Strategic Analysis

euaa
EUROPEAN UNION
AGENCY FOR ASYLUM

Latest Asylum Trends

Mid-Year Review 2026

September 2026

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Cover photo/illustration: “People walking by Kabul river - stock photo” © Getty Images, 2011. Editorial #: 458673481

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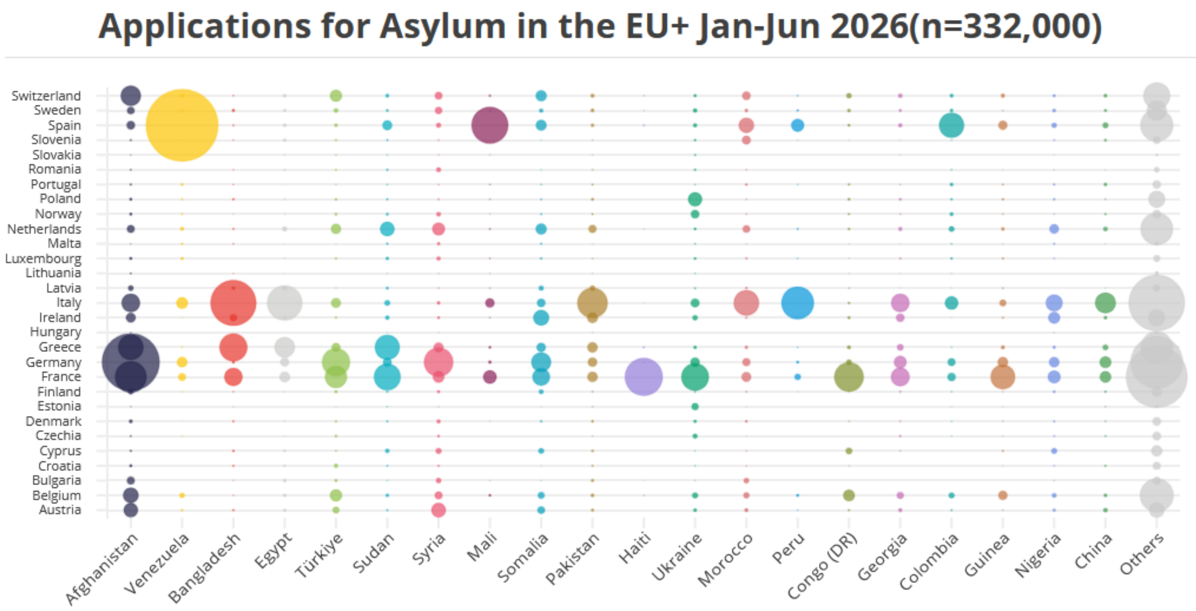
List of abbreviations

Term	Definition
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
EPS	EUAA's Early warning and Preparedness System
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
EU	European Union
EU+ countries	Member States of the European Union plus Norway and Switzerland
Member States	Member States of the European Union
SAM-UKR	Survey of Arriving Migrants for Displaced People from Ukraine

Introduction

Figure 1. Asylum applications lodged in the EU (332,000) by main citizenships and receiving countries, Jan-Jun 2026



Source: EUAA Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data as of 7 August 2026.

Click here for an interactive chart. Click here for Data Tables: EU+ Countries and Citizenships.

Key Findings

- In the first half of 2026, the EU+ received around 332,000 applications for international protection, 17% fewer than in the same period of 2025. This was the lowest first-half total since 2021 and the lowest in any non-COVID-19 year since 2019.
- Afghans lodged the most applications, around 39,000, followed by Venezuelans with 33,000 and Bangladeshis with 20,000. The overall decline was driven especially by fewer Venezuelan, Syrian, Colombian, Ukrainian and Turkish applications.
- France became the main EU+ destination, receiving around 69,000 applications, closely followed by Italy with 66,000. Spain and Germany each received around 55,000. Together, these four countries accounted for around three quarters of all applications. Relative to population size, Greece received the most applications, followed by Cyprus.
- The EU+ recognition rate stood at 31% at first instance, remaining close to the low level recorded in 2025. With the Pact entering into application on 12 June 2026, applicants from safe countries of origin and citizenships with low EU-wide recognition rates became particularly relevant to accelerated and border procedures
- Around 770,000 cases were awaiting a first instance decision at the end of June 2026, 8% fewer than a year earlier, but the remaining caseload had become older. We estimate that 1.18 million cases were pending at all instances.

FAQ Latest Asylum Trends (Jan - Jun 2026)

What are the latest asylum trends in Europe (EU+) during the first half of 2026?

EU+ countries received around 332,000 applications for international protection between January and June 2026, 17% fewer than in the same period of 2025. Excluding the pandemic-affected years of 2020 and 2021, this was the lowest first-half level since 2019.

Why have asylum applications decreased in Europe?

The decline reflects several simultaneous developments rather than a uniform reduction across citizenships. The largest absolute decreases were among Venezuelans and Syrians, followed by Colombians, Ukrainians and Turkish nationals. These falls outweighed increases among Sudanese, Bangladeshis, Haitians, Somalis and several other groups. Syrian applications in particular remained far below the levels seen before the fall of the Assad government in December 2024.

Which nationalities are applying most for asylum in Europe?

The largest applicant groups in the first half of 2026 were:

- Afghans — around 39,000 applications,
- Venezuelans — around 33,000,
- Bangladeshis — around 20,000,
- Egyptians and Turks — around 12,000 each, and
- Sudanese and Syrians — around 11,000 each.

Together, the 20 main citizenships accounted for around 70% of all applications.

Why are Afghans the top applying citizenship?

Afghans lodged around 39,000 applications in the first half of 2026. Although this was 7% fewer than in the same period of 2025, Afghan applications had risen strongly during the second half of 2025, largely because of repeated applications from Afghan women already present in the EU+, particularly in Germany, driven by legal clarification regarding their status. By the first half of 2026, both first-time and repeated Afghan applications were declining, indicating that this earlier surge was receding.

Why are there still many Venezuelan asylum applications?

Venezuelan asylum trends reflect a combination of continuing political and socioeconomic instability in Venezuela, visa-free access to the Schengen area, and the particular protection and migration opportunities available in Spain.

Venezuelans can travel to the Schengen area without a visa, while Spain has historically granted national humanitarian protection to many Venezuelans who do not qualify for EU-regulated international protection.

More recently, Spain has also introduced a regularisation process for migrants already living in the country since 2025, potentially providing an alternative pathway to legal residence and employment without relying on the asylum procedure. By the June 2026 deadline, 1.2 million people had applied for the programme. This may have contributed to the recent decline in Venezuelan asylum applications, especially as Spain will likely stop granting national protection to Venezuelans after June 2026. Nevertheless, Venezuelans still lodged around 33,000 applications in the first half of 2026, down by almost one third year on year, and 93% were lodged in Spain.

Which EU+ countries receive the most asylum applications?

Applications remained concentrated in a small number of countries. France received around 69,000 applications (21%), Italy 66,000 (20%), Spain 55,000 (17%) and Germany 54,000 (16%). Together, these four countries received around 75% of all applications lodged in the EU+. Greece received a further 23,000, or 7% of the total.

Which countries received the most asylum applications per capita?

When adjusted for population size, Greece recorded the most applications per capita, with 2,254 applications per million inhabitants, followed by Cyprus with 1,732. The EU+ level was 710 applications per million inhabitants, equivalent to around one application for every 1,408 residents. Per-capita figures can differ substantially from absolute application numbers: Ireland and Italy, for example, received ten-fold differences in the number of actual applications, but almost identical numbers relative to their populations.

It should be noted that many EU+ countries are also hosting many beneficiaries of temporary protection, most of which are in Germany and Poland whereas Czechia hosts the most per capita.

What is the recognition rate for asylum in the EU+?

During the first half of 2026, the EU+ recognition rate was 31% at first instance. This means that nearly a third of first instance decisions granted either refugee status or subsidiary protection. National forms of protection, such as humanitarian protection, are not included as positive decisions in the EU+ recognition rate.

Do recognition rates vary by nationality?

Yes. Recognition rates differed substantially between citizenships. In the first half of 2026, rates were high for Malians (87%), Haitians (84%), Afghans (73%) and Sudanese (65%), while they were very low for Bangladeshis and Venezuelans (3% each), Egyptians (2%) and Peruvians (3%). Recognition rates can also vary between receiving countries because of differences in applicant profiles, jurisprudence, national policies and other factors.

How many asylum cases are pending in Europe?

At the end of June 2026, around 770,000 cases were pending at first instance in the EU+, around 8% fewer than a year earlier. However, the pending caseload has become older: around 565,000 cases, or 73%, had been pending for more than six months, compared with 68% a year earlier.

First instance figures do not include cases pending in appeal or review. The EUAA therefore combines first instance EPS data with Eurostat data to estimate the total caseload. At the end of May 2026 (latest available data) there were 1.18 million cases in the EU+ awaiting decisions at all instances or which around a third were in appeal or in review.

What does the new EU Pact mean for applicants from countries with low recognition rates or designated as safe?

The Pact on Migration and Asylum entered into application on 12 June 2026. Among other changes, it introduces procedures particularly relevant to applicants from countries on the common EU list of safe countries of origin and from citizenships with an EU-wide recognition rate of 20% or less. Around 56% of applications lodged in the first half of 2026 were from accession countries, other EU safe countries of origin, or other citizenships with a 2025 EU-wide recognition rate of 20% or less. Individual circumstances nevertheless remain relevant to how each application is processed.

Are asylum applications from Iran increasing?

At present, applications from Iranian nationals remain relatively low and represent a small share of total EU+ asylum applications. During the first half of 2026, Iranian nationals lodged around 3,600 applications, remaining a relatively small contributor to the overall EU+ asylum inflow. This was broadly stable compared with the same period in 2025 (which includes the Twelve-Day War) and still does not indicate a sustained increase.

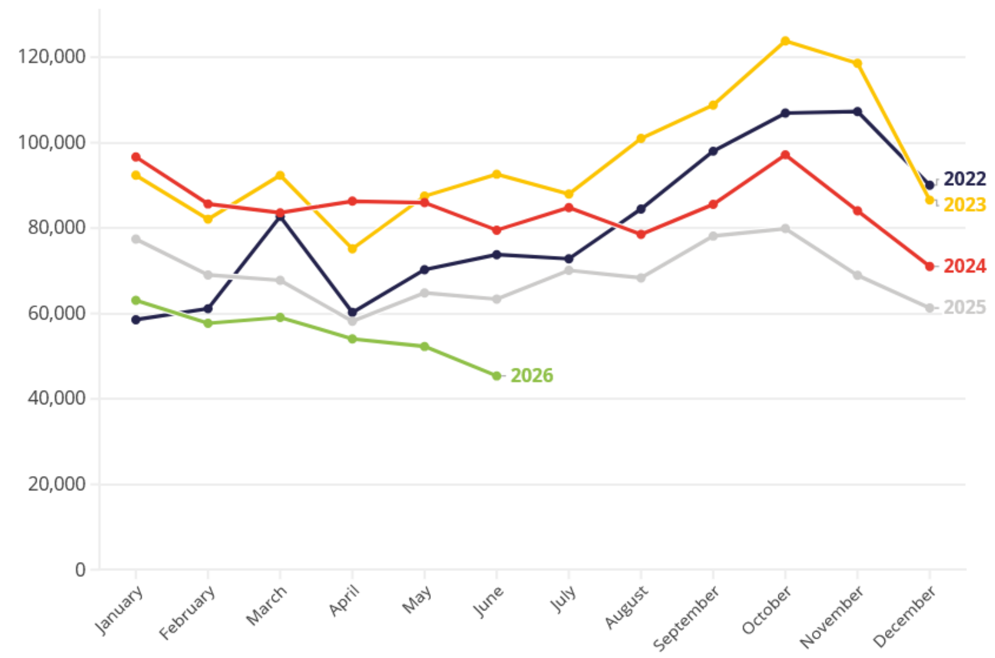
However, the situation remains uncertain. Previous increases — such as those observed following government crackdowns in 2022–2023 — were gradual and limited in scale. In fact, in the past Iranian applications tended to be more affected by visa policy changes in countries of transit. Given Iran's large population of around 90 million, even a small proportion seeking protection could result in significant and sudden increases in the EU+. However, IOM monitoring up to early August continued to show predominantly localised, temporary and regular cross-border mobility rather than mass displacement from Iran, while Iranian applications remained a marginal component of the EU+ caseload during the first half of 2026.

