Press Release Published: 3 December 2021

Afghans lodge 72 % more asylum applications in the EU+



In September 2021, Afghans lodged more than 17 000 asylum applications in the EU+, up from 10 000 in August and nearly twice as many as Syrians. This made Afghanistan by far the main country of origin, which Syria had been for seven years until July. Total applications in the EU+ exceeded pre-pandemic levels for the first time since the outbreak of COVID-19.

Analysis released by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) shows that **about 71 200 applications for international protection were lodged in the EU+ in September 2021**, up by a quarter from August and the most since November 2016.[1] For the first time since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, applications exceeded the last pre-pandemic levels in early 2020.

The rising trend in Afghan applications not only continued but accelerated. **Applications by Afghans increased by a considerable 72 %, from about 10 000 in August to 17 300 in September**. This increase partly reflected the evacuations that followed the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August.[2] **Afghans were by far the largest group of applicants in the EU+** in September, with almost twice as many applications as by Syrians (9 100), who had been the largest group every month for seven years up to July 2021. While Afghans lodged the most applications since September 2016, their number was still less than half of the all-time high in November 2015.



High or rising levels of applications for all 10 main nationalities

Turkish nationals (3 000) were the third largest group of applicants in September, continuing to apply at the highest level on record.[3] Similarly, **applications by Iraqis (2 900) increased further, partly due to the irregular migration route via Belarus**, where Iraqis have been the largest group. Several other main nationalities recorded substantially more applications in September: Bangladeshis (2 800, a new high), Pakistanis (2 700), Albanians (2 100), Venezuelans (1 800), Georgians and Tunisians (1 700 each).

The 10 main nationalities jointly accounted for almost two thirds of all applications lodged in the EU+. About 3 000 applications were lodged by self-claimed unaccompanied minors, remaining at the highest level since 2016. They corresponded to 4 % of the total applications in the EU+.

Widening gap between applications and decisions at first instance

Asylum authorities in EU+ countries issued about 40 500 first instance decisions in September, significantly more than in August. However, as applications increased more strongly, the gap with decisions widened. **In September, applications outnumbered first instance decisions by more than 30 000 cases**, the largest gap in five years. Following recent increases in applications, pending cases at first instance rose for the fourth time in a row, to about 394 300 cases at the end of September.

The EU+ recognition rate[4] was 41 % in September, the highest since April 2020. About three fifths of all positive decisions granted refugee status, while the remainder granted subsidiary protection. The high EU+ recognition rate largely reflected **a record-level recognition rate for Afghans (86 %)**.[5] Recognition rates were also especially high for Syrians (87 %), Belarusians (85 %) and Eritreans (81 %).

For more information and an interactive data visualisation, please visit the Latest Asylum Trends page.

Any further information may be obtained from the European Asylum Support Office on the following email address: press@easo.europa.eu

Notes

[1] EASO EPS data are preliminary and might differ from validated official statistics submitted to Eurostat at a later stage. Eurostat data are used in the annual EASO Asylum Report. The total EPS numbers include approximations for two EU+ countries and may change after data updates.

[2] See EASO Situational update Issue No 7, Developments in asylum procedures in EU+ countries in response to the situation in Afghanistan

[3] That is, since the beginning of the EPS data exchange in 2014.

[4] This refers to the recognition rate for EU-regulated types of protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) at first instance.

[5] The highest monthly recognition rate for Afghans since the beginning of the EPS data exchange in 2014.

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu