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A more resilient EU asylum system, despite increased pressures



The EUAA has just published its annual report on the state of asylum in Europe. Despite over 1.1 million applications in 2023, capacity building efforts meant that asylum systems were broadly more capable of managing increased numbers. In contrast, some reception systems are under notable pressures. At the same time, European and national courts have played an increasing role in driving forward convergences in practices.

The European Union Agency for Asylum's (EUAA) Asylum Report 2024 builds on the annual trends presented in February, by providing a comprehensive and qualitative analysis of the State of Asylum in the EU in 2023, as well as the early part of 2024.

In 2023, EU+ countries received over 1.1 million asylum applications, a 7-year high. Just four Member States: **Germany, France, Spain**, and **Italy received 70% of all applications**. Syrians (181 000), Afghans (114 000), and Turks (101 000) continued to submit the highest numbers of requests. While still at relatively low levels, Palestinian applications (12 000) rose1, as compared to 2022. However, it should be noted that this moderate increase began prior to the October 2023 re-escalation between Israel and Hamas.

EU+ countries took around 677 000 decisions at first instance, of which 294 000 were positive, resulting in **an overall EU+ recognition rate of 43 % in 2023**. While these decisions contributed to the overall number

of cases closed, the inflow of new applications resulted in a net increase of 280 000 cases to the overall caseload at first instance in the EU+. The latter **stood at 883 000** at the end of the year.

Despite this, asylum authorities, having adapted from past challenges, **have generally proven resilient in their handling of the increased pressure**. EU+ countries took a variety of approaches including prioritising certain profiles, shortening the personal interview, digitalising administrative systems, or increasing recruitment and staff training; all-in-all, building on a decade's worth of EU-supported capacity-building efforts.

Courts playing a more important role in driving convergence

The Report also identifies the significance of European and national courts in enforcing current asylum legislation. A combination of national court decisions and referrals to the Court of Justice of the EU meant that **judiciary bodies played an increasingly important role in shaping the practical application of the EU asylum *acquis***.

Highlighting the role that courts play, not only in enforcing EU law, but also in its consistent interpretation; most referrals delved into the complexities of Dublin transfers. Some courts halted the transfer of applicants due to concerns related to living conditions or overloaded reception capacity, while others confirmed them – relying on the principle of mutual trust. Similarly, extreme pressure on national reception systems meant that not all asylum seekers could be accommodated in dedicated facilities. In 2023, **around 100 court decisions required national authorities** to ensure applicants had access to accommodation and sufficient reception conditions.

A new start on migration, built on firmer legal ground

On 20 December 2023, European lawmakers reached a political agreement on the proposed Pact on Migration and Asylum. Last week, its ten composite legal texts entered into force just ahead of the adoption of a Common Implementation Plan by the European Commission, and its presentation to the Justice and Home Affairs Council. The Pact will become applicable in two-years-time[2]. Largely directly applicable, it offers a more modern system: one that can help EU countries address the complex phenomenon of asylum-related migration, particularly as geopolitical instability – both in the European neighbourhood and further afield – is on the rise.

Download the Asylum Report 2024

Any further information may be obtained from the European Union Agency for Asylum's Press Office at the following email addresses:

- Press Office: press@euaa.europa.eu
- Andrew McKinlay, Press Officer: andrew.mckinlay@euaa.europa.eu
- Anis Cassar, Spokesperson: anis.cassar@euaa.europa.eu

[1]

This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States. As a result, Palestinian applications may be reported (*see: https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-report-2023/41311-stateless-palestinians*) as coming from “stateless individuals”. The figure is, therefore, likely underestimated.

2

Regulation (EU) 2024/1350 (*see: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1350*) establishing a Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework became applicable on 11 June 2024.

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