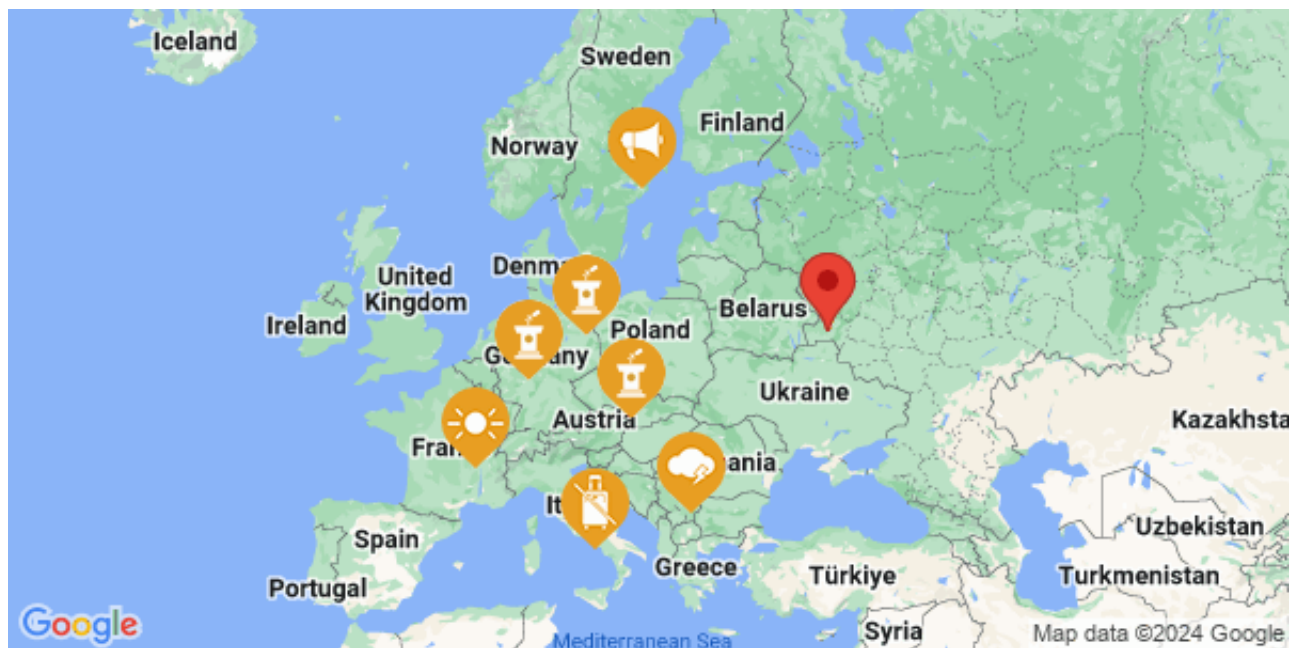




## Daily



23

JUN

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## MAX - Europe Region Daily Summary - June 23, 2024

### Highlights of the Day

- **Europe:** Red, orange alerts issued for adverse weather conditions in multiple countries regionwide on June 23-25; remain cognizant of updates
- **France:** RN candidate assaulted while campaigning in Saint-Etienne, per June 21 reports; risk of political violence to remain elevated
- **Russia & Ukraine:** UAV attack on Russia's Bryansk region, air strike in Kyiv region on June 23; Kyiv to continue targeting border regions
- **Slovakia:** Government approves bill to dissolve public broadcaster per June 21 reports; protests likely in coming days

### Actionable Items

**Europe:** Red, orange alerts issued for adverse weather conditions in multiple countries regionwide on June 23-25; remain cognizant of updates

**Current Situation**– Meteoalarm, Europe’s regional weather service, has issued red and orange alerts, the highest and second-highest on a three-tier scale, in multiple countries through June 25. In southern Serbia and southern Romania, red alerts for extreme heat are in effect through June 24, with temperatures of up to 39 degrees Celsius. Authorities have warned of the risk of power blackouts, which were recorded in affected countries on June 21. Orange alerts for extreme heat and thunderstorms are in effect in Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Romania through June 24. Orange alerts for thunderstorms are also in place in central and northern Italy through June 25. Separately, an orange alert for wind is in place for the Velebit channel region of Croatia through June 24. Additionally, in Greece, authorities have warned of a very high risk for wildfires in the Region of Attica and Central Greece (Evia) on June 23. Further details are available [here](#) (in Greek).

**Recommendations** – Those operating or residing in the aforementioned countries in Europe on June 23-25 are advised to remain cognizant of authorities’ updates regarding weather-related risks and allot for associated disruptions to travel and services.

#### **Sweden: Pro-Palestinian protests slated in Malmo, Stockholm on June 23-24; maintain heightened vigilance**

**Current situation** – Reports indicate that protests related to the Israel-Hamas conflict will be held in Sweden on June 23-24. In Stockholm, pro-Palestinian activists will stage a protest march from 14:00, at Sergels Torg on June 23. In Malmo, pro-Palestinian activists will stage a protest in front of an optic company on Jagershillgatan at 15:00 on June 24 over the company’s alleged ties to Israel

**Assessment & Forecast** – Based on precedent, the protests are expected to garner turnouts ranging from the mid-to-high hundreds. In addition to the aforementioned protests, the potential of spontaneous pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel protests remains elevated regionwide. Given heightened sentiments surrounding the protest issue, any planned or spontaneous demonstrations carry an elevated potential for unrest. Authorities are expected to deploy a bolstered security presence near protest locations to monitor proceedings. If unrest escalates, police may use forcible crowd dispersal methods, including conducting arrests. Disruptions to travel should be anticipated near the protest locations.

**Recommendation** – Those operating or residing in the aforementioned cities in Sweden on June 23-24 are advised to maintain heightened vigilance near protests due to the elevated potential for unrest. Allot for associated travel disruptions in the vicinity of the protest locations.

## Notable Events

**France: RN candidate assaulted while campaigning in Saint-Etienne, per June 21 reports; risk of political violence to remain elevated**

**Current Situation** - Per June 21 reports, Herve Breuil, a candidate for Marine Le Pen's far-right Rassemblement National (RN) party, was physically assaulted while campaigning in Saint-Etienne, Loire department, on June 19. Breuil said he was attacked by four individuals dressed in black and masked. He was hospitalized following the incident. Le Pen attributed the attack to "far-left extremists."

**Assessments & Forecast** - The incident reflects the growing threat of political violence in France, with the Interior Ministry reporting 2,387 physical and verbal attacks targeting politicians in the first nine months of 2023, compared to 2,265 in all of 2022. Since the June 9 European Parliamentary elections, political tensions have increased, with mass-protests organized by unions and left-wing parties denouncing RN and the far-right taking place nationwide. That the assailants were dressed in black and masked, dress associated with the radical far left, supports Le Pen's statement. That far-left actors have been involved in protests, carrying out vandalism, and clashing with police, also supports the likely involvement of far-left assailants in the attack. Ahead of the June 30 elections, the risk of similar violent incidents will remain elevated.

**Germany: Three individuals arrested for alleged espionage in Frankfurt, per June 21 reports; Russian involvement likely**

**Current Situation** - As per June 21 reports, three individuals were arrested in Frankfurt on June 19, suspected of spying for an unspecified foreign intelligence service. The suspects, identified as Robert A. (Ukrainian), Vardges I. (Armenian), and Arman S. (Russian), allegedly targeted a Ukrainian national in Frankfurt. According to the German prosecutors, the individuals were scouting a cafe where the Ukrainian national frequented.

**Assessments & Forecast** - While the foreign intelligence service has not been named, the suspects' target strongly suggests they were likely recruited by Russia or Belarus. This is supported by multiple allegations of Russian espionage activities in Germany since the conflict began in February 2022. Indeed, on June 18, the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV), Germany's domestic intelligence agency, reported an increase in Russian espionage efforts - including recruitment through financial incentives and blackmailing attempts. This is also in line with regionwide trends, with Denmark, the Czech Republic, France, and Poland all reporting an increase in Russian espionage and/or sabotage attempts in recent weeks. In Germany, the repeated espionage incidents are liable to lead to concerns over weaknesses in the government's counterintelligence protocols.

## **Germany: Government begins discussion on deportation of Afghan, Syrian refugees, per June 21 reports; expected given calls for deportations**

**Current situation** – On June 20, Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Interior Minister Nancy Faeser announced that discussions had commenced regarding the deportation of Afghan and Syrian migrants who have been convicted of serious crimes, including possibly through third countries such as Uzbekistan. Over 300 organizations responded with an open letter to Scholz, expressing their opposition to the initiative. Separately, on June 22, Alexander Dobrindt, a senior MP from the conservative Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern (CSU) in the Bundestag, said Ukrainian refugees who do not work should be deported.

**Assessments & Forecast - Scholz's announcement reflects** increasing efforts within the government to tighten migration and refugee policies, especially amid backlash following multiple violent incidents, including stabbings, carried out by Afghan nationals in recent weeks. That the government is considering deportations via third countries highlights an increased tendency of European countries to carry out such practices – evidenced by Denmark sending migrants to Kosovo, Italy to Albania, and the UK to Rwanda. Separately, Dobrindt's statement reflects disagreements regarding Ukrainian refugee benefits, with government coalition member Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP) suggesting that Ukrainians receive the same benefits as other asylum seekers.

## **Italy: Island of Capri temporarily bans tourists over water shortage malfunction on June 22; to raise concerns of over-tourism**

**Current Situation** – On June 22, at around 09:00 (local time), Capri, located off the coast of Naples, ordered an immediate halt to the arrival of tourists amid a failure in the mainland water system that left parts of the island without access to water. Due to associated health concerns, multiple boats and ferries were turned around on their way to the island. The ban was lifted on June 23.

**Assessment & Forecast** – While the ban was due to a malfunction, it is likely to raise concerns over the perceived negative impacts of tourism on environmental conditions and residents. Indeed, such concerns have increased in multiple travel hotspots, leading to protests from residents – including mass protests in the Canary Islands against mass tourism during a “water emergency” in April, which attracted attendance of tens of thousands. As complete bans are difficult to enact due to economic dependence on tourism, local dissatisfaction with tourism is more likely to pressure local authorities to enact restrictions – such as the tourist entry fee in Venice. With that, similar limited restrictions are likely to be enacted, especially in travel hotspots.

## **Russia & Ukraine: UAV attack on Russia's Bryansk region, air strike in Kyiv region on June 23; Kyiv to continue targeting border regions**

**Current Situation** – On June 23, Russian officials reported a Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attack targeting Russia's Bryansk region. Air defense systems reportedly intercepted 30 UAVs during the overnight hours (local time), with no casualties or damage reported. Meanwhile, also on June 23, a Russian missile attack on the Kyiv region injured two people and damaged numerous residential buildings and infrastructure.

**Assessments & Forecast** – The attack on the Kyiv region highlights Russia's continued strategy to maximize the impact of air strikes ahead of the arrival of western air defense systems, with civilian areas in western Ukraine also targeted on June 22. With that, further air strikes targeting residential areas and critical infrastructure are expected in the coming days. Separately, the alleged UAV strike in Bryansk is in line with recent Ukrainian attacks targeting Russian border regions, with these attacks likely aimed at pressuring Russia to redeploy air defense resources. Further, given reports of restrictions on using US-supplied weapons within a 100-kilometer radius across the border, Ukraine will likely continue leveraging its domestic UAV capabilities not subject to such limits to target areas beyond this radius.

## **Slovakia: Government approves bill to dissolve public broadcaster per June 21 reports; protests likely in coming days**

**Current situation** – Per June 21 reports, the Parliament approved a government bill to dissolve the public broadcaster Rozhlas a televizia Slovenska (RTVS) and transform it into a state-run channel called STVR. President Peter Pellegrini, who took office on June 15, is expected to sign the bill into law on July 1. Michal Simecka, head of the opposition Progresívne Slovensko (PS) party, called the law "shameful" and said he would "challenge it at the Constitutional Court".

**Assessments & Forecast** – Considering significant backlash against the bill, the development is expected to further increase anti-government sentiment, with opposition groups claiming the bill will allow the government to take "full control of broadcasting" and limit the freedom of the press. Moreover, given weekly protests against the bill, protests are expected to increase in frequency and size ahead of July 1. Further, the development is likely to be met with opposition from the EU, especially given that the European Media Freedom Act came into force in May. This will likely strain relations between Bratislava and Brussels, with the latter already concerned over Prime Minister Robert Fico's pro-Russia stance.

## Other Developments

- On June 22, a 16-year-old was beaten and suffered life-threatening injuries in Horn, **Austria**, by an Afghan asylum seeker. Interior Minister Gerhard Karner called for the man to be deported. Far-right actors are likely to capitalize on this incident in pushing anti-migrant rhetoric.
- On June 22, anti-Semitic slogans were recorded during a pro-Palestinian rally in Berlin, **Germany**. Further, 51 people were arrested during clashes at the protest, with one police officer injured. The development reiterates growing tensions at such protests, with backlash against police likely.
- Based on June 21 reports, the government will introduce a six-day work week in **Greece** starting July 1. A 40 percent supplement to the daily wage will be paid on the sixth day. Protests denouncing the measure are highly likely in the near term.
- On June 21, the **Russian** Ministry of Justice added a prominent film director to the list of “foreign agents” after he condemned Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. This highlights the challenges faced by Russian artists and public figures who express views contrary to the government’s position on the war.

# Notable Dates

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>1</b><br>AUG  | Switzerland Holiday: National Day             |
| <b>2</b><br>AUG  | North Macedonia: Republic Day                 |
| <b>4</b><br>AUG  | Iceland Holiday: Commerce Day                 |
| <b>4</b><br>AUG  | UK Holiday: Summer Bank Holiday               |
| <b>5</b><br>AUG  | Croatia Holiday: Victory and Thanksgiving Day |
| <b>15</b><br>AUG | Europe Holiday: Assumption Day                |