



Chairman,  
European Scrutiny Committee  
House of Commons  
14 Tothill Street  
London  
SW1H 9NB

2 October 2017

## **14 SEPTEMBER JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS COUNCIL**

As Parliament is in recess, I am writing to provide you with a report of discussions at the Justice and Home Affairs Council which took place on 14 September in Brussels. I represented the UK.

The Council began with a discussion on the Estonian Presidency's proposed priorities in the fight against terrorism, following the recent terrorist attacks in Spain and Finland. The Council held a minutes' silence in memory of those affected by the attacks. Ministers made substantive interventions on a broad range of areas but the focus was on the importance of de-radicalisation initiatives and information sharing. The Commission confirmed that an anti-terrorist package would be presented at the next JHA Council in October. I stressed the UK's ongoing commitment working with our European partners to enhance the security of all our citizens. I then updated the Council on the work that the UK had undertaken to build relationships between government and civil society groups, which enhanced the effectiveness of strategic communications campaigns. By developing such relationships, the Government has been able to develop bespoke communications based upon the nature and victims of attacks, meaning that messages of unity and defiance can reach audiences less likely to engage with solely government communications.

I also encouraged Member State attendance at the European Strategic Communications Network event on crisis communications, which is taking place in October. I joined other Member States in welcoming the Commission's creation of the High Level Expert Group on Radicalisation, supported efforts to enhance interoperability of EU border control and security data systems, and drew attention to the Prime Minister's United Nations General Assembly side event on Terrorist Use of the Internet which took place on 20 September.

The second main agenda item was a discussion on the ongoing migration crisis, in light of the recent trends in migration flows on Mediterranean routes. Ministers focused on

upstream activity and discussed projects in Libya and North Africa, including socio-economic development of local communities across migratory routes to help mitigate their need to benefit from illegal migration. There was agreement among Member States on the importance of third country co-operation. I stressed the UK's continued support for cooperation with Libya and for efforts to disrupt smugglers' business models. As part of this, I confirmed the renewal of our commitment to Operation Sophia through to completion of its full mandate in December 2018. This includes increased training for the Libyan Coastguard and our naval support which has destroyed 172 smuggling boats and saved over 12,000 lives since the Operation began. I also highlighted our recent financial offers in the Central Mediterranean, including the new £75m fund for humanitarian assistance which the Prime Minister announced in June.

The next JHA Council will take place on 12-13 October.

I will place a copy of this letter in the House Library.

I am writing in similar terms to the Chair of the Lords European Union Committee; Chris Johnson, Clerk to the Lords Committee; Eve Samson, Clerk to your Committee; Les Saunders, Department for Exiting the European Union; and Maya Pillai, Departmental Scrutiny Coordinator for the Home Office.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brandon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP**  
**Minister of State (Immigration and International)**