

Latest Asylum Trends - EASO

September 2019



Some **59 300** asylum applications were lodged in the EU+ in September, up by 6 % from August



Most applicants were from **Syria, Afghanistan, Venezuela, Pakistan or Turkey**



EU+ countries issued about **46 500** decisions at first instance



32 % of the decisions issued in the past six months granted EU-regulated protection



Some **507 800** cases were pending at first instance at the end of September, 34 000 more than in August

Key findings

More than half a million asylum applications were lodged in the EU+ during the first nine months of 2019, up by 10% compared to the previous year.

As before, Syrians, Afghans and Venezuelans continued to lodge the most applications, accounting for a quarter of all applications in the EU+.

Most of the main citizenships of origin lodged more applications in January-September in 2019 compared to the same period a year ago.

Decision-making in Member States remained stable in September 2019. First-instance decisions issued to Syrian, Venezuelan, Afghan and Iraqi applicants accounted for about a third of all first-instance decisions issued in the EU+.

The EU+ recognition rate for EU-regulated types of protection remained stable at around 32% in September 2019.

The stock of cases pending at first instance remained considerable, standing at close to 507 835 cases at the end of September 2019. In addition, almost as many applications were pending a decision in appeal or review as by the end of June 2019.

More than half a million asylum applications lodged in the EU+ since the start of 2019

More than half a million asylum applications have been lodged in the EU+ during the first nine months of 2019, which is a 10% increase compared to the same period in 2018. **In September approximately 59 300 applications for international protection were lodged in the EU+,¹ up by 6% from August**, but well below the July 2019 total, when the most applications (62 917) were lodged since March 2017.

In September 2019, **Syrians, Afghans and Venezuelans** lodged the most applications. These three citizenships continued to account for a quarter of all asylum applications in the

EU+ (see more in the box below). **Afghan nationals** lodged more than 5 600 applications in September, the most since December 2016, of which almost 60% were lodged in just two EU+ countries.

Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq, Colombia, Iran, Albania, and Nigeria completed the list of the top 10 countries of origin of applicants. Applications lodged by **Pakistanis** showed the largest increase among these citizenship groups against the previous month (+ 21%), followed by **Albanians** (+ 16%) and **Afghans** (+ 14%). **Iraqis** were the top 10 citizenship group with the largest month-to-month decrease (- 7%). For the third consecutive month, **Turkish nationals** lodged many more applications than in any other month during the first half of the year. Similarly, **Syrians** and **Somalis** also applied for asylum at levels much higher than earlier in the year.

Most of the main citizenships of origin lodged more applications in January-September in 2019 compared to the same period a year ago. This was especially the case for Latin American nationalities. For instance, Venezuelans – the third main citizenship in January-September this year – lodged 41% more applications than a year ago, whereas Salvadorians increased by 43%, Hondurans by 83%, Colombians by 102% and Nicaraguans by 154% compared to the same period in the previous year. In contrast, some other nationalities applied for asylum in lower numbers compared to last year; these included Iraqis, Eritreans (each – 39%), Sudanese and nationals with unknown citizenship (each - 37%).

In September 2019, nationals from visa-exempt third countries accounted for a quarter of all applications lodged in the EU+ (13 593). This was below the monthly average for 2019, but still higher than in any month in recent years. The majority (59%) of these applicants continued to be nationals of countries located in Latin America.

Approximately 3% of all asylum applications were lodged by self-claimed unaccompanied minors (UAMs) in September.² Almost a third of self-claimed UAMs were nationals of Afghanistan, followed by Pakistanis, Syrians (8% each), Somalis (5%), Venezuelans and Eritreans (4% each). For citizenships lodging at least 1 000 applications, the largest concentration of UAMs in September was among Afghans (11% out of all Afghan applicants), followed by applicants from Somalia and Guinea (7% each).

Finally, **repeated applications continued to account for 8% of all applications lodged in the EU+ in September 2019.** The share of repeated applicants was particularly high among nationals from the Western Balkans countries: 34% of Serbian applicants, 33% of Kosovar applicants and 24% of applicants from North Macedonia had already applied for asylum in the same EU+ country previously. The same applies to Russian and Armenian applicants (23% each), as well as asylum seekers from Ghana and The Gambia (23% and 22%, respectively).

Focus on the main countries of origin of applicants

Syria - In September, Syrian nationals lodged close to 6 200 asylum applications. This was the third consecutive month with Syrian applications exceeding 6 000. Between January and September 2019, Syrians lodged more than 51 000 applications in EU+ countries, but almost two thirds of all applications in the EU+ were lodged in just two countries.

