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The story so far...

Proposed changes to EU rules on firearms could impact on UK shooters. Here's how BASC has been campaigning on your behalf...

As a result of the January 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, Charlie Hebdo, French police, the Jewish community and the European Agenda for Security called on the EU Commission to review the existing legislation on firearms. The EU Council reiterated this request for a revision at the beginning of 2016 suggesting specific modifications; for example; "the sharing of information on firearms, reinforcing their traceability, to standardise marking and to take into account the illegal trafficking through the internet and dark net."

On Friday 13 November, terrorists attacked Paris for a second time and the Commission considerably widened their scope for amendment of the Directive. Their justification came from issues identified in a recent (but unpublished) report of the working of the 1991 firearms Directive (as amended in 2008). The report was compiled prior to the November attacks. The proposals were quickly seen as inadequate to prevent terrorism and the trafficking of illegal firearms.

On 9 November 2015, BASC attended the newly-formed Firearms Experts Group of the European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation (FACE) to plan a united way forward. BASC, their partners in FACE and the British Shooting Sports Council (BSSC) set to work immediately, especially in response to the following proposals:

- Introduction of a five-year ceiling to certificate life.
- Introduction of a 'standard medical test' for applicants.
- Regulating blank-firing and other replicas.
- Banning the ownership of EU category-A firearms (such as machine guns) even when deactivated and the licensing of other category deactivated firearms.
- Tightening of the distance sales for firearms dealers.
- A proposed ban on "semi-automatic firearms for civilian use which resemble weapons with automatic mechanisms".
- Introduction of stricter marking and tracing rules.

As soon as BASC heard of the Commission's new proposals, we made immediate contact with the Home Office, NI Department of Justice and sister organisations such as the BSSC and the FACE Firearms Experts' Group. A working party was formed at Marford Mill to formulate a list of unintended consequences and to develop a response to the Commission proposals, all of which have subsequently been shared with the Home Office and FACE. A number of stakeholder meetings have also taken place at the invitation of the Home Office and MEPs.

FACE later drafted its response and met with the Commission on two occasions. Their response was later brought under

the banner of the European Shooting Sports' Federation which represents the widest range of trade and sporting shooting stakeholders across the EU.

In December, the EU's Internal Markets and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO) – chaired by Vicky Ford MEP – challenged the Commission proposals as disproportionate and lacking evidence. A Commission working party examined the Firearms Directive proposals after a request from the IMCO Committee. BASC briefed the Home Office civil servants in attendance.

Luckily for shooters, Vicky Ford MEP volunteered to be rapporteur for the directive on behalf of the EU Parliament. Ms Ford is a patron of the countryside and sympathetic to shooting sports. BASC met and briefed Ms Ford regarding unintended consequences and views on better regulation.

Lobbying activity has included BASC raising concerns with the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary, and MPs and Lords have been briefed at every opportunity. We also met with Home Office Minister, the Rt Hon Mike Penning MP, to discuss BASC's medical involvement model and ten-year certificates, both issues of which he is supportive.

BASC believes we have the right person in Ms Ford to lead the Directive amendments to a sensible conclusion and with minimal unintended consequences. The timetable for voting is set for this summer, with various processes between now and then. It isn't over yet, though, and BASC will continue to engage proactively in the process to prevent any unintended consequences of changes to the Directive.

For more information on how to lobby MEPs on firearms proposals please follow the link <http://goo.gl/KHKvz2>.