



Daily



20
MAR
13:51 UTC

MAX - Europe Region Daily Summary - March 20, 2025

Highlights of the Day

- **Austria:** LGBTQ+ solidarity protest slated at Hungarian Embassy in Vienna at 19:00 (local time) on March 20; maintain heightened vigilance
- **Belarus:** Two individuals, including foreign national, placed on trial for “extremism” on March 17; risk of arbitrary detention remains high
- **UK:** Government announce social security system reforms on March 18; likely to trigger anti-austerity protests in near-to-medium term
- **Ukraine:** Zelensky agrees to halt strikes on energy facilities after call with Trump on March 19; implementation of deal likely to be delayed

Actionable Items

Austria: LGBTQ+ solidarity protest slated at Hungarian Embassy in Vienna at 19:00 (local time) on March 20; maintain heightened vigilance

Current Situation - On March 20, a protest in support of the Hungarian LGBTQ+ community is slated to take place in front of the Hungarian Embassy, located at 6 Bankgasse in Vienna at 19:00 (local time). The protest aims to condemn Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's plan to ban LGBTQ+ events, including Budapest Pride, announced on March 15.

Assessments & Forecast - Based on the precedent and media coverage, the protest is likely to attract a turnout ranging from the low to mid-thousand. Given the heightened sentiments surrounding the protest issue, coupled with the potential participation of Hungarian protesters and radical left-wing activists, the slated protest carries a latent risk of unrest in the form of localized clashes between protesters and security officials. As such, a bolstered security presence is liable to be deployed near the Hungarian Embassy as a precautionary measure. In the event of escalating unrest, authorities are likely to use forcible dispersal methods, including conducting arrests. Localized disruptions to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic can be anticipated in the vicinity of the Hungarian Embassy from the evening hours onwards.

Recommendations - Those operating or residing in Vienna on March 20 are advised to maintain heightened vigilance in the vicinity of the Hungarian Embassy due to the latent potential for unrest during the slated protest. Allot for associated disruptions to travel from the evening hours onwards.

Source: [OTS](#)

Cyprus: Road closures on Limassol-Nicosia A1 motorway due to maintenance work on March 20-21; allot for disruptions

Current Situation - The Department of Public Works announced partial road closures on the Limassol-Nicosia A1 motorway for maintenance work, starting on March 20 at 21:00 (local time) and lasting until 05:30 on March 21. During the maintenance work, all three lanes of the motorway in the direction of Nicosia will be closed for approximately 3 km, with traffic diverted to a single lane in the opposite direction, operating as two-way traffic. Additionally, the entrance and exit to and from Kotsiatis will be closed, with traffic rerouted through the old Nicosia-Limassol B1 road. Authorities have urged drivers to follow temporary road signs, maintain a safe speed, keep a proper distance from other vehicles, allow extra travel time, and consider alternative routes where possible.

Recommendations - Those operating or residing in Cyprus on March 20-21 are advised to allot for disruptions on the Limassol-Nicosia A1 motorway due to maintenance work during the overnight hours

Source: [Department of Public Works](#)

Greece: Municipal workers to hold 24-hour nationwide strike, protest march in Athens on March 21; allot for disruptions

Current Situation - On March 21, unionized municipal workers affiliated with the Panhellenic Federation of Workers in Local Government Organizations (POE-OTA) will stage a 24-hour nationwide strike. An associated protest march is scheduled in Athens, starting at 11:00 (local time) in front of the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family, before proceeding to the Ministry of Interior. The strike and the associated protest are being held to demand job security for municipal workers and secure funding to continue municipal social services.

Assessments & Forecast - Based on precedent, the protest in Athens is likely to garner a turnout in the mid-hundreds, while the nationwide labor action is expected to be widely adhered to. Additionally, spontaneous small-scale protests are also likely to occur in other major urban centers throughout the day. Given the nature of the issue, the slated protest is expected to transpire largely peacefully and without instances of major unrest. Regardless, a bolstered police presence is expected to be deployed along the protest march to monitor the proceedings. Disruptions to travel should be anticipated near the aforementioned protest march during the morning hours.