Syrian nationals were issued some 5 800 first-instance decisions in September, more than any other citizenship. Around 82% of these decisions offered international protection – either refugee status or subsidiary protection. Looking at the longer term, so far this year Syrians received the most first-instance decisions in EU+ (58 300), accounting for 14% of the total. More than 80% of these decisions were issued by just four EU+ countries, with a recognition rate of 86%, which is more or less the same as last year. Syrians were the citizenship with the most pending cases (9% of the total) at the end of September, with more than a half of those pending for more than six months.

Afghanistan - In September, Afghan nationals lodged some 5 657 applications, the most since December 2017, and up by 14% compared to August.

So far this year Afghan nationals lodged some 39 200 applications, which is an increase of 23% compared to last year. In fact, this was one of the largest increases of any citizenship, plus Afghans continued to account for the most self-claimed unaccompanied minors, representing 30% of all asylum applicants claiming to be UAMs in September 2019. Despite increased applications, decision-making for Afghans is on the decline, which has impacts on the number of open cases. In September, Afghan applicants received more than 3 000 first-instance decisions which is roughly stable compared to recent months. However, so far this year just 26 500 first-instance decisions have been issued to Afghans which is a reduction of 44% (21 100 fewer decisions) compared to the same period last year. The combination of increased applications and decreased decision-making resulted in a surge in the number of pending cases at first instance at the end of September 2019 - to almost 40 000, the most for nearly two years.

In September and so far this year, the first-instance EU+ recognition rate for decisions issued to Afghan nationals remained fairly stable at 50%, up from 41% during the first nine months of last year.

Venezuela – In September, Venezuelan nationals lodged 2 963 applications, similar to August but lower compared to earlier in the year. Nevertheless, during the first 9 months of this year, Venezuelans lodged nearly twice as many applications (31 412) as the same period last year (16 262). Venezuelan applications were largely concentrated in a single EU+ country. The difference between the country receiving the most Venezuelan applications and the

country receiving the second highest number of applications was more than 27 500 applications, in absolute numbers.

Consistent with recent months, many decisions were issued to Venezuelan applicants. In fact, more than 4 500 decisions were issued in September, the second highest total recorded so far. In the last three months alone, more than 13 300 first-instance decisions have been issued to Venezuelans, compared to just 10 000 or so issued over the last four years. Pending cases of Venezuelan nationals accounted for 8% of the total pending cases.

Despite the fact that more first-instance decisions are being issued to Venezuelans, the recognition rate tends to be rather low at around 4% and much reduced compared to recent periods. However, the EU recognition rate does not include permits to stay for humanitarian reasons under national law concerning international protection (i.e. humanitarian protection), which are granted automatically to Venezuelan nationals in some EU+ countries.

First-instance output remained stable in September 2019

In September, more than 46 500 first-instance decisions were issued in the EU+ countries³, close to the average monthly number of decisions issued between January and September 2019 (46 800 decisions), and also similar to the total in the preceding month. In the first nine months of 2019, more than 421 600 first-instance decisions were issued. Five EU+ countries issued almost 80% of all first-instance decisions in the EU+ area – this trend applies equally to September of this year and the period January-September 2019.

Nevertheless, the number of first-instance decisions was lower in comparison to the previous year. During the period January-September in 2018, the average monthly number of decisions issued was above 50 000 and, in total, more than 450 800 decisions were issued across EU+ countries in the first nine months in 2018.

The first-instance decisions issued to four citizenship groups – Syrian, Venezuelan, Afghan and Iraqi applicants – accounted for about one third of all first-instance decisions issued in the EU+. Generally, this remained in line with the trend shown during January-September 2019.

Despite having received 733 decisions fewer than in August (i.e. - 11%), Syrian applicants remained the citizenship with the most decisions issued in the EU+ in September (5 812 decisions or 12% of all decisions in EU+). Venezuelan applicants received the second highest number of first-instance decisions across the EU+ (4 562 decisions or 10% of the EU+ total), thus demonstrating the steepest monthly growth in first-instance decisions among the top citizenships (+ 42%). It is only since July of this year that Venezuelans are among the top three citizenships receiving most first-instance decisions in the EU+, and only since June of this year that they started to appear among the top 10 citizenships with the most decisions issued across the EU+.

So far this year, the citizenships with the most first-instance decisions issued in the EU+ were Syrians (14% of all decisions), Afghans, Iraqis, Nigerians (6% each) and Pakistanis (4%). A year ago, the top citizenships receiving most decisions in the EU+ in the period January-September were the same: Syrians (13% of all decisions), Afghans (11%), Iraqis (7%), Nigerians (6%) and Pakistanis (4%). It is only in the period July-September that first-instance decisions issued on Venezuelan applications became more prominent.