Summary

Applications for international protection in the EU+ have fluctuated substantially over the past decade. Following the exceptionally high levels recorded in 2015 and 2016, applications declined and reached a low point during the COVID-19 restrictions starting in 2020. They subsequently increased strongly between 2020 and 2023, before falling again in 2024. The decline continued in 2025, when EU+ countries received approximately 827,000 applications, 19% fewer than in 2024. This downward trend continued during the first half of 2026, when EU+ countries received around 332,000 applications, 17% fewer than in the same period of 2025. Excluding the pandemic-affected years of 2020 and 2021, this was the lowest since 2019. For a fully interactive chart at the level of individual citizenships click here.

Methodological Note: The Pact on Migration and Asylum entered into application on 12 June 2026. The data used in this report refer to January–June 2026, thus reflecting the pre-Pact asylum situation and should not be interpreted as evidence of the effects of Pact implementation. The transition will inevitably affect the data available for situational analysis. The Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) is being redesigned to reflect the Pact's new procedures and reporting requirements, which may initially affect the continuity and comparability of some indicators across countries and over time. Future LAT analysis will therefore need to distinguish between genuine changes in asylum trends, operational effects of the Pact and discontinuities associated with the transition to the new reporting framework. This midyear report may therefore represent one of the last LAT analyses based predominantly on an established and broadly comparable pre-Pact EPS data series.

Figure 2. Monthly applications for asylum in the EU+, 2022–2026



Source: EUAA Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data as of 7 August 2026.

Click here for interactive chart. Click here for Data Tables: EU+ Countries and Citizenships.

PART I — Major Nationality-Driven Shifts in 2026

1. Afghans: the 2025 repeated-application surge recedes

Legal developments within the EU+ can shape asylum trends by harmonising and clarifying protection thresholds. In October 2024, the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) altered the protection landscape for Afghan women, holding that they face a general risk of persecution under Taliban rule. Nationality and gender alone were deemed sufficient grounds for granting refugee status. Afghan women and girls were thus recognised as a particular social group at acute risk, in light of the Taliban's systematic oppression — described by the European Parliament as gender apartheid.

EUAA Country Guidance in 2024 (updated in 2026) concluded that the cumulative restrictions imposed on women and girls under Taliban rule amount to persecution, while UNHCR issued guidance reaching similar conclusions.

During 2025, this legal clarification prompted many Afghan women already living in the EU+—including some previously granted subsidiary or national protection—to lodge repeated applications seeking refugee status, which provides broader rights, including in relation to family reunification. The resulting increase was concentrated principally in Germany and, on a smaller scale, Austria and France, while first-time applications continued to decline.

By the first half of 2026, however, both first-time and repeated applications were declining, indicating that the earlier rise had largely run its course rather than developed into a sustained upward trend. During the first half of 2026, Afghans lodged around 39,000 applications, 7% fewer than in the same period in 2025. According to Frontex, during the first half of 2026 Afghans were also the most detected nationality in illegal border-crossings on the Eastern Mediterranean route, but overall, detections at the border were much lower than applications for asylum and did not increase during the peak of repeated applications in 2025.

Against this backdrop, the EU and several EU+ countries continued to pursue the return of Afghan nationals without a right to remain, while the wider regional context was marked by much larger return movements from countries neighbouring Afghanistan. From the onset of the Middle East crisis to 4 July 2026, approximately 269,000 Afghans are said to have returned from Iran to Afghanistan, with deportations accounting for around 79% of these movements. Between 1 March and 10 August 2026, IOM recorded around 662,000 movements from Iran into Afghanistan, compared with around 305,000 movements in the opposite direction, reflecting substantial return and circular cross-border mobility between the two countries. According to UNHCR, many Afghan returns from Iran and Pakistan were driven by pressure rather than informed choice, with returnees reporting risks including arrest, detention, deportation, harassment, loss of assets and limited support after arrival. UNHCR continued to underline that many Afghans may require international protection, particularly women and girls, and that returns should take place voluntarily, safely and with dignity.

For more information see the EUAA Country Guidance: Afghanistan, a UNHCR trends report on Afghan applications in the EU+, an IOM Emergency Border Response report, and a UNAMA Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan.

2. Venezuelans: a reversal after record applications

Around 8 million Venezuelans have fled the country since President Maduro took power in 2013, as the country experienced economic mayhem, hyperinflation, hunger and increasingly authoritarian rule. According to UNHCR, this is the largest exodus in Latin America's recent history and one of the largest displacement crises in the world.

Venezuelans remained one of the largest applicant groups in the EU+ during the first half of 2026, although applications declined from late 2025, falling from around 8,300 applications in October 2025 to just 2,400 in June 2026.

Spain continued to dominate this flow, recently receiving around 90% of all Venezuelan applications, reflecting visa-free access to the Schengen area, a shared language, established diaspora networks and Spain's longstanding practice of granting national humanitarian protection to many Venezuelans who did not qualify for EU-regulated protection.

The external context changed sharply when United States forces captured Nicolás Maduro in January 2026, but the existing governing structures largely remained in place under acting President Delcy Rodríguez and the prospects for a genuine democratic transition stayed uncertain. The humanitarian and socioeconomic situation also remained severe, with around 7.9 million people estimated to require humanitarian assistance and more than half of the population living in extreme poverty. This was exacerbated further by the earthquakes in late June 2026.

Spain's migration policy also offered an important alternative pathway to legal status through an extraordinary regularisation process for migrants already living in the country before 31 December 2025. By the end of the application period, around 1.17 million regularisation applications had been received, including a substantial number from applicants for international protection. By providing an alternative pathway to legal residence and employment, the scheme may have reduced the need for some Venezuelans already in Spain to rely on the asylum procedure, potentially contributing to the decline in Venezuelan asylum applications during the first half of 2026.

For more information read the EUAA Country of Origin Report on Venezuela and the EUAA Query Response on Treatment of Venezuelan Returnees.

3. Syrians: applications remain at historically low levels

Syria's political transition continued to underpin the sharp decline in Syrian applications in the EU+, but developments during the first half of 2026 showed that the displacement crisis was far from resolved. The fall of the Assad government in December 2024 was followed by large-scale refugee and internally displaced person returns, greater institutional stability and somewhat improved humanitarian access, creating cautious optimism about recovery. More than 315,000 refugees returned to Syria during the first four months of 2026, following the return of over 3.4 million refugees and internally displaced people during 2025.

The scale of return should not, however, be interpreted as evidence that conditions had become uniformly safe or that Syria's displacement crisis had been resolved. Field research by the International Rescue Committee found that returns were taking place faster than housing, essential services and livelihood opportunities could be restored. This dynamic became particularly visible following the escalation of hostilities in Lebanon in March 2026. More than 400,000 people crossed from Lebanon into Syria during the initial phase of the crisis, but only 27% indicated that they intended to remain permanently. By 10 August, IOM DTM Syria had recorded around 656,000 movements from Lebanon into Syria, 98% involving Syrian nationals, although changes in population coverage, sources and methodology mean that the latest figure is not directly comparable with earlier estimates.

Conditions within Syria also remained highly uneven. The UN Commission of Inquiry continued to document executions, torture, gender-based violence, destruction of homes and other serious violations, including violence affecting minority communities. The continuing insecurity and uneven reach of state protection meant that the transition altered the profiles potentially requiring protection rather than eliminating protection needs altogether.

Humanitarian and economic conditions also remained severe, with an estimated 15.6 million people requiring humanitarian assistance in 2026, including more than 5.5 million internally displaced people. Extensive damage to housing, infrastructure and public services continued to constrain sustainable return and reintegration.

The decline in Syrian applications in the EU+ should therefore be interpreted as part of a major but still fragile political and regional adjustment. Large-scale returns and reduced onward movement have substantially changed Syrian asylum trends, but insecurity, damaged infrastructure, limited livelihoods and displacement from neighbouring countries continue to generate protection risks and the possibility of renewed movement.

For more information read EUAA COI Reports: Security Situation and Country Focus, as well as UNHCR Returns to Syria, Regional Update.

4. Bangladeshis: many applications but low recognition rate

Bangladesh has been one of the top applicant countries for some time, but it became particularly relevant to EU+ asylum trends in 2026 because it was included in the first common EU list of safe countries of origin, which began applying with the Asylum Procedure Regulation on 12 June. The designation means applications by Bangladeshi nationals would mainly be examined through the accelerated procedure or may be examined under the border procedure if certain criteria are met, while preserving individual assessment where applicants demonstrate specific protection risks.

Bangladeshi applications were overwhelmingly of first-time claims, with repeated applications accounting for only around 4% between January and June 2026. Recognition rates were consistently very low, with only around 2–3% of first instance decisions granting refugee status or subsidiary protection.

Italy was by far the principal destination for Bangladeshi applicants, followed by Greece and France. This pattern was consistent with IOM data showing that in 2025 some 83% of all Bangladeshi arrivals had entered via Italy, with most identifying Italy as their intended destination. According to Frontex, Bangladeshis were the most frequently detected nationality on the Central Mediterranean route in the first half of 2026, but asylum applications still far exceeded detections at the border.

Taken together, the very low recognition rate, predominance of first-time applications and concentration in Italy suggest that the asylum trend is closely connected to established mixed-migration, including labour-migration routes, while the low share of repeated applications suggests that asylum trends cannot be explained mainly by people already present in the receiving country re-entering the asylum procedure.

The first months of Pact implementation will show whether the safe-country designation reduces processing times and pending caseloads for Bangladeshi claims. It is likely to affect the procedural treatment of applications but the economic incentives and established migration patterns are likely to remain. However, in May 2026 Bangladesh and Italy signed a Memorandum of Understanding, aimed at combatting irregular migration, addressing labour shortages, and promoting safe, orderly and regular migration.

For more information read EUAA COI Report and Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) report on Bangladeshi migration to Italy.

PART II — Policy developments

The Pact enters application: from preparation to implementation

The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum entered into application on 12 June 2026, following extensive legal and operational preparations across EU+ countries. The Asylum Report 2026 provides a comprehensive account of developments in asylum policy, legislation and practice during 2025, including preparations for Pact implementation. Rather than repeat that broader assessment, this section highlights only those policy developments most directly relevant to interpreting asylum trends in the first half of 2026.

Comprising 10 interlinked legislative acts, the Pact substantially revises the common framework for asylum procedures, border management, responsibility and solidarity, with the broader aim of managing applications more efficiently while preserving processing capacity for people with evident protection needs.

One of the most consequential changes concerns the processing asylum applications considered less likely to result in international protection. For example, the first EU-wide list of safe countries of origin includes Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, India, Kosovo, Morocco and Tunisia, as well as accession candidate countries unless specified exclusions apply. Applications from these countries (with the exception of Ukraine) could be examined more quickly through the accelerated procedure or may also be handled in the border procedure if certain conditions are met, while still requiring an individual assessment.

In addition, applications from citizenships with an EU-wide recognition rate of 20% or lower are, subject to limitations and exceptions, also channelled into the accelerated procedure and, where the applicant has not been authorised to enter, may fall under the mandatory border procedure. The accelerated procedure remains a full examination on the merits but operates under shorter deadlines; the border procedure forms part of the pre-entry phase and is intended to process applications considered likely to be unfounded or inadmissible more efficiently.

The EUAA is providing operational and technical support to EU countries with the implementation of the new rules via its own Pact Programme. Information about specialised training on the Pact offered by the EUAA Academy, and available to Member States, is available in the European Asylum Curriculum.

For more information read the EUAA Asylum report 2026, or watch the presentation.

Labour-market pragmatism amid political sensitivities

National migration policies often seek to limit irregular migration and facilitate returns, while at the same time EU institutions and several EU+ countries are pursuing more pragmatic approaches to address labour shortages and demographic decline. Ageing populations, shrinking workforces and pressure on pension systems increasingly influence migration policy, even where political rhetoric remains focused on deterrence and control.

At EU level, the Council approved the EU Talent Pool in March 2026, establishing the first EU-wide platform to connect employers in participating Member States with jobseekers living outside the EU. The initiative is intended to facilitate recruitment in occupations facing labour shortages and forms part of efforts to attract foreign workers via regular migration channels.

Spain adopted a particularly pragmatic approach by approving an extraordinary one-off regularisation process for migrants already living in the country since 2025 without secure status, including people involved in asylum procedures. By the end of the application period, around 1.17 million applications, mostly from Venezuelans, had been received. The measure does not allow beneficiaries to live and work in other EU+ countries but in Spain it provides access to residence and work permits and the social-security system. This approach adopted by the Spanish government clearly links labour-market participation to economic growth, social cohesion and the sustainability of public services and pensions as the population ages.

Italy provides another example of this dual approach. In May 2025, Italy and Bangladesh signed a Memorandum on Migration and Mobility combining stronger cooperation on irregular migration, returns and human trafficking with the promotion of legal labour migration. Italy has sought to expand regular-entry quotas and training-to-work pathways for Bangladeshi workers in response to labour shortages, while Bangladesh has advocated increased opportunities for skilled and semi-skilled workers. This is particularly relevant because Bangladeshis are simultaneously one of the largest asylum applicant groups in Italy and among the nationalities most frequently detected on the Central Mediterranean route. At the same time, Bangladeshi workers are already well established in sectors of the Italian economy including hospitality, retail and manufacturing, with particularly strong concentrations in parts of the shipbuilding industry.

The experience of people displaced from Ukraine provides further evidence of the economic effects of rapid access to employment, although outcomes vary considerably between countries. In Poland, Ukrainians established almost 39,000 businesses in 2022–2023, equivalent to around 7% of all new business registrations during that period. Their relatively rapid labour-market integration has been facilitated by geographic, cultural and linguistic proximity, although demographic pressures remain much larger than the contribution of any single migrant group can offset. In neighbouring Czechia, where the most Ukrainians per capita are hosted, the integration into the Czech labour market reached 66% at the beginning of 2026.

Germany hosts the largest number of people displaced from Ukraine, but labour-market integration has generally been slower, with language acquisition remaining an important constraint. Employment has nevertheless increased with length of residence, illustrating how integration outcomes can improve over time even where initial barriers are greater.

Cooperation with third countries on migration management

Cooperation with partner countries remained a central component of the EU's migration strategy in the first half of 2026, combining stronger border management, action against migrant smuggling, return and readmission arrangements, protection for refugees and host communities, and legal migration. The European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy, adopted in January 2026, places greater emphasis on migration diplomacy and a whole-of-route approach, including cooperation with partner countries on border management, migrant smuggling, protection, returns and legal pathways.

One of the most significant developments concerned returns. In June, the Council and the European Parliament reached a provisional agreement on common EU return rules intended to establish faster and more effective procedures for returning third-country nationals without a right to stay and to strengthen cooperation among Member States. The agreement would also allow Member States to establish return hubs in third countries, either as final destinations or as transfer centres facilitating onward return to a country of origin or another third country. Such arrangements may only be concluded with third countries respecting international human rights standards and international law, including the principle of non-refoulement, while unaccompanied minors are excluded.

In April 2026 the EU presented the first Action Plan under the Pact for the Mediterranean. Its security, preparedness and migration pillar includes measures to strengthen operational and institutional border-management capacity and implement a whole-of-route approach to migration. The approach seeks to address migration along routes through countries of origin and transit, while combating migrant smuggling and facilitating legal pathways. Counter-smuggling cooperation has also expanded through Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnerships with Morocco, Tunisia, Niger and the Western Balkans, involving partner-country authorities, EU Member States, EU agencies and EU funding. The European Commission reports that more than EUR 200 million is being invested in ongoing counter-smuggling projects covering around 25 partner countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean.

In this context, the EUAA contributes to the external dimension of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) by supporting partner third countries in strengthening their asylum and reception systems and promoting protection-sensitive approaches to migration management. The Agency's engagement is guided by the EUAA External Cooperation Strategy (2023), which aims to develop partnerships with partner third countries through effective, innovative, and rights-based cooperation.

EUAA currently cooperates with several partner third countries in different regions, both at bilateral and regional level. For example, cooperation with the Western Balkans continues through the EU-funded regional programme EU Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management Systems in the Western Balkans, Phase III, implemented by EUAA, Frontex, IOM and UNHCR. The multi-country, multi-partner programme supports all six Western Balkan partners in strengthening migration and asylum systems in line with EU and international standards, including capacities related to asylum procedures, reception, returns and contingency planning. In 2026, partners also began preparing priorities for the programme's next phase, covering 2027–2030.

In Türkiye, cooperation is currently implemented under the fifth EUAA-Türkiye Roadmap, focusing on areas including international protection, temporary protection and resettlement. In the Southern Neighbourhood, the Agency continues to implement bilateral cooperation with Egypt under the EU's Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). Under the Regional Protection Project for the Southern Neighbourhood (RPSN), co-funded by Denmark, the EUAA provides support to Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania and Morocco, in cooperation with twelve EU Member States. Key areas of engagement include access to asylum procedures, reception systems, protection of vulnerable persons, appeals mechanisms, and the gradual development of sustainable national asylum systems.

Overall, EUAA's engagement is underpinned by a whole-of-route approach, recognising that effective asylum and migration management requires cooperation at both national and regional levels along migratory routes.

Humanitarian funding contraction and shrinking protection capacity globally

Humanitarian funding continued to contract in 2026 despite persistently high displacement and protection needs. This followed a sharp funding deterioration in 2025, when UNHCR's available funding fell by 25% compared with the previous year and returned to levels last seen around a decade earlier, despite the number of people requiring support having approximately doubled.

The consequences were already substantial: UNHCR closed, merged or reduced operations in 185 of its 550 offices, more than 5,200 staff lost their jobs (a quarter of its global workforce) and up to 11.6 million displaced people lost, or were at risk of losing, direct protection and assistance as a result of these cuts. The effects were particularly visible in regions already facing renewed instability. At the end of June 2026, UNHCR operations were funded at only 17% in Iran, 21% in Lebanon and 28% in Afghanistan, while conflict and forced-return pressures were increasing across the region. These shortfalls constrained preparedness and response at the same time as large movements were taking place, including Afghan returns from Iran and Pakistan, and renewed displacement and return between Lebanon and Syria.

The contraction in humanitarian capacity has not yet emerged as a clearly measurable driver of higher asylum applications in the EU+. Nevertheless, this risk is particularly relevant in the context of Sudan: applications by Sudanese nationals have more than doubled over the past year, while UNHCR has warned that severe funding shortfalls are reducing essential assistance and protection for Sudanese refugees in neighbouring Chad. More broadly, reduced assistance, weaker registration and protection systems, and declining support for host communities may make displacement less sustainable and increase the likelihood of onward movement when new crises occur.

PART III — Interpreting recent trends and looking ahead

1. The Middle East: regional escalation and persistent displacement

The escalation of hostilities involving Iran and Lebanon in the first half of 2026 generated substantial displacement in the region but did not produce increased applications in the EU+.

According to IOM, some families in Iran had begun returning home by early August, although thousands remained displaced because of damage to housing and civilian infrastructure; overall, population movements remained localised and temporary, with no signs of mass displacement despite renewed regional tensions. Nevertheless, between 1 March and 10 August, around 662,000 movements were recorded from Iran into Afghanistan, while around 38,000 movements into Pakistan were recorded to 9 August; overall, cross-border flows remained variable rather than showing a sustained increase. However, much of this cross-border mobility reflected return, transit, family visits, employment, business or precautionary travel rather than flight by Iranians displaced by the conflict and seeking protection.

By early July, UNHCR reported that most people temporarily relocated within Iran had returned to their areas of habitual residence. The conflict nevertheless had important secondary effects on displaced Afghans in Iran, with approximately 269,000 returns to Afghanistan recorded from the onset of the crisis to 4 July and deportations accounting for around four fifths of these movements.

Lebanon experienced a much larger and more immediate displacement shock. The scale of displacement was compounded by IDF operations south of the Litani River: in March, the IDF ordered civilians across UNIFIL's area of operations to evacuate north of the river, an area of around 850 km^2 and home to hundreds of thousands of people. Israeli officials subsequently stated that the return of residents to the area south of the Litani would be restricted until the security of northern Israel was ensured, while Israel has described its continued presence in southern Lebanon as a security zone intended to counter the threat from Hezbollah.

By 6 August, around 353,000 people remained internally displaced in Lebanon, including around 26,000 in collective shelters, while 835,000 displaced people had returned. By 10 August, around 656,000 movements from Lebanon into Syria had been recorded by IOM, with Syrian nationals accounting for 98% of recorded movements and Lebanese nationals for the remaining 2%. According to UNHCR, these movements reflected both the displacement of Lebanese citizens and the repeated displacement of Syrians who had previously sought protection in Lebanon.

These developments demonstrate that major regional displacement does not always translate into asylum applications in the EU+. Displacements in the Middle East are so far dominated by internal displacement, temporary and circular mobility, return to neighbouring countries and repeated displacement among populations already living in exile.

2. Interpreting the decline: structural change or fragile lull?

The decline in EU+ asylum applications continued into the first half of 2026, extending the downward trend that began in late 2024. The most important component remained the exceptional fall in Syrian applications following the end of the Assad government in December 2024. Syrians accounted for around two fifths of the overall reduction among citizenships with declining applications in 2025, while substantial decreases among Turks, Colombians, Peruvians, Bangladeshis and Iraqis broadened the downward trend.

The resulting caseload was therefore not simply smaller but differently composed. Afghan and Venezuelan applications remained high, while applications from Sudanese, Malians and Haitians increased and partially offset declines among previously prominent citizenships.

The decline has already provided some operational relief, with first instance pending cases falling from 986,000 at the end of 2024 to 770,000 at the end of June 2026. However, this reduction in pending cases probably resulted more from fewer incoming applications than from a general increase in processing capacity, while the overall caseload across all instances remained high because of cases awaiting decisions in appeals and review.

At the same time, the decline may partly reflect changes in access to the EU rather than a proportionate reduction in underlying displacement pressure. The European Commission has linked lower irregular border crossings to strengthened external-border management and increased cooperation with countries of origin and transit. Meanwhile, major displacement crises remain unresolved. The war in Sudan continues to generate displacement into neighbouring countries, while renewed conflict in the Middle East displaced hundreds of thousands of people in Lebanon, even though this has so far translated into little additional asylum pressure in the EU+. Humanitarian and protection capacity is also contracting in several host settings. Taken together, these factors suggest that lower applications may reflect a combination of reduced irregular arrivals, changing routes and destination preferences, and changes in the underlying demand for protection.

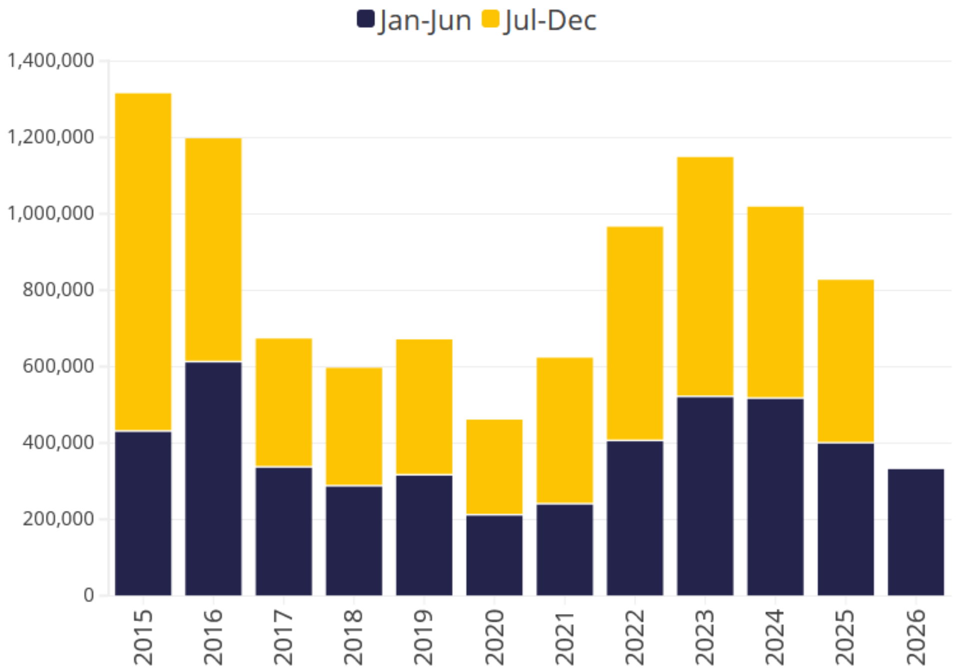
Applications

Main citizenships

Applications for international protection in the EU+ have fluctuated substantially over the past decade. Following the exceptionally high levels recorded in 2015 and 2016, applications declined and reached a low point in 2020. They subsequently increased strongly between 2020 and 2023, before falling again in 2024. The decline continued in 2025, when EU+ countries received approximately 827,000 applications, 19% fewer than in 2024. This downward trend continued during the first half of 2026, when EU+ countries received around 332,000 applications, 17% fewer than in the same period of 2025. Excluding the pandemic-affected years of 2020 and 2021, this was the lowest since 2019.

The composition of the **inflow also continued to change. [Afghans](#) lodged the most applications in the first half of 2026, with around 39,000, despite a mild 7% decrease compared with the first half of 2025. This represents another change in ranking: Venezuelans had lodged more applications than Afghans during the first half of 2025, while Afghan applications subsequently increased sharply during the second half of that year. In the first half of 2026, [Venezuelans](#) ranked second with around 33,000 applications, down by almost one third year on year.**

Figure 3. Applications for asylum in the EU+, 2015–Jun 2026



Source: EUAA Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data as of 7 August 2026.

Click here for interactive chart. Click here for Data Tables: EU+ Countries and Citizenships.

Bangladeshis remained the third-largest applicant group, lodging around 20,000 applications. This was 13% more than in the first half of 2025, although still below the level recorded in the first half of 2024. Egyptians and Turks followed, each with around 12,000 applications. Egyptian applications were broadly stable compared with the first half of 2025, whereas Turkish applications declined by 30%, continuing the substantial reduction from the much higher levels recorded in 2023 and 2024.

Some of the most pronounced increases occurred among citizenships with smaller, but increasingly significant, application trends. During the first half of 2026, Sudanese applications almost doubled year on year to around 11,000, their highest ever Jan-Jun level. Haitian applications rose by 27% to around 8,600, also the highest ever Jan-Jun level. Somali and Malian applications increased more moderately (by 15% and 8%, respectively) to around 9,700 each. Chinese applications also continued to increase, reaching around 5,000 in the first half of 2026, their highest Jan-Jun level on record.

At the same time, several previously prominent citizenships recorded large declines. Syrians lodged around 11,000 applications, 57% fewer than in the first half of 2025 and 85% fewer than in the first half of 2024. This represents the lowest ever Jan-Jun level for Syrians and continues the pronounced decline already highlighted in previous reports. Colombian applications fell by 54% year on year to around 6,200, while Ukrainian applications declined by 47% to around 8,200. Substantial decreases were also recorded for Congolese (DR) and Turkish applicants, both down by around 30%, as well as Peruvians (-29%), Guineans (-24%) and Moroccans (-21%).

Taken together, the 20 main citizenships accounted for around 70% of all applications lodged in the first half of 2026. The overall decline therefore reflects several simultaneous developments rather than a uniform reduction across citizenships. The largest absolute decreases came from Venezuelans and Syrians, followed by Colombians, Ukrainians and Turks. These falls outweighed increases among Sudanese, Bangladeshis, Haitians, Somalis and several other groups, resulting in a smaller and increasingly different EU+ asylum caseload.

Visa-free citizenships — nationals of countries whose citizens can travel to the Schengen area for short stays without a visa — accounted for around 22% of all asylum applications in the first half of 2026, with approximately 75,000 applications. This was somewhat below the 25% share recorded in 2025, although considerably higher than a decade ago, when visa-free nationals represented around 10% of applications. As in recent years, the caseload was concentrated among a small number of citizenships: during the first half of 2026, Venezuelans lodged around 33,000 applications, Ukrainians 8,200, Peruvians 7,600 and Colombians 6,200, together accounting for around three quarters of all applications by visa-free nationals. The importance of this mobility channel has also prompted closer policy attention: the revised EU visa suspension mechanism provides for the temporary suspension of visa exemptions in response to specified migration or security concerns and broadened the grounds on which the mechanism may be triggered.

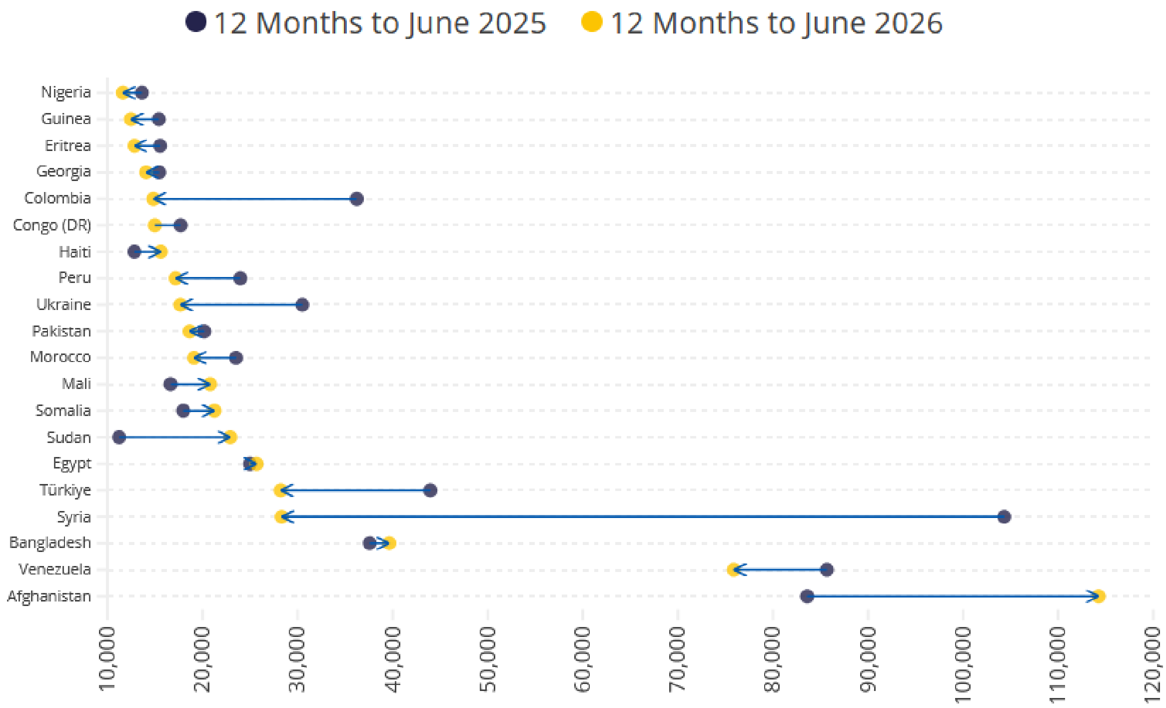
Repeated applications — those submitted in the same receiving country after a final decision on a previous claim — accounted for 16% of all asylum applications in the first half of 2026, the highest annual or semi-annual share in recent history. This was up from 12% in the first half of 2025 but stable compared to 16% recorded for 2025 as a whole. In absolute terms, around 54,000 repeated applications were lodged between January and June 2026. In contrast, first-time applications fell by around 21%, from approximately 350,000 to 276,000. The rising share of repeated applications therefore partly reflects a changing composition of the EU+ caseload, with applications by people already present in the receiving country becoming more prominent as the number of first-time applicants declines.

Trends

To smooth out month-to-month fluctuations, trends in asylum applications can be assessed by comparing the 12 months leading up to June 2026 with the preceding 12-month period, namely the 12 months leading up to June 2025. This highlights more sustained changes across the main citizenships rather than short-term or seasonal variation

At the EU+ level, developments among the main citizenships continued to diverge markedly. Afghan applications increased by 37%, from around 84,000 to 114,000, making Afghans the largest applying citizenship over the latest 12-month period. Sudanese applications more than doubled (+104%) to around 23,000, while increases were also recorded for Malians (+25%), Haitians (+22%) and Somalis (+18%). Bangladeshi and Egyptian applications were comparatively stable, increasing by 5% and 3%, respectively.

Figure 4. Asylum applications for main citizenships, 12 months to June 2025 (blue) versus 12 months to June 2026 (yellow)



Source: EUAA Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data as of 7 August 2026.

Click for an interactive chart. Click here for Data Tables: EU+ Countries and Citizenships.

These increases contrasted with substantial declines among several previously high-volume citizenships. Syrian applications fell by 73%, from around 104,000 to 28,000, by far the largest reduction among all the main citizenships. Colombian applications declined by 59%, while Ukrainian applications fell by 42% and Turkish applications by 36%. Peruvians (-28%), Moroccans and Guineans (both -19%), Eritreans (-17%), Congolese (DR) and Nigerians (both -15%), Venezuelans (-11%) and Pakistanis (-8%) also lodged fewer applications.

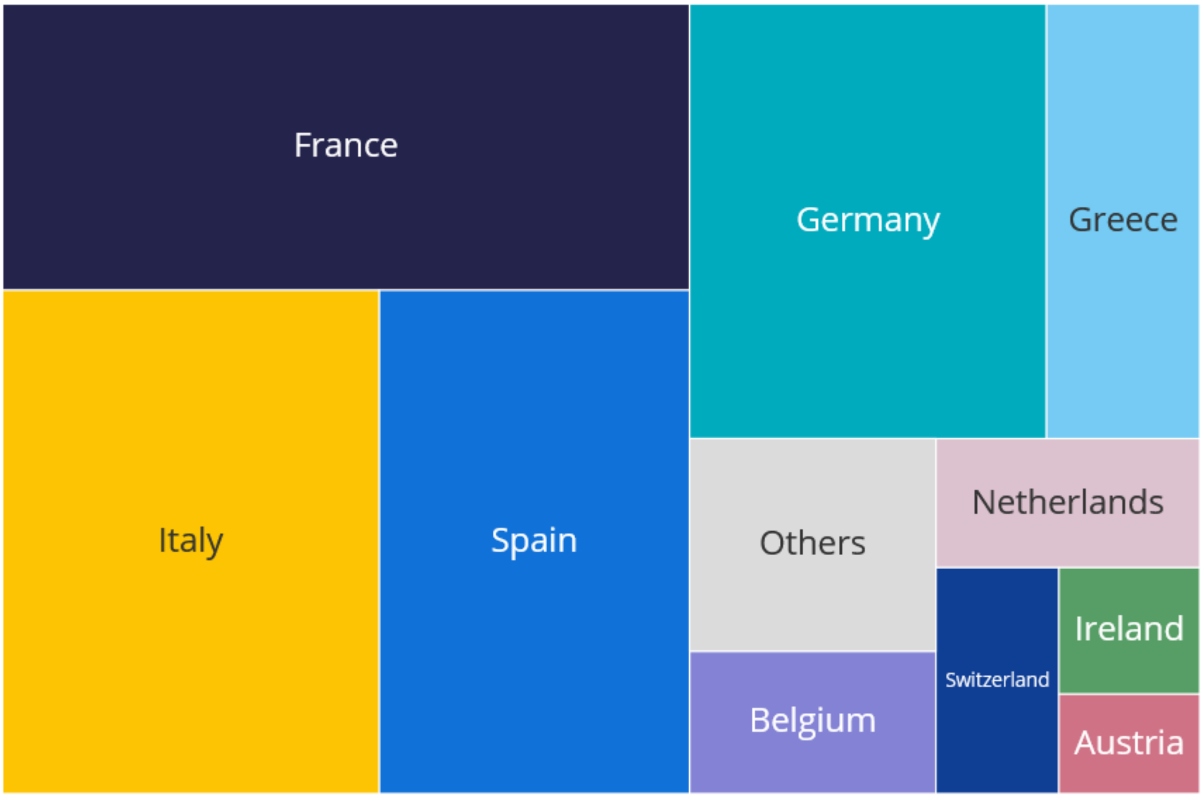
EU+ level trends can, however, conceal substantially different developments within the main receiving countries:

- In Germany, application trends were dominated by two nationalities: Afghan applications more than doubled (+127%), increasing from around 30,000 to 68,000 and becoming by far the largest component of the inflow, while Syrians applications fell to a similar absolute extent (-74%).
- In France, Haitians became the largest applying citizenship, rising by 22% to around 16,000. Afghan applications were essentially unchanged at around 13,000, while Congolese (DR) applications declined by 14%. Ukrainian applications fell by 39%, whereas Sudanese applications increased by 48% and Somali applications by 41%.
- In Spain, Venezuelans remained by far the largest applicant group despite a 9% decline to around 71,000. Malian applications increased by 42% to around 17,000, while Colombian applications fell by 65%, from around 26,000 to 9,100. Peruvian (-68%) and Senegalese (-75%) applications also declined sharply.
- In Italy, Bangladeshis remained the largest applying citizenship, with around 28,000 applications, broadly stable compared with the preceding period (-3%). Egyptian applications increased by 50% to around 15,000, while applications by Afghans (+77%), Chinese (+43%) and Sri Lankans (+23%) also rose. In contrast, Moroccans declined by 22% and Peruvians by 12%.

Destinations

Applications in the first half of 2026 remained concentrated in a small number of receiving countries. **France received the most applications, around 69,000 or 21% of the EU+ total, followed closely by Italy with 66,000 (20%). Spain and Germany each received around one sixth of all applications, with approximately 55,000 and 54,000, respectively. Together, these four countries accounted for almost 75% of all applications lodged in the EU+. Greece received a further 23,000 (7%), while substantially smaller shares were recorded elsewhere.**

Figure 5. Applications for asylum in the EU+, by destination country, Jan–Jun 2026



Source: EUAA Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data as of 7 August 2026.

Click here for an interactive chart. Click here for Data Tables: EU+ Countries and Citizenships.

Behind these overall figures, strong citizenship–destination patterns persisted. Almost all Haitian applications were lodged in France (99%), while Spain received 93% of Venezuelan applications and 82% of Malian applications. Italy received 82% of applications by Peruvians, 64% by Bangladeshis, 63% by Egyptians and 62% by Pakistanis. Congolese (DR) applications were similarly concentrated in France (75%), as were, to a lesser extent, Guinean applications (62%). Colombians also remained strongly oriented towards Spain, which received 60% of their applications. These concentrations can be seen in the Overview section.

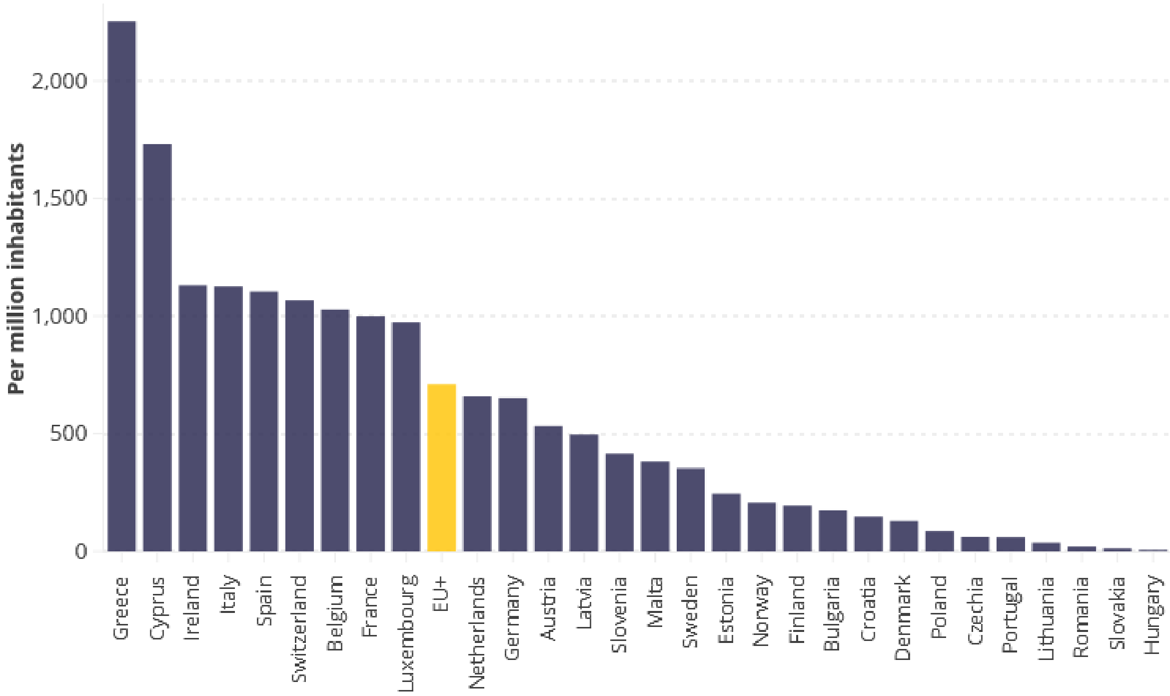
Other major citizenships were slightly more dispersed across the EU+. Germany received around half of all Afghan applications (51%) and around half of all Syrian applications (48%), while France received 15% of Afghan applications. Sudanese applications were divided mainly between France (39%) and Greece (34%), while Turkish applications were concentrated primarily in Germany (40%), followed by France (25%). Georgian applications were almost evenly divided between France (32%) and Italy (31%), whereas Somali applications were spread more widely, led by Germany (24%), France (19%) and Ireland (15%).

Overall, the figures show that EU+ asylum trends continue to reflect a mixture of highly localised citizenship–destination patterns and other caseloads distributed across several receiving countries.

Applications per capita

Evaluating which EU+ countries tend to receive the most applications for asylum is important but to some extent a simple like-for-like comparison is not appropriate because the EU+ countries vary wildly in terms of the size and capacity of their asylum and reception systems. As a rough measure of their overall capacity and a more nuanced estimation of the pressure exerted on national authorities, this analysis takes into account the number of asylum applications lodged per million inhabitants (Eurostat population data).

Figure 6. Applications for asylum per million inhabitants by receiving country, Jan–Jun 2026



Source: EUAA Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data as of 7 August 2026. Population sizes: Eurostat (DEMO_GIND) extracted on 21 July 2026

Click here for an interactive chart. Click here for Data Tables: EU+ Countries and Citizenships.

In the first half of 2026, Greece recorded by far the highest number of applications per capita, with 2,254 applications per million inhabitants, equivalent to around 1 application per 444 inhabitants. It was followed by Cyprus with 1,732 per million. A second group of countries also recorded comparatively high levels, all with around 1,000 applications per million inhabitants: Ireland (1,132), Italy (1,127), Spain (1,104), Switzerland (1,067), Belgium (1,028), France (1,000) and Luxembourg (973).

Per-capita analysis can also show that countries with very different absolute numbers may in fact receive a similar relative caseload. For example, Italy received around 66,000 applications, compared with 6,000 in Ireland, but the two countries recorded almost identical per-capita levels, at 1,127 and 1,132 applications per million inhabitants, respectively. Similarly, France received around 69,000 applications and Luxembourg 670 yet both recorded close to

1,000 applications per million inhabitants. This illustrates why per-capita analysis is a useful complement to absolute application numbers.

At EU+ level, there were 710 applications per million inhabitants in the first half of 2026, equivalent to around 1 application for every 1,408 inhabitants. This places the EU+ average below the countries with the highest relative caseloads, but above countries such as the Netherlands (658) and Germany (652), and well above Austria (532), Latvia (496) and Slovenia (415).

At the other end of the scale, some countries received relatively few asylum applications per capita. Poland and Slovakia recorded just 87 and 12 applications per million inhabitants, respectively. However, these figures should be considered alongside other forms of protection: at the end of June 2026, both countries hosted very high numbers of temporary protection beneficiaries relative to population, at 26 and 27 per 1,000 inhabitants, respectively. Cyprus stands out as an extreme case, ranking near the top on both measures: it received 1,732 asylum applications per million inhabitants and hosted 27 temporary protection beneficiaries per 1,000 inhabitants. This underlines the importance of considering asylum applications together with other forms of protection when comparing pressures across countries.

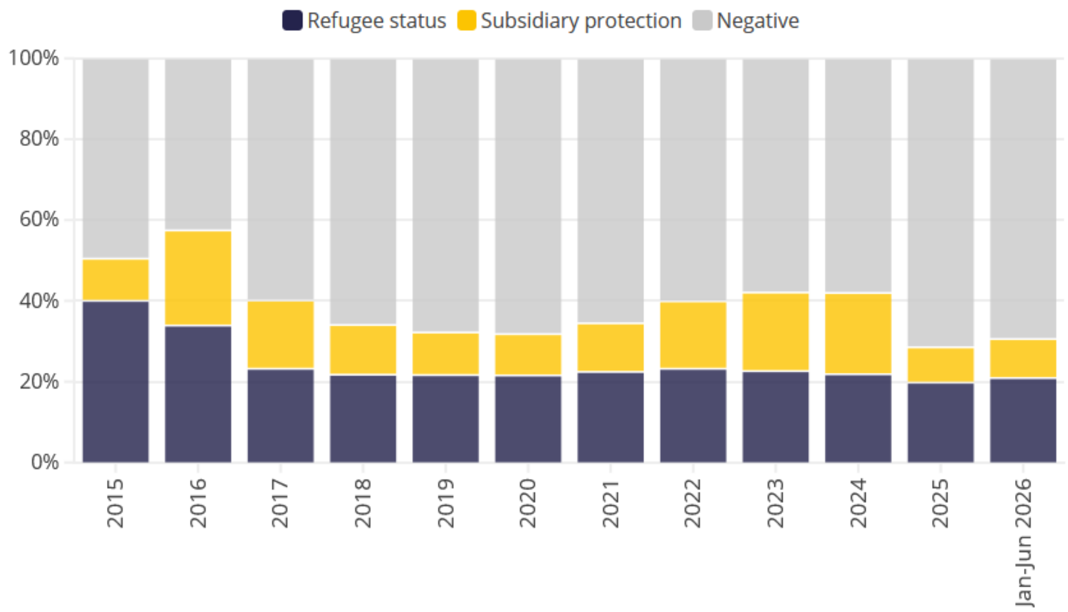
Recognition rates

Main citizenships

Over the three years pr**eceding 2025, the recognition rate—which reflects the percentage of asylum applicants granted refugee status or subsidiary protection—was broadly stable at around 40% at first instance, ranging between 40% in 2022 and 42% in both 2023 and 2024. It then fell to 29% in 2025. During the first half of 2026, the EU+ recognition rate stood at 31%, remaining close to the 2025 level. Refugee status continued to be granted more frequently than subsidiary protection.**

The low overall recognition rate **by historical standards, reflects the composition of decisions issued across different citizenships. In the first half of 2026, almost 45,000 decisions were issued to Syrians, for whom the recognition rate stood at 19%, compared with 28% in 2025 and 90% in 2024. Large numbers of decisions were also issued to citizenships with very low recognition rates, including Bangladeshis (3%), Venezuelans (3%), Egyptians (2%) and Peruvians (3%). Taken together, these citizenship-specific patterns contributed to keeping the overall EU+ recognition rate low.**

Figure 7. Annual recognition rates at first instance by decision outcome, 2015–Jun 2026



Source: EUAA Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data as of 7 August 2026.

Click here for an interactive chart. Click here for Data Tables: EU+ Countries and Citizenships.

More broadly, the EU+ recognition rate is a composite indicator, shaped by differing citizenship profiles and evolving protection needs. Recognition rates vary widely by nationality and many remain relatively stable over time. For example, the recognition rate for Bangladeshis remained at 3% in the first half of 2026, while that for Pakistanis stood at 13%, compared with 12% in 2025.

Several citizenships, however, have experienced marked changes in recent years, all of which can be seen in the interactive version of Figure 6:

- **Türkiye**: after a long decline from 54% in 2019 to 13% in 2025, the recognition rate increased slightly to 18% in the first half of 2026.
- **Afghans**: the recognition rate continued its long term increase, from 32% back in 2017 to 73% in the first half of 2026. The large majority of positive decisions granted refugee status.
- **Haiti**: following a dramatic increase from 16% in 2021 to 89% in 2025, the recognition rate remained very high at 84% in the first half of 2026, with the vast majority of positive decisions granting subsidiary protection.
- **Mali**: the recognition rate increased further from 84% in both 2024 and 2025 to 87% in the first half of 2026.
- **Ukraine**: after jumping to 86% after the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, the recognition rate has since declined from the peak of 92% in 2023, to 58% in the first half of 2026.
- **Colombia**: in contrast, the recognition rate increased markedly from 5% in 2024 and 2025 to 15% in the first half of 2026.

Context: It should be noted that some applicants, especially those from Venezuela and to a lesser extent from Somalia, Afghanistan and Pakistan have often been granted national (rather than international) forms of protection, which are unregulated at the EU level and are therefore considered as negative asylum decisions in these statistics. Also, the recognition rates presented here are based on first instance decisions issued by asylum authorities and thus do not account for cases decided by the judiciary and other authorities at second or higher instance, i.e. in appeal and review.

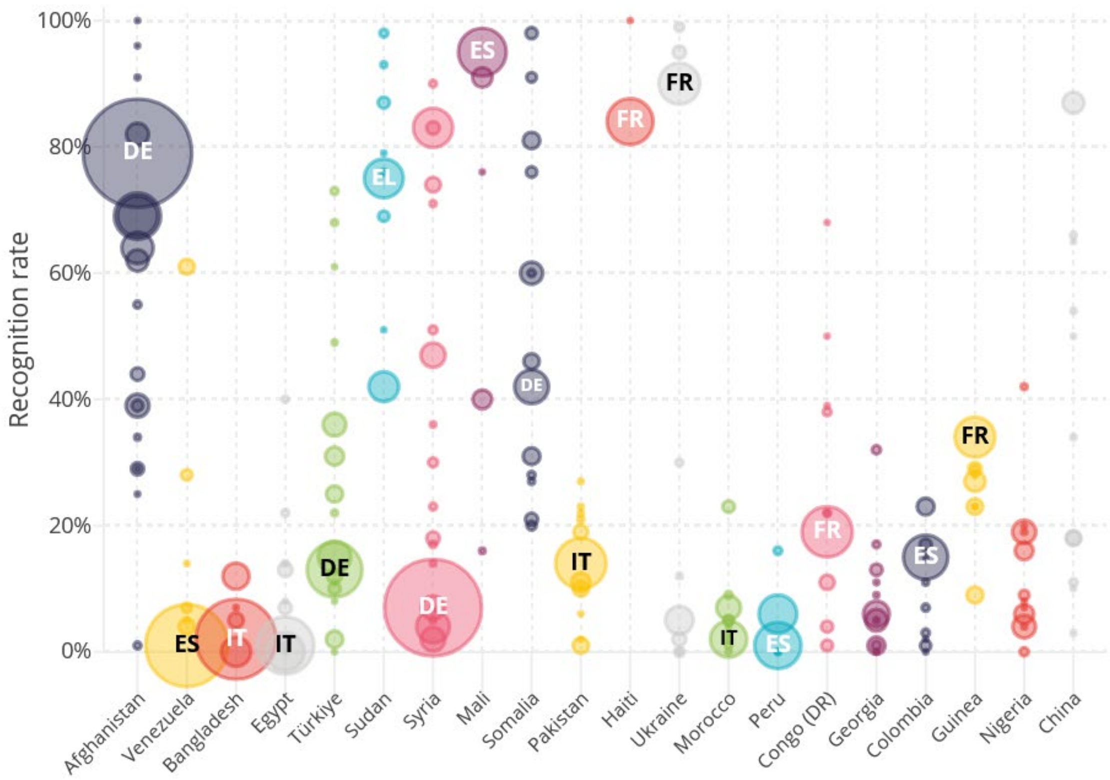
Across the EU+

The aim of EUAA's work is to foster a harmonised implementation of the Common European Asylum System across the EU so as to reach a situation where an application for international protection would receive the same decision, no matter where it was lodged. Recognition rates, the percentage of asylum applications that receive decisions granting refugee status or subsidiary protection, are sometimes cited as an indicator of the level of such harmonisation between EU+ countries.

It is important to recognise, however, that several factors can lead to variation in recognition rates. The assessment of an asylum application cannot be reduced to a single characteristic such as nationality. Differences in applicant profiles, national jurisprudence, national policies and the application of specific legal concepts may all influence outcomes. Applicants from the same country of origin may also have different profiles across receiving countries. As a result, differences in recognition rates should not be interpreted mechanically as evidence of divergent decision making.

Against this background, Figure 7 illustrates first instance recognition rates across the EU+ for selected citizenships during the first half of 2026. Within each column, circles of the same colour represent different issuing countries; circle size reflects the number of decisions issued, while vertical position indicates the corresponding recognition rate.

Figure 8. First instance recognition rates for the main citizenships across EU+ countries, Jan–Jun 2026



Source: EUAA Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data as of 7 August 2026.

Click here for an interactive chart. Click here for Data Tables: EU+ Countries and Citizenships.

Notes: In each column, bubbles represent different EU+ countries. The sizes depict the number of decisions issued, while the placement on the vertical (y) axis illustrates the recognition rate. The EU+ country issuing the most decisions is labelled for each citizenship. Bubbles containing fewer than 100 decisions are not shown.

As in previous reporting periods, some citizenships had relatively high recognition rates across the main decision-issuing countries. For Afghans, whose EU+ recognition rate stood at 73%, Germany issued by far the most decisions, around 36,000, with a recognition rate of 79%. France and Greece each had recognition rates of 69%, while Switzerland stood at 64% and Austria at 82%. Lower recognition rates were recorded in some other countries, including Belgium at 39%, but generally with considerably smaller decision volumes. Haitians also had a very high recognition rate, although almost all decisions were concentrated in France, where around 6,400 decisions were issued with a recognition rate of 84%.

At the other end of the spectrum, several citizenships had consistently low recognition rates across the main decision-issuing countries. For Bangladeshis, Italy issued around 20,000 decisions with a recognition rate of 2%, while rates were below 1% in Greece, 5% in Ireland

and 12% in France. Egyptians showed a similar pattern: Italy issued around 10,000 decisions with a recognition rate of 1%, while Greece issued around 4,400 with a rate below 1%. Recognition rates were also generally low across the main decision-issuing countries for Moroccans, Peruvians and Georgians.

For some other citizenships, however, substantial differences persisted between EU+ countries, including in countries issuing sizeable numbers of decisions:

Syrians showed the widest variation. Germany issued around 29,000 decisions with a recognition rate of just 7%, while rates were similarly low in the Netherlands (4%), Belgium (7%) and Cyprus (2%). In contrast, recognition rates stood at 83% in Austria and Switzerland, 74% in France and 90% in Italy.

Ukrainians also had sharply divergent outcomes. France – with most decisions issued (5,100) – had a recognition rate of 90% and Italy 95%, compared with 5% in Poland and 2% in Germany.

Somalis had recognition rates ranging from 21% in the Netherlands, 31% in Greece and 42% in Germany to 81% in Switzerland, 91% in Italy and 98% in Spain.

Sudanese applicants had generally high recognition rates, but with an important difference between the two largest decision-issuing countries: Greece issued around 4,600 decisions with a recognition rate of 75%, compared with 42% among around 2,700 decisions issued in France.

Malians similarly had recognition rates of around 95% in Spain and 91% in Italy, compared with 40% in France. Importantly, Spain accounted for by far the largest number of decisions, with around 6,900.

Turkish recognition rates were relatively low in Greece (2%), Italy (12%), Germany (13%) and France (15%), but higher in Switzerland (36%) and Belgium (31%), and substantially higher in some countries issuing fewer decisions, such as Denmark (73%) and Norway (68%).

Taken together, the data show that recognition rates were relatively consistent for some citizenships but highly variable for others. In interpreting these differences, both recognition rates and the volume of decisions issued are important: a very high or low rate based on a small number of decisions does not carry the same weight for the overall EU+ recognition rate as a comparable difference between countries processing thousands of cases.

