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4.14.1.1. Recognition rates at first instance

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The overall EU+ recognition rate for first instance decisions on asylum applications was 34% in 2021. This means that out of 535,000 decisions issued, 182,000 were positive, granting the applicant either refugee status or subsidiary protection. As such, two-thirds of all first instance decisions were negative.

Most positive decisions at first instance granted refugee status (118,000 or 65% of all positive decisions) and subsidiary protection was granted in the remaining 64,000 cases (35% of all positive decisions). While the recognition rate for EU-regulated types of protection has remained stable since 2018, the share of positive decisions granting refugee status dropped in 2021.

Asylum applicants who were not eligible for international protection as defined in the Qualification Directive may be granted an authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons under national law. The EU+ recognition rate of 34% excludes authorisations to stay for humanitarian reasons. If such authorisations are included, the recognition rate for 2021 would be 40%. This considerable difference is largely due to humanitarian status granted to Venezuelans in Spain, which represented more than two-fifths of all humanitarian permissions to stay in EU+ countries. Moreover, Afghans received one-seventh of all humanitarian permissions, most of which were issued by Germany and Switzerland.

In 2021, women received more positive decisions on their protection claims (41% of all decisions) than men, who were granted protection in 31% of all decisions. This difference was slightly higher than in 2020 (35% compared to 28%). However, the data available do not indicate which applications lodged by males or females were part of family groups.
The same caveat applies to the situation of children, whether their application is lodged as part of a family submission or alone. Overall, 53% of decisions issued protection to minors younger than 18 years, which is considerably higher than for applications lodged by the 18-34 age group (28%), 35-64 age group (24%) and applicants aged 65 years or older (25%). In 2021, recognition rates by age group were slightly higher compared to the previous year.

In some EU+ countries, first instance recognition rates varied over time, usually because of changes in caseloads. Partially because of more positive decisions issued to Afghan applicants, overall recognition rates increased for example in Bulgaria (from 37% in 2020 to 62% in 2021), Czechia (10% to 27%), Denmark (23% to 41%), Estonia (36% to 67%), Latvia (13% to 40%), Lithuania (23% to 45%), Poland (17% to 67%) and Portugal (23% to 62%). While the recognition rate also climbed in Hungary, from 27% to 73%, the overall number of decisions was low (55 decisions in 2021) and new legislation requires applicants to submit a declaration of intent at a Hungarian embassy in a non-EU country before they can enter the country and apply for international protection.

In contrast, recognition rates declined substantially in Cyprus (50% to 19%), Greece (55% to 44%) and Iceland (63% to 45%).

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