing it is an important tool to detect terrorist travel and disrupt future plots. The use of this tool can, however, only be effective if it is fully respectful of the fundamental right of data protection and citizen given all due guarantees.

Second report on the implementation of the Framework Decision on combating terrorism

A report on the implementation of this key instrument of the EU's arsenal of counter-terrorism legislation is also presented. This report includes information on the situation in the Member States that joined the Union in 2004 and 2007. Despite progress since the first report the lack of correct transposition of the EU norms is still disappointing.

Communication updating on Commission's activities in the field of Counter Terrorism

The package is completed by a communication setting the scene for EU action in this field and placing the proposals presented in the framework of the EU Counter Terrorism Strategy. Terrorism remains a long-term, multifaceted and complex threat requiring EU action addressing all its aspects – prevention, protection, prosecution and responding if an attack occurs. EU action adds value by providing adequate tools to Member States and addressing cross border issues and common interests across the EU. European action must both seek to protect EU citizens and go hand in hand with respecting fundamental rights.

For more information on the activities of Vice-President Frattini, please visit his website at:

http://www.ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/frattini/index_en.htm

For more information on funding opportunities in the Justice, Freedom and Security policy areas:

http://www.ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/intro/funding_intro_en.htm

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