


Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	1996/2134(INI)	Procedure completed
Combating terrorism in the European Union		
Subject 7.30.20 Action to combat terrorism		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	LIBE Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs	PPE REDING Viviane	29/05/1996

Key events			
05/09/1996	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
11/11/1996	Vote in committee		Summary
11/11/1996	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0368/1996	
29/01/1997	Debate in Parliament		Summary
30/01/1997	Decision by Parliament	T4-0028/1997	Summary
30/01/1997	End of procedure in Parliament		
24/02/1997	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	1996/2134(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	LIBE/4/08095

Documentation gateway				
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0368/1996 OJ C 380 16.12.1996, p. 0004	11/11/1996	EP

Combating terrorism in the European Union

The committee on civil liberties adopted the draft resolution on combating terrorism in the EU. The rapporteur, Mrs Reding (PPE, L), called for a complete and coherent catalogue of measures, which would go beyond mere selective proposals and would put greater emphasis on preventing acts of terrorism, together with improved intelligence and the strengthening of repressive measures. Drawing inspiration from a proposal put by the Committee on International Law for a definition of the concept of terrorism, which would be valid throughout the EU, to be included in Recital A, the wording which was adopted presents in detail the following areas: prevention, investigation, suppression and police and judicial cooperation. While calling on each Member State to promote democratic dialogue between conflicting parties in its territory and to implement a strategy for reconciliation, the Committee declared itself against the adoption of exceptional laws and procedures which might give greater importance to acts of terrorism and also protested against the unacceptable glamorization by the media of terrorist acts. The Council was called upon to take a decision as a matter of urgency which would enable Europol to assume powers in the fight against terrorism and to strive for the harmonisation, both at European level and from a longer-term perspective, of the criminal justice system which applies to serious crossborder crime, while for their part Member States were urged to cooperate actively within the framework of the new European Convention on extradition. ?

Combating terrorism in the European Union

The rapporteur, Mrs Reding (EPP, LU), expressed her disappointment that the promises of action following each terrorist attack were not being fulfilled. Condemning terrorism as an unjustified criminal act, the rapporteur warned against exceptional laws and procedures which would end up glorifying this violence instead of halting it. Mrs Reding argued for a true prevention policy not only in political and technical terms but also with regard to police cooperation. In this respect, not only did Europol need to get up and running but cooperation and the exchange of information between the various police forces, regardless of the existence of criminal proceedings, needed to be stepped up. The rapporteur then called for the Convention on extradition to be ratified and declared her opposition to political asylum between Member States. Finally, she called for families falling victim to terrorist acts to benefit from public assistance both materially and psychologically. Commissioner Gradin welcomed the results of European police cooperation which had allowed a number of terrorists to be arrested and their networks to be broken up. Cooperation with the Central and Eastern European Countries in the fight against organised crime had also allowed a number of results to be achieved. While stressing the need to better define the causes of terrorism, Mrs Gradin confirmed that she agreed with Parliament's call to ratify the Europol Convention as quickly as possible and to conclude a Convention on extradition.

Combating terrorism in the European Union

The European Parliament adopted, by 294 votes to 19 with 4 abstentions, the own-initiative report of Mrs Viviane REDING (PPE, L) on combating terrorism, calling in particular on the IGC to include in the Treaty 'concrete and effective principles for ensuring close collaboration on judicial matters' and advocating that this cooperation should constitute an essential pillar in the fight against terrorism and any other form of organised crime. The basic premise is clear: a total rejection of all acts of terrorism or recourse to violence as a means of pursuing political or ideological objectives in the European Union, whether these be motivated by religious fanaticism or based on irrational motives. The democratic constitutional structure of the Member States makes the recourse to such practices even more unjustifiable. Such acts should never be considered as political offences, but should always be regarded as criminal actions to be prosecuted in the criminal courts, under the rule of law, without recourse to exceptional procedures. This approach does not however rule out the call for democratic dialogue in the attempt to find a political solution to ethno-national, social and ecological conflicts and to prevent such conflicts from being used as an excuse for acts of terrorism. From this perspective Parliament advocated a strengthening of police and judicial cooperation between Member States in order to combat terrorism and to this effect proposed a series of concrete measures for the prevention (for example by airport controls, improved systems for detecting dangerous substances, etc.) suppression and investigation of terrorism. Parliament called in particular for Europol to be granted powers for the prevention and control of terrorism, and for this to be done as soon as possible after the ratification of the Convention. The Member States should classify acts of terrorism in their penal codes as serious offences which are liable for extradition and should cooperate actively within the framework of the new European Convention on extradition. Parliament called in particular on Member States to ratify this Convention (signed 27 September 1996) as soon as possible and hoped that Member States would abandon the reserve clause which allowed them not to proceed with the extradition of their own nationals. The resolution also set out to define the concept of terrorism, affirming that within the EU terrorism must be regarded as a 'criminal act which seeks, under the rule of law, to alter the political, economic and social structures by threatening to use violence or by resorting to violence'. Apologia for terrorism should also be considered as a criminal offence. Parliament stressed that financial and police cooperation should be reinforced and that this should be accompanied by a strengthening of democratic controls and legal restrictions. In the longer term, Parliament called on the Council to strive for the harmonisation, at European level, of the criminal law applying to 'serious cross-border crime'. In addition, the IGC should include in the Treaty the principle that the right of asylum only applies to nationals from non-member countries. At the same time, it called on the Council to take the decisions and measures which were needed to ensure that a national from a Member State, who is accused of a terrorist offence or of collaborating with an armed group, as defined in the resolution, cannot be granted political asylum or refugee status in another Member State. Finally, Parliament considered that it was essential for both material and psychological aid to be given to the victims of terrorism and their families. ?