

EU Finance Ministers Agree to French Approach on Stopping Terror Financiers

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[By Irene Madongo](#)

EU finance ministers broadly endorsed a French plan to tackle terrorist financing ahead of the expected issuance in the coming weeks of related regulatory proposals by the European Commission.

The 13-page French proposal drafted last week would require the bloc's member-states to permit financial intelligence units to obtain data from financial institutions even when the information is not linked to suspicious transaction reports, and to otherwise streamline international cooperation among the agencies.

EU nations would also impose stricter controls on digital funds, strengthen border checks on precious metals and prepaid cards and consolidate certain bank account data in centralized registers in an effort to give terrorism investigators quicker access to financial information, under the plan.

The European Commission is expected to issue formal recommendations in line with the plan ahead of a ministerial meeting slated for January, roughly one year after the Paris terrorist attacks on the headquarters of satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo* and a kosher supermarket.

Europe's financial industry will watch such developments "very closely," said London-based David Artingstall, a consultant with AML Consulting Global. "The banking sector has already taken account of what the French have said about those particular products and they are looking at what their exposure might be, what they can do to increase monitoring, if that's a possibility."

But quick changes to compliance programs at financial institutions may not be realistic, said Artingstall, adding that officials should understand what companies can "actually achieve in the short term and what the outcome of that will be."

The European Commission will separately join efforts to expedite the enforcement of the EU's latest anti-money laundering directive, currently for implementation in 2017.

"The Commission has been asked to look into all legal impediments [to implementation] that might exist and then table them so that we can see to what extent those rules can be adjusted," said Valdis Dombrovskis, the body's vice president, during a press conference Tuesday.