

European Council conclusions, 24-25 June 2021



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Indicative Leaders' Agenda 2021-2022



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EASO publishes a COI report:

Afghanistan – Security situation

The newly released [report](#) provides information on the security situation in Afghanistan, which is relevant for the assessment of international protection status determination, including refugee status and subsidiary protection.

The security situation in Afghanistan remains volatile. After the reduction in violence preceding the signing of the Doha agreement between the US and the Taliban on 29 February 2020, the Taliban resumed targeting government checkpoints and convoys. In terms of territorial control, the situation changes rapidly with the Taliban advancing in a growing number of Afghan districts. At the same time, civilians are continuously threatened by indiscriminate violence and targeted attacks.

✖ [Afghanistan: Security Situation Report](#) provides information about **relevant security trends in the period between 1 January 2020 and 31 May 2021**. The first part of the report provides a general overview of the security situation in the country, including conflict background and actors involved and main security incidents and their impact on the civilian population. The second part holds a geographic subdivision, focusing in greater detail on the security situation in all 34 provinces and Kabul city, and provides a description of the armed actors, recent security incidents as well as data on civilian casualties and conflict-induced displacements.

The report was co-drafted by COI experts from Belgium, Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, Cedoca (Centre for Documentation and Research); France, Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless persons (OFPRA), Information, Documentation and Research Division (DIDR); Poland, Department of Refugee and Asylum Proceedings, and researchers from EASO COI Sector, in accordance with the [EASO COI Report Methodology](#). The report was reviewed by experts from Denmark, Danish Immigration Service (DIS); Hungary, National Directorate-General of Origin Information Centre; Norway, Landinfo, the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre; Slovakia, Migration Office, Department of Documentation and Foreign Cooperation, and ACCORD, the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation.

In 2020, **Afghanistan** continued to remain the **second most important country of origin in EU+**. During the year, Afghans lodged 48 578 applications in the EU+ countries, which represented a decrease of 16 % compared to 2019 but constituted a higher number of applications compared to 2018. The recognition rate for Afghans was 53 % in 2020, an increase of 5 % from 2019. At the end of April 2021, around 41 100 Afghans were awaiting a first instance decision, accounting for 11 % of all pending cases in EU+. However, the backlog of Afghan cases pending longer than six months increased after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and remained above pre-pandemic levels.¹ While in 2020 Greece, Germany, and France were the main receiving countries for

applications lodged by Afghan nationals, the top three countries in the period between January and March 2021 were Germany, France, and Romania.²

Any further information may be obtained from the European Asylum Support Office on the following email address: press@easo.europa.eu

Notes

[1] This overview is based on EASO Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data

[2] Eurostat, Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex – annual aggregated data (rounded) as of 24 June 2021

The Cyber Blue Line – the new law enforcement frontier



It all started in 1854 at the Battle of Balaclava during the Crimean War when a red-uniformed Scottish Highland Regiment formed a long line and extraordinarily halted a Russian cavalry charge. This act of bravery inspired a phrase still in use today – the thin red line, which is echoed in the term thin blue line often used in the context of law enforcement – as a thinly stretched resource, resisting far greater forces. The thin blue line flag graphic has appeared on everything from police coffee cups to COVID-19 masks.

The ‘cavalry charge’ is now taking place in cyberspace, as a significant and ever increasing aspect of police work today is dedicated to providing safety and security online. This not only means protecting the rule of law and victims online, but also serving the online community. In doing so, law enforcement is confronted with a number of challenges that, at their core,

link to the question on where to draw the thin blue line in cyberspace.

Published today, the [Cyber Blue Line report](#) – the latest publication in the Europol Specialist Reporting series, highlights these challenges and identifies a number of pertinent issues which require debate, and thought leadership.

Join the discussion

From the thin red line, to the thin blue line, to the Cyber Blue Line: Where does responsibility now lie when it comes to maintaining secure and safe societies in cyberspace?

The two authors of the report – Prof. Dr. Mary Aiken and Dr. Philipp Amann, explore the changing ways in which policing could be approached, in the real world and cyberspace, in a continuously evolving technological upheaval.

Prof. Dr. Mary Aiken is a world-leading expert in Cyberpsychology – the study of the impact of technology on human behaviour. She is a Professor of Cyberpsychology and Department Chair at Capitol Technology University Washington DC, a Professor of Forensic Cyberpsychology at the University of East London, and an Adjunct Professor at the Geary Institute for Public Policy, University College Dublin, Ireland. Prof. Dr. Aiken is an Academic Advisor to Europol's European Cybercrime Centre (EC3). Prof. Dr. Aiken holds a PhD degree in Forensic Cyberpsychology, and a MSc in Cyberpsychology.

