

## EU Parliament should reject firearms directive

Written by Stephen A. Petroni on 11 July 2016 in Thought Leader  
Thought Leader

The ill-conceived firearms directive proposals deserve Parliament's outright rejection, argues Stephen A. Petroni.



Stephen Petroni | Photo credit: Stephen Petroni

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Over the last seven months, MEPs have been attempting to re-write what is arguably one of the most misguided legislative proposals ever presented to the European Parliament. Barely one week after the Paris terrorist attacks that shook Europe, the European Commission published its proposal to amend the firearms directive, presenting it as an urgent response to terrorism.

In reality, it was a rushed conclusion to a process that was initiated three years earlier. A 2013 public consultation identified the need for proper enforcement in member states as opposed to further changes to the directive.

Two further impact assessment studies covered the possible introduction of rules on deactivation, marking procedures, regulation of alarm devices and options for combatting illicit firearms trafficking.

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Another study found that the directive, last revised in 2008, was generally adequate and required minor improvement in areas already identified in the impact assessments.

Yet the Commission was also considering additional measures aimed at legal firearm ownership. These were contentious enough to be kept under wraps - until the tragic events of 13 November 2015.

Seizing the moment, the Commission unleashed an unprecedented attack on millions of legal firearm owners as well as on the legitimate firearms industry that contributes over €20bn and almost 700,000 jobs to the economy. If that were not enough, it went as far as to propose destroying a wealth of irreplaceable historical heritage in museums and in private collections.

These disproportionate measures were presented without a corresponding impact assessment, depriving MEPs of fair judgement on whether the marginal gain in the fight against terrorism justifies the considerable collateral damage to citizens, heritage and the economy. The proposal disregards the fundamental principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

Our case as recognised collectors merits particular attention: in the absence of supporting evidence, the Commission stated that we may be a, "possible source of trafficking of firearms" in order to justify proposing the confiscation and destruction of important firearms that we acquire legally and conserve and research at great personal sacrifice.

The increase in European citizens' scepticism and mistrust of the EU project is symptomatic of such a misguided approach by the Commission.

Firearm collectors have found themselves at the forefront of the defence of legitimate firearm owners, joining organisations representing European sport shooters, hunters, traders, manufacturers as well as a new grassroots movement of individual firearm owners - Firearms United - to form a grand alliance of stakeholders.

Thankfully, many MEPs have taken a sensible approach. On 9 May the civil liberties committee voted to reject most of the Commission measures. With two days to go before a vote in the internal market committee, we appeal to MEPs to reject disproportionate measures that were proposed without an impact assessment.

## About the author

Stephen A. Petroni is Chair of the Foundation for European Societies of Arms Collectors

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