

## FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN SOCIETIES OF ARMS COLLECTORS



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Mr. Jyrki Katainen  
Vice-President  
European Commission  
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200  
1049 Brussels  
Belgium

Dear Mr. Katainen,

We had the occasion to meet when I visited you last year at the Finnish Parliament together with the board members and observers of our Foundation. This was prior to your important appointment as a Vice President of the European Commission in Brussels.

During our meeting I introduced you to the aims of our Foundation which is the voice of serious arms collectors in Europe. We have always been involved whenever the European Institutions discussed legal gun ownership and our contribution was always taken on board in the best interest of the citizens that we represent as well as the conservation of historic arms. That is why collectors just like museums are exempt from the Directive.

The proposals for the strengthening of gun controls put forward by the Commission in yesterday's press release are an affront to law-abiding arms collectors in Europe. Moreover, coming in the wake of the sad events of Friday 13th November, they represent the most illogical and emotional knee-jerk reaction that we have ever witnessed in the EU and a clear move in the wrong direction.

As responsible EU Citizens we fully support effective measures that target the illicit trafficking of arms which is the one true source for organised crime and terrorism on European soil and which has very well-known routes into the EU. However we cannot in any way accept the Commission's reaction to punish law-abiding owners of legal firearms. Let me make it very clear that if the proposals were to be



implemented they would not only destroy large numbers of artifacts of historic importance but also the lives and livelihood of thousands of citizens across the EU.

In respect of collectors who I represent I take particular offence to the wording of the following paragraph which also displays the utter ignorance of the person or persons who drafted it:

"In Article 2 the proposal newly includes collectors within the scope of the directive. Collectors have been identified as a possible source of traffic of firearms by the evaluation carried out. Therefore, collectors will have the possibility to acquire firearms but only subject to authorisation/declaration."

This vile and unfounded allegation is being used as a pretext to destroy the bona-fide activity of serious collectors. Moreover it is a misleading statement as there is no one in Europe today that can collect non-antique firearms without authorisation.

It is being proposed that collectors be included in the Directive under Article 6. The precise wording is as follows:

"Member States may authorise bodies concerned with the cultural and historical aspects of weapons and recognised as such by the Member State in whose territory they are established to keep in their possession firearms classified in category A acquired before [the date of entry into force of this Directive] provided they have been deactivated in accordance with the provisions that implement Article 10(b)."

The Commission is therefore proposing to ban the further acquisition of category A firearms by collectors and the deactivation of all category A firearms possessed up to the date of entry into force of the revisions to the Directive.

Besides bringing to an end collectors' activity that is such a vital contributor to the conservation and study of historical arms of all types, such a provision would also herald the greatest act of institutionalized vandalism ever attempted in the world as thousands of safely-kept historical firearms would be destroyed. Just think what this would do to your own country Finland with a relatively young history if the historical arms of the 20th century that are mainly in private collections would be deactivated or destroyed. Which country can afford such a loss and the financial burden to compensate owners for their property?



One has to keep in mind that this destruction, the persecution of legal owners and the huge costs that every Member State would have to bear will not cause the slightest dent in the trafficking of illegal arms which will carry on unabated in spite of the Commission turning on its law-abiding citizens. On the contrary the resources that are required to tackle illicit arms trafficking will be diverted to a useless and destructive cause.

This is sheer madness that the EU cannot afford to implement and further alienate those who have supported it so far. More significantly this issue goes beyond firearm ownership; it is an assault on the rights of EU citizens who want go about their lives within reasonable legal parameters.

While I do appreciate that you are not directly responsible for DG Home, I appeal to your sense of logic and justice to intervene on our behalf. On my part I assure you that FESAC has always offered sensible solutions and that it is once again ready to do so in this case.

Sincerely,

**Stephen A. Petroni**  
Chairman FESAC