Box 1. Identifying statelessness in the asylum context

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icon on global developments for stateless persons

Statelessness is a legal anomaly which affects people who are not considered a national by any state under the operation of its law. Lacking any state's protection, stateless persons may not be able to fully exercise their fundamental rights.
Stateless persons and refugees are two distinct categories in international law. Nevertheless, a person can be both a refugee and stateless. In the context of asylum, statelessness may also be relevant to determine international protection needs, as in many instances the reasons why a person left their country are connected to reasons why they are stateless.

According to data exchanged by EU+ countries under the EUAA Early-Warning and Preparedness System (EPS), between January-December 2025, approximately 2,700 applications for international protection were lodged by stateless applicants across EU+ countries. During the same period, 8,800 applications were lodged by Palestinians. During this time, EU+ countries issued 2,300 decisions at first instance to stateless applicants, with a recognition rate of 63% (decisions granting refugee status or subsidiary protection). About 11,000 decisions at first instance were issued to Palestinian applicants, with a recognition rate of 49%.v

Several developments took place in 2025 affecting beneficiaries and applicants for international protection who have been identified as stateless. Slovenia ratified the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and Iceland drafted standard operating procedures for statelessness determination.199 Adopting a more restrictive policy, Estonia revoked the voting rights of stateless people in local elections.200

National courts across EU+ countries ruled on several cases involving stateless persons, notably Palestinian applicants originating from the area of operation of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), assessing whether UNRWA's assistance and protection had effectively ceased in light of the security and humanitarian situation in Gaza.201 Other rulings addressed Bedoons in Kuwait who are excluded from public services and living in precarious conditions202 and children at risk of statelessness when born to asylum-seeking

parents.203

At the policy and advocacy levels, in October 2025 the European Network on Statelessness (ENS), an alliance carrying out multi-faceted work to address statelessness in Europe, updated its Thematic Briefing on Statelessness Determination and Protection in Europe, reflecting recent legal, policy and practical developments based on data from the Statelessness Index. In November 2025, ENS and Statefree, a civil society organisation aiming to create visibility around statelessness, co-organised a conference dedicated to advancing solutions for stateless people.204

The European Migration Network (EMN) Platform on Statelessness organised a multistakeholder conference on statelessness as a vulnerability under the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The operationalisation of Pact measures were discussed with representatives of the European Commission, the EUAA, FRA, UNHCR, the Council of Europe, the ENS, national authorities and civil society organisations.

Within the international framework, Sweden announced a new pledge at the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review in December 2025 to integrate displaced and stateless populations into national statistics.205 By the end of 2025, six EU+ countries (Denmark, Italy, Norway, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden) joined the Global Alliance to End Statelessness, a multistakeholder platform committed to accelerating solutions to eradicate statelessness.206

For more information, please see: European Network on Statelessness

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  The recognition rate for Palestinians dropped sharply from about 90% in 2024 to 49% in 2025. This was partly due to many more inadmissibility decisions issued in 2025 by Belgium, due to Palestinian applicants having a protection status in another Member State.

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