Recommendations - Those operating or residing in Athens on March 21 are advised to allot for disruptions in the vicinity of the aforementioned protest march from Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family to the Ministry of Interior during late morning hours.

Source: [MAX Security Report](#)

Italy: Unionized public transportation workers to hold 24-hour nationwide strike on March 21; allot for disruptions

Current Situation - Unionized public transportation workers are slated to hold a 24-hour nationwide strike, including in Rome and Milan on March 21. The participants will demand an increase in wages, reduced weekly working hours without salary reductions, and enhanced workplace health and safety measures for both workers and passengers. Further details are available [here](#).

Assessments & Forecast - Based on the mobilizational capabilities of the organizing unions, the planned strike is expected to be widely adhered to. With that, significant disruptions to local public transportation services, including delays and cancelations, are expected nationwide. Limited disruptions are also likely to continue beyond the scheduled strike period and day due to backlogs. Increased demand for alternative modes of transport, including taxis and rental vehicles, can be expected. Additionally, traffic will likely be heavier than usual as an increased number of commuters will opt for private transportation. Although no specific demonstrations have been announced as of writing, spontaneous gatherings or peaceful protests by striking workers could take place near major transportation hubs, particularly in Rome and Milan. Such protests are likely to transpire largely peacefully.

Recommendations - Those operating or residing in Italy on March 21 are advised to allot for disruptions to local public transportation services nationwide due to the slated labor action.

Source: [Quotidiano.net](https://www.quotidiano.net)

Poland: Anti-government protests slated to be held in Krakow, Warsaw on March 21-22; maintain heightened vigilance

Current Situation - On March 21, activists associated with the Forum Mlodych PiS Warszawa, the youth wing of the opposition Prawo i Sprawiedliwosc (PiS) party, will stage a protest at ul. Nowowiejska 26 B in Warsaw from 09.30 (local time). This protest has been organized against the alleged corruption or mismanagement in the government. Separately, an anti-government protest will take place at Plac Matejki in Krakow on March 22 at 16:00. Further details are available [here](#).

Assessments & Forecast - Based on the mobilizational capabilities of the groups involved and precedent, these protests are likely to witness a turnout in the range of mid-to-high hundreds each. Given heightened sentiments over the protest issues, the demonstrations carry a latent potential for clashes between protesters and police officials. As such, a bolstered security presence can be anticipated in the vicinity of the slated protest locations to monitor proceedings. Should unrest escalate, police are liable to deploy forceful crowd dispersal measures, including conducting mass arrests. Disruptions to vehicular and pedestrian movement are anticipated in the vicinity of the protest locations during the slated hours.

Recommendations - Those operating or residing in Warsaw and Krakow on March 21-22 are advised to maintain heightened vigilance in the vicinity of the aforementioned protest locations due to the latent potential for unrest at slated anti-government protests.

Source: [MAX Security Report](#)

Notable Events

Belarus: Two individuals, including foreign national, placed on trial for “extremism” on March 17; risk of arbitrary detention remains high

Current Situation - On March 17, the Minsk City Court began proceedings against an Estonian national and a Belarusian citizen accused of “creating an extremist formation or participating in it,” “inciting enmity,” and “insulting the President.” Both individuals are linked to a non-profit funding organization that provided assistance to “victims of political repression in Belarus”. The organization has been classified as “extremist” by the Belarusian government.

Assessments & Forecast - Given the nature of the organization, the development reflects continued efforts by the government led by President Aleksandr Lukashenko to crack down on domestic dissent. This also highlights the high risk of arbitrary detentions

targeting foreign nationals, especially those linked to journalism or non-profits, usually under the pretext of the country's "anti-extremism" laws under which any anti-government entity can be enlisted as extremist in nature. There are 257 such "extremist formations" recognized by the government, of which 89 were added in 2024. Belarus also currently holds over 1,200 "political prisoners", including 36 foreign citizens. The recent development is liable to lead to backlash from human rights groups, with activists expected to hold protests outside Belarusian embassies in Europe.

