

Gun control: MEPs debate changes to firearms proposal to make it fit for purpose

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Amendments tabled by Parliament's lead MEP to a Commission proposal to revise the EU firearms directive were discussed in the Internal Market Committee on Wednesday. Concern to close loopholes in European gun laws and strike a balance between the right to own certain types of firearms and appropriate risk controls shaped the changes tabled by committee chair and rapporteur on this file, Vicky Ford (ECR, UK).

Most MEPs welcomed Mrs Ford's amendments, considering her draft report an excellent basis for the committee's work on revising the EU firearms directive. Stronger deactivation standards, classifying weapons, defining essential components, marking and traceability of firearms, medical tests, time limits for licences, safe storage, online sales and information sharing were among the issues addressed during the debate.

In her [86 amendments](#), Mrs Ford seeks, *inter alia*, to:

- introduce clearer rules on blankfiring weapons so that any firearm which has been converted to firing blanks should continue to be covered by European laws
- clarify that a firearm should only be considered deactivated if the process is truly irreversible and the weapon can never be used again, as well as many other amendments on deactivation to address significant problems with the implementing regulation on deactivation, which came into force on 8 April. "These have implications for public security and is also causing great confusion for many law abiding citizens who want to comply with the law but find it impossible to do so", says Ms Ford
- reword the Commission's proposal to ban semi-automatic firearms that resemble automatic firearms since this has been tried by many member states and has been found to be legally impractical
- define authorisations for firearms used for historical purposes more strictly. These should be granted only if security measures are in place and on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of each member state, and to maintain a provision for special cases in which member states may authorise certain persons to hold otherwise prohibited firearms
- introduce secure storage requirements, which could include on-site checks
- establish an effective "monitoring system" for the acquisition and possession of firearms, including "medical checks, which may be on a continuous or periodic basis", but suggesting that member states should be responsible for deciding how this could be best achieved in their own countries
- improve information sharing among EU member states, including when an authorisation has been refused
- ensure that online sales of firearms, parts and ammunition is only permitted provided that the actual handover takes place "face-to-face", for instance, at a dealer's premises, a local police station or another body authorised under national law.

Other MEPs have until 28 April to table their own amendments to the legislative proposal. A vote in the committee is due to take place at the end of June.

Press release

Further information

- Video extracts from the debate: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/Page.aspx?id=33&menu=ebs>
- Video recording of the debate (click on 20.04.2016): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/committees/?legislature=8&start-date=01-07-2014&end-date=20-04-2016&committee=IMCO>
- Press release - Firearms proposal: impact on law-abiding citizens dominates EP committee debate (EP Press Service, 23.02.2016): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20160222IPR15334/Firearms-proposal-impact-on-law-abiding-citizens-dominates-EP-committee-debate>
- Subject file, with links to the procedure, timetable and other documents : <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/imco/subject-files.html?id=20160209CDT00521>
- EP Research Service - In-depth Analysis : http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2016/573289/EPRS_IDA%282016%29573289_EN.pdf
- Experts speak out on new gun control rules : <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20160314STO19202/Crime-prevention-experts-speak-out-on-new-gun-control-rules>
- Videos and photos on firearms for audiovisual media: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/Page.aspx?id=2714>

Contact

Isabel Teixeira NADKARNI

BXL: (+32) 2 28 32198

STR: (+33) 3 881 76758

PORT: (+32) 498 98 33 36

EMAIL: imco-press@europarl.europa.eu

TWITTER: EP_SingleMarket