



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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COTER 71**

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

of: Extraordinary joint meeting of the Terrorism Working Party and COTER
on: 28 July 2011
Subject: Summary of discussions

The extraordinary joint meeting of the Terrorism Working Party and COTER was devoted to the tragic events in Norway on 22 July 2011.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The meeting adopted the agenda as set out in CM 4065/1/11 REV 1.

2. Information by Norway

A representative of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided some background information on the course of events of 22 July and commented on the national political reaction to them. As has already been expressed by the politicians and people in Norway, the attack will not lead to any change in the values advocated by the Norwegian society. Democracy, rule of law and tolerance will remain fundamental in Norway and will continue to be promoted internationally.

The Norwegian delegation informed the meeting on the current state of criminal investigations and outlined a preliminary assessment of the suspect and his manifesto, and noted that one of the objectives of the ongoing investigations is to study potential links to other countries.

The Norwegian delegation also expressed deep appreciation for condolences and expressions of solidarity from all over the world and confirmed that there has been no change in the overall threat situation in Norway after the attacks.

3. Comments from the EU CTC office

The representative of the EU CTC office noted that the Oslo and Utøya attacks have shown once again that terrorism cannot be linked to any particular religion, belief or region. The EU and its Member States have always rejected violence regardless of the motivation. The EU already has effective tools and mechanisms for dealing with terrorist attacks that have to be further exploited. The phenomenon of 'lone wolf' terrorism has not been neglected in the EU, as has been confirmed in a number of reports by the CTC and the Commission. The EU needs to better understand the processes of radicalisation which usually depend on a variety of factors independent of the cause which any terrorist seeks to promote.

It was noted that several Member States have already experience with right-wing extremism that was discussed within the Working Party on Terrorism under the Czech Presidency in 2009. National counter terrorism coordination centres have proven to be effective in exchanging information in response to this kind of events and Member States that do not have them might consider setting them up. Access to weapons and explosives is another issue that requires attention.

4. Information by Member States and EU bodies

The representative of the Commission expanded on several elements of the EU counter terrorism policy that have proven useful in responding to such incidents.

On 9 September the Commission will launch the Radicalisation Awareness Network that should facilitate the work of professionals by providing them with e.g. logistical and financial support. The network should help interconnect its members, collect good practices and possibly enable the establishment of a database of good practices, and report back to policy makers.

Under the commitment of building an EU culture of threat and risk assessment, the Commission has been working on improved information exchange, the solidarity clause, better connection of existing crisis and CT capabilities, and combating misuse of the internet for terrorist purposes.

The representative of the EEAS noted that possible links of the perpetrator of the act to other violent extremist groups and the danger of the act to cause trigger events were preoccupying. The Service offered its continuous support, including organising political dialogues, to the Norwegian authorities.

The representative of Europol informed the meeting on the activities taken by Europol since the events in Norway under the Europol Preparedness Programme. In the wake of the devastating attacks in Norway, Europol opened its operations centre to provide an international platform to support the investigation. To provide a more systematic response, the First Response Network was initiated. Established in 2007, the network consists of nominated CT experts in Member States, ready for mobilisation in the event of a serious attack to ensure efficient information exchange among all involved parties.

It was noted that the TE-SAT report of March 2011 warned about the increasing levels of professionalism and mobilisation of right-wing extremists, for example spreading propaganda through the internet.

The conclusions of the recent European Police Chiefs Convention in the Hague identified a need for the harmonisation and interconnection of databases of law enforcement authorities. The Convention also noted that the changing dynamics in the society, together with technological advances, may encourage isolated, disaffected individuals to turn into violent extremists, with the potential to become 'lone wolf' terrorists.

In the discussion that followed delegations expressed admiration for the mature and well-considered reaction of the Norwegian people and professional work of the Norwegian authorities. It was agreed that the existing mechanisms and channels of communication have to be made better use of. The delegations highlighted the importance of the timely conclusion of the negotiations on the draft Regulation on the marketing and use of explosives precursors. Ongoing discussion regarding the minimum standards on firearms were also mentioned. Delegations agreed on the difficulty and even impossibility to foresee such 'lone wolf' attacks. Increased attention should also be paid to combating radicalisation over the internet. The need to share information with Europol and share best practice in dealing with terrorist incidents were also stressed.

The Chair of the Technical Harmonisation Working Party updated the meeting on the discussions of the proposal for Regulation on the marketing and the use of explosives precursors. The events in Norway have confirmed the importance of the initiative. The aim of the Presidency is to complete negotiations in the Council by the end of the year. The delegations of the TWP will continue to be invited to the meetings of the THWP, the next one taking place on 9 September 2011.

The representative of SitCen briefly reported on the steps undertaken by SitCen since the attacks in Norway.

The UK delegation gave a presentation on the police operations on "lone actor" right wing extremists in the UK.

The Presidency outlined the different ways in which the Polish authorities have provided support to their Norwegian counterparts in the aftermath of the tragic events.

5. Debate

The Presidency presented a discussion paper on the recent events in Norway and its consequences in the field of countering attacks of a terrorist or extremist nature (doc. DS 1494/11). In view of its late distribution, delegations were invited to comment on the paper in writing by 2 September 2011. The aim of the paper is to initiate a debate on identifying key areas where possible improvements could be made, drawing on the existing ways of cooperation.

Delegations saw this proposal as a good opportunity to evaluate the existing systems and identify possible shortcomings. However, this should be done only after a more in-depth analysis of the situation and by avoiding any duplication of the existing assessments. The importance of the cooperation with international partners and at international fora was reiterated.

6. AOB

No items were raised under AOB.