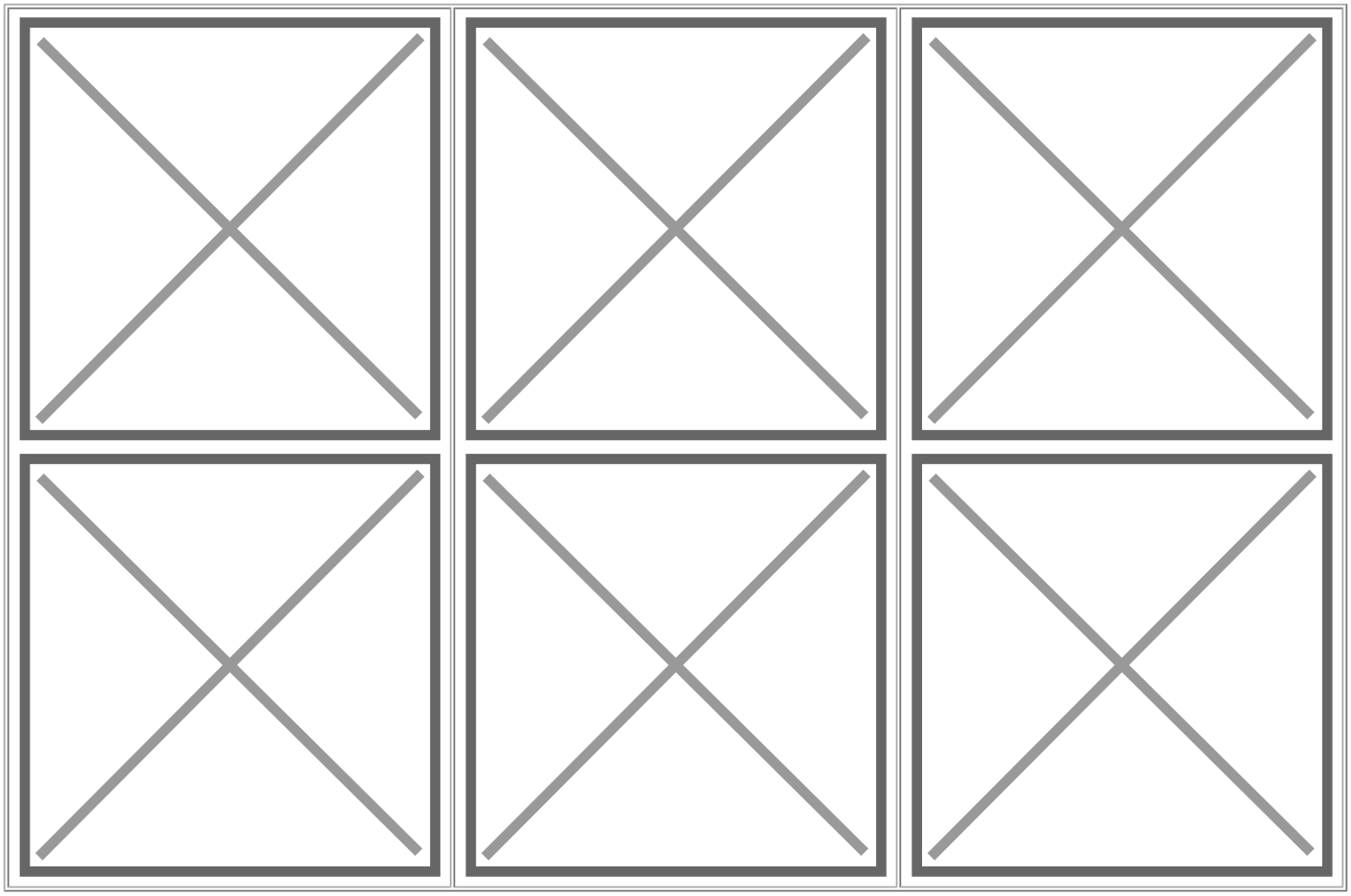
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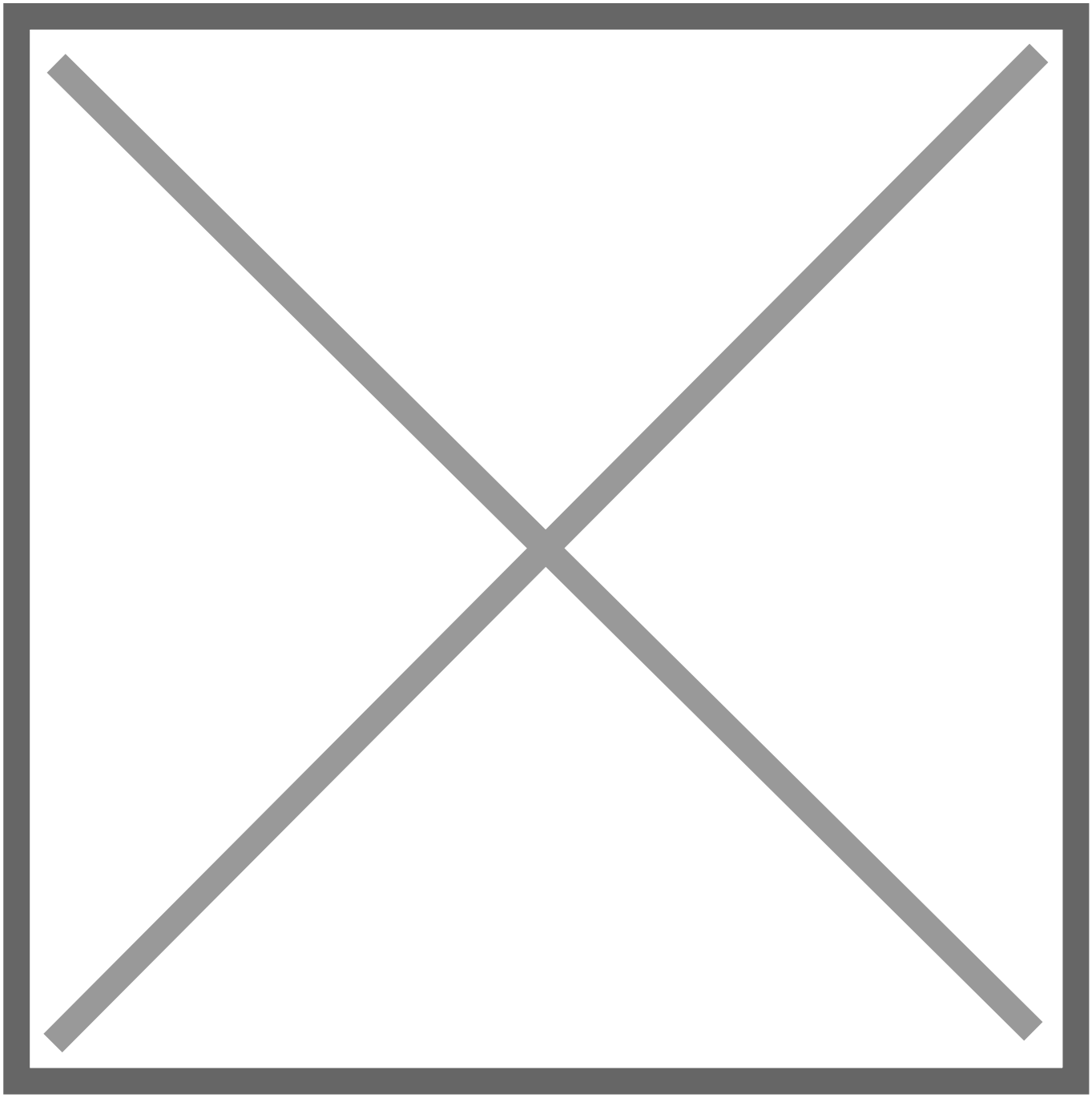
EU asylum decisions exceed applications for first time since 2017 due to COVID-19



