



PRESS RELEASE

FACE: EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS FOR HUNTING & CONSERVATION

Will terrorists comply with the revision of the Firearms Directive?

Yesterday, reacting to the tragic events in Paris of 13 November, the European Commission rushed a proposal to review the Firearms Directive. FACE supports the European Commission's initiatives in the fight against terrorism and illegal practices. FACE nonetheless questions how the Commission's proposal to further restrict the *lawful* possession of firearms by hunters and sports shooters would prevent terrorists from committing atrocities. *Illegally* manufactured and/or trafficked firearms are readily available from the black market within the EU or from outside its borders.

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 19 November 2015 – FACE welcomes the firm reaction of the European Commission against terrorism. FACE supports the adequate control of firearms, including justified and proportionate restrictions to their acquisition and possession. At the same time, any legislative proposal purportedly aimed at combating terrorism should refrain from unduly limiting the rights of legal users. Therefore, FACE calls on the European Commission to respect the rights of hunters and sport shooters, who represent the largest group of legal and responsible users of civilian firearms in the European Union and who are among the most intensely controlled and law abiding social groups in the EU.

Michl Ebner, FACE President, stated: *“FACE applauds the leadership shown by the European Commission to intervene against terrorism with great determination. Our legitimate fight against terrorism must not unduly affect the freedom of law abiding citizens to lawfully acquire, use, transport and store hunting firearms, guaranteed by the Firearms Directive.”*

FACE subscribes to several elements in the Commission proposal, including improvement of the traceability of firearms, deactivation standards and better exchange of information between Member States, which are necessary to duly protect EU citizens. However, FACE rejects that measures making it more difficult for hunters and sport shooters to acquire legal firearms in the European Union will prevent criminals and terrorists from obtaining illegal weapons and committing atrocities.

The Firearms Directive is the legal instrument that regulates the lawful acquisition and possession of firearms in the EU. Under the current rules, only persons having a good cause for the acquisition or possession and not presenting a danger to him-/herself or the public are entitled to own a firearm. To this extent the primary aim of the Firearms Directive is to ensure the functioning of the internal market.

FACE underlines that no link exists between the possession of legal civilian firearms for hunting and shooting purposes and criminal behaviour and terrorism. Moreover, legal firearms have not been demonstrated to feed into the illegal market, as it has sometimes been suggested. On the contrary, the terrorists involved in the Paris attacks illegally obtained automatic assault rifles from the black market in the EU or from outside the European Union. Consequently and logically, efforts to combat terrorism must be directed at preventing terrorists, extremist and criminals from obtaining such illegal firearms, not at citizens who respect the law and who are already subjected to strict and burdensome licensing schemes and thorough background checks.

FACE doubts that standardised medical checks of legal users by EU Member States will prevent criminals from obtaining firearms from illegal sources. In addition, by imposing such standards the EU would obstruct the competence of the Member States.

FACE criticises the inclusion of semi-automatic firearms that “resemble” automatic firearms in the prohibited category. The criterion is unclear, subjective and disproportionate and requires Member States to confiscate at huge costs licensed firearms which have the same technical specifications as other B category firearms, which are already subject to authorisation.

FACE furthermore objects to the Commission’s proposal to prohibit the private sale of legally acquired firearms by means of distance communication. Such a definition has implications on every sale between parties and could deeply impact the fundamental freedom of EU citizens and their right to equal treatment.

While FACE welcomes proposals to combat illicit trafficking giving authorities the right tools to restrict the circulation of illegal firearms and improve border controls. However the European Commission must ensure the full implementation of the European Firearms Pass across the EU, guaranteeing the right of free movement. The European Firearms Pass, issued by the authorities of a EU Member State to persons lawfully acquiring and using a firearm, is the instrument that validly and efficiently allows the tracing of a legal firearm to its owner while travelling in the European Union.

*****ENDS*****

NOTES TO EDITORS:

FACE is the European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation. Established in 1977, FACE **represents the interests of Europe’s 7 million** hunters as an international non-profit-making nongovernmental organisation. FACE is made up of national hunters’ associations from 35 European countries including the EU-28. FACE is supported by 7 associate members and is based in Brussels.

FACE is the largest democratically representative body for hunters in the world.

FACE upholds the principle of sustainable use, has been a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) since 1987, and more recently of Wetlands International. FACE works with its partners on a range of hunting-related issues, from international conservation agreements to local implementations with the aim of sustaining hunting across Europe.

More on www.face.eu

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, INTERVIEWS, QUOTES, PLEASE CONTACT:

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