Asylum in Europe in 2022: A Year in Review

Overview of Asylum in EU+ Countries

Asylum report 2023 cover page showing two people holding hands

As the go-to source of information on international protection in Europe, the annual EUAA Asylum Report provides a comprehensive overview of key developments in asylum in Member States of the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland (EU+ countries).

All aspects of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) are covered by summarising changes to legislation, policy and practices at the European and national levels.

The annual review, provides an overview of the key highlights and developments earmarked the situation of asylum in the EU+ and it is an additional resource accompanying the EUAA Asylum Report 2023.

Protection needs in Europe reached a new high, testing asylum and reception systems

With almost 1 million asylum seekers and about 4 million beneficiaries of temporary protection in 2022, EU+ countries reacted swiftly to tackle the dynamic situation.

Strengthened solidarity was shown through multi-stakeholder collaboration to provide shelter and basic aid to displaced persons from Ukraine.

National and EU-level campaigns addressed the increased levels of trafficking, focusing on prevention, identifying victims and ensuring adequate support.

Read more in the EUAA Asylum Report 2023

Protection needs in Europe

National Asylum Develpments

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National developments focused on long-term measures to address gaps in procedures. Governments invested in training staff who work with minors, enacted new legislation related to age assessment procedures and worked on optimising national guardianship systems. Some countries recruited new staff who were allocated to decrease the backlog of cases lodged by unaccompanied minors.

Faced with a record number of persons seeking protection, the European response was largely constructive and protection-oriented

applications

Nearly 1 million applications lodged across EU+ countries

Male applicants

71% of applicants for international protection were male

70% of asylum applications were received in just 5 EU+ countries in 2022

country number of applicants
tests

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A combined total of 5 million people arrived in Europe in 2022, adding acute pressure on already-strained reception places in many countries.

In addition to about 4 million people who fled Ukraine and registered for temporary protection, applications for international protection increased by one-half to almost 1 million (996,000 applications).

More applications were lodged in nearly all EU+ countries, with 13 of them receiving the highest number of applications on record. In total, 7 out of every 10 applications were lodged in five receiving countries, namely Germany (244,000 applications), France (156,000), Spain (118,000), Austria (109,000) and Italy (84,000).

During the record levels of 2015 and 2016, applications for international protection were primarily lodged by nationals of Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. In 2022, however, the surge in applications was due to a much wider range of nationalities seeking protection in Europe.

As previously, the main countries of origin were Syria (with 138,000 applications) and Afghanistan (132,000), in addition to Türkiye (58,000), Venezuela (51,000) and Colombia (43,000).

Applications for international protection by top countries of origin, 2022

stats 2

Source: Eurostat [migr_asyappctza, migr_asyappctzm for Iceland] as of 13 April 2023.

Rise in unaccompanied minors seeking protection as asylum applications in Europe continue to grow

applications uams

Several EU+ countries registered a record number of asylum applications from unaccompanied minors in 2022.

This was coupled with a rise in minors absconding from the asylum procedure, pointing to secondary movements to other countries.

In total, 42,000 asylum applications were lodged by unaccompanied minors in EU+ countries in 2022, which was the most since 2016. While their share of total applications remained stable at

4%, it represented an increase by three-fifths compared to 2021 (26,400 applications).

The minors primarily originated from just two countries: Afghanistan and Syria. Together, these two citizenships accounted for two-thirds of the applications submitted by unaccompanied minors.

The increase in the number of unaccompanied children seeking protection exerted additional pressure on asylum processes.

Read more in the EUAA Asylum Report 2023

Growth in applications by unaccompanied minors

Source: Eurostat.

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Rising implicit withdrawals of asylum applications point to a pattern of secondary movements

Several sources sounded the alarm about a marked increase in implicit withdrawals of asylum applications by unaccompanied minors. This occurs when the authorities cannot locate an applicant, who is then assumed to have absconded and abandoned the procedure.

There were about twice as many implicitly withdrawn applications by unaccompanied minors in 2022 compared to 2021. In total, 18,000 applications were withdrawn by unaccompanied minors in 20 reporting EU+ countries, predominantly (95%) by boys aged 14 to 17 years.

An implicit withdrawal can indicate unauthorised secondary movements to another country. In addition, children under the radar are at greater risk of falling victim to trafficking, with reports of organised criminal groups increasingly targeting areas near reception facilities.

EU+ countries with the most withdrawals overall, 2022 compared to 2021

withdrawn_applications_per_eu_country

Source: Eurostat [migr_asywitha] as of 13 April 2023.

Applications outnumber first instance decisions for a second year in a row

EU+ countries issued a total of 646,000 first instance decisions in 2022, which represents an increase by one-fifth compared to the year before. Approximately 39% of these decisions granted an EU-harmonised protection status (refugee or subsidiary protection).

If decisions granting a national form of protection are added, the figure rises to 50%. This means that one-half of all applicants for asylum in EU+ countries received a form of protection.

Despite the increase in the number of first instance decisions, the stock of cases pending a decision at the end of the year increased across EU+ countries due to the sharp rise in new applications that were lodged.

Applications for international protection and first instance decisions in EU+ countries, Q1 2021–Q4 2022

applications for international protection

Source: Eurostat [migr_asydcfstq] and [migr_asyappctzm] as of 13 April 2023.

646,000

decisions issued on first instance asylum applications in 2022

39%

of first instance decisions granted an EU-harmonised protection status*

93%

of Syrian applicants were granted protection in the EU

*refugee or subsidiary protection.

The expanding role of the EUAA as a vital component of the European asylum architecture

Highlights of EUAA’s operational support in 2022

EUAA Operational support

In 2022, the EUAA continued being an important actor in the provision of protection solutions in Europe.

The agency provided operational support to 14 Member States; continued to offer evidence-based information to a range of audiences, including policymakers; developed guidance; and delivered training to asylum and reception officials to support the practical implementation of CEAS.

As part of the Agency’s reinforced mandate, the new position of the independent Fundamental Rights Officer will catalyse work to ensure that the rights of asylum applicants are always safeguarded. Apart from the technical, operational and training support provided by the Agency, the new position of the independent Fundamental Rights Officer will ensure that the Agency’s operations continue to fully adhere to fundamental rights.

Through its Monitoring Mechanism, the Agency will work even closer with Member States in the coming years to monitor the operational and technical application of EU legal obligations.

With the assistance of the EUAA:

62,000

persons were registered for temporary protection in Romania

6,000

information desk activities set-up in Lithuania

650

individuals received training in Romania

1,000

vulnerability pre-screening activities in Lithuania

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