Applications for asylum in the EU+[1] in 2020 decreased by 31% compared to 2019, down to the lowest levels since 2013, largely as a result of emergency travel restrictions. Despite the pandemic, national asylum authorities showed resilience in sustaining many activities, resulting in a decrease in backlogs of pending applications.

Analysis released by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) on asylum trends in 2020 shows that **461 300 applications** were lodged, compared to 671 200 in 2019.[2] The considerable decrease (-31%) reflects the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and related emergency measures, such as movement restrictions, while national asylum authorities made efforts to ensure that applications could be lodged, and decisions still issued.[3] Approximately **4% of all applications in the EU+ in 2020 were lodged by self-claimed unaccompanied minors** (UAMs), an increase of one percentage point from the previous year.





Most nationalities lodged fewer applications – with some exceptions

The top countries of origin remained unchanged from 2019, although applications decreased for almost all citizenships. **Syrians lodged the most applications** (64 540; -9% from 2019), accounting for 14% of all applications in the EU+. With 48 578 applications (-16%), **Afghans became the second most frequent citizenship, followed by Venezuelans** (30 643; -32%), **Colombians** (29 438; -9%) **and Iraqis** (18 167; -40%). Together, the five top nationalities lodged over two fifths of all asylum applications in the EU+.

Pakistanis, Turks, Nigerians, Bangladeshis and Somalis also lodged a significant number of applications, but fewer than in the previous year. This was especially the case for Nigerians (13 031, -44%) and Turks (15 834; -38%). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was further highlighted by substantial decreases for most other citizenships, including applicants from Albania (6 498; -66%), Georgia (8 508; -61%), and Iran (7 721; -60%).

Among citizenships lodging the most applications in 2020 (>1 000), **only those from Comoros** (1 996; +53%), **Belarus** (1 319; +28%), **Cuba** (2 170, +8%), **and Brazil** (1 622; + 5%) **lodged more applications than in 2019**. Applicants from visa-exempt countries seemed to be especially affected by the travel restrictions implemented due to the pandemic. In 2020, their applications decreased by 36% from the previous year, whereas applications by citizens from visa-obliged countries only fell by 30%.

The COVID-19 situation triggers a reduced backlog of cases

Despite the pandemic, **national asylum authorities roughly maintained the same level of first instance decisions** as in 2019. About 521 000 decisions were issued at first instance in 2020, which exceeded the number of applications for the first time since 2017. As a result, **the backlog of cases was reduced somewhat**, falling by more than 74 000 cases at first instance and by some 160 000 at all instances altogether. At the end of 2020, about 412 600 cases were still pending at first instance.

The recognition rate[4] in the EU+ remained stable at 32% in 2020, despite strong fluctuations during the year. Syrians (84%), Eritreans (80%) and Yemenis (75%) had the highest recognition rates, while the recognition rates of Colombians (2%) and Venezuelans (3%) reached very low levels.

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

[1] EU27 plus Norway and Switzerland.
[2] 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.
[3] EASO, COVID-19 emergency measures in asylum and reception systems, Issue 3, 7 December 2020.
[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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