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4.14.1.1 Recognition rates at first instance



For first instance decisions on asylum applications, the EU+ recognition rate was 42% in 2020: out of 534,500 decisions issued, 224,000 were positive and the applicant was granted either refugee status, subsidiary protection or humanitarian status. This implies that almost 6 in 10 decisions at first instance were negative. Most of the positive decisions at first instance granted refugee status (113,000 or one-half of all positive decisions). Subsidiary protection was granted in about 52,000 cases (23% of all positive decisions), while humanitarian status was granted in 59,000 cases (27% of all positive decisions).

In line with Eurostat reporting, asylum applicants granted an authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons under national law concerning international protection are counted towards positive decisions. Such persons are not eligible for international protection as defined in the Qualification Directive but are nonetheless protected against removal under the obligations that are imposed on all Member States by international refugee or human rights instruments or on the basis of principles flowing from such instruments. This clearly has implications for the calculation of the EU+ recognition rate. As mentioned above, in 2020 the EU+ recognition rate was 42% when including authorisations to stay for humanitarian reasons within positive decisions. If such cases are considered as negative from the perspective of EU-harmonised types of protection, the EU+ recognition rate drops to 31% (i.e. for EU-regulated types of protection only). This considerable difference is largely due to decisions issued to Venezuelans in Spain, which represented over three quarters of all humanitarian permissions to stay in EU+ countries.

The recognition rate for all types of protection in 2020 was similar to 2019 and 2018 (39% in both years). The share of decisions granting refugee status has been roughly stable over this time, but the share of subsidiary protection has steadily declined since 2016, from 37% to the current 23%. In contrast, the share of positive decisions granting humanitarian status has steadily increased from 8% in 2016 to 27% in 2020.

The recognition rates for applications lodged by women (50%) were higher than for men (37%) in 2020. This difference was larger in 2019 (50% compared to 33%). However, the data available do not indicate which applications lodged by men or women were part of family groups. With this caveat in mind, applications lodged by minors (younger than 18 years) had a recognition rate of 59% in 2020, considerably higher than for applications lodged by the 18-34 year age groups (34%) and 35-64 year age group (35%). Yet the recognition rate was highest for the applicants aged 65 years or older (66%), most of whom received humanitarian status. In 2019, results by age group were similar, apart from a substantially lower recognition rate for those aged 65 years or older (53%).

In some receiving countries, there were notable changes in first instance recognition rates over time. Substantial increases occurred in Austria (from 53% in 2019 to 65% in 2020) and especially in the Netherlands (37% to 63%). In contrast, recognition rates declined substantially in Denmark (52% to 35%), Romania (44% to 25%), Slovenia (40% to 28%) and Spain (66% to 41%). Some of these changes may be due to policy changes which took place in 2020.



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