



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 7.3.2016
C(2016) 1270 final*

Dear Chair,

The Commission would like to thank the Eduskunta for its Opinion on the Commission proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 91/477/EEC on control of the acquisition and possession of weapons {COM(2015) 750 final}.

As the Eduskunta observes in its Opinion, the primary objective of the Commission proposal is to improve internal security in Europe notably in light of recent terrorist attacks. However, the question of security is not limited to terrorism. The new legislation should help to take away from the legal market military grade weapons that could be reactivated as well as some of the most dangerous categories of semi-automatic weapons, notably those which can easily be converted into fully-automatic weapons. Over the last decade, it is estimated that 10 000 homicides have been committed in Europe with firearms. In certain Member States, a majority of homicides have been committed with legal firearms. Moreover, there are nearly half a million firearms inside the EU which have been registered as lost or stolen from the mid-1990s to 2014, and can be used by criminal organisations.

At the same time, the Commission recognises that several million EU citizens possess firearms whether for hunting, sport shooting or collecting without posing any threat to security. As such the Commission is conscious of the need to strike the right balance between the legitimate interests of hunters or sports shooters and the security of EU citizens.

It should be underlined that the objective of the proposal is to regulate the civilian use of firearms and that the proposal is not meant to interfere with matters of national defence. The proposed Directive would not apply to firearms belonging to the Finnish army and handed over to reservists during training exercises. Concerning the specific question of government-supervised and authorised organisations being allowed to acquire and possess A-class firearms for purposes related to national defence, the Commission is willing to engage with the Finnish government to clarify this matter.

*Ms Anne-Mari VIROLAINEN
Chair of the Grand Committee
Suomen Eduskunta
FI - 00102 HELSINKI*

*cc. Ms Maria LOHELA
Speaker of the Eduskunta
Suomen Eduskunta
FI – 00102 HELSINKI*

The Commission shares the concern of the Eduskunta that proper emphasis should also be put on the illegal possession of firearms and their trafficking. It is precisely for these reasons that the Commission proposes to include brokers within the scope of the revised directive and announced on 2 December 2015 an action plan against the illegal trafficking of weapons and explosives.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Eduskunta and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Elżbieta Bienkowska
Member of the Commission*