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Asylum applications by Afghans approaching those by Syrians



While Syrians were still the largest group of asylum applicants in EU+ countries in July, the gap to Afghans continued shrinking. As these and other main nationalities lodged substantially more applications compared to previous months, total applications were at the highest level since the outbreak of COVID-19 and approached pre-pandemic levels.

Analysis released by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) shows that **about 50 000 applications for international protection were lodged in the EU+ in July 2021**,[1] significantly more than in June (+ 8 %). The most common countries of origin were Syria, Afghanistan, Turkey, Pakistan and Iraq. **Applications by Afghans increased for the fifth consecutive month, to about 7 300** (+ 21 % from June). This came relatively close to the number of applications by Syrians (8 500, + 14 %). The gap between Afghans and Syrians has been shrinking almost steadily since December 2020.

Turks (2 500) were the third largest group in July, after their applications increased by half from June. A peak of applications by Iraqis (2 300) was partly due to the irregular migration route via Belarus. Citizens of several Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan countries applied in larger numbers, such as Georgians (1 300) and Albanians (980). In contrast, applications by many North and West African nationalities receded, including Moroccans (1 500) and Malians (570).



Gradual return of asylum applications towards pre-pandemic levels

The overall **level of applications in July was the highest since the outbreak of COVID-19** and, for the first time, exceeded 80 % of the last pre-pandemic level in February 2020. The remaining gap can be explained by a longer-term decline of applications by Latin Americans. For many other nationalities, it appears that COVID-19-induced constraints on asylum-related migration have lately had a lesser impact.

Self-claimed unaccompanied minors lodged more than 2 200 applications in the EU+ in July, compared to 1 900 in June and 1 500 in May. The main driver of this development has been unaccompanied minors from **Afghanistan**, whose applications rose from 700 in May to 1 000 in June and close to 1 200 in July, i.e. accounting for half of all unaccompanied minors. As applications by unaccompanied minors increased roughly in line with total applications, they still represented 4 % of the total in July.

Recognition rate for Afghans only half of that for Syrians

Asylum authorities in EU+ countries issued at least 35 100 first instance decisions in July,[2] slightly fewer than in June. A third of all decisions were issued to Syrians, Afghans and Pakistanis. Overall, first instance decisions continued to be outnumbered by applications. Approximately 366 300 cases were pending at first instance at the end of July,[3] and this **backlog was essentially stable from June**.

Based on preliminary data, **the EU+ recognition rate[4] was 39% in June**. Three fifths of all positive decisions granted refugee status, while the remainder granted subsidiary protection. Recognition rates were especially high for Syrians (87 %) and Eritreans (81 %). At 45 %, the recognition rate for Afghans was substantially lower than over the previous six months.

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 three EU+ countries and may change after data updates.

[2] For three EU+ countries, data on decisions in July were not available and the comparison with applications was adapted

[3] For three EU+ countries, June or May values were used as July data were not available.

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

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