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Venezuelans seeking asylum in EU up by almost 800% in two years

The monthly number of Venezuelans seeking international protection in the EU per month has increased sharply over the past two years, now representing the 10th most common nationality. Spain received by far the most applications lodged by Venezuelans in February 2018, with 1,160 applications out of almost 1,400 [1].

In February 2018, Venezuelan nationals were by far the largest group of applicants in Spain, followed by citizens of Colombia. Nationals of El Salvador and Honduras were also included among the six main countries of origin of applicants in Spain, with about two-thirds of all applications involving Latin-American citizenships. For comparison, Venezuelan, Colombian, Salvadorian and Honduran applicants represented only 5% of all applications lodged in the EU as a whole in February.

Venezuelan applications for asylum in the EU have increased dramatically from 150 in February 2016, to 985 a year later, reaching close to 1,400 in February 2018. The upward trend has continued in the first two months of 2018, with Venezuela being the only country of origin amongst the top 10 in the EU that saw an increase in the number of asylum applications between January and February 2018.

On an annual basis, Venezuelan applicants for international protection in the EU have increased by over 3,500% between 2014 and 2017 (325 to 11,980). Given the considerable number of applications lodged by Venezuelans, who enjoy visa-free travel to the Schengen Area, throughout 2017, the number of applicants awaiting a decision in first-instance more than doubled in a one-year period, from 6,743 in February 2017 to 14,824 in February 2018.

The increasing number of asylum applicants from Venezuela coincides with political and economic challenges being faced by the country, while linguistic and cultural ties are likely to be the primary factors driving Venezuelans to Spain. To date, February marked the highest number of applications by Venezuelan nationals recorded in Spain in a single month.

General Asylum Trends in EU+

In February 2018, an estimated 46,500 applications for international protection were lodged in the 28 European Union Member States plus Norway and Switzerland (EU+). Germany received the most number of applications during the period, followed by France, Italy, Greece and Spain.

This figure represents a 12% decrease compared to the previous month; the lowest level recorded over the last twelve months. Only Norway, Slovenia and Latvia recorded slightly higher numbers of applications lodged in February 2018 over the previous month.

Lower levels of asylum-related migration were clearly reflected in the volume of applications from the 10 main countries of origin. All recorded a decrease in February compared to January, with Venezuela as the only exception. The top ten nationalities included Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Georgia, Albania, Iran, Bangladesh and Venezuela.

EU+ countries issued some 51,107 first-instance decisions in February [2], a decrease compared to the previous month, but still exceeding the number of applications lodged. The number of cases awaiting a decision in first-instance further decreased, though only slightly, to some 437,000 cases [3].

A recently-launched EASO interactive portal, updated with data from February 2018, allows users to visualise data on asylum applications, as well as on decisions and the numbers of pending cases in the EU+: www.easo.europa.eu/latest-asylum-trends.

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

Notes

[1] All data relating to Spain sourced from Eurostat
[2] Data missing for four EU+ countries.
[3] Data missing for six EU+ countries.

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