

Latest Asylum Trends

January - June 2023 Review

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January – June 2023, Midterm Review



Manuscript completed in September 2023

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Disclaimer

The data provided to the EUAA by the EU+ countries are provisional, and therefore may differ from validated data published by Eurostat, according to [Regulation \(EU\) 2020/851](#) or national authorities. Discrepancies between different data sources are possible due to timing of data extraction, dissimilar definitions, or collection methodologies.

The figures generated by the EUAA should be understood as giving an estimation of the current situation in as near to real-time as possible.



Key Findings

1. In the first half 2023, some **519 000 applications for asylum** were lodged in the EU+, **up by 28 %** compared to the first half of 2022.
2. Applications for asylum in the first half of 2023 **were at the highest level** for this time of the year since the refugee crisis of 2015 – 2016.
3. In the first half of 2023, **Syrians, Afghans, Venezuelans, Turks and Colombians** lodged the most applications for asylum in the EU+, **jointly accounting for 44 %** of all applications.
4. **Germany received the most applications** in the first half of 2023, in fact 30 % of all applications and nearly twice as many the next Member States Spain (17 %) and France (16 %).
5. At the end of June 2023, the number of asylum **cases awaiting first instance decisions reached 682 000**, a level only surpassed once since 2017 during the aftermath of the refugee crisis.

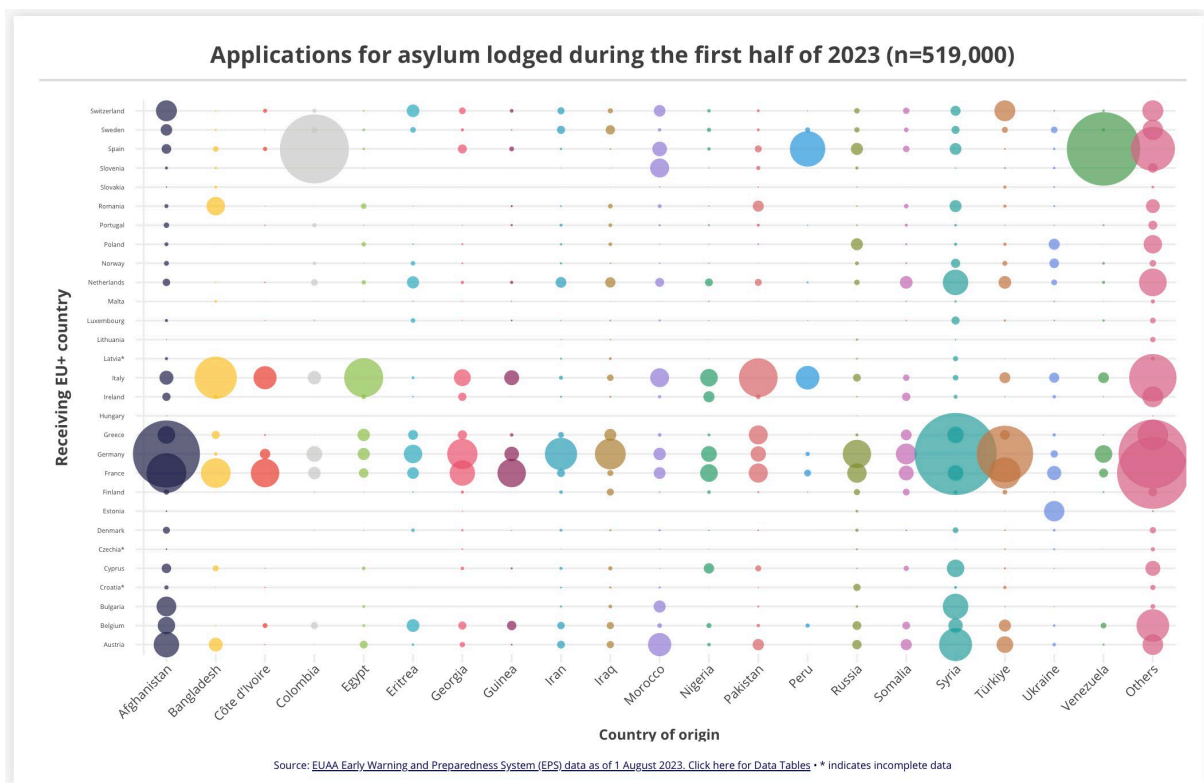


Figure 1: Bubble chart application data by [Country-of-Origin](#) of applicants and [receiving EU+ country](#).



Applications

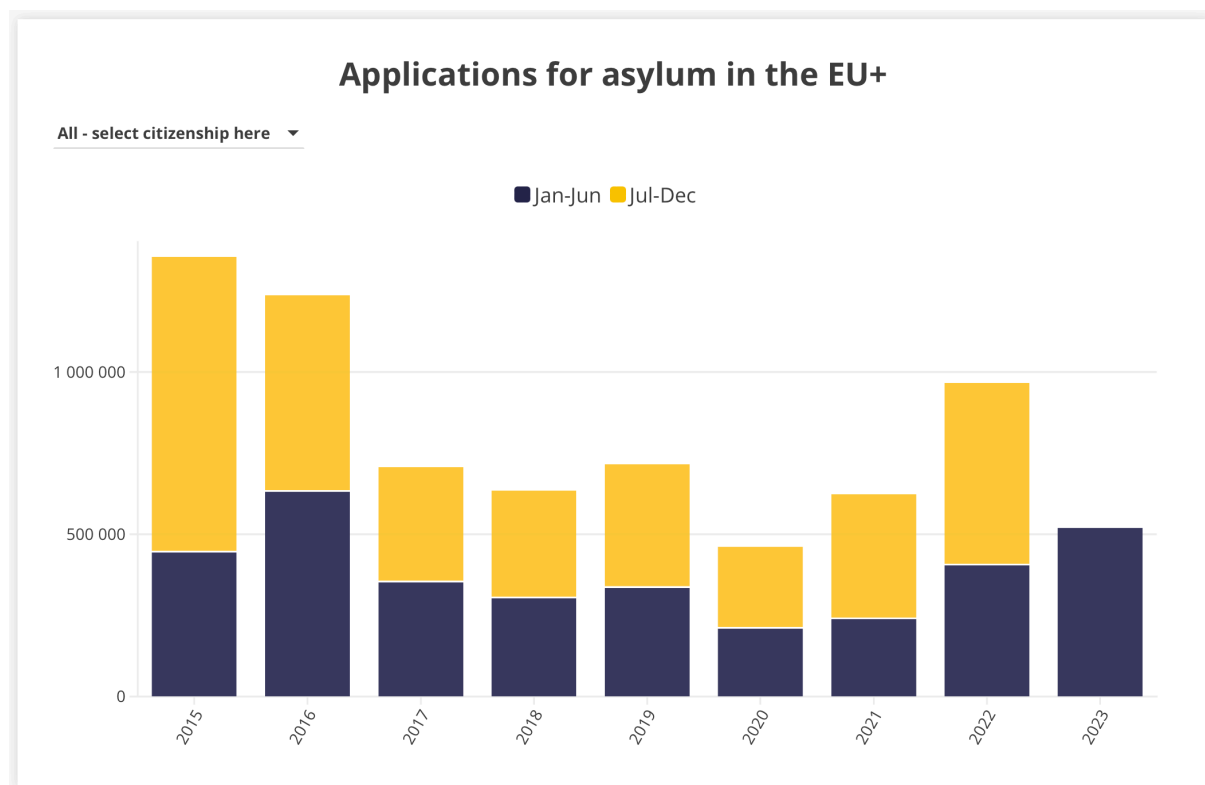


Figure 2: Semesterly data on asylum applications lodged in EU+ countries between 2015 - 2023. Explore an [interactive visualisation](#) here.

During the initial six months of 2023, the EU+ received an exceptional 519 000 asylum applications, marking the highest figure since 2016 and constituting the second-highest count on record. This follows a clear, upward trend which has been evident since the COVID- 19 lockdowns of 2020.

Historically, the volume of applications tends to be higher in the second half of the year. If this pattern holds, by the end of the year, more than 1 million asylum applications will be received by EU+ countries in 2023.

The upswing in applications is particularly pronounced for some specific citizenships, use the interactive chart for more details:

- Syrian applications in the first half of 2023 exceeded any comparable period since the 2015-16 refugee crisis.
- Subsequent to the refugee crisis of 2015-16, Afghan applications fell and remained steady at roughly 50 000 per year. Since COVID-19, Afghan applications have been climbing steadily to the second highest ever level during the first half of 2023.





- In the first half of 2023, Venezuelans, Colombians, and Peruvians all lodged record-high numbers of applications for this time of year, and are expected to lodge the most-ever applications by year's end.
- In 2022, Turkish applications exceeded any previous year by more than double. However, 2023 is projected to see an even greater number of Turkish applications.
- Iranian and Russian applications more or less doubled compared to the same period in 2022.
- In 2022, Pakistanis lodged the most applications since 2016. This level is however likely to be outpaced in 2023.
- Moroccans and Bangladeshis lodged record high numbers of applications in 2022, with 2023 so-far projected to continue this upward trend.





Countries of Origin

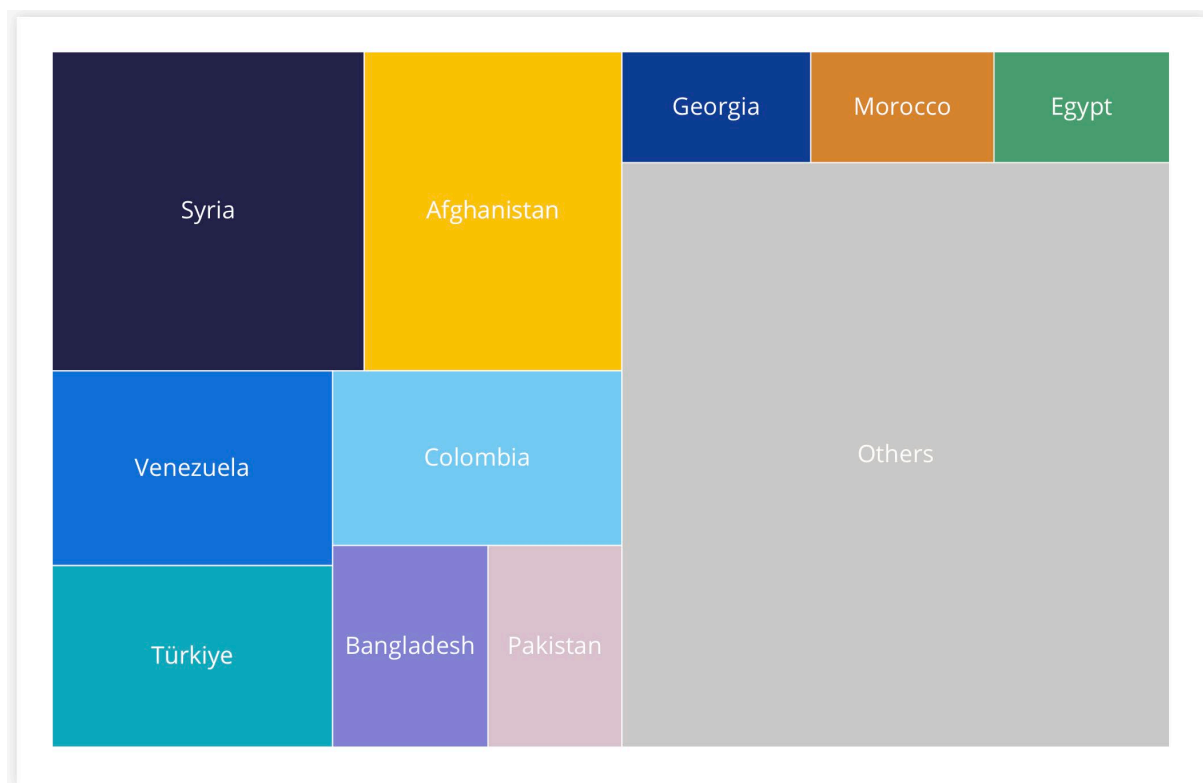


Figure 3: Distribution of asylum applications by country-of-origin of applicants. Explore [an interactive visualisation](#) here.

In the initial half of 2023, Syrians and Afghans submitted the most asylum applications, accounting for 66 600 and 55 000 requests respectively, which together encompassed nearly a quarter (24 %) of all applications. For over a decade, these two countries have consistently been among the main countries of origin of applicants for international protection in the EU+.

Recent years have seen a notable increase in applications from Venezuelans, Colombians, and to a lesser extent, Peruvians, together constituting 16 % of all submissions in the first half of 2023. Concurrently, Turks also formed a significant portion of the applicant pool in the EU+, contributing to 7 % of all applications. Likewise, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis comprised noticeable fractions, submitting 4 % and 3 % of all applications, respectively.



Recognition Rates

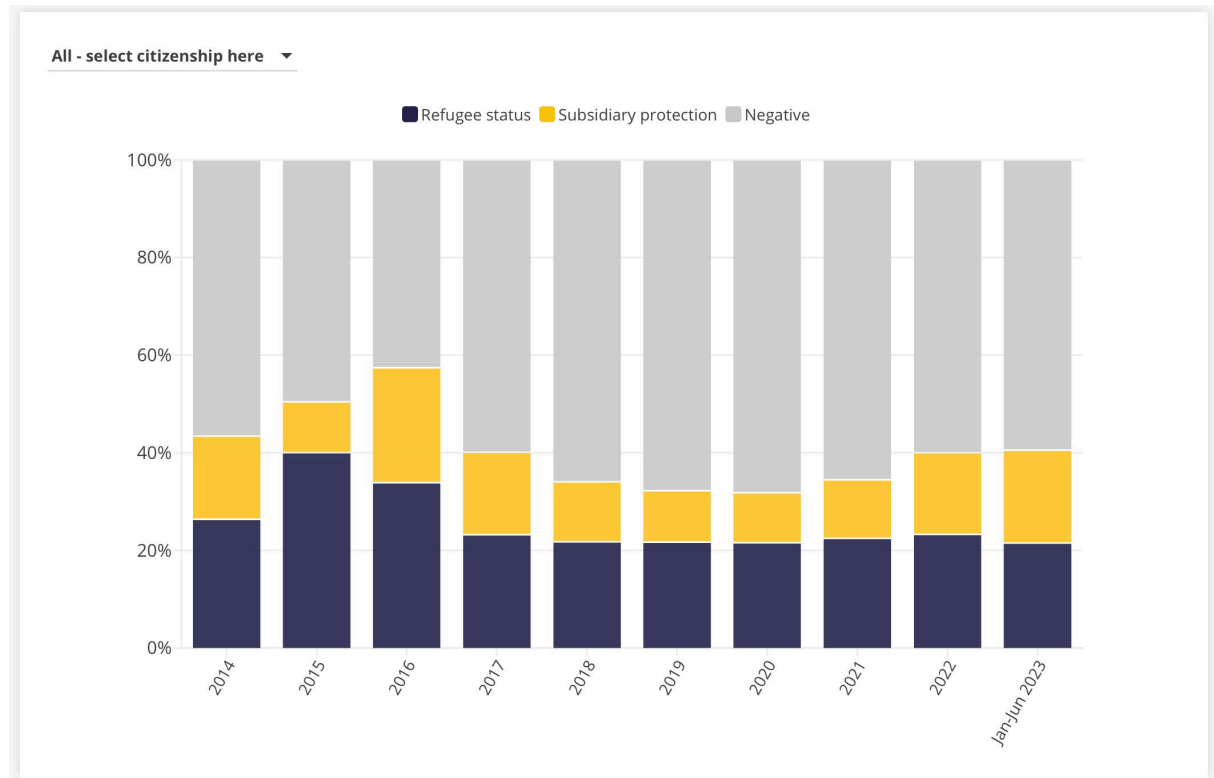


Figure 4: Recognition rates between 2014 - 2023. Explore [an interactive visualisation](#) here.

Recognition rates, the percentage of asylum applications that receive decisions granting refugee status or subsidiary protection, are subject to change over time, reflecting the shifting profiles and protection requirements of the applicants, as well as national policies on [specific profiles and nationalities](#). Following the refugee crisis of 2015-16, the EU+ recognition rate has swung between 30 % and 40 %. Post COVID-19, this rate has increased from 32 % in 2020, to 34 % in 2021, and further to 40 % in 2022—a rate which continued throughout the first half of 2023 with 41 %.

Naturally, the protection needs, and recognition rates exhibit substantial variation between different nationalities. For instance, during the first half of 2023, Syrians had a recognition rate of 95 %, while the rates for Afghans, Ivorians, and Moroccans stood at 58 %, 28 %, and 7 %, respectively. Though the recognition rates for each citizenship generally remain stable over time, notable exceptions persist:

- Syrians had a recognition rate of 95 % during the first half of 2023—the highest in six years—but it is important to note that a growing percentage [are granted subsidiary protection](#) rather than refugee status.
- The Afghan recognition rate leapt from 53 % in 2020 to 66 % in 2021 following the Taliban takeover. However, the rate slightly declined to under 60 % in 2022 and the



first half of 2023, while at the same time an increasing portion of Afghan applications [were granted refugee status](#).

- The Turkish recognition rate, which increased between 2016 and 2019, has since been on a steady decline, plunging from 54 % in 2019 to 28 % in the first half of 2023.
- For years, Russians had a recognition rate hovering around 20 %, but this hiked to 30 % in 2022 following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and further increased to 35 % in the first half of 2023.
- Also, on the increase in recent years, Iranians are now granted international protection at a rate of 47 % up from 32 % in 2020.
- The Ukrainian recognition has surged over the last couple of years—rising from roughly 12 % in 2021 to 86 % in 2022, and further still to 94 % during the first half of 2023 primarily through decisions [granting subsidiary protection](#). Note that most Ukrainians register for [temporary protection](#) rather than applying for international protection *per se*.

Context: It should be noted that some applicants, especially those from Venezuela and to a lesser extent from Afghanistan, tend to be granted national (rather than international) [forms of protection](#) which are unregulated by the EU and are therefore considered as negative asylum decisions in these statistics. Additionally, these recognition rates are calculated based on first instance decisions made by asylum authorities. They do not encompass decisions issued by judiciary and other authorities at the second instance or higher, such as [in appeals and reviews](#). In addition, approximately 4 million Ukrainians currently benefit from temporary protection in the EU+ after fleeing Russian aggression in Ukraine. Together these two parallel trends pose significant challenges to EU+ asylum, reception and other authorities, so much so that in June 2023, the EUAA was offering operational assistance to 13 Member States.



Pending Cases

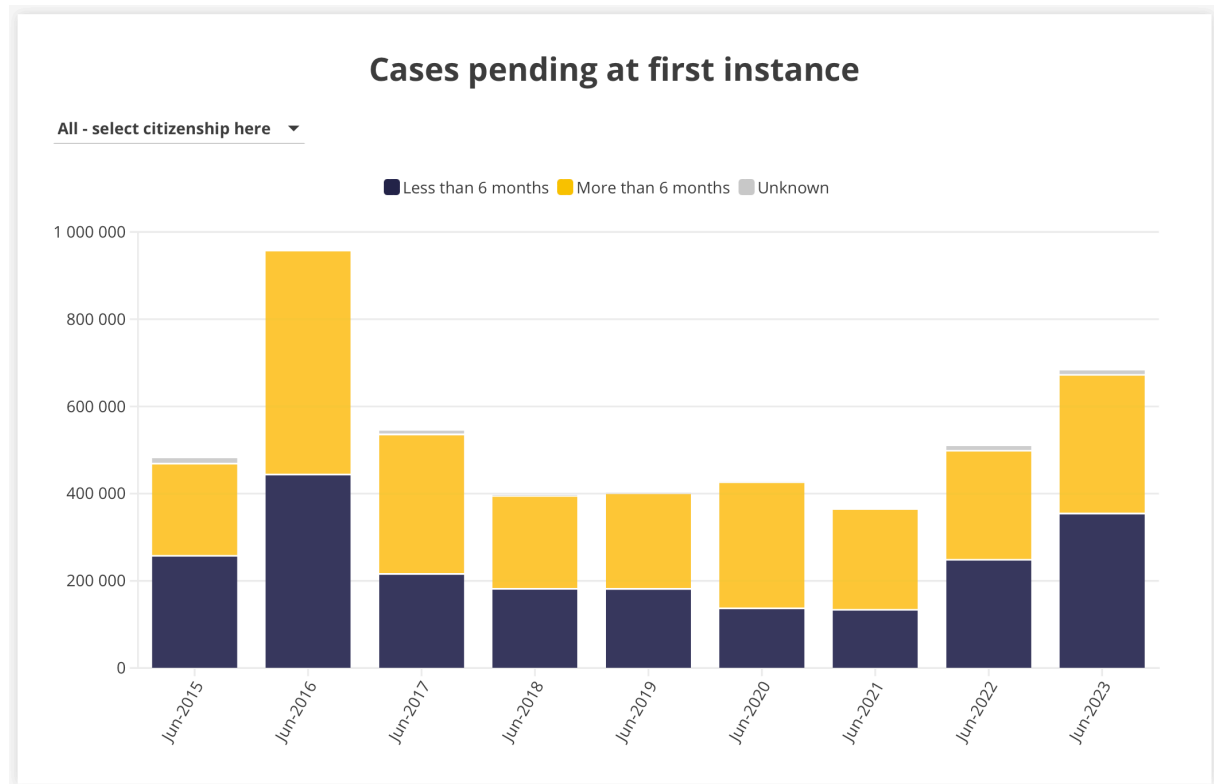


Figure 5: Pending cases by end June of each year, between 2015 - 2023. Explore [an interactive visualisation](#) here.

At the end of June 2023, some 682 000 cases were awaiting a first instance decision which is up by 34 % compared to a year ago at the end of June 2022. Notwithstanding April 2023, this number of pending cases is by far more than at any other point since 2017, when receiving countries were still processing applications lodged during the refugee crisis of 2015-16.

For the most part, citizenships lodging the most applications are also those with the most cases awaiting decisions. For instance, Syrians and Afghans had the most pending cases at the end of June 2023, with 87 000 and 69 000 cases, respectively. The number of pending cases for Syrians has surged by 45 % compared to June 2022, while the number for Afghans has remained relatively stable. However, pending cases have more than doubled over the past year for Colombians and Peruvians (predominantly in Spain), Turks and Iranians (primarily in Germany), and Egyptians (mostly in Italy).

Context: EU+ asylum authorities often rely on the [operational support of the EUAA](#) to increase their decision making. However, despite these efforts, the speed of decision-making has not kept pace with the surge of applications being lodged. Consequently, the total number of cases awaiting a decision at the end of February 2023, including those in appeal or review, [increased to 920 000](#).

Country Focus

Syria

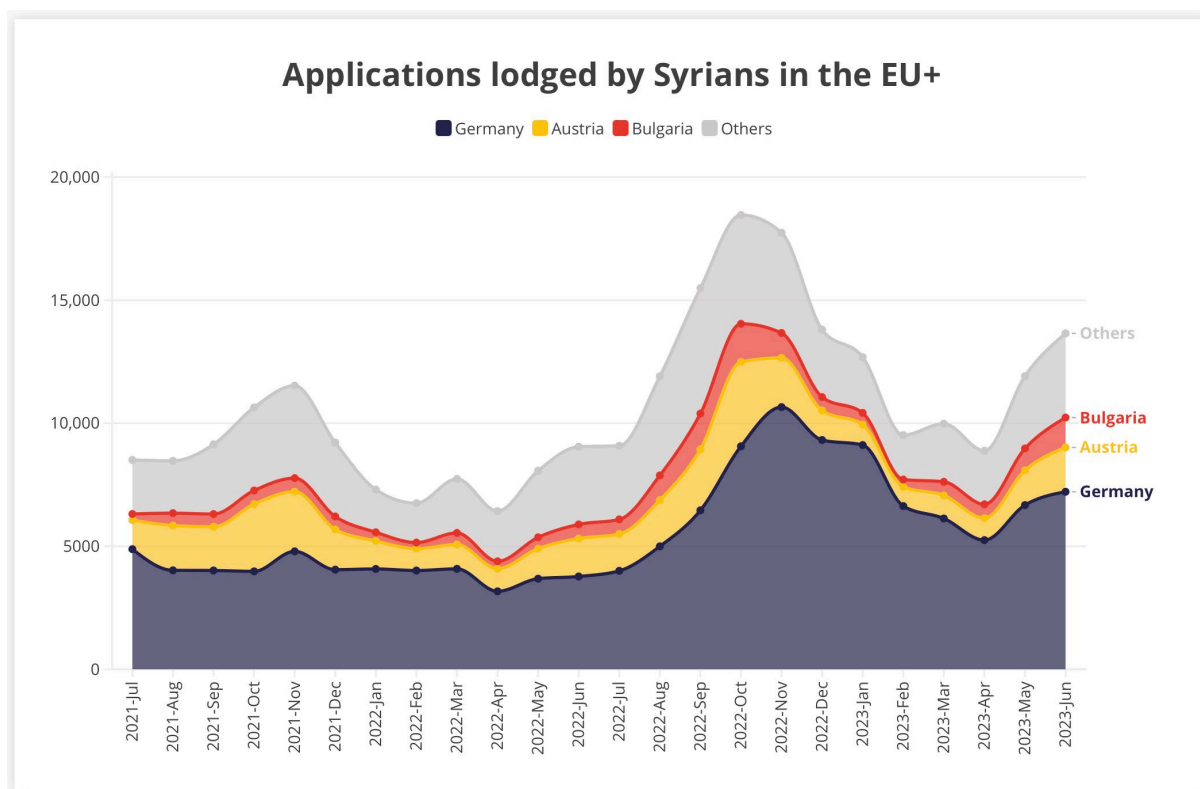


Figure 6: Applications by Syrian nationals in key EU+ countries, monthly, since mid-2021. Explore [an interactive visualisation](#) here.

During the first half of 2023, Syrians lodged the most applications in the EU+: 66 600 representing 13 % of the total. This marked a non-trivial increase of 47 % compared with the first half of 2022. At the same time, they were issued an increasing number of first instance decisions (62 000) but the gap between applications and decisions means that there was also an increase in the number of cases awaiting first instance decisions.

When it comes to recognition rates, of all the first instance decisions issued to Syrians in the first half of 2023, some 95 % granted protection, which is in line with recent trends. However, in recent years there has been an emerging shift towards granting subsidiary protection rather than refugee status.

An analysis of asylum applications across EU+ countries reveals that Germany continues to receive the most Syrian applications, processing 62 % of all Syrian applications in the first half of 2023. Austria and Bulgaria trailed significantly behind, receiving 10 % and 6 % of the applications, respectively. Furthermore, Frontex's public data underscores that Syrian

nationals continue to be the most frequently detected nationality illegally crossing the EU's external borders via the [Western Balkan and Eastern Mediterranean routes](#).

In February 2023, the EUAA and Member States [published a joint assessment](#) of the situation in Syria in relation to the applicable international and EU legislation on international protection.

Venezuela and Colombia

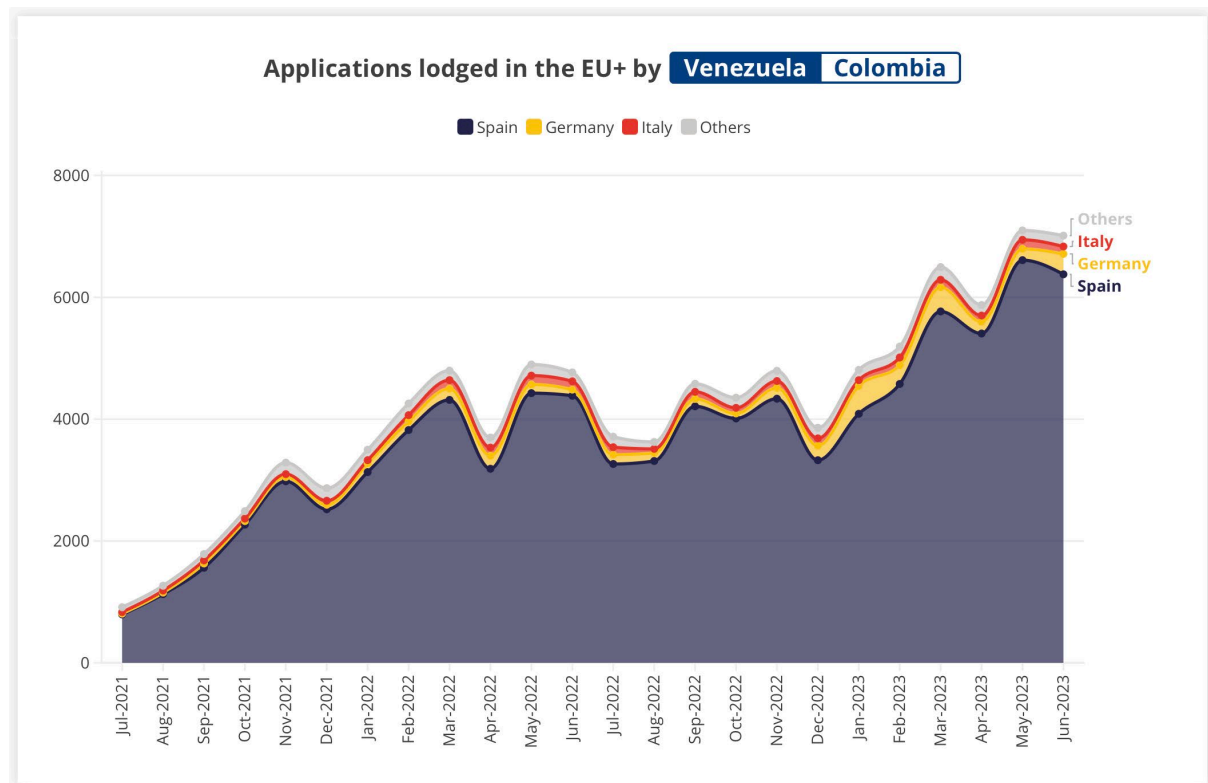


Figure 7: Applications by Venezuelan and Colombian nationals in key EU+ countries, monthly, since mid-2021. Explore [an interactive visualisation](#) here.

During the first half of 2023, Venezuelans and Colombians lodged increasingly more applications, together accounting for 13 % of all applications in the EU+ (36 500 and 33 700). This represented a steep increase of 41 % for Venezuelans and an even steeper increase of 73 % for Colombians, compared to the first half of 2022. Importantly, this trend is unrelated to irregular migration because these citizenships can legally enter the EU's Schengen area without visas, even journeying on flights from their home countries. These trends are also unique because of their singularity: the overwhelming majority of applications, along with corresponding decisions and pending cases, are highly concentrated in a single Member State – Spain.

The case of Venezuelan applicants in the EU+ is rather distinct for two reasons. Firstly, they lodge nearly all their applications in Spain (90 % in the first half of 2023), and secondly

because Spain does not grant Venezuelans asylum in the form of EU-regulated forms of protection but instead issues residence permits on humanitarian grounds. This results in a very low recognition rate in the whole of the EU+: merely 2 % in terms of international protection in the first half of 2023. However, when factoring in national / humanitarian protection the recognition rate increases to 96 %.

Similar to Venezuelans, Colombians primarily sought asylum in Spain, but they are not accorded the same national humanitarian protection. Consequently, their asylum recognition rates remain relatively low at 6 %, representing the genuine protection rates [as per official statistics](#). Another vital factor for Colombians is the steadily increasing number of pending first instance cases, which reached 54 000 by the end of June 2023, more than doubling compared to the same period in 2022.

Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea

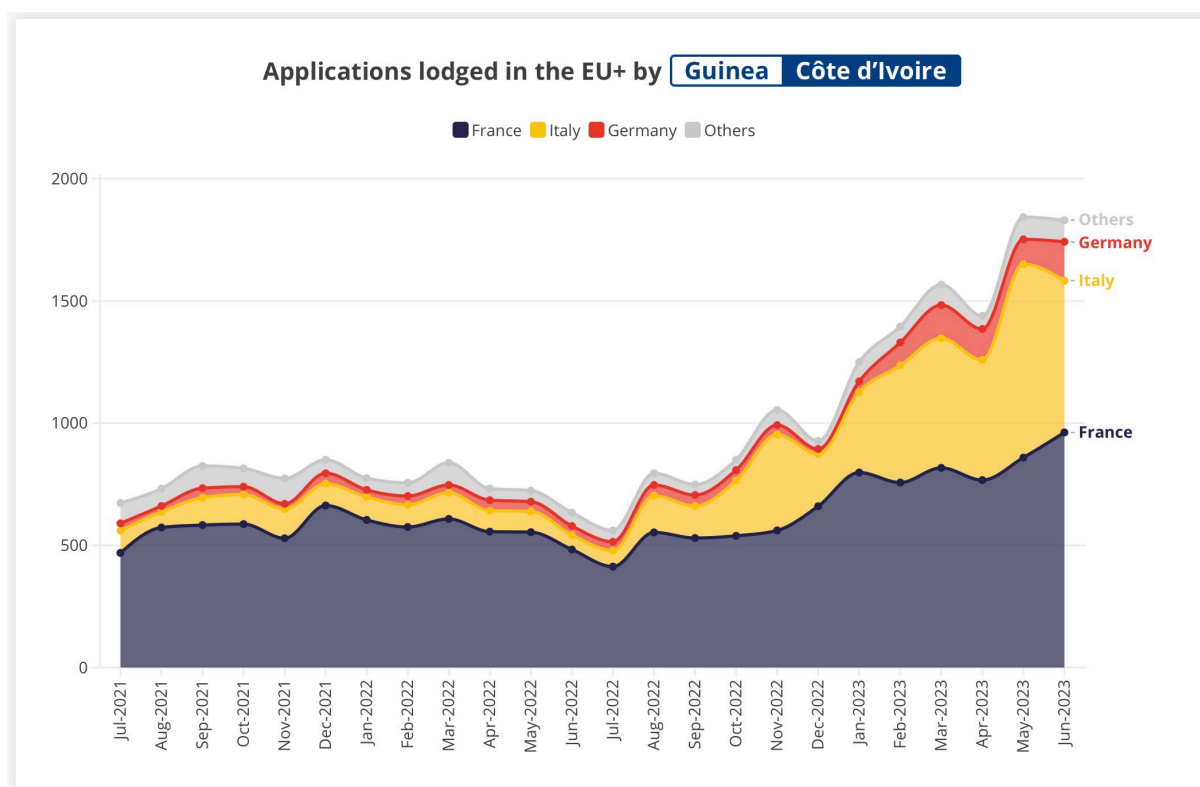


Figure 8: Applications by Ivorian and Guinean nationals in key EU+ countries, monthly, since mid-2021. Explore [an interactive visualisation](#) here.

The first half of 2023 witnessed a significant surge in asylum applications from Ivorian and Guinean nationals in the EU+, together accounting for 3.5 % of all applications (9 300 and 8 700, respectively). In a striking trend, Ivorian applications more than doubled, while Guinean submissions rose by 60 % compared to the same period in the previous year.

These West African neighbours were also among the [most frequently detected persons](#) illegally crossing the Central Mediterranean route during the first half of 2023. Historically, more than half of their asylum applications have been lodged in France, although the recent surge is largely attributable to a rise in applications in Italy, and to a lesser extent also in Germany. In accordance with the EUAA Asylum report, Guinean nationals frequently feature in Dublin transfers [implemented by France](#).

The recognition rate of both these citizenships have been steadily increasing from 2017 to reach 28 % for Ivorians and 32 % for Guineans in the first half of 2023.



Key Terms and References

Term	Definition
APD (recast)	Asylum procedures directive — Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast)
Asylum applications	Persons who have lodged or have been included in an application for international protection as a family member in the reporting country during the reporting month
CEAS	#GetItRight: What is the Common European Asylum System ?
Dublin III regulation	Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 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 or a stateless person (recast)
COI	Country-of-Origin Information
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
EU	European Union
EU+ countries	Member States of the European Union and Schengen-associated Countries
EU+ recognition rate	<p>EU-regulated forms of protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) and excludes national protection forms (humanitarian reasons).</p> <p>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.</p>



Term	Definition
First-time applications	Asylum applicants who have lodged (or been included in) an application for the first time in the reporting country
Member States	Member States of the European Union
Pending Cases	<p>All cases for which an asylum application has been lodged and are under consideration by the national authority responsible for the first instance determination of the application for international protection (until the first instance decision has been issued) at the end of the reference period (i.e. last day of the reference month).</p> <p>It refers to the “stock” of applications for which decisions at first instance are still pending on the last working day of the reporting period.</p>
QD (recast)	Qualification directive — Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast)
RCD (recast)	Reception conditions directive — Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast)
Resettlement arrivals	<p>All persons effectively resettled in a EU+ country. Resettlement and humanitarian admission are closely related and therefore both within the scope of the data and information collection. They involve the selection and transfer of persons in need of international protection from a third country to an EU+ country where they are permitted to reside.</p> <p>Relocations and transfers of persons which are already beneficiaries of international protection within the EU+ are excluded.</p>



Term	Definition
Refugee Convention	The 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol (referred to in EU asylum legislation and by the CJEU as ‘the Geneva Convention’)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Withdrawn applications	<p>All persons covered by decisions taken in the reference period following the withdrawal of the application for international protection during the first instance determination process.</p> <p>An application can be withdrawn either explicitly (where the applicant informs officially the determining body of their wish to discontinue their application) or implicitly (where an applicant can no longer be located and is judged to have abandoned the procedure)</p>



Annex 1: Relevant Publications

- [Asylum Report 2023](#): The annual EUAA Asylum Report provides a comprehensive overview of key developments in asylum in Member States of the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.
- [Country Guidance: Afghanistan](#) (January 2023): This country guidance document provides an in-depth analysis of the situation in Afghanistan, focussing on the key elements of qualification for international protection.
- [Country Guidance: Syria](#) (February 2023): This country guidance document provides an in-depth analysis of the situation in Syria, focussing on the key elements of qualification for international protection.
- [Surveys of Arriving Migrants from Ukraine](#) (June 2023): This thematic factsheet provides information on demographic profiles of those displaced from Ukraine to the EU, their employment status, access to accommodation, levels of satisfaction with key aspects of living in the host countries and most urgent needs.
- [Forced displacement from and within Ukraine](#): This report brings together the results of desk research and survey projects carried out by the EUAA, IOM and OECD to detail forced displacement from and within Ukraine.
- [The future of International Protection in the EU+ in the next 10 years](#): This report is the final output of a multi-phase foresight project undertaken by the EUAA to better understand the complex interactions that could shape the future of international protection in the European Union (EU).

