



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



# **The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy**

**Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting, Brussels 1 December 2005**

**P R E S S**

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# THE EUROPEAN UNION COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY

PREVENT PROTECT PURSUE RESPOND

*The European Union's strategic commitment:*

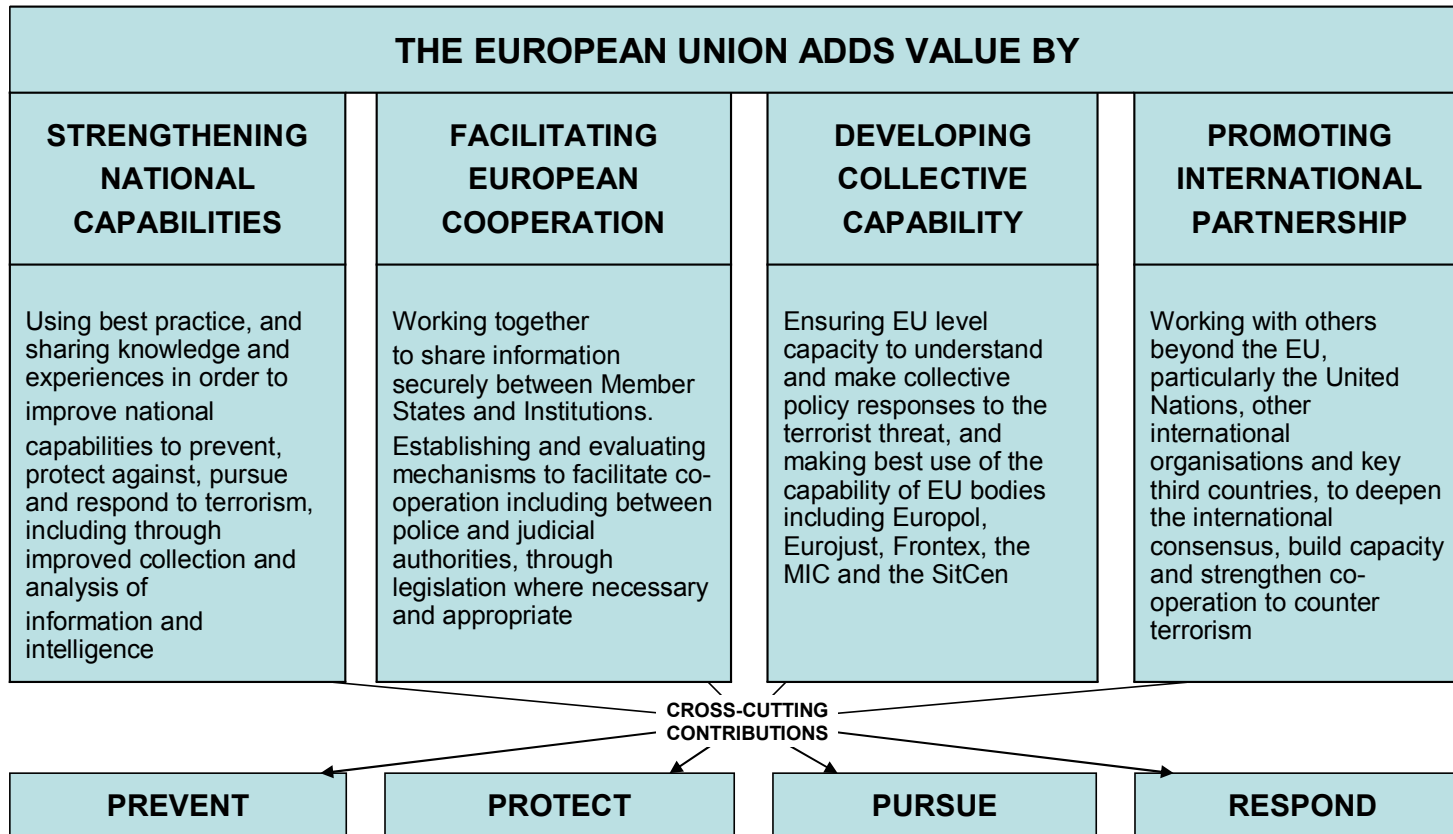
*To combat terrorism globally while respecting human rights,  
and make Europe safer, allowing its citizens to live in an area of freedom, security and justice*

