FIREARMS UNITED
WORLDWIDE CONFEDERATION OF GUN OWNERS

MAY 30TH, 2016

TIME FOR ACTION AGAIN!

June will be a decisive month as decisions will be taken at various levels on the EU Commission's proposal to ban most categories of firearms. Currently there are two institutions that are working on the proposal.

The first is the European Parliament where the LIBE vote of 9th May dealt a surprising blow to the Commission's plans and where the all-important IMCO vote on the 286 amendments proposed by MEPs has been postponed to 10th June. The main rapporteur, British MEP Vicky Ford, has so far been significantly reasonable in her approach. In her words, the LIBE ruling should be "*a starting point for IMCO's deliberation*".

The other institution is the Working Party for General Matters, Including evaluation (GENVAL) which is tasked with providing an opinion to the Council concerning the proposed restrictive changes to the European Firearms Directive. The Council of Ministers shall consider that opinion when it eventually rules on the European Parliament's vote.

The postponement of the IMCO vote could have both good and bad repercussions for our community. The current Dutch Presidency, which has so far supported the European Commission's gun ban proposal, will come to an end at the end of June to be replaced by the Slovak Presidency and, six months later, by the Maltese Presidency. This is good news for us as both countries back reasonable firearms legislation which respects law-abiding firearm owners and users.

On the other hand, should the result of the "Brexit" referendum on 24 June result in a victory for the "Out" campaign, the Commission might possibly take advantage of the situation and influence parliament to replace Vicky Ford with an anti-gun MEP as Rapporteur such as Sergio Cofferati (S&D) or Pascal Durand (Greens).

On May 24th, the European Commission's Legal Affairs Committee (JURI) examined Rapporteur Gilles Lebreton's dossier according to which the Commission proposal violates the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and breaks the REFIT rules by missing out on a mandatory impact assessment.

Unfortunately, said dossier was rejected simply because Mr. Lebreton is part of the ENF group – which the major Parties and most of the European institutions (including the European Commission) label to as "far right" and intend to marginalize as much as possible, regardless of the fact that the ENF group represents hundreds of thousands of voters all throughout the EU.

SO, CAN WE REST ON OUR LAURELS? *NO, WE CAN'T!*

Over the past days it has become increasingly clear that the Dutch Presidency is heavily compromised as a result of the Commission's pressure and that it is doing its utmost to obtain an anti-gun ruling in GENVAL before the Slovaks step in and puts an end to the Commission's plan.

The final draft of the latest GENVAL Report that was leaked by a Swedish magazine, indicates that although it is marginally better than the previous versions, it is still an extremely restrictive and punitive approach towards law-abiding firearm owners:

- All detachable magazines holding more than 11 rounds for long guns (rifles, carbines, shotguns) and more than 21 rounds for handguns, would be banned.

- Semi-automatic firearms capable to accept those "High-Capacity" magazines would be banned.

- Firearms using internal box or tube magazines capable to hold more than 11 rounds (for rifles, carbines, shotguns) or 21 rounds (for pistols) may also be banned or restricted.

- All semi-automatic firearms that can be shortened to less than 60 centimeters in length by the use of a collapsing, telescoping, folding or easily removable buttstock should be banned.

- "Demilitarized" guns – those semi-automatic, civilian-grade guns converted after full-automatic military firearms – would be banned even if the modification has been put in place in such a way that would make re-conversion to select-fire/full-automatic capabilities impossible.

- While partial exceptions to those bans could be granted to sport shooters, only national shooting federations recognized by the ISSF (International Sport Shooting Federation) would have the authority to decide what a "Sporting firearm" is and what is not. This means that all guns that are not conceived for academic or Olympic shooting competitions – including IPSC/IDPA/3-Gun firearms – would not qualify for the exemption. Moreover, sport shooters would only be granted a permit for such firearms if they have been active shooters during the preceding twelve months.

- Deactivated firearms and alarm guns should be registered.

- Reproductions of antique firearms would no longer be outside the scope of the Directive.

- Licenses allowing ownership of semi-automatic firearms could be limited in duration – possibly to as shortly as three years.

- A grandfathering clause would allow current owners to retain those firearms, but no new ones could be acquired by anybody and existing ones could not be transferred for any reason – including inheritance: upon owner's death, those guns should thus be confiscated and destroyed without compensation.

- The only improvement relates to Collectors who according to this latest draft may be permitted by Member States to acquire and keep "Category A" firearms and associated artefacts, while historic firearms may be exempted from retro-marking.

The above "highlights" are eerily similar to some passages of the UN model gun law. It just goes to show how tightly knit is the international anti-gun lobby.

It is not expected that if GENVAL approves this final draft opinion and introduces it to the Council, this could be an influence on the European Parliament's vote (although there is always a risk).
But should IMCO and the EP plenary vote a resolution that they consider "too pro-gun" for their taste, the Council could ***reject it***, forcing the entire process to more readings and possibly to the Conciliation Committee where ***a compromise could be reached over our heads***.

Just as bleak is the news that ***the current blocking minority at GENVAL may be wavering and possibly unable to survive a vote!***

THUS IT'S TIME FOR ACTION AGAIN!

It is of paramount importance that all firearm owners in all Member States urgently contact their Governments and ***remind them what European citizens think of the Commission's prohibitionist proposals.***

Do not hesitate to contact your government authorities as well those of the other Member States. Our objective is to show them that ***they are now dealing with a united front of legal firearm owners and users*** and that the "*Divide et Impera*" strategy will no longer work against us.

Specific attention should be focused on urging the ***Polish and Finnish delegations to GENVAL to stand their ground***, and on exerting further pressure on the governments of ***Belgium, Hungary, Romania and Sweden,*** which could all play a decisive role.

The associations that are part of the FIREARMS UNITED network are working hard, but ***the continuous attention and pressure of European Citizens is necessary now more than ever***.

Thus let us set to work and contact the representatives of all governments of the twenty-eight Member States, including those that are known to be supportive of the ban proposals, and to remind them that ***important elections are due soon in many Countries***.

Recently, a so-called "Eurosceptic" candidate for the Austrian Presidency lost the race by a hair's breadth, and the European Commission's hysterical reaction and threats of anti-democratic measures betrayed its fears.
Once again, it is refusing to face the fact that it is precisely its arrogant behavior which is damaging the EU's credibility and popularity among its citizens.

If the European Union's institutions continue to refuse the citizens' demand for a sensible approach, then it is up to us to bring the matter to the attention of twenty-eight national governments: ***they shall face consequences if they support the Commission's attack on law-abiding firearms owners.***

The small victories that we attained so far were all ***thanks to your support***.
Our common stand has so far been so compact and strong that it prompted several members of European institutions such as the EESC and the Commission itself to declare that there is a "*dangerous surge of a gun lobby in Europe*"!
In reality our common front would not have seen the light of day had we been treated with more respect.
Now we are here to stay – united, determined and stronger than ever.

Let us keep up the pressure right to the end of the process. You can click this link to download a list of the national government offices to contact for all the twenty-eight Member States.

According to our sources, we have a very tight window for action, possibly less than a week, so it is absolutely essential that you mobilize in a matter of hours.

ACT TOGETHER, FEEL FREE AND MAKE CHANGES