**Participation of the Minister of Justice and Public Order in the Informal Meeting of EU Justice and Home Affairs Council**



The combat of terrorism and cybercrime were the main issues discussed by the Ministers of Justice, in the framework of the deliberations of the Informal Meeting of the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council, held in Amsterdam, on 25 and 26 January.

Due to the recent terrorist attacks in Paris and the weaknesses recorded on the information exchange processes concerning foreign fighters, the Ministers of Justice elaborated on ways for the improvement of information exchange amongst EU member states, as well as between the relevant EU agencies. The Ministers stressed the need for interoperability of all available data bases, so that the law enforcement agencies have an immediate access to all information which might lead to identifying terrorists.

Aiming at the prevention of terrorist attacks, the Ministers mentioned the need to improve both the quality and quantity of the available information, as well as to take measures that are going to enable the exchange of the information shared between the security services and the corresponding national law enforcement agencies.

The Council also announced the set-up of the Counter-Terrorism Group in Europol, which is expected to play a significant role in the improvement of coordination amongst member states.

Moreover, the Council focused on the importance of local societies’ assistance in dealing with radicalization and violent extremism. The Local Authorities, in cooperation with the education, the social and the health services could structure targeted programs for the prevention and support of the vulnerable groups of people, especially the young, aiming at enhancing society against terrorist propaganda.

In addition, the Ministers exchanged views on issues of common concern faced by their law enforcement agencies as far as the prosecution of cross-border crime committed through the internet is concerned, such as the limitations on jurisdiction and the differences between the legal systems of member states. They also shared views on the solution of problems occurring at the collection of evidence stage, within the cross-border investigation framework and the presentation of the evidence at the court.

The possibility of updating the existing European legal rules and the adoption of common standards and processes of collection and exchange of evidence, in order to effectively prosecute suspects, were examined as possible solutions. Additionally, the importance of cooperation with service providers and the training of the prosecution authorities personnel on the best practices applied in other countries were emphasized during the discussion.

Lastly, the European Committee presented its proposals concerning the amendment of laws on the exchange of criminal records, in order to include in the records the conviction of third country nationals.

At the side of the Council’s deliberations, the Minister of Justice, Mr Ionas **Nicolaou**, had a meeting with the Greek Minister of Justice, Mr Nicos Paraskevopoulos, during which they discussed issues of common interest.