



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

GENERAL SECRETARIAT

Brussels, 17 October 2013

CM 4763/13

LIMITE

**ENFOPOL
COTER**

COMMUNICATION

REQUEST FOR CONTRIBUTION

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Workstream on foreign fighters - Questionnaire

The Council on 7 June 2013 endorsed the proposal by the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator to invite TWP and COTER to establish a workstream on foreign fighters to coordinate future activities. TWP and COTER had a discussion on this issue at the meeting on 17 July 2013. On 23 July the Presidency distributed a questionnaire (DS 1585/13) seeking the views of Member States regarding the establishment of such a workstream. 15 Member States replied to the questionnaire.

The large majority of Member States supported the CTC proposal to establish workstreams on foreign fighters. They suggested a number of important aspects that could be examined, which could be divided into three major areas of work: departure, travel and return. For all areas, Member States proposed to explore options for action under the existing legal framework and to intensify cooperation with key third countries. Among the possible actions to be carried out Member States mentioned experts meetings and seminars and exchanges of good practices, that could possibly be included into a handbook.

The topics suggested under the area "departure" include an analysis of the process that brings an individual to become a foreign fighter, as well as an analysis of the options for preventing travel abroad (identifying the intention to travel to become a foreign fighter; understanding motivating factors; understanding and harnessing the potential impact of families, communities and the media on those planning to depart; prevention of radicalisation online, etc.).

The issues to be examined under the area "travel" included the identification and analysis of itineraries and routes used by foreign fighters, as well as options for preventing intended foreign fighters from reaching their destination (effective use of travel information, options for developing cooperation with third countries, etc.).

Activity under the area "return" could include an analysis of the means to decrease the threat arising from returning foreign fighters (assessing and reducing the threat from returnees; evidence-gathering with a view to criminal proceedings for participation in military actions or terrorist camps, re-integration of and psychological assistance for returnees).

The UK volunteered to lead work in the area on "Tailoring Communication". The UK is keen to share with other Member States its practical experience gained from the work carried out to understand community sentiment and tailoring communications accordingly. The UK would also make contacts available to advise on aspects of the implementation of such work.

Following a discussion at the TWP on 9 October, FR expressed its interest in leading work to explore the possible use of SIS to counter the phenomenon of foreign fighters. In the discussion Member States highlighted the need to discuss the shortcomings of alerts, to increase the use of the system, to improve the competence of the staff/end users, to ensure better performance on discreet or specific checks, to make sure that authorities find it easier and safer to enter alerts under Article 36(3). In addition, it was suggested that Member States establish protocols of cooperation between national Sirene offices and national authorities. All competent authorities should receive timely information about foreign fighters and exchange of information should be improved. Member States willing to take part in the strands led by UK or FR are requested to inform the delegations concerned by contacting the TWP delegates and the Council Secretariat (twg@consilium.europa.eu).

The Presidency will continue consultations with delegations in order to further identify possible topics in the workstream as well as possible leaders. In order to facilitate the reflection, the Presidency would like to present a questionnaire to the Member States. The Presidency believes that the answers to the questionnaire could assist the allocation of resources to the areas of the workstream on foreign fighters where they are needed the most. The results could also serve as an input to the report of the CTC to the Council in December.

The questions are the following:

- a) How many individuals with links to your country have travelled to Syria? How many remain in Syria, have been killed, have returned?
- b) What steps are you taking to prevent or dissuade individuals from travelling to Syria?
- c) What actions are you taking to disrupt travel to Syria?
- d) What motivating factors have you identified for those travelling, what percentage of those travelling would you place by each motivation?
- e) How are you handling returnees?
- f) What difficulties/challenges hinder your response capability? For example, Schengen and free movement rules on mobility?
- g) Are you planning any policy or legislative changes in respect of your capabilities?
- h) How is the conflict in Syria perceived in public opinion and amongst Muslim communities?

The Presidency would appreciate the answers as well as any additional information sent by email to twg@consilium.europa.eu or twg@vsd.lt prior to 31 October 2013