

# COVID-19: Council approves conclusions on the impact of the pandemic on internal security and terrorist threat



The Council approved two sets of conclusions on the impact of the pandemic, one on internal security and a second on the threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism.

## **Internal security**

The conclusions acknowledge the unpredictable threats and challenges that the crisis posed to the internal security landscape. Focusing on making better use of existing means of cooperation and building upon established structures, the Council:

- encourages member states to identify practical solutions to prevent difficulties to strategical operational and tactical cross-border law enforcement cooperation
- underlines the need to prevent the infiltration of criminal networks in the implementation of the Next Generation EU
- encourages CEPOL (EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training) and the member states to develop scenario-based training and practical exercises to ensure preparedness and resilience for future pandemics and other crises
- stresses the need for the Commission to support Europol and the innovation lab to set up a common, resilient and secure instrument for communications in the EU law enforcement cooperation framework
- recommends to member states that they develop and promote awareness campaigns for their citizens to prevent the impact of cybercrime activities, as well as misinformation and hate speech
- encourages member states to share best practices on strategies that improve reporting channels for victims of crimes, such as domestic violence and sexual abuse, during lockdown and crisis situations

## **Terrorism and violent extremism**

So far the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the terrorist threat seems to have been limited. However, the protracted pandemic may increase member states' vulnerabilities and the risks of radicalisation. The online presence of extremist groups is on the rise since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to COVID-19, counter-terrorism authorities have had to increasingly rely on online capabilities rendering/making their work more difficult.

In the medium to long term, the pandemic and its socio-economic consequences may prove to be a favourable breeding ground for extremist narratives. Some (violent) far-left, far-right and Islamist extremist groups have already incorporated COVID-19 into their narratives, and this might pose security challenges in the medium and long term.

The conclusions therefore:

- Call on member states to continuously contribute to the assessment of the online dimension of the terrorist threat by providing information to the relevant EU bodies. INTCEN (EU Intelligence and Situation Centre) and Europol should continue to deepen their assessment of the impact of the pandemic on terrorist operations
- Invite member states to swiftly give effect to the regulation on terrorist content online, and the Commission and EU internet referral unit to provide support with their technical and operational expertise
- Underline the influence of algorithms and their role in fostering radicalisation as another key point that deserves attention
- Note the need to pay increased attention to emerging security risks, as well as opportunities, stemming from new technologies and underline the role of the EU innovation hub
- Underline the utmost importance of continuing to develop secure VTC systems and channels for the exchange of classified information.

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## Council approves conclusions on the protection of public spaces



Recent terrorist attacks carried out across the EU have underlined the need to improve the protection of public spaces. To this end, the Council approved today conclusions on the protection of public spaces.

In these conclusions the Council invites the Commission to explore further opportunities to support projects and initiatives to improve the protection of public spaces and community resilience. It also encourages member states to support the development and implementation of security-by-design concepts in public spaces.

The Council urges Europol to continue exploring digital technologies and countermeasures to put in place against terrorist attacks in public spaces. The focus of this research could be directed at developing explosives

detection techniques, protection against drones and serious cybercrime, and use of artificial intelligence in the processing of large data sets.

The Council also recommends that member states examine their national legal frameworks with a view to restricting non-legitimate carrying of bladed weapons in public spaces and major events, as well as consider developing specific protection measures with regard to places of worship. It encourages member states to continue analysing security guidance and tools for rental vehicle operators to prevent and mitigate the risk of vehicle attacks in public spaces.

The Council advises member states to develop, engage and actively participate in projects concerning the protection of public spaces and crowded places with the aim of cooperating and sharing knowledge. It advises them to continue to organise practical exercises and joint training in order to improve the preparedness and response of law enforcement and the first respondent community. It also calls on member states to raise awareness among cities about existing EU initiatives which facilitate the sharing of good practices and support projects led by local level.

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## **Council adopts conclusions on sports-related violence ahead of the European football championship**



The Council today adopted conclusions on sports-related violence. In these conclusions the Council emphasises the unique challenge to security posed by the UEFA EURO championship, since the competition will take place in 11 European cities simultaneously.

The Council emphasises that the organisers of major events taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic should continue to adopt measures and procedures that prevent the spread of the virus among all actors involved.

The Council also stresses the relevance of international police cooperation and information exchange to ensure a safe and secure competition. Acknowledging that monitoring the movement of risk supporters may be vital to prevent public disorder and associated criminal activity, it encourages effective international cooperation through the deployment of specialised law enforcement spotters as well as other liaison officers, even if a sports event takes place without general public attending.

The Council recognises that, in view of several recent incidents of sports-

related violence, it is crucial to address this issue beyond the sport venues. The scope of preventive measures should be enlarged to cover locations such as public transport, hotels, training centers, nightlife areas and other public spaces.

The Council stresses the importance of protecting public spaces and private spaces open to the public, namely through the implementation of security-by-design concepts and the use of surveillance and detection systems that incorporate artificial intelligence, while respecting fundamental rights. It also calls on member states to continue to monitor online content, with a view to preventing and mitigating the dissemination of messages that incite violence, extremism, radicalisation and xenophobia.

The Council stresses the need for member states to increase the risk assessment of risk supporters, especially those with extremist ideologies, so as to identify, prevent and limit possible hostile and criminal activity during international sport events.

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## **Press briefing ahead the G7 summit of 11-13 June 2021**



The press briefing ahead of the special meeting of the G7 summit of 11-13 June 2021 will take place via video conference on **Wednesday 9 June 2021 at 09.00** (Brussels time)

English and French interpretation will be available.

This briefing is “off the record”.

In order to follow the briefing and to be able to ask questions remotely, EU accredited journalists and journalists who had a EUCO accreditation from June 2019 European Council meeting or later, can register using [this link](#).

**Journalists who already registered for high-level press conferences** (European Councils, international summits) in 2020 or 2021 **don't need to register again**.

**Deadline: Tuesday 8 June, 17.00**

Further instructions will be sent to all registered participants approximately half an hour before the briefing.

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## Council approves conclusions on the protection of vulnerable adults



The Council today approved conclusions on the protection of vulnerable adults across the EU, with regard to civil and criminal law matters.

A significant number of adults face or will face limitations: Eurostat expects a fifth of the EU population to have some form of disability by 2050. Many of these adults are or will become vulnerable and, due to the multiple barriers still in place for persons with a serious mental or physical disability, they are not or will not be in a position to protect their own interests without adequate support. In cross-border situations, these existing difficulties may be made worse by additional obstacles related to language, representation or access to the judicial system and public services.

In these conclusions, the Council invites member states to use available funding opportunities from the EU budget to develop actions related to the protection and promotion of the rights of vulnerable adults, including on digital literacy. It also calls on them to promote greater awareness of the 2000 Hague convention on the international protection of adults and advance procedures to ratify it or consultations on possible accession. The Council invites member states to ensure the full implementation of existing legislation in the field of criminal law. It invites them to enhance the use of cross-border victim protection mechanisms and ensure that vulnerable adults, whether suspects, accused or victims, are properly identified so that they can fully exercise their rights.

The conclusions call on the Commission in civil law matters to conduct a study aimed at reflecting on how the protection of vulnerable adults could be further strengthened, and to consider the possible need for a legal framework within the EU to facilitate free circulation of judicial and extra-judicial decisions on the protection of vulnerable adults in civil matters.

In criminal law matters, the conclusions invite the Commission to consider whether there is a need to strengthen the procedural safeguards for vulnerable adults and to carefully reflect on the need to identify common criteria for identifying vulnerable adults in criminal proceedings.

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