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Subject: Council Conclusions on the Protection of Public Spaces
– *Council Conclusions (7 June 2021)*

Delegations will find in the annex the Council Conclusions on the Protection of Public Spaces, approved by the Council (Justice and Home Affairs) at its 3799th meeting held on 7 June 2021.

Council Conclusions on the Protection of Public Spaces

1. NOTING that resilience must start with protecting European democratic values, institutions, and ways of life and has to include all of society,
2. UNDERLINING that the European Union aims to provide citizens with a high standard of living within an area of freedom, security and justice, by developing common action among the Member States in the field of police cooperation as laid down under Title V of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
3. HIGHLIGHTING that the recent terrorist attacks carried out in public spaces across the EU have underlined the need to strengthen efforts to enhance the protection of public spaces,
4. CONSIDERING the evolving threat landscape and the need to prevent and protect local communities against terrorist attacks that intend to cause instability and fear in our open societies,
5. UNDERLINING the fact that the rise of terrorism triggered by violent extremism, regardless of its ideological motivation is a growing concern regarding public spaces and notably places of worship,
6. ACKNOWLEDGING that public spaces are by their nature perceived as vulnerable to hostile and unlawful acts seeking to undermine the security and freedom of movement that shapes the Union and benefits its citizens,
7. REMARKING that due to the development of our digital economy, the widespread use of the internet, wireless networks and mobile phone communications, the protection of public spaces has also a cybersecurity dimension,

8. RECOGNISING that terrorism and violent extremism, due to their propaganda and coverage, be it in mainstream media or social media, amplify the feeling of insecurity and contribute to the dissemination of terrorist content online, undermining core values of the European Union's area of freedom, security and justice,
9. ACKNOWLEDGING that some public spaces and major events, e.g. places of worship, railway stations, public parks, business areas, tourist sites, universities and schools, major sports and cultural events, mass gatherings and demonstrations demand adequate protection, due to their nature, vulnerability and social significance and the potential threat and impact of an attack,
10. RECALLING that some of the modi operandi of the terrorist attacks perpetrated in Europe and in other international contexts include not only the use of firearms and explosives, but also easily available low-tech weapons such as bladed weapons and vehicles, particularly rental or stolen vehicles, in order to directly inflict damage and endanger the life of citizens,
11. NOTING that the protection of public spaces should be based on a holistic and horizontal approach, connecting EU and relevant national and local strategies, as well as public-private partnerships,
12. WELCOMING the Commission's EU Counter-Terrorism Agenda adopted on 9 December 2020, which identifies key actions that are ongoing or to be undertaken at EU level with regard to enhancing the protection of public spaces,
13. CONSIDERING that law enforcement agencies play a fundamental role in the prevention of terrorist attacks, as well as in the security and protection of public spaces, namely through cooperation and partnerships with other relevant stakeholders such as local municipalities, universities, private operators and local communities,
14. UNDERLINING the importance of cross-border cooperation and coordination in both enhancing the capacity of law enforcement and identifying good practices that operators of public spaces can implement, such as security measures taken during major sports events, in public transport facilities, in public areas of international airports and at tourist sites,

15. RECOGNISING the importance of new technologies in protecting public spaces, namely with regard to threat detection and analysis of large data sets while guaranteeing citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms.

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16. ENCOURAGES the COMMISSION to continue the efforts undertaken in launching and funding initiatives, such as the EU Forum for the Protection of Public Spaces, training programmes and projects under the Internal Security Fund and Horizon Europe, and to continue implementing programmes based on volunteer peer expert review, and INVITES the COMMISSION to explore further opportunities to support projects and initiatives to enhance the protection of public spaces and community resilience, namely through the actions put forward in the 2017 Action Plan to Support the Protection of Public Spaces and the priorities identified in the 2020 EU Counter-Terrorism Agenda,
17. UNDERLINES the importance of resilience, developing protective solutions and reinforcing cooperation and assistance among law enforcement agencies of the MEMBER STATES, within the applicable legal framework, with the support of EUROPOL and the ATLAS network in responding to terrorist attacks and complex emergencies, with a view of dealing with crisis situations, by sharing equipment, technology, special police units, as well as providing technical support and expertise. In line with this goal, SUGGESTS the strengthening of the capacity of first responders to detect suspicious behaviours and objects when dealing with crisis situations,
18. ENCOURAGES MEMBER STATES to support the development and implementation of security-by-design concepts in public spaces,
19. RECOMMENDS that CEPOL and law enforcement networks, notably those involved in the EU practitioners' forum on the protection of public spaces (EUCPN, ATLAS, AIRPOL, RAILPOL, AQUAPOL, ENLETS, EU High Risk Security Network), take into account the strategic objectives related to the protection of public spaces in their training and work programmes in order to enhance coherence and synergies,

20. EMPHASISES the importance of research and development at MEMBER STATES and EU levels, including future initiatives of the EU Innovation Hub for Internal security to develop tools for the protection of public spaces.
21. URGES EUROPOL, in line with its legal mandate and considering the priority setting mechanisms between MEMBER STATES and the Innovation Lab, to continue exploring digital technologies and countermeasures to put in place against terrorist attacks in public spaces, for the benefit of MEMBER STATES and all European citizens. The focus of this research could be directed at developing explosives detection techniques, protection against unmanned aerial vehicles, serious cybercrime and artificial intelligence in the processing of large data sets, and in full compliance with the respective data protection regulations and standards. In addition to fast and useful operational information sharing with MEMBER STATES, the results should be continuously shared in the form of annual reports and by implementation of manuals on the protection of public spaces with updated information and recommendations to MEMBER STATES' law enforcement agencies,
22. RECOMMENDS that EUROPOL, ENISA, EU-LISA, and other relevant EU actors, within their respective mandates, provide support to MEMBER STATES with regard to the prevention of serious cybercrimes and sabotage of public lighting systems, mobile communications, video surveillance systems in public and other systems that may impact on the security of public spaces,
23. EMPHASISES the importance of research and development at the EUROPOL Innovation Lab and other EU agencies to develop protection and countermeasures against unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and their combined use with firearms and explosives, and INVITES MEMBER STATES to support the Commission's European Programme for counter-UAS testing and sharing good practices,

24. RECOMMENDS that CEPOL continue supporting EU law enforcement training programmes on security and protection of public spaces and soft targets, protection of critical infrastructures, major event security, behaviour detection, insider threats, CBRN/explosives detection, countermeasures and protection against UAV and active shooters,
25. STRESSES the need for MEMBER STATES to work towards, and where feasible, implement and/or enhance national as well as regional and local strategies for increased resilience of local communities and public spaces,
26. ENCOURAGES MEMBER STATES to develop, engage and actively participate in projects concerning the protection of public spaces and crowded places, creating synergies among international and national stakeholders, such as regional/local authorities, law enforcement agencies, private security firms, private businesses and others, with the aim of cooperating and sharing knowledge that contributes to reducing risks and improving the use of smart and safe technologies to protect public spaces,
27. EMPHASISES the importance of secure operational and EU interoperable communication for law enforcement agencies and other security practitioners to be able to properly protect and respond in case of cross-border cooperation in the area of public spaces and major events, and INVITES MEMBER STATES to further support EU initiatives aiming at the improvement of existing systems and EU-wide interoperable communication systems for public security, notably the Horizon 2020 BroadWay project,
28. RECOMMENDS that MEMBER STATES examine their national legal frameworks with a view to restricting-non-legitimate carrying of bladed weapons in public spaces and major events, as well as consider developing specific protection measures with regard to places of worship, and INVITES the COMMISSION to examine existing options and potential future initiatives to further enhance protection at EU level,

29. ENCOURAGES MEMBER STATES to continue studying and analysing security guidance and tools for rental vehicle operators to prevent and mitigate the risk of vehicle attacks in public spaces and INVITES the COMMISSION to explore options for preventing and mitigating the impact of vehicle attacks at the EU level,
30. INVITES MEMBER STATES to screen their national legislation and local regulation with a view to ensuring that it contains clear provisions with regards to administrative requirements and responsibilities for those who plan and manage the security of public spaces, and NOTES the aim of the COMMISSION to explore options for setting minimum obligations for operators of public spaces.
31. ADVISES MEMBER STATES to continue to plan and organise practical exercises and joint training between local authorities, law enforcement, civil protection, medical emergency, private businesses, private security firms and other stakeholders in order to improve the preparedness and response of law enforcement and the first response community,
32. EMPHASISES that MEMBER STATES should provide the appropriate tools including existing EU guidance for local authorities to conduct a solid risk and vulnerability assessment, as well as guidance on protective measures, and EU networks and national fora for sharing of knowledge and best practices amongst those authorities,
33. CALLS ON MEMBER STATES to raise awareness among cities about existing EU initiatives and fora which facilitate the sharing of good practices and support projects led by local level, and INVITES the COMMISSION to launch the EU Pledge on Urban Security and Resilience announced in the 2020 EU Counter-Terrorism Agenda,
34. ENCOURAGES MEMBER STATES to incorporate crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) techniques at local level and through public-private partnerships and projects, as a mechanism for the protection of public spaces, namely to prevent vehicle ramming, explosions, CBRN, improvised incendiary devices, active shooters and other modi operandi in spaces such as railway and underground railway stations, public areas of international airports, places of worship, business areas, tourist attractions (e.g. monuments and museums), universities and schools and others which the risk assessment may advise.