



Latest Asylum Trends - midterm review

January - June 2023 review

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Overview

Key findings

1. In the first half 2023, some 519,000 applications for asylum were lodged in the EU+, up by 28% compared to the first half of 2022.
2. Applications for asylum in the first half of 2023 were at the highest level for this time of the year since the refugee crisis of 2015-2016.
3. In the first half of 2023, Syrians, Afghans, Venezuelans, Turks and Colombians lodged the most applications for asylum in the EU+, jointly accounting for 44% of all applications.
4. Germany received the most applications in the first half of 2023, in fact 30% of all applications and nearly twice as many the next Member States Spain (17%) and France (16%).
5. At the end of June 2023, the number of asylum cases awaiting first instance decisions reached 682,000, a level only surpassed once since 2017 during the aftermath of the refugee crisis.

Applications

During the initial six months of 2023, the EU+ received an exceptional 519,000 asylum applications, marking the highest figure since 2016 and constituting the second-highest count on record. This follows a clear, upward trend which has been evident since the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020.

Historically, the volume of applications tends to be higher in the second half of the year. If this pattern holds, by the end of the year, more than 1 million asylum applications will be received by EU+ countries 2023.

The upswing in applications is particularly pronounced for some specific citizenships, use the interactive chart for more details:

- **Syrian** applications in the first half of 2023 exceeded any comparable period since the 2015-16 refugee crisis.
- Subsequent to the refugee crisis of 2015-16, **Afghan** applications fell and remained steady at roughly 50,000 per year. Since COVID-19, Afghan applications have been climbing steadily to the second highest ever level during the first half of 2023.
- In the first half of 2023, **Venezuelans, Colombians, and Peruvians** all lodged record-high numbers of applications for this time of year, and are expected to lodge the most-ever applications by year's end.
- In 2022, **Turkish** applications exceeded any previous year by more than double. However, 2023 is projected to see an even greater number of Turkish applications.
- **Iranian** and **Russian** applications more or less doubled compared to the same period in 2022.
- In 2022, **Pakistanis** lodged the most applications since 2016. This level is however likely to be outpaced in 2023.
- **Moroccans** and **Bangladeshis** lodged record high numbers of applications in 2022, with 2023 so-far projected to continue this upward trend.
- In the first half of 2023, **Ivorians** lodged a record number of applications for this time of year, in fact nearly as many as in the whole of 2022.

Countries of Origin

In the initial half of 2023, Syrians and Afghans submitted the most asylum applications, accounting for 67,000 and 55,000 requests respectively, which together encompassed nearly a quarter (24%) of all applications. For over a decade, these two countries have consistently been among the main countries of origin of applicants for international protection in the EU+.

Recent years have seen a notable increase in applications from Venezuelans, Colombians, and to a lesser extent, Peruvians, together constituting 16% of all submissions in the first half of 2023. Concurrently, Turks also formed a significant portion of the applicant pool in the EU+, contributing to 7% of all applications. Likewise, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis comprised noticeable fractions, submitting 4% and 3% of all applications, respectively.

Recognition Rates

Recognition rates, the percentage of asylum applications that receive decisions granting refugee status or subsidiary protection, are subject to change over time, reflecting the shifting profiles and protection requirements of the applicants, as well as [national policies on specific profiles and nationalities](#). Following the refugee crisis of 2015-16, the EU+ recognition rate has swung between 30% and 40%. Post COVID-19, this rate has increased from 32% in 2020, to 34% in 2021, and further to 40% in 2022—a rate which continued throughout the first half of 2023 with 41 %.

Naturally, the protection needs and recognition rates exhibit substantial variation between different nationalities. For instance, during the first half of 2023, Syrians had a recognition rate of 95%, while the rates for Afghans, Ivorians, and Moroccans stood at 58%, 28%, and 7%, respectively. Though the recognition rates for each citizenship generally remain stable over time, notable exceptions persist:

- [Syrians](#) had a recognition rate of 94% during the first half of 2023—the highest in six years—but it is important to note that a growing percentage are granted subsidiary protection rather than refugee status.
- The Afghan recognition rate leapt from 53% in 2020 to 66% in 2021 following the Taliban takeover. However, the rate slightly declined to under 60% in 2022 and the first half of 2023, while at the same time an increasing portion of [Afghan applications](#) were granted [refugee status](#).

- The Turkish recognition rate, which increased between 2016 and 2019, has since been on a steady decline, plunging from 54% in 2019 to 28% in the first half of 2023.
- For years, Russians had a recognition rate hovering around 20%, but this hiked to 30% in 2022 following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and further increased to 35% in the first half of 2023.
- Also on the increase in recent years, Iranians are now granted international protection at a rate of 47% up from 32% in 2020.
- The Ukrainian recognition has surged over the last couple of years—rising from roughly 12% in 2021 to 86% in 2022, and further still to 94% during the first half of 2023 primarily through decisions granting [subsidiary protection](#). Note that most Ukrainians register for temporary protection rather than applying for international protection per se (see [Providing Temporary Protection to Displaced Persons from Ukraine: A Year in Review](#) and [here](#)).

Context: It should be noted that some applicants, especially those from Venezuela and to a lesser extent from Afghanistan, tend to be granted [national \(rather than international\) forms of protection](#) which are unregulated by the EU and are therefore considered as negative asylum decisions in these statistics. Additionally, these recognition rates are calculated based on first instance decisions made by asylum authorities. They do not encompass decisions issued by judiciary and other authorities at the second instance or higher, such as [in appeals and reviews](#). In addition, approximately 4 million Ukrainians currently benefit from temporary protection in the EU+ after fleeing Russian aggression in Ukraine. Together these two parallel trends pose significant challenges to EU+ asylum, reception and other authorities, so much so that in June 2023, the EUAA was offering operational assistance to 13 Member States.

Pending Cases

At the end of June 2023, some 682,000 cases were awaiting a first instance decision which is up by 34% compared to a year ago at the end of June 2022. Notwithstanding April 2023, this number of pending cases is by far more than at any other point since 2017, when receiving countries were still processing applications lodged during the refugee crisis of 2015-16.

For the most part, citizenships lodging the most applications are also those with the most cases awaiting decisions. For instance, Syrians and Afghans had the most pending cases at the end of June 2023, with 87,000 and 69,000 cases, respectively. The number of pending cases for Syrians has surged by 45% compared to June 2022, while the number for Afghans has remained relatively stable. However, pending cases have more than doubled over the past year for Colombians and Peruvians (predominantly in Spain), Turks and Iranians (primarily in Germany), and Egyptians (mostly in Italy).

Context: EU+ asylum authorities often rely on the [operational support of the EUAA](#) to increase their decision making. However, despite these efforts, the speed of decision-making has not kept pace with the surge of applications being lodged. Consequently, the total number of cases awaiting a decision at the end of February 2023, including those [in appeal or review](#), [increased to 920,000](#).

Relevant publications

[Image](#)
[Asylum Report 2023](#)

[Asylum Report 2023](#)

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.

[Image](#)
[Cover of Country guidance Afghanistan](#)

[Country Guidance Afghanistan](#)

This country guidance document provides an in-depth analysis of the situation in Afghanistan, focussing on the key elements of qualification for international protection.

[Image](#)

[Cover of Country Guidance Syria](#)

[Country Guidance Syria](#)

This country guidance document provides an in-depth analysis of the situation in Syria, focussing on the key elements of qualification for international protection.

[Surveys of Arriving Migrants from Ukraine](#)

[Surveys of Arriving Migrants from Ukraine](#)

This thematic factsheet provides information on demographic profiles of those displaced from Ukraine to the EU, their employment status, access to accommodation, levels of satisfaction with key aspects of living in the host countries and most urgent needs.

[Image](#)

[2022_11_09_Forced_Displacement_Ukraine_Joint_Report_EUAA_IOM_OECD.pdf.pdf](#)

[Forced displacement from and within Ukraine](#)

This report brings together the results of desk research and survey projects carried out by the EUAA, IOM and OECD to detail forced displacement from and within Ukraine.

[Image](#)

[Cover of The future of International Protection in the EU+ in the next 10 years](#)

[The future of International Protection in the EU+ in the next 10 years](#)

This report is the final output of a multi-phase foresight project undertaken by the EUAA to better understand the complex interactions that could shape the future of international protection in the European Union (EU).

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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