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EU received over 1.1 million asylum applications in 2023



In 2023, EU+ countries received 1.14 million applications for international protection, reaching a 7-year high. Syrians continued to lodge the most applications, with Afghans remaining the second largest applicant group, albeit with significantly fewer applications than the previous year. An increase in Palestinian applications was also noted towards the end of the year.

Analysis released by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) reveals notable shifts in the asylum landscape within the EU+. In 2023, EU+ countries lodged over 1?140?000 applications for asylum, an **increase of 18?% compared to 2022**1. Germany (334?000) continued to **receive the most applications** by far, in absolute terms; though **Cyprus** (12?000) was under the most pressure, relative to its population size.

Changing trends for some countries of origin

In 2023, **Syrians** (181?000) submitted significantly more applications; in fact, recording an increase of 38?% compared to 2022. This represents just under half of the number of applications lodged in 2015. **Afghans** (114?000), while remaining the second-largest applicant group, **lodged significantly fewer applications**

compared to 2022 (down by 11?%); making them one of the only key nationalities to decrease last year.

In a trend that began in the fourth quarter, **Turkish nationals** (101?000) lodged over four fifths (82?%) more applications; compared to the year before. Around **one fifth of all applications** were lodged by nationals with visa-free access to the Schengen Area, including **Venezuelans** (68?000) and **Colombians** (63?000).

Despite some inconsistent data, it has become clear that more **Palestinians** are lodging asylum applications in the EU+. In 2023, the number of applications reached nearly 11?600, two thirds higher than in 2022.

A natural consequence of higher applications is the increasing number of cases pending a decision at first instance (883?000), which rose by 39?% in 2023. This does not paint a complete picture however, as EU+ countries are also working to provide temporary protection **to over 4.4 million Ukrainians** fleeing the Russian invasion. These parallel strands continued to pose significant challenges for EU+ asylum and reception authorities; so much so, that by the end of 2023, the EUAA was providing **operational assistance in 13 Member States**.

High application levels and strains on reception capacity in some Member States

In 2023, **Germany** (334?000) remained the leading destination of asylum seekers in the EU+, **receiving nearly a third of all applications**. In fact, Germany received more applications than **France** (167?000) and **Spain** (162?000) combined. **Italy** (136?000) also featured prominently in the asylum landscape. Collectively, these four countries received **over two thirds of all applications** last year.

Some citizenships lodge most of their applications in a single EU+ country. In 2023, these included **Venezuelans** and **Colombians**, lodging over 80?% of their applications in **Spain**; **Egyptians** lodging nearly 70?% of their applications in **Italy**, as well as **Afghans**, **Syrians**, and **Turks** lodging most of their applications in **Germany**. Significantly, of the **Moroccans** (31?000) applying in EU+ countries, most did so in **Austria**. In addition, **Guineans** (21?000) and **Ivorians** (20?000) largely applied in **France**.

While evaluating which EU+ countries receive the most asylum applications is important, **it is not the best measure of pressure** on national administrations.2 Indeed, asylum and reception systems vary widely in terms of their capacity. **Cyprus** (12?000), with its small population, received 1 application per 78 inhabitants. In contrast, Germany received 1 application per 252 inhabitants. While receiving very different numbers, **Belgium** (35?000) and **Estonia** (4?000) were under similar pressure per capita. Taken together, **EU+ countries received approximately one asylum application for every 400 inhabitants** in 2023.

Highest recognition rate in years

In 2023, the **EU+ recognition rate rose to 43?%** which is the highest level seen in 7 years. While the rate remained stable for most nationalities; for some, it fluctuated – both in terms of the number of positive decisions (at first instance), but also in terms of the type of protection decision.

Although remaining high, in the case of **Syrians** (over 80?% recognition rate) only a quarter of decisions (26 ?%) granted refugee status. For **Afghans** however (61?% recognition rate), around half of the decisions granted refugee status. In addition, since 2019, the recognition rate for **Turkish nationals** has decreased significantly to 25?%.

For more information and a series of interactive data visualisations, please visit the Latest Asylum Trends page.

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1

EUAA EPS data are preliminary and might differ from the validated statistics submitted to Eurostat under Regulation (EU) 2020/851 (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2020/851), at a later stage. Total EPS numbers include an approximation for one EU+ country and may change after updates.

2

Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position. 'Refugee', 'pressure', 'risk' and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not in the legal sense as applied in the EU Asylum Acquis (https://euaa.europa.eu/about-us/legal-basis#1), the Refugee Convention, 1951 (https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention) and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, 1967 (https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=V-5&chapter=5).

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