Read EUAA Country Guidance on Afghanistan and EUAA Country Focus on Afghanistan.

Low recognition rates and safe countries of origin

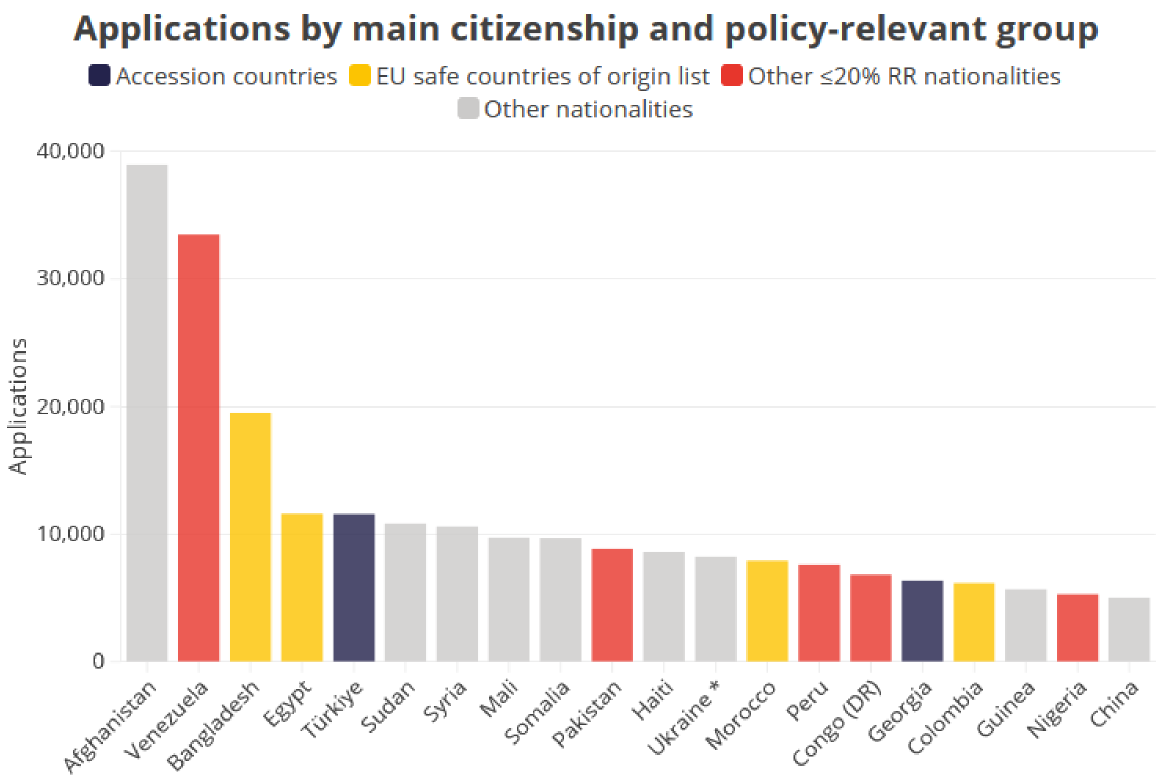
The Pact on Migration and Asylum introduces procedures that are particularly relevant to applicants from countries with low recognition rates and from countries designated as safe countries of origin. Under the mandatory border procedure, one relevant category concerns applicants from citizenships with an EU-wide recognition rate of 20% or less. This is intended to allow applications considered more likely to be unfounded or inadmissible to be assessed rapidly at the EU's external borders.

A related **concept is the safe country of origin, referring to countries considered to ensure effective protection.** With the Pact entering into application on 12 June 2026, a common EU list now applies and includes Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, India, Kosovo, Morocco and Tunisia. EU accession candidate countries are also designated as safe, provided that there is no international or internal armed conflict, no restrictive measures affecting fundamental rights and freedoms, and their EU-wide recognition rate does not exceed 20%. The European Commission monitors whether these exceptions apply or cease to apply. For further information, see the EUAA *Overview of the Implementation of Safe Country Concepts*.

Ukraine is the exception among the EU accession candidate countries. On 12 June 2026, the European Commission exempted Ukraine from designation as a safe country of origin because of the continuing armed conflict, characterised by widespread and indiscriminate violence.

Figure 8 shows the 20 citizenships lodging the most applications in the first half of 2026, divided into four mutually exclusive groups: accession countries; other countries on the EU list of safe countries of origin; other citizenships with a 2025 EU-wide recognition rate of 20% or less; and all remaining citizenships. Several of the largest applicant groups fell within the first three categories. These included Venezuelans among low-recognition-rate citizenships, Bangladeshis and Egyptians among the other EU safe countries of origin, and Turkish nationals among accession countries.

Figure 9. Applications for the main citizenships by groups relevant to accelerated and border procedures, Jan–Jun 2026



Source: EUAA Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data as of 7 August 2026.

Click here for an interactive chart. EUAA Report Implementation of Safe Country Concepts. Eurostat - Citizenships with an asylum recognition rate of ≤20% * Ukraine is an EU accession candidate country but is excluded from this category because an armed conflict is ongoing C/2026/3247

Across all applications lodged during the first half of 2026, 56% of applications lodged in the first half of 2026 fell within one of these three policy-relevant groups. However, these categories should not be interpreted as meaning that every application from the citizenships concerned will necessarily be processed under the same procedure; individual circumstances remain relevant.

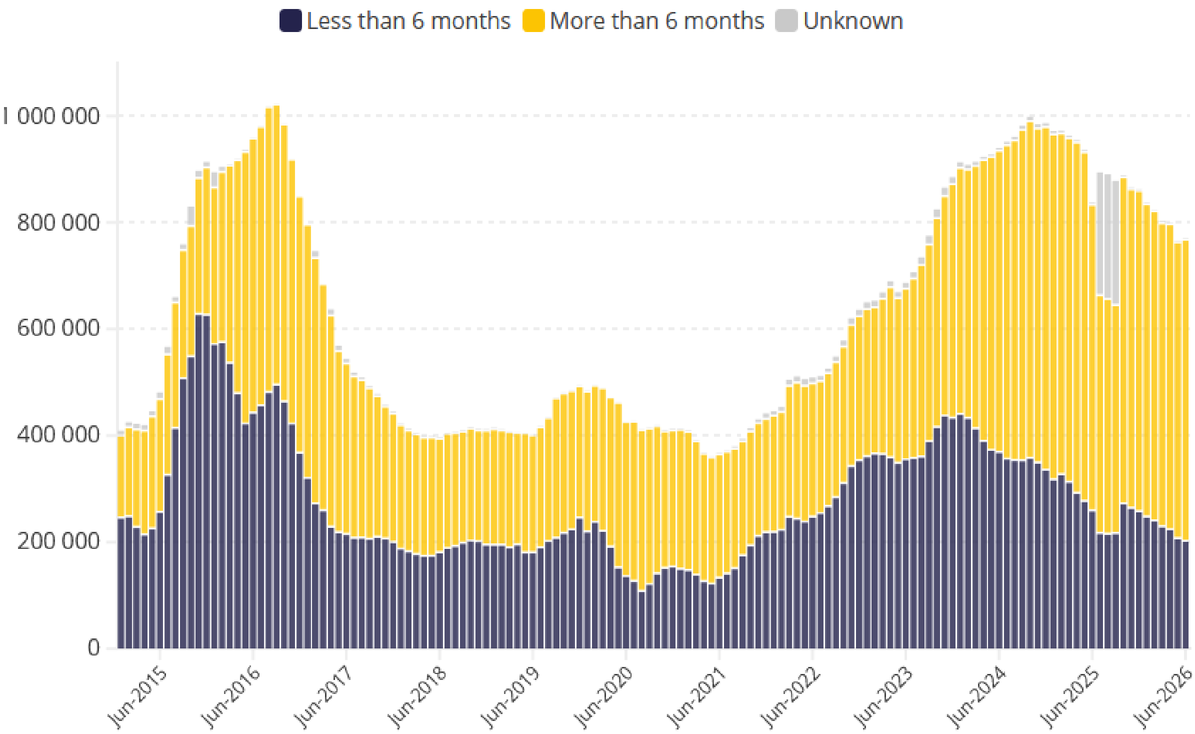
Pending cases

First instance

While an asylum application is awaiting a *first instance* decision, it remains part of the caseload of applications under examination by the asylum authorities. The number of pending cases serves as a key indicator that reflects the workload faced by national authorities and the strain on national asylum systems, including reception systems.

At the end of June 2026, around 770,000 cases were pending at first instance in the EU+, around 8% fewer than the 837,000 recorded a year earlier. The decline was nevertheless concentrated among more recent cases: at the end of June 2026, around 203,000 cases had been pending for less than 6 months, down by around 22% from June 2025, whereas the number pending for more than 6 months remained broadly stable at around 565,000, only slightly below the 573,000 recorded a year earlier. Consequently, the share of the caseload pending for more than 6 months increased from around 68% to 73%. This suggests that the fall in the overall number of pending cases is being driven mainly by fewer recent cases entering or remaining in the stock, rather than by a comparable reduction in older cases.

Figure 10. Pending cases at first instance at the end of each month since 2015



Source: EUAA Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data as of 7 August 2026.

Click here for an interactive chart. Click here for Data Tables: EU+ Countries and Citizenships.

In general, citizenships lodging the most applications tend to have the most cases awaiting decisions. At the end of June, Venezuelans had by far the most cases awaiting first instance decisions, at around 129,000, followed by Syrians (76,000), Colombians (64,000), Peruvians (38,000) and Bangladeshis (36,000). In fact, Venezuelan pending cases increased by around 14% compared with June 2025, while particularly strong increases were also visible for Malians (+70%), Chinese (+68%) and Sudanese (+56%).

Growing and ageing caseloads: Venezuelans provide the clearest example of a growing and ageing pending caseload. At the end of June 2026, around 129,000 Venezuelan cases were awaiting a first instance decision, 14% more than a year earlier and the largest pending caseload of any citizenship. The increase was entirely concentrated among older cases: those pending for more than six months rose from around 68,000 to 98,000 (+44%), while cases pending for less than six months fell from 45,000 to 31,000. As a result, more than three quarters of the Venezuelan caseload had been pending for over six months. This is particularly noteworthy given that Venezuelan applications are overwhelmingly lodged in Spain, where many applicants who do not qualify for international protection have been granted a national form of protection.

A similar combination of growth and ageing was visible for some smaller caseloads. Chinese pending cases increased by 68%, from around 6,200 in June 2025 to 10,000 in June 2026, the highest level in the series. Cases pending for more than six months almost doubled, from 3,400 to 6,500. Haitian pending cases also increased, from 4,300 to 5,600, while cases older than six months more than doubled from around 850 to 1,900.

Shrinking but ageing caseloads: For several citizenships, the total number of pending cases declined, but this was driven mainly by reductions in newer cases, leaving an increasingly old residual caseload. Colombian pending cases fell from around 82,000 in June 2025 to 64,000 in June 2026, but newer cases pending for less than six months fell much more rapidly, from 11,000 to 4,500. Consequently, a significant 93% of Colombian pending cases had been awaiting a decision for more than six months by the end of June. For Peruvians, the overall stock was broadly stable at around 38,000, but cases older than six months increased slightly while newer cases declined, raising the share of older cases to 84%. A similar shift towards older cases was visible among Ukrainians and Congolese (DR), even as their total pending caseloads declined.

Growing caseloads with a large recent component: A different pattern was apparent for Sudanese and Malians, whose pending cases increased rapidly while remaining heavily weighted towards more recent cases. Sudanese pending cases increased from around 8,000 in June 2025 to 12,000 in June 2026, with cases pending for less than six months increasing to around 7,000. Malians had around 14,000 pending cases, up from 8,200 a year earlier, of which around 8,300 had been pending for less than six months. In both cases, therefore, a majority of the pending caseload was less than six months old, consistent with recent increases in applications.

Shrinking old caseloads: For Afghans and Turkish nationals, reductions in pending cases extended to both newer and older cases. Afghan pending cases almost halved, from around 51,000 in June 2025 to 27,000 in June 2026, while the number pending for more than six months fell from 28,000 to 13,000. The Turkish caseload declined even more sharply, from around 36,000 to 17,000, with older cases falling from 28,000 to 12,000. Unlike the ageing caseloads described above, these declines therefore involved substantial reductions in the stock of long-pending cases.

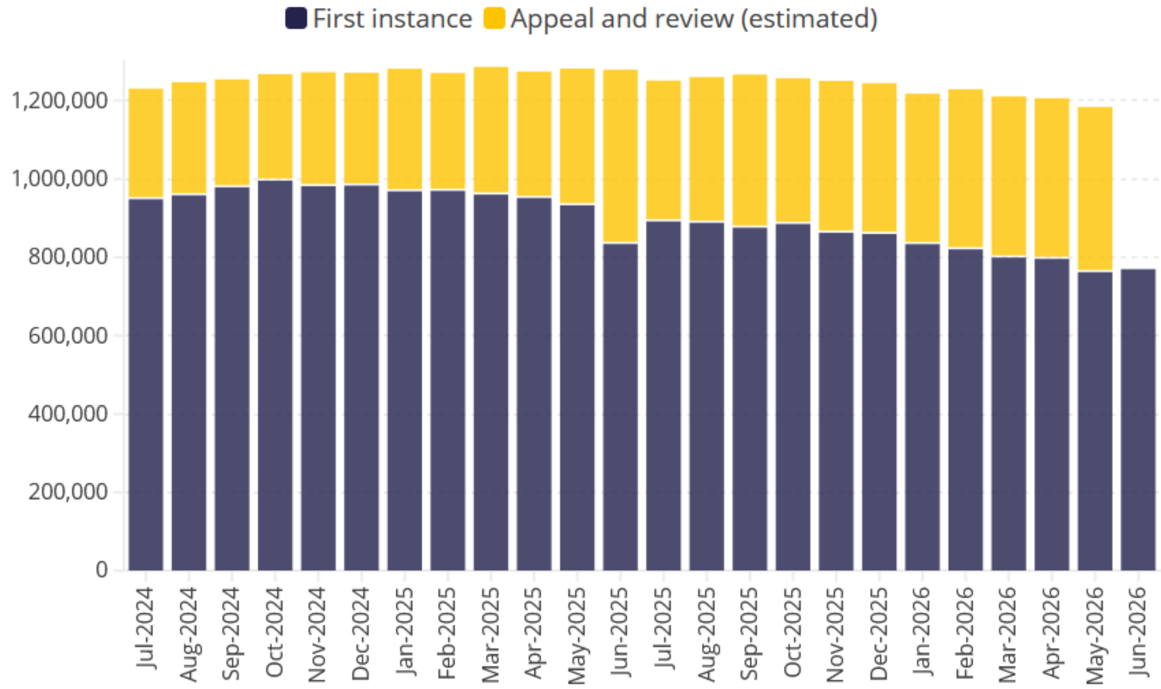
The Syrian case: Syria presents a distinct pattern, partly reflecting changes in the processing of Syrian claims following the fall of the Assad regime**.** In the first half of 2025, most EU+ countries temporarily paused or limited the processing of Syrian applications while they reassessed the security and political situation in Syria, although new applications continued to be accepted. In countries where processing was only partially suspended and in countries where processing resumed, decisions tended to be issued in specific circumstances where an assessment of conditions in Syria was not required, for example for applicants who had already been granted protection in another EU+ country.

By early 2026, more Syrian cases were again being processed, particularly in Germany. These procedural developments may help explain the changing size and age profile of the Syrian pending caseload. At the end of June 2026, around 76,000 Syrian cases were awaiting a first instance decision, down from 110,000 a year earlier. Cases pending for less than six months fell especially sharply, from around 20,000 to 7,600 (-62%), broadly reflecting the steep decline in new Syrian applications. However, cases pending for more than six months declined more slowly, from around 88,000 to 68,000 (-23%), meaning that at the end of June 2026 almost 90% of the remaining Syrian caseload was more than six months old. The pattern is therefore consistent with a large stock of pending cases ageing during the period of suspended or limited processing, followed by a gradual reduction as processing resumed, while far fewer new applications entered the caseload. The number of older cases has now clearly begun to fall, but a substantial backlog remains.

All instances

Under the Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS), EU+ asylum authorities regularly report to the EUAA the number of cases that they have pending at first instance—that is, newly lodged applications still awaiting an initial decision. However, this indicator does not reflect the full scope of the caseload being processed across the EU+ because there are also many cases pending in appeal and in review: cases pending in appeal refer to those that have been challenged before the judiciary, where applicants contest the first instance decision on points of fact and/or law. At the same time, other cases are pending in review, meaning the asylum authority has been requested to re-examine its original decision—often due to procedural concerns or new information.

Figure 11. Pending cases at all instances



Source: EUAA Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data as of 7 August 2026. Eurostat data on Persons subject of asylum applications pending at the end of the month (migr_asypenctzm).

Click here for an interactive chart. Click here for Data Tables: EU+ Countries and Citizenships.

To provide a more comprehensive picture of the total caseload, EUAA combines EPS data on first instance pending cases with an estimate of cases pending in appeal and review based on Eurostat data. The two components can vary substantially over time. For example, in May 2026 (latest available data) there were around 1.18 million cases pending at all instances, comprising approximately 765,000 first instance cases (65%) and an estimated 419,000 cases in appeal or review (35%). This was slightly below the approximately 1.28 million cases pending in May 2025 and is indicative of a gradual decline in the number of cases pending at first instance. This illustrates why first instance pending cases, do not represent the full workload associated with asylum procedures.

At the end of June 2026, around 770,000 cases were pending at first instance. However, the corresponding estimate of cases pending in appeal and review is not yet available in the data used for this analysis. The final bar in Figure 10 therefore represents first instance cases only and should not be interpreted as the total number of cases pending at all instances.

Annexes

Data Tables

Figure 12. Key first instance indicators by receiving EU+ country, Jan–Jun 2026

First time applications Repeated applications

EU+ country	Asylum applications	Top 3 countries	Type of application	Decisions issued	Positive	Pending cases	Withdrawn applications	Resettlement arrivals
France	69,139	HT AF CD		73,255	29,355	43,456	474	181
Italy	66,437	BD EG PE		72,017	9,026	244,442	2,510	441
Spain	54,732	VE ML CO		54,519	12,529	226,479	7,159	69
Germany	54,454	AF SY TR		109,393	39,098	68,344	4,998	32
Greece	23,363	BD AF SD		28,990	11,331	23,139	221	0
Belgium	12,285	AF PS TR		13,987	3,741	39,498	3,005	0
Netherlands	11,929	UN KS DS		10,766	2,040	47,355	2,551	5
Switzerland	9,734	AF ER DZ		10,980	6,085	7,755	1,804	9
Ireland	6,240	SO NG PK		8,435	1,311	12,776	128	132
Austria	4,903	SY AF SO		9,018	6,059	5,169	565	0
Sweden	3,747	IR AF SY		3,456	676	3,637	312	25
Poland	3,147	UA BY RU		3,718	849	11,381	973	0
Cyprus	1,726	CD SY NG		3,519	246	14,103	1,079	0
Norway	1,164	UA SY CO		942	260	4,672	287	12
Bulgaria	1,127	AF IQ MA		857	130	1,100	608	0
Finland	1,096	AF SO IQ		1,762	818	787	222	106
Latvia	915	AF PK SO		295	76	705	450	0
Slovenia	887	MA DZ EG		132	56	593	484	0
Denmark	783	ER SY AF		632	312	1,895	269	288
Portugal	680	AO CO CN		147	57	8,425	423	0
Luxembourg	672	SY ER SD		580	258	2,458	155	0
Czechia	668	UA VN UZ		627	106	416	113	0
Croatia	569	RU TR JO		116	5	559	3,804	0
Romania	382	SY IR SD		322	179	70	191	0
Estonia	333	UA RU YE		284	272	302	29	0
Malta	225	SY VE SD		256	73	244	42	0
Lithuania	108	BY AF IQ		110	41	0	30	0
Slovakia	66	UA TR EG		50	14	32	15	0
Hungary	47	IR UN KP		48	22	32	16	0

Source: EUAA Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data as of 7 August 2026. Click here for an interactive chart.

Figure 13. Key first instance indicators by top 20 countries of origin, Jan–Jun 2026

Positive Negative

Country of origin	Asylum applications	Top 3 EU+ countries	First time applications	Decisions issued	Recognition rate %	Pending cases	Withdrawn applications	Resettlement arrivals
Afghanistan	38,960	DE FR EL	25,259	56,846		192,391	1,873	255
Venezuela	33,486	ES IT DE	32,226	22,895		761,019	1,043	30
Bangladesh	19,521	IT EL FR	18,644	25,159		227,208	334	0
Egypt	11,607	IT EL FR	10,360	16,242		179,655	791	0
Türkiye	11,576	DE FR BE	8,223	18,456		111,490	1,654	0
Sudan	10,832	FR EL NL	10,465	8,771		73,582	324	249
Syria	10,596	DE AT NL	9,356	44,937		501,091	4,628	100
Mali	9,717	ES FR IT	8,379	9,433		79,686	191	0
Somalia	9,675	DE FR IE	8,668	9,819		78,657	615	9
Pakistan	8,840	IT IE EL	7,990	11,591		177,379	687	0
Haiti	8,583	FR EL ES	4,625	6,520		32,894	16	0
Ukraine	8,236	FR PL DE	7,595	9,601		76,588	1,007	0
Morocco	7,914	IT ES FR	7,190	7,504		89,106	1,150	0
Peru	7,607	IT ES FR	7,370	11,300		233,022	962	0
Congo (DR)	6,816	FR BE CY	5,353	9,793		57,334	192	183
Georgia	6,367	FR IT DE	5,312	5,931		68,520	409	0
Colombia	6,160	ES IT FR	5,785	8,294		397,731	4,142	0
Guinea	5,693	FR DE BE	3,970	8,665		65,640	435	0
Nigeria	5,289	IT FR IE	3,341	6,448		64,451	368	9
China	5,011	IT DE FR	4,749	3,421		56,648	321	0

Source: EUAA Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data as of 7 August 2026. Click here for an interactive chart.

Definitions

Asylum applications include all 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 period.

EU+ refers to the 27 European Union Member States, plus Norway and Switzerland.

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.

Pending cases include 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). It refers to the "stock" of applications for which decisions at first instance are still pending.

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.

This analysis was performed by the EUAA's Situational Awareness Unit (SAU) based on monthly data exchanged under the [Early warning and Preparedness System] (EPS) as of 7 August 2026. Some data were incomplete at the time of going to press. The data shared with the EUAA by EU+ countries are provisional and unvalidated and, therefore, may differ from validated data submitted to Eurostat at a later stage under [Regulation (EU) 2020/851].

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