

Preventing terrorism: clampdown on foreign fighters and lone wolves

Plenary sessions [16-02-2017 - 12:35]

To counter the growing threats from “foreign fighters” travelling to conflict zones for terrorist purposes and “lone wolves” planning solo attacks, new EU-wide rules were approved by Parliament on Thursday.

The new directive on combatting terrorism will update the current EU “framework” rules on terrorist offences and widen their scope to include emerging threats.

“We need to stop the perpetrators before they commit these acts rather than regretting the fact that there have been attacks”, said Parliament’s lead MEP Monika Hohlmeier (EPP, DE) in the debate ahead of the vote. “We have struck a good balance between improving security and strictly upholding fundamental rights, because there is no point in having security without rights”, she stressed.

The text, informally agreed by Parliament and Council in November 2016, was approved by 498 votes to 114, with 29 abstentions.

The extended list of preparatory acts to be criminalised includes:

- travelling abroad to join a terrorist group and and/or returning to the EU with the aim of carrying out a terrorist attack,
- recruiting for terrorism,
- training or being trained for terrorism,
- aiding, abetting or attempting to carry out an attack,
- public incitement or praise of terrorism, and
- financing of terrorism and terrorist groups

Helping victims of terrorism

The new directive also includes provisions to ensure immediate assistance to victims and their relatives after an attack. For example, EU member states should ensure that support services are in place to help families find out which hospital their relative has been taken to, and help victims to return to their home countries, if they have been caught in an attack while visiting another EU country. Assistance should also include medical and psychological support as well as advice on legal and financial matters such as legal procedures for making claims.

Next steps

Once the new rules are published in the EU Official Journal, member states will have 18 months to transpose them into national law.

The UK and Ireland will not be bound by the directive, but may notify the EU Commission of their intention to opt in, if they so wish. Denmark will not be covered by the directive.

Press release

On Thursday, Parliament also approved [new rules to step up external border checks](#) with a view to improving the EU's internal security.

Background

The new directive on combatting terrorism will replace the 2002 Council framework decision ([2002/475/JHA](#)), updated in 2008, to keep pace with new developments and emerging threats such as foreign fighters and lone wolves, and also ensure that member states comply with international obligations and standards such as [UN Security Council Resolution 2178](#) and the [Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism](#).

Procedure: Ordinary legislative procedure, first reading agreement

Facts

- Further attacks in the EU are likely to be attempted, by both lone wolves and groups, a recent report from Europol's European Counter Terrorism Centre says. It predicts that if ISIS is defeated or severely weakened in Syria/Iraq, the numbers of foreign fighters returning to Europe will rise.

Further information

- Adopted text (2015/0281(COD)) will soon be available here (16.02.2017)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html>
- Video recording of debate (click on 15.02.2017)

: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/search-by-date>
- Video of the press conference (15.02.2017)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/other-events/schedule>
- EbS+ (15.02.2017)

: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs/schedule.cfm?sitelang=en&page=3&institution=0&date=02/15/2017>
- Audiovisual material for media
: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/counter-terrorism>
- EP Think tank - Combatting terrorism (10.02.2017)
: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI\(2017\)599269](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2017)599269)

Political groups

- Press release by the EPP group
: <http://bit.ly/2IPoE6G>
- News pages of the S&D group
: <http://bit.ly/1WWG6F4>
- News pages of the ECR group
: <http://bit.ly/1Y0YFrj>
- News pages of the ALDE group
: <http://bit.ly/2ikk6qK>
- News pages of the GUE/NGL group
: <http://bit.ly/1UrAIM9>
- Press release by the Greens/EFA group
: <http://bit.ly/2lg9Srw>
- News pages of the EFDD group
: <http://bit.ly/1TUnDFU>
- News pages of the ENF group
: <http://bit.ly/2cxzxcR>

Press release

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