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European Centre for Economic,
Policy Analysis and Affairs

Research paper

Results of the survey on the "Actions taken by the EU to protect European citizens"

February 2016

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Research paper

Actions against Terrorism: Strengthening the Borders

Terrorist attacks that last November shocked Paris and the entire Europe brought terrorism and security on top of the political agenda. Immediately after the attacks, the Council of EU agreed to strengthen checks at the external borders, while some Member States decided to reinstate temporary border controls. On December 15, 2015 the European Commission, according to the conclusion of the Council, proposed a modification of the Schengen Borders Code to introduce mandatory systematic checks of EU citizens at external land, sea and air borders. It has been argued that these measures pose a threat to freedom of movements within Europe, which represents one of the core principle of the EU.

Tracking Data and Security Spending

In addition, the Council renewed its proposal regarding the Passenger Name Record (PNR) system, and demanded an agreement with the European Parliament. At the beginning of December 2015, whilst the present survey was already in progress, the agreement was found between the Council and the EP LIBE committee. According to the final version of agreement, passengers' data will be kept "unmasked" for a period of six month, and then "masked-out" for four years and a half. Moreover, the new system will only allow, not oblige, its application to "intra EU flights". The final decision of the European Parliament is expected in the following months. Finally, President of European Commission, Mr. Junker stated that security spending would not be considered as ordinary expenses in the Stability Pact, thus allowing Member States to implement new security and defense measures.

2. METHODOLOGY

The Questionnaire

This survey aims to cast light on people's attitude towards the political decisions taken to tackle terrorism, soon after the attacks on Paris.

The questionnaire was composed of 12 questions. Some of them were structured as multiple-choice questions, while others as yes/no questions.

The questionnaire has been finalized in this way:

1. A first draft of the questionnaire was prepared into two versions (Italian and English);

2. Then, the questionnaire was put online.

Data Collection

The questionnaires were collected through an online system. The portal remained open from 23/11/2015 to 14/12/2015. In order to collect the largest number of questionnaires, the link of the questionnaires was spread by various methods:

1. The ECEPAA newsletter, which includes more than 15.000 email addresses;
2. LinkedIn;
3. Facebook.

The total accesses to the questionnaire have been 169, while the questionnaires completed amounted at 101: 87 respondents to the Italian version, 14 to the English version.

Security vs. Freedom

In the aftermath of the 13 November terrorist attacks in Paris, EU council decided to strengthen security checks at the external EU border even on European citizens, so far subject only to minimum identification procedures. The majority of the interviewed (66,3%) agrees with the council decision, which de facto narrows (although slightly) freedom of movements for European citizens. However, when it comes to freedom limitations for security reasons, even though the percentages are not deeply divergent (51,5% vs. 48,5%), the majority of the respondents declared that strengthening intelligence agencies' activities should not imply limitations of individual rights.

Security vs. Privacy

Soon after the terrorist attacks in Paris, the Council of EU proposed an agreement to the European parliament on the PNR system (Passenger Name Record). According to the proposal of the Council, passengers' data would be kept available up to one year, before being "masked-out" and stored for four years. Moreover, the Council stressed the need to apply PNR system also to intra EU flight. In this respect, the majority of the respondents (68,3%) declared to be in favor of the council proposal, even though only 46,5% of them believe PNR system to be an effective tool for preventing and fighting terrorism.

Terrorism and Fear

After the events that happened in Paris, 77% of respondents declared to be afraid of terror attacks taking place in their countries. However, only 55% of them actually expressed safety concerns.

Strategies against Terrorism

According to the respondents, the best strategy against terrorism consists in improving migrants' integration process, fostering their inclusion in the job market (68,3%). A good share of respondents also consider the cooperation with countries of origin of migrants, in order to intensify examinations and controls (17,8%). On the other hand, very few respondents believe that military actions against terrorist organizations would be beneficial to fight terrorism (10,9%), and even fewer would be in favor of closing borders (2,9%). Finally, the great majority finds the interfaith dialogue an effective tool to prevent terrorism (82,1%), even though it does not seem that we are facing a clash of civilizations (69,3%).

As regard security spending, for the majority of the respondents (79,2%) it should not be a priority over other spending categories. This result is consistent with the opinion that EU and member states should increase their spending on welfare investments (80%), before security (37,6%) or military operations (4,9%).

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY-MAKERS

Security vs. Freedom

- Strengthen border controls even for EU citizens.

- Increase intelligence services without limiting EU citizens' fundamental rights.

Security vs. Privacy

- Take into account the Council proposal in the development of the PNR system.

- Consider also the development of other instruments to prevent and fight terrorism: PNR alone is not enough.

Strategies against Terrorism

- Prioritize two strategies of action against terrorism:

  1. Enhancing migrants' integration and inclusion in the job market
  2. Seeking cooperation with countries of origin of migrants

- Minimize the use of ineffective strategies to contrast terrorism, namely:

  1. Carrying out military actions against terrorist organizations
  2. Closing internal borders

- Foster interfaith dialogue as a tool to prevent terrorism

- Allocate more resources in welfare investments over security and military operations investment.

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The European Centre for Economic and Policy Analysis and Affairs (ECEPAA) is a non-profit organization specialized in the development of European Union projects in the field of research, education, youth, culture and social inclusion.

Founded in Brussels in 2011, ECEPAA implements projects in the aforementioned fields as well as carries out policy-oriented research while developing also assistance projects at local, national and international level.