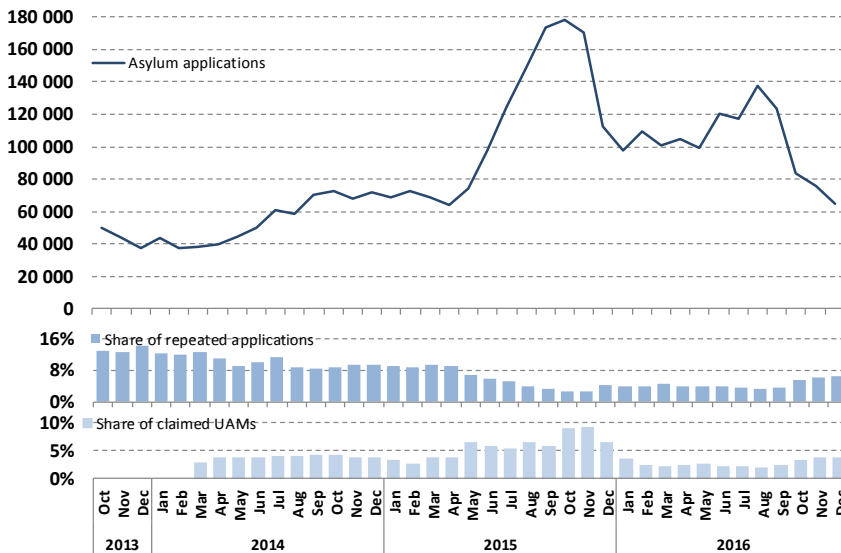


Latest asylum trends – December 2016

Number of applications for international protection in the EU+¹

In December 2016, EU+ countries recorded 64 513 applications for international protection². This marked the fourth consecutive month of decrease in numbers of applications lodged in the EU+ and the lowest monthly total since May 2015.

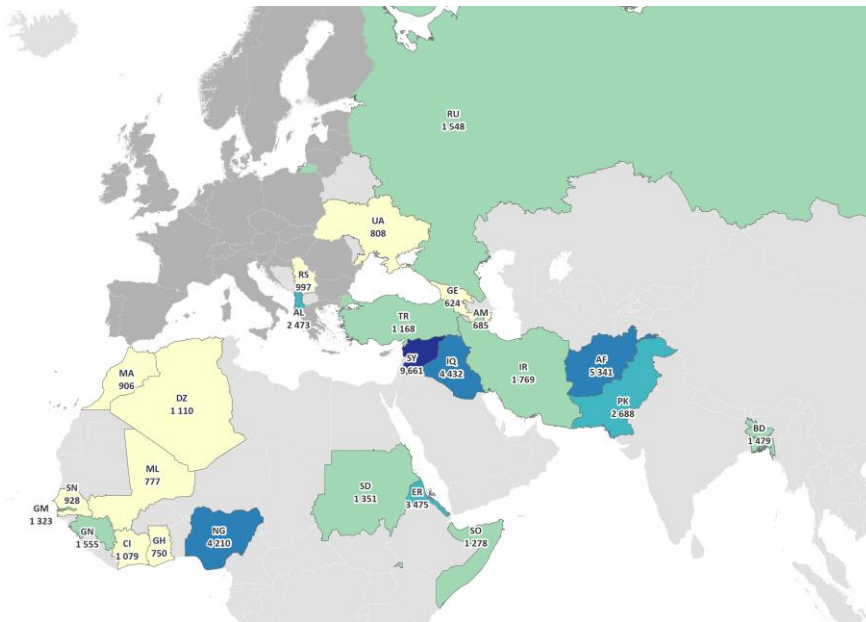


Compared to December 2015 the number of asylum applicants this month was 43 % lower. **During 2016, 1 234 558 applications have been recorded in the EU+.** 8 % fewer than in 2015 when 1 354 984 applications were lodged.

The share of repeated applications (having previously lodged an application in the same EU+ country) rose slightly from 6 % in November to 6.6 % in December. **4 % of all applicants claimed to be unaccompanied minors (UAMs)³** when lodging an application. 18 % of all UAM applicants were Afghan citizens, 13 % Eritreans and 8 % Pakistani.

Main countries of origin of applicants

Syria and Afghanistan remained the main citizenships of applicants in December 2016. The third top country of origin changed compared to previous month as Iraq replaced Nigeria. Syria has been the main citizenship of applicants since April 2015. In December 2016, EU+ countries recorded 9 661 Syrian applications, 15 % less than in the previous month (11 423).



The number of Afghan applicants also decreased, to 5 341 from 7 238. Compared to the previous month Iraqis lodged 15 % fewer applications at only 4 432. These top-three citizenships together accounted for 30 % of all applications lodged in the EU+. Nigeria with 4 210 applicants ranked fourth position while the top 10 list of applicants citizenships for December was completed by Eritrea (3 475) Pakistan (2 688), Albania (2 473), Iran (1 769), Guinea (1 555) and Russia (1 548). The number of applicants from all top ten citizenship groups decreased compared to November 2016, with the largest decreases observed

among citizens from Afghanistan and Nigeria (- 26 % and -25 %, respectively).

¹The EU+ is composed of EU28 plus Norway and Switzerland. The share of repeated applicants is the proportion of repeated applicants in the total number of applicants for international protection. The share of claimed UAMs represents the proportion of asylum applicants claiming to be below the age of 18 years in the total number of applicants rather than those assessed to be such after an age assessment has been carried out.

²Asylum applications were available for 29 EU+ countries. No data were available for Cyprus.

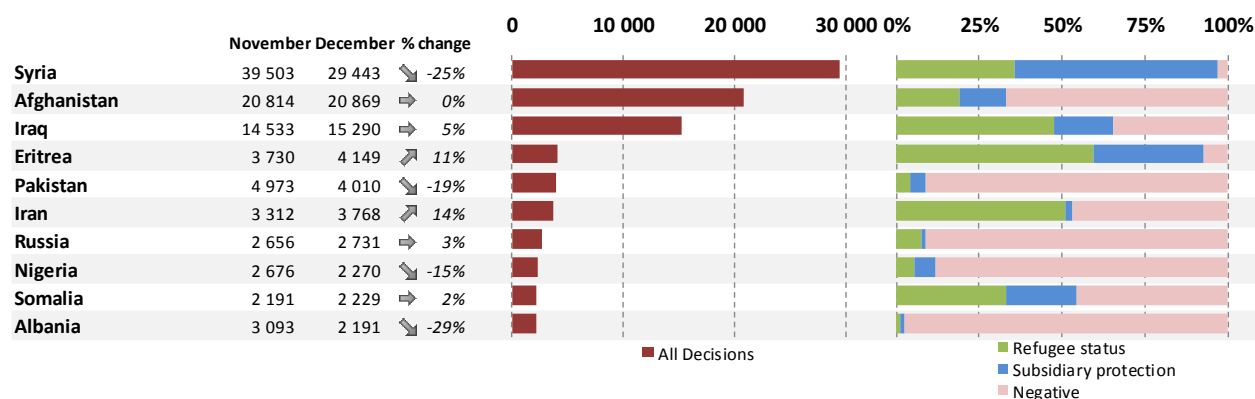
³Several EU+ countries have difficulties reporting on claimed UAMs in the framework of the EPS, these figures should therefore be considered as underestimations of the actual proportion of claimed UAMs.

Syria – In December 2016, Syria remained the main country of origin of applicants for international protection in the EU+ with 9 661 applications. This was 15 % fewer than the number of Syrian applications recorded in November and the lowest number since April 2015. In December the Syrians constituted only 15 % of applications. Syrian applicants remained widespread throughout the EU+ with 19 EU+ countries counting Syrian nationals among their top-three citizenships of applicants.

Afghanistan – Afghanistan was in second place of the citizenships with most applicants for the ninth consecutive month. The numbers however fell for the fourth consecutive month, with a drop of 26 % to 5 341 applications in December. This was the lowest number since May 2015. Afghanistan remained the main citizenship of claimed UAMs (18 %). 11 EU+ countries reported Afghan applicants in their national top-three citizenships.

Iraq – In December 2016, the number of Iraqi applicants decreased by 15 % to 4 432. 13 EU+ countries counted Iraqi applicants among the top-three citizenships.

Number and type of decisions issued in first instance in EU+ countries



In December 2016, EU+ countries issued 115 197 first-instance decisions⁴, about 11 % fewer than in November 2016 when the highest level since the start of EPS monthly data collection in 2014 was recorded. Still it was 56 % more in comparison to the same period in previous year, demonstrating the increased decision-making capacity implemented in a number of EU+ countries. **The EU+ recognition rate reached 52 %** in December, one percentage point lower than in the previous month. More positive decisions granted refugee status (53 %) than subsidiary protection (47 % of all positive decisions). 26 % of all decisions were issued to **Syrian** applicants, namely 29 443 decisions, 25 % fewer than in the previous month. For the third consecutive month the recognition rate for Syrian applicants remained at 97 %, with a majority of positive decisions granting subsidiary protection (63 %) rather than refugee status (37 %). The number of decisions issued to **Afghan** applicants remained stable. The recognition rate for Afghan nationals was on the same level as in the previous month: 33 %. Of total positive decisions, 58 % resulted in refugee status and 42 % in subsidiary protection, with an increasing proportion for refugee status throughout the past year. The number of decisions on **Iraqi** applications increased by 5 % to 15 290, with a 65 % recognition rate. Most Iraqi applicants were issued refugee status (73 % of all positive decisions). Of 10 citizenships with the most first-instance decisions issued, Eritrea showed the second highest recognition rate (93 %). The lowest recognition rates were observed for Albanian (3 %), Pakistani (9 %) and Nigerian (12 %) applicants.

Cases awaiting a first-instance decision

For the third consecutive month in 2016, the number of cases awaiting a first-instance decision decreased by 7 % to 874 693.⁴ This slight decrease in pending cases is explained by the continued high number of first-instance decisions issued, combined with a lower number of applications lodged. 56 % of all cases were pending for longer than six months. The applicants awaiting first instance decision for longer than six months were mainly coming from Afghanistan (27 % of total), Iraq (13 %) and Syria (10 %).

⁴ Data on these indicators were not yet available for Cyprus.