

Asylum statistics

Data extracted on 21 May 2015. Most recent data: Further Eurostat information, Main tables and Database. Planned article update: March 2016.

This article describes recent developments in relation to numbers of asylum applicants and decisions on asylum applications in the European Union (EU). Asylum is a form of international protection given by a state on its territory. It is granted to a person who is unable to seek protection in his / her country of citizenship and / or residence, in particular for fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.

Main statistical findings

Asylum applicants

Having peaked in 1992 (672 thousand applications in the EU-15) and again in 2001 (424 thousand applications in the EU-27), the number of asylum applications within the EU-27 fell in successive years to just below 200 thousand by 2006. Focusing just on applications from citizens of non-member countries, as shown in Figure 1, there was a gradual increase in the number of asylum applications within the EU-27 and later the EU-28 through to 2012, after which the rate of change quickened considerably as the number of asylum seekers rose to 431 thousand in 2013 and 626 thousand in 2014; this was the highest number of asylum applicants within the EU since the peak in 1992.

This latest figures for 2014 marked an increase of almost 195 thousand applicants in relation to the year before, in part due to a considerably higher number of applicants from Syria, Eritrea, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244/99), Afghanistan and Ukraine and to a lesser extent from Iraq, Serbia, Nigeria and the Gambia (see Table 1).

Asylum applicants from Syria rose to 122 thousand in the EU-28 in 2014, which equated to 20 % of the total from all non-member countries. Afghani citizens accounted for 7 % of the total, while Kosovans and Eritrean citizens accounted for 6 % and Serbians for 5 %. Among the 30 main groups of citizenship of asylum applicants in the EU-28 in 2014, by far the largest relative increase compared to 2013 was recorded for individuals from Ukraine. There were also considerable increases in relative terms in the number of applicants from several African countries (The Gambia, Eritrea, Senegal, Mali, Sudan and Nigeria), two Middle Eastern countries (Syria and Iraq) and Afghanistan, as well as Western Balkan countries (Kosovo ^[1], Albania, and



Figure 1: Asylum applications (non-EU) in the EU-28 Member States, 2004-14 ⁽¹⁾ (thousands)
Source: Eurostat (migr_asyctz) and (migr_asyappctza)

Table 1: Countries of origin of (non-EU) asylum seekers in the EU-28 Member States, 2013 and 2014
Source: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza)

Table 2: Five main citizenships of (non-EU) asylum applicants, 2014 (number, rounded figures)
Source: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza)

Table 3: Number of (non-EU) asylum applicants in the EU and EFTA Member States, by age distribution, 2014 ⁽¹⁾
Source: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza) and (migr_asyunaa)

Bosnia and Herzegovina), and large increases of applicants from unknown origins and Stateless applicants. The largest relative fall in applicants, among these 30 countries, was recorded for Russia, as the number of Russian asylum seekers more than halved between 2013 and 2014.

A number of factors play a role in determining where an asylum seeker will lodge his / her application. These include historical ties between countries of origin and destination (former colonies for instance), a certain knowledge of the language used in the host country, the presence of established ethnic communities, and the economic situation of the destination country. These pull factors largely overlap with the drivers of other non-asylum migration flows. However, other factors such as the perceived likelihood that the destination country will grant a protection status or the benefits connected to a protection status are specific to asylum seekers. Table 2 provides an overview of the five largest groups of asylum applicants (by citizenship) in each of the EU Member States.

Syrians accounted for the highest number of applicants in 11 of the 28 EU Member States, including 41 thousand applicants in Germany (the highest number of applicants from a single country to one of the EU Member States in 2014) and 31 thousand applicants in Sweden. Some 27 thousand Serbians and 13 thousand Eritreans also applied for asylum in Germany and 12 thousand Eritreans in Sweden. The only other EU Member States to receive in excess of 10 thousand asylum applicants in 2014 from a single group of citizens were Hungary (21 thousand Kosovans) and Italy (10 thousand Nigerians).

The number of asylum applicants and their relative importance (for example, their number in relation to the total resident population of the country where the application is lodged) varies considerably between EU Member States. In 2014, by far the highest number of asylum seekers from outside of the EU-28 was reported by Germany (203 thousand), which was two and a half times as many as the number of applicants in Sweden (81 thousand) — see Table 3. Italy (65 thousand applicants), France (64 thousand), Hungary (43 thousand), the United Kingdom (32 thousand), Austria (28 thousand), the Netherlands (25 thousand) and Belgium (23 thousand) followed. The total number of persons seeking asylum in these nine Member States accounted for 90 % of the EU-28 total in 2014.

The number of asylum applicants in 2014 more than doubled compared with 2013 in Italy (an increase of 143 %), Hungary (126 %) and Denmark (105 %), while it more than halved in Croatia (-58 %) and nearly halved in Poland (-47 %).

Nearly four in every five (79 %) asylum seekers in the EU-28 in 2014 were aged less than 35 (see Table 3); those aged 18–34 accounted for slightly more than half (54 %) of the total number of applicants, while minors aged less than 18 accounted for one quarter (26 %).

This age distribution for asylum applicants was common in the vast majority of the EU Member States, with the largest share of applicants usually being those aged 18–34. There was one exception to this pattern: Poland reported a higher proportion of asylum applicants aged less than 18.

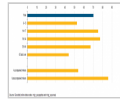


Figure 2: Share of male (non-EU) asylum applicants in the EU-28, by age group and status of minors, 2014 (%)

Source: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza) and (migr_asyunaa)



Table 4: First instance decisions on (non-EU) asylum applications, 2014 (number, rounded figures)

Source: Eurostat (migr_asydcfsta)

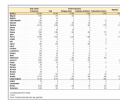


Table 5: Final decisions on (non-EU) asylum applications, 2014 (number, rounded figures)

Source: Eurostat (migr_asydcfina)

According to the latest data available, in 2014 there were 23.1 thousand applications in the EU-28 from unaccompanied minors. An unaccompanied minor is a person below the age of 18 who arrives on the territory of an EU Member State unaccompanied by an adult responsible for them or a minor who is left unaccompanied after having entered the territory of an EU Member State.

The distribution of asylum applicants by sex shows that men were more likely than women to seek asylum. Across the EU-28, the gender distribution was most balanced for asylum applicants aged less than 14, where boys accounted for 53 % of the total number of applications in 2014. There was a greater degree of gender inequality for asylum applicants aged 14–17 or 18–34, where around three quarters of applicants were male. Female applicants outnumbered male applicants for asylum seekers aged 65 and over, although this group was relatively small, accounting for just 0.8 % of the total number of applications in 2014.

The gender difference was even more apparent when considering unaccompanied minors, as 86 % of asylum applicants in the EU-28 in 2014 that were unaccompanied minors were male, compared with 54 % for accompanied minors.

Decisions on asylum applications

There is a wide diversity in the handling of asylum applications across the EU Member States: this may be linked to differences in the citizenship of applicants in each Member State, and may also reflect asylum and migration policies that are applied in each country. Though refugee and subsidiary protection status are defined by EU law, humanitarian reasons are specific to national legislation, which explains why the latter is not applicable in all EU Member States.

In 2014, close to half (45 %) ^[2] of EU-28 first instance asylum decisions resulted in positive outcomes, that is grants of refugee or subsidiary protection status, or an authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons; note that all EU-28 data on decisions on asylum applications for 2014 exclude Austria. This share was considerably lower (18 %) for final decisions (based on appeal or review). For first instance decisions, some 56 % of all positive decisions in the EU-28 in 2014 resulted in grants of refugee status, while for final decisions the share was somewhat higher, at 60 %.

In absolute numbers, a total of almost 104 thousand persons were granted refugee status in the EU-28 in 2014 (first instance and final decisions), nearly 60 thousand subsidiary protection status, and just over 20 thousand authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons.

Around 160 thousand people received positive decisions at first instance in the EU-28 in 2014 (of which 90 thousand were granted refugee status, 55 thousand were granted subsidiary protection and 16 thousand were granted humanitarian status); a further 23 thousand people received positive final decisions in 2014 (of which nearly 14 thousand were granted refugee status, 5 thousand subsidiary protection and 5 thousand humanitarian status).

The highest number of positive asylum decisions (first instance and final decisions) in 2014 was recorded in Germany (48 thousand), followed by Sweden (33 thousand), France and Italy (both 21 thousand), the United Kingdom (14 thousand) and the Netherlands (13 thousand). Altogether, these six Member States accounted for 81 % of the total number of positive decisions issued in the EU-28.

Data sources and availability

Eurostat produces statistics on a range of issues relating to international migration. Between 1986 and 2007, data on asylum was collected on the basis of a gentlemen's agreement. Since 2008 data have been provided to Eurostat under the provisions of Article 4 of Regulation (EC) 862/2007 most of the statistics presented in this article were collected within this regulatory framework. Data are provided to Eurostat with a monthly

frequency (for asylum application statistics), quarterly frequency (for first instance decisions) or annual frequency (for final decisions based on appeal or review, resettlement and unaccompanied minors). The statistics are based on administrative sources and are supplied to Eurostat by statistical authorities, home office ministries / ministries of the interior or related immigration agencies in the EU Member States.

Two different categories of persons should be taken into account when analysing asylum statistics. The first includes asylum seekers who have lodged a claim (asylum applications) and whose claim is under consideration by a relevant authority. The second is composed of persons who have been recognised, after consideration, as refugees, or have been granted another kind of international protection (subsidiary protection), or were granted protection on the basis of the national law related to international protection (authorisations to stay for humanitarian reasons), or were rejected from having any form of protection.

Since the entry into force of Regulation (EC) 862/2007, statistics on asylum decisions have been made available at different stages of the asylum procedure. First instance decisions are decisions granted by the respective authority acting as a first instance of the administrative / judicial asylum procedure in the receiving country. In contrast, final decisions in appeal or review relate to decisions granted at the final instance of administrative / judicial asylum procedure and which result from an appeal lodged by an asylum seeker rejected in the preceding stage. Since asylum procedures and the number / levels of decision making bodies differ among the EU Member States, the true final instance may be, according to the national legislation and administrative procedures, a decision of the highest national court. However, the applied methodology defines that final decisions should refer to what is effectively a final decision in the vast majority of cases: in other words, once all normal routes of appeal have been exhausted and there is no possibility to appeal on the substance of the decision but only on procedural grounds.

Context

The 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees (as amended by the 1967 New York Protocol) has, for over 60 years, defined who is a refugee, and laid down a common approach towards refugees that has been one of the cornerstones for the development of a common asylum system within the EU.

Since 1999, the EU has worked towards creating a common European asylum regime in accordance with the Geneva Convention and other applicable international instruments. A number of directives in this area have been developed. The four main legal instruments on asylum — all recently recast — are:

- the Qualification Directive 2011/95/EU on standards for the qualification of non-EU nationals and stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection;
- the Procedures Directive 2013/32/EU on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection;
- the Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection;
- the Dublin Regulation (EU) 604/2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national (national of a non-member country) or stateless person.

The Hague programme was adopted by heads of state and government on 5 November 2004. It puts forward the idea of a common European asylum system (CEAS), in particular, it raises the challenge to establish common procedures and uniform status for those granted asylum or subsidiary protection. The European Commission's policy plan on asylum (COM(2008) 360 final) was presented in June 2008 which included three pillars to underpin the development of the CEAS:

- bringing more harmonisation to standards of protection by further aligning the EU Member States' asylum legislation;
- effective and well-supported practical cooperation;
- increased solidarity and sense of responsibility among EU Member States, and between the EU and non-member countries.

With this in mind, in 2009 the European Commission made a proposal to establish a European Asylum Support Office (EASO). The EASO supports EU Member States in their efforts to implement a more consistent and fair asylum policy. It also provides technical and operational support to EU Member States facing particular pressures (in other words, those EU Member States receiving large numbers of asylum applicants). The EASO became fully operational in June 2011 and has worked to increase its capacity, activity and influence, working with the European Commission and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

In May 2010, the European Commission presented an action plan for unaccompanied minors (COM(2010) 213 final), who are regarded as the most exposed and vulnerable victims of migration. This plan aims to set-up a coordinated approach and commits all EU Member States to grant high standards of reception, protection and integration for unaccompanied minors. As a complement to this action plan, the European Migration Network has produced a comprehensive EU study on reception policies, as well as return and integration arrangements for unaccompanied minors.

In December 2011, the European Commission adopted a Communication on 'Enhanced intra-EU solidarity in the field of asylum' (COM(2011) 835 final). This provided proposals to reinforce practical, technical and financial cooperation, moving towards a better allocation of responsibilities and improved governance of the asylum system in the EU, namely through:

- introducing an evaluation and early warning mechanism to detect and address emerging problems;
- making the supporting role of the EASO more effective;
- increasing the amount of funds available and making these more flexible, taking into account significant fluctuations in the number of asylum seekers;
- developing and encouraging the relocation of beneficiaries of international protection between different EU Member States.

See also

- Asylum quarterly report
- Dublin statistics on countries responsible for asylum application
- Statistics on enforcement of immigration legislation
- Residence permits statistics
- Migration and migrant population statistics
- Migrant integration statistics
- Population and population change statistics
- Population statistics at regional level

Further Eurostat information

Publications

Data in focus

- Asylum applicants and first instance decisions on asylum applications: 2014
- Asylum applicants and first instance decisions on asylum applications: third quarter 2014
- Asylum applicants and first instance decisions on asylum applications: second quarter 2014
- Asylum applicants and first instance decisions on asylum applications: first quarter 2014
- Asylum applicants and first instance decisions on asylum applications: 2013
- Asylum applicants and first instance decisions on asylum applications: 2012

News releases

- 185 000 first time asylum seekers in the EU in the first quarter of 2015
- EU Member States granted protection to more than 185 000 asylum seekers in 2014
- The number of asylum applicants in the EU jumped to more than 625 000 in 2014
- More than 2.3 million first residence permits issued in the EU28 in 2013
- Large increase to almost 435 000 asylum applicants registered in the EU28 in 2013
- EU Member States granted protection to 135 700 asylum seekers in 2013

Main tables

- Asylum and managed migration (t_migr), see:

Asylum and new asylum applicants - monthly data (tps00189)
Persons subject of asylum applications pending at the end of the month - monthly data (tps00190)
Asylum and new asylum applicants - annual aggregated data (tps00191)
First instance decisions on applications by type of decision - annual aggregated data (tps00192)
Final decisions on applications - annual data (tps00193)
Asylum applicants considered to be unaccompanied minors - annual data (tps00194)

Database

- Asylum and managed migration (migr), see:

Asylum and Dublin statistics (migr_asy)
Applications (migr_asyapp)
Decisions on applications and resettlement (migr_asydec)
'Dublin' statistics (migr_dub)

Dedicated section

- Asylum and managed migration

Methodology / Metadata

- Applications (ESMS metadata file — migr_asyapp_esms)
- Decisions on applications and resettlement (ESMS metadata file — migr_asydec_esms)
- 'Dublin' statistics (ESMS metadata file — migr_dub_esms)

Source data for tables and figures (MS Excel)

-  Asylum statistics: tables and figures

External links

- European Commission — DG Migration and Home Affairs — Common European asylum system
- European Asylum Support Office — EASO
- European Migration Network — EMN
- UNHCR — Statistics and operational data

Notes

1. ↑ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.
2. ↑ Since reference year 2014, asylum applicants rejected on the basis that another EU Member State accepted responsibility to examine their asylum application under 'Dublin' Regulation No 604/2013 are not included in data on negative decisions. This has lowered the number of rejections. Consequently, the proportion of positive decisions in the total number of first instance decisions is estimated to have increased by around 5 percentage points.

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