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Terrorist attack in Norway: Joint meeting of the Terrorism Working Party and COTER

Following the tragic events in Norway on 22 July 2011, the Polish presidency convened a joint meeting of the two Council working groups on terrorism, the Terrorism Working Party (TWP) and COTER.¹

Representatives of the Norwegian authorities informed the meeting about the events and the ongoing investigation. This was followed by a debate which included experts from EU member states, representatives of several EU bodies and institutions (Europol, European External Action Service, European Commission) as well as the office of the EU Counter-terrorism coordinator. Delegations seized the opportunity to express condolences and solidarity with Norway and the Norwegian people.

The goal was to exchange information and analysis and to start the process of drawing the lessons of this tragedy in order to better prevent and respond to such attacks in the future. The debate also included an assessment of the tools and mechanisms used in the fight against terrorism - both existing ones and those under preparation.

It was noted that, as the Oslo attacks have shown once again, terrorism has nothing to do with any particular religion or belief. The EU and its member states have always rejected violence regardless of the motivation - be it right wing or left wing extremist, separatist or religiously motivated terrorism.

¹ The TWP brings together member states experts for the internal aspects of terrorism mainly representing ministries of interior, while in COTER experts from foreign affairs ministries focus on the external aspects of terrorism. Both group meet regularly separately and usually twice a semester jointly. The EU Counter-terrorism coordinator's office takes part in both groups and assures the overall coordination of the EU's action in the area of terrorism. In June 2011, the Council adopted conclusions on enhancing the links between internal and external aspects of counter-terrorism ([11075/11](#)).

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At the meeting, particular attention was given to the processes of radicalization and recruitment which usually depend on a variety of factors independent of the cause which any terrorist seeks to promote, whether the ideology of Al Qaeda, the far right or any other extreme ideology.

The issue of 'lone-wolf terrorism', represented by terrorists that are self-radicalised (e.g. through the internet) with no obvious attachment to any terrorist organisation, seems to require increasing attention. The experts also agreed that in confronting the threat of a terrorist attack, regardless of its underlying motivation, the effective exchange of information is vital. The importance of strengthening response capacity was another issue that was highlighted.
