

Latest Asylum Trends - midterm review

January - June 2023 review

Countries of Origin on Focus

- Syria
- Venezuela and Colombia
- Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea

Syria

During the first half of 2023, Syrians lodged the most applications in the EU+: 67,000 representing 13% of the total. This marked a non-trivial increase of 47% compared with the first half of 2022. At the same time, they were issued an increasing number of first instance decisions (62,000) but the gap between applications and decisions means that there was also an increase in the number of cases awaiting first instance decisions.

When it comes to recognition rates, of all the first instance decisions issued to Syrians in the first half of 2023, some 95% granted protection, which is in line with recent trends. However, in recent years there has been an emerging shift towards granting subsidiary protection rather than refugee status.

An analysis of asylum applications across EU+ countries reveals that Germany continues to receive the most Syrian applications, processing 62% of all Syrian applications in the first half of 2023. Austria and Bulgaria trailed significantly behind, receiving 10% and 6% of the applications, respectively. Furthermore, Frontex's public data underscores that Syrian nationals continue to be the most frequently detected nationality illegally crossing the EU's external borders via the Western Balkan and Eastern Mediterranean routes.

In February 2023, the EUAA and Member States published a joint assessment of the situation in Syria in relation to the applicable international and EU legislation on international protection.

Venezuela and Colombia

During the first half of 2023, Venezuelans and Colombians lodged increasingly more applications, together accounting for 13% of all applications in the EU+ (36,000 and 34,000). This represented a steep increase of 41% for Venezuelans and an even steeper increase of 73% for Colombians, compared to the first half of 2022. Importantly, this trend is unrelated to irregular migration because these citizenships can legally enter the EU's Schengen area without visas, even journeying on flights from their home countries. These trends are also unique because of their singularity: the overwhelming majority of applications, along with corresponding decisions and pending cases, are highly concentrated in a single Member State – Spain (see

interactive chart).

The case of Venezuelan applicants in the EU+ is rather distinct for two reasons. Firstly, they lodge nearly all their applications in Spain (90% in the first half of 2023), and secondly because Spain does not grant Venezuelans asylum in the form of EU-regulated forms of protection but instead issues residence permits on humanitarian grounds. This results in a very low recognition rate in the whole of the EU+: merely 2% in terms of international protection in the first half of 2023. However, when factoring in national / humanitarian protection the recognition rate increases to 96%.

Similar to Venezuelans, Colombians primarily sought asylum in Spain, but they are not accorded the same national humanitarian protection. Consequently, their asylum recognition rates remain relatively low at 6%, representing the genuine protection rates as per official statistics. Another vital factor for Colombians is the steadily increasing number of pending first instance cases, which reached 54,000 by the end of June 2023, more than doubling compared to the same period in 2022.

Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea

The first half of 2023 witnessed a significant surge in asylum applications from Ivorian and Guinean nationals in the EU+, together accounting for 3.5% of all applications (9,300 and 8,700, respectively). In a striking trend, Ivorian applications more than doubled, while Guinean submissions rose by 60% compared to the same period in the previous year (see interactive chart).

These West African neighbours were also among the most frequently detected persons illegally crossing the Central Mediterranean route during the first half of 2023. Historically, more than half of their asylum applications have been lodged in France, although the recent surge is largely attributable to a rise in applications in Italy, and to a lesser extent also in Germany. In accordance with the EUAA Asylum report, Guinean nationals frequently feature in Dublin transfers implemented by France.

The recognition rate of both these citizenships have been steadily increasing from 2017 to reach 28% for Ivorians and 32% for Guineans in the first half of 2023.

Definitions

Asylum applications include all persons who have lodged or have been included in an application for international protection as a family member in the reporting country during the reporting month.

EU+ refers to the 27 European Union Member States, plus Norway and Switzerland.

First instance decisions include all persons covered by decisions issued on granting EU-regulated international protection status (refugee or subsidiary protection) following a first time or repeated application for international protection in the first instance determination process.

Stock of pending cases includes all cases for which an asylum application has been lodged and are under consideration by the national authority responsible for the first instance determination of the application for international protection (until the first instance decision has been issued) at the end of the reference period (i.e. last day of the reference month). It refers to the "stock" of applications for which decisions at first instance are still pending.

The EU+ recognition rate includes EU-regulated forms of protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) and excludes national protection forms (humanitarian reasons). It is calculated by dividing the number of positive first instance decisions (granting refugee status or subsidiary protection) by the total number of decisions issued

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