

**Annual General Conference 2022, 28 June, Brussels**  
**Asylum in Europe: Strategies for Resistance and Resilience**

Rue du Parnasse 19, 1050 Bruxelles

**Workshop 4: Lisbon room, 11h00 – 13h00**

**Title:** Treatment of Afghan asylum seekers in Europe

**Lead organisation(s):** ECRE

**Objectives:**

- To discuss European countries' approach toward Afghan asylum seekers and policy changes since the events of 2021
- To explore the EUAA's country guidance on Afghanistan
- To examine EUMS practices on the treatment of Afghans with a particular focus on Belgium.
- To reinforce advocacy on Afghanistan through gathering input on the above elements.

**Moderator:** Ms. Rahela Sidiqi, Executive Director, Rahela Trust and Omid International, UK,

**Speakers:**

- Ms. Maria Ferrante, Protection Officer at the UNHCR Representation for EU Affairs, Belgium, Ireland Luxembourg and the Netherlands.
- Ms. Tine Claus, Director, Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen, Belgium
- Ms. Sahar Nasiri, Political Advisor to the left group in the European Parliament
- Mr. Reshad Jalali, Policy Officer, European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)

**Structure/method:** Following input from the speakers, there will be a moderated discussion to which all participants are welcome to contribute.

**Description:**

The situation in Afghanistan remains dire and uncertain. It has been almost a year since the Taliban seized control; there have been mixed responses from the European Union (EU) and its Member States (MS). While humanitarian aid has significantly increased, little has been done on providing protection for Afghans at risk and Afghans seeking international protection in their territories.

Throughout 2021, Afghan nationals remained the second-largest group of asylum seekers in the EU+ countries. There was a significant increase in applications in the last months of 2021 because in some EUMS Afghan evacuees had to go through asylum procedures. While it is positive that EUMS provide protection to Afghans, serious concerns also arise, given that the majority of Afghan asylum seekers face challenges in Europe, including pushbacks and other difficulties in access to the territory, the "asylum lottery", and long waiting times in the asylum procedure.

There are worrying developments in some countries, where the examination of asylum cases has resumed. In Denmark, an Afghan asylum seeker was rejected on the ground that Afghanistan is safe for him to return to. Belgium recently announced that it will no longer grant subsidiary protection for Afghan asylum seekers on the basis of the security situation or socio-economic and humanitarian circumstances in Afghanistan. This may lead to the rejection of asylum applicants and leave people in limbo. Against this backdrop, ECRE is organising the workshop to discuss the latest developments on the approaches to Afghan asylum seekers within Europe and to assess EUMS+ practices concerning the treatment of Afghan asylum applicants. The discussion will inform ECRE's ongoing advocacy work on the EU's response to events concerning Afghanistan.