

## [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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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

## Notes

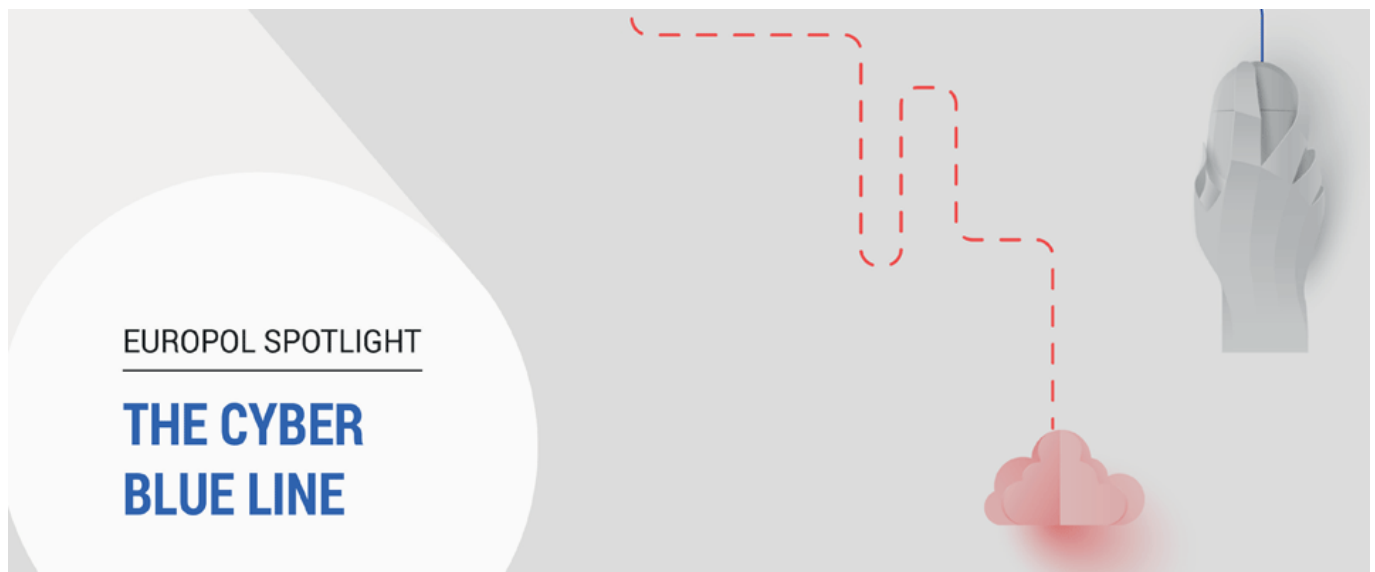
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[1] This overview is based on EASO Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data

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

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# 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](mailto:press@europol.europa.eu) to discuss how we could work together to discuss, debate and conceptualise the Cyber Blue Line.

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# [#CoRplenary: Local leaders to discuss democracy, the European way of life, and the Conference on the Future of Europe](#)



*Also on #CoRplenary agenda: Resolution on cross-border cooperation, and recommendations on Green Deal dossiers, digital services, smart mobility, and regional airports.*

Three vice-presidents of the European Commission will address the European Committee of the Regions on 30 June, discussing efforts to strengthen and deepen democracy, build inclusive societies, and improve EU legislation. Vice-President Věra Jourová will present the European Democracy Action Plan to empower citizens and build more resilient democracies, Vice-President Margaritis Schinas will highlight the role of education and culture in protecting the European way of life, while Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič will set out the European Commission's work programme as well as the Commission's efforts to embed strategic foresight into its work. Members of the CoR will also discuss the Conference on the Future of Europe with the three MEPs leading the work of the European Parliament in the EU-wide consultation.

[Follow the plenary on the CoR website](#)

30 June: Debate with Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the European Commission, on better regulation, foresight and the European Commission's work programme

[Maroš Šefčovič](#), Vice-President of the European Commission, will update local and regional leaders on the progress of the EU's Better Regulation Agenda, including the EU's efforts to improve outreach to regions and other stakeholders and how the Commission is seeking to integrate strategic foresight into its agenda. He will also discuss the European Commission's Work Programme 2022; the CoR will at the plenary session adopt a resolution on the Work Programme. CoR contributions to the Better Regulation Agenda include its pioneering feedback mechanism, RegHub 2.0.

30 June: Debate with Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President of the European Commission, on promoting the European way of life

The CoR will welcome [Margaritis Schinas](#), Vice-President of the European Commission for Promoting our European Way of Life, to its plenary for a debate on the role of education and culture in creating inclusive societies.

