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Asylum applications in EU remain limited in May



Despite the slow lifting of containment measures across most EU+ countries[1], asylum applications remained significantly reduced (-84%) in May compared to pre-COVID levels. At the same time, the number of cases awaiting a decision continue decreasing as national authorities redeploy staff to clear backlogs.

Notwithstanding the gradual easing of containment measures across the EU+, asylum activities have still not fully resumed in many countries. **Indeed, just 10 200 applications were lodged in the EU+ in May**, up slightly compared to April (8 730), but still a dramatic decline from 65 692 applications in January 2020.

In May, several Member States remained in a state of health emergency, with many only providing for the pre-registration of new asylum applications, but not their formal lodging. This might imply that a backlog is being formed in these countries which will need to be dealt with once full services resume.

As has been reported in previous weeks, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) expects the number of recorded applications to begin increasing as asylum services begin to return to normal operations. This may, however, continue to be limited to a certain degree in the current period as travel restrictions and closed external borders with various non-EU countries remain in place.

In May, the share of repeated applications – i.e. those lodged by applicants in the same country where a previous application was already rejected or discontinued - doubled to 16%, from pre-COVID levels (8%). Similarly, a slightly higher proportion of Unaccompanied Minors applied for asylum (up by more than 1 percentage point to over 4% of all applications), since in many countries' vulnerable applicants were given priority for lodging applications.

Syrians, Afghans and **Iraqis** continued to lodge the most applications, accounting for a third of all applications lodged in May. The composition of other top countries of origin is more influenced by differential resumption of activities in national asylum authorities, rather than indicative of asylum-related migration trends to the EU+. For example, **Venezuelans** and **Colombians** – who were among the top four nationalities of applicants at the beginning of this year (January – March) – lodged only 131 and 87 applications, respectively.

At least 27 300 decisions were issued by asylum authorities (first instance) in May, down by 42% from February[2]. Thus, decision-making continued to be less affected by containment measures compared to the lodging of applications, which shows that asylum authorities continued to process cases despite the temporary suspension of some services.

As a result of more decisions being issued than applications lodged, at the end of May the number of pending cases at first instance decreased to some 462 829, down by more than 32 300 cases from February (-7%).

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.

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[1]Includes European Union Member States, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.
[2]Data on first-instance decisions were missing for one count.

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