Source: [Belsat](#)

Europe: Charges announced over bribery of EU MPs to promote Chinese telecom policies on March 18; likely to strain EU-China relations

Current Situation - On March 18, the Belgian Federal Public Prosecutor announced charges against five individuals, suspected of bribing European Parliament (EP) members to promote commercial policies for a Chinese telecom company in Europe. They are charged with active corruption, criminal organization, and money laundering. The prosecutor's office stated that the corruption started in 2021. Previously, on March 13, two offices in the EP were sealed off for investigation. On March 14, the EP temporarily banned the company's lobbyists from its premises.

Assessments & Forecast - This incident is likely to strain EU-China relations, prompting stricter regulations and oversight of Chinese companies in the EU, along with potential retaliatory measures from China. The involvement of EP lawmakers is liable to erode public trust in EU institutions, likely leading to enhanced transparency requirements for lobbying and a review of foreign influence within the EP. This also highlights the EU's vulnerability to external influence, exemplified by the "Qatargate" political scandal, involving allegations that EP officials, lobbyists, and their families were influenced by the governments of Qatar, Morocco, and Mauritania, engaging in corruption, money laundering, and organized crime.

Source: [Euro News](#)

Ireland: Terrorist risk assessment remains moderate, per Department of Justice's March 18 report; likely influenced by regionwide trends

Current Situation - According to a March 18 report by the Department of Justice, the overall terrorist risk assessment for Ireland remains "moderate", including from Republican paramilitary and Islamist groups. Authorities have linked the Islamist threat to "continued instability" in the Middle East, radicalized individuals returning from conflict zones, and domestic radicalization.

Assessments & Forecast - The official report stating that the risk of terrorism in Ireland is moderate is notable as the country has not recorded terror attacks in recent years. As such, the risk assessment is likely also influenced by recent trends in nearby countries.

Indeed, the Islamist threat in Ireland being moderate is likely influenced by a regionwide increase in Islamist militancy following the October 2023 attack in Israel, as evidenced by authorities linking the threat in Ireland to conflicts in the Middle East. Similarly, the threat emanating from Republican paramilitary groups being moderate is likely due to the elevated risk of Republican paramilitary activity in neighboring Northern Ireland. Additionally, an increase in far-right attacks against asylum accommodations also likely contributed to the moderate terrorism threat perception.

Source: [gov.ie](https://www.gov.ie)

Romania: George Simion declared as sole far-right Presidential candidate after Gavrila withdrew on March 19; likely due to his popularity

Current Situation - On March 19, far-right parties Alianta pentru Unirea Romanilor (AUR) and Partidul Oamenilor Tineri (POT) endorsed George Simion as their joint candidate for the May 4 presidential election after POT leader Anamaria Gavrila withdrew from the race. Earlier, authorities rejected the candidacies of two far-right candidates, Diana Sosoaca and Calin Georgescu, the latter being the leading contender in the polls. Meanwhile, Crin Antonescu and Nicusor Dan are running as independent candidates on centrist platforms.

Assessments & Forecast- Simion's nomination as the sole far-right candidate was expected, as he and Gavrila had agreed that one would withdraw if both were approved and due to his stronger popularity among right-wing voters. Indeed, recent opinion polls suggest that Simion is likely to win the first round, benefiting from a strong support base. However, Bucharest Mayor Nicusor Dan, running independently, is projected to win the runoff due to his broader electoral appeal. Regardless, given the highly polarized political landscape in Romania, frequent large-scale rallies are expected to take place nationwide, especially in Bucharest, in the coming weeks, with an elevated risk of counter-protests and potential unrest.

Source: [Barrons](https://www.barrons.com)

Russia: Ukrainian UAVs attack energy facility in Saratov region on March 20; strikes likely to persist before partial ceasefire

Current Situation- On March 20, Russian media reported that UAVs attacked an oil refinery in Engels, as well as infrastructure in Saratov city in the Saratov region. Later that day, regional authorities confirmed that a local hospital in Engels was damaged, injuring one person. Reports also indicated that a military airfield in Engels was targeted.

Assessments & Forecast - The above indicates Ukraine's continued targeting of key Russian military infrastructure, particularly long-range aviation bases. The reported damage to civilian infrastructure highlights the collateral impact beyond military targets. That this attack comes after Russia and Ukraine agreed to the possibility of a temporary

ceasefire indicates both sides will maintain pressure despite diplomatic engagements. Given Saratov Governor Roman Busargin's statement calling the Saratov attack "the most massive UAV attack on Saratov and Engels since the war began," Moscow is likely to retaliate with intensified UAV and missile strikes on Ukraine. Further aerial strikes on Russian infrastructure, including refineries, are likely before a partial ceasefire on energy infrastructure, while attacks on military bases and logistics hubs will persist as Kyiv seeks to disrupt Russian operations.

Source: [DW](#)

Ukraine: Zelensky agrees to halt strikes on energy facilities after call with Trump on March 19; implementation of deal likely to be delayed

Current Situation - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky confirmed that Kyiv was ready to accept a mutual halt on strikes targeting energy infrastructure, during an hour-long phone call with President Trump on March 19. Moreover, Trump suggested that the USA could be "very helpful in running" Ukrainian power plants "with its electricity and utility expertise." He further stated that "American ownership" of the plants would ensure protection of the facilities.

Assessments & Forecast - While Russia and Ukraine have, in essence, agreed to halt strikes on energy infrastructure, the partial ceasefire remains vulnerable to loopholes as the exact contours of the deal remain unclear. Considering key details are yet to be ascertained, associated negotiations are likely to extend over several days or weeks with aerial attacks likely to continue. Furthermore, Trump's proposal regarding US ownership of Ukrainian power plants is likely indicative of Washington's attempts to pursue its economic interests, especially the stalled progress in the US-Ukraine minerals deal. While Ukraine is seeking to maintain a positive bilateral relationship with the USA, the potential for Kyiv to agree to US ownership of Ukrainian power plants remains uncertain.

Source: [CNN](#)

UK: Government announce social security system reforms on March 18; likely to trigger anti-austerity protests in near-to-medium term

Current Situation - On March 18, Work and Pensions Secretary Liz Kendall announced reforms to Britain's social security system aimed at saving five billion GBP annually by 2030. Notable proposed changes include stricter eligibility for Personal Independence Payments (PIP) from November 2026, scrapping work capability assessments by 2028, and halving new incapacity benefits by 2026, with existing payments frozen at GBP 97 until 2029. The government argues these changes will reduce public spending and encourage employment.

Assessments & Forecast - While these reforms align with the government's fiscal consolidation goals, these are expected to draw significant backlash and criticism from

Labour's traditional supporters, including trade unions and disability rights groups. These reforms are also likely to deepen existing divisions within the Labour Party, particularly between left-wing and centrist MPs, with many on the left openly criticizing the proposal. Furthermore, reports indicate that many MPs have privately raised concerns, reflecting internal unease. However, with Labour holding 404 out of 650 seats, these tensions are unlikely to threaten government stability. Regardless, the risk of anti-austerity protests and potential strikes remains elevated in the near to medium term.

Source: [Reuters](#)

Other Developments

- On March 17, a boycott campaign was held in **Sweden** against major grocery brands to protest high food prices. This highlights the growing use of boycott campaigns regionwide in response to rising costs - especially with regard to food.

Notable Dates

3
APR Switzerland Holiday: Nafelser Fahrt

9
APR Kosovo Holiday: Constitution Day

14
APR Switzerland Event: Sechelauten

18
APR Europe Holiday: Good Friday

20
APR Europe Holiday: Easter Sunday

21
APR Europe Holiday: Easter Monday
