

**Embargo: Immediate Wednesday 9 May 2007
Contact: Owen Williams 020 7219 8659**

**LORDS COMMITTEE RAISE CONCERNS OVER PRÜM
TREATY AND CRITICISE GERMAN EU PRESIDENCY**

The House of Lords European Union Committee have today criticised the German EU Presidency for attempting to bypass the proper procedures in trying to incorporate the Prüm Treaty into EU law.

The Committee stress the importance of EU initiatives on increased cross-border cooperation in combating terrorism and serious crime. They regret that these will be replaced by the arrangements between Germany and six other Member States.

The Prüm Treaty between Germany, Austria, Spain, France, and the Benelux countries gives the signatories access to each other's national databases containing:

- DNA profiles
- Fingerprints
- Vehicle registration data.

This is being extended to all Member States and will take the place of EU initiatives which in some respects would have gone wider.

The Committee criticise the German Presidency for putting this proposal forward without:

- **an explanatory memorandum;**
- **an impact assessment;**
- **an estimate of the cost to Member States;**
- **time for proper consultation with Member States and the European Parliament.**

The Presidency's proposal has provisions on data protection which are intended to supplement a general Data Protection Framework Decision, but no such Framework Decision has been agreed. The Government must make sure it is agreed before the Prüm Treaty becomes EU law.

A major concern of the Committee is that the UK has a much lower threshold for collecting and holding DNA profiles than any other Member State; the UK's DNA database is 50% larger than those of all other Member States combined. In most European nations DNA profiles are kept only for criminals convicted of serious offences. In the UK they are kept for most individuals who are arrested regardless of whether charges are brought or convictions achieved. **This could**

result in British citizens who have never been convicted of any crime having their DNA details shared across European police forces.

Lord Wright of Richmond, who chaired the Lords Committee looking at the Prüm Treaty, said:

“We have serious concerns about the way the German Presidency are trying to incorporate the Prüm Treaty into EU law.

“What was an agreement between seven Members States is now intended to become law binding across the EU. The Presidency should have followed the established procedures to allow Member States, national Parliaments and the European Parliament a proper opportunity to consider the proposal.

“We regret that the Presidency declined to give evidence to the Committee about the proposal.

“The Presidency proposal needs unanimity. The Government now have an opportunity to ensure that uniform data protection standards are agreed across the EU before anything else is agreed.”

Notes to Editors

1. The report is published by The Stationery Office, *Prüm: an effective weapon against terrorism and crime?*, House of Lords European Union Committee (Sub-Committee on Home Affairs), 18th Report of 2006/07, HL Paper 90.
2. The full report will be available shortly after publication at:

http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/lords_s_c_omm_f.cfm

For copies of the report or to request an interview with Lord Wright please contact Owen Williams, committee press officer on 020 7219 8659.