30 June: Debate with members of the executive board members of the Conference on the Future of Europe

MEPs [Manfred Weber](#) (DE/EPP), [Guy Verhofstadt](#) (BE/RE), and [Iratxe García](#)

[Pérez](#) (ES/S&D) will join the European Committee of the Regions to discuss the recently launched Conference on the Future of Europe. The Conference will entail months consultations to identify areas of life on which citizens would like to see the EU focus its work, leading to a set of recommendations for EU decision-makers in spring 2022. The three MEPs are members of the Conference's executive board. The CoR, which is organising citizens' dialogues across the Union as part of its contribution to an open, inclusive, transparent and structured debate, will be represented by 18 members in the Conference's concluding plenary.

30 June: Debate with Věra Jourová, Vice-President of the European Commission, on the European Democracy Action Plan

[Věra Jourová](#), Vice-President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency, will on 30 June discuss the European Democracy Action Plan, which seeks to protect the integrity of electoral processes, involve and empower the public, strengthen the media, and address challenges such as disinformation. At the plenary, CoR members will adopt recommendations on the European Democracy Action Plan drafted by Alexandra Dulciewicz (PL/EPP), mayor of Gdańsk, and recommendations on the EU's strategy to strengthen the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, drafted by Jean-Luc Vanraes (BE/RE), member of Uccle Municipal Council.

#### KEY DEBATES

- Wednesday, 30 June, 3.00 p.m.: Debate on Better Regulation, Foresight and the European Commission Work Programme for 2022, with Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the European Commission for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight.
- Wednesday, 30 June, 4.00 p.m.: Debate on promoting European values through culture and education, with Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President of the European Commission for Promoting our European Way of Life.
- Wednesday, 30 June, 5.30 p.m.: Debate on the Conference on the Future of Europe, with MEPs Manfred Weber (DE/EPP), Guy Verhofstadt (BE/Renew Europe), and Iratxe García Pérez (ES/S&D).
- Wednesday, 30 June, 6.20 p.m.: Debate on the European Democracy Action Plan, with Věra Jourová, Vice-President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency.

#### RESOLUTIONS FOR ADOPTION

- On the European Commission Work Programme for 2022.
- On the Future of Cross-Border Cooperation.

#### OPINIONS FOR ADOPTION

- European Democracy Action Plan. *Rapporteur*: [Alexandra Dulciewicz](#) (PL/EPP), mayor of Gdańsk.
- Communication on the new strategy to strengthen the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. *Rapporteur*: [Jean-Luc Vanraes](#) (BE/RE), member of Uccle Municipal Council.
- On the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets

- Act. Rapporteur: [Rodi Kratsa](#) (EL/EPP), Governor of Ionian Islands Region.
- □An Action Plan for the Social Economy. Rapporteur: [Mikel Irujo Amezaga](#) (ES/EA), Director-General for External Action of the Government of Navarre.
  - □Future plan for care workers and care services – local and regional opportunities in the context of a European challenge. Rapporteur: [Heinrich Dorner](#) (AT/PES), member of the State Government of Burgenland.
  - **Delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.** Rapporteur: [Ricardo Rio](#) (PT/EPP), Mayor of Braga.
  - **Forging a climate-resilient Europe – the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change.** Rapporteur: [Markku Markkula](#) (FI/EPP), Chair of the Espoo City Board and President of the Helsinki Region.
  - □Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambition towards COP26. Rapporteur: [Vincent Chauvet](#) (FR/RE), Mayor of Autun.
  - □Resilience of critical entities. Rapporteur: [Mario Guarente](#) (IT/ECR), Mayor of Potenza.
  - □Revised Trans-European Energy Infrastructure Regulation fit for the Green and Digital Transition. Rapporteur: [Robert Sorin Negoită](#) (RO/EPP), Mayor of District 3, Bucharest Municipality.
  - □Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy. Rapporteur: [Robert Van Asten](#) (NL/RE), Alderman of The Hague.
  - **The future of regional airports- challenges and opportunities.** Rapporteur: [Władysław Ortyl](#) (PL/ECR), President of the Podkarpackie Region and president of the ECR group.
  - □Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood: A new Agenda for the Mediterranean. Rapporteur: [Vincenzo Bianco](#) (IT/PES), member of Catania Municipal Council.

Practical information:

- Location: Hybrid online and in-person – Jacques Delors Building (Room JDE 52), European Committee of the Regions, rue Belliard 99-101, 1040 Brussels
- Date: Wednesday, 30 June – Thursday, 1 July 2021.
- Background material: The plenary [agenda](#) and [opinions](#), with amendments.
- Webstreaming: On the [website](#) of the CoR.
- App: The European Committee of the Regions app is downloadable via the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store.

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