

Clampdown on terrorism - new counter-terrorism law backed by civil liberties MEPs

Foreign fighters as well as “lone wolves” training and preparing terrorist attacks on European soil will be criminalised under new EU-rules to fight terrorism backed on Monday.

Civil Liberties Committee MEPs voted by 37 to 4, with 7 abstentions, to back an informal deal on the draft law, struck by Parliament, the Council and Commission on 17 November. For a preparatory act to be criminalised, it must have been carried out intentionally or knowingly, the text says. Parliament’s negotiators inserted a clause stressing that fundamental rights and freedoms must be respected. The deal still needs to be endorsed by Parliament as a whole and EU ministers.

Parliament’s lead MEP Monika Hohlmeier (EPP, DE) said “There is no freedom without security. Travelling abroad for terrorist purposes, training or being trained for them, inciting terrorism or financing terrorist activities will be made a crime in all EU member states. This is a very comprehensive framework which implements UN and Financial Action Task Force Directives in the fight against terror.”

The following acts, among others, are to be made criminal offences throughout the EU:

- travelling abroad to join a terrorist group or for training for terrorism, such as foreign fighters travelling to Syria or other conflict zones, or returning to the EU if that the person might constitute a threat,
- recruitment for terrorism,
- providing or receiving training for making explosives or weapons or noxious or hazardous substances. This provision would also apply to “lone wolves” studying to carry out an attack on their own,
- public incitement to commit terrorism or advocating terrorism, either directly or indirectly through the glorification of such acts, that intentionally caused danger of new offences. (Member states would be required to ensure the prompt removal of online content that constitute public provocation to commit terrorism or, if not possible, block such content while ensuring judicial redress and compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights), and
- providing funds to commit or contribute to terrorism (member states would also be required to take measures to freeze or seize such funds).

Stepping up information sharing among member states

Parliament's negotiators ensured that, for the first time, member states will be obliged to exchange relevant information in relation to criminal proceedings on terrorist offences as soon as possible if the information could be used to prevent future attacks or assist other ongoing investigations or proceedings.

Helping victims of terrorism

Member states would have to put in place emergency response systems in the event of an attack to ensure immediate help is given to victims and their families, for example through national websites and emergency support centres.

Help should include medical treatment, emotional and psychological support, as well as counselling on legal or financial matters, including compensation claims. Victims caught in a terrorist attack while visiting another EU country should get help to return home.

Next steps

The agreement is expected to be voted in Plenary in February 2017. Member states will have 18 months to ensure that its provisions can be applied.

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.

Background

Further attacks in the EU are likely to be attempted, both by lone actors 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.

How the European Parliament is addressing the threat

[Infographic: how Parliament is addressing the terrorism threat](#)

Further information

[Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[Profile of rapporteur Monika Hohlmeier \(EPP, DE\)](#)

[Catch up via video on demand \(05.12.2016\)](#)

[EP Research: Counter-terrorist sanctions regimes, legal framework and challenges at UN and EU levels \[Briefing, 20-10-2016\]](#)

[Combating terrorism \[EU Legislation in Progress\] July 2016](#)

[Audiovisual material for media](#)

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