

Joint Letter of European Mayors

Calling for measures against the misuse of explosives and pyrotechnics

Rotterdam, 12 June 2025

Dear members of the Justice and Home Affairs Council,

Dear members of the LIBE committee of the European Parliament,

Dear Executive Vice-President Séjourné and Commissioner Brunner,

Over the past few years our cities have experienced an unprecedented wave of attacks and incidents involving flash bangers and other heavy explosives. Pyrotechnics are increasingly misused for criminal purposes. Whether it is as means of intimidation by organized crime groups, in attacks on homes, businesses and ATM's, in soccer stadiums or as improvised weapons against the police. These are not mere firework accidents, but deliberate acts often linked to organized crime and personal vendettas, carried out with powerful pyrotechnic devices like flash bangers and "Cobra" fireworks. The damage to public safety, property, and trust in urban life is severe and long-lasting.

Many of the explosives used are imported from elsewhere in Europe or beyond, often legally produced but then diverted into the hands of criminals and then easily sold onwards through digital platforms. The illegal trade of pyrotechnics causes an important security concern itself: everyday transporter vans loaded with highly explosive devices are driving on our roads, through our neighbourhoods – without any regards for the safety of our citizens. If one van explodes, the scale of the disaster would be unimaginable. The misuse of flash bangers as weapons is therefore no longer a national problem – it is a European urban security issue. This is why we call for stricter European regulation.

Even though the manifestation of the problems as well as the public safety responsibilities vary across the European Union, our citizens are calling upon us for answers and action. In this light we are joining forces and call upon you to take appropriate measures following the evaluation of the 'Pyro Directive' (Directive 2013/29/EU) and the ongoing evaluation of the regulation on the marketing and use of explosives precursors (Regulation (EU)2019/1148).

Notwithstanding the proper functioning of the internal market and the safety and quality of articles produced in and imported into the Union we believe it is at least equally important to ensure more conformity and a strict enforcement of the EU legislation as the explosive materials have inherently dangerous properties. The most commonly used pyrotechnics in criminal acts are of the F4 category that are strictly for professional use and already illegal for private consumers.

In line with the collaborative non-paper of the Netherlands and France (Modify the Pyro Directive to Protect Public Order and Safety) we would like to underline the following points:

Strengthen the EU laws and Regulation

The evaluation of the 'Pyro directive' offers an opportunity to update the legislation to recent developments and bring it more in line with other relevant EU-legislation. For instance flash powder is heavily regulated under the explosives precursors legislation whereas when used as

pyrotechnics it can fall under lighter regimes, especially when low amounts of flash powder are being used and they are classified as F2 or F3. In these cases they are relatively easily available and can be turned into homemade grenades or explosives. We therefore welcome the **call for a ban on flash bangers and a prescribed maximum limit on the amount of flash powder used in professional fireworks.**

We also believe more strict controls to verify whether individuals purchasing pyrotechnics possess in fact the required permits. In the case of the explosive precursor legislation sellers are required to check this and keep records. Such an extended responsibility would also be beneficial to check whether individuals purchasing specific types of pyrotechnical items have the necessary qualifications. The **broad application of the Pyro-Pass**, as has been introduced in the Benelux and has been promoted by the Netherlands and France, could prove a valuable addition to the current legal framework.

At the same time measures need to be taken to ensure that the illegal sale through social media, platforms and organised criminal groups will be pushed back. Stricter controls and legal action are necessary. The Commission's ProtectEU proposal that is considering measures to **improve prevention and criminal sanction on pyrotechnics trafficking** could be a crucial step in this direction.

Reinforce collaboration between Member States and with local authorities

More strict controls and permitting requires that Member States actively gather and share information on the issues mentioned before. But also on the illegal production of pyrotechnics within the EU, the import and monitoring of pyrotechnics from outside the EU, and the distribution within the EU, ensuring the legitimacy, safety and quality of the products. We therefore call upon our governments to follow the proposal made by The Netherlands and France to **step up the cooperation and information exchange.**

We furthermore believe that the **strengthening of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) by including the illegal production and distribution of pyrotechnics** in its priorities can help to streamline this cooperation and exchange.

Finally, we are convinced that besides the role of the responsible authorities, often including local authorities, we firmly believe that **we can also bring additional knowledge and expertise.** As government closest to our citizens, we have a unique position and are experiencing first handedly the devastating impact of (illegal) heavy fireworks on our neighborhoods, especially when they fall into criminal hands. Close cooperation with other stakeholders in both the public and private sector is also paramount to disrupt the flow of illegal explosives. This additional information can offer crucial input for early identification, focusing research efforts and contribute to criminal investigations.

In conclusion, we believe that it is of the utmost importance to work in close partnership with all levels of government involved to ensure our cities and societies will be safe and secure from the disruptive and often devastating effects of the use of illegal pyrotechnics.

On behalf of the European mayors listed below,

Yours sincerely,

Carola Schouten, Mayor of **Rotterdam**, The Netherlands

Signatories

Hein van der Loo, Mayor of **Almere**, The Netherlands and on behalf of the 41 Dutch member cities of the **G40 network**

Femke Halsema, Mayor of **Amsterdam**, The Netherlands

Koen Kennis, Acting Mayor of **Antwerp**, Belgium

Pierre Hurmic, Mayor of **Bordeaux**, France, and on behalf of the member cities of the **Forum Français pour la Sécurité Urbaine (FFSU)**

Ricardo Rio, **Mayor of Braga**, Portugal

Philippe Close, Mayor of **Brussels**, Belgium

Henriette Reker, Mayor of **Cologne**, Germany

Mathias De Clercq, Mayor of **Gent**, Belgium

Katrin Stjernfeldt Jammeh, Mayor of **Malmö**, Sweden

Gerdo van Grootheest, Mayor of **Oosterhout**, The Netherlands and on behalf of the **Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG)**

Anne Lindboe, Mayor of **Oslo**, Norway

Jack Mikkers, Mayor of **'s-Hertogenbosch**, The Netherlands

Nikola Barbutov, Deputy Mayor of **Sofia**, Bulgaria

Jeanne Barseghian, Mayor of **Strasbourg**, France

Jan van Zanen, Mayor of **The Hague**, The Netherlands

Sharon Dijksma, Mayor of **Utrecht**, The Netherlands