



Home Office

Rt Hon Damian Green MP  
MINISTER OF STATE FOR POLICING AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF  
www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Juan Fernando Lopez Aguiler  
Chairman  
Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs  
(by email)

29 JAN 2014

*Dear Chairman Lopez Aguiler,*

**CEPOL: THE DECISION TO CLOSE AND SELL BRAMSHILL**

I am writing in advance of the LIBE Committee debate on the Member State Initiative to amend the Council Decision on CEPOL and enable CEPOL to move from Bramshill to Budapest.

As you know, CEPOL currently shares the Bramshill site with the College of Policing. The centre-piece of the site is a 17th-century Grade 1 listed mansion called Bramshill House, it is set on a large estate and has substantial conservation liabilities. The need to seek greater efficiencies and improve the support that the College will be able to provide to policing in the future meant that the decision had to be taken to close the site and relocate the College of Policing.

This was not an easy decision, but with running costs of some £5m per annum, the UK is no longer able to justify keeping this historic site in the public estate at the tax payer's expense. The Home Secretary therefore decided in December 2012 that the site should be sold. At the same time, the Home Secretary wrote to both the Director of CEPOL, Dr. Ferenc Bánfi, and to Commissioner Malmström to inform them of the decision and that the UK would therefore be unable to continue to host CEPOL.

Our concern from the outset was to minimise the impact of the sale on the operations of the agency and its staff. CEPOL has 32 permanent staff based at Bramshill, who play a tremendous role in supporting and strengthening action by the competent authorities of Member States and their mutual cooperation in the fight against crime, in particular the cross-border dimensions of those problems. I would like to emphasise that any decision affecting the lives of staff and their families is never taken lightly by the UK Government. The impact on staff and families is not to be underestimated and the UK stands by to do all it can to help provide families with

the much needed certainty that they now require. This is why we have sought to progress the decision making progress through the European Union at such pace.

As soon as Bramshill was placed on the market in the summer of 2013, we initiated discussions with the Lithuanian Presidency with a view to finding a new temporary host for CEPOL as soon as possible. Further to the common accord by member states on the selection of Budapest as the temporary seat in the margins of the JHA Council in October 2013, the next step is for the Council and the European Parliament to reach agreement on the Member State Initiative which you are due to debate at your meeting on 30 January. The Home Secretary has now extended CEPOL's lease at Bramshill from March 2014 to September 2014 in order to provide sufficient time for the new site in Budapest to be fully prepared to welcome CEPOL and its staff and we understand that CEPOL is in the process of establishing a working group to manage the short term challenges that CEPOL is facing. The Home Office will provide as much support to that group as possible over the coming months.

I would also like to underline that the decision to sell Bramshill is not in any way a reflection of the UK's view of CEPOL itself. The UK values the contribution CEPOL makes to policing and security across Europe very highly and has already indicated that we wish to continue participating in CEPOL in the future as part of our Protocol 36 position.

We appreciate the attention that the LIBE Committee is paying to the issue and thank you for the opportunity to provide further detail on the reasons behind the decision and our belief in the need to provide certainty to CEPOL staff as soon as possible.

A number of uncertainties remain as regards the logistics of the relocation, but I do hope that this letter helps to clarify the position as it stands. If you require further information from the United Kingdom in the course of the coming months the Home Office and the UK Representation to the EU stand ready to assist as far as practically possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Damian Green', written in a cursive style.

**Rt Hon Damian Green MP**