Terrorism in the EU: terror attacks, deaths and arrests in 2019
The number of terrorist attacks and victims of terror in the EU continued to decrease in 2019. Check out our graph to see the evolution of jihadist terrorism since 2014.

There were 119 terrorist attempts in Europe in 2019 counting the ones that were successfully carried out and those that failed or were foiled. Of those, 21 are attributed to jihadist terrorism. Although they represent only a sixth of all attacks in the EU, jihadist terrorists were responsible for all 10 deaths and 26 out 27 people who got injured.

About half of terrorist attacks in the EU are ethno-nationalist and separatist (57 in 2019, all but one in Northern Ireland) with the other main categories of terrorists being far-right (6) and far-left...
The numbers of victims of jihadist terrorism has further decreased since its peak in 2015 and in 2019 the number of attacks foiled by member state authorities was double the number completed or failed. However, according to Manuel Navarrete, the head of Europol’s counter-terrorism centre, the threat level is still relatively high.

Navarete presented Europol’s annual report on terrorist trends to Parliament’s civil liberties committee on 23 June. He said that there is the same trend of online communities instigating violence in right wing and jihadist milieus: “For the jihadists, terrorists are holy war martyrs, for right wing extremists, they are the saints of a racial war.”

Fewer terrorist attacks and terrorism victims

Ten people lost their lives in three completed jihadist attacks in the EU last year in Utrecht, Paris and London, compared to 13 deaths in seven attacks in 2018.

Eight EU countries suffered terrorist attempts in 2019.

Twice as many foiled attacks as completed or failed ones

In 2019, four jihadist attacks failed while 14 incidents were foiled, compared to one failed attack and 16 foiled ones in 2018. In both years, the number of plots foiled by authorities is double the number of completed or failed attacks. Jihadist-inspired attacks mostly target public places and police or military officers.

The completed and failed jihadist attacks were mostly carried out using knives and firearms. All plots involving the use of explosives were disrupted. The majority of the perpetrators were acting or were planning to act alone.

In 2019, 436 individuals were arrested on suspicion of offences related to jihadist terrorism. The arrests occurred in 15 countries. By far the most in France (202), between 32 and 56 in Spain, Austria and Germany and between 18 and 27 arrests in Italy, Denmark and the Netherlands. This figure is also lower than the previous year when a total of 511 people were arrested.

The threat of radicalised prisoners

People in prison for terrorist offences and those radicalised in prison pose a threat. In many European countries, a number of radicalised prisoners will soon be released and this could increase the security threat, Navarrette warned. In 2019 one failed attack, one foiled and one successful one were carried out by radicalised prisoners.
EU cooperation

Reinforced cooperation between EU countries and information sharing have helped to prevent attacks or limit their impact, according to the head of Europol’s counter-terrorism centre. “Because of the information exchange, because of the connections that we have, member states manage to be early on the scene to identify the risks. For me it’s a good sign that two thirds of the attacks were identified and foiled thanks to the cooperation that is in place.”

Check out EU measures to fight terrorism

No systematic use of migration routes by terrorists

Some have been concerned about the risk posed by migrants trying to enter Europe. Europol’s report reiterates that as in previous years there are no signs of systematic use of irregular migration by terrorist organisations. In fact, in more than 70% of arrests related to jihadist terrorism, for which citizenship was reported to Europol, the individuals were nationals of the EU country in question.

Find out more
Terrorism Situation and Trend Report