

Transparency Register: Second political meeting opens way for negotiations in the New Year

Following the Council's approval of its negotiating mandate on 6 December, the three institutions reiterated their full commitment to increasing the transparency of the activities of interest representatives at EU level. At this second political meeting, which closed the pre-negotiation phase, they also stressed the importance of conducting the upcoming interinstitutional talks in an open and inclusive manner.

European Commission First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"I am pleased that the European Parliament and the Council have agreed to start formal negotiations in the New Year on our proposal for a mandatory Transparency Register. People have a right to know who is seeking to influence EU decisions. The Commission has been applying the 'not on the Register, no meetings' rule for some time and it works. A commitment is now needed from all three Institutions to make interactions with lobbyists conditional on being in the Register."*

The meeting was organised at the initiative of the Estonian Presidency of the Council, which highlighted the main aspects of Council's negotiating mandate. The Commission and Parliament welcomed the Council's readiness to enter negotiations, and the three institutions agreed to start negotiations as soon as possible.

Background

Since 2011, the Commission and Parliament have jointly operated a public register for interest representatives, aiming to increase the transparency and accountability of the EU decision-making process. The Council has been an observer to the current scheme since 2014.

The European Commission presented its proposal for a new inter-institutional agreement on a mandatory Transparency Register for lobbyists covering the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on 28 September 2016. The proposal aims to strengthen the framework for a transparent and ethical interaction between interest representatives and the three institutions participating in the new scheme.

On 15 June 2017, the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament, bringing together the Parliament's President and political group leaders, approved the Parliament's negotiating mandate, following endorsement by a Parliament contact group made up of representatives of all the political groups. The Parliament's mandate underlines the need for a strong transparency message from the three institutions and a meaningful outcome of the negotiations.

The Council adopted its negotiating mandate on 6 December 2017 and also decided to make it public.

For more information

[Commission proposal for a Joint Transparency Register](#)

[Ms Hilde Vandevoorde appointed National Member for Belgium](#)

The Hague, 12 December 2017

Ms Hilde Vandevoorde was appointed National Member for Belgium at Eurojust for a five-year period. In accordance with Article 2(1) of the Eurojust Decision, the appointment was approved by the Secretary General of the Council of the European Union. Ms Vandevoorde officially took up her duties on 7 December 2017.

Prior to her appointment, Ms Vandevoorde was a member of the Federal Prosecutor's Office, where she served as Head of the Special Missions Unit in charge of special investigation techniques, such as surveillance, undercover investigations and Covered Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) (informants). She was also responsible for the witness protection programme and review of the federal judicial police.

After her law studies at Brussels University, Ms Vandevoorde was admitted to the Brussels Bar in 1986, and worked as a defence lawyer for almost six years. In 1992, she became a prosecutor specialised in organised crime and terrorism cases and special investigation techniques at the local prosecutor's office in Brussels.

Ms Vandevoorde, a national magistrate in Belgium since 2000, joined the Federal Prosecutor's Office in 2002, coordinating organised crime and terrorism cases on national level and handling international requests for mutual legal assistance. Since its establishment in 2001, Ms Vandevoorde brought cases to Eurojust.

Ms Vandevoorde commented on her appointment : *'Fighting organised crime and terrorism at European level is a logical continuation of my work on national level. I am looking forward to handling Belgian cases at Eurojust and coordinating with the other EU countries and beyond.'*

Ms Vandevoorde is replacing Michèle Coninx, who was National Member for Belgium since its beginnings as Pro-Eurojust in 2001.

Photo: © Eurojust

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Photo: © Eurojust

Press Release: Afghanistan in Focus

EASO publishes two Country of Origin Information (COI) reports on the targeting of individuals in Afghanistan.

Today, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) published two Country of Origin Information (COI) Reports entitled '[Afghanistan – Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict](#)' and '[Afghanistan – Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms](#)'. In 2016, Afghanistan ranked second in the top countries of origin in EU+ countries ^[1], with more than 175,000 applicants. In the first ten months of 2017, more than 40,000 applications have been lodged in the EU+ by Afghans, ranking third (in the overall applications to date). In addition, Afghan applications constitute the largest backlog of all countries of origin. At the end of October 2017, there were more than 64,000 asylum applications from Afghan nationals in the EU+ pending at first instance.

The reports were drafted by COI researchers from EASO in accordance with the [EASO COI Report Methodology](#). The report was reviewed by COI researchers from Sweden and UNHCR. In addition, a review of the report was carried out by Afghanistan expert Neamat Nojumi and the Human Rights Service of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The terms of reference of these reports were defined based on information needs identified by asylum policy experts in EU+ countries and UNHCR.

Both reports discuss the situation and treatment of individuals by different actors in the conflict and in society. The report 'Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict' deals with the modus operandi, methods and targeting strategies used by armed actors, both on the side of the insurgents as on the side of the government, in the context of the conflict and the possibilities for individuals to escape such targeting. The report 'Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms' is focused on socio-legal structures and actors in society and how such elements treat issues such as crime, gender-based violence, harmful traditional practices, disputes, transgressions of social norms, and the possibility for individuals to avoid targeting. Special attention is paid to the situation of women throughout both reports, and a separate chapter covers certain issues affecting children.

Earlier this year, EASO already published a COI Report, titled [Afghanistan – Key socio-economic indicators, state protection, and mobility in Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat City \(August 2017\)](#). An update of the [EASO COI Report Afghanistan – Security Situation \(November 2016\)](#) is expected shortly.

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

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

[1] EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland

Letter to IASB on Exposure Draft Amendments to IAS 8

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