Greek contribution to the
“Consultation on the renewal of the EU Internal Security Strategy”

1. "Which specific challenges need to be tackled by EU action in the coming five years regarding international crime, radicalization and terrorism, cybercrime and cyber attacks, natural and man-made disasters? What role should the border security have in addressing those challenges?"

International crime and terrorism consist significant challenges to the EU’s internal security and put European citizens’ rights and freedoms at risk. External borders security is a contributing factor to combating these forms of crime by means of both border surveillance and control over the legal movement of persons at border crossing points. Specific actions to be taken could include the continuing education-training of border security personnel with border guarding and passport control tasks, the closer cooperation of all relevant authorities at international level in the fields of training-education and information/best practices exchange, the improvement of intelligence and security information networking and the optimal use of the information drawn from them, the use of new technologies in combating trans-border crime and, finally, the continuous adaptation of national and EU legislation to the new reality arising from the challenges modern crime poses.

Furthermore, special attention should be given to the external dimension of the JHA policies.

The increase in the number of conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, the crisis in Ukraine, as well as food and humanitarian crises in various parts of the world have led to an increased flow of migrants towards Europe, exerting great economic and social pressure on EU Member States. If there is no variation in the current situation, migration flows are expected to continue to exert pressure on both national and European structures. Tackling and managing migration “supported” by organized crime networks in a joint manner consists the greatest challenge the EU is being faced with, since this phenomenon has an impact on the social cohesion and prosperity of the Member States, which are called upon to assimilate a disproportionate number of migrants and refugees, as compared to their population size.
The intensity of religiously motivated violence in regions that are in (very close) proximity to Europe’s borders (Middle East and North Africa) has led to the development of networks recruiting members for and providing logistical support (financing) to jihadist organizations with a terrorist activity in them. EU authorities’ assess that a few thousands of EU citizens have traveled to jihad-related battlefields to join terrorist organizations, causing great concern and show the extent of the problem. It has been monitored that a large number of these “foreign fighters” have returned to their countries of origin in Europe to establish recruitment networks, spread jihadi propaganda and when applicable to organize attacks such as the attack against the Jewish Museum in Brussels). Each Member State and the EU in its entirety should intensify their efforts to detect and identify jihadists returning to Europe and to prevent the radicalization that the contact of Europe’s general population with them may cause.

Over the past ten years, organized crime networks have made a more and more extensive use of new technologies in an effort to expand their criminal activity and increase their illicit financial proceeds. It is to be noted that although, in the vast majority of the EU Member States, there is a decrease in the number of crimes requiring the perpetrator’s physical presence, cybercrime (fraud, organized crime, identity theft etc.) is on the increase. Disrupting criminal activities on the internet is one of the greatest challenges Member States’ law enforcement agencies are facing today and should be addressed, *inter alia*, by strengthening their cooperation at the European level and private – public partnership. At the same time, terrorist networks use new technologies to perform “cyber-attacks”, convey their extremist message, spread terror among those considered enemies, etc. The “battle over the internet” is therefore an integral part of the EU Internal Security Strategy.

2. “Taking into account the developments in the next five years, which are the actions to be launched at EU level?”

Actions aimed at enhancing external borders security and combating primary and secondary illegal migration are currently under implementation. More specifically, the Visa Information System (VIS) for the issuance of visas containing biometric data, which is recently fully operational, will contribute to the prevention of internal security threats, since it will ensure stricter checks at cross-border points and help
detect people who do not fulfill or no longer fulfill conditions for entry to, stay or residence on the territory of EU Member States. Moreover, the Entry-Exit Registration System, which is part of the “Smart Borders” legislative package and is in the phase of legislative drafting, will contribute to combating illegal migration by giving Member States access to data pertaining to the time and place of entry/exit of third country nationals while crossing the EU external border.

The interoperability of the afore-mentioned IT systems with SIS II has to be enhanced in the benefit of the law enforcement. SIS II current technical capacities allow direct access of the End Users to updated databases that include persons and objects. SIS II future technical capacities that include biometrical data enhance the view that all EU IT systems in the JHA area should closely cooperate in the benefit of law enforcement and under the umbrella of the administrative and technical support of eu - LISA. Moreover, the possibility to update the SIS II legal base in 2016 should be pursued with a view to provide SIS II with new state of the art applications, as well as to correct the malfunctions indicated by the Member States within the Change Management Board.

Furthermore, discussions should be focused on the further standardizations of procedures at EU level, as well as on the exchange of best practices with a view to enhance information exchange and law enforcement cooperation.

The EU has to concentrate efforts to better tackle the problem of illegal migration. In this view, a holistic EU approach is needed based on three main axes:

a. enhancing actions related to border protection,

b. strengthening reception and asylum structures and

c. allocating refugees and migrants on the basis of population, social, economic and other criteria, taking into consideration the special circumstances prevailing in each Member State.

Also, the EU has to develop actions to combat radicalisation through:

a. the creation of a “counter-narrative” placing emphasis on deconstructing of the jihadist propaganda,

b. the cooperation with former foreign fighters who, after joining jihadist organizations, have distanced themselves from them and their violent tactics/means
and turned into opponents of the jihadist propaganda, the recruitment through the Internet, and in particular the social media..

c. the design of de-radicalisation plans aiming at the reintegration of persons who have been exposed to violent radicalisation and been in contact with jihadist structures.

d. actions aiming at intensifying information exchange and strengthening operational cooperation among Member States’ law enforcement authorities, in order to combat all forms of organized crime and criminal activity on the internet.

Finally, special attention should be given to the law enforcement training. It is a fact that the non-stop training will render law enforcement authorities more efficient as regards the prevention and the fight against serious and organized crime, terrorism, electronic crime, trafficking in human beings and illicit trade in drugs. It will also be important as far as, the EU external borders more efficacious management and the strengthening of our endurance for coping with natural and manmade disasters are concerned.

For promoting an authentic European education in the fields of law and law enforcement, it is significant to promote the training in issues related to the European Union and to make this training accessible to all professionals engaged in the establishment of an area of freedom, security, and justice.

Of course, Member-States will decide on their national educational programmes on their own, but for enforcing an Internal Security Strategy, the non-stop, coordinated training of Security Forces, at a national and a European level, is indispensable.

In this view, the objectives and the basic principles of the Internal Security Strategy may be achieved by means of trainings and seminars on the following topics:

- hunting for, tracking down and breaking up of international criminal organizations,
- prevention and combat against terrorism/radicalization, irrespective of its form,
- the fight against cyber crime and the increase of security level concerning the citizens,
- border management for increasing the security of the States,
- dealing with crisis and disasters cases and
 prevention and suppression of the trafficking in drugs and/or in toxic agents, by means of European and international cooperation.

3. "Which specific research, technology and innovation initiatives are needed to strengthen the EU’s capabilities to address security challenges?"

The complexity of financial system and economic transactions, the specialised modus operandi of criminal organisations as well as the sensitive and transnational character of economic crime present new security challenges for the law enforcement authorities. The cases dealt with include a sheer volume of complex data, whose investigation requires special software. Moreover, those handling these cases should combine, in addition to operational experience, knowledge of procedures related to economic, tax and insurance matters, ability to assess the technical means and equipment to deal with, in cases of transnational character, knowledge of international police cooperation channels and practices. In this regard, cooperation among the judicial authorities and the FIUs should be further enhanced.

Moreover, it is considered needful to make wider use of new technologies and to upgrade electronic infrastructures by placing particular emphasis on communications security. It is also important to enlarge cooperation with the private sector in this field.

Finally, the European Commission’s initiative for the establishment of Single Points of Contact (SPOC) in all Member States should be strongly pursued in order that each Member State has and operates a SPOC in accordance with its national legislation and the Guidelines approved by the Council.

4. "What is needed to safeguard rights of European citizens when developing future EU security actions?"

During the development of actions aiming at enhancing internal security, the EU should take all necessary measures to ensure that the implementation of such actions will not affect EU citizens’ fundamental rights. More specifically, the relevant legislation lays down a special provision relating to the protection of EU citizens’ fundamental rights as well as the continuing training of border guards with border
surveillance and passports control tasks on matters related to the protection of such rights.

EU Member States’ cooperation in cases where activity of this kind is observed in more than one country is considered important. Operational meetings on the initiative of Europol and Member States and the participation of Member States’ representatives in Europol’s Focal Points enhance immediate information exchange and build trust among those handling similar operations.

In the context of information exchange, it is recommended to simplify and accelerate procedures and direct communication among interested parties. Information exchange will be positively affected by the creation of an electronic database at European level or the optimisation of the existing database (EUROPOL’s PLATFORM), where general data relating to closed cases will be recorded and direct communication among the Services involved will be feasible.

The EU and its Member States have a whole toolbox of legal instruments, whose adequate implementation guarantees the protection of EU citizens’ fundamental rights. Any challenges in this field should be addressed through additions to the existing legislation, where necessary.

5. “How can EU’s foreign policy improve the security within the EU and/or your country?”

EU’s foreign policy should focus on addressing emerging or existing threats against the EU, in regions outside the EU where such threats emerge and evolve. This can be achieved, inter alia, through a dynamic diplomatic intervention on international or regional crises, as well as through the strengthening of EU’s public diplomacy and the spread of European values in third countries, etc.

Moreover, the principle of “more for more” should be applied in the EU relations with third countries, as indicated in the Strategic Guidelines for the JHA area adopted by the European Council in June 2014.

Finally, the role of FRONTEX in conducting joint maritime operations in the Mediterranean region should be further enhanced. These maritime operations should take place throughout the Mediterranean; focusing in the regions where increased migratory pressure is emerged or foreseen.