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Nearly a million applications lodged across EU+ countries

icon for data on applications on international protection

About 996,000 applications for international protection were lodged in EU+ countries in 2022, up by about one-half from 2021 and two-fifths higher than the pre-COVID level of 2019. More applications were lodged in nearly all EU+ countries, except in Malta, Lithuania and Liechtenstein (where they decreased), as well as Latvia (where they remained stable).

While the EU+ total remained well below the high of 2015, the number of applications exceeded 2015 values in several countries. In fact, as illustrated in Figure 1, France, Spain, Austria and, at lower levels, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Ireland, Croatia, Romania, Slovenia, Iceland, Estonia, Portugal and Latvia (in descending order) received the most applications on record.[x],[xi] In many others, notably the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and, at lower levels, Poland, Finland, Norway, Denmark and Slovakia (in descending order), the most applications since at least 2016 were recorded. The rise in applications came in addition to about 3.9 million beneficiaries of temporary protection, as reported by Eurostat.[xii]

As in previous years, 7 in 10 applicants (71%) were male in 2022, with their share remaining stable compared to 2021. Applicants aged 18-34 years, predominantly men, accounted for more than one-half of all applicants in 2022, while one-quarter were younger than 18. Only one-fifth of all applicants were older than 35. The distribution of applicants by age group was similar to previous years, with men accounting for the majority in each age group except among applicants aged over 65.

Across EU+ countries, 7 out of every 10 applications were lodged in the Top 5 receiving countries – namely Germany, France, Spain, Austria and Italy (in descending order). Germany (244,000) continued to be the main receiving country, with applications increasing by more than one-quarter from 2021, to the highest level since 2016. It was followed at a distance by France (156,000), where applications rose by 30% from 2021 and reached the most since at least 2008. Applications lodged in Spain (118,000) increased by about four-fifths, following a decline in the 2 previous years.

Applications in Austria (109,000) rose the most in absolute terms, nearly tripling from 2021. This was partially driven by stronger secondary movements, increased flows along the Balkan route and visa-free policies of some Western Balkan countries. Linked to this, applications in Bulgaria (20,000) returned to the peak of 2015 and were the highest on record in Romania (12,000).

All-time highest number of applications in 13 EU+ countries

Figure 1. Applications for international protection by EU+ country, 2022

Figure 1. Applications for international protection by EU+ country, 2022
Note: Annual data were missing for Iceland. The annual total was calculated as the sum of monthly applications.
Source: Eurostat [migr_asyappctza, migr_asyappctzm for Iceland] as of 13 April 2023.

Nationals of Syria, Afghanistan, Türkiye, Venezuela and Colombia lodged the most applications in 2022. While the record levels of 2015 and 2016 were primarily driven by applications for international protection by persons coming from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, the current increase stems from a much wider range of nationalities *(see Figure 2)*.

In 2015 and 2016, applicants from Syria accounted for more than one-quarter of all applications, whereas in 2022 they represented one-seventh. In fact, in 2022, the number of applications by nationals of Syria and Afghanistan were the highest since 2016, while for several other groups – including nationals of Türkiye, Venezuela and Colombia – they were the highest on record. The number of applicants from Türkiye more than doubled from 2021, while applicants from Venezuela and Colombia increased by about three times each.

At lower levels, the number of applicants from India increased by more than six times to the highest level since at least 2008, with three-quarters of them applying in Austria. At the same time, citizens of Bangladesh, Georgia, Ukraine, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Peru, Moldova, Burundi, Palestine, Belarus, Yemen and Cuba (in descending order) also applied in unprecedented numbers.[xiii]

Syrians and Afghans lodged the most applications since 2016

Figure 2. Applications for international protection by top countries of origin, 2022

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Note: Data were missing for Iceland. The annual total was calculated as the sum of monthly applications which is included as part of the ‘other’ citizenships.
Source: Eurostat [migr_asyappctza, migr_asyappctzm for Iceland] as of 13 April 2023.

In 2022, the largest corridors of applicants and receiving countries consisted of nationals of Syria and Afghanistan applying for international protection in Germany, as well as applicants from Venezuela and Colombia lodging applications in Spain. For the latter two citizenships, Spain received the overwhelming majority of applications, while Germany and Austria received the highest number of applications from citizens of both Syria and Afghanistan.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, asylum applications by citizens of Ukraine temporarily peaked in March 2022, then stabilised at lower levels as most of those fleeing the country began to register for temporary protection.

- [x]Since at least 2008 (except for Croatia, for which data are available since 2013). According to Eurostat data, Bulgaria had the same number of applications in 2022 and 2015. However, national statistics indicate that the number in 2022 was marginally higher. Source: State Agency for Refugees at the Council of Ministers | Държавната агенция за бежанците при Министерския съвет. (2023). Информация за броя лица, подали молба за международна закрила и броя на взетите решения в периода 1993 – 2022 г [Information on the number of persons applying for international protection and the number of decisions taken between 1993 and 2022]. https://aref.government.bg/sites/default/files/uploads/docs/2023-01/Applications-Decisions-1993-2022 - bulg_12.xlsx
- [xi]Annual data were missing for Iceland. The annual total was estimated using the sum of monthly data (Eurostat: migr_asyappctzm as of 13 April 2023).
- [xii]Based on beneficiaries of temporary protection at the end of December 2022 (Eurostat: migr_asytpsm as of 13 April 2023).
- [xiii]Only citizenships with at least 3,000 applications were considered.

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