

Strengthening Counter-Terrorism Efforts and Safeguarding European Values

Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting in Skopje (18/11/2023)

In the wake of the tragic events that unfolded on October 16, 2023, in Brussels, where a devastating terrorist attack claimed the lives of two Swedish nationals and left another individual injured, our collective resolve to combat the scourge of terrorism is resolute. This horrifying incident occurred on Boulevard d'Ypres, merely 3 miles from the King Baudouin Stadium, where the Belgium-Sweden Euro 2024 qualifier football match was underway.

This specific tragic event highlights a broader context in which radical Islamist groups have disseminated false narratives in Sweden, particularly targeting public institutions. Such narratives have included baseless allegations of the abduction of young children from their families, thereby adding to the complexities of our security landscape. Notably, Sweden's security situation has seen a marked escalation, with the Swedish secret service raising the threat level from 3 to 4 on a 5-level scale.

In light of these pressing and ever-persistent challenges posed by terrorism within the European Union, our resolution seeks to address these issues while staying unwavering in our commitment to fundamental values. Recent attacks, like the one that unfolded in Brussels, serve as stark reminders of the urgency of our efforts in the face of terrorism. With this resolution, we endeavor to establish a comprehensive framework for the enhancement of counter-terrorism measures within the EU. Our foremost objective is to secure the safety and well-being of European citizens while ensuring that the principles of freedom of speech and expression remain unwavering, even in the face of the looming threat of terrorism.

Acknowledging that:

- The persistent threat of terrorism within the European Union (EU) and the global context.
- The fundamental values of freedom of speech, expression, and democracy that the EU holds dear, as enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
- The critical importance of protecting the lives and safety of European citizens in the face of terrorist threats.

Recognizing that:

- That terrorism remained a significant concern for EU Member States throughout 2022, with a total of 28 attacks recorded, encompassing both completed, failed, and foiled attempts. Among these incidents, 16 attacks were successfully executed, with the preponderance of

these attributed to left-wing and anarchist terrorism, totaling 13 cases, while two instances were linked to jihadist terrorism, and one to right-wing terrorism¹.

- The need for coordinated and effective measures to combat terrorism while respecting human rights and the rule of law.
- The potential radicalization and recruitment of individuals within EU member states by terrorist organizations.
- The importance of a united approach to address the multifaceted challenges posed by terrorism.
- The necessity of protecting freedom of speech and expression while maintaining a zero-tolerance approach to incitement to violence and hate speech.
- The critical importance of the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS) Third Country Nationals (TCN), the non-operational status attributed to persistent IT issues poses a significant challenge. Urgent measures are needed to expedite the resolution of these IT problems, ensuring the operational functionality of the ECRIS-TCN for enhanced efficiency in counter-terrorism efforts.

YEPP Calls on:

- EU member states and the European Commission to work diligently on combatting terrorism and upholding our values of freedom of speech and expression as well as protecting European lives
- EU member states to enhance cooperation in sharing intelligence, expertise, and best practices to effectively counter terrorism.
- The European Commission to strengthen EU-wide legislation and cooperation mechanisms to combat terrorism, ensuring consistency and synergy in counter-terrorism efforts.
- Emphasizing the importance of proactive measures to prevent radicalization, including robust educational programs and community engagement initiatives.
- EU member states to ensure that counter-terrorism measures are in compliance with international human rights standards, and that any restrictions on civil liberties are proportionate, necessary, and subject to oversight.
- The EU to support third countries in addressing the root causes of terrorism and extremism, as well as in building their capacity to counter terrorism effectively.
- EU member states to prioritize the realization of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, with the goal of facilitating improved information sharing related to asylum seekers. This effort is aimed at expediting and enhancing the accuracy of the application processing procedures.

¹ EUROPEAN UNION TERRORISM SITUATION AND TREND REPORT 2023