



***Report about the AECAC
activity in 2014***

March 2015



AECAC activities in 2013

1. The last AECAC **GENERAL ASSEMBLY** was held in Nuremberg on **March 2014**.

2. SPONSORS.

During 2014 AECAC was sponsored by **NATURABUY (www.naturabuy.fr)**. The President has thanked this company for its support.

We need a new Sponsor for 2015 – 2016. All partners are kindly invited to propose the sponsorship to other companies.

3. FULFILMENT OF TAX OBLIGATIONS before the Belgian authorities.

We should thank the Belgian association which representative, **Mr. Nico Demeyere** (Belgian Lawyer), has prepared and fulfilled all tax declarations before the Belgian authorities without any charge.

It is necessary to remind once again the inputs system: the partners do not pay fees but make **voluntary contributions** depending on the Association's needs. Such payments are not obligatory, nor regular, but agreed yearly.

4. AECAC PROMOTION

Web page: Our web page www.aecac.eu is a very efficient tool to promote AECAC and includes our most important position papers.

5. EUROPEAN FIREARMS DIRECTIVE

The Firearms Directive (Directive **91/477/EEC** on control of the acquisition and possession of weapons) was amended by Directive **2008/51/CE**.

For the acquisition and possession of firearms, EU countries must impose the requirements laid down in the Directive into their laws. They are also entitled to adopt more stringent measures than those provided for by the Directive.

The amending Directive 2008/51/EC reinforced the security aspects of the Directive, allowing a partial alignment with the UN Firearms Protocol against transnational organised crime. It recommends the complete marking of firearms, as well as computerised record-keeping systems for firearms, for a minimum of 20 years.

The Commission has adopted different reports on the implementation of this Directive:

- **Report on implementation** (2000) of the Firearms Directive, which sets out guidelines for future developments.



- **Report on replica firearms** (2010) on the placing on the market of replica firearms, examines the possibility and desirability to include replica firearms within the scope of this Directive. The Commission concluded that the assimilation of replicas to real firearms was not always practicable

- **Report on classification of firearms** (2012) evaluates possible changes to the classification system of weapons used by civilians. It recalls that the directive provides for minimum harmonisation, which also allows EU countries to adopt stricter measures as long, as they comply with the rules of the Treaty, in particular the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity. Does not advocate for a reduction of the number of categories.

- **Evaluation document.** (December 2014) (Find attached as [Annex I](#) executive summary). Evaluation Study commissioned by the DG Growth with the aim of assessing the implementation of the Directive in the different Member States. Aims to provide the necessary input to support the report that the Commission shall submit by July 2015 to the Parliament and de Council (according to the Directive's last amendment) about the situation resulting from its application, accompanied, if appropriated by amendment proposals. The evaluation report points several issues that might need to be faced, from which we stress three main concerns:
 - ✓ Alarm weapons
 - ✓ Deactivation
 - ✓ Marking of fundamental components

Next steps.

- In **July 2015** the Commission shall submit a **report** to the European Parliament and the Council which will comprise an overview of the **Directive's implementation**. This may be accompanied by specific amending or even other legislative proposals.
- The Commission might also support non legislative measures being implemented against the illegal trafficking and use of firearms, whether at inter-governmental or EU level.

AECAC keeps the pressure on all forums to strongly oppose against an eventual reopening of the Firearms Directive. See **internal** (please for internal use only) report attached as [Annex II](#) and AECAC's position paper for 2015 attached as [Annex III](#).

6. EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SUSTAINABLE HUNTING INTERGROUPE

European Parliament Intergroups gather MEPs from different Political Groups and stakeholders, sharing a common interest in a particular subject. The "Sustainable Hunting" Intergroup, created in 1985, is one of the oldest and most active in the EP. The Intergroup bears now the official name "**Biodiversity, Hunting & Countryside**", which reflects better its conservation goals and the fact that most of its Members are not hunters.

FACE hosts the Secretariat of this Intergroup and has organized and leaded very efficiently this tool.

Currently there are **107 MEP** who have joined the group.

Objectives



- PROMOTE the role of hunting and other forms of sustainable use of wild species contributing to biodiversity enhancement and rural development
- DISCUSS current issues related to wildlife management & rural development on the agenda of the European Parliament (EP)
- SECURE the interests of 7 million hunters, as well as land-managers & other countryside stakeholders, thereby contributing to the strengthening of the democratic legitimacy of the EP.
- INITIATE helpful discussions in the EP on national/regional issues relating to biodiversity & the countryside, and enable a fruitful exchange of experience
- REAFFIRM the importance of hunting as an activity with significant socio-economic impact in the EU (total turnover 8 billion/annum & 120,000 full-time jobs)
- ENSURE access to reliable databases on wildlife management and conservation & countryside activities.

Activities

The Intergroup deals with issues for which the EP is competent and which relate to hunting, wildlife management, angling, forestry, agriculture, biodiversity and nature conservation, taking into account public and wildlife health and welfare aspects. Also addressed on a regular basis are cross cutting issues which have an impact on socio economic activities in rural areas.

Meetings take place during Plenary Sessions of the EP in Strasbourg and Brussels. The Intergroup may, by consensus, decide to adopt a position, statement, declaration, resolution or recommendation or to take any other initiative that seems appropriate.

Organisation

The Intergroup is composed of MEPs promoting wildlife conservation, sustainable hunting & fishing, sustainable management of the countryside and cultural heritage.

The diversity of the Intergroup membership demonstrates the importance of these topics for a large range of Member States, political parties and citizens.

Firearms Directive

Thanks to our collaboration with **FACE (Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the E.U.)** AECAC was invited as stakeholder to the last meeting of the Hunting Intergroup that took place on the **11th of February 2014** in the EU Parliament.

The meeting was organized to debate about the Commissions initiative to amend the Firearms Directive.

AECAC's President Yves GOLLETY, was one of the four speakers.

The Intergroup will be crucial in an eventual process of amendment of the Directive.

7. COMPLAINT AGAINST SWEDEN AND SPAIN FOR FIREARMS MARKING RESTRICTIONS

As you remember AECAC in collaboration with our Swedish and Spanish members **Sveriges Vapenhandlareforening** and **ACACE**, and also with the Spanish producers association (**Asociación Armera**) prepared and presented a formal complaint before the EU Commission against Sweden and Spain due to their gun marking system.



The Swedish government is requiring the international import marking for gun transfers **coming from other EU countries**.

The requirement of the Swedish authorities of marking all firearms imported from other EU Member States is a clear **breach of the free movement of goods principle**, enshrined in Article 34 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU): “**Quantitative restrictions on imports and all measures having equivalent effect shall be prohibited between Member States**”. The intended restriction cannot be justified on the basis of the public policy / public security grounds mentioned in Article 36 TFEU since there is already specific harmonisation at EU level, and thus mutual trust between Member States, through Directive 91/477/EEC as amended by Directive 2008/51/EC.

The case of Spain is not as extreme as it only affects antique firearms. The Spanish government is requiring a new marking on most antique firearms which is causing an almost complete extinction of the collecting market for old military weapons. AECAC defends that by applying such restrictions Spain is stating barriers to the common market.

AECAC’s complaint was accepted by the EU Commission in 2013. Both countries faced two infraction procedures, **Infraction Procedure 2013/4204** for Sweden and **Infraction Procedure 2013/4203** for Spain.

The EU Commission’s position is that both regulations are not justified.

In November 2014 Sweden already accepted to modify its legislation. This will take place during the following months. For this reason the Infraction procedure will be suspended and the EU Commission will control and follow the correct implementation of the new legislation.

Spain has not yet accepted to amend its current regulation, nor has justified the need to maintain it. Therefor the Commission will send a **letter of formal notice to Spain** requiring the amendment of the current legislation. Such formality normally includes the proposal of sanctions in case the member state does not accomplish with the commission’s requirements.

8. LEAD IN SHOTS

Lead is still being one of the most critical issues for our sector. Many international organisations and institutions target the total or partial ban of lead in shots and even in bullets:

- **Council Directive 2009/147/EC**, also known as “**Birds Directive**”. Under this frame the Commission has launched several initiatives in order to help improve the understanding of the legal and technical aspects of the Directive’s provisions on hunting, which stands for phasing out of the use of lead shot for hunting in wetlands throughout the EU as soon as possible.
- **European Regulation on Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH)**. It is the strictest law to date regulating chemical substances which affects industries throughout the EU. Among legal instruments available to the Commission and the Member States, it is **applicable to lead shots**. ECHA shall suggest restrictions, based on a restriction proposal from a member state, in order to initiate restriction process. Even though such a proposal was made by Sweden, in December 2013 although it was decided not to include a restriction of lead in shot used for hunting purposes, but focused on restricting lead in certain articles intended for consumer use.
- **Water Framework European Directive** with the objective to fight against water pollution in Europe. A recommendation for including lead as a priority hazardous substance has been made, but for the moment there aren’t any legislative restrictions.



- **International Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)** which calls for a ban on lead shot and lead bullets. Its next Conference of the Parties will take place in **2017**; there is a working group that will continue discussing the lead issue by that time.
- **African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)** which is the main tool to implement CMS in the African-Eurasian region with regard to water birds, with 73 countries and the European Union as contracting parties. The lead issue will be discussed during the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties (AEWA MOP6) **from 9 to 14 November 2015** in Bonn, Germany.
- **European Standards Food Agency EFSA** adopted a scientific opinion on lead in food in March 2010, pointing out that game meat consumers have higher lead exposure than “regular people” and that a specific game meat diet (200 grams per week) may be harmful.

For the moment there is no EU legislation restricting the use of lead in ammunition. All of these directives and agreements are only encouraging the contracting parties to phase out the use of lead but have no leverage in this context; the measures to be adopted and their extension are left to the **decision of each signing country**.

However, among legal instruments available to the Commission and the Member States, potentially applicable to the case of lead shot in wetlands, is REACH which could be used to implement obligatory lead ban if the restriction proposal was adopted.

In the EU 17 Member States (BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, HU, NL, IT, ES, FI, FR, GR, LV, PT, SE, UK) have banned lead shot either completely or on wetlands or for waterfowl hunting, 4 Member States (AT, EE, LU, SK) ban on the use of lead in the near future.

In AECAC's opinion no further restriction should be applied to the use of lead in shots, since it has a **minimal environmental impact**, the risk of **game meat consumption** is reduced, and currently **there isn't any safe, economic and efficient alternative** to lead produced at industrial level. The minimal benefits of a complete lead ban are in disproportion with the negative **economic effects**, such as poor competitiveness of European companies, it may cause. No further restriction should be applied till the innovation processes enables to produce at industrial level a real alternative to lead.

AECAC has prepared a new position paper on lead that has been sent to all competent organizations.

Please find enclosed as **Annex IV and V** AECAC internal report on Lead in shots and the official position paper on the same subject that has been presented to AEWA.

9. ESSF (European Sport Shooting Forum)

The ESSF is a “think tank” of the European hunting and shooting sector. Its approach to all issues is very technical and efficient.

AECAC participates in the ESSF meetings which took place in Nuremberg in March 2015, and in Brussels in February and October 2014.

The ESSF allows all sectors at European level to coordinate themselves in different issues.

The ESSF has coordinated very efficiently the Common Position of all sectors concerning the initiative to amend the Directive.

10. WORLD FORUM OF THE FUTURE OF SPORT SHOOTING ACTIVITIES (WFSA)



AECAC is voting member of the WFSA, we take part in some of the WFSA meetings and contributes yearly with **3.600 €**.

The WFSA is a highly efficient organization, recognized by the UN, and its actions are of great importance as many of the issues start globally.

The current issues in which WFSA is involved are the following:

- **Global Arms Trade Treaty**
- **UN Programme of Action (POA) on SALW**
- **International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS)**
- **Transit Task Force (TTF).**
- **UN Register of Conventional Arms**

For more information on the WFSA actions see www.wfsa.net

Brussels, March 2015



Annex I



Annex II



**AECAC'S RESPONSE TO THE COMMISSION'S AIM TO REOPEN THE FIREARMS DIRECTIVE
91/477/EEC**

Increasing the restrictions on legal trade and usage of hunting and sporting firearms will not reduce illegal trafficking in firearms. The reason behind it lies in a problem-identification mistake, in the sense that the Commission should in truth focus its attention in criminal organization's constant growth and the facility with which they can arm themselves with war weapons.

AECAC, the European Association of the Civil Commerce of Weapons, defends in this Position Paper the Firearms Directive's initial purpose and nature, arguing that it is not an adequate instrument for the achievement of a full common regulation on firearms. If a common regulation on firearms is esteemed as necessary, then the Commission should resort to another instrument, whichever its legal nature. AECAC believes that an amendment of the Firearms Directive would only undermine its own nature as an act that seeks a certain level of harmonization, but that, at the same time, respects the different sensibilities that Member States have towards firearms.

Additionally, AECAC underlines the obligation of the EU institutions to respect the right to a good administration of article 41 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, which translates in the need to base de European decision-making on an impartial way of handling the problem, and not on ideological goals.



I. ABOUT US: THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF THE CIVIL COMMERCE OF WEAPONS

AECAC was founded in 1992 and it is formed from numerous national associations representing the interests of firearm and hunting small- and medium-sized enterprises (hereinafter, “SMEs”) and specialized shops from all over Europe. In fact, AECAC’s main target is to lower barriers that exist in the sector to SMEs. It aims, among others, to enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of the European companies by supporting the free market.

Since its foundation, AECAC has actively participated in all the procedures of the European Commission policies in which firearm trading is involved in order to support an adequate control of firearms. AECAC does not oppose justified and proportionate restrictions on their acquisition and possession, but seeks to participate in a constructive and non-ideological manner to the EU debate on civilian firearms.

Being the only representative at a European level of the firearm retailers, AECAC has already stated¹ its satisfaction with the current text and functioning of the Directive 91/477/EEC, as amended by Directive 2008/51/EC, on the control of the acquisition and possession of weapons.

II. EARLY PRECEDENTS: THE COMMISSION’S COMMUNICATION ON “FIREARMS AND IN THE INTERNAL SECURITY OF THE EU: PROTECTING CITIZENS AND DISRUPTING ILLEGAL TRAFFICKING”

Former Commissioner Cecilia Malmström stated at the conference “Fight against illicit trafficking in firearms. Where do we stand”, that took place in Brussels the 19th of November, 2012, that “*legally owned weapons in the EU continue to feed the illegal market*”². After that, in April 2013, the Commission published a Decision setting up a European Firearms Expert Group that was originally supposed to deal with illicit trafficking in legal firearms³. Even though the manufacturers of firearms and ammunition obtained two seats in that Expert Group, AECAC and all the legal firearm users obtained none. By doing this, DG HOME left firearm and hunting SMEs unrepresented and without the possibility of defending their own position.

From March to June 2013, DG HOME ran the online public consultation “A common approach to reducing the harm caused by criminal use of firearms in the EU”. In this sense, many of the consultation’s questions actually concerned *legal* firearms and were dramatically misleading. They induced the respondent to believe that there were barely any EU rules on legal firearms, when the reality is obviously the opposite. The Firearms Directive (which confirms the existence of EU regulation on legal firearms) already regulates a wide range of areas, such as the conditions and limitations put to the production and/or selling of firearms⁴ and the acquisition and possession of ammunition⁵, among many others. Nevertheless, despite the misleading formulation of the questions, an overwhelming majority of the **85.673 responses to the consultation opposed a change of the current EU rules on legal firearms**.

Surprisingly, DG HOME dismissed its own consultation and launched a Eurobarometer survey. The reason for disavowing the consultation was that most of the responses that opposed more EU action or further harmonization came from hunters and target shooters, a large proportion of them declaring “*their membership of associations related to firearms use*”⁶. The question however is: how did DG HOME obtain this information? The public consultation never required respondents to indicate their status and even

¹ AECAC issued in October 2013 a Position Paper on the eventual reopening of the Directive 91/477/EE.

² *Speech/12/841*. To be found in <http://europa.eu/>

³ Commission Decision of 11 April 2013 setting up an expert group on measures against illicit trafficking in firearms to safeguard the EU’s internal security (the Firearms Expert Group). Published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* C 107, the 13th of April 2013.

⁴ Article 4 of the Firearms Directive 91/477/EEC.

⁵ Article 10 of the Firearms Directive 91/477/EEC.

⁶ Question for written answer to the Commission (E-012523-13), formulated by a MEP, the 5th of November 2013. To be found in: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/>



though 2.600 French respondents declared themselves as hunters or target shooters, that number only represents a marginal 3% of the total responses.

Nothing changed with the posterior Eurobiameter survey. The questions were as misleading as they had been in the public consultation, making the respondents believe that there are no common EU rules on legal firearms and forcing a result that does not meet the requirements of impartiality needed in a public consultation of these characteristics.

Finally, in October 2013, DG HOME adopted the Communication “Firearms and the international security of the EU: protecting citizens and disrupting illegal trafficking”⁷. This Communication made it obvious that the Commission’s plan has always been to completely change the EU rules on legal acquisition and possession of legal firearms. Instead of focusing in the illegal trafficking of firearms, the Communication shows an unfounded interest in creating a link between legal and illegal firearms that does not exist, mixing up one concept with the other so that, in the end, there is no apparent difference between the two. DG HOME is of the opinion that legally registered, held and traded firearms get diverted into criminal markets or to unauthorized individuals. It also states that firearms in illegal circulation are usually a product “*of theft or diversion from their lawful lifecycle, of being illegally imported from third countries and of the conversion of other objects into firearms*”⁸. As a consequence of the apparent link that exists between legal and illegal firearms, the Commission considers it reasonable and necessary to develop stricter measures with regard to legal firearms. In short, the Commission’s conclusions were the following ones:

1. The absence of EU common standards provokes that legal firearms are lost or stolen.
2. Firearms deactivated in Member States with low standards are being reactivated.
3. Criminals in Member States with liberal rules have access to firearms.

AECAC, however, differs from all three points. It bases its position in the arguments listed below and that proof that not only does the Firearms Directive take care of this issues, but also that DG HOME has made a very doubtful use of the obtained data.

As for point 1, the Communication strongly defends Malmström’s idea that legally held firearms feed the illegal market. However, no concluding data is offered in this sense. In fact, the Communication only substantiates this thesis by providing one single example of the exact number of stolen firearms during a specific period in a Member State: the UK. This example contains manipulated data. The Communication states that “*In UK in 2010/11 63% of the 2.534 stolen firearms were stolen from residential premises*”⁹. Notwithstanding this information, the truth is that the UK publicly available document shows more precise details that make the Commission’s statement dramatically misleading. In fact, a very important statement contained in the UK document was omitted: “*Air weapons accounted for around a half (46%) of the thefts (Table 2.14)*”¹⁰. Furthermore, the mentioned table 2.14¹¹ shows that the 2.534 firearms do not only comprehend air weapons, but also starting guns, imitation firearms and other unspecified weapons. In this sense, shotguns, handguns and rifles¹² state as 696 misappropriated firearms, being therefore undoubtedly far from the figure of 2.534 defended by the Commission.

Regarding the reactivation of deactivated firearms in Member States with low standards, the Firearm Directive already contains legally-binding provisions to tackle this issue. Article 4 concretely disposes that “*Member States shall ensure either that any firearm or part placed on the market has been marked and registered in compliance with this Directive, or that it has been deactivated*”. The same article contains

⁷ To be found in <http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/>

⁸ *Speech/12/841, op. cit.*

⁹ Footnote 12 of the Communication.

¹⁰ Document to be found in:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/116483/hosb0212.pdf. To this effect, see section 2.9, page 67.

¹¹ Table to be found in page 81.

¹² Those items are the only ones that match the definition of firearm contained in Firearms Directive 91/477/EEC (see article 1).



exhaustive obligations on the part of the Member States in marking of firearms, establishment and maintenance of a computerized datafiling system and making the activity of dealer conditional upon authorization, among others.

Finally, as for criminals in Member States with liberal rules having access to firearms, AECAC wants to point out that the Firearms Directive bars criminals –and any person who is likely to be a threat to public security– from acquiring and possessing firearms. Concretely, it is said in Whereas 13 that *“The acquisition of firearms by private individuals by means of distance communications, for example via the Internet should, where authorized, be subject to the rules laid down in Directive 91/477/EEC and, as a general rule, the acquisition of firearms by persons convicted by a final court judgment of certain serious criminal offences should be prohibited”*.

As AECAC already stated in the Position Paper made in October 2013, the arguments put forward by the Commission to justify the reopening of the Firearms Directive can simply not be accepted as a matter of principle. AECAC clearly concluded that *“It is erroneous to believe that by increasingly restricting legal trade in and use of hunting and sporting firearms (regulated by the Directive), illegal trafficking in firearms will be reduced”*¹³.

Before urging new and stricter legislation, the Commission should provide trustworthy evidence that this measure is needed, proportionate and suitable to attain the pursued objectives. AECAC considers that the Commission failed to substantiate this evidence when elaborating the Communication. Also, by conveniently omitting crucial information, the Commission proved that the link between legal firearms and illicit trafficking and criminal use is, in truth, non-existent.

III. THE ‘THINK SMALL FIRST’ PRINCIPLE

AECAC considers that the SBA for Europe, adopted in June 2008, should be necessarily borne in mind. According to the European Commission, its object was *“to improve the overall approach to entrepreneurship, to irreversibly anchor the ‘Think Small First’ principle in policy making from regulation to public service, and to promote SMEs’ growth by helping them tackle the remaining problems which hamper their development”*¹⁴.

Furthermore, the *“‘Think Small First’ principle requires that legislation takes SMEs’ interests into account at the very early stages of policy making. Various tools and techniques could lead to an effective implementation of the principle. These include the application of an SME test to forthcoming legislative proposals, the consultation of the SME stakeholders, the work of the SME Envoy, the use of specific SME provisions in legislation in view of avoiding disproportionate burden on SMEs etc.”*¹⁵.

As past experience has proved, new legislation and more restrictions always generates new obstacles and costs to SMEs, which in turn would be disproportionately affected or disadvantaged by such modification in comparison with large companies. This is the main reason causing the loss of competitiveness of European SMEs in front of our American and Asian competitors.

Quite the contrary, alternative mechanisms and flexibilities in order to help SMEs to comply with the current legal framework would become particularly relevant and necessary in this context.

IV. THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY

One of the principles that need to be observed by the Commission when elaborating a legislative proposal is the one of subsidiarity. This principle is known to be fundamental to the functioning of the European Union, and more specifically to European decision-making.

¹³ AECAC’s Position Paper from October 2013, *Conclusions*, p. 6

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/sba_en.htm#ff2

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/think_small_first.htm



This principle rules the *way* in which EU competences have to be exercised. It therefore does not delimitate nor grant competences, but instead it tries to rationalize the abstract terrain of the competences shared between the EU and the Member States. It basically measures the limits the EU can reach when elaborating its rules. The Preamble and article 5 of the TEU refer to the principle of subsidiarity by demanding **‘proximity’ to the citizens in the decision-making of the EU and its institutions**. As a consequence, **the EU should only act as a kind of *last resort***. Subsidiarity is, in this sense, a principle that regulates the way in which the competences shared between the EU and the Member States have to be exercised.

When the EU institutions act within their competences, even when it is by virtue of a shared competence, their intervention should be justified by the following premises:

- a. Does the action have transnational aspects that cannot be resolved by Member States?
- b. Would national action or an absence of action be contrary to the requirements of the TEU?
- c. Does action at European level have clear advantages?¹⁶

The fulfilling of the mentioned criteria shall be previously supervised by all institutions that intervene in the decision-making process of the EU according to the Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

Additionally, the respect towards the principle of subsidiarity also affects the legality of the rules and acts of the EU and its fulfillment is susceptible of being controlled before the Court of Justice.

According to AECAC’s already given opinion, the amendment of the Firearms Directive would be contrary to the abovementioned principle, given the fact that the existing framework already provides the Member States with the necessary mechanisms to ensure the enforcement of the current legislation on civilian firearms.

V. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS THAT DEMONSTRATE DG HOME’S INTENTION OF REOPENING THE FIREARMS DIRECTIVE

5.1. “Study to Support an Impact Assessment on Options for Combatting Illicit Firearms Trafficking in the EU”

5.1.1. Brief summary

The Study focuses on analyzing the current legal framework in all Member States relating to firearms trafficking. Underlining the existence of a serious illicit firearms trafficking problem, the report defends that the main sources of illegal weapons in the EU are the *“reactivation of neutralized weapons, burglaries and thefts, embezzlement of legal arms, legal arms diverted to the illegal market, firearms retired from service by army or police, and the conversion of gas pistols”*¹⁷. However, deep differences seem to exist between the EU Member States’ legal frameworks for combating illicit firearms trafficking. This could apparently be remedied by enacting EU-wide rules on this subject and reducing the existing legal uncertainty.

5.1.2. Content analysis

When defining the problem relative to illicit firearm trafficking, the Study mentions six ways in which firearms can enter the illicit market. Four of these ways directly involve legally held firearms¹⁸:

- Legally held firearms that have been stolen or diverted to illegal uses or users.

¹⁶ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/institutional_affairs/treaties/lisbon_treaty/ai0017_en.htm

¹⁷ P. ii of the *Executive Summary*.

¹⁸ Pages 13 to 14.



- Legally held firearms becoming illegal.
- Modification of legally held firearms.
- Diversion of legally transferred or imported firearms to unauthorized uses or users.

It is obvious that the intention behind the Study is to focus on legally held firearms. However, while trying to enumerate different sources of illicit firearm trafficking that directly derive from legally held firearms, the Study deceptively mentions different causes that, in the end, are all the same. In fact, “*legally held firearms that have been stolen or diverted to illegal uses or users*”, “*legally held firearms becoming illegal*”, “*modification of legally held firearms*” and “*diversion of legally transferred or imported firearms to unauthorized uses or users*” all belong to a same source, which is the possibility of legally held firearms becoming illegal. As a result, the ways in which firearms enter the illicit market go from six, to three, only one of them involving legally held firearms.

Also, there are no precise qualified estimates of how important these different sources are in relation to each other. There is one statement in the Study that is relevant and worth commenting. It concretely says that “*stocks of legally-held firearms are vulnerable to loss, theft or unauthorized misuse*”¹⁹. AECAC already answered to such affirmation in its Position Paper of 2013: the Firearms Directive already foresees a strict control on the usage and ownership of firearms and makes it necessary for some classes to count with the corresponding authorization. In this sense, the point in which the Study analyses “*firearms-related murders*”²⁰ is quite interesting. It is stated that over the past 10 years there have been over 10,000 victims involving firearms in the EU28 Member States. However, the Study does not mention how many of these cases actually involve or affect legally held firearms. This is rather surprising, especially if we consider how concerned DG HOME seems to be about proving the existence of a “*link*” or “*connection*” between legally held firearms and illegal firearms and their trafficking.

It is true, nonetheless, that a few number of mass shooting cases are mentioned in the Study. Those shootings were caused by “*mentally unstable adults*” that were however “*licensed to possess a firearm*” (although it is not known if the mental illness appeared after obtaining the license or before). The problem apparently lies on a lack of control when granting the corresponding license. Once again, though, it has to be remembered that the Firearms Directive already lays down an adequate level of control on the acquisition and possession of firearms, even for the “*lower*” categories of firearms: C and D (which only include firearms that are difficult to conceal, have slow firepower and are mainly used for hunting and sporting activities but very seldom for criminal activities). As AECAC already informed in its Position Paper of 2013, the Firearms Directive requires as a minimum that Category C and D firearms are registered and “*linked to their owner at any moment*”²¹ and that Member States ensure that those owners have been “*specifically permitted to acquire and possess such firearms in accordance with national law*”²² and “*are not likely to be a danger to themselves, to public order or to public safety*”²³. Firearms in general and firearms in categories C and D specifically, are thus already subject to strict controls. Nevertheless, if the Commission considers that the Standards in some State Members do not fulfill this requirement, it should start legal actions.

The Study also mentions the reactivation of neutralized weapons as one of the main sources of illegal weapons within the EU. Again, this is something which the Directive already foresees by requiring that deactivated firearms be “*rendered permanently unfit for use*”²⁴. If this obligation is not met, then the Commission should, once again, start legal actions. Furthermore, as AECAC already stated, the Directive imposes upon the Commission the obligation to issue Common Guidelines on deactivation, which the Commission has failed to do.

¹⁹ Page 14.

²⁰ Pages 26 to 28.

²¹ Article 4.5.

²² Article 4.a.

²³ Article 5.

²⁴ Point (a) of Part III of Annex I.



Which one is the real problem?

When the Study describes the different ways in which firearms can enter the illegal market, it expressly states that “*there are no precise quantified estimates of how important these different sources are in relation to each other*”²⁵. However, it still insists in focusing on legally held firearms instead of analyzing the real problem, which basically affects the “*direct import of illegal firearms*”²⁶ to the EU.

Recent cases have shown that our problem has nothing to do with the hunting community acquiring hunting and sporting weapons and ammunition, but the growth of terrorism in Europe and the easiness with which members of the terrorist community can arm themselves with war weapons, such as Kalashnikov assault rifles (AK-47) and grenade launchers, for example.

Now, what exactly does the Firearms Directive regulate?

The Firearms Directive, as its own title says, is meant to control “*the acquisition and possession of weapons*”, majorly for hunting purposes and with express exclusion of war weapons. Thus, the Directive does not apply to the illegal acquisition of war weapons by unauthorized individuals and for criminal or terroristic purposes. It strictly and exclusively controls the possession of civil firearms.

The problem the European Union is facing goes far beyond what DG HOME has been defending up until today. Legislative action is urgently necessary, but not concerning legally held firearms. There is a huge and alarming lack of control in the trafficking of weapons and ammunition of war and a deficient application of its regulatory legislation by the Member States. In this sense, the Commission has already stated its intention of elaborating a new strategy in order to reinforce security in the EU and AECAC firmly supports such action. However, erasing illegal trafficking of firearms and terrorism will not be fulfilled by amending the Firearms Directive which, as explained before, does not regulate this matter.

5.2. “Study to Support an Impact Assessment on a possible initiative related to improving rules on deactivation, destruction and marking procedures of firearms in the EU, as well as on alarm weapons and replicas”

5.2.1. Brief summary

The Study investigates the possible actions that may improve the rules on marking, deactivation and destruction of firearms, while suggesting different options for a better regulation of alarm weapons and replicas that can be easily converted. After analyzing all possible solutions and remedies to the mentioned problems, the preferred policy option proposed is the revision of the Firearms Directive 91/477/EEC.

5.2.2. Content analysis

The Study explains that “*reactivated firearms, converted alarm weapons and replicas can constitute a commodity fuelling the illicit business of organized criminal groups and represent a threat to EU citizens’ safety and security*”²⁷. It also mentions the threat that new technologies represent nowadays with the availability of 3D-printed firearms.

In the first place, it is important to point out once again that our real problem does not concern legally held firearms becoming illegal, which, nonetheless, does not mean that its control is not necessary since the Directive precisely exists for that purpose and already fulfills it with its current text. As stated in point 4.1.2., the Commission needs to refocus its attention on the direct import of illegal firearms to the EU and specifically on how criminal organizations get their hands on war weapons such as AK-47 and grenade launchers.

²⁵ Page 14.

²⁶ *Idem*.

²⁷ Page 10.



However, it is also important to insist on why the Firearms Directive already offers an adequate legal framework. Concerning the reactivation of firearms, AECAC believes that article 4 is, per se, wide-ranging enough and, most importantly, respectful towards the principle of subsidiarity.

When analyzing replica firearms, the Study shows a great concern in how much the definition of “replicas” varies from one Member State to another. It is rather surprising, however, that suddenly this aspect has become a problem when the Commission already had an opportunity to propose an amendment in this sense. In fact, Directive 2008/51/EC requested that *“the Commission shall, by 28 July 2010, submit a report to the European Parliament and the Council presenting the conclusions of a study of the issue of the placing on the market of replica firearms in order to determine whether the inclusion of such products within the scope of this Directive is possible and desirable”*²⁸. The report was submitted the 27 July 2010 and the Commission concluded that *“replicas, with their various characteristics and purposes, should not be included in the field of application of Directive 91/477/EC, especially as those which can be converted to a firearm and therefore treated as one are now covered by Directive 2008/51/EC”*²⁹.

As for 3D-printed firearms, AECAC understands the threat it can suppose in a near future, but it does believe that the Directive’s current text is broad enough as to include these kinds of firearms. As long as 3D-printed firearms possess the characteristics required by the Directive to be considered as firearms, the Directive’s regulations shall be applicable in the same terms as to regular firearms. This would equally affect the 3D-printing of essential components.

After analyzing national regulations, the Study identifies two key issues:

- a. The existence of *“differences in national definitions and approaches”* and
- b. *“cases of lack of full or proper implementation of the Directive at the national level”*³⁰.

It is important to remember that one of the main reasons why AECAC supports the current framework provided by the Directive is that it *“creates mutual trust among Member States whilst respecting different national sensibilities on firearms”*³¹. However, as it has been repeated along this Position Paper, if the Commission believes that Member States do not fulfill the requirements foreseen in the Directive, then it should meditate about starting legal actions. Also, instead of seeking an amendment of the Directive, a correct implementation and enforcement of its current text and provisions should be ensured in order to minimize any possible loopholes.

As for the differences that exist among national regulations and approaches, it is important to keep in mind that, as AECAC already explained in 2013, *“it has never been the intention of the Directive to fully harmonize national legislations on firearms and a shift in that direction would impinge unnecessarily on the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality”*³². In this sense, what the Study truly shows is not only the intention of a full harmonization, but to establish a common regulation on the control of the acquisition and possession of weapons. This cannot be accomplished by amending the Directive.

What exactly is the purpose of a Directive?

Article 288 TFEU defends that *“a directive shall be binding, as to the result to be achieved, upon each Member State to which it is addressed, but shall leave to the national authorities the choice of form and methods”*. This means that a directive is only binding to the achievement of a certain “result”, leaving the

²⁸ Amended text of article 17 of the Firearms Directive.

²⁹ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: *“The placing on the market of replica firearms, Conclusion 9.11.*

³⁰ Page 23.

³¹ AECAC Position Paper 2013, p. 1

³² *Idem.*



choice of the form and methods to the national authorities. Its characteristics can be summarized in the following three points:

- The directive imposes upon Member States the obligation to achieve a certain result that has to be fulfilled in the period of time foreseen by the directive. This obligation of execution is absolute and its non-observance supposes an infringement of the European Law.
- As an obligation of execution, the directive does not only request the achievement of a result, but it also imposes upon the States the obligation to adopt the national measures that are necessary for achieving that result with the liberty, however, of choosing the corresponding forms and methods.
- The directive has a sufficient normative intensity to be imposed against national regulation that is contrary to its text and to protect, if necessary, the right of the individuals against their own States. The Court of Justice of the European Union has recognized the possibility of invoking the directive before the domestic jurisdictional authorities³³.

In light of the above, the directive is, per se, not adequate for the purposes defended by DG HOME. If a common regulation on firearms is esteemed as necessary, then the Commission should resort to another instrument, whichever its legal nature. AECAC believes that an amendment of the Firearms Directive would only undermine its own nature as an act that seeks a certain level of harmonization, but that, at the same time, respects the different sensibilities that Member States have towards firearms.

VI. ARTICLE 41 OF THE EUROPEAN CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS: RIGHT TO GOOD ADMINISTRATION

6.1. Concept and meaning

A good way of understanding the meaning of a good administration is to differentiate it from a deficient administration. In this sense, a deficient administration is characterized by the violation of the rules or principles that are binding to the administration. A good administration therefore includes the fulfillment of all legal requisites and other precepts in the relations held with the citizens and other interested parties.

The right to a good administration does not end with the rights that are enumerated in article 41. Actually, from its content it is possible to deduce that it is an independent fundamental right in charge of guaranteeing a good administration for everyone. This implies that the matters of the citizens have to be handled with **impartiality**, in a just way and within the established temporal frame and within the frame of a functional and efficient administration.

6.2. Whom does it involve?

Article 41 is applicable not only to nationals and citizens of the EU, but also, and without any limitation, to all natural and *legal* persons whose matters are being affected. The obligation has to be fulfilled by the institutions and organisms of the EU, in the sense that the whole EU administration is involved.

6.3. How this right comes into play in our case

DG HOME, as an institution that belongs to the European Union and that, consequently, is subject to article 41 of the European Chart of Fundamental Rights, has not approached the problem in an impartial way. This was made clear when the public consultation on firearms was run from March to June 2013. As explained in epigraph II of this Position Paper, the public consultation contained misleading questions that induced the respondents to believe that there is practically no EU regulation on legal firearms. However, as the overwhelming results that opposed EU action on legal firearms were not satisfactory to DG HOME's interests, the Directorate disavowed its own consultation and launched a Eurobarometer survey that

³³ Case 8/81, *Ursula Becker v. Finanzamt Münster-Innenstadt*.



contained as misleading questions as the consultation in order to achieve its desired result. But would DG HOME have dismissed the results obtained in the consultation if they had been positive to EU action? Not only that, but the Communication released in October 2013 provided the reader with misrepresented information. It defended that in the UK in 2010 and 2011 65% of the stolen firearms had been stolen from residential premises, but it intentionally omitted the fact that 46% of those thefts affected air weapons.

The Studies released by the Commission are not satisfactory either and although they do not contain obvious hints of DG HOME's partiality in the handling of the issue, they do prove that a mistake is being made not only by focusing on a non-existent link between legally held firearms and illicit trafficking, but also because amending the Directive will not solve the problem faced by the European community.

VII. PRINCIPLE OF INSTITUTIONAL BALANCE

One of the key elements of the institutional system of the EU is the *principle of institutional balance*. This fundamental principle implies that each institution has to act in accordance with the powers conferred on it by the Treaties and in subjection with the corresponding conditions.

The immediate consequences of this principle are that:

- a. the powers conferred to a certain institution cannot be exercised by another institution or organisms –without prejudice to the delegation of powers for the adoption of non-legislative acts (art. 290 TFEU)–.
- b. the powers conferred to the institutions have to be exercised by them within the limits and conditions imposed by the treaties.

The Supreme Court of Justice explained in Case 9/56, *Meroni & Co., Industrie Metallurgiche, SPA v. High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community*, that the balance of powers is a characteristic of the institutional structure of the Community and a fundamental guarantee granted by the treaties to the undertakings and associations of undertakings to which it applies. In this sense, institutional balance implies both, respect towards the existing relationship between the institutions and respect towards the exercise of their respective competences and powers.

However, the Court has also admitted that when an institution has the right to intervene in the decision-procedure, then the institution that will take the final decision cannot overlook or ignore the first's opinion or deprive it from its competences (f. ex., the consultative opinion of the European Parliament in the ordinary legislative proceeding represents a key element of the institutional balance).

The principle of institutional balance mainly applies to the relationship between the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament, a relationship that is also governed by the idea of the “institutional triangle”. However, institutional balance should also be taken into account when analyzing the existing relationship between the multiple organisms that collaborate or even integrate an EU institution. Precisely, the Commission itself cannot appropriately act if there is a power-struggle between its Directorates.

AECAC still defends the fact that DG HOME's opinion needs to be heard in this matter, but it should act with utmost respect towards DG GROWTH's competences. Otherwise the decision of reopening the Firearms Directive could be based on an infringement of those competences and a violation of the said balance.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Believing that increasingly restricting legal trade in and use of hunting and sporting firearms will reduce illegal trafficking in firearms is a mistake. As AECAC already stated such restrictions would however impose unjustified and disproportionate restrictions on legal users, while diverting public resources from the important issues, such as tackling trafficking in firearms coming from post-conflict areas.



Also, if a common regulation on firearms is sought, then the Commission should resort to another instrument instead of undermining the Directive's own nature.

Furthermore, given the fact that criminal organizations are on constant growth and the threat they represent to EU citizens (and, of course, to the entire world) is exponentially increasing, the Commission should consider using other instruments for tackling the problems of illicit trafficking in and criminal use of firearms.

Additionally, the European decision-making should be based on an impartial way of handling the problem, and not on ideological goals. The violation of article 41 of the European Chart of Fundamental Rights will more than surely result in the disaffection of many citizens towards the EU institutions.

And last but not least, it has to be kept in mind that an amendment of the existing Directive would directly impinge on the 'Think Small First' principle, given the fact that SMEs will be disproportionately affected or disadvantaged by said modification in comparison with large companies. In order to avoid such a scenario, the Commission should consider alternative mechanisms and flexibilities for the purposes of helping SMEs to comply with the current provisions of the legalization on civilian firearms.

In any case, AECAC still wants to reiterate its eagerness to engage constructively in an open debate on legal civilian firearms.

Brussels, February 2015



Annex IV



AECAC POSITION PAPER ON LEAD IN SHOTS

I.- ABOUT AECAC

Our Association is formed from numerous national associations representing the interests of gun and hunting retailer businesses and specialized shops from all over Europe. AECAC defends efficiently the gun retailers at European level.

Currently the members of our federation are the following national trading associations:

1. **Austria:** Verband Österreicher Büchsenmacher (Bundesinnung der Metalltechniker)
2. **Belgium:** Wapenunie – Union Armes
3. **Cyprus:** Cyprus Gundealers Association
4. **Denmark:** Danske Vabenhandlerere
5. **Finland:** Asekauppiaiden Liitto ry
6. **France:** Chambre Syndicale Nationale des Armuriers
7. **Germany:** VDB - Verband Deutscher Büchsenmacher und Waffenfachhändler
8. **Greece:** Pan-Hellenic Association of Handcraft men & Professionals of Hunting Items
9. **Ireland:** Irish Gun Dealers and Shooters Association
10. **Italy:** ASSOARMIERI-Associazione Comercianti Armi-Munizioni Caccia Pesca Sport
11. **The Netherlands:** Nederlandse Vereniging voor de Wapenhandel
12. **Spain:** ACACE - Asociación de Comerciantes de Armería sus Complementos y Explosivos
13. **Sweden:** Sveriges Vapenhandlareforening
14. **Luxemburg:** Association Luxembourgeoise des Armuriers et Négoçiants d'Armes.

Since its foundation, AECAC has actively participated in all the procedures of the European Commission policies in which gun trading is involved.

AECAC is currently the only representative at a European level of the gun and ammunition retailers, in this capacity AECAC is being considered as a reputable stakeholder before all European Institutions.

Our principle target is to lower barriers that exist in the sector to small and medium-sized enterprises who are involved in gun, ammunition and hunting trading. By supporting the free market we aim to enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of the European companies.

II.- THE GUN AND AMMUNITION RETAILERS SECTOR IN EUROPE

It is important to understand the gun and ammunition trade in Europe to evaluate the potential impacts of any legislative change concerning lead use in shots.

Gun and ammunition retail market is a very important sector in many European countries. These are the number of companies in the retail sector in some EU member states:

- Finland 600 dealers
- Hungary 500 dealers
- Poland 500 dealers
- Austria 700 dealers



- France 1.000 dealers
- Germany 1.500 dealers
- Italy 1.200 dealers
- Spain 700 dealers
- Belgium 250 dealers
- Greece 700 dealers

Such companies create more than 100.000 employments in Europe, and represent an important turnover.

To understand the importance of the sector it is also worth mentioning some of the figures of civilian users. Europe has more than **12 million** lead shot users. The largest number of hunters and sport marksmen are found in France with more than 1.600.000 hunters and marksmen, Spain with around 1.500.000 users and Italy with 1.150.000 users.

It is notable the high number of users compared to its small population in some northern countries. Sweden has more than 550.000 users, mainly hunters. Finland has more than 335.000 hunters and marksmen. Denmark accounts 289.000 civilian users.

III.- PRICE COMPARISON OF LEAD-BASED AND ALTERNATIVE SHOT

The average market price of lead shot cartridges is **0,35 €/unit** without VAT.

Average market (final user) prices of cartridges of alternative materials, VAT excluded are the following:

- **Zinc 1,60 €/unit**
- **Steel - Iron 0,68 €/unit**
- **Tungsten 3,10 €/unit**
- **Bismuth 2,15 €/unit**

Currently the ammunition trading represents around 25 % of the retailers market in Europe. So such an increase of the prices would cause an enormous damage to thousands of small and medium enterprises in Europe.

As we will comment on later, steel or iron shots have technical and even safety problems. The rest of the other alternatives are too expensive. The impact on the trading market could not be assumed with prices increasing more than 150 %.

Associated cost for customers in case of lead shots restriction

On average, non-lead shot gun ammunition for hunters cost normally 4 times as much as lead shot ammunition. Considering an average hunter with a cartridge consumption of 200 cartridges a year, its increase of cost would be of around **250 € more per year**.

Gun testing cost approximately 100 €/ per gun. Considering an average hunter owning 3 shotguns: **300 €**.

Installation of new chokes (approximately 50 € per gun): **150 €**.

Purchasing of new guns (2 new shotguns per hunter): **2.500 €**.



Competitive shooters with very high cartridge consumption may face increased barrel wear due to steel shot forcing frequent replacement of weapons.

It should be noted that the average hunter has a limited budget and usually allocates a certain amount of money to his/her firearms and ammunition. A substantial increase in the prices related to these products will only result in a reduction in the quantities that are acquired and in some cases even the giving up of hunting.

All these numbers should be related to the number of users in Europe: more than **12 million**.

IV.- DRAWBACKS FOR CUSTOMERS USING ALTERNATIVE SHOTS COMPARED TO USING LEAD-BASED SHOTS

Ballistic performance. Major technical problem on all the alternatives to lead is the ballistic performance. None of the existing materials ensure a perfect ballistic performance on game as lead does.

The ballistic properties of steel and iron shot differ completely from lead shot.

Other alternatives as bismuth, tungsten and tin are available that do not suffer from the technical drawbacks of steel, its ballistic performance is better, but not equal to lead. However, these alternatives are much more expensive than the lead.

Suitability in gun types. Steel and iron shots cannot be used in all gun types. Only modern shotguns can be used with such materials. Restrictions could easily cause accidents in case people keep on using traditional guns.

Hunting or shooting technique. Alternatives are less effective than lead. The ballistic effect on game of all the alternatives is much worst than using lead. Specially iron, steel and zinc are less lethal and cause wounds.

Severe safety risks. Iron steel and zinc shots should not be used in rocky and similar terrains due to the high risk to ricochet.

Impact on forestry economy. Steel and iron shots are often not allowed in forest from which trunks are sold for furniture and veneer making as the industrial cutting tools may be damaged.

Recyclability. Lead is a recyclable material. This is not the case of most of the alternatives.

V.- NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs)

Fact is that many companies which deal worldwide with sport and hunting guns and ammunition are Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). For these the implementation of any further restriction would have a negative strong impact on their economies.

SMEs would suffer more heavily the consequences of any restriction on lead use.

The so-called “**Small Business Act**” (**SBA**) recognises the central role of SMEs in the EU economy and puts into place a comprehensive policy framework for the EU and its Member States concerning Small Companies.

The SBA aims to promote entrepreneurship, make legislation SME-friendly and help SMEs to grow. Furthermore, all new legislative and administrative proposals will be subjected to an “**SME test**” in order



to assess their impact on SMEs. For example policy results should always be delivered while **minimising cost for business, lighter procedures can be foreseen to protect small and micro-enterprises** from unavoidable negative effects of new law.

Our general opinion is that any further restriction on lead use is unnecessary and it would affect - once again - negatively the competitiveness of European companies. Member States already have strict regulations concerning this issue.

VI.- BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

AECAC position concerning lead in shots is the following:

- Lead in shots, except in wetlands, has a **minimal environmental impact**.
- The risk of **game meat consumption** is reduced and only affects small children and pregnant women. No scientific study has stated that the alimentary risk makes advisable a ban on lead shots.
- **Alternatives to lead.** The cartridge production sector is developing several projects and innovations to find a possible alternative to lead shots. AECAC fully supports all actions in this line. Notwithstanding although some alternatives can be developed in the near future, today it does not exist any safe, economic and efficient alternative to lead which is produced at industrial level.
- **Restrictions on lead.** Our general opinion is that in the current situation any further restriction on lead use is unnecessary and it would affect - once again - negatively the competitiveness of European companies. It shall be stressed that any legislative change should be based on scientific evidences and should take in consideration its social and economic impact.

The minimal benefits of a complete lead ban should be compared to the dramatic economic and social impact that such a measure could cause.

No further restriction should be applied till the innovation processes enable to produce at industrial level a real alternative to lead.

Brussels, February 2015