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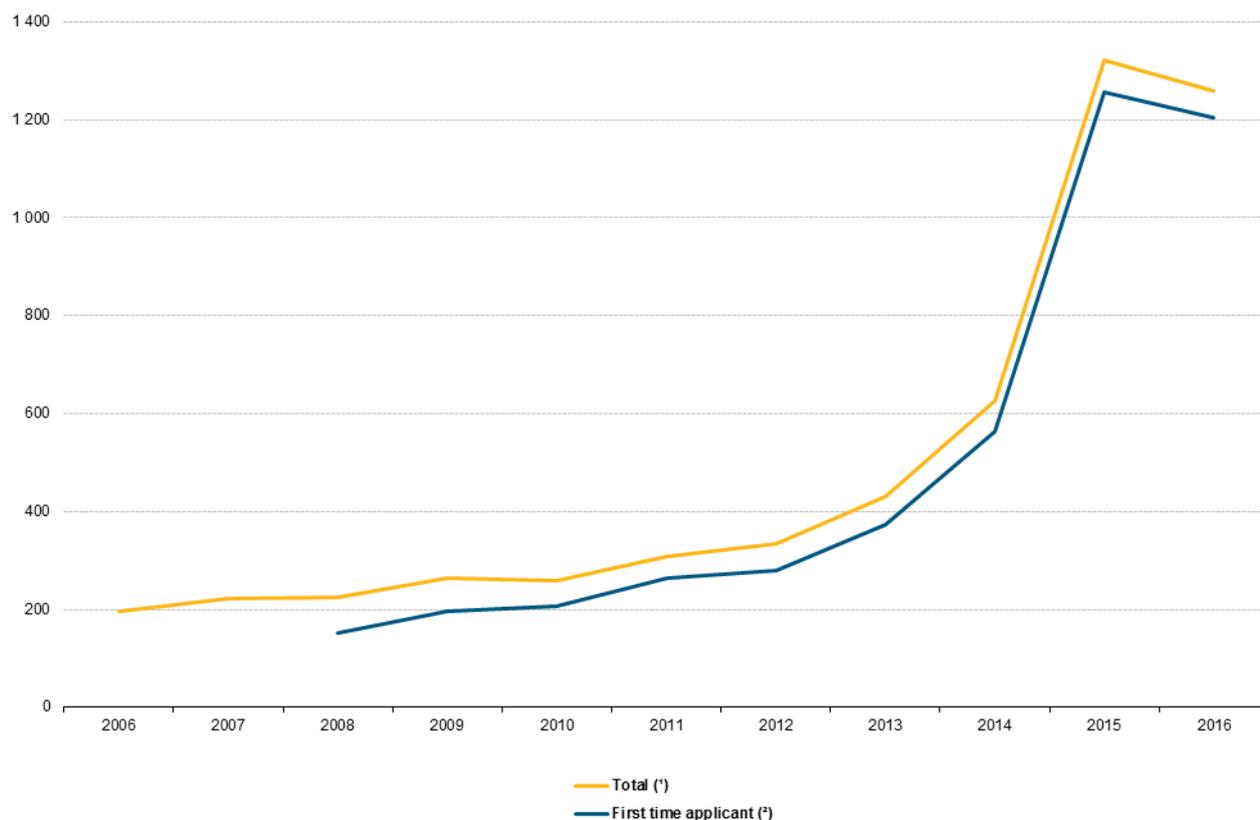
This article describes recent developments in relation to numbers of [asylum applicants](#) and decisions on [asylum applications](#) in the [European Union \(EU\)](#) . Asylum is a form of international protection given by a state on its territory. It is granted to a person who is unable to seek protection 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](#)) when the EU Member States received many asylum applicants from former Yugoslavia and again in 2001 (424 thousand applications in the [EU-27](#)), the number of asylum applications within the EU-27 fell to just below 200 thousand by 2006.

Focusing just on applications from citizens of non-member countries (see 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 number of asylum seekers rose at a more rapid pace, with 431 thousand applications in 2013, 627 thousand in 2014 and around 1.3 million in both 2015 and 2016. As such, the number of asylum applications within the EU-28 in 2015 and 2016 was approximately double the number recorded within the EU-15 during the previous relative peak of 1992.



(*) 2006 and 2007: EU-27 and extra-EU-27.

(*) 2006 and 2007: not available.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: migr_asyctz and migr_asyappctza)

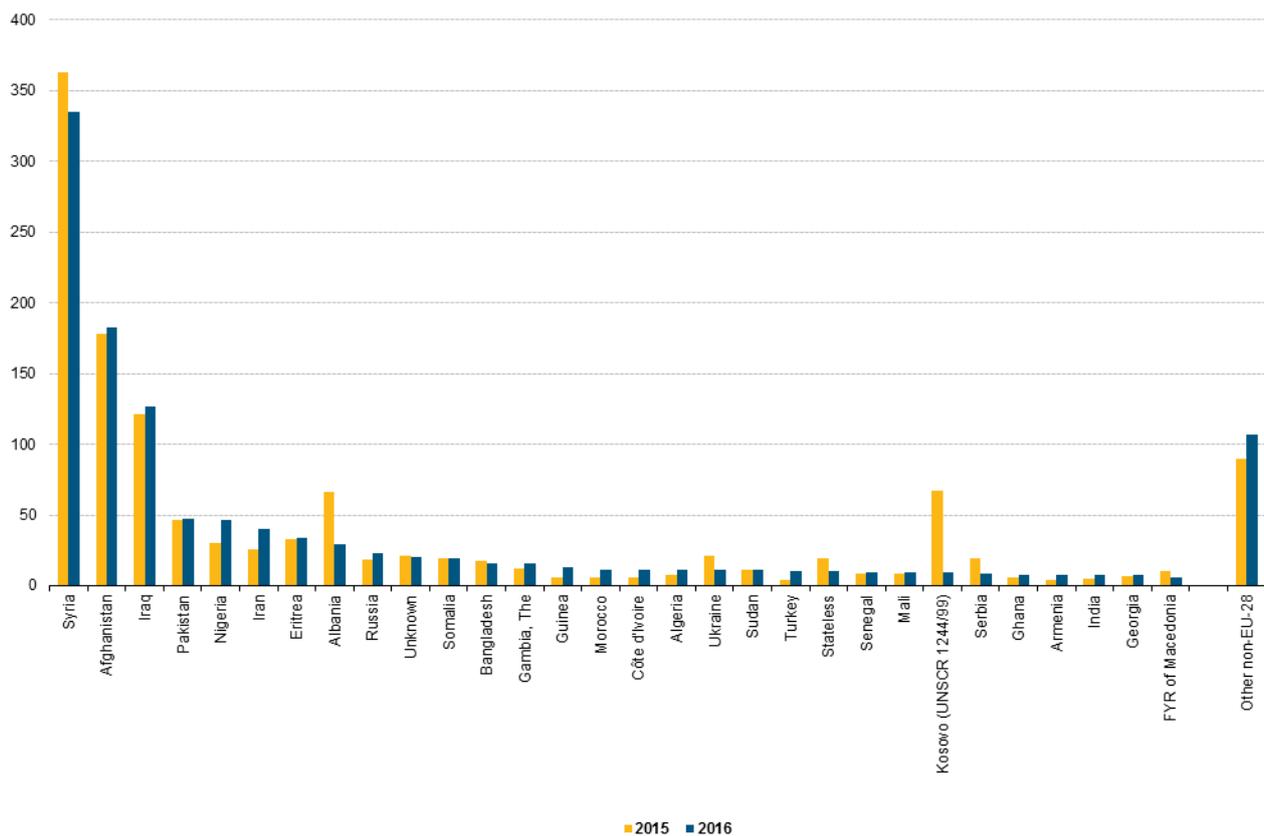
Figure 1: Asylum applications(non-EU) in the EU-28 Member States, 2006–2016(thousands)Source: Eurostat (migrasyctz) and (migrasyappctza)

The number of **first time asylum applicants** in the EU-28¹ in 2016 was 53 thousand (about 4 %) less than the total number of applicants. A first time applicant for international protection is a person who lodged an application for asylum for the first time in a given EU Member State and therefore excludes repeat applicants (in that Member State) and so more accurately reflects the number of newly arrived persons applying for international protection in the reporting Member State.

This latest figure for 2016 marked a decrease of 53 thousand first time applicants across the EU-28 in comparison with the year before, as the number of first time applicants fell from almost 1.26 million in 2015 to 1.20 million in 2016; this followed on from an increase of 694 thousand first time applicants between 2014 and 2015. The main contributions to the decrease were lower numbers of applicants from Kosovo²(UNSCR 1244/99), Albania and Syria (see Figure 2).

¹The EU total is calculated as an aggregation of Member States data. Member State data refer to the number of persons applying for asylum for the first time in that Member State. Persons may however apply for international protection in more than one Member State in a given reference year. Consequently, the EU total may include such multiple applications. Based on an estimate using latest available Dublin statistics, around 6% of asylum applicants in the EU have applied for asylum in more than one EU Member State during the same year.

²This 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.



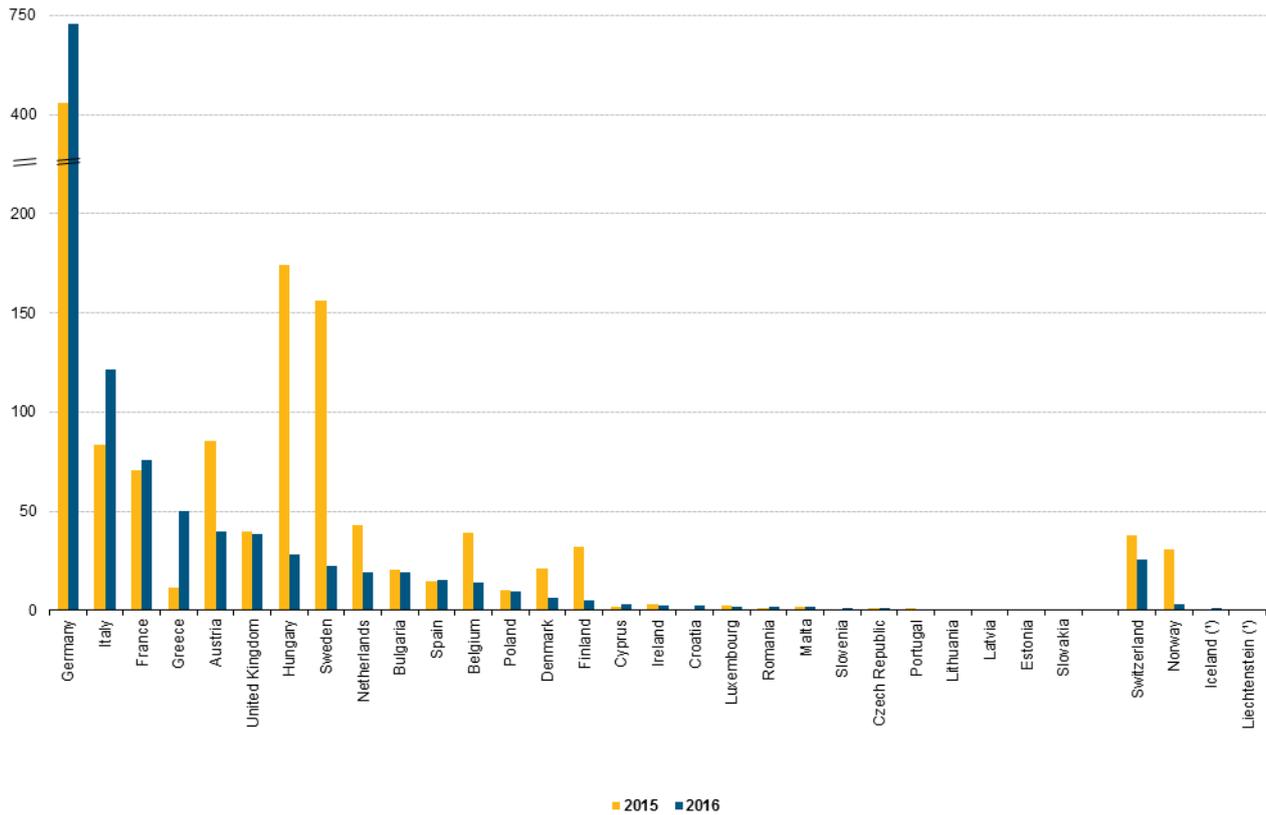
Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr_asyappctza)

Figure 2: Countries of origin of (non-EU) asylum seekers in the EU-28 Member States, 2015 and 2016 (thousands of first time applicants) Source: Eurostat (migrasyappctza)

In 2016, the number of first time asylum applicants in the EU-28 from Syria fell back slightly to 335 thousand from 363 thousand in 2015; the share of Syrian citizens in the total dropped from 28.9 % to 27.8 %. Afghani citizens accounted for 15 % of the total number of first time asylum applicants and Iraqis for 11 %, while Pakistanis and Nigerians accounted for 4 % each. Among the most numerous groups of citizenship of asylum applicants in the EU-28 in 2016, the largest relative increases compared with 2015 were recorded for Nigerians (share up 1.4 percentage points) and Iran (up 1.3 percentage points). There was also considerable growth in relative terms in the number of applicants from Afghanistan and Iraq (in Asia), Guinea, Morocco and Côte d'Ivoire (in Africa), as well as Turkey. The biggest relative fall in the number of applicants, among the most common countries of citizenship for asylum seekers in 2016, was recorded for Albania and Kosovo in the Western Balkans³. Between 2015 and 2016, Turkey, Morocco, Armenia and India moved into the top 30 non-member countries from which the EU-28 Member States received (first time) asylum applications, while Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of Congo, China and Ethiopia moved out of it.

The number of first time asylum applicants in Germany increased from 442 thousand in 2015 to 722 thousand in 2016 (see Figure 3). Greece and Italy also reported large increases (both in excess of 30 thousand additional first time asylum applicants) between 2015 and 2016. In relative terms, the largest increases in the number of first time applicants were recorded in Croatia (over 15 times as high), Slovenia (nearly five times as high) and Greece (more than four times as high). By contrast, Austria, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Hungary and Sweden reported less than half the number of first time asylum applicants in 2016 as in 2015; Norway also recorded a large fall.

³For the purpose of this analysis only the top 30 countries of citizenship in terms of the number of applicants for asylum were considered.



Note: the y-axis is interrupted with a different interval above the interruption from that below it.

(*) 2015: not available.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr_asyappctza)

Figure 3: Number of (non-EU) asylum seekers in the EU and EFTA Member States, 2015 and 2016 (thousands of first time applicants) Source: Eurostat (migrasyappctza)

Germany's share of the EU-28 total rose from 35 % in 2015 to 60 % in 2016 while other EU Member States that recorded a notable increase in their share of the EU-28 total included Italy (up 3.4 percentage points to 10.1 %) and Greece (up 3.2 percentage points to 4.1 %). Conversely, Hungary and Sweden's shares of the EU-28 total each fell more than 10 percentage points between 2015 and 2016, with falls of 1 percentage point or more also recorded in Austria, Finland, Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark.

Table 1 provides an overview of the five largest groups of first time asylum applicants (by citizenship) in each of the EU Member States. Syrians accounted for the largest number of applicants in 13 of the 28 EU Member States, including 266 thousand applicants in Germany (the highest number of applicants from a single country to one of the EU Member States in 2016) and 27 thousand in Greece. Some 127 thousand Afghan applicants were recorded in Germany, 12 thousand in Austria and 11 thousand in Hungary. A further 96 thousand Iraqis, 26 thousand Iranians and 19 thousand Eritreans also applied for asylum in Germany. Italy was the only other EU Member State to receive more than 10 thousand asylum applicants in 2016 of a single citizenship, with 27 thousand applicants from Nigeria and 14 thousand from Pakistan.

Belgium		Bulgaria		Czech Republic		Denmark	
Syria	2 235	Afghanistan	8 645	Ukraine	355	Syria	1 255
Afghanistan	2 225	Iraq	5 240	Iraq	140	Afghanistan	1 110
Iraq	760	Syria	2 585	Cuba	80	Stateless	490
Somalia	725	Pakistan	1 775	Syria	65	Iraq	435
Guinea	720	Iran	440	China (including Hong Kong)	65	Morocco	325
Other	7 585	Other	305	Other	495	Other	2 440
Germany		Estonia (*)		Ireland		Greece	
Syria	266 250	Syria	45	Syria	245	Syria	26 630
Afghanistan	127 010	Iraq	20	Pakistan	235	Iraq	4 770
Iraq	96 115	Albania	10	Albania	220	Pakistan	4 420
Iran	26 425	Iran	10	Zimbabwe	190	Afghanistan	4 295
Eritrea	18 855	Palestine	10	Nigeria	175	Albania	1 300
Other	187 610	Other	55	Other	1 170	Other	8 460
Spain		France		Croatia		Italy	
Venezuela	3 960	Albania	6 850	Afghanistan	685	Nigeria	26 550
Syria	2 920	Afghanistan	6 065	Syria	335	Pakistan	13 470
Ukraine	2 550	Sudan	6 055	Iraq	335	Gambia, The	8 845
Algeria	725	Haiti	5 145	Pakistan	180	Senegal	7 550
Colombia	610	Syria	4 670	Iran	140	Côte d'Ivoire	7 435
Other	4 805	Other	47 205	Other	475	Other	57 335
Cyprus		Latvia		Lithuania		Luxembourg	
Syria	1 165	Syria	150	Syria	165	Syria	330
Somalia	225	Afghanistan	35	Russia	50	Albania	220
Pakistan	205	Russia	25	Iraq	40	Kosovo (UNSCR 1244/99)	195
India	200	India	20	Ukraine	30	Iraq	180
Vietnam	150	Pakistan	20	Afghanistan	30	Serbia	150
Other	895	Other	95	Other	95	Other	990
Hungary		Malta		Netherlands		Austria	
Afghanistan	10 775	Libya	655	Syria	2 865	Afghanistan	11 500
Syria	4 875	Syria	285	Eritrea	1 865	Syria	8 730
Pakistan	3 650	Eritrea	255	Albania	1 665	Iraq	2 735
Iraq	3 355	Somalia	225	Morocco	1 270	Pakistan	2 410
Iran	1 250	Ukraine	85	Afghanistan	1 025	Iran	2 410
Other	4 310	Other	230	Other	10 595	Other	12 075
Poland		Portugal		Romania (*)		Slovenia	
Russia	7 435	Ukraine	140	Syria	805	Afghanistan	410
Tajikistan	830	Congo	50	Iraq	460	Syria	270
Ukraine	595	Guinea	50	Pakistan	95	Iraq	115
Armenia	320	DR Congo	40	Afghanistan	75	Pakistan	105
Vietnam	70	Iraq	35	Eritrea	45	Iran	75
Other	530	Other	395	Other	375	Other	290
Slovakia		Finland		Sweden		United Kingdom	
Pakistan	15	Iraq	1 080	Syria	4 710	Iran	4 780
Ukraine	15	Afghanistan	685	Afghanistan	2 145	Pakistan	3 700
Syria	10	Syria	600	Iraq	2 045	Iraq	3 645
Afghanistan	10	Somalia	425	Somalia	1 280	Afghanistan	3 100
Iraq	10	Eritrea	275	Stateless	985	Bangladesh	2 225
Other	40	Other	2 210	Other	11 165	Other	20 840
Iceland		Liechtenstein (*)		Norway		Switzerland	
FYR of Macedonia	460	Serbia	15	Eritrea	545	Eritrea	5 040
Albania	230	Ukraine	10	Syria	540	Afghanistan	3 185
Iraq	75	China (including Hong Kong)	5	Afghanistan	365	Syria	2 040
Georgia	40	Albania	5	Iraq	205	Somalia	1 530
Syria	35	Belarus	5	Ethiopia	155	Sri Lanka	1 315
Other	265	Other	35	Other	1 430	Other	12 710

(*) Russia: also 10.

(*) Stateless: also 45.

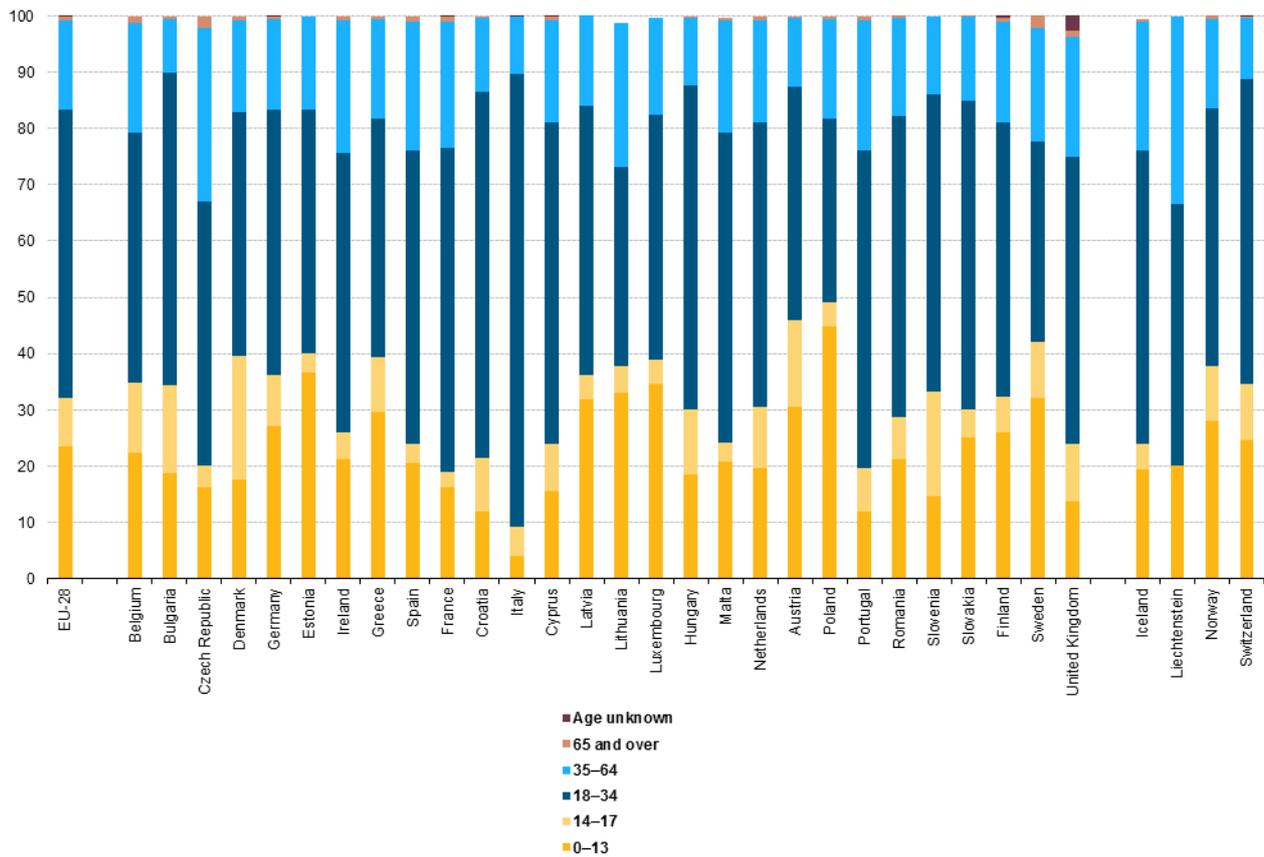
(*) Eritrea, Georgia, Somalia and Syria: also 5.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr_asyappctza)

Table 1: Five main citizenships of (non-EU) asylum applicants, 2016 (number of first time applicants, rounded figures) Source: Eurostat (migrasyappctza)

More than four in five (83 %) of the first time asylum seekers in the EU-28 in 2016 were less than 35 years old (see Figure 4); those in the age range 18–34 years accounted for slightly more than half (51 %) of the total number of first time applicants, while nearly one third (32 %) of the total number of first time applicants were minors aged less than 18 years.

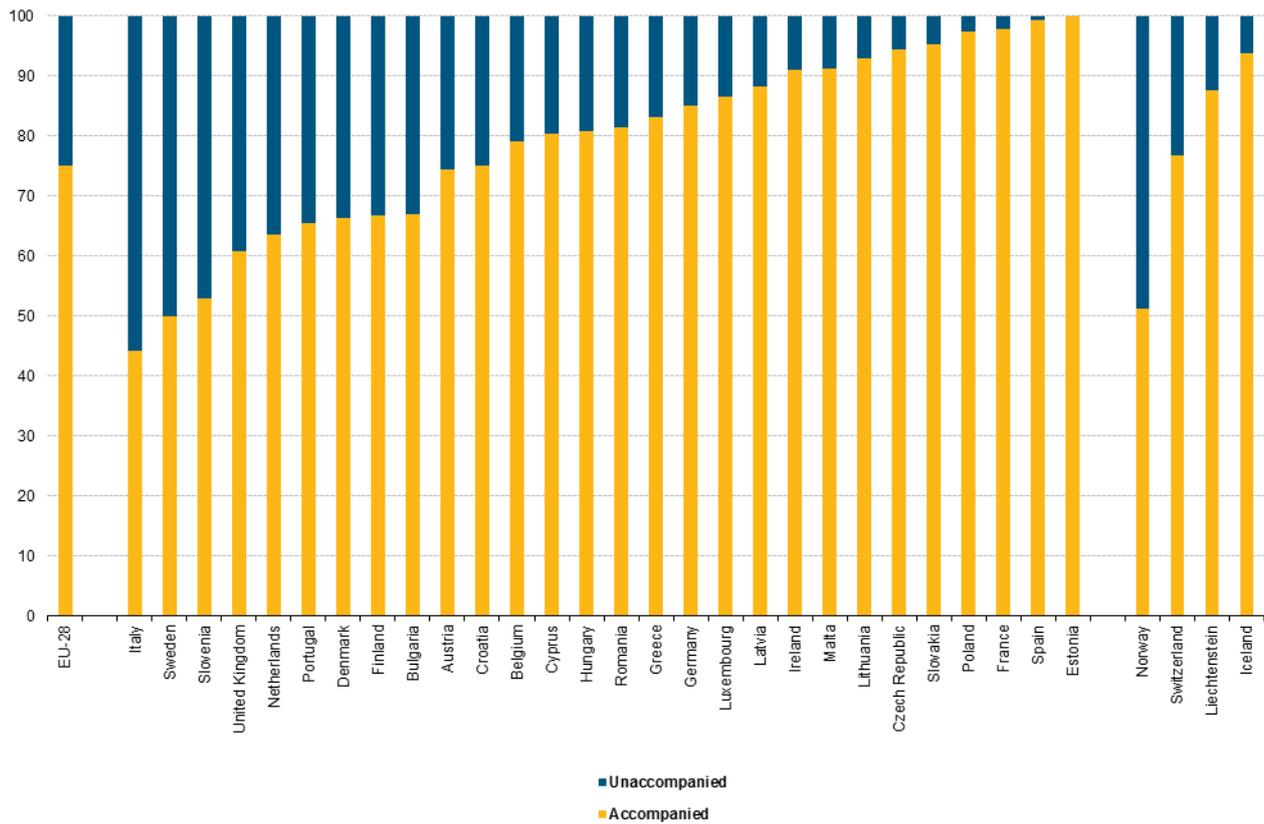
This age distribution of asylum applicants was common in almost all of the EU Member States, with the largest share of applicants usually being those aged 18–34. There was one exception to this pattern: Poland reported a higher proportion of asylum applicants less than 14 years old (45 %).



Note: due to the use of rounded figures in these calculations the sum of all age groups does not always equal 100 %.
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr_asyappctza)

Figure 4: Distribution by age of (non-EU) first time asylum applicants in the EU and EFTA Member States, 2016 (%) Source: Eurostat (migrasyappctza)

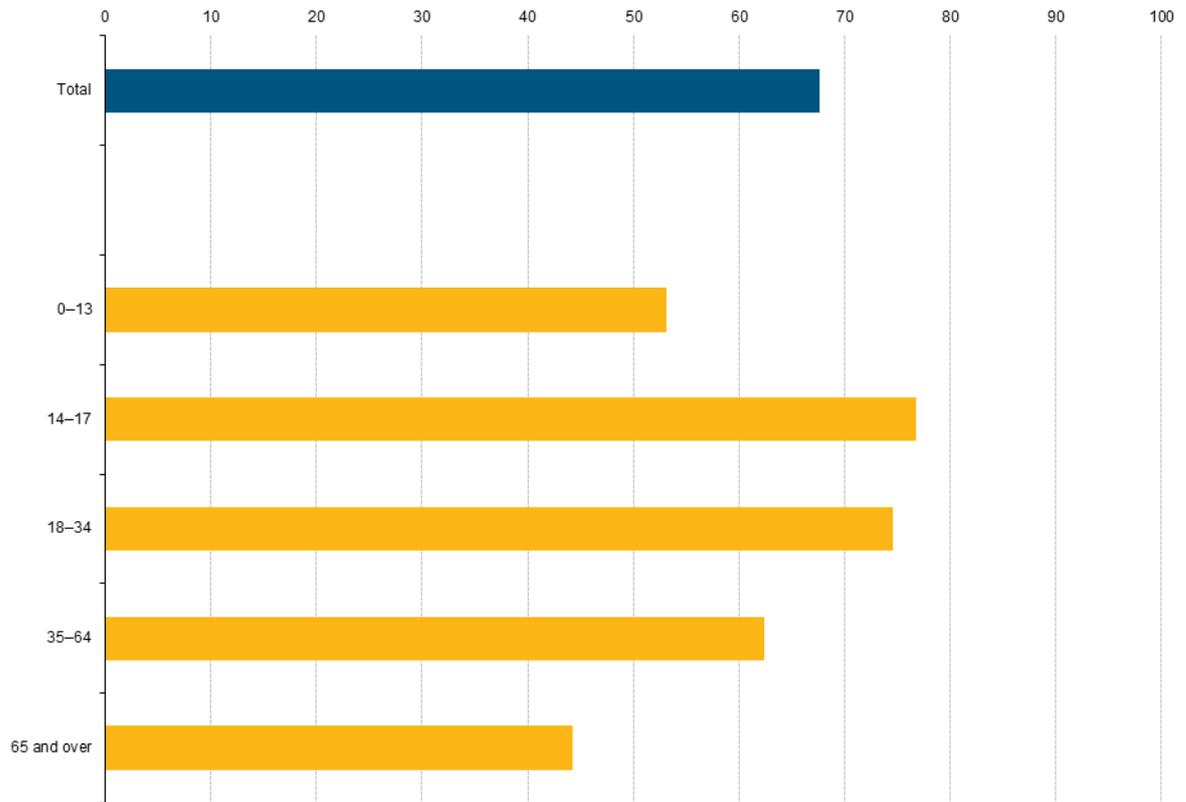
An unaccompanied minor is a person less than 18 years old who arrives on the territory of an EU Member State not accompanied by an adult responsible for the minor or a minor who is left unaccompanied after having entered the territory of a Member State. In 2015 there were 96.5 thousand applications in the EU-28 from unaccompanied minors; 25.1 % of all minors were unaccompanied (see Figure 5). Among minors who applied for asylum, the share that was unaccompanied was less than half in most EU Member States in 2015, the exceptions being in Italy and Sweden.



Source: Eurostat (online data codes: migr_asyappctza and migr_asyunaa)

Figure 5: Distribution by status of (non-EU) asylum applicants from minors in the EU and EFTA Member States, 2015 (%) Source: Eurostat (migrasyappctza) and (migrasyunaa)

The distribution of first time asylum applicants by sex shows that more men than women were seeking asylum. Among the youngest age group (0–13 years), males accounted for 53 % of the total number of applicants in 2016. There was a greater degree of gender inequality for asylum applicants who were 14–17 or 18–34 years old, where around three quarters of first time applicants were male, with this share dropping back to just over three fifths for the age group 35–64. Across the EU-28, female applicants outnumbered male applicants in 2016 for asylum applicants aged 65 and over, although this group was relatively small, accounting for just 0.6 % of the total number of first time applicants.



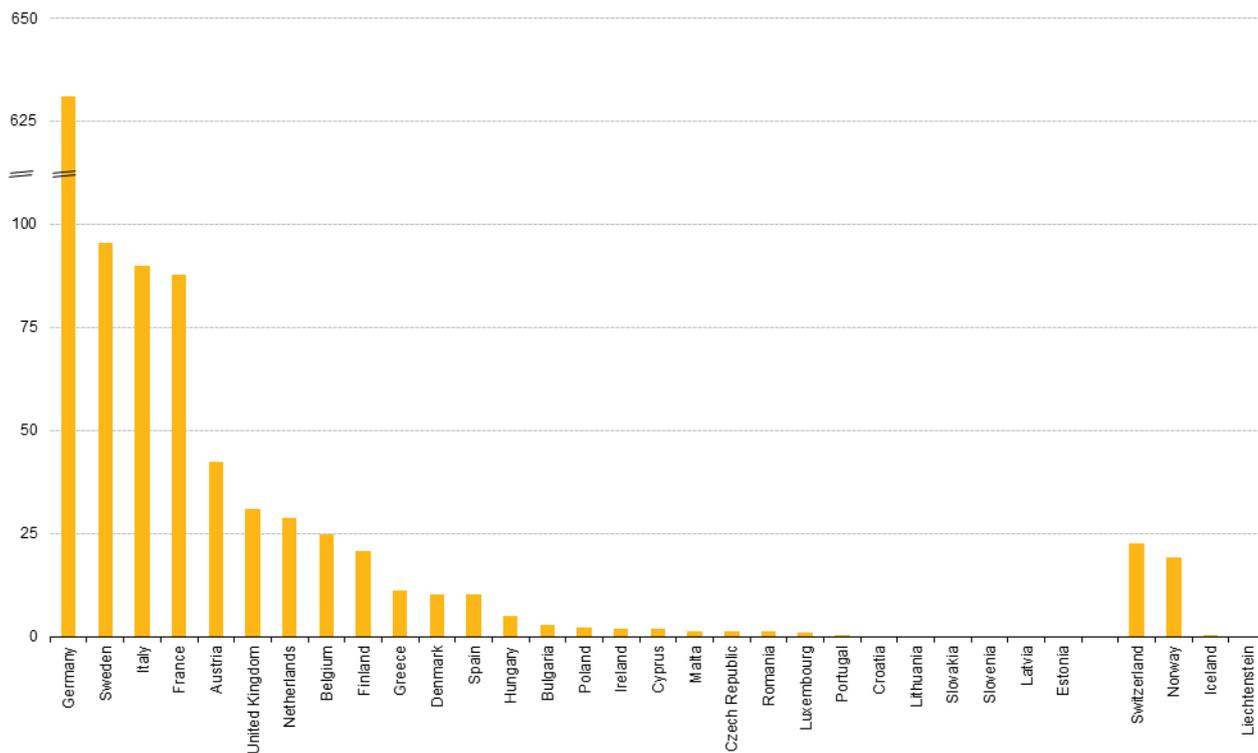
Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr_asyappctza)

Figure 6: Share of male (non-EU) first time asylum applicants in the EU-28 Member States, by age group, 2016 (%) Source: Eurostat (migrasyappctza)

Decisions on asylum applications

Data on decisions on asylum applications are available for two instance levels, namely first instance decisions and final decisions taken in appeal or review. Data on final decisions taken in appeal or review will be available in April 2017 and will be added to this analysis at that time.

In 2016, there were 1.1 million first instance decisions in all EU Member States, almost double the number in 2015 (593 thousand). By far the largest number of decisions was taken in Germany (see Figure 7), constituting close to three fifths (57 %) of the total first instance decisions in the EU-28 in 2016.



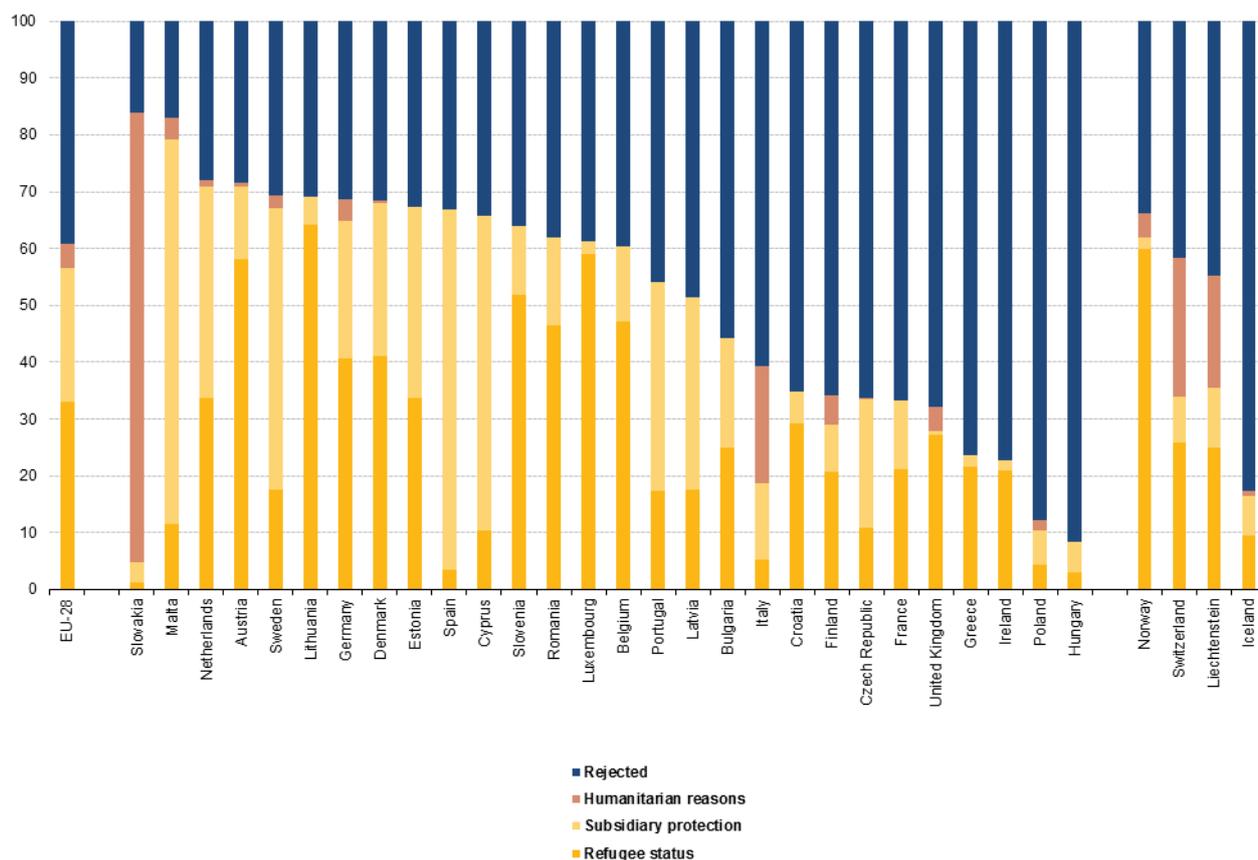
Note: the y-axis is interrupted.
 Source: Eurostat (online data codes: migr_asycdfsta and migr_asycdfina)

Figure 7: Number of first instance decisions on (non-EU) asylum applications, 2016 (thousands) Source: Eurostat (migrasydcfsta) and (migrasydcfina)

Figure 8 provides an analysis of the outcome of first instance decisions. Though [refugee](#) and [subsidiary protection status](#) are defined by EU law, [humanitarian reasons](#) are specific to national legislation and are not applicable in some of the EU Member States.

In 2016, three fifths (61 %) ⁴of 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 (see Figure 8). For first instance decisions, some 54 % of all positive decisions in the EU-28 in 2016 resulted in grants of refugee status.

⁴Since 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.



Note: based on original (not rounded) figures.
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr_asydcfsta)

Figure 8: Distribution of first instance decisions on (non-EU) asylum applications, 2016 (%) Source: Eurostat (migrasydcfsta)

A total of 366 thousand persons were granted refugee status in the EU-28 in 2016 at first instance, 258 thousand were given subsidiary protection status, and 48 thousand were given authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons.

The highest shares of positive first instance asylum decisions in 2016 were recorded in Slovakia (84 %) and Malta (83 %). Conversely, Greece, Ireland, Poland and Hungary each recorded first instance rejection rates above 75 %.

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 application) 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 become available for 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.

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 Member States facing particular pressures (in other words, those 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](#) .

A number of directives in this area have been developed. The four main legal instruments on asylum — all of which are currently subject to proposals for replacement or recasting — 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 EU 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 migrant crisis during much of 2015 and 2016 resulted in the European Commission announcing [proposals](#) for an emergency assistance instrument within the EU. The plan allocates some EUR 700 million of aid (over a period of three years) to help avert a humanitarian crisis and to be able to deliver more rapidly food, shelter and healthcare, as required by refugees within the EU.

In April 2016, the European Commission adopted a [Communication \(COM\(2016\) 197 final \)](#) launching the process for a reform of the CEAS. This included options for a fair and sustainable system for allocating asylum applicants among EU Member States, a further harmonisation of asylum procedures and standards to create a level playing field across the EU and thereby reduce pull factors inducing irregular secondary movements, and a strengthening of the mandate of the EASO.

In May 2016, the European Commission presented a [first package of reforms](#) , including proposals for establishing a sustainable and fair Dublin system ([COM\(2016\) 270 final](#)), reinforcing the Eurodac system ([COM\(2016\) 272 final](#)) and establishing a European Agency for Asylum ([COM\(2016\) 271 final](#)).

In July 2016, the European Commission put forward a [second set of proposals](#) related to the reform of the CEAS, for example to establish a resettlement framework for the EU ([COM\(2016\) 468 final](#)) and a common procedure for international protection ([COM\(2016\) 467 final](#)) as well as a recast of the legislation on the standards for the reception of applicants for international protection ([COM\(2016\) 465 final](#)).

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

- [Number of first time asylum seekers up to almost 360 000 in the third quarter of 2016](#)
- [Number of first time asylum seekers slightly up to almost 306 000 in the second quarter of 2016](#)
- [Number of first time asylum seekers down to fewer than 290 000 in the first quarter of 2016](#)
- [Almost 90 000 unaccompanied minors among asylum seekers registered in the EU in 2015](#)
- [EU Member States granted protection to more than 330 000 asylum seekers in 2015](#)
- [Record number of over 1.2 million first time asylum seekers registered in 2015](#)
- [More than 410 000 first time asylum seekers registered in the third quarter of 2015](#)
- [Over 210 000 first time asylum seekers in the EU in the second quarter of 2015](#)
- [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](#)

Main tables

- [Asylum and managed migration \(tmigr\)](#) , see:

Asylum and first time asylum applicants - monthly data (rounded) (tps00189)

Persons subject of asylum applications pending at the end of the month - monthly data (tps00190)

Asylum and first time asylum applicants - annual aggregated data (rounded) (tps00191)

First instance decisions on asylum applications by type of decision - annual aggregated data (tps00192)

Final decisions on asylum 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 (migrasy)

Applications (migrasyapp)

Decisions on applications and resettlement (migrasydec)

'Dublin' statistics (migrdub)

Dedicated section

- [Asylum and managed migration](#)

Methodology / Metadata

- [Applications](#) (ESMS metadata file — migrasyappesms)
- [Decisions on applications and resettlement](#) (ESMS metadata file — migrasydecesms)
- ['Dublin' statistics](#) (ESMS metadata file — migrdubesms)

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

View this article online at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics