

## [EU clears national aid linked to EU funded programmes from state aid checks](#)

EU27 leaders met for a special meeting of the European Council (Art.50) on Sunday 25 November 2018. They endorsed the Brexit withdrawal agreement, as presented by the negotiators of the EU and the UK. Leaders also approved the political declaration on future EU-UK relations, which accompanies and is referred to in the withdrawal agreement.

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The Council today adopted a regulation that enables the Commission to exempt two additional categories of national subsidies from the standard checks required under EU state aid rules.

The two new categories are :

- a) national funds combined with EU centrally managed funds, such as the InvestEU Fund or 'Seal of Excellence' projects provided for by the next framework programme on research and innovation;
- b) national funds for projects supported by EU European Territorial Cooperation programmes.

The new rules will significantly simplify the national financing of projects co-financed by the new EU funds provided for by the next multiannual financial framework.

The adopted regulation will improve the interaction of EU funding programmes with state aid rules. It will enable the Commission to make targeted modifications to its general block exemption regulation so that nationally managed funds and centrally managed EU funds can be combined as smoothly as possible, without having to prove that they do not distort competition in the single market.

The regulation will apply as from the twentieth day after its publication in the Official Journal.

The new rules will be part of the so-called 'enabling regulation', which constitutes the legal basis for the Commission declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market and enabling member states to directly finance certain projects without prior Commission approval.

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## [EASO publishes four COI reports on Nigeria](#)

***Today, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) published four Country of Origin Information (COI) Reports on Nigeria: [Security Situation](#), [Actors of Protection](#), [Targeting Individuals](#), and [Key Socio-economic indicators](#). The reports provide information relevant for the protection status determination of Nigerian asylum seekers.***

*In 2017, Nigeria was the fourth most common country of origin in the EU+ countries with a total number of close to **42,000** applicants. In 2018, following a substantial decrease in the number of irregular arrivals in the central Mediterranean, far fewer asylum applications were lodged by Nigerian nationals in EU+ countries. Despite this decrease, Nigeria remained in the top-five among all countries of origin of applicants in the EU+ with about **21,500** applicants recorded between January and October 2018. At the end of October 2018, around **25,000 cases** awaited a first-instance decision.*

The EASO COI report [Nigeria Security Situation](#), following a brief and general introduction to Nigeria provides a general description of the security situation in Nigeria. The first chapter gives an overview of the recent conflicts in the country; actors in the conflict; recent security trends and armed confrontations; the impact of the violence on the civilian population and IDPs; and the impact of the violence on the state ability to secure law and order.

The main conflicts in Nigeria are elaborated upon in more detail in the second chapter. A general description at the level of the geopolitical zone contains information on the geography and population, and on the background of the conflict, including the actors active in the conflict. This is followed by a description of recent trends in the security situation, with regard to the nature of the violence, frequency, tactics and targets, locations and number of fatalities. Also the impact of the violence on the state's ability to secure law and order, and the impact on the population are discussed.

The report includes specific information on violent incidents and civilian casualties in the North East where Boko Haram is active. An increase is noted in the number of violent incidents in the North Central Zone and Kaduna State, where conflicts between herders and farmers are intensifying. By comparison, the Niger Delta saw a much lower number of fatalities than the

two previous zones. Striking is the relatively low number of incidents but resulting in a high number of fatalities in Zamfara State, where cattle rustling and mass attacks on villages have soared since the beginning of 2018.

The EASO COI report [Nigeria Security Situation](#) was drafted by the Office for Country Information and Language Analysis (OCILA) of the Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service, in accordance with the [EASO COI Report Methodology](#). It was reviewed by an expert from the International and European Affairs Unit, Department for Asylum and Migration Policy, Czech Republic. The external expert Nnamdi Obasi, Senior Advisor on Nigeria, International Crisis Group also reviewed this report, in order to ensure the highest quality. The EASO COI report [Nigeria Actors of Protection](#) provides information on the Constitution and the state's legal structure, the police and armed forces, the public prosecution institutions, the court system, the National Human Rights commission, the Public Complaints Commission – (the Ombudsman) and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP).

The report highlights the complexity of the country's pluralist legal system, consisting of common law, Islamic law, customary law at federal, state, and local levels. Problematic capacity and integrity issues with the police and the national army are noted, leading to human rights abuses and corruption, as well as the high number of complaints received by the National Human Rights Commission, reaching one million over 2017.

The EASO COI report [Nigeria Actors of Protection](#) was drafted by the International and European Affairs Unit, Department for Asylum and Migration Policy, Czech Republic, in accordance with the [EASO COI Report Methodology](#). The report was reviewed by the Office for Country Information and Language Analysis (OCILA) of the Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service. In addition, the report was reviewed by the external expert Stella Amadi Odiase, Lawyer and International Development Practitioner, and by the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD).

The EASO COI report [Nigeria Targeting Individuals](#) is divided into two main sections, following a first brief and general introduction to Nigeria. The second chapter on actors discusses several non-state actors, such as Boko Haram, militant groups in the Niger Delta, student/university cults, traffickers, and state or state-affiliated actors.

The third chapter discusses 15 profiles of persons subject to targeting by one or more actors, or by society in general. These profiles, which sometimes overlap, include: persons targeted by Boko Haram, by university cults, members of militant groups in the Niger Delta, persons involved in herders-farmers conflict, religious minorities, persons affected by witchcraft and ritual killings, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) persons, women and children, and others.

The EASO COI report [Nigeria Targeting Individuals](#) was drafted by members of the Country of Origin Information (COI) sector in EASO, in accordance with the [EASO COI Report Methodology](#). The report was peer reviewed by Office for Country Information and Language Analysis (OCILA) of the Dutch Immigration

and Naturalisation Service, and by Lifos, the Centre for Country of Origin Information and Analysis of the Swedish Migration Agency. In addition, the report was reviewed by the external expert Dr Megan Turnbull, Assistant Professor of Comparative Politics at the University of Georgia in the Department of International Affairs.

The EASO COI report [Nigeria Key Socio-economic indicators](#) is divided into two main sections, after a first brief and general introduction to Nigeria in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 provides information on the following key socio-economic indicators: demographics, economic growth, employment, poverty, food security, housing and living conditions, education, health care, social networks and support mechanisms.

A main emphasis, where information is available, is on the situation in Abuja and Lagos and on the socio-economic situation of women, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees. The third chapter provides information on mobility and internal travel possibilities.

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It is EASO's intention to continue to produce such reports on important countries of origin and to update them on a regular basis in order to raise and harmonise COI standards in the EU and to further support the practical implementation of the Common European Asylum System.

The reports can be downloaded via:

EASO, COI report Nigeria, Security situation, November 2018,  
[https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2018\\_EASO\\_COI\\_Nigeria\\_SecuritySituation.pdf](https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2018_EASO_COI_Nigeria_SecuritySituation.pdf)

EASO, COI report Nigeria, Actors of Protection, November 2018,  
[https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2018\\_EASO\\_COI\\_Nigeria\\_ActorsofProtection.pdf](https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2018_EASO_COI_Nigeria_ActorsofProtection.pdf)

EASO COI report Nigeria, Targeting of individuals, November 2018,  
[https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2018\\_EASO\\_COI\\_Nigeria\\_TargetingIndividuals.pdf](https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2018_EASO_COI_Nigeria_TargetingIndividuals.pdf)

EASO, COI report Nigeria, Key-socio-economic indicators, November 2018,  
[https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2018\\_EASO\\_COI\\_Nigeria\\_KeySocioEconomic.pdf](https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2018_EASO_COI_Nigeria_KeySocioEconomic.pdf)

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# Expanding and strengthening Erasmus+: Council agrees its position

Studying abroad will become easier for Europe's youth

The Council today adopted its position (partial general approach) on the Erasmus+ programme for 2021-2027. The proposed regulation will expand the offer of learning opportunities in Europe and beyond to more people compared to the current period. It will also be extended to include all levels of education and training. To underline its inclusive approach, the Council has maintained the current name of the programme "Erasmus+". Today's agreement does not cover the budgetary aspects of the draft regulation, since the final amounts will depend on the agreement reached on the next multiannual financial framework.

Erasmus+ is about investing in people. By expanding learning mobility and exchanges, the programme will make an even more important contribution to the personal, educational and professional development of many individuals. It is also an important tool for generating economic growth and creating jobs across Europe.

*Heinz FASSMANN, Federal Minister for Education, Science and Research of Austria*

The Erasmus+ programme plays a crucial role in the development of a European Education Area. At the European Council meeting in December 2017 EU leaders called for stepping up mobility and exchanges, including through a substantially strengthened, inclusive and extended Erasmus+ programme. This new regulation responds to this call by:

- offering learning mobility to a record number of people
- increasing the accessibility for young people with fewer opportunities
- increasing the accessibility for small and grass-roots organisations
- maintaining the integrated nature of the programme, covering learning in all contexts – formal, non-formal and informal

## **Background**

Erasmus is one of the most popular and successful EU programmes. Launched 30 years ago it has helped over 9 million people to study, work or volunteer abroad. Under Erasmus more than 2 000 transnational partnerships are established each year.

## **Next steps**

The agreement reached by the Council will serve as the basis for negotiations with the European Parliament. The decision on the financial allocations for Erasmus+ for 2021-2027 will depend on the agreement on the next MFF.

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