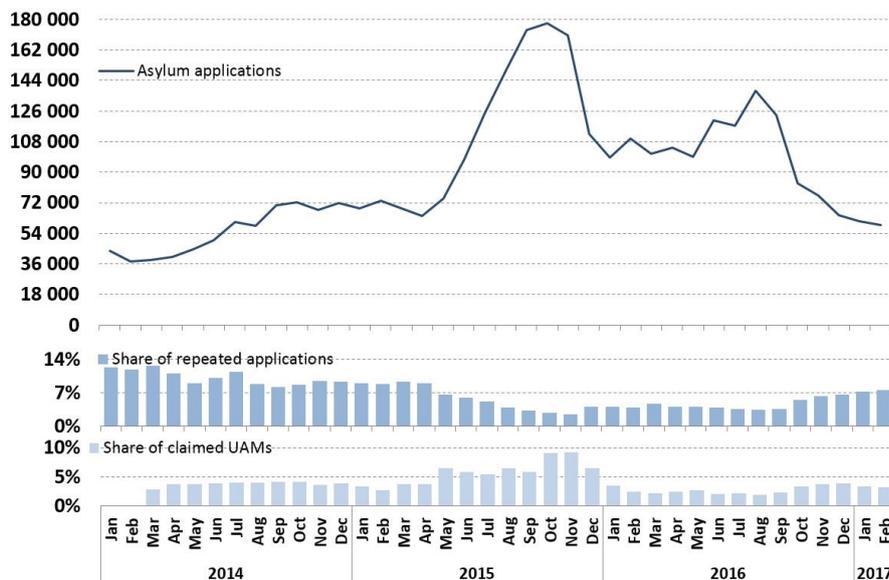


## Latest asylum trends – February 2017

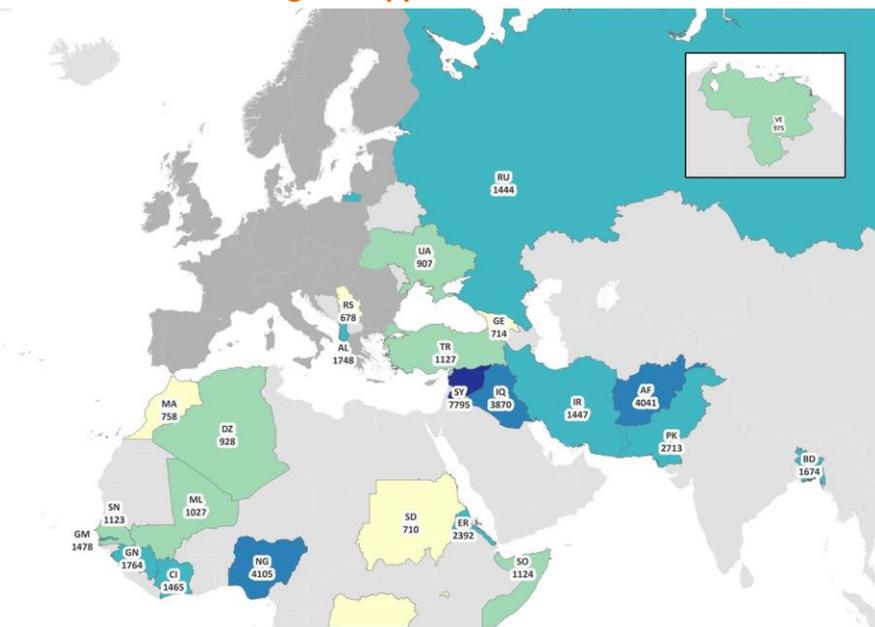
### Number of applications for international protection in the EU+<sup>1</sup>

In February, EU+ countries recorded 59 036 applications for international protection.<sup>2</sup> This marked the sixth consecutive monthly decrease (by 4 %) and the lowest monthly total in the past two years. It was 46 % lower than February 2016 and 19 % lower than February 2015.



90 % of all applications were first-time applications (there was no previous application lodged in the same EU+ country), which was slightly lower compared to the previous months, with slightly higher shares for relocated (3 % of total EU+). **3 % of all applicants claimed to be unaccompanied minors (UAMs)<sup>3</sup>** when lodging an application. 19 % of all UAM applicants were Afghan citizens, followed by Gambian and Pakistani citizens (10 % each).

### Main countries of origin of applicants



In February, similar to the previous months, **Syria was the main country of origin of asylum applicants in the EU+**. The top-three countries of origin remained the same as in January, although **Nigeria replaced Afghanistan as the second country of origin**. Afghanistan became the third main citizenship of origin. These top-three citizenships together accounted for 27 % of all applications lodged in the EU+. Iraq ranked fourth with 3 870 applicants. The top 10 list of applicants' citizenships for February was completed by Pakistan (2 713), Eritrea (2 392),

Guinea (1 764), Albania (1 748), Bangladesh (1 674), and Gambia (1 478). The highest increase in number of applicants among the top 10 citizenship groups compared to January was reported for nationals from Bangladesh (+ 12 %). The highest drop, after Afghan applicants, was observed for applicants from Albania and Eritrea (16 % and 13 %, respectively).

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

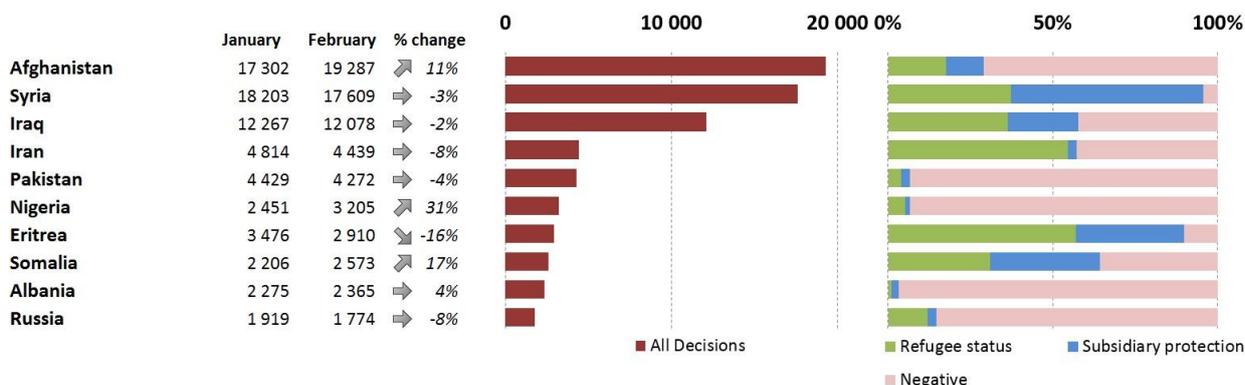
<sup>2</sup>Information on asylum applications were available for 28 EU+ countries. Weekly estimates were used for Portugal and Malta.

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

**Syria** – In February 2017, Syria remained the main country of origin of applicants for international protection in the EU+, as it has since April 2015. With 7 795 applications, however, this constituted only 13 % of the total of applications in the EU+, whereas in February 2016 it was 35 %. In February 2017, the number of applications increased slightly (by 2 %) compared to the previous month. Syrian applicants remained relatively widespread throughout the EU+ with 20 out of 28 EU+ reporting countries counting Syrian nationals among their top-three citizenships of applicants.

**Nigeria** – In February 2017, despite the decrease in the number of applicants by 7 % to 4 105, Nigeria ranked as the second citizenship of origin in the EU+ for the first time. Nigerian applicants exceeded Afghan and Iraqi applicants, the two citizenships that were consistently in the top three for the past year. Only two EU+ countries counted Nigerian applicants among the top-three citizenships.

**Afghanistan** – Following six months of consecutive decreasing monthly numbers of Afghan applicants and a drop of 18 % to 4 041 applications in February 2017, Afghanistan ranked third instead of second main citizenship of origin – for the first time since April 2016. This was the lowest observed number of Afghan applicants since May 2015. Afghanistan remained the main citizenship of claimed UAMs (19 %). 11 out of 28 EU+ reporting countries had Afghan applicants in their national top-three citizenships.



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

In February 2017, EU+ countries issued 96 628 first-instance decisions<sup>4</sup>, about 3 % more than in January 2017. The EU+ recognition rate dropped to 43 % in February, 3 percentage points lower than in the previous month. This decrease in the share of positive decisions was mainly due to increases in decisions granted to citizenships with low recognition rates (mostly Afghan and Nigerian applicants) combined with a lower number of decisions issued to citizenships with high recognition rates (mostly Syrian and Eritrean applicants). Similar to previous months, more positive decisions led to refugee status (55 % of all positive decisions) than subsidiary protection (45 %). 20 % of all EU+ decisions issued this month were granted to **Afghan** applicants, followed by **Syrians** (17 609 decisions and 18 % of the EU+ total). The recognition rate for Afghan nationals was 29 %, the same as in the previous month, while the recognition rate for Syrian applicants remained high, for the fourth consecutive month, at 96 %. 12 % of all decisions were issued to **Iraqi** applicants, out of which 58 % granted protection in the form of refugee status or subsidiary protection. Of the 10 citizenships with the most first-instance decisions issued, Eritreans showed the second-highest recognition rate (90 %). The lowest recognition rates were observed for Albanian (3 %) and Pakistani (7 %) applicants. Compared to the previous month, the highest drop in the number of decisions issued was noted for applicants from Eritrea (- 16 %) and the highest increase (apart from Nigeria) was observed for applicants from Somalia (+ 17 %).

### Cases awaiting a first-instance decision

February was the fifth consecutive month with decreasing numbers of cases awaiting a first-instance decision. Compared to the previous month, this stock decreased by 6 % to 773 128.<sup>4</sup> This decrease in pending cases is explained by the continued high number of first-instance decisions issued, combined with a lower number of applications lodged. 61 % of all cases were pending for longer than six months. The applicants awaiting a first-instance decision for longer than six months mainly came from Afghanistan (27 % of total), Iraq (11 %) and Syria (9 %).

<sup>4</sup> Data on these indicators were not yet available for Portugal and Malta.