**The EU 's Counter-Terrorism Strategy covers four strands of work, fitting under its strategic commitment:**

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**Member States have the primary responsibility for combating terrorism, and the EU can add value in four main ways:**



**The EU should pursue its goals in a democratic and accountable way.  
Political oversight of the Strategy and regular follow-up will be essential:**

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**EUROPEAN COUNCIL: POLITICAL OVERSIGHT**

**THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL DIALOGUE ON COUNTER-TERRORISM**  
COUNCIL - EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT- COMMISSION  
Meeting once per Presidency to ensure inter-institutional governance

**COREPER monitoring progress on the Strategy**  
with regular follow-up and updates by the  
Counter-Terrorism Co-ordinator and the Commission

**PREVENT**

**PROTECT**

**PURSUE**

**RESPOND**

# THE EU COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY

**PREVENT**

**PROTECT**

**PURSUE**

**RESPOND**

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT

**To combat terrorism globally while respecting human rights, and make Europe safer, allowing its citizens to live in an area of freedom, security and justice**

## INTRODUCTION

1. Terrorism is a threat to all States and to all peoples. It poses a serious threat to our security, to the values of our democratic societies and to the rights and freedoms of our citizens, especially through the indiscriminate targeting of innocent people. Terrorism is criminal and unjustifiable under any circumstances.
2. The European Union is an area of increasing openness, in which the internal and external aspects of security are intimately linked. It is an area of increasing interdependence, allowing for free movement of people, ideas, technology and resources. This is an environment which terrorists abuse to pursue their objectives. In this context concerted and collective European action, in the spirit of solidarity, is indispensable to combat terrorism.
3. The four pillars of the EU's Counter-Terrorism Strategy - prevent, protect, pursue, and respond - constitute a comprehensive and proportionate response to the international terrorist threat. The Strategy requires work at national, European and international levels to reduce the threat from terrorism and our vulnerability to attack. The Strategy sets out our objectives to prevent new recruits to terrorism; better protect potential targets; pursue and investigate members of existing networks and improve our capability to respond to and manage the consequences of terrorist attacks. This Strategy takes into the next phase the agenda of work set out at the March 2004 European Council in the wake of the Madrid bombings.
4. Across the four pillars of the Union's Strategy a horizontal feature is the Union's role in the world. As set out in the European Security Strategy, through its external action the European Union takes on a responsibility for contributing to global security and building a safer world. Acting through and in conjunction with the United Nations and other international or regional organisations, the EU will work to build the international consensus and promote international standards for countering terrorism. The EU will promote efforts in the UN to develop a global strategy for combating terrorism. Continuing to make counter-terrorism a high priority in dialogue with key partner countries, including the USA, will also be a core part of the European approach.
5. Given that the current international terrorist threat affects and has roots in many parts of the world beyond the EU, co-operation with and the provision of assistance to priority third countries - including in North Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia - will be vital. Finally, working to resolve conflicts and promote good governance and democracy will be essential elements of the Strategy, as part of the dialogue and alliance between cultures, faiths and civilisations, in order to address the motivational and structural factors underpinning radicalisation.

## PREVENT

6. In order to prevent people from turning to terrorism and to stop the next generation of terrorists from emerging, the EU has agreed a comprehensive strategy and action plan for combating radicalisation and recruitment into terrorism. This strategy focuses on countering radicalisation and recruitment to terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and the groups it inspires, given that this type of terrorism currently represents the main threat to the Union as a whole.
7. Terrorism can never be justified. There can be no excuse or impunity for terrorist acts. The vast majority of Europeans, irrespective of belief, do not accept extremist ideologies. Even amongst the small number that do, only a few turn to terrorism. The decision to become involved in terrorism varies from one individual to another, even though the motives behind such a decision are often similar. We must identify and counter the methods, propaganda and conditions through which people are drawn into terrorism.
8. The challenge of combating radicalisation and terrorist recruitment lies primarily with the Member States, at a national, regional and local level. However, EU work in this field, including the contribution of the European Commission, can provide an important framework to help co-ordinate national policies; share information and determine good practice. But addressing this challenge is beyond the power of governments alone and will require the full engagement of all populations in Europe and beyond.
9. There are practical steps an individual must take to become involved in terrorism. The ability to put ideas into action has been greatly enhanced by globalisation: ease of travel, transfer of money and communication - including through the internet - mean easier access to radical ideas and training. We need to spot such behaviour for example through community policing and monitoring travel to conflict zones. We also need to disrupt such behaviour by: limiting the activities of those playing a role in radicalisation; preventing access to terrorist training; establishing a strong legal framework to prevent incitement and recruitment; and examining ways to impede terrorist recruitment through the internet.
10. The propagation of a particular extremist worldview brings individuals to consider and justify violence. In the context of the most recent wave of terrorism, for example, the core of the issue is propaganda which distorts conflicts around the world as a supposed proof of a clash between the West and Islam. To address these issues, we need to ensure that voices of mainstream opinion prevail over those of extremism by engaging with civil society and faith groups that reject the ideas put forward by terrorists and extremists that incite violence. And we need to get our own message across more effectively, to change the perception of national and European policies. We must also ensure that our own policies do not exacerbate division. Developing a non-emotive lexicon for discussing the issues will support this.

11. There is a range of conditions in society which may create an environment in which individuals can become more easily radicalised. These conditions include poor or autocratic governance; rapid but unmanaged modernisation; lack of political or economic prospects and of educational opportunities. Within the Union these factors are not generally present but in individual segments of the population they may be. To counter this, outside the Union we must promote even more vigorously good governance, human rights, democracy as well as education and economic prosperity, and engage in conflict resolution. We must also target inequalities and discrimination where they exist and promote inter-cultural dialogue and long-term integration where appropriate.
12. Radicalisation and recruitment is an international phenomenon. There is much we can do with our partners overseas to assist them in combating radicalisation, including through co-operation and assistance programmes with third countries and work through international organisations.
13. Key priorities for 'Prevent' are to:
  - Develop common approaches to spot and tackle problem behaviour, in particular the misuse of the internet;
  - Address incitement and recruitment in particular in key environments, for example prisons, places of religious training or worship, notably by implementing legislation making these behaviours offences;
  - Develop a media and communication strategy to explain better EU policies;
  - Promote good governance, democracy, education and economic prosperity through Community and Member State assistance programmes;
  - Develop inter-cultural dialogue within and outside the Union;
  - Develop a non-emotive lexicon for discussing the issues;
  - Continue research, share analysis and experiences in order to further our understanding of the issues and develop policy responses.

## **PROTECT**

14. Protection is a key part of our Counter Terrorism Strategy. We must strengthen the defences of key targets, by reducing their vulnerability to attack, and also by reducing the resulting impact of an attack.
15. While Member States have the primary responsibility for improving the protection of key targets, the interdependency of border security, transport and other cross-border infrastructures require effective EU collective action. In areas where EU-level security regimes exist, such as border and transport security, the EU and European Commission in particular have played an important role in raising standards. Further work between Member States, with the support of the European institutions, will provide an important framework in which Member States are able to co-ordinate their policies, share information about responses developed at national level, determine good practice, and work together to develop new ideas.
16. We need to enhance protection of our external borders to make it harder for known or suspected terrorists to enter or operate within the EU. Improvements in technology for both the capture and exchange of passenger data, and the inclusion of biometric information in identity and travel documents, will increase the effectiveness of our border controls and provide greater assurance to our citizens. The European Borders Agency (Frontex) will have a role in providing risk assessment as part of the effort to strengthen controls and surveillance at the EU's external



border. The establishment of the Visa Information System and second generation Schengen Information System will ensure that our authorities can share and access information and if necessary deny access to the Schengen area.

17. We also must work collectively to raise standards in transport security. We must enhance the protection of airports, seaports, and aircraft security arrangements in order to deter terrorist attacks and address the vulnerabilities in domestic and overseas transport operations. These measures will be developed by a combination of specific assessments of threat and vulnerability, the implementation of agreed EU legislation on aviation and maritime security, and the agreement of revised EU legislation on aviation security. There is also scope for working together to increase road and rail security. To support work in all of these fields, EU research and development policy including the European Commission's R&D programmes should continue to include security related research in the context of terrorism.
18. Reducing the vulnerability across Europe of critical infrastructure to physical and electronic attack is essential. To further enhance our protection, we agreed to establish a Programme of work aimed at improving the protection of critical infrastructure across Europe. We will continue work to this end, developing an all hazard approach which recognises the threat from terrorism as a priority.
19. We must also ensure that our collective work, and particularly EU research efforts, contribute to developing methodologies for protecting crowded places and other soft targets from attacks.
20. Internationally, we must work with partners and international organisations on transport security, and non-proliferation of CBRN materials and small arms/light weapons, as well as provide technical assistance on protective security to priority third countries as a component of our wider technical assistance programmes.
21. Key priorities for 'Protect' are to:
  - Deliver improvements to the security of EU passports through the introduction of biometrics;
  - Establish the Visa Information System (VIS) and the second generation Schengen Information System (SISII);
  - Develop through Frontex effective risk analysis of the EU's external border;
  - Implement agreed common standards on civil aviation, port and maritime security;
  - Agree a European programme for critical infrastructure protection;
  - Make best use of EU and Community level research activity.

## PURSUE

22. We will further strengthen and implement our commitments to disrupt terrorist activity and pursue terrorists across borders. Our objectives are to impede terrorists' planning, disrupt their networks and the activities of recruiters to terrorism, cut off terrorists' funding and access to attack materials, and bring them to justice, while continuing to respect human rights and international law.
23. As agreed in the Hague Programme, when preserving national security, Member States will also focus on the security of the Union as a whole. The Union will support the efforts of Member States to disrupt terrorists by encouraging the exchange of information and intelligence between them, providing common analyses of the threat, and strengthening operational co-operation in law enforcement.
24. At national level the competent authorities need to have the necessary tools to collect and analyse intelligence and to pursue and investigate terrorists, requiring Member States to update their policy response and legislative provisions where necessary. In this respect our common aim is to follow up and take full account of the recommendations identified during the EU's peer evaluation process. Member States will report back on how they have improved their national capabilities and machinery in light of these recommendations.
25. Developing a common understanding of the threat is fundamental to developing common policies to respond to it. The Joint Situation Centre's assessments, based on the contributions of national security and intelligence agencies and Europol, should continue to inform decisions across the range of the EU's policies.
26. Instruments such as the European Arrest Warrant are proving to be important tools in pursuing and investigating terrorists across borders. Priority should now be given to other practical measures in order to put into practice the principle of mutual recognition of judicial decisions. A key measure is the European Evidence Warrant, which will enable Member States to obtain evidence from elsewhere in the EU to help convict terrorists. Member States should also improve further the practical co-operation and information exchange between police and judicial authorities, in particular through Europol and Eurojust. In addition, Joint Investigation Teams should be established where necessary for cross-border investigations. Evaluation of the implementation of legislative measures will be important and will inform further work, and Member States should ensure that they implement agreed European measures as well as ratify relevant international Treaties and Conventions, to ensure an appropriate legislative response to the threat.

27. To move from ad hoc to systematic police co-operation, one important step will be developing and putting into practice the principle of availability of law enforcement information. In addition, the development of new IT systems such as the Visa Information System and the next generation Schengen Information System, while safeguarding data protection, should provide improved access to those authorities responsible for internal security thereby widening the base of information at their disposal. Consideration should also be given to developing common approaches to the sharing of information on potential terrorists and on individuals deported for terrorism-related offences.
28. Terrorists must also be deprived of the means by which they mount attacks - whether directly (eg weapons and explosives) or indirectly (eg false documentation to enable undetected travel and residence). Their ability to communicate and plan undetected should be impeded by measures such as the retention of telecommunications data. They must also be deprived as far as possible of the opportunities offered by the Internet to communicate and spread technical expertise related to terrorism.
29. Creating a hostile operating environment for terrorists also means tackling terrorist financing. The EU has already put in place provisions for freezing terrorist assets. The next stage is to implement the EU-wide legislation concerning money laundering and cash transfers, and to agree steps to impede money (wire) transfers by terrorists. In addition, tackling the misuse of the non-profit sector remains a priority. We must also ensure that financial investigation is an integral part of all terrorism investigations. These measures and others which build on the Financial Action Task Force's recommendations, form part of the EU's comprehensive strategy for combating terrorist financing. A review of the EU's performance against terrorist financing is currently being conducted to ensure our approach is kept up to date.
30. Much of the terrorist threat to Europe originates outside the EU. 'Pursue' must therefore also have a global dimension. The EU will work to reinforce the international consensus through the United Nations and other international bodies and through dialogue and agreements (which include counter-terrorism clauses) with key partners, and will work for agreement of a UN Comprehensive Convention against Terrorism. Assistance will be provided to priority countries to help them introduce and implement the necessary mechanisms to disrupt terrorism, in co-ordination with the work of other donors.

31. Key priorities on 'Pursue' are to:

- Strengthen national capabilities to combat terrorism, in light of the recommendations of the peer evaluation of national anti-terrorism arrangements;
- Make full use of Europol and Eurojust to facilitate police and judicial cooperation, and continue to integrate the Joint Situation Centre's threat assessments into CT policy making;
- Further develop mutual recognition of judicial decisions, including by adopting the European Evidence Warrant;
- Ensure full implementation and evaluation of existing legislation as well as the ratification of relevant international Treaties and Conventions;
- Develop the principle of availability of law enforcement information;
- Tackle terrorist access to weapons and explosives, ranging from components for home-made explosive to CBRN material;
- Tackle terrorist financing, including by implementing agreed legislation, working to prevent the abuse of the non-profit sector, and reviewing the EUs overall performance in this area;
- Deliver technical assistance to enhance the capability of priority third countries.

## **RESPOND**

32. We cannot reduce the risk of terrorist attacks to zero. We have to be able to deal with attacks when they occur, recognising that attacks can have effects across EU borders. The response to an incident will often be similar whether that event is natural, technological or man-made, hence the response systems in place to manage the consequences of natural disasters may also be used to alleviate the effects on citizens in the aftermath of a terrorist attack. Our response to any such events should make full use of the existing structures, including the Civil Protection Mechanism, which the EU has developed to respond to other major European and international crises, and be co-ordinated with the action of other international organisations involved.
33. In the event of an incident with cross border effects there will be a need for rapid sharing of operational and policy information, media co-ordination and mutual operational support, drawing on all available means, including military resources. The ability of the EU to take consistent or collective action will also be essential to an effective and efficient response. The development of EU crisis co-ordination arrangements, supported by the necessary operational procedures, will help ensure the coherence of the EU response to terrorist attacks.
34. Member States have the lead role in providing the emergency response to a terrorist incident on their territory. Nevertheless, there remains a need to ensure that the EU collectively, supported by the European Institutions including the Commission, has the capability to respond in solidarity to an extreme emergency which might overwhelm the resources of a single Member State, and could constitute a serious risk to the Union as a whole. Reviewing and revising the current framework for mutual support – the Community Mechanism for civil protection – is important in ensuring this safeguard.

35. Developing a risk based approach to capability assessment – focusing on preparing for those events which are judged most likely to occur, and which would have the greatest impact – will enable Member States to develop their capabilities to respond in the event of an emergency. The shared EU database listing the resources and assets which Member States might be able to contribute to dealing with such events in other Member States or overseas complements this work.
36. The solidarity, assistance and compensation of the victims of terrorism and their families constitutes an integral part of the response to terrorism at national and European level. Member States should ensure that appropriate compensation is available to victims. Through sharing of best practice on national arrangements, and the development of contact between national victims' associations, the European Commission will enable the EU to take steps to enhance the support offered to those who most suffer from terrorist attacks.
37. Internationally, there is a need to provide assistance to EU citizens in third countries and to protect and assist our military and civilian assets on EU crisis management operations. We should also ensure that our work on disaster response is closely co-ordinated with related work in international organisations and in particular the United Nations. Finally, the technical assistance provided by the EU to priority third countries will need to factor in assistance on managing the consequences of terrorist attacks.
38. Key priorities on 'Respond' are to:
- Agree EU Crisis Co-ordination Arrangements and the supporting operational procedures for them;
  - Revise the legislation on the Community Mechanism for civil protection;
  - Develop risk assessment as a tool to inform the building of capabilities to respond to an attack;
  - Improve co-ordination with international organisations on managing the response to terrorist attacks and other disasters;
  - Share best practice and develop approaches for the provision of assistance to victims of terrorism and their families.

## **DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY**

39. The European Council will review progress on the Strategy once every six months.
40. Once per Presidency, and ahead of the European Council's review of progress, a High Level Political Dialogue on Counter-Terrorism, bringing together the Council, European Commission, and European Parliament, will meet to allow the three Institutions to consider progress together and promote transparency and balance in the EU's approach.
41. This Strategy will be complemented by a detailed Action Plan listing all the relevant measures under the four strands of this strategy. This will allow for detailed progress to be monitored on a regular basis by the Committee of Permanent Representatives, with regular follow-up and updates from the Counter-Terrorism Co-ordinator and the European Commission.

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