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Asylum applications in EU approaching highest level since 2016



Asylum applications in November 2021 were the second highest in five years, narrowly below the level recorded in September. While Afghans remained the largest group and Syrians applied the most since 2016, the increase in November was also linked to several other nationalities.

Analysis released by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) shows that **about 71 400 applications for international protection were lodged in the EU+ in November 2021**, up 9 % from October[1]. This was nearly as many as at the peak in September 2021, when EU+ countries received the most applications since the so-called ’migration crisis’ of 2016. While the September peak included many applications linked to the evacuations from Kabul following the withdrawal of Allied Forces and the subsequent Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the almost equally high level in November not only reflected an increase in Afghans, but also for several other main nationalities.

Afghans lodged the second most applications since 2016 (about 13 000), significantly more than in October but fewer than in September. They remained the largest group of applicants, followed by **Syrians (11 500) who lodged the most applications since 2016**. Some 4 300 Iraqis applied in November (+ 30 % from October), representing the third largest group of applicants. Substantial increases also occurred for Venezuelans (3 300), Pakistanis (2 800) and Colombians (2 500)

Applications by unaccompanied minors remain high

In recent months, an unusual number of asylum applicants in the EU+ claimed to be unaccompanied minors. They lodged some 3 300 applications in October (the most since 2015) and 3 200 in November. **Afghans accounted for around half of all unaccompanied minors**, followed at a distance by Syrians, Somalis, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis. Unaccompanied minors represented 5 % of all applicants in the EU+ in November.

Persistent gap between applications and decisions at first instance

Asylum authorities in EU+ countries issued about 45 500 first instance decisions in November 2021, in line with October. For the fifth consecutive month, applications substantially exceeded first instance decisions and there was no discernible tendency for this gap to close. **As a result, the number of cases pending at first instance has increased in recent months**, to about 431 000 at the end of November. Slightly more than half of these cases had been pending for less than six months.

The EU+ recognition rate[2] was 40 % in November, the second highest in 19 months, exceeded only in September 2021 (41 %). Almost three in four positive decisions in November – an unusually high share – granted refugee status, while the rest were granted subsidiary protection. This was driven by Afghans, who had a recognition rate of 92 % and overwhelmingly received refugee status. Recognition rates were also comparatively high for Syrians (91 %), Eritreans (87 %) and Palestinians (72 %).

For more information, please visit the EUAA Latest Asylum Trends page or contact the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA):

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Notes

[1] EUAA 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 EUAA Asylum Report. The total EPS numbers include approximations for two EU+ countries and may change after data updates.

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

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