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An asylum application can be withdrawn for various reasons before a final decision has been issued. For reporting purposes, withdrawn applications can be measured based on two indicators:

icon for withdrawn applications at first instance

- 'explicit' withdrawals refer to cases where the applicant no longer needs international protection and notifies the authorities to withdraw the application; and
- 'implicit' withdrawals concern cases where the authorities fail to locate the applicant and therefore it is considered that the applicant has abandoned the procedure. Data on implicit withdrawals may cover cases prior to the reference year since an applicant may have absconded long before the withdrawal was noted and reported.

In 2021, about 69,000 applications were withdrawn in EU+ countries, the most since 2017. Compared to 2020, this represented a 46% increase, which is in line with the overall increase in asylum applications (+33% from 2020 to 2021). The number of withdrawn applications in 2021 represented 11% of the number of applications lodged. Nearly one-half of withdrawn applications occurred in the last 4 months of 2021, with an unprecedented peak in September.

Around four in every five withdrawals were by male applicants, and more than one-half by applicants between 18 and 34 years of age. In 2021, there were more than three times as many withdrawals by minors aged 14 to 17 years old than in 2020 and the most in absolute terms since the migration crisis of 2015-2016.

In 2021, Eurostat started reporting data on the type of withdrawal, which was previously unavailable. Two-thirds of all withdrawn applications were implicit. Provisional data from the EUAA's Early Warning and Preparedness System (EPS), which cover withdrawals of first instance applications only, suggest that most withdrawn applications in previous years were implicit.[xxxvi] While most EU+ countries had mostly implicitly withdrawn applications,[xxxvii] there were some exceptions. In Czechia, Finland, France and Ireland, more than 60% of withdrawn applications were explicit, and in Cyprus and Germany, it was almost 50%.[xxxviii]

In 2021, the most applications were withdrawn in Greece, accounting for nearly one-quarter of all withdrawals. Austria, Italy, Germany and Romania also had high numbers of withdrawn applications (in descending order).[xxxix] Most of the top countries recorded significantly more withdrawals in 2021 compared to 2020. This was especially the case for Bulgaria (more than six

times as many), Malta (almost four times as many), Austria and the Netherlands (more than three times as many each), as well as Greece, Belgium and Romania. It is possible that asylum applicants implicitly withdraw an application lodged in one EU+ country in order to apply again in another one, thus indicating secondary movements towards other EU+ countries. Thus the figures indicate a pattern of secondary movements from countries along the Balkan routes and at the EU's external borders.

Over one-quarter of withdrawn applications were by Afghan nationals, accounting for over 18,000 applications in 2021 compared to 5,000 in 2020. More than 60% of these withdrawals were by minors aged between 14 and 17 years old. These applications were largely withdrawn in Greece and other countries along the Balkan routes *(see Figure 4.18).* The rate of withdrawals increased as of September 2021 after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

Nationals of Syria, Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq, Bangladesh and Tunisia (in descending order) also withdrew a high number of applications, with large-scale increases compared to 2020. Syrians, Turks, Iraqis and Bangladeshis mostly withdrew their applications in Greece and Austria, whereas the majority of applications by Pakistanis were withdrawn in Greece and Italy. Four-fifths of withdrawals by nationals of Tunisia were in Italy.

Figure 4.18. EU+ countries with the most withdrawals in 2021, nationality of applicants who accounted for at least 50% of all withdrawals in these countries and change compared to 2020

Figure 4.18. Chart presenting the EU+ countries with the most withdrawals in 2021
Source: Eurostat [migr_asywitha] as of 22 April 2022.

While at a smaller scale, citizens of Iraq withdrew a record number of applications in Latvia, after entering through Belarus.544 The profile of nationalities differed in other EU+ countries. For example, withdrawals were mainly done by Indians, Pakistanis and Vietnamese in Cyprus, Moroccans and Algerians in the Netherlands, and Sudanese, Eritreans and Libyans in Malta (in descending order) *(see Figure 4.18).*

Most nationalities largely withdrew their applications implicitly. The main exceptions – with more explicit withdrawals – included nationals of Vietnam and North Macedonia, as well as Belarusia and Serbia.

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Footnotes

[xxxvi] Data on the type of withdrawal (implicit or implicit) are available through the EUAA EPS data exchange. Based on that data, around three-quarters of all withdrawals were implicit. However, a direct comparison of EUAA and Eurostat data is not possible. The EUAA indicator refers to applications withdrawn during the first instance determination process related to first instance decision-making, while Eurostat data cover applications withdrawn at all instances of the administrative or judicial procedure. In addition, the

reporting dates differ: the EUAA uses the date of the decision on the withdrawn application, while Eurostat uses the date the application is considered withdrawn. Finally, the EPS data collection does not cover Iceland or Liechtenstein

[xxvii] Eurostat data did not cover Belgium and Italy, so EUAA EPS data were used for the total calculation. Information on the type of withdrawal was not available for Romania.

[xxxviii] Analysis was restricted to EU+ countries with a minimum of 100 reported withdrawals in 2021.

[xxxix] Analysis was restricted to EU+ countries with a minimum of 1,500 reported withdrawals in 2021.

- 544Ministry of the Interior | Lekšlietu Ministrija. (2021, August 11). Government Declares State of Emergency on the Latvia-Belarus Border. https://www.iem.gov.lv/en/article/government-declares-state-emergency-latvia-belarus-border

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