Dr. Philipp Amann is the Head of Expertise & Stakeholder Management at Europol's European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) and responsible for assessing and acting on relevant trends and threats related to cybercrime and cyber-security. Other key areas of responsibility include managing EC3's advisory groups, prevention & awareness and technology foresight. Dr. Amann holds a PhD degree in business informatics from the University of Vienna and a MSc in Forensic Computing and Cybercrime Investigation from the University College Dublin.

Europol, as the collective voice of European law enforcement, strives to provide a platform for important discussions by facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue to discuss responsibility, accountability, safety and security now mediated by technology.

Are you an academic or a think tank with an interest in this topic? Then please get in touch with us at press@europol.europa.eu to discuss how we could work together to discuss, debate and conceptualise the Cyber Blue Line.

The CoR welcomes the agreement keeping regional and local communities at the heart of EU agricultural policy



□ The efforts of the European Committee of the Regions contributed to ensure that regions remain key actors in shaping, implementing and assessing CAP strategic plans.

□□□ **Local communities' needs will weigh more in the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) investment decisions and regions will be among leading actors in shaping, implementing and assessing the national CAP strategic plans.** This crucial result was achieved thanks to the work of the CoR, its intense cooperation with the European Parliament and – more recently – with the EU Commission. Regional and local leaders are ready to use the new CAP to deliver the Green Deal on the ground but urge Member States to set adequate rules to make this happen. □

[Apostolos Tzitzikostas](#), President of the CoR, said: " *The voice and commitment of EU's regional and local leaders have made a difference in the final deal on the future CAP. The reform proposed in 2018 by the previous Commission risked undermining the impact of this crucial policy with a heavy centralisation. Thanks to our mobilisation and the decisive cooperation with the European Parliament, we can now reassure our citizens: the new EU's agricultural policy will listen to them and not be a territorially blind,*

top-down policy. Only a renewed partnership among EU, national and regional institutions can boost the recovery of rural areas and the greening of Europe's agriculture. "

The full involvement of regional authorities in the preparation and governance of the CAP plans, the possibility for Member States to designate Regional Managing Authorities for CAP interventions established at regional level and the setting up of regional monitoring committees constitute a clear improvement to the initial proposal of the CAP Strategic plan regulation. The preparation of Strategic plans is mandatory for Member States in order to benefit from the CAP financial resources.

"The proposal put forward by the CoR to include quantified environmental targets to be reached by 2027 in the CAP Strategic Plans regulation was not taken up. We therefore call on the EU Ministers for Agriculture to make the CAP a key instrument for delivering the European Green Deal: the national strategic plans should be approved by the Commission under the condition that they comply with the green deal objectives ", underlined [Guillaume Cros](#) (FR/Greens), Vice-President of the Regional Council of Occitanie and CoR rapporteur on the CAP reform.

The CoR welcomes the agreement reached on the common organization of the markets (CMO). As requested by the CoR, measures, such as the voluntary reduction of production, will be possible without waiting for another crisis. *" A large proportion of farmers are selling their products at a loss and have an income which fails to reflect the value of their work. In the absence of fair farm prices and with no economic recognition, young people will continue to shun farming. In a volatile market, market regulation is more effective and less costly than the retroactive triggering of measures "* explains **Guillaume Cros**.

Background information:

The CAP Strategic Plan regulation will define governance of the future CAP within the framework of the New Delivery Model. The European Committee of the Regions has repeatedly voiced its concerns regarding the lack of a common vision on the role of regional authorities in the governance of the future CAP. In the letters, co-signed by [Apostolos Tzitzikostas](#), President of the CoR, and [Ulrika Landergren](#) (SE/RE), Chair of the CoR's Commission for Natural Resources (NAT), the CoR called for European regions to play a key role in CAP management and for delivery to be kept up and even bolstered, particularly for the second pillar, so that policy choices can be tailored at a local level.

CoR members asked for the introduction of a clear role for regional authorities in the management of rural development interventions, [supported by the European Parliament in its resolution on the Common Agricultural Policy](#) .

On Monday 21 June, the European Court of Auditors released a [special report](#) stating that, during the programming period 2014-20, the CAP missed its objective of making the EU agriculture more climate-friendly as it mostly

finances measures with a low potential to mitigate climate change.

The [regional and local barometer](#) published by the [European Committee of the Regions](#) in October 2020 found that 33% of EU citizens want regions and towns to have more influence on EU agricultural and rural development policy.

Contact:

Wioletta Wojewodzka

Tel. +32 473 843 986

wioletta.wojewodzka@cor.europa.eu

Matteo Miglietta

Tel. +32 (0)470 895 382

matteo.miglietta@cor.europa.eu

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