

**TERRORISM IS BORDERLESS;  
INTELLIGENCE HAS TO BE BORDERLESS**

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Unfortunately, the nature of terrorism which has been an unfortunate part of our lives has fundamentally changed. The EU has to find ways to respond. A new paper, *Towards a 'Security Union': Bolstering the EU's Counter-Terrorism Response*, published on April 20, 2016 by the European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC), asked whether it was time for the EU to have its own intelligence agency.

The main reason for the lack of progress is that the initiative would require political will and a major change of mind-set by all 28 EU member states to share intelligence and establish a counterterrorism network. As it is, the majority of EU interior ministers loath the idea of sharing information, even though no one country and its security agencies can cope with or assess the threats and possible attacks European citizens face. But recent developments in Syrian front of Aleppo, in Iraqi front of Mosul and in Sirte Libya means perhaps that the European Union which is confronted with the phenomenon of fighters leaving Europe to undertake a holy war (jihad) in such places would be under more threats. It is believed that between 3,500 and 5,000 Union citizens have left their country to become foreign fighters since the start of the war and violence in Syria, Iraq and Libya. They can pose a serious threat to security on their return to Europe.

Essentially, it is going to require a special pooling of sovereignty and of information and expertise if European governments want to enhance not only the security of their citizens but also essential infrastructure facilities such as energy, transportation networks, and utilities.

The EU already has a plethora of security agencies ranging from individual national police forces and judicial authorities to the EU law enforcement agency Europol does not have any 'executive policing power', but is just supporting the police in the

individual member states, the judicial cooperation agency [Eurojust](#), the [EU Intelligence Analysis Center INTCEN](#) the most important agency is the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (IntCen). This agency can be seen as the European hub of intelligence sharing. The mission of IntCen is to provide intelligence analyses, and the border management agency [Frontex](#) and the recently established European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC), which aims to boost cooperation among European member states in their fight against terrorist threats in Europe.

Clearly, we can see that the EU is not lacking in agencies that are providing the necessary information to ensure its security. But still, all of these agencies do not resemble the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the United States. As mentioned above. The FBI has an executive policing power and has over 36000 employees. Many of them are stationed in branch offices throughout the US, but the FBI also has staff overseas in order to address terrorism at its roots.

The FBI is also empowered to carry out independent criminal investigations in the field, conduct searches, or make arrests. EU agencies currently do not have access to these methods. Importantly, one thing we need to keep into account is that the EU is not equal to a state. Therefore, EU intelligence should not be deemed unsuccessful because it does not replicate or mirror a national system. However, there are several roadblocks that the EU needs to overcome if it wants to become more effective or resemble the FBI.

The problem with the EU agencies is that they are either underfunded or constructed in a way that does not facilitate genuine sharing of intelligence and information. Also, in the member states there is competition between the security and intelligence agencies rather than the instinct to share. The Belgian authorities admitted as much after the [March 22 suicide bomb attacks in Brussels](#) that killed 32 victims plus the three terrorists.

It may come as no surprise, then, that two of the men who carried out attacks in Brussels, the brothers Khalid and Brahim el-Bakraoui, were [known to police and had criminal records](#). What's slightly more disconcerting is the possible identity of the third attacker— Najim Laachraoui—who was earlier named as a [wanted accomplice of Salah Abdeslam](#) whose DNA had been discovered in the flat the Paris attackers stayed in.

Another example is that of Mehdi Nemmouche, who murdered tourists at the Brussels Jewish museum in 2014. An associate of Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the now-dead leader of the Paris attacks, Nemmouche was known by French authorities as a serious criminal who had been in Syria and returned to Europe, but this information was not passed on to other nations.

As the EPSC points out, the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington forced the United States to bring all the security services under the roof of a new Department of

Homeland Security. The EPSC report states there is no comparison between Europe and the United States. But the authors argue that “the larger lesson of better integrating and coordinating across various policy fields that pertain to security does appear to be necessary in order to prevent future attacks.” That’s some understatement.

The EPSC proposes that the EU should consolidate “a European multi-level counter-terrorism network.” Even though national security remains the sole responsibility of each member state, there is plenty of scope in the EU treaties for cross-border cooperation. In practice, this cooperation could be anchored on a data- and information-sharing arrangement. The [Schengen Information System](#) was designed for this purpose in the EU’s passport-free Schengen Area but was never developed in any systematic or sustained way.

The EPSC rightly draws on the experience of Estonia, which has integrated its databases, to show how a Single European Identity Management System could work. In principle, as the EPSC points out, such an arrangement would avoid the multiple collection, registration, and storage of personal data. Another proposal would be the creation of a European CIA to pool data, security experts say that this would run up against real, and in some cases legitimate, sensitivities on the part of the agencies that gleaned the information in the first place.

Critics of these ideas would justifiably question how individual data would be kept safe and private, who would have access to the system, and which authority would be accountable for it. These are important issues, but so is security to protect freedom.

A new European Agenda on Security and Liberty could instead be adopted by paying due regard to the lessons learned from previous EU policy experiences on counterterrorism where rapid and emergence led policy responses have in the past taken precedence over quality and democratically (rule of law) accountable decision making.

We need tools to work with greater agility and speed against potential terrorists. Intelligence agencies must be given greater resources to identify and interpret the flood of data as quickly and efficiently as they can. This necessarily involves an element of profiling, building on an analysis of those most likely to be radicalized.

**Read more on:**

<http://www.rieas.gr/research-areas/editorial/2059-the-role-of-an-intelligence-service-within-the-european-union-mechanism>

**“The Role of an Intelligence Service within the European Union Mechanism”**

*by John M. Nomikos (RIEAS Director) published in RIEAS web site on 17 November 2013*