Several citizenships continued to show significant gaps between first-instance decisions issued and asylum applications lodged.

One in three decisions granting refugee status

The EU+ recognition rate for EU-regulated types of protection in September was 32%, down by one percentage point from August 2019.⁴ The recognition rate for decisions issued over the first nine months of this year (January-September 2019) was 34%, whereas in the first nine months in 2018 the recognition rate stood at 33%.

Of all positive decisions issued between January and September 2019, the large majority granted refugee status (69% or 98 708 decisions), and the remainder subsidiary protection (31% or 44 408 decisions). A year ago (January-September 2018), first-instance decisions granting refugee status represented 64% of all positive decisions and first-instance decisions granting subsidiary protection 36%.

Among the top 10 citizenships receiving the highest number of first-instance decisions in January-September 2019, applications lodged by Syrians had the highest recognition rate (86%), followed by Turkish applicants (53%) and Afghan applicants (48%). Conversely, Georgian and Albanian applicants had the lowest recognition rate (3% and 6%, respectively) among the top 10 citizenships with the most first-instance decisions issued. Still, there is a variation across the EU+ countries regarding the recognition rate for the same citizenship.

Increased pressure on national asylum authorities in terms of pending cases

At the end of September 2019, there were some 507 800 applications awaiting a decision in first instance in the EU+, an increase of 34 098 cases (or 7%) compared to the previous month. Syrians had the most pending cases (9%), whereas Afghans and Venezuelans each accounted for 8% of all pending cases in the EU+. The list of top 10 countries of origin with most cases pending was completed by Colombia, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, Nigeria, Iran and Eritrea. At the end of September, these citizenships each had 17 000 cases or more pending at first instance.

For the 10 citizenships with most cases pending at the end of September, there was a decrease only for Venezuelans (- 9%). The largest month-to-month increase between August and September 2019 took place for pending cases involving Eritrean nationals (which more than doubled) and for Nigerian nationals (+ 39%). To a large extent, the

increase was related to a revision in data on pending cases carried out in one of the EU+ countries.

In September 2019, six EU+ countries accounted for 80% of all pending cases, which was identical to the situation observed in August 2019. More than a half of all cases at first-instance were pending for longer than six months, but with a considerable variation across EU+ countries, implying that the share of older cases was higher in some countries. In terms of the main citizenships of origin, the cases involving applicants from Eritrea (77%), Nigeria (66%), Pakistan (59%), and Iraq (58%) had the highest shares of cases pending for longer than six months.

In addition to cases open with asylum authorities, an estimated 381 700 applications were also awaiting a decision in appeal or review at the end of July 2019, implying that the concentration of pending cases is now larger at first instance than in second instance (in the previous months, the distribution between both decision-making stages was roughly equal).⁵ This, however, does not necessarily suggest a large influx of new first-instance cases. Some EU+ countries have recently undergone technical revisions that may have affected the reported numbers of pending first-instance cases, even if in reality the situation has not changed much.

This page is produced by EASO's Information and Analysis Unit (IAU) on the basis of monthly data exchanged under the Early Warning and Preparedness System (EPS). The data shared with EASO by the EU+ countries are provisional and unvalidated, and therefore may differ from validated data submitted to Eurostat (according to Regulation (EC) No 862/2007). In line with the dissemination guide on EPS data, EASO cannot publish data disaggregated per EU+ country.

Date of release: 15 November 2019

Notes

[1] The EU+ is composed of 28 EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland. Monthly data for September were available for 28 EU+ countries.

[2] Claimed UAM represent the asylum applicants claiming to be below the age of 18 years rather than those assessed to be such after an age assessment has been carried out. Some EU+ countries have difficulties reporting on claimed UAM in the framework of the EPS data exchange. These figures should therefore be considered as underestimations of the actual proportion of claimed UAM.

[3] First-instance decisions include all persons covered by decisions issued on granting EU-regulated international protection status (refugee or subsidiary protection) following a first time or repeated application for international protection in the first instance determination process. Data on first-instance decisions were available for 28 EU+ countries.

[4] The EU+ recognition rate includes EU-regulated forms of protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) and excludes national protection forms (humanitarian reasons). It is calculated by dividing the number of positive first-instance decisions (granting refugee status or subsidiary protection) by the total number of decisions issued.

[5] An indication of the cases pending at second and higher instances (i.e. in appeal or review) may be drawn by comparing the number of cases awaiting a decision at first instance (EPS data), with those pending at all instances of the administrative and/or judicial procedure (*Eurostat migr_asypenczm*).