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**NOTE**

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	8451/25
Subject:	European Internal Security Strategy - Exchange of views

The 19 December 2024 European Council endorsed the strategic guidelines for legislative and operational planning within the area of freedom, security and justice<sup>1</sup>, shaping the direction of EU policy in justice and home affairs.

In the context of the above, of discussions in the Council, and of the experience gathered through the implementation of previous strategies, the Commission presented on 1 April 2025 a communication entitled “ProtectEU: a European Internal Security Strategy” (hereinafter ‘the communication’)<sup>2</sup>. Together with other communications such as the "Preparedness Union Strategy", the "White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030" and the planned "European Democracy Shield", the communication sets out the Commission’s vision for a safe, secure and resilient Union.

<sup>1</sup> 16343/24, EUCO 50/24.

<sup>2</sup> 7750/25.

The Presidency puts forward the report in annex to summarise in a concise manner the views of Member States on how to develop and implement key issues identified by the communication.

The Council, and in particular the Standing Committee on operational cooperation on internal security (COSI), will follow up on work designed to tackle internal security challenges.

**Questions to the Ministers:**

- In your view, does the Commission communication “ProtectEU” as complemented by the Presidency report adequately reflect the expectations of Member States to effectively tackle internal security challenges in the years to come?
  - From your perspective, which actions should be treated as the highest priority?
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## **Presidency report**

The Presidency of the Council of the European Union, building on discussions held in the Council and its preparatory bodies, issues this report to provide guidance on how to develop and implement key issues identified by the communication “ProtectEU”.

The Presidency considers that Member States have broadly welcomed the Commission’s communication and recognised it as a key contribution for mobilising different actors in the common endeavour of maintaining and strengthening the EU’s internal security by addressing the increasingly complex and challenging security threat landscape which requires a strong, coordinated and forward-looking response. Delegations have also raised questions on specific elements identified by the Commission.

The Presidency noted that Member States endorsed the following three guiding principles of the communication: firstly, a whole-of-society approach, emphasising the central role that security plays in our societies and involving different actors that can meaningfully contribute to the EU’s security beyond law enforcement. Secondly, the mainstreaming and integration of the consideration of security aspects across all EU legislation, policies and programmes; and thirdly, the need to increase investment in security by the EU, Member States and the private sector, thereby enhancing the EU’s strategic autonomy. In addition, Member States agreed with the Commission that internal security should be an integral part of the EU’s relations with third countries.

In order to better address security threats in the years to come, Member States broadly agreed with the way forward proposed by the Commission including an enhanced legal toolbox where relevant, deeper cooperation and increased information sharing, increased action at international level, combined with a call to "change the mindset" on internal security and foster a new EU security culture.

## **Areas which gathered general support**

The Presidency has noted general support for the comprehensive character of the communication and its focus on security and preparedness going hand-in-hand, addressing elements such as cyber threats, the weaponisation of migration, the resilience of critical infrastructure and the importance of implementing the ‘follow-the-money’ approach, further investing in asset recovery and confiscation and fostering public-private cooperation. The importance of boosting cooperation with third countries, in particular with Ukraine, the Western Balkans, Latin America and the Caribbeans as well as the Mediterranean region has also been emphasised.

Support was expressed for initiatives to tackle the persistent threat of terrorism, the surge in cybercrime, and the proliferation of emerging threats. Member States also welcomed the importance given to measures addressing security risks stemming from geopolitical instability, including firearms trafficking and the challenges linked to returning foreign terrorist fighters, but also the growing misuse of digital platforms for the spread of extremist and terrorist content, disinformation campaigns, and the use of online means to facilitate criminal activities.

The Presidency noted that Member States consider access to data for effective law enforcement as a top priority in line with the Council conclusions on access to data for effective law enforcement approved on 12 December 2024. They called on the Commission to adopt an ambitious approach in identifying and implementing solutions that would enable access to information for law enforcement authorities in individual cases, while safeguarding fundamental rights, including the presentation of a roadmap for the implementation of the recommendations issued by the High-Level Group in May 2024, and a legislative proposal on data retention.

The Presidency noted strong support for the continuation and enhancement of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) as the key EU framework for joint action against serious and organised crime. In particular, and in line with the relevant Council conclusions, Member States agreed on the need to increase EMPACT funding to effectively tackle the EU crime priorities under the EMPACT cycle 2026-2029.

The Presidency also noted support for the strengthening of the EU decentralised agencies and bodies operating in the area of justice and home affairs and reinforcing the synergies among them (notably, Europol, Eurojust, EPPO, Frontex, eu-LISA, CEPOL). In this respect, expectations are that when mandates of agencies and bodies are renewed, proposals would focus on their supporting role taking into account the needs, capacities and competences of the Member States. Regarding the proposed strengthening of Europol, delegations stated that operational actions must be carried out in agreement with the authorities of the Member States concerned, and that the application of coercive measures is the exclusive responsibility of national authorities.

There was broad agreement on continuing investing in the implementation of already adopted legislation and in the development of renewed EU strategies and actions plans (on terrorism and violent extremism, firearms trafficking, drug trafficking and trafficking in human beings). The Presidency also noted broad support to apply the Better Regulation principles when preparing legislation, including thorough impact assessments. Likewise, support was expressed for the focus on prevention to tackle the root causes of crime and radicalisation, and especially for the new action plan on the protection of children against crime.

Finally, Member States underlined the need to match the ambitions on internal security with flexible and adequate funding under the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) post-2027.

## Key areas that require further discussion

The Presidency noted that some elements included in the communication have raised questions or concerns among Member States and will require further reflection. Two of these key points are:

- Firstly, following up on the threat picture provided in the EU SOCTA 2025 and its reinforced focus on hybrid and cyber threats, while some Member States welcome the proposed approach to tackle emerging threats, others expressed doubts and asked for clarifications regarding the definition of hybrid threats, stating that the delineation of competences between the Union and the Member States should be respected, also in relation with the possible extension of the mandate of Europol in the future.
- Secondly, some Member States questioned the added value of the "regular EU internal security threat analyses" that the Commission offers to prepare, which would come in addition to the already existing threat assessments regularly produced in connection with counterterrorism and the fight against serious and organised crime.

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In conclusion, the Presidency considers that the comprehensive, policy cross-cutting nature of the Commission's communication "ProtectEU: a European Internal Security Strategy", its different strands, action plans and deliverables, together with the views expressed by Member States during the examination of this communication in Council preparatory bodies, will be key to effectively anticipate, prevent and respond to increasingly complex security threats. On that basis, the Presidency looks forward to further work on internal security in close cooperation with Member States, the European Parliament, the Commission